

RISEING CRIME IN AUSTRALIA

LUCY SULLIVAN

Policy Monograph 39



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LUCY SULLIVAN



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Key Points

- crime represents a failure of internal and external constraints to deter socially harmful behaviour
- the family is a prime source of socialisation in the values that provide internal constraints against crime
- surveillance and punishment are external constraints and secondary methods of crime prevention
- crime declined in the first half of the century, before increasing in the second half, and rising massively from the 1970s
- homicide rates have been more stable, but still increased in the 1980s and 1990s
- rape, at very low levels for most of the century, became a much larger problem from the 1970s
- robbery rates show the same pattern of rising significantly over the last 25 years
- assault rates more than doubled between the early 1980s and early 1990s
- the proportion of the population in prison dropped from late last century to the 1920s, before rising again from the early 1980s
- however, rates of imprisonment have not kept pace with increases in the crime rate
- there is an increasing number of police per head of population, but fewer police for each crime
- rising crime cannot be attributed to the proportion of young people in the population, which declined during the period of escalating crime
- over the century, there is no close relationship between levels of unemployment and crime
- female employment, which subtracts from the time mothers can give to socialisation, shows a statistical association with crime

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- male employment rates show no association with crime
- divorce, which diminishes the time parents give to socialisation, shows a statistical association with crime
- with a two decade time lapse, there is significant association between young motherhood and crime
- there is a strong relationship between ex-nuptial birth and crime
- there has been a parallel rise in sole parenting and crime
- there is no statistical relationship between marriage rates and crime rates

TAKING CHILDREN SERIOUSLY

In 1994 the Centre embarked on a program of research entitled Taking Children Seriously, directed by CIS Senior Fellow Barry Maley. At the heart of this program is the present and future well-being of children. This publication arises from work carried out under the program.

Major supporters of the *Taking Children Seriously* program include:

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Foreword

As the Executive Director of a think-tank best known for opposing big government, I'm sometimes asked whether our current interest in children and crime is a departure from traditional concerns. The subject matter is certainly different, but in fact the old and new interests are complementary. If we are to have a free society government must be kept small, but for society to function effectively there must be a reasonable level of order, stability, and predictability. If centralised government does not provide this, it must be done by voluntary institutions encouraging pro-social behaviour, whether this is through promoting appropriate values or providing informal sanctions.

The statistics presented in *Rising Crime in Australia* show that the order, stability and predictability people need to plan their lives and go about their business without fear has declined, especially over the last twenty years. Some of this can be attributed to the state's failure to perform one of the few duties it clearly has – the protection of its citizens from theft and violence. Police numbers and imprisonment levels seem inadequate to the task of deterring potential offenders and keeping criminals away from where they can do harm.

The more striking findings presented in *Rising Crime in Australia* are, however, related to changes in a primary institution of socialisation, the family, rather than the institutions of law enforcement. Whatever the failings of the police and the courts, they would not be facing the difficulties they are were it not for failings in socialisation. Through her book, Lucy Sullivan shows that changes that could be expected to reduce the capacity of the family to socialise – sole parenthood, female employment, ex-nuptial birth, divorce – consistently correlate with increasing rates of crime. While there is no single 'cause' of crime, these changes in family functioning and structure have almost certainly had a large, and negative, effect on the socialisation of children.

The relationship between family and rates of crime shows just how dependent we are on institutions like the family to provide the underlying conditions of a free society. Indeed, the relationship suggests that the state, which has as one of its principal purposes maintaining order, is actually less important to that goal than the family, which is mainly intended to achieve other things. Family policy has wide implications.

Our *Taking Children Seriously* program, of which *Rising Crime in*

Greg Lindsay

Australia is a part, is concerned principally with the present and future well-being of children. Crime has a direct and negative impact on children, both as victims and as perpetrators who become caught in the criminal justice system. Crime also has an indirect negative impact on children, in the way it creates distrust and lowers the quality of life.

In the short to medium term crime can be reduced through better policing methods. However, long term and significant reductions in crime can probably only occur via better socialisation of children, and that in turn requires effective families.

Greg Lindsay
Executive Director

About the Author



Lucy Sullivan is a Research Fellow at the CIS. She has published widely in academic journals, including the *British Journal of Sociology* and the *Journal of Medicine and Law*. For the CIS, she was a co-author of *Home Repairs: Building Stronger Families to Resist Social Decay* (1996) and *State of the Nation: Statistical Indicators of Australia's Well-being* (1997).

Rising Crime in Australia

Lucy Sullivan

Are we living in a period of increasing violence and social disorder? The public and media view is that we are; but most crime research today does not extend back beyond about twenty years and the advent of computerisation, and so provides no real data to confirm or disconfirm the perceptions of those with a long memory of the past. The object of the present study is to provide a picture of crime in Australia in the roughly ninety years since Federation. This is of interest for its own sake, but also because it allows us to detect relationships, and speculate on factors which may affect rates of crime, in a manner which is impossible when we have only short series of statistics covering brief periods in which other social factors have been reasonably stable. It also allows us a longer vista against which to set the current public perception of an increasing incidence of crime, and to reflect on the quality of life implied by the incidence of crime today and in the past.

Constraints on criminal behaviour

Crime can be sociologically understood as signifying a failure of either external or internal constraints (or both) which deter the performance of acts which are socially harmful or disapproved. The sociologist Émile Durkheim argued, about a century ago, that behaviour is controlled by shared beliefs and values in a culture. If a society loses its shared cultural beliefs, a condition of 'anomie' results, in which both individual and society suffer from a lack of knowledge of, understanding of, and compliance with prescribed and proscribed behaviour. In a sense, both the individual and society are cut adrift, lacking patterns and models of beneficial behaviour. Suicide and socially destructive behaviour (crime) are observable outcomes, and the latter can be viewed as resulting from a failure of the 'common conscience'.

Crime can also be sociologically conceived of as a breaking of the social contract. The notion of an implicit contract (maintained by conscience) underpinning effective social and political behaviour has been expressed repeatedly in the history of Western thought by social

observers and theorists (see, for example, Hobbes 1651, Rousseau 1762, Beccaria 1764). It implies a consensual recognition of and conformity to an array of prosocial (requiring abnegation of individual preference) behaviours which the society maintains basically without formal regulation or enforcement – the private decencies of social intercourse and the public ones of business and political undertakings. Membership of the group requires commitment to and acquiescence in its norms at both levels. Conformity, today, is often construed as oppressive, but loss of such conformity spells harm both to the individual and the group.

The social consensus is maintained primarily at the informal level, by mutual approval or stigmatisation of certain behaviours, but also at the formal levels of religion and law. As Western society has become more secular, the law has increasingly supplanted religion as the formal expression of the social contract. Although the law carries the weight of sovereign authority, unlike religion it incorporates no psychological mechanism for the internalisation of values. Thus, although it certainly provides a formal statement of social values, it is, ideologically, a weaker source of control than religion, for which weakness it compensates by the weight of its socially supported mechanisms of punishment – in our society, largely imprisonment and fines. As a result of its public, rather than private locus of impact (unlike religion which always seeks to enter the home and the local community), the law operates largely as a reinforcement of certain key points of the informal social contract – protection of the person, property, contracts, and so on, by the imposition of external constraints. In the absence of a totalitarian system of surveillance, it cannot, therefore, function effectively if its strictures are not followed gratuitously by the large majority of the people, and supported at the informal level of sanction.

An important factor in the functioning of the social contract is, therefore, that its terms should be shared, particularly in their informal elements; for if one group within society is working to one set of norms and another to a different set, then each will perceive the other as breaching the rules in certain respects and discord will follow. If values are not universally held, the normative pressures of a society on its members will be weakened, and standards of performance are likely to fall in all groups. The socialisation of a nation's citizens requires their embuement with an understanding of the mutual benefit which lies in the acknowledgment and performance of a shared set of esteemed behaviours, on which the efficient day to day running of the institutions

(both informal and formal) of their culture rests, and with both the wish and the ability to play fair, in terms of the obligations towards his fellows which each citizen inherits.

How is this embuement achieved? A common presumption is that it is achieved via teaching in the family. Aristotle believed that the moral virtues are engendered in us by 'habit'. Good habits dispose us to act in just ways, hence the importance of having been trained 'from infancy to feel joy and grief at the right things'. It is in the family that children are cared for by adults sufficiently committed to them to devote long hours to instilling in them the approved norms of their society. For Adam Smith, if the family failed little could be done to make up for lost ground, and he urged parents not to send children to boarding school away from their influence (Smith 1790/1982: 222)

James Q. Wilson echoes Aristotle in asserting that, 'A moral life is perfected by practice more than by precept; children are not taught so much as habituated' (Wilson 1993: 299). What happens in the family, and also in the school – what behaviours are rewarded, punished, or simply permitted – will inevitably teach the child a set of moral norms, and it is important that the norms the child learns should be functional and shared – should be those of the social contract of his or her own place of living, loving and working, and should contribute to the welfare of the society and to the welfare of individuals within that society.

The Australian 'man and woman in the street' agree with this view of the importance of the family. A recent *Reader's Digest* survey of 400 Australians reported as follows:

Where do Australians get their values? The answer is simple – at home, through families. 'How much did your family shape your beliefs about right and wrong?' we asked. A staggering 94 per cent answered 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' – one of the highest responses in our study (McMahon 1996).

There is research evidence that failure to acquire the norms of right and wrong is the precursor of later criminality. James Q. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein found that, in the early years of school, future delinquents had 'less regard for the rights and feelings of their peers; less awareness of the need to accept responsibility for their obligations, both as individuals and as members of a group; and poorer attitudes toward authority, including failure to understand the need for rules and regulations in any well-ordered social group and the need for abiding by them' (Wilson and Herrnstein 1985). If the home is the prime source

of this socialisation – and this rests on the conscientiousness and ability of the child's parents in transmitting the best possible version of the social contract – then any factor which diminishes both the time and capacity of parents for performing this role is likely to result in less successful socialisation, enfeebled performance, and increased crime.

If the primary defence against crime is the successful embuement of all citizens with the terms of the social contract, the law, surveillance and punishment are secondary methods of prevention whose function is to deter the shakily socialised, and to sequester the unsocialised from opportunities for inflicting damage on the smooth gearing of the community's endeavours. Both primary and secondary defences must be considered as factors in any attempt to understand the escalating (as we shall see) crime rates of our day. It is but common sense that in a situation of weakened embuement with the behavioural requirements of a culture (its virtues and morality), the task of secondary prevention will either become ineffectual or will require such large resources as to seriously hinder the proper functioning of civil and economic enterprise.

Sources and Methodology

The most accessible source of crime statistics for Australia is the Commonwealth *Year Books*, covering the years since Federation, in 1901, up till the present day, with a time-lag of usually two years in the figures provided. In some cases a full century of statistics is available, using figures for the 1890s from T.A. Coghlan's earlier series, *A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia*. As has been widely discussed by criminologists, there are problems with every method of collecting crime statistics ever devised, if one's object is to reveal the *real* rate of crime. The great and outstanding virtue of the *Year Books* is that, for the statistics they have chosen, we have an uninterrupted series, without change of category, lasting seventy years; and the virtue of the statistics chosen for record is that they represent actual, not sample, figures, for crime outcomes which are actual, not suppositional – namely, charges and convictions within the criminal justice system. Their disadvantage is that they may represent a varying relationship with the numbers of crimes committed, depending as they do on the success of the police in bringing criminals to justice. Nevertheless, in the absence of a public perception, in that period, of complete inadequacy of the police force in this regard, we may take them as meaningful in overall patterns, if not in absolute terms.

This admirable record of continuity is rudely interrupted in the

1970s, when not only was the choice of statistic changed, from court to police records, but also the coverage of crimes represented was decimated. Since the 1980s there has been an improvement in coverage, though still not to the standards of clarity and detail of the first seventy years of the century, and the useful concept of stability of categorisation appears to have been entirely lost.

The problem for creating a complete series for the century lies, then, in the break created by the change from the court-based records of the first seventy years to the police-based records of the latter twenty-five. Fortunately we have a 'Rosetta Stone' to aid us, in a brief series of *Year Books* in the sixties, which offer the simultaneous presentation of both the old and the new formulations. The *Year Book* of 1965 (p.630) notes that a conference of Police Commissioners in 1963 recommended that a statistical collection of the incidence of selected categories of reported crimes derived from police records be introduced, and this duly appeared in the *Year Book* of 1966, providing figures for 1964. By 1971-72, the original form of reporting had been supplanted.

The fact that we have both court and police records for the decade of the sixties means that we can plot a complete series for the century which reveals trends in the crime rate in terms of these two sets of indicators, with an indication of their relationship (in magnitude) to one another. Interestingly, the break occurs at the point at which what had been generally a downward trend and then a stabilisation changed to an impressive and apparently accelerating rise. Were it not for the joint statistics of the sixties, it would be difficult to judge the point of initiation of the rise and the significance of its magnitude.

Crime convictions, rather than charges, have been used to create the series for the first seven decades. The *Year Books*, in the period of reporting convictions, provided breakdowns into categories of crime only for the 'higher' courts. These were divided into 'offences against the person' and 'offences against property'. Offences against the person are reported in the sub-categories of homicide, murder and attempted murder, rape and attempted rape, and other offences against the person (largely assault). Offences against property have sub-categories of robbery and various types of theft. For magistrates courts, however, only total convictions for 'serious crime' are reported, with no breakdown into categories. Serious crime comprises serious offences against the person, against property, against the currency, forgery and blackmail.

When reporting of crimes 'recorded by police' was instituted, they

were by definition those defined as total serious crime before that time, although new sub-categories of motor vehicle theft and manslaughter by driving were created for the motor car age, and a new category of serious drug crime (trafficking) was introduced in the seventies.

'Offences against the person' are crimes which today we would call violent crimes and which, in their serious forms, are always dealt with in the higher courts. Therefore in comparing rates for these crimes as convictions and as police records, we do not have to be concerned that the latter for the last three decades are artificially raised by the inclusion of offences which are dealt with in the magistrates courts and so would not appear in the higher courts' records.¹

This situation does not apply in the case of property crime. In order to gain a more reliable picture of on-going trends in crime other than violent crimes (which are still a small proportion of all crime) for the century, a data series based on 'total serious crime' was constructed. This used the figures for total serious crime in magistrates courts plus those in the serious crime category in the higher courts for the decades to the sixties, to create a series comparable with that of the crimes recorded by police from the sixties onwards.

Thus only serious crime against the person and property has been presented in the following tables and figures. All the components of serious crime are not necessarily the offences of greatest moment for civility in everyday life – for example, rates of drunkenness and marijuana use could be considered to impact more on general domestic health and happiness than do rates of theft. But significant changes have occurred in the definition of petty offences, particularly in the decriminalisation of drunkenness and vagrancy, which accounted for large proportions of convictions until the 1970s. Obviously, crime rates in early and recent decades will not be comparable if these are included for the early years. For the same reasons, two major categories of crime which have become prominent only in the last three decades have been withdrawn from the figures for those years – namely drug and motor traffic offences.

As noted, motor vehicle theft occurs as a new sub-category of offence in the 1970s, probably due to its first substantial appearance. Nevertheless it was not thought appropriate to exclude it, as it represents a subdivision of a persisting category, rather than a redesignation of the nature of crime. Resting merely on the occurrence of a new class of goods, its novelty is not essentially different from that of video or computer theft. It had its equivalent in the past as horse theft.

For reasons which will become clear later, it was also wished to create a set of uninterrupted crime rates for the century in the various categories of crime, using a consistent standard which avoids the magnitude of the break between convictions and police records. In creating a complete series, it appeared more sensible to rely on the stable original 70-year record and convert police reports to court figures, rather than accept the huge loss of information which a conversion in the opposite direction would entail. The duplicated Australian figures of the sixties, together with a comparison of NSW figures for convictions and police records of the eighties and nineties, indicate a diminishing proportion of convictions in relation to recorded crime as the decades unroll. Therefore, in order to provide a maximum of parity between the earlier actual, and the later estimated, convictions statistics, the ratio indicated by the earliest figures available, for 1964, was used for purposes of calculation (with the exception of all serious crime, for which the 1971/2 ratio was used). The percentages used, in the different categories of crime, for estimation of conviction equivalents from police records, are given in the table below:

Estimated Convictions at Higher Courts

	<i>% of reported crimes</i>
<i>crimes against the person</i>	
homicide (murder & manslaughter)	50
murder (& attempted murder)	30
rape (and attempted rape)	40
serious assault	14
all crimes against the person	20
<i>crimes against property</i>	
robbery	30
theft, break & enter etc (incl. motor vehicle)	10

Estimated Convictions at Higher and Magistrates Courts

total serious crime	60
(offences against the person, property, & currency, forgery & blackmail) ²	

Absolute numbers of crimes committed can be expected to rise with population, without this being a sign of loss of civic standards, and

therefore all figures are presented as rates of conviction per population unit. The unit chosen for rate calculation is per half million (500,000) people in the population. This was preferred to the more usual 10,000 or 100,000 population because of the low incidence of most crimes in the earlier decades of the century, which fall into decimal figures if these lower ratios are employed. With rate presentation of data, any rise or fall of crime incidence represents a real change in standards of civic behaviour. Data was collected at ten-year intervals, using the mid-decade *Year Book*, which usually reported crime figures for two years earlier, so that the statistics presented are predominantly for the third year of each decade.

This monograph does not attempt to review the findings of others studies of crimes rates and their correlates, nor to engage with on-going debate in the field of academic criminology. It confines itself to the presentation of an established set of Australian statistics, which have been gathered and recorded in accordance with the highest standards of demographic reporting by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and to their examination and analysis within their own terms of validity and reliability. Appendix I, however, presents a brief comparison with two previously published and similarly-based Australian data series.

Crimes against the Person

All violent crimes:

Figure 1 shows crime rates against the person – the combined figures for homicide, rape and attempted rape, and serious assault – as convictions and then police records, over a century, taken at decade intervals from 1894-1964 and from 1964-1993, respectively.³ Looking first at conviction for violent crime, it can be seen that crimes of violence decreased steadily during the first half of the century, reaching an all time low in 1943, in the middle of the Second World War, partly explainable as due to the removal of large numbers of young men from civilian life. But it remained lower in the fifties and sixties than for most of the century. Turning to police records, it can be seen that substantial rises in violent crime rates occurred during the decades of the sixties, seventies, and eighties, and this escalated in the decade to the nineties. Violent crime more than doubled between 1981/2 and 1993, and increased by a factor of seven, or 700% between 1964 and 1993, attesting to the accuracy of public perceptions of the growth in, and people's growing fear of, personal violence.

Figure 1A shows the century-long trend when police records are

Figure 1: Violent Crime 1894 - 1993

rate per 500,000 population

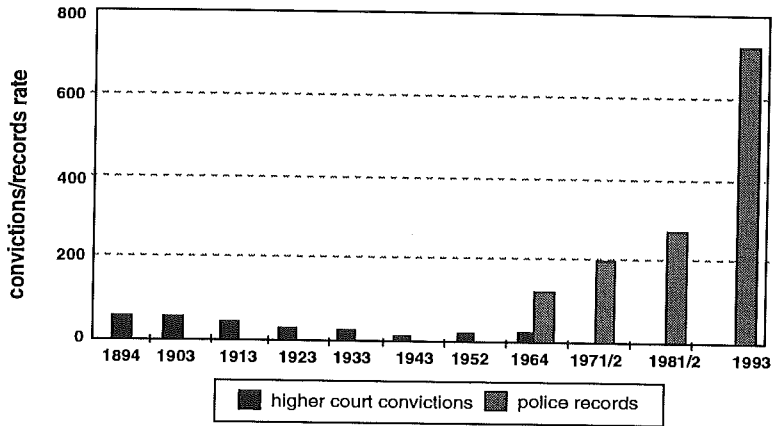


Figure 1A: Violent Crime 1894 - 1993

convictions in higher courts

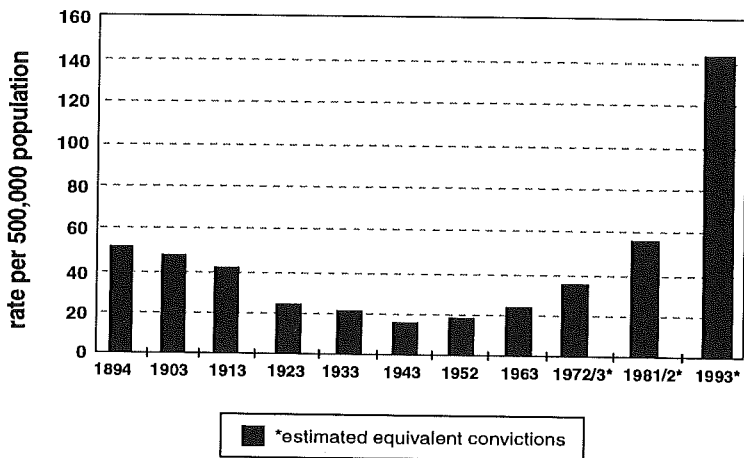


Figure 2: Homicide 1903 - 1993

rate per 500,000 population

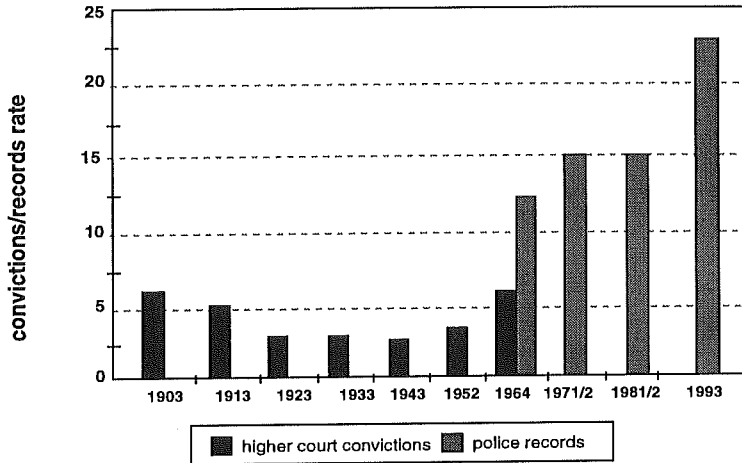
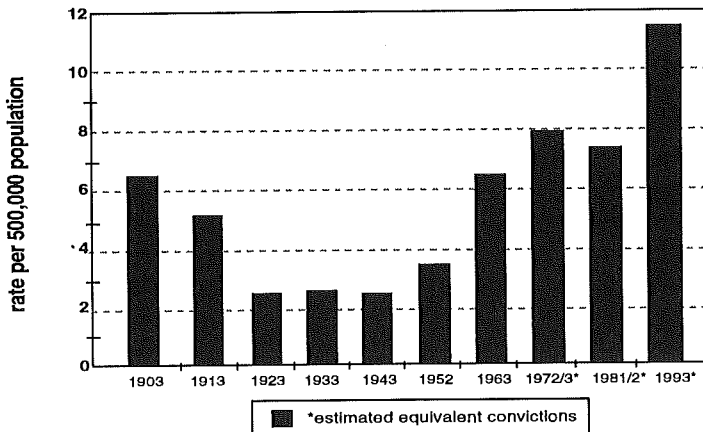


Figure 2A: Homicide 1903 - 1993

convictions in higher courts



converted into equivalent conviction rates (as explained earlier).

Homicide:

Figure 2 shows homicide conviction and police record rates from 1903-64 and from 1964-93, respectively. Homicide includes murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, and causing death by driving. It can be seen that the homicide rate, as measured by convictions, fell by half in the early middle to middle years of the century, compared with in the first two decades, reaching an all-time low in the Second World War, again due probably to the occupation of large numbers of young men elsewhere. By 1964, it had returned to turn of the century levels. Turning to police records, it rose substantially in the following decade, remained stable to the early eighties, but showed a large rise, by about half of the now higher rate, in the nineties. It nearly doubled between 1964 and 1993. Death caused by driving was a minor element in homicide before the sixties, due to low levels of car ownership. In 1993, crimes recorded by police show this category of homicide at about a sixth of murder and attempted murder, so the major part of the rise in the nineties cannot be attributed to this somewhat less culpable origin.

Figure 2A shows the century-long trends when police records are converted into equivalent conviction rates.

Figure 3: Murder and Attempted Murder 1903 - 1993

rate per 500,000 population

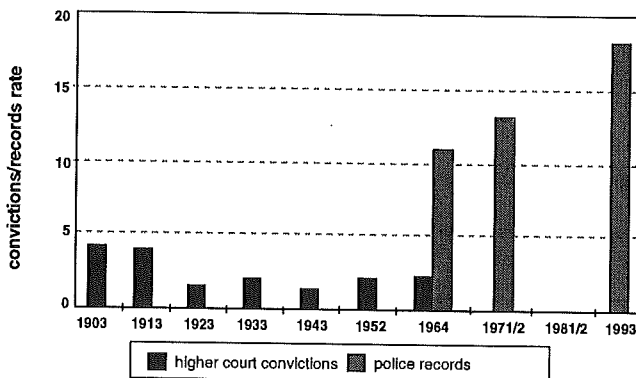


Figure 3A: Murder and Attempted Murder 1903 - 1993

convictions in higher courts

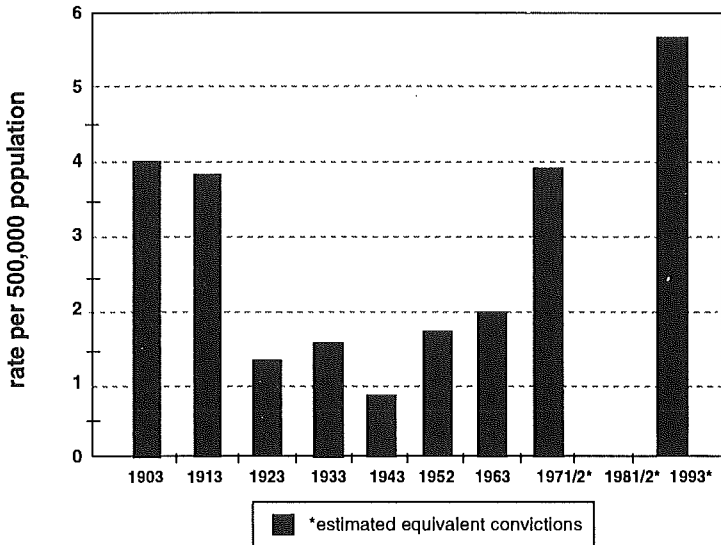
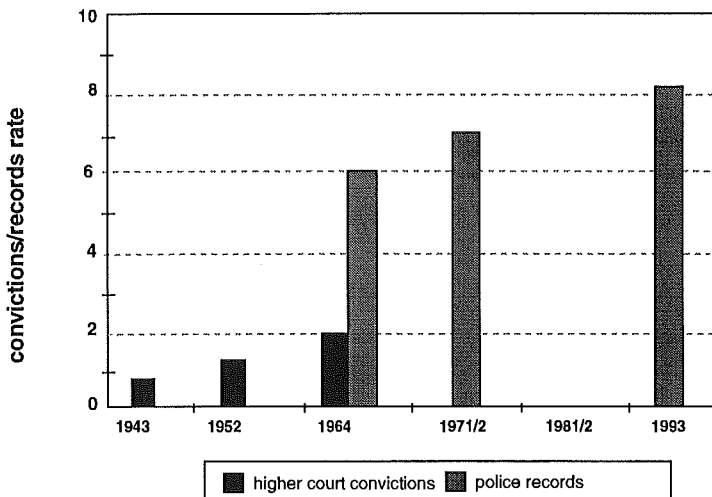


Figure 4: Murder 1943 - 1993

rate per 500,000 population



Murder:

Figure 3 shows murder plus attempted murder conviction and police record rates from 1903-64 and from 1964-93, respectively. The graph shows murder conviction rates as comparatively high in the first two decades of the century, with a halving in the middle decades and a rise again in 1964, although still only to half the level at the beginning of the century. The 1993 figure is well over a third higher than that for 1964. Murder was not distinguished from homicide in the *Year Books* providing figures for the early eighties, but a continuing rise from the middle of the century is suggested. However, it is also possible that, like homicide, there was a levelling in the eighties, making the rise in the nineties even more dramatic, and concerning.

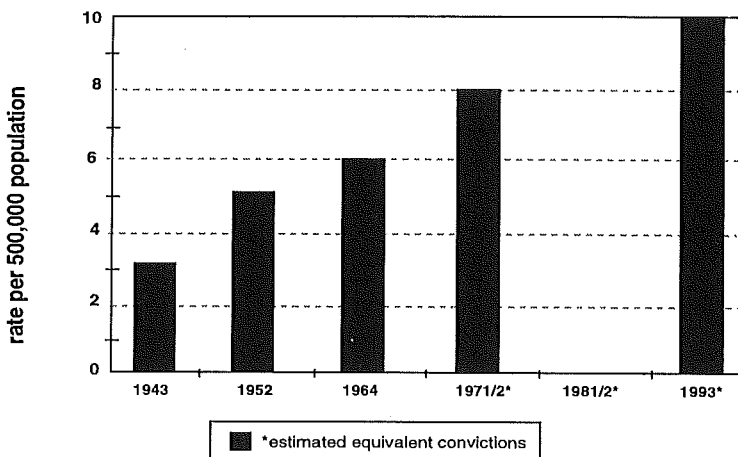
Figure 3A shows the century-long trend when police records are converted into equivalent convictions rates.

Only a limited set of statistics for murder separated from attempted murder is available and is presented in Figures 4 and 4A. Although the rise is not quite so extreme, the murder rate in 1993 is nevertheless more than a third higher than in 1964.

Rape:

Rape rates, also, show the now familiar U-shaped curve, with a marked

Figure 4A: Murder 1943 - 1993
convictions in higher courts



fall in conviction rates in the middle decades of the century (Figure 5). Rape fell precipitously to extraordinarily low levels in the twenties (with only nine convictions for rape and attempted rape in the whole of Australia in 1923), and remained almost non-existent to the fifties. There is no justification for arguing that this low rate reflects merely shame and denial of this crime, as the rate of convictions at the turn of the century was considerably higher, and sexual misdemeanour of all sorts had been at the forefront of controversy in the latter years of the now supposedly prudish nineteenth century. The slight rise in 1943, in the opposite direction from other crimes, can again be attributed to wartime conditions. The fall in the rape rate in the first half of the century may reflect the success of the Social Purity movement (see Jeffreys 1985), whose initial mission was to combat the high rate of prostitution and associated venereal disease of the nineteenth century, but which targeted, among other things, the 'myth' that the sex drive in men is uncontrollable.

The counter-reformation of the sexologists (such as Havelock Ellis, Marie Stokes, and Wilhelm Reich), which began hard on the heels of Social Purity in the 1890s, reached its apotheosis in the sixties when the substitute 'myth' took hold that the sex drive, whether male or female, *should not* be controlled. This may have contributed to the rise in rape in the sixties, seventies and eighties, as seen in the police

Figure 5: Rape and Attempted Rape 1903 - 1993

rate per 500,000 population

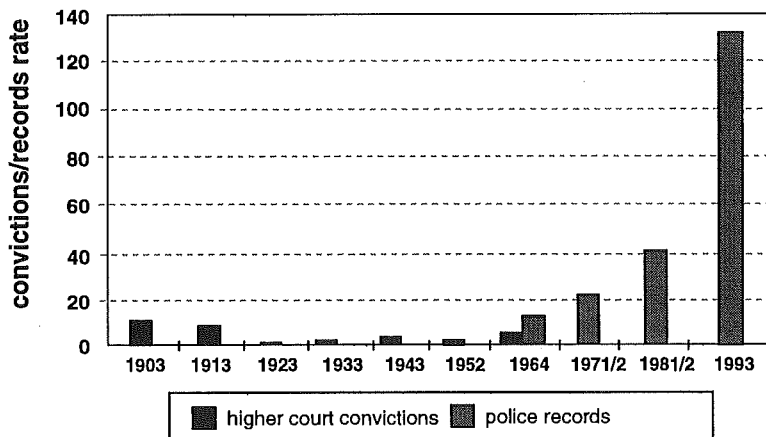
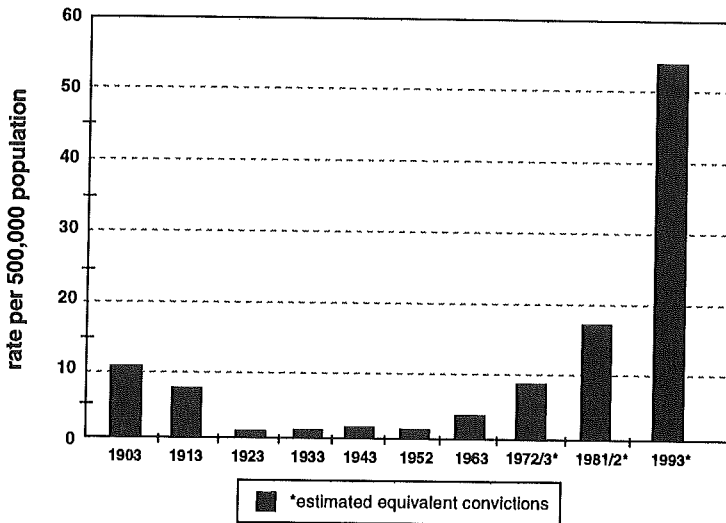


Figure 5A: Rape and Attempted Rape 1903 - 1993

convictions in higher courts



records, to levels probably similar to those at the beginning of the century, aided, probably, not so much by greater every day freedom of women (as the low rates of all crime of the previous four decades had allowed women of all ages a confident freedom of the streets and highways), as by a greater acceptance of male-female pairing in secluded and isolated locations, even as virtual strangers. The massive rise in rape between 1983 and 1993 requires further explanation, and will be returned to later. Between 1963 and 1993, rape rose by a factor of almost 14, or 1400%.

Figure 5A shows century-long trends when police records are converted to equivalent convictions.

Assault:

The assault rate has been somewhat higher than the rape rate throughout the century, and shows a fairly continuous fall to the forties, and thereafter first a slow and then a rapid rise (Figure 6). (By contrast rape showed a precipitous fall in the twenties, remaining at extremely low levels until the upward climb began in the seventies.) If the unusually low wartime level is excluded, it could be interpreted as showing a continuous fall through to the sixties. Convictions for assault

Figure 6: Assault 1903 -1993

rate per 500,000 population

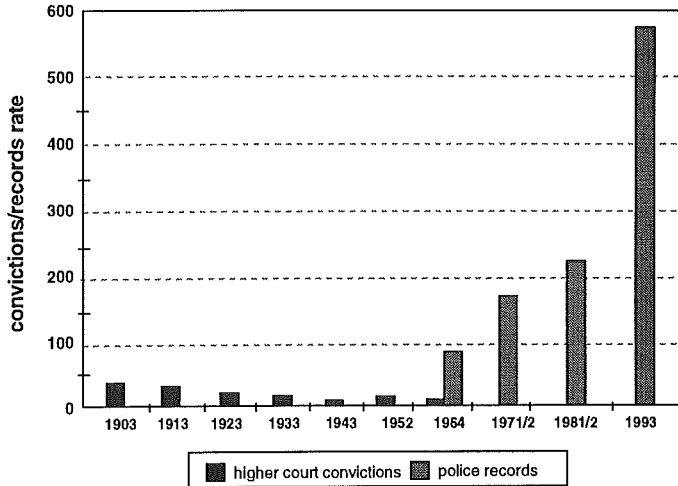
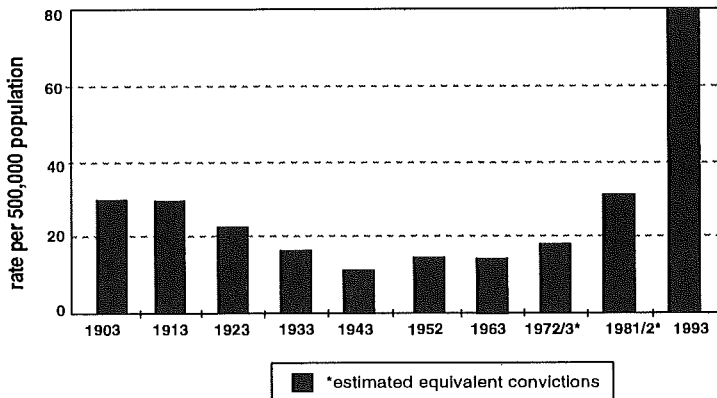


Figure 6A: Assault 1903 - 1993

convictions in higher courts



show a lesser fall than any other crime, and the rate in 1964 was only approximately half that in 1913, the highest earlier level. Police records show substantial rises across the decades of the sixties, seventies and eighties, and an escalation to 1993. The rate in 1993 was six times that in 1964, and more than double that in 1981/2.

Figure 6A shows the century-long trend when police records are converted to equivalent convictions.

Crimes against Property

Figure 7 shows crime rates against property over a century, as convictions in higher courts from 1894-1964⁴, and as police records from 1964-1993. The disparity between convictions and police records is much greater than for violent crime, at least partly because the former represent convictions only in the higher courts. Nevertheless the *rise* in property crime in the police records is real. Crime against property, primarily the various forms of theft, fell to its lowest level this century in the 1930s (the height of the Great Depression!) and the 1940s (the middle of the Second World War). Each of the last three decades has seen substantial rises. It more than doubled between 1964 and 1971/2, and the rate in 1993 was about four times that in 1964.

Motor vehicle theft in 1973 represented 27.1% of property crime,

Figure 7: Crimes against Property 1894 - 1993

rate per 500,000 population

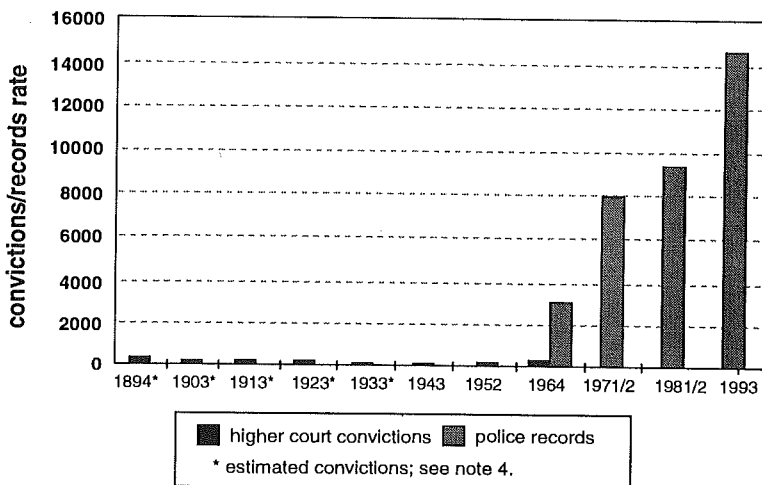


Figure 7A: Crimes against Property 1894 - 1993

convictions in higher courts

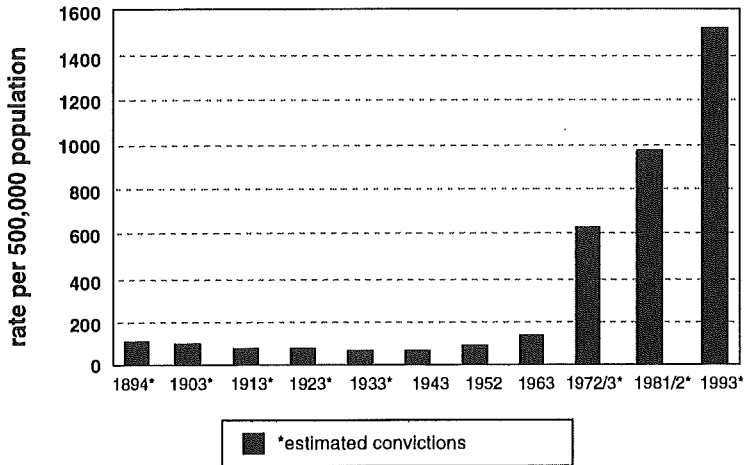
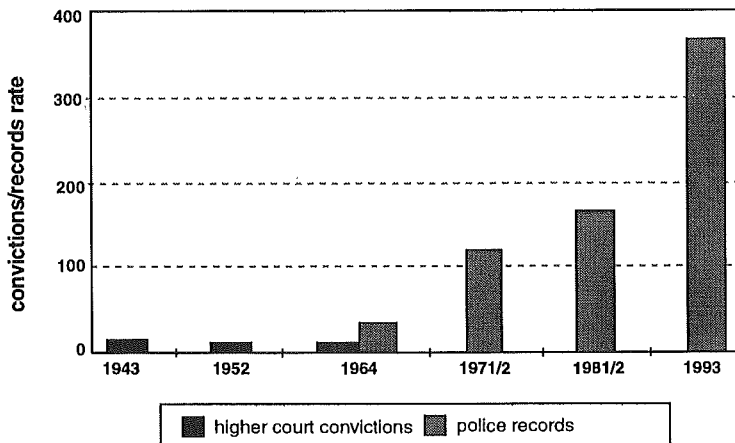


Figure 8: Robbery 1943 - 1993

rate per 500,000 convictions



and in 1993, 22.3%. Thus it cannot be held individually accountable for the rise in property crime over these decades. The rise in motor vehicle theft was rather less than that for all property crime.

Figure 7A shows the century-long trend when police records are converted into equivalent conviction rates (as described earlier).

Robbery:

Robbery is theft from a person by force or the threat of force, and thus might also be considered a crime of violence. Figures for robbery rates as a sub-category of offences against property are available only from 1943. Figure 8 shows convictions from 1943 to 1964, and police records from 1964 to 1993. While robbery rates remained very stable to the early sixties, they have risen dramatically in succeeding decades. Robbery more than quadrupled between 1964 and 1971/2, and increased by a factor of 14 between 1964 and 1993. Like violent crime, it has shown a particularly large increase in the last decade.

Figure 8A shows the equivalent trend when police records are converted into conviction rates.

Total Serious Crime:

The composition of the figures for serious crime has already been described. It includes all convictions for serious crime in magistrates and higher courts from 1894 to 1964, and all serious crime recorded by

Figure 8A: Robbery 1894 - 1993

convictions in higher courts

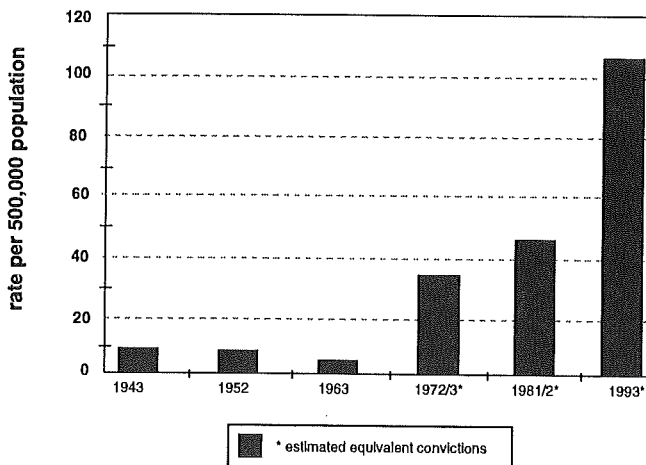


Figure 9: Serious Crime 1894 - 1993

rate per 500,000 convictions

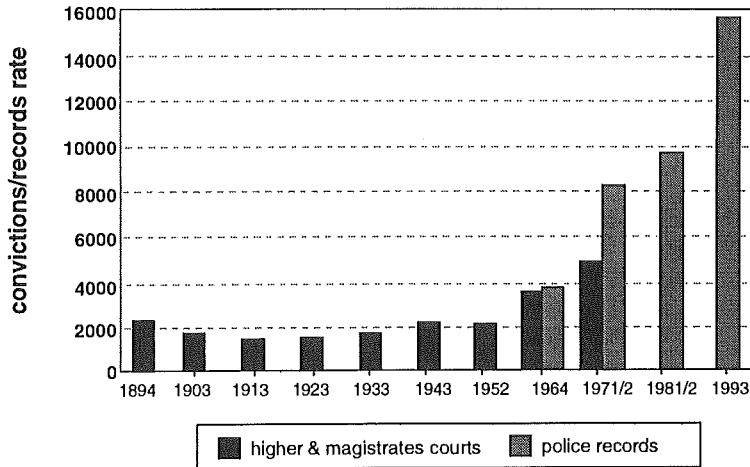
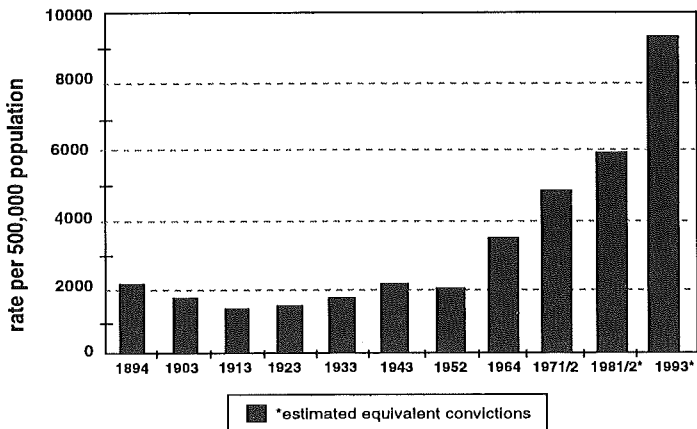


Figure 9A: Serious Crime 1894 - 1993

convictions - higher and magistrates courts



police from 1964 to 1993. In Figure 9 it can be seen that serious crime rates fell fairly steadily from 1894 to 1913, then rose to re-attain 1894 levels in 1943 and 1952. Thereafter the rise is considerable in both convictions and police records, with the rate in 1971/2 twice that at the beginning of the century, and that in 1993 four times that in 1964.

Figure 9A shows the century-long trend when police records are converted to equivalent conviction rates.

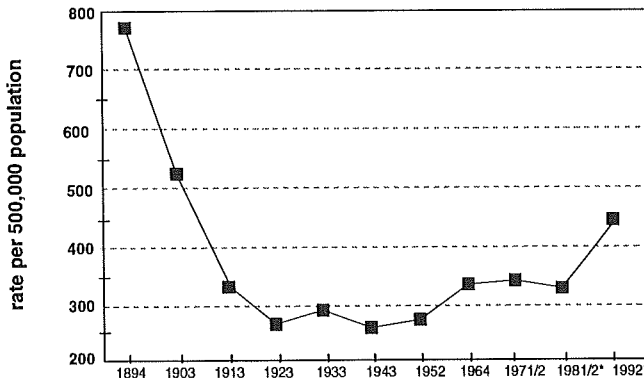
The profile for all serious crime should be considered largely that of crimes against property, as crimes against the person (violent crimes) are at a sufficiently lower rate not to greatly affect the composite profile. The difference between the serious crime and the property and violent crime conviction trends, with a slow rise beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, rather than in the 1950s and 1960s, suggests that lesser forms of serious crime, handled in the magistrate's courts, began to rise in incidence earlier than did the more serious crimes which reach the higher courts, which remained low until the 1960s.

Prisoners and Police

Imprisonment:

Because of changes in sentencing policy, the numbers of prisoners in gaol in a particular year is generally considered to be not so much an indication of crime rates as of theories of crime prevention. Figure 10 shows the imprisonment rate in Australia – that is, the number of

Figure 10: Prisoners at Mid-Year 1894 - 1992

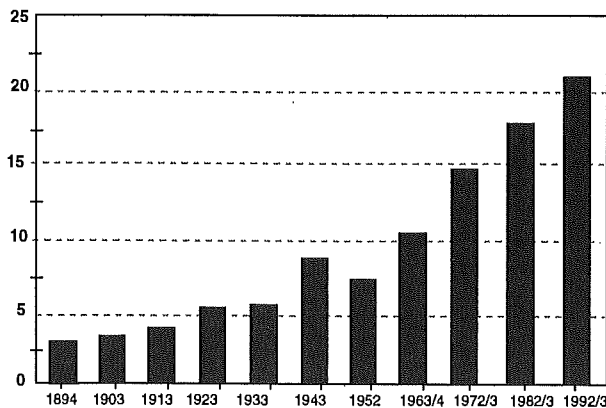


prisoners at mid-year per half million population – from 1894 to 1992. It shows the familiar U-shaped curve of our crime rates, with the difference that the highest rate of imprisonment for the century occurs at the beginning of the time-span (when crime rates were considerably lower than today), with a rapid fall to levels roughly only a third as high between 1913 and 1952, and thereafter a slow rise with a slight decline between 1971/2 and 1981/2, to reach a level something over half that at the beginning of the century, in 1992.

It is evident, then, that rates of imprisonment have not kept pace with increases in the crime rate. This is best exemplified by looking at ratios of prisoners to convictions (and estimated equivalent convictions). Figure 11 shows the ratios of total serious crime convictions to prisoners from 1894 to 1992/3. The number of serious crimes per prisoner rose slowly from 3 in 1894 to 7.5 in 1952. This means that fewer convictions were being punished by imprisonment and/or prison sentences were shorter, over the period, which may be in order given the earlier suggestion that a higher percentage of convictions were for less serious crimes. From 1963/4, the ratio rose more rapidly, despite the fact that this is the period of marked rise of violent and property crime convictions in the higher courts, that is, of more serious crime. Imposition of imprisonment was seven times lower in 1992/3 than in 1894.

Because crime conviction rates for the last two decades have had

Figure 11: Imprisonment for Serious Crime 1894 - 1992/3
convictions:prisoner ratios

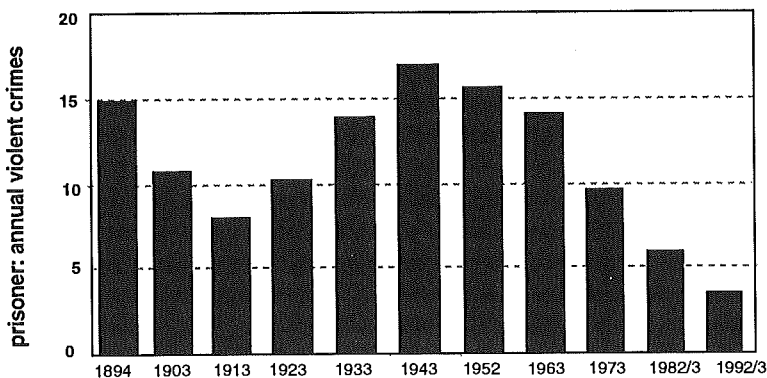


to be estimated, it is impossible to tell whether the fall in imprisonment rates represents greater leniency in judges or increased inability of police to catch culprits and obtain convictions. Nevertheless, this relationship of crime rates to imprisonment does not, at face, support the 'expert' wisdom that punishment via imprisonment is not effective in reducing crime, which is maintained despite the truism that crime diminishes with advancing age: the majority of prisoners are persistently between the ages of 20 and 34 (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics *Records*) so that the majority of those who are imprisoned when young must later desist from crime. Falling rates of imprisonment have been accompanied by rising rates of crime of exponential degree. While this *may* not mean that reduced rates of imprisonment have caused (at least partially) increased rates of crime, it flies in the face of the statistical evidence to continue to maintain that imprisonment is neutral or counterproductive as regards the control of crime.

Imprisonment for violent crime is probably of greater concern to the public than imprisonment for crimes against property. If imprisonment rates per violent crime have remained steady, while those for property crime fell, this would be some indication of a continuing commitment by the forces of law to protect the public from sources of personal harm. The ratio of prisoners to violent crimes (regardless of prisoner offence – a breakdown of this nature is not given in the *Year Books*) is shown in Figure 12. The ratios indicate a fall from 15 prisoners per violent crime committed in 1894 to about three in 1992/3; that is,

Figure 12: Imprisonment for Violent Crime 1894 - 1992/3

prisoner:conviction ratios



of about 15 person years of imprisonment occurring per violent crime committed in 1894 to an average of about three in 1993, and suggesting a lesser occurrence of the longer sentences generally felt to be necessary for violent crimes (*not* the average length of sentence per violent crime, since imprisonment for non-violent crime had to be included in the ratio). We can perhaps find some reassurance in the fact that the number of violent crimes does not yet outstrip the number of prisoners (145 violent crimes and 445 prisoners per half million population in 1992/3), although there has been a strong movement in that direction since 1983, the period in which violent crimes have increased dramatically. As with total serious crimes, we cannot be sure how much of this change is due to leniency in sentencing and how much to lower conviction rates, but it is unlikely to be entirely the latter. The effect, as regards failure of deterrence and of protection of the public, is likely to be much the same in either case.

Correlations between prisoner numbers and both serious crime and violent crime (against the person) were calculated. The correlation

Correlation is a statistical test which measures whether variations (rises and falls) in one set of events (or factor) are matched in a regular fashion by variations in another set of events (or factor). If a match occurs, this means that changes in the one set of events may be causing the changes in the other. It is also possible, however, that a third factor, rising or falling, is causing the rises and falls in both the measured factors. So while finding a good correlation between two measures allows that they may be causally related, it does not definitely establish that one causes the other. Nevertheless, it does indicate that they are related to one another in some web of causality.

A positive correlation means that both factors rise or fall together, while a negative correlation means that as one factor rises the other falls, but this does not affect the causal relationship. A low or absent correlation means that they are unlikely to be causally related to any major degree. Anything less than .3 or -.3 is considered a low correlation, while .8 or -.8 is very high.

Significance, in the statistical sense, means that a sufficiently strong relationship between two measures or events has been found, for statisticians to agree that it is very unlikely to have occurred by chance, so that causality can be inferred. Significance at the .05 level is regarded as a safe indication of a real relationship, at the .01 level as very safe, and .001 even better. This is expressed as significant at the .05 level or $p < .05$, et cetera.

between the number of serious crimes and the number of prisoners, at 0.07, is virtually non-existent and is obviously non-significant. That between violent crime and prisoners, at 0.38, is higher, but is still non-significant, so that the expert view that imprisonment rates do not reflect crime rates is supported. The hypothesis that the lack of relationship is caused primarily by policy variations is, however, not necessarily thereby confirmed.

When the serious-crime:prisoner ratios and violent-crime:prisoner ratios are plotted against serious crime and violent crime rates respectively, we find very close patterns of change (see Figures 13 and 14), with high correlations, 0.94 and 0.96 respectively, which are highly significant beyond the .001 level. These figures indicate that as the crime rate has gone up, the rate of imprisonment has gone down (indicated by *rising* ratio) in a very consistent manner. This may indicate, then, that criminological opinion is wrong, and that crime increases when incarceration rates are low.

Alternatively, the causal impact may be in the reverse direction, and the correlations may simply reflect diminishing availability of prison places; that is, that prisons have not been constructed to match the rising rates of crime. This is in keeping with a newspaper report, of late 1995, of magistrates' complaints that 'convicted criminals are escaping detention because there is not room for them in NSW jails' (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 17 December 1995: 1).

Figure 13: Deterrence 1894 - 1992/3

imprisonment ratios and serious crime

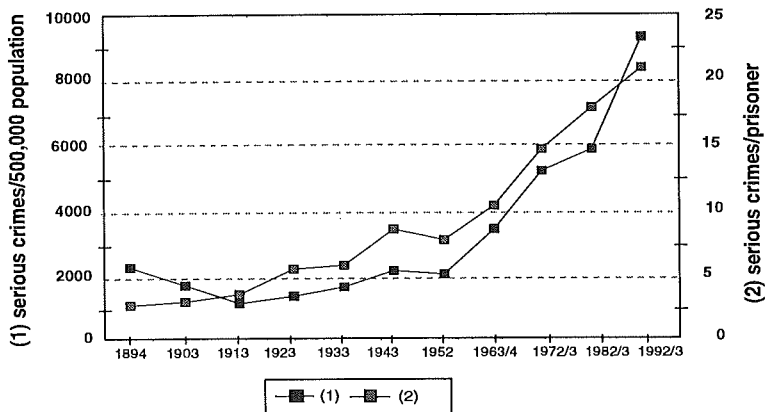
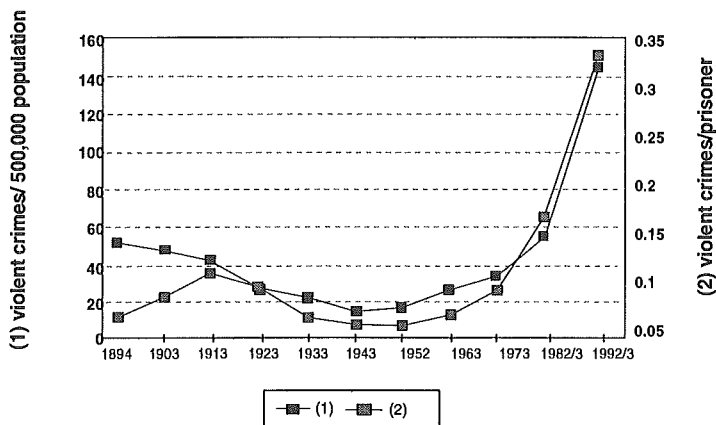


Figure 14: Deterrence 1894 - 1992/3

imprisonment ratios and violent crime



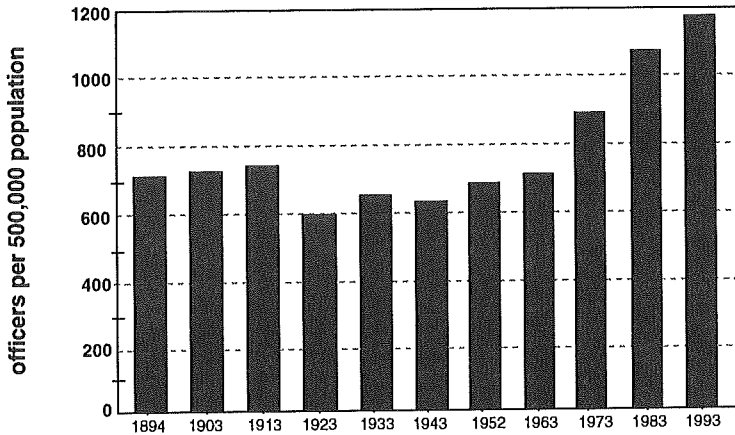
A complex interaction of events and ideology is also possible, whereby the belief that imprisonment does not reduce crime has resulted in both lenient sentences and failure to construct prisons, at a time when the crime rate began to rise for other reasons, so that lack of punishment exacerbated the already rising crime rate. It certainly does not appear that policy variation was a major factor.

Police:

The innovation explicit in Robert Peel's police force, which replaced such local instruments of the law as the Bow Street Runners in London in early nineteenth century Britain, was prevention of crime by surveillance before the event, rather than detection and punishment afterwards. The ubiquity of police stations and police officers on the beat was an essential part of this strategy. An obvious requirement for successful prevention via surveillance is an adequate proportion of policemen, not only to terrain and population, but also to the potential and actual incidence of crime for the place and period.

The *Year Books* provide figures of the number of police officers in Australia, and of the ratio of police to population in terms of persons in the population per police officer. If crime rates are stable, this is an appropriate means of monitoring how well the police force is being maintained, but if crime rates increase markedly, so will police duties

Figure 15: Police:Population Ratios 1894 - 1993



in terms of detection and the processes of conviction, leaving less time for preventative surveillance. What is an adequate police force in conditions of low crime rates becomes quite inadequate in conditions of escalating crime.

Figure 15 transforms the *Year Book* figures of police numbers from 1894 to 1993 into our selected format of rate per half million population. Bearing in mind our knowledge of the fall in crime rates in the first half of the century, followed by a rise in the second, one can see that, as logic would demand, there is generally a fall in the ratio of police to population in the first part of the century, followed by a rise in the second half, which escalates from 1963 in apparent keeping with the escalation in serious crime rates in the same period. The number of police officers per 500,000 population in 1993, 1,183, is double the lowest rate of 597 in 1923.

Nevertheless, these figures give us no real idea of how appropriate the rise in officer numbers is to the rise in the crime rate, in terms of leaving adequate time for prevention. Time spent on each crime committed, in terms of follow-up, means time withdrawn from surveillance duties. In particular, we can assume that each crime conviction represents a large amount of officer worktime. In Figures 16 and 17, officer numbers are presented as ratios, not to population, but to total serious crime convictions (and estimated equivalent convictions) and to convictions for violent crime. These figures demonstrate that the rise

Figure 16: Police:Crime Ratios 1894 - 1993

officers/conviction for serious crime

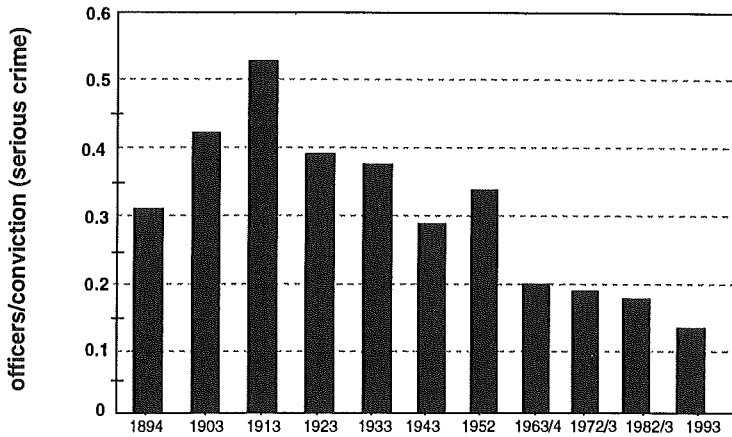
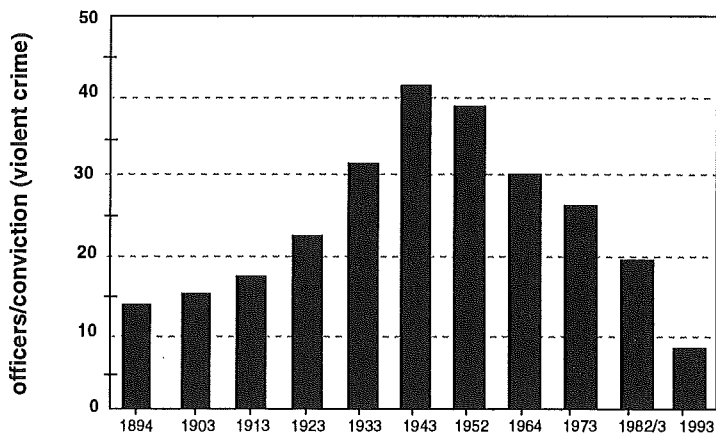


Figure 17: Police:Crime Ratios 1894 - 1993

officers/conviction for violent crime



in ratio of officers to population has completely failed to compensate for the rise in crime rates of recent decades.

There is a rise in police:serious-crime ratios to 1913, coinciding with (and perhaps achieving) the fall in all serious crime over that period, followed by a fall to turn of the century levels by 1952, in parallel with the concurrent rise in serious crime rate. Thereafter the ratio escalates downwards. Similarly, the ratio of officers to violent crimes rose as violent crime rates fell to mid-century, then fell in the period of increasing violent crime, with the ratio finally falling below that at the turn of the century in the decade of sudden rise of violent crime. The correlation between the ratio of officers to serious crime and serious crime rate is both high and negative (-0.83 , $p < .001$) – the lower the number of officers per serious crime, the higher the serious crime rate.

Although these changes in ratio are, at the statistical level, a function of changes in the crime rate, they are also, in the real world, an indication of an inadequacy of police numbers to handle the job which confronts them, which, in turn, on the basis of the economics of crime, will predispose society to increase its crime rates as time goes on.

Secondary Defences against Crime

In terms of the secondary defences against crime provided by our police and justice systems, what can be identified as possible, or likely, contributory factors to the last three decades' escalation of crime? These can be divided into *prevention* and *punishment*, although the latter is intended to, and no doubt does, contribute to the former.

In terms of the 'removal from opportunity' aspect, our figures have shown that, of the minority of offenders who are actually convicted, far fewer are today put out of harm's way, in prison, for any length of time, thus multiplying the opportunities for repeated offending. The deterrent effect of likelihood of conviction is also diminished, with a 26.5% chance (NSW) of conviction for homicide in 1993 compared with a 48.5% chance (Australia) in 1964, an 11.5% chance for sexual assault in 1993 compared with 39.5% for rape in 1964, and 10.5% for crimes against property in 1993, compared with 32% for robbery in 1964 (theft-in-general figures not being available from both courts in 1964). Conviction rates for *murder* have not fallen greatly, with 31.5% in 1964 and 26.5% in 1993, so perhaps we see evidence of the preventative role of successful detection in the fact that murder rates have remained more stable than any other

Thus the conditions to support increased crime by making it more profitable, according to the economic theory of crime (Buchanan and Hartley 1992), have indeed occurred. But there is no real evidence that these conditions precipitated the crime rise in the first place, for there was no fall in the imprisonment rates, nor in police officer:population ratios, prior to the large rises in crime rates – rather the reverse. The time series evidence suggests, rather, that falls in the proportional incidence and severity of punishment by imprisonment have followed, rather than instigated, changes in the crime rate. The rise of punishment-free crime accompanies rather than precedes the rising crime rate. But if these falls in conviction likelihood and severity of punishment did not cause the rises in the first place, it is possible that they have exacerbated them. Once set in train, this process can be expected to encourage crime exponentially.

It is also possible that the continuing rise in crime is, to a major degree, owing to reasons quite other than the economics of punishment – that is, its continuation, like its initiation, is in response to other, primary, causes which we will go into later. But there is another factor of secondary prevention which is more favourably placed, temporally, than punishment, as a possible causal influence – the role of surveillance.

As I have already pointed out, the capacity of the police to engage in preventative surveillance has inevitably been hampered, if not virtually removed, by the exponential rise in the crime rate, which has not been even moderately matched by a rise in police force numbers. In effect, we have lost Robert Peel's reforms. We no longer have a police force, but rather a modern day version of the Bow Street Runners, ineffectually mopping up after crime rather than preventing it (except in the high-profile area of speed and drink-driving offences which we have not dealt with here, but where the surveillance approach seems to have been comparatively successful).

I would like to suggest four factors which may have contributed to the breakdown in preventative surveillance, which partially pre-dated, and in any case operate outside, the vicious circle of increasing crime and inadequate resources for surveillance, which latter appears likely to be *the* major factor in the breakdown of secondary methods of crime control in Australia. Some, perhaps all, were themselves a response to four decades of low crime rates.

First, and this has been remarked by other commentators, was the withdrawal of the police from visibility and ubiquitousness in the streets and public places – from the beat and from traffic duty – due to

the increasing substitution of car patrols and traffic lights. Both these transformations were largely accomplished in the course of the nineteen sixties. In the fifties it was still sensible to advise a stranger or child, if in difficulties, to ask a policeman. One could expect to find a policeman always to hand. Today the police are absent or inaccessible, and by the same token their function of surveillance is withdrawn.

Second was the rise in the percentage of police business devoted to traffic offences, as a result of the huge increase in motor vehicle use and ownership. This both removed their attention from other types of surveillance and necessitated their movement into cars of their own (and thus is related to the first cause). This large switch of attention, from stationary to moving property, was no doubt facilitated by the low rates of violent and property crime for four decades.

Third, also arising from the prevalence of honesty, was the lowering of levels of protection of property which resulted from it. The prevalence of honesty contributed to changes in the modes of operation of business and public utilities. Where previously goods had mostly been kept safely behind counters, now they were put on eye-catching display, readily accessible to the passing hand. Where before there was an integrated system of ticket issue, inspection, collection and design of facilities for use of public transport, key aspects of monitoring were allowed to lapse. The close interdependence of honesty and surveillance was overlooked, and as the latter was suspended, the former went into rapid decline. Shops have responded with new methods of detection of theft, rather than a return to the old system of initial protection of goods, while public transport is returning to its old methods of assuring payment for services. But in the meantime a generation has learned habits of dishonesty which transfer to other fields which, themselves, have often dropped their defences. This escalation of habitual petty crime also absorbs police attention and reduces the time available for more general surveillance.

A fourth factor which, I would like to suggest, has been crucially significant in undermining the effectiveness of police surveillance in crime prevention, was the withdrawal of the various prohibitions against vagrancy, loitering, disorderly conduct and so on in most states in the middle to latter 1970s. It is much more difficult for police to be on the spot just at the point in time at which a crime is committed than it is to observe and intercept the more long-drawn-out preludes to acts of crime. When the prerogative of police to reduce the *opportunity* for crime was effectively withdrawn by these 'reforms', general surveillance as a preventative measure against crime became largely inoper-

able. A policeman on every corner would not be enough when prevention must wait for the event to occur.

This section has identified a number of factors which could scarcely fail to contribute to decreased effectiveness of our secondary defences against crime. Central is the loss of surveillance as a preventative measure which, it is hypothesised, has both instigated, resulted from, and facilitated our escalating crime rates. Whatever one's doubts about such causal relationships, it is an inescapable fact that the ratio of police officers to crime rate is now so inadequate as to make an effective preventative role for the police virtually impossible.

Primary Defences against Crime

I began by suggesting that the primary defence against crime in a society is the successful imbuelement of its citizens with the terms and values of the social contract which supports that society's being and functioning. The commentator in the 1923 *Year Book* suggested that the fall in crime rates since the beginning of the century had been due to both social factors and deterrence: improved social conditions, increased education of citizens, improved penological methods such as assistance to prisoners after release, the introduction of the fingerprint system which increased the likelihood of conviction, and the introduction of the habitual prisoners system with longer sentences for repeated offenders. Thus among the suggested factors were matters of detection and punishment which I have touched on in the previous section, and also cited were the more primary factors of education and social conditions. In the longer term, we can see that these particular primary factors have not been of enduring importance in producing lower crime rates.

In the last three decades, we have seen increasing retention of children and youth in higher secondary and tertiary education, while the crime rate has risen sharply. If education is to be considered a factor, clearly we must look at its contents and the nature of the experience, rather than at just the fact of institutional attachment. Social conditions have also improved during the period of increasing crime, if viewed in any sort of material terms, such as possession of consumer goods and clothing, and quality of housing, and also health (there have been significant improvements in life expectancy and infant mortality in the period, for example). Bearing in mind the concept of crime as a breaking of the social contract, it is to the more cultural of the social conditions – such as family and cultural stability – that it seems sensible

to turn, if we wish to relate crime to social factors.

But first we should look, with our century long series, at two demographic factors which are commonly cited as possibly accounting for changes in overall crime rates, age and sex; and at an economic factor, unemployment, which has been examined time and again, without success, as the primary cause of fluctuation in crime rates. All these have been invoked to deny the reality of 'apparent' rises in crime. Because higher crime rates are associated with younger age and male sex (young men are said to account for two thirds of crimes but only one sixth of the population: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics 1995), it is reasonable to suggest that rises or falls in the crime rate may result from greater or lesser representation in the population of the more crime-prone groups.

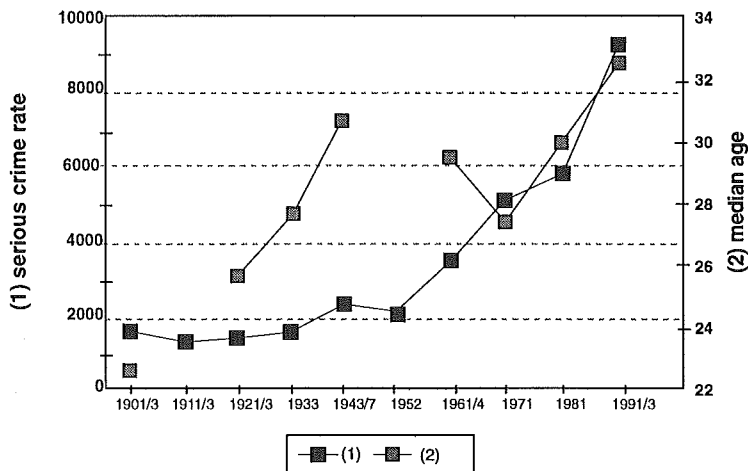
For the purposes of these correlations, the estimates of crime conviction rates for the last three decades of the century, which were calculated to complete the series for earlier decades, are employed. Correlations are calculated for the time series on all violent crime, as convictions in the higher courts, and on all serious crime, as defined earlier, as convictions in both magistrates and higher courts.

Age:

Figures 18 and 19 plot the median age of the Australian population

Figure 18: Age and Serious Crime 1901/3 - 1991/3

median age of population



against serious crime rates and violent crime rates, respectively. At the beginning of the century, the median age of Australians was only 22. This rose to just over 30 in the 1940s, falling again to 27 in the early 70s, but rising thereafter to reach an all-time high of 33 in the early 1990s.

If we were to terminate our series in the early 1970s, it would be possible to maintain a thesis that young age of the population is an important factor in crime rates, and indeed the rise in average age may have been a factor in the fall of crime over this period. But from the seventies to the nineties we have both increasing age of the population and an increase in crime rates, so younger age representation cannot be considered to account in any way for the massive increases in crime of the last two decades. Correlations carried out on the data confirm that age is not a significant factor in varying crime rates across the century. The correlation with serious crime is 0.67 and with violent crime, 0.57, both of which are non-significant. (Although they appear high correlations, for most contexts, the relatively few data points militate against their significance.)

A possibly better gauge of the effect of age representation in the population on crime is the proportion of the population in the age range 15 to 25. Unfortunately this is not available for the century in the *Year Books*, but an approximation to it can be made by using the figures for the proportion of the population aged less than 15 matched

Figure 19: Age and Violent Crime 1901/3 - 1991/3

median age of population

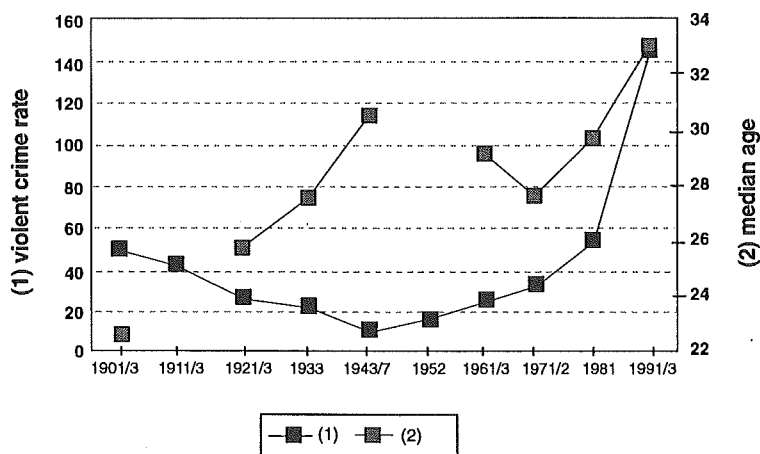


Figure 20: Age and Serious Crime 1901/3 - 1991/3

proportion of population aged 10 - 25

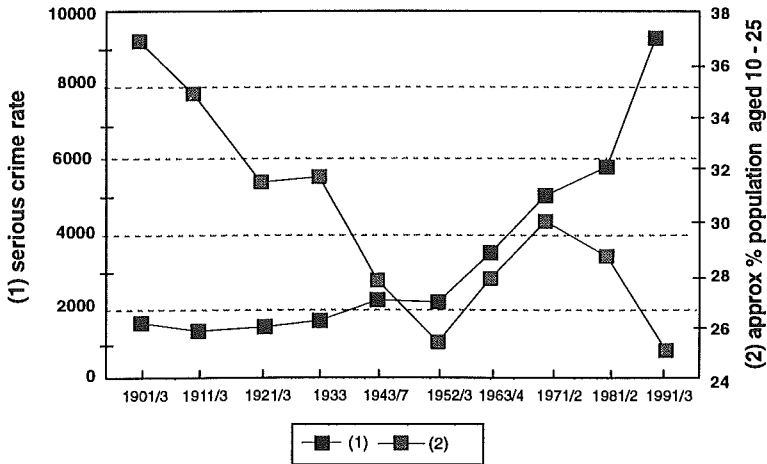
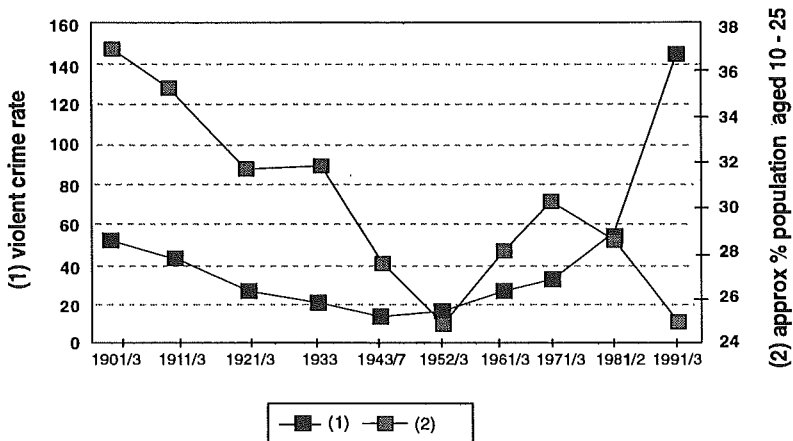


Figure 21: Age and Violent Crime 1901/3 - 1991/3

proportion of population aged 10 - 25



with the crime rate a decade later, thus giving a reasonable estimate of the proportion of the population aged 10-25 in that decade. The approximate percentage of the population aged 10 to 25 is plotted against all serious crime and violent crime in Figures 20 and 21, respectively. The pattern is similar to that for median age, with a switch from a positive to a negative relationship in the last two decades of the time period. The former produces a correlation of -0.55 and the latter, one of -0.24 – both non-significant and, if they were significant, in the wrong direction of indicating higher crime rates associated with lower numbers in the 10-25 age range.

In both cases, the reversal of relationship suggests that some quite new factor or factors have come into play in the last two decades, entirely masking the usual association between younger age of the population and higher rates of crime. Thus recent rises in the crime rate cannot be attributed to the age factor – indeed it would predict quite the reverse of the observed rise.

Sex:

Figures 22 and 23 plot the percentage of the population of female sex against serious and violent crime rates. If the higher rates of crime in recent years were the result of a change in the balance of the sexes, one would expect a fall in the percentage of females in the population in the last three decades. Instead, the opposite is the case. The percentage of females in the population fell somewhat in the decade following World War II, but has risen steadily since then, throughout the period of escalating crime rates. The correlations obtained with serious and violent crime, 0.53 and 0.11, respectively, are non-significant.

Unemployment:

The most persistent, and persistently unsuccessful, hypothesis proposed in order to relate crime to social conditions is the socioeconomic thesis that crime is caused by unemployment. This ostensibly plausible thesis is founded on the supposition that crime is fundamentally motivated by the need for material goods. Crime against the person as well as crime against property can be largely drawn into this explanatory hypothesis. Although some minor correlations have been identified for sub-sets of data, the larger picture across time and nation is, however, that crime and unemployment rates are largely independent. Our own data shows an impressive lack of relationship between the two in Australia, over the period 1903/7 to 1993.

Figures 24 and 25, which plot total serious crime and violent crime, respectively, against unemployment rates, show large fluctuations in both crime and unemployment, each quite independently of the other.

Figure 22: Sex and Serious Crime 1891/4 - 1993

% female

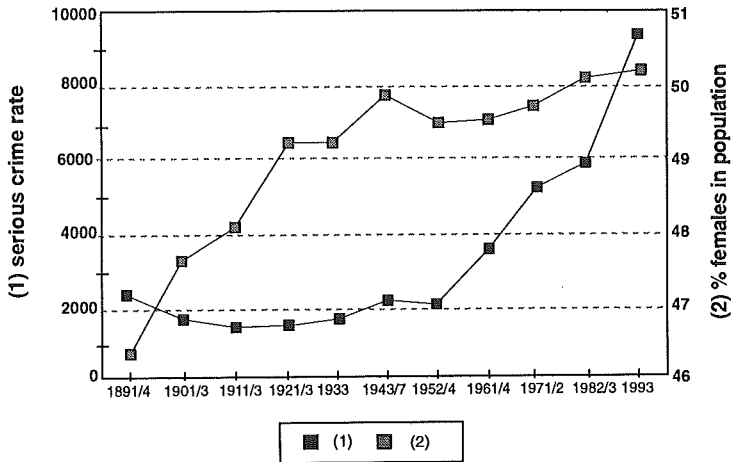


Figure 23: Sex and Violent Crime 1891/4 - 1993

% female

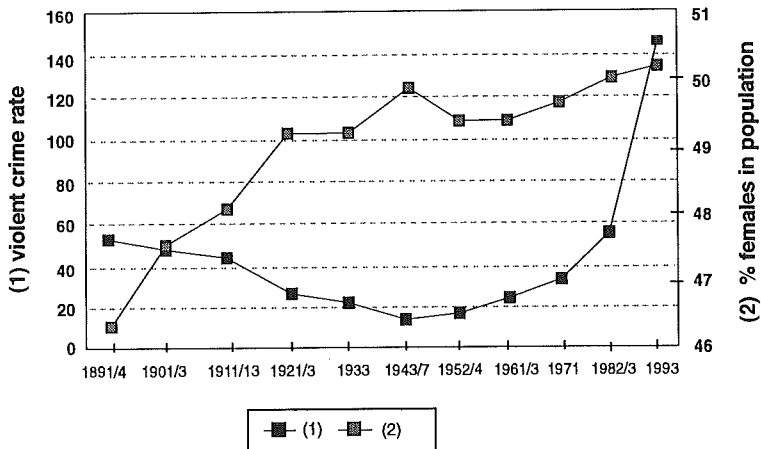


Figure 24: Unemployment and Serious Crime 1903/7 - 1993

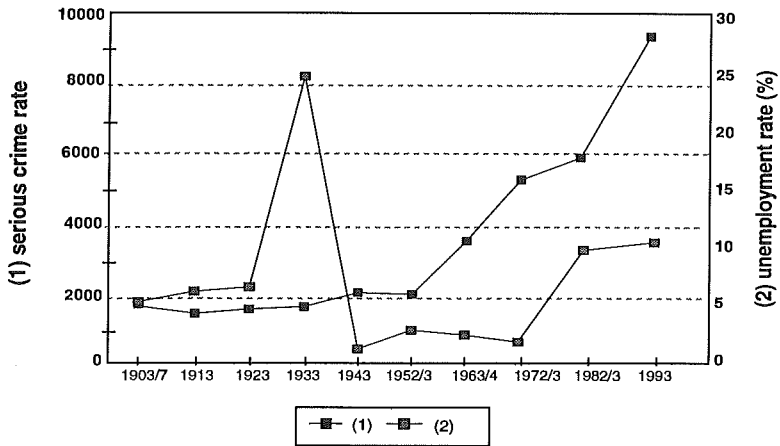
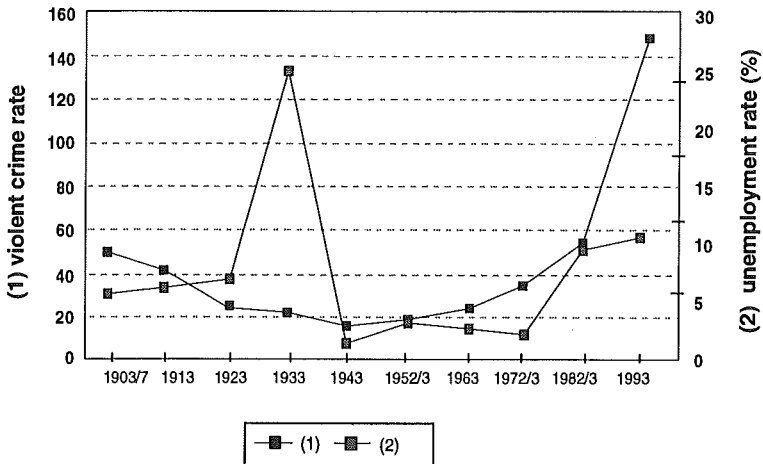


Figure 25: Unemployment and Violent Crime 1903/7 - 1993



The lack of association is confirmed by correlation coefficients of -0.1 and 0.002, respectively, which amount to the non-existent. The lack of relationship of crime rate to unemployment can be taken, perhaps, as negative evidence for the role, in controlling crime, of socialisation in, or embuement with, the obligations of the social contract. Commitment to the social contract can survive immediate adverse circumstances, such as the loss of material welfare associated with unemployment, at least in the shorter term of a part of a decade. In 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, we have the lowest rate, in our series, of convictions in the higher courts for crime against property, and convictions for all serious crimes did not depart markedly from the pattern of low serious crime for the whole period from 1903 to 1953.

Unemployment may, however, in the longer term, break down the ability of the family to socialise its members, thus affecting primary defences, but this does not yet appear on a whole population basis.

Female Employment and Divorce:

If we wish to find positive evidence of a relationship between socialisation and crime rates, we need to look at factors which would ostensibly contribute to, or detract from, the initial and/or continuing socialisation of children and young adults in the values and obligations fundamental to the culture. As discussed earlier, a factor of enormous importance is likely to be the ability of the family to inculcate, to teach and support, these beliefs and behaviours in its children. In the years of early childhood, such teaching and support will normally come primarily from the mother, but her ability to do so will depend largely on the time she has to interact with, observe and supervise her children. In later childhood and in adolescence, one can expect the father's participation to increase, and the joint effectiveness of the parental team to assume prime importance. Alan Barcan, for example, reports that the disruption of family life during the Second World War, caused by the enlistment of many fathers and the mobilisation of women for war work, resulted in deterioration of school discipline and increased truancy and juvenile delinquency, particularly among older girls and younger boys (Barcan 1995).

Two facets of family life, on which *Year Book* data is available, would appear likely to have implications for the family's ability to fulfil its socialisation functions in these terms: firstly, levels of female employment outside the home, which will subtract from the time mothers can give to socialisation; and secondly, divorce, which will weaken or remove the father's influence, and severely reduce the effectiveness of operation of the parental team.

In Figures 26 and 27, female employment rates (females aged 15 and over) and divorce rates, respectively, are plotted against serious crime rates. The levels of coincidence are evident, and convincing, particularly when one considers the failure of unemployment figures to show a close relationship. When correlation coefficients are calculated, the relationship between employment rates for females aged 15 and over and serious crime for the years 1933 (figures on female employment for earlier decades were not available) to 1993 is high, at 0.9 ($p < .01$). That between divorce and serious crime rates for the hundred years 1894-1993 is also 0.9 ($p < .001$).

Correlations with violent crime (a sub-set of serious crime) are lower – 0.74 for female employment and 0.61 for divorce, the latter just significant at the 0.05 level, the former just falling short (with more data points it could well reach significance). The difference suggests that, as one might expect, internalised controls on respect for property dissipate more readily than those on respect for the person, as we have seen already in the two extra decades it has taken for crimes of violence to escalate on a par with those against property. Correlations within the violent crimes category were also significant. That between female employment and homicide was 0.88 ($p < .01$), and with murder and rape, correlations were significant at the .05 level. Correlations of divorce with homicide and murder were also significant at the 0.05

Figure 26: Female Employment and Serious Crime
1930/3 - 1993

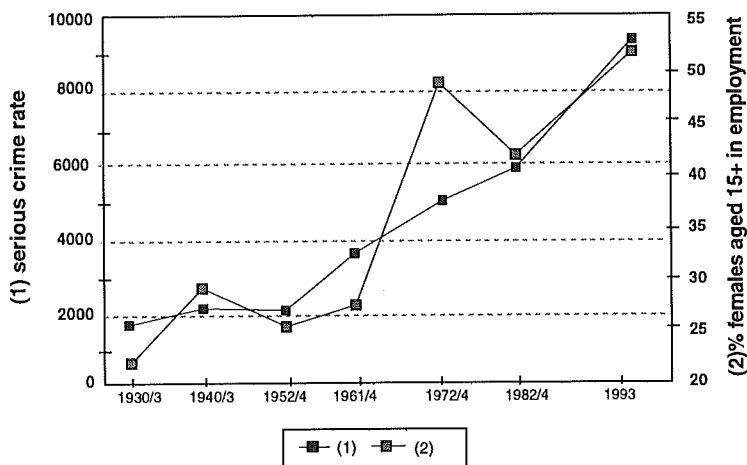
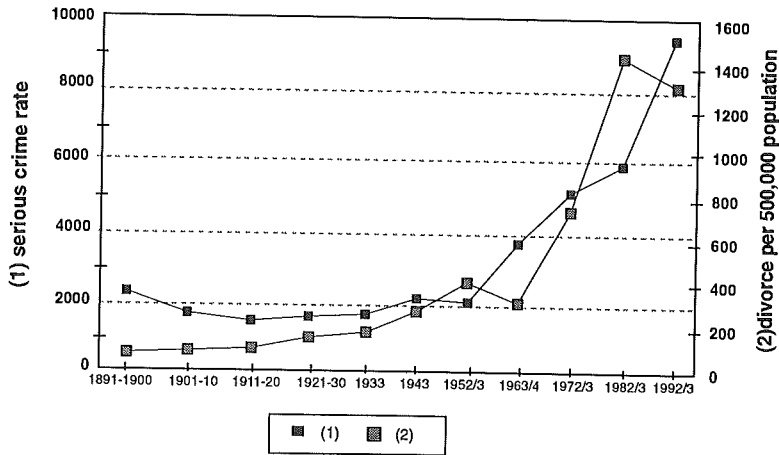


Figure 27: Divorce and Serious Crime
1891 - 1992/3



level, so that the effect is more marked for the most violent of the violent crimes.

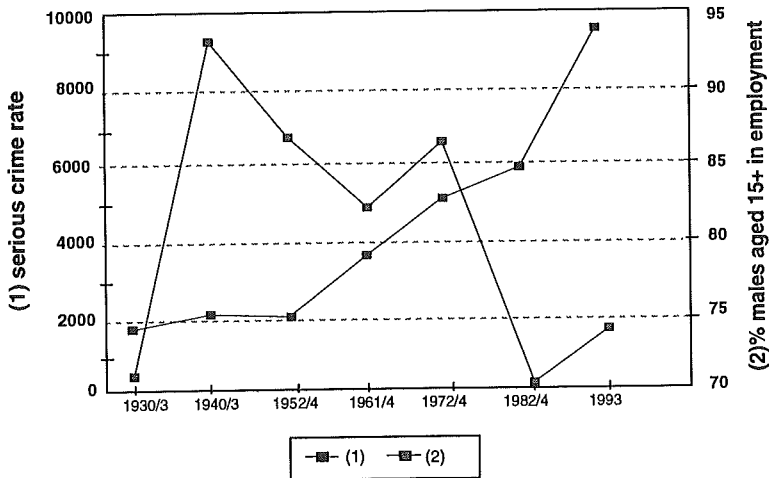
The significance of the association of serious crime with female employment is the more remarkable, when one compares it with the association in the opposite direction between male employment (males aged fifteen and over) and serious crime. Figure 28 shows the plot of these figures.

The correlation coefficient calculates at -0.43 , while the equivalent correlation for violent crime is -0.48 . Both these associations, like that for unemployment, fail to reach significance at the 0.05 level. The negative relationship is of interest in exhibiting the contrast that the higher male employment, the *lower* is serious crime, while the higher female employment, the *higher* is serious crime. The relationship between female employment and crime is also much stronger than that between male employment and crime. (The factor of female employment *may* partly explain the failure to find a significant relationship between unemployment figures and crime rates.)

If children are young at the time of divorce, this can be expected to have no immediate effect on the crime rate. One might therefore expect the effects of divorce to appear more strongly with a time lapse of a decade or so, when those children who have missed paternal

Figure 28: Male Employment and Serious Crime

1930/3 - 1993



parenting for a longer period of time reach maturity. When correlations are calculated between divorce rates and crime rates a decade later, this expectation is confirmed. The correlation between divorce rate and serious crime a decade later remains at a high 0.96 (significant beyond the .001 level), while that with violent crime rises to 0.86 (significant at the 0.001 level). A more immediate effect on property crime could be associated with the effects of the disruption of divorce on older children, while the effects on younger children may be deeper, and take longer to emerge in violent crime. At two decades lapse, the correlation of divorce with crime rates is still highly significant for both serious and violent crime – 0.97 ($p < .000$) and 0.82 ($p < .01$), respectively.

As for divorce, time lapse effects could be expected to occur for female employment, the most operative lapse depending on the age of children when their mothers enter the workforce. This has probably changed in the course of the seven decades under review, with children being left at a younger age in recent decades, with the promotion and growth of childcare, and this could exert a disruptive effect on the significance of correlations. At one decade time lapse, the correlation with serious crime falls to 0.71, and that with violent crime

falls to 0.64, both non-significant. At two decades time lapse, the correlation with serious crime again becomes significant with a correlation of 0.9, while that with violent crime rises sharply to 0.96, also significant, for the first time, at the .05 level.

The growth in childcare which has accompanied the increase in female employment may also be a factor in its own right. A chain of correlation from childcare child to brattish primary pupil to teenage drink driver has been reported (Ochiltree and Edgar 1995; Larriera 1995), and appears to represent a generalised loss of socialisation.

Maternal Age:

Brigitte Berger (1996) notes that one of the features of the successful bourgeois family was late marriage. The reason for late marriage was economic: if a household unit, dependent on the earnings of the husband, was to be independent it could not be established until the man had made his way in the world and achieved some savings. Late marriage was essential to the new nuclear family's independence, self-sufficiency and stability. A secondary effect of this constraint was late procreation, with the result that parenting began at a relatively mature age.

The nuclear family, as we are now aware, creates particular stresses for child-rearing because of the relative absence of support and assistance, comparable with that provided by the extended family, domiciled together. It is possible, therefore, that maturity of the parents is essential to the proper functioning of the nuclear family as a social educator of children: that young parents, isolated from the assistance of the extended family, are unequal to the task of imbuing their offspring with the terms of the social contract, which they have scarcely completed internalising themselves. Thus an unusual maturity of parents, compared with that which is sufficient in simpler societies, may be needed for the reproduction of culture in advanced Western society.

If this is so, we might expect to find a relationship between the average age of parents, particularly the mother, and crime rates a decade or so later, as children come to maturity. If greater numbers of children are born to mothers too young to socialise them adequately, then we might expect to find a cultural loss of the traits of individual responsibility, hard work, honesty and prudence which Berger regards as characteristics of the bourgeois family, and which can be regarded as the obverse of criminality.

Figure 29 shows the percentages of births to mothers aged less

than 20 and less than 25 in the decades from 1913 to 1992. It can be seen that there was a steep rise in the percentage of births to mothers in both these younger age groups in the decades of the sixties and seventies, births to those less than 20 doubling from 5% to 11% between 1953 and 1974, and to those less than 25 rising from 33% to 40% over the same period. This trend had gone into reverse by the 1980s.

When percentages of births to mothers aged less than 20 are plotted against serious crime rates (Figure 30), a more or less parallel rise with a time lapse of one to two decades can be discerned. In Figures 31 and 32, births to mothers aged less than 20 are plotted against serious crime rates one and two decades later, respectively, and the co-incidence of rise is increasingly apparent. The correlation between births to mothers aged less than 20 and serious crime rate in the same year, at 0.27, is non-significant, a correlation of 0.56, not yet significant, appears a decade later; and two decades later the correlation rises to 0.82, a significant correlation at the .05 level.

Similar patterns appear when, using two-decade time lapses, we plot violent crime rates against births at age less than 20 (Figure 33), and both serious and violent crime against births at age less than 25 (Figures 34 & 35).

Figure 29: Young Mothers 1913 - 1992

% births to mothers aged <20 and <25

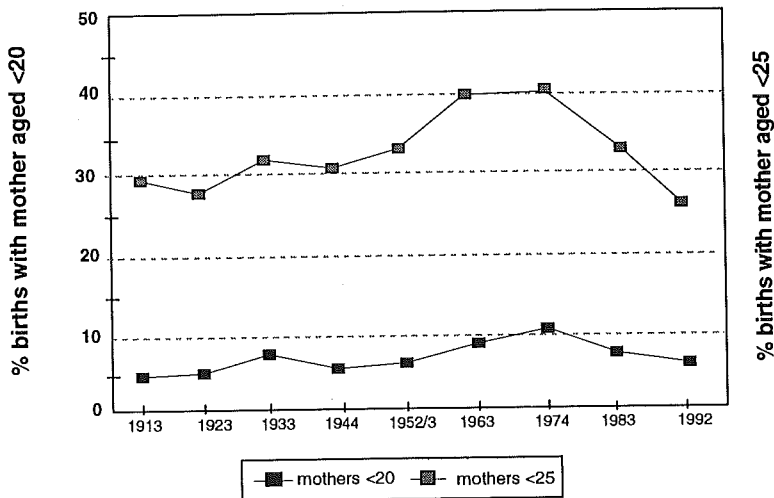


Figure 30: Maternal Age <20 and Serious Crime

1913 - 1992/3

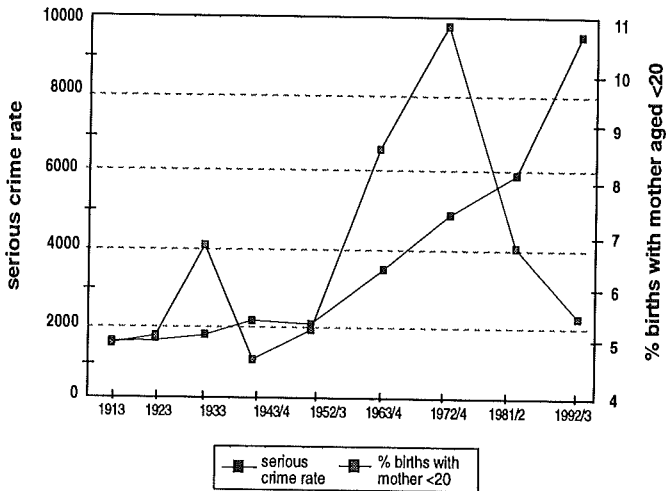


Figure 31: Maternal Age <20 and Serious Crime

one decade lapse

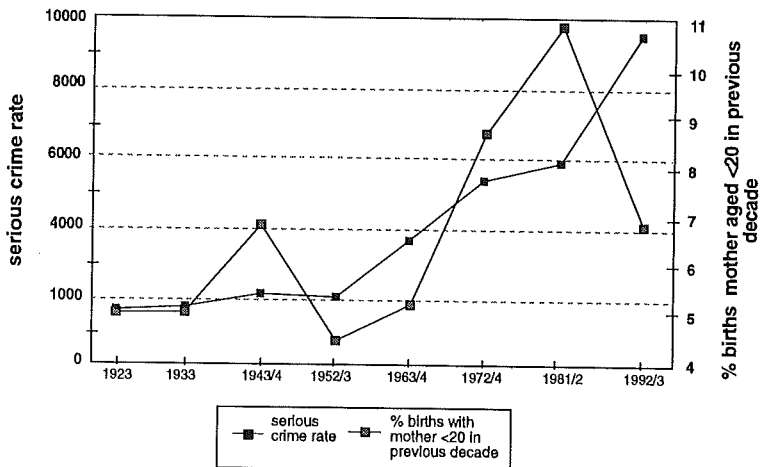


Figure 32: Maternal Age <20 and Serious Crime
two decades lapse

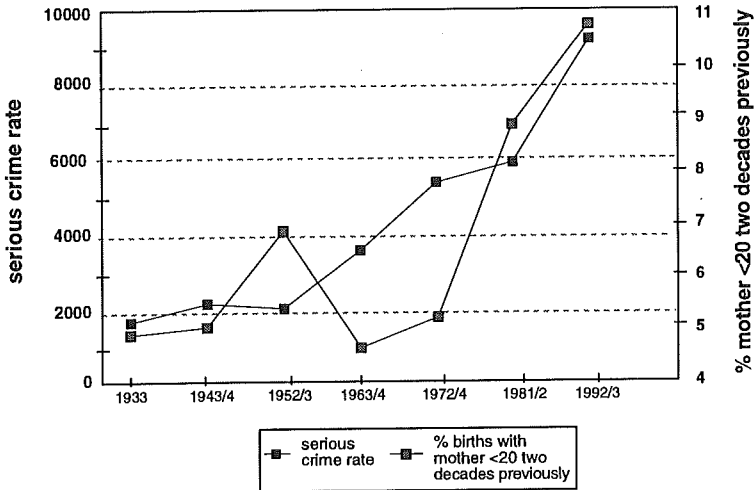
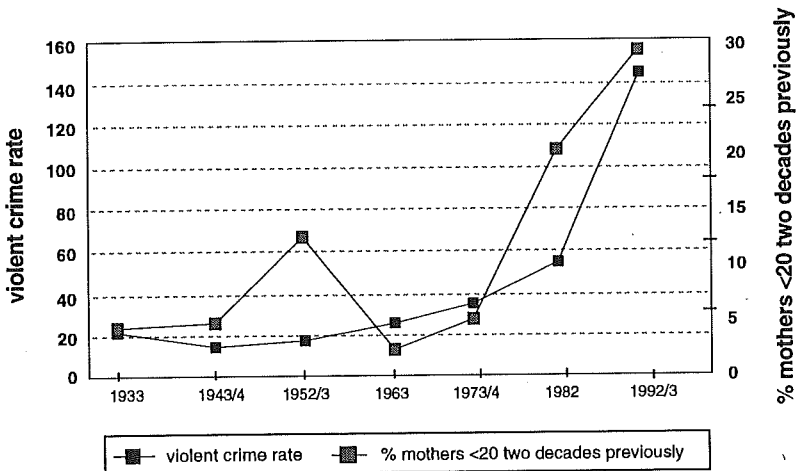


Figure 33: Maternal Age <20 and Violent Crime
two decades lapse



The correlations for birth at age less than 20 and violent crime in the birth year and at one and two decades later are -0.1, 0.21 and 0.88, with the first and second non-significant, and the third significant at the .01 level, as with serious crime. For birth at age less than 25 and serious crime they are -0.05, 0.58 and 0.88, again showing the regular increase in correlation with elapsing time, to reach significance at the .01 level with a two-decade time lapse. For birth at age less than 25 and violent crime they are -0.45, 0.27 and 0.87, with violent crime again showing a slower rise, and a significant association ($p < .05$) emerging at two decades time lapse.

Thus the correlations are in keeping with the hypothesis that immaturity of the mother results in deficiencies of socialisation which are reflected in crime rates one to two decades later, on a population scale, as the children of increasing proportions of young mothers progressively reach maturity. The fall in the percentage of young mothers in the last two decades may predict a coming fall in the crime rate, but it is also possible that the move to childcare of infants and preschool children, which is associated with poor socialisation, will neutralize this development.

Figure 34: Maternal Age <25 and Serious Crime

two decades lapse

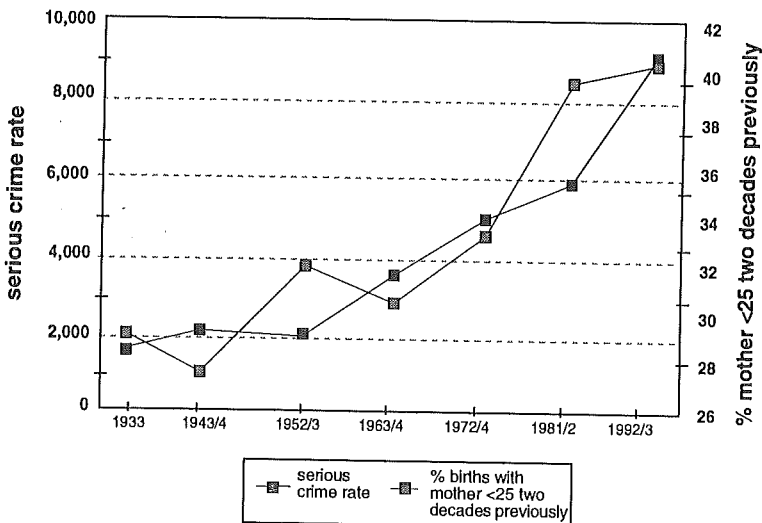
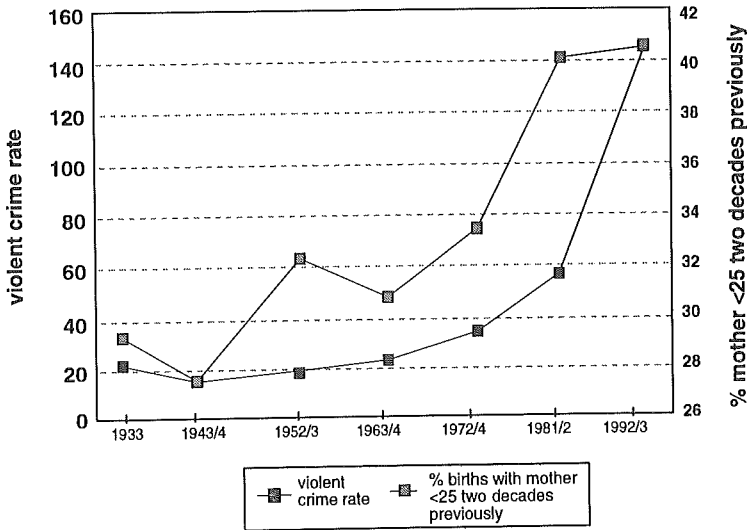


Figure 35: Maternal Age <25 and Violent Crime

two decades lapse



Ex-nuptial Birth:

If the absence of the father as a result of divorce, and the strain this puts on the mother's capacity for socialising her child, results in higher crime rates, then one might expect an even stronger effect in the case of ex-nuptial births, where the father is absent and the mother lacks support from the very beginning. John Bowlby concluded, from his observations, that there was 'no group of children in danger of deprivation in whose production psychiatric factors play a larger part than illegitimates' (1951:75) One would also expect it to show the same delayed pattern as births to young mothers – of an effect only as the child grows to maturity, so that one or two decades will elapse before the effect appears.

Figures 36 and 37 plot ex-nuptial birth rates against serious and violent crime rates. It can be seen that they appear to rise sharply together, but there is some effect of time lapse for the latter. When correlations are calculated, we find that, in contrast to the effects for young motherhood, high correlations with crime rates occur in the decade in which the births occur as well as in the two succeeding decades, as children of the birth decade reach the years of criminal activity. The correlations of ex-nuptial birth rate with serious crime at

Figure 36: Ex-nuptial Birth and Serious Crime

1903 - 1992/3

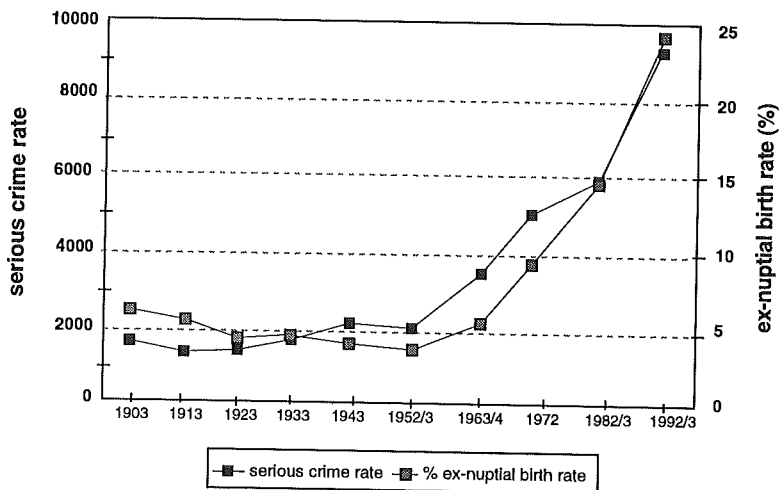
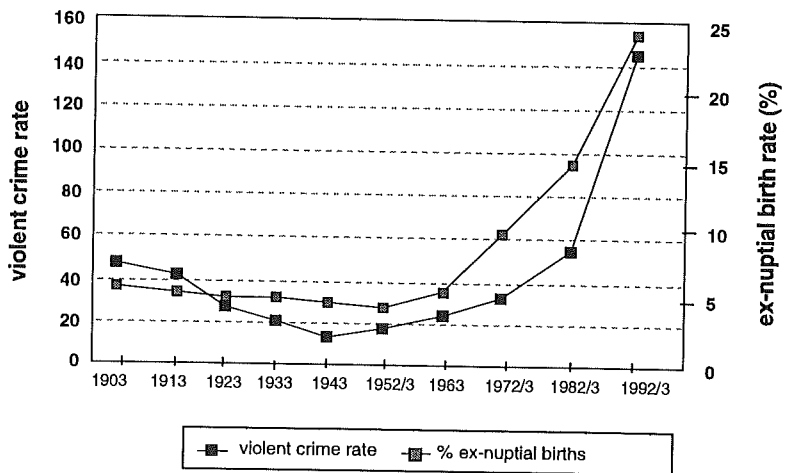


Figure 37: Ex-nuptial Birth and Violent Crime

1903 - 1992/3



the three junctures are 0.96, 0.88 and 0.69 (significant beyond the .001 level for the first, and at the .01 level for the second, but just short of significance for the third – $p=.058$), and with violent crime, 0.94, 0.97 and 0.91 (all significant beyond the .001 level).

The correlations with crime in the same decade obviously cannot be explained by the effect of ex-nuptial birth on parenting. It seems likely that its origin lies in the old tenet that while wayward boys commit crimes, wayward girls expose themselves to 'moral danger': that is, that the same causal factors which produced rising crime rates in boys, resulted in rising rates of ex-nuptial birth in girls. The continuing mostly high correlations at one and two decades time lapse *may* simply reflect the continuation of this paired response. The fall in correlation with serious crime, scarcely evident for violent crime, at one and two decades time lapse, suggests (if we maintain the parenting thesis) that, as with young motherhood, the effects of this disruption of parenting are greater for violent than for property crime.

In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, teenage birth is increasingly also ex-nuptial birth. In the early 1970s, 37% of teenage births were ex-nuptial, and in the early 1990s this had risen to 55.5%. At the same time, the percentage of all births which were to teenagers fell from 10.8% to 5.6%. One can see any adverse effects on crime of ex-nuptial birth being compounded by those of young motherhood.

Single-Parent Families:

Some indication of whether the relationships of divorce and ex-nuptial birth with crime rates might result from reduced parenting presence, and specifically absence of the father, in both cases, or rather from the emotional trauma of divorce in the one case, and young motherhood in the other, may be derived by looking at the role of a family definition which both share – namely, that of single or sole parent family. Unfortunately the *Year Books* provide figures on numbers of single parent families in Australia for only three decades – the sixties, seventies and nineties. These are plotted against serious and violent crime rates in Figures 38 and 39. The correlations obtained, 1.0 (!) and 0.98 respectively, are phenomenally high, although, due to the small number of data points involved, the latter does not reach significance. Too few data points were available for decade-lapsed calculations to be performed.

It can be seen that the rise in both is remarkably parallel. This means that the initial concomitant rise is unlikely to be entirely attributable to the effect of single parenthood on child-rearing, but, like that of ex-nuptial birth, would probably also represent direct effects on

Figure 38: Sole Parenting and Serious Crime

1964/6 - 1992/3

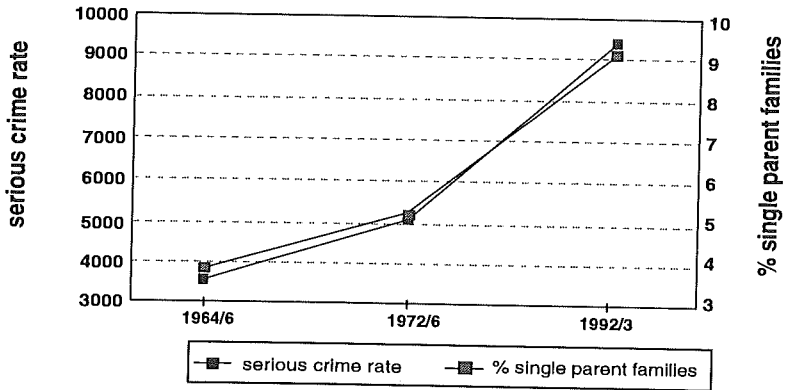


Figure 39: Sole Parenting and Violent Crime

1963/6 - 1992/3

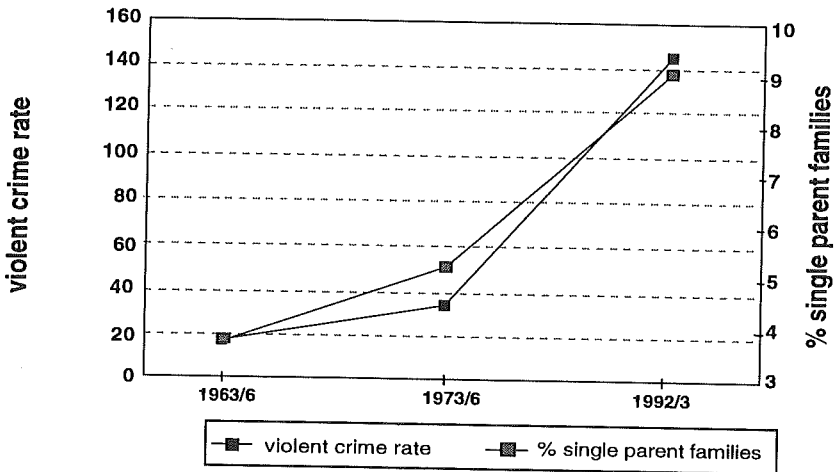


Figure 40: Marital Status and Serious Crime

unmarried aged 15+

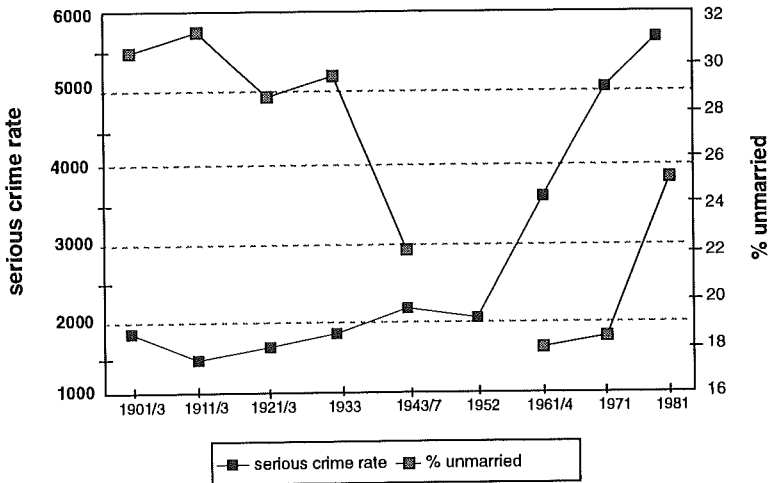
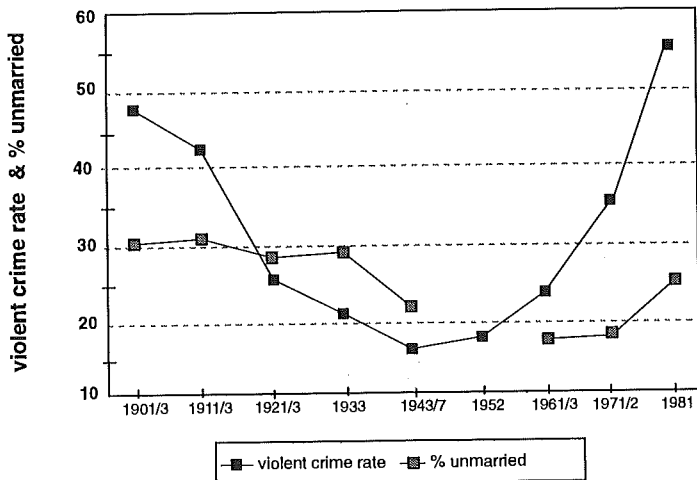


Figure 41: Marital Status and Violent Crime

unmarried aged 15+



both crime rates and parenting commitment of a lapse in socialisation. An alternative thesis might be that changes in the conception of the social contract over this period (from the late sixties) liberalised the national ideology of the requirements of responsible parenthood, and this, rather than a loss of socialisation as such, permitted the changes in divorce and ex-nuptial birth rates. This said, it is also possible that there is a continuing relationship between single parenthood and criminality, mediated by deficiencies in parenting – by ineffective embuement of children with the doctrines of proper behaviour which prevent the commission of both property and violent crime – which result from too large a task for one parent and/or the absence of the father. This is supported by the time-lapse data for divorce and ex-nuptial birth which, combined, produce the great majority of single parent families.

Marriage:

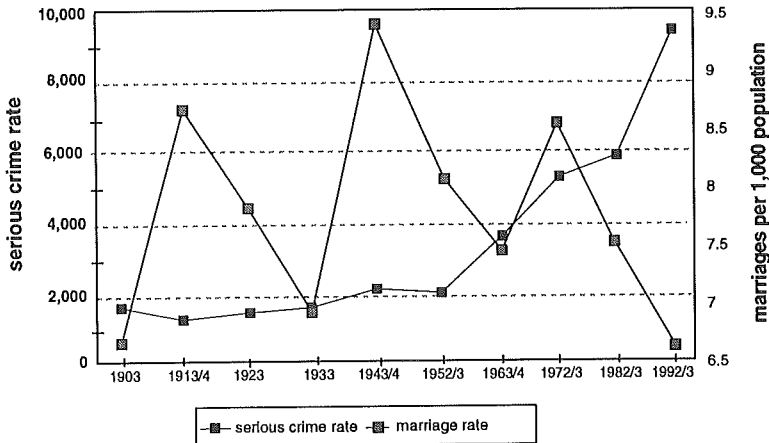
It is a reasonable hypothesis that crime and marital status of the population should be correlated, in that marriage may be seen as having a stabilising effect on male behaviour, resulting in less criminal activity, and that the achievement of marriage in itself might be seen as a sign of a well-socialised individual. On the other hand, we have observed that relatively late marriage is a characteristic of the stable, effective bourgeois family, and that young motherhood, which is likely to be associated with young marriage age, is associated with higher crime rates.

Figures 40 and 41 plot the percentage of unmarried persons aged 15 and over in the Australian population against serious and violent crime rates from 1901 to 1981. It can be seen that although they bear something of a positive relationship with one another in the first two thirds of the century, this was lost dramatically in the decade of the seventies, with serious crime rising sharply while percentage unmarried remained low, although the relationship is reasserted in the following decade of the eighties. The same pattern occurs for violent crime. The correlation between marriage status and serious crime is -0.63 , and with violent crime -0.04 , both non-significant. Thus, as with age and sex, whatever relationship marital status of the population normally has with crime, it is quite overborne by other factors in the last three decades.

As an alternative measure, Figure 42 shows the marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 population) from 1903 to 1992/3 plotted against serious crime rate. It can be seen at a glance that there is no sort of

Figure 42: Marrying and Serious Crime

marriage rate



relationship. Marriage rate obviously responds in a major way to factors which have nothing to do with crime, and vice versa.

Violent Crime and Family Factors:

The association of violent crime with family factors is more complex and variable than that of all serious (largely property) crime. Divorce has an immediate high association with all serious crime, but strong associations with violent crime occur only at one and two decades time lapse – suggesting that its disruptive effect shows itself immediately in property crime in the older children of divorce, but that deeper personality effects develop in younger children, which reveal themselves in personal violence, but do not emerge publicly until they reach maturity a decade or so later. Young motherhood correlations suggest the same pattern, with a significant correlation with violent crime emerging only after two decades time lapse. However, in this case serious crime also is not immediately significant, and while showing an effect at one decade time lapse, only becomes significant at two. For female employment, the significant association with all serious crime (largely property) disappears at one-decade time lapse, but at two-decades time lapse reappears and for the first time is significant for violent crime.

It may well be that these patterns of time lapse correlation can be

explained as indicating that violent crime, like property crime, increases as a result of dysfunctional familial factors, but that the loss of civility towards the person takes longer to develop than does that towards property, appearing only in the adult who, from early childhood, has suffered ineffectual socialisation. An alternative possibility is, however, that these rising correlations, with time lapse, are fortuitous, and in fact occur because they index familial factors against violent crime rates in the decades in which non-judgmental depiction of violence and pornography assumed major proportions in both high and popular cultural entertainment. I could not but be aware that in creating the time lapse data, particularly the two decade time lapses which were most powerfully productive of violent crime correlations, while sometimes diminishing all serious crime correlations, that I was in each case indexing violent crime rates of the nineties, which could well represent the fruition of a decade's exposure of children, now adolescent or adult, to extreme media violence and, in some cases, pornography.

The 1980s marked the saturation of cinema and television screens with images and role models of violence, and with a constant diet of depersonalisation of its victims. Although the pressure to remove censorship of violence in the media began in the sixties, the presentation of extreme violence in films remained intermittent until the eighties. The arrival of videos and computer games in the eighties introduced levels of violence not tolerated on public screens (TV and cinema), allowing repeated viewing and pseudo-participation in the acts depicted. By the mid-nineties the first generation of children exposed to this diet of atrocities was reaching maturity.

There is, thus, support in the crime trends for a special role of media violence in the rise in violent crime in Australia, in that violent crime shows a different trajectory in its rise from crime against property. The latter took off in the seventies and continued an exponential rise through the eighties to the nineties. Violent crime, by contrast, showed a much flatter rise in the seventies and eighties, exhibiting a massive escalation only in the decade to the nineties, and this accords well with the thesis that violence in the media creates a model for imitative behaviour. Although initially the social sciences declared no evidence of an effect of media violence on behaviour, the longer experience of exposure to more extreme forms, and observation of behaviour changes over time, is producing steadily accumulating evidence that both violence and violent pornography do have population effects on behaviour (Malmuth and Donnerstein 1984,

Phillips 1992).

The escalation in rape, as a sub-category of violent crime, also coincided with the consummation of the anti-censorship crusade, both as regards explicit sexuality in the popular media, and the availability of pornographic material on video for private consumption. By the early nineties, we had a population of young men who had been exposed to such material since early youth, and whose attitudes to women and sex may have been substantially shaped by it. In Denmark, violent sexual crimes increased when pornography was legalised in the sixties, and for some time there has been considerable evidence from the United States of a link between availability of and exposure to pornography and high rates of sexual assault (Malmuth and Donnerstein 1984; Goldsmith 1993).

It is therefore necessary to bear in mind the possibility that media violence and pornography may be the major factor in the dramatic rise in violent crime over the last decade, with family factors in this case producing the more gradual trend observable in the two decades rise from the sixties to the eighties.

Conclusion

The figures for crime rate in Australia across the century show that, in keeping with popular perceptions, Australia has shown an extreme decline in the last three decades, as a nation of people with a strong respect for the personal well-being and property concerns of others. It is not, as we are frequently admonished, that we were too naive or ignorant to notice the crime going on about us in the past – that we were mugged in trains at night, but continued to travel care-free; that banks were robbed but we simply didn't notice it, and so never bothered to put in security screens or guards; and that leaving our houses persistently unlocked, we just didn't notice that we were often burgled – but rather, that these crimes really did not occur with anything like their current frequency a few decades ago, and well within living memory. Rather, the old bad times were at the turn of the century, and were not nearly so bad as today, and these are time out of mind for most.

As regards secondary causes or prevention, we obtain a picture of a police force so overtaken by the rapidity of the rise in the crime rate, that it has entirely lost its preventative function where serious crimes are concerned, returning us to the reactive system of a century and a half ago. The reemergence of private police as a growth industry, in the

form of security guards, is a telling sign of the loss of this important civic amenity.

There is obviously a need for some major changes in policy, and an initial step might be to maintain a separate account sheet of police activity in motor traffic law enforcement, so that there is not a continual seepage of police attention and activity out of traditional areas of crime prevention and detection. Serious consideration should be given to raising police numbers to reach ratios, in relation to criminal episodes, which are comparable with those at the turn of the century. An updated version of loitering and vagrancy provisions is also needed if truly preventative strategies are to be achieved. The creation of 'alcohol-free zones' in trouble spots is one such move already selectively in operation.

Our penal system, also overtaken by the escalation in crime, has allowed the 'economic' rewards of crime to rise markedly.

The social factors identified here as highly correlated with rising crime rates are in keeping with the hypothesis of familial embuement of the social contract as a primary defence against crime. When, as here, a number of significant correlations are obtained, one is justified in looking for the existence of a higher order correlation, lying behind them, and perhaps causally related to them as intervening factors. As reported in Appendix II, the current data set was not large enough to permit this operation to be performed. It is equally possible, however, that a number of separately operating factors are involved. So rapid an increase in crime rates, of the order of 400-800% in a mere three decades, is almost bound to be the effect of a conjunction of several precipitating, interacting, and catalysing circumstances.

One such, discussed above, is the influence of violence and pornography in the media, which could not be statistically documented here. The often weaker correlations of violent, compared with property, crime with the various family factors identified suggests that some other factor is at work in its rising incidence, and this may well be media violence and pornography. As noted earlier, the correlations of violent crime with family factors which achieve significance at one and two decades time lapse cannot confidently be given exclusive causal significance, in that these time lapses result in the indexing of crime rates from the period of vastly increased media violence and pornography, which latter may be the real or major causal factor.

It is certainly undeniable that the prediction that increased media violence would lead to increased real violence has, on the face of it, been fulfilled, while the prediction that it would be accompanied by no

change in real levels of violence, or would prove therapeutic, has proved false. It would therefore seem time that those who still maintain that there is no connection should allay our distrust of media violence by explaining what *is* the cause of increased rates of violent crime, and why it cannot be laid at the door of their successful advocacy of relaxed censorship.

The general sweep of a new ideology can also affect behaviour, and it is possible that the youth rebellion of the late sixties and early seventies, with its culture of permissiveness, its Little Red School Book, and its rejection of the established norms of civil society, played a role in the increase in property crime at that time. Proudhon's early communist maxim that 'all property is theft' was a popular and self-serving canon of belief in the 'left-wing' student population of the period (a bookseller in Brisbane at the time commented that there was no point in his carrying books on peace or the environment as they were always stolen), and may have contributed in the long term to loss of conscience and of empathy for the victims of theft. The ideology of sexual permissiveness, rather than poor socialisation, was probably the major factor in the rise in ex-nuptial and teenage births between 1963 and 1973, thereby setting in train the social circumstances for *later* poor socialisation.

And finally, there is the factor of drugs. Although property crime is associated with drug use, the hypothesis that the rise in crime we have witnessed is caused in any major way by the high cost of illegal drugs does not withstand examination. The cost of marijuana is not high enough to project such huge increases in property crime, and the number of heroin users is too few. Drug use no doubt plays a part in rising crime, but it is less likely that the cost of drugs is the main causal effect than that the direct effect on the mental capacity and motivational condition of drug users makes them rely on theft as a way of life (Sullivan 1996). Long series for alcohol consumption and use of tobacco and other drugs are not available in the *Year Books*. The probable rise in smoking in the middle years of the century and the decrease in smoking of recent years would preclude a significant correlation of the use of this drug with crime, despite its cost to the heavy smoker. The rise in alcohol use in the sixties and seventies coincides with the rise in crime of those decades, but the fall in consumption of the last decade again is contradictory of a major causal association as regards our current ills.

Efforts at explanation of fluctuations in crime rates have been stalled for a long time on economic causes. This focus must be judged

to be almost entirely non-productive, at least so far as long-term trends are concerned, in its inability to produce reliable correlations and in the contradictory predictions and explanations which it throws up, as occasion demands: both that crime increases with falling prosperity due to need eliciting criminal behaviour, and that crime increases with rising prosperity because of the increased presence in the community of stealable goods. Shifts in age and sex ratios in the population have also been shown to be irrelevant to the huge increase in crime of the last three decades.

While lack of correlation tends to preclude causality, its presence allows, although it does not prove it. The remarkable correlations identified here between crime rates and family breakdown (divorce, ex-nuptial birth, single parent families), disengagement of women from supervision of their children (female employment), and maturity of parenting are not thereby proved to be causal factors, but they may be. We can, too, venture to assess the direction in which causality is likely to operate, if it exists:

Does ex-nuptial birth cause crime or vice versa?

Does divorce cause crime or vice versa?

Does female employment cause crime or vice versa?

In each case it is unlikely to the point of absurdity that crime is the causal agent in the correlation observed.

One cannot fail to be impressed that the familial factors which have here been found to be strongly associated with crime rates, falling and rising across a century, have in common that they represent the practical outcome of a permissive philosophy applied to sexuality and to matters of reproduction in its broadest sense of both procreation and the raising of the young to cultural as well as physical maturity. Sexual permissiveness has found expression as both promiscuous and precocious sexual behaviour, and these in turn have been given social approval in the liberalisation of divorce and in de-stigmatisation of, and financial support for, both divorce and ex-nuptial birth.

The advocates of uninhibited sexuality in its various forms, from Ellis to Reich to Murphy, assumed that liberalism in the sphere of sexual behaviour would have no repercussions, or only good ones, on other areas of social behaviour. But as the Bible prophesies, it seems to be a case of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children: the highly significant correlations this study has revealed between reproductive behaviour (again in its widest sense) and crime indicate that a belief in its total dissociation from other aspects of social well-being can no longer be confidently sustained, and that its liberalisation has resulted

in the loss of an effectiveness and stability in parenting which had been achieved under conditions of greater inhibition in the early and middle years of the century. It may be that to reject 'Victorian' virtues and morality wholesale is to take on again the whole range of nineteenth century social ills which their implementation so successfully eliminated in the course of the first half of the twentieth century. A relaxed ideology in matters relating to the production of the next generation may be the factor lying behind the numerous correlations revealed in this study.

A recent Position Paper of the Australian Psychological Society (Sanson et al. 1995), addressing the role of punishment in the prevention of crime, calls for preventative intervention in childhood and adolescence, as likely to be more effective than contingent punishment. It recommends intervention at the individual level, by counselling and therapy, with at-risk children and with prison inmates. There is no sure evidence that such intervention is effective. Indeed, in the period in which it has been given most credence and support, crime has increased rather than decreased.

The findings of the present paper suggest, rather, that we should take a *public health* approach to psychological health for the prevention of crime, addressing the societal rather than the individual level, for purposes of intervention. Physical health in the community was improved as much by such public health measures as clean water, sewerage, and food and housing standards, as by medical advances in drugs, surgery and other such expertise which operate at the level of individual intervention. It seems likely that psychological health – at least as regards the prevention of crime – may similarly be more sweepingly improved by discouragement of divorce, young motherhood, ex-nuptial birth, and perhaps discouragement of excessive maternal employment, than by individual counselling and therapy for those in whom the damage has, essentially, already been done.

Bowlby expressed a similar view, in rather different circumstances and based on a different type of evidence, when he wrote:

The proper care of children deprived of a normal home life can now be seen to be not merely an act of common humanity, but to be essential for the mental and social welfare of a community. For, when their care is neglected, as happens in every country of the Western world today, they grow up to reproduce themselves. Deprived children, whether in their own homes or out of them, are a source of social infection as real and serious as are the carriers of

diphtheria and typhoid. And just as preventive measures have reduced these diseases to negligible proportions, so can determined action greatly reduce the number of deprived children in our midst and the growth of adults liable to produce more of them (1951:158).

The lesson of recent years has been that if the family does not perform well, no amount of government intervention and activity of the 'caring' professions can make up for it. The failure to raise well-socialised children appears, on the strength of the improvement in so many indicators of social competence in the first half of the century, to lie less in an absence of innate skills in ordinary parents, than in the encouragement, via such 'benefits' as childcare and easy divorce, of social circumstances which militate against their exercise. Perhaps we can see some hope for the immediate future in the recent rise in the maternal age for first births, in that more children will have the benefit of mature parenting.

At the very least, these findings suggest some avenues for exploration of causal factors where policy intervention is possible; and the century-long crime rate series, here identified for the first time, offer the prospect of future testing in greater detail of these and of other similarly possible (if correlated), and probably impossible (if non-correlated) causes. Let those who are inclined to urge the lack of purchase of these correlations on causality consider whether they would have experienced a similar doubt had the correlations found been with unemployment, age or sex.

Appendix I

There appear to have been no previous attempts to construct long-term data series on either crime dealt with in the higher courts or serious crime in magistrates courts in Australia. Most reports on crime in Australia go back only to the early 1980s, when computer storage of data began, or at most to the early 1970s, and report only crimes recorded by police and crime victimisation surveys. S.K. Mukherjee, however, in *Crime Trends in Twentieth Century Australia* (1981) created data series for all charges (not convictions and not isolating serious crime) in magistrates courts from 1900 to 1976, and calculated correlations between this data and some economic and social statistical indices. While, due to limited resources and therefore time, the present account reports only at decade intervals, Mukherjee worked with figures on an annual basis. Nevertheless his findings are not seriously at odds with those of the present report.

It will be recalled that our series on all serious crime (convictions in higher and magistrates courts, with numbers in the latter far exceeding those in the former), declined, like other conviction rates, for the first two decades of the century, but showed an earlier, albeit very low, rise than did convictions in the higher courts alone (the most serious of crimes), and that a dramatic rise began in the 1950s, whereas the marked rise in both crimes against property and against the person in the higher courts began a decade later. This pattern is very much replicated in Mukherjee's data (despite the change of category from convictions to charges and the inclusion of petty offences and offences against good order), which shows a modest fall, with fluctuations, to the 1920s, followed by a modest rise, with fluctuations, to 1950, and thereafter an exponential and uninterrupted rise.

Where Mukherjee's chosen factors for correlation coincide with those of the present study, the outcome is generally similar. Like us, Mukherjee obtained positive correlations between crime rates and divorce and police strength, negative correlations with unemployment, non-correlation with marriage rate, and either negative or non-correlation with numbers in the crime-prone age-groups. Mukherjee found a strong positive correlation between total population aged >10 and total, property and petty offences, but not with crimes against the person, and similarly our figures show a strong correlation between total population and serious, but not violent, crime. It is a fairly untenable thesis that higher population in itself predicts higher crime

rate, and later analysis by Mukherjee suggested that this was a spurious effect.

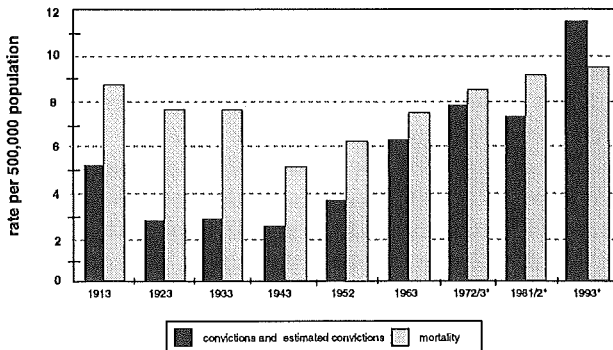
In *Crime in Australia* (1995), S.K. Mukherjee and D. Dagger present a graph of annual data of homicide rate in Australia from 1915 to 1995. This is derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics mortality, not crime, data, and therefore attempted murder, which is normally included in criminal homicide data, is necessarily missing. This is obviously a significant omission, if our concern is with the commission of crime, rather than with causes of death, and moreover may make it a misleading indicator of actual rates of serious violence, given the increased ability over the last two decades of the medical profession to reclaim lives which would previously have been lost, evident in many statistics. Homicide rates as recorded by police show a reduced rate of rise in Australian Institute of Criminology figures, which omit attempted murder, as compared with *Year Book* statistics, which continue to include them, thus retaining parity with records for the rest of the century.

Nevertheless when correlations were calculated for Mukherjee and Dagger's homicide mortality data (as read off their graph) with some of our social factors, they showed a similar pattern to that for our conviction data. There were positive correlations with divorce and ex-nuptial birth (0.56 and 0.7), a positive correlation with female employment (0.74) but a negative correlation with male employment (-0.7), and non-correlation with unemployment (0.2).

The figure below shows our conviction rate for homicide plotted beside Mukherjee's mortality data.

Homicide 1913 - 1993

convictions and mortality



Appendix II

Correlations and Crime Factors

The statistics presented in this report fall into three main groupings: rates for various categories of crime; figures relating to what I have called secondary prevention – prison and police rates and ratios; and various social statistics which might validly be related to what I have called primary prevention of crime, namely the internalisation of the social contract. In all, thirty-seven data sets are included, containing variously from three to eleven items, representing the various descriptive statistics at approximately decade intervals, some replicated by time-lapsing. Pearson (r) correlations were calculated between all 37 factors (plus 3 factors of religious belief, not discussed here). Details are given in the final pages of this appendix.

The data used in calculating the correlations are shown in Table 1 (page 69), while Table 2 (page 70) presents the original police record figures.

Highly significant correlations ($p < .01$) were obtained between all measures of crime, except murder and property crime and murder and all serious crime (all serious crime, because of the vastly higher rate of property than of violent crime, reflects primarily the former), the former significant at the .05 level, and the latter non-significant. It will be seen that crimes of violence (crimes against the person) also tended to show relationships with the imputed social factors examined which were rather different from those of property crimes.

Turning to factors of secondary prevention, there was no significant correlation between numbers of prisoners and rate of conviction for crimes other than homicide and murder. The lack of correlation no doubt partially reflects the fact that policies on imprisonment are subject to political and policy variation, but beyond this it reflects the significant failure, which I pointed out earlier in the book, of imprisonment rates to keep pace with crime conviction rates. The sole significant correlations, with homicide and murder, emerge from the likelihood that these crimes have been given priority and continued to attract (relatively) lengthy imprisonment.

The ratio of serious crime to number of prisoners and of violent crime to number of prisoners can be understood as a measure of both the severity of punishment that can be expected if one's crime is detected and the degree to which those who are convicted of crimes are withdrawn from the opportunity to repeat them. That is, it is a measure of the state of deterrence – the higher the ratio, the lower the

deterrence.

The ratio of serious crime to number of prisoners has its most significant correlations with property crime, and total serious crime (which represent much the same thing), but is not significantly correlated with murder and assault. The higher the ratio, the lower is the imprisonment rate, and thus we see that as imprisonment is less assiduous, so crime rates rise; and/or that as crime rates rise, a smaller percentage of offenders are imprisoned. It is impossible, with the present data, to distinguish these two active causes but, as I suggested earlier, one would expect both to be operative.

Similarly, there are highly significant correlations between low deterrence of violent crime (loosely, on the grounds that violent crime is more likely to lead to imprisonment) and all crime categories, the lowest correlation being with murder, which nevertheless falls just short of significance at the .01 level, and is significant at the .05 level.

The police:population ratio is highly significantly correlated with all types of crime, the lowest being with assault, which is nevertheless significant at the .01 level. That is, as we have seen, the ratio has fallen and risen as crime rates have fallen and risen with the passing of the century. As we have noted, it has not, nevertheless, kept pace with the rising crime rate, and this is reflected in the statistics which follow.

Turning to the hypothesised factors of primary prevention, we find, first, an uneven pattern of correlation between divorce and the various categories of crime. The correlations between divorce rates and property and all serious crime are very highly significant, while those with murder and assault are not significant, and those with all violent crime, homicide and rape are significant at the .05 level. Female employment shows a similar pattern, except that all violent crime replaces murder in not achieving a significant correlation. Thus it seems that disruption of parental involvement and supervision of children is most strongly correlated, immediately, with a rise in property crime, but also with a sub-set of the violent crimes.

One decade after a given set of divorce rates, there are highly significant correlations with all categories of crime, with the exception of murder, which is not significant; two decades later, it almost reaches significance at the .05 level, while assault returns to this level. With female employment rates and a one-decade time lapse, only murder shows a significant correlation, while two decades later significant correlations are found with all factors except property crime and murder. Male employment rates show no significant correlations with crime rates, suggesting that the father is effective if present in the

family, whether employed or not.

Maternal age <20 yielded no significant correlations with crime in the same decade or at one decade time lapse. At two decades time lapse, all correlations other than with homicide were significant. Maternal age <25 also yielded no significant correlations with immediate crime rates or at one decade time lapse, but at two decades time lapse all correlations were significant.

Ex-nuptial birth rate yielded extremely significant correlations (<.001) with all categories of crime other than murder, which was nevertheless significant at the .05 level. At one-decade time lapse, all correlations became highly significant, while at two-decades time lapse, homicide and all serious crime ceased to correlate significantly (although the latter was just below .05), and the correlation with property reduced to the .05 level.

All these significant correlations with crime one and two decades later are the more remarkable given the reduction to only half a dozen or so data points. With more data points, the slightly random failures to correlate significantly would most probably disappear.

Despite correlations above 0.9, single parent household rates show significant relationships only with all serious crime and homicide, due to the paucity of data points.

By contrast with these child-rearing related demographic variables, none of the other socioeconomic variables tested yield significant correlations with crime rates. This applies to median age of the population, proportion of the population aged 10-25, and sex ratio of the population. The correlations of median age with homicide and all serious crime sufficiently approach significance to perhaps achieve it with more data. Unemployment rates, also, show no relationship with crime rates in any of the categories.

The later onset of the precipitous rise of crimes of violence, compared with crimes against property, which we have associated with the time lapse in the expression of poor socialisation, is reflected in their weaker associations with police statistics. Nevertheless, the more patchy correlation of crimes of violence with social factors suggests that factors which we have not identified in the statistics may be at work here, *in addition* to those which have been identified as highly correlated with crime rates, immediate and delayed. A first port of call, in attempting to identify them, would seem, sensibly, to be a visiting of exposure rates to images of violence and pornography in those major educators of the young and not so young – film, television and video.

We can note again here the relatively low correlation of murder with property and all serious crime, contrasting with all other correlations of violent crime with property crime, and despite the fact that the correlations of murder with other violent crimes were nevertheless highly significant.

If we look at the correlations among the various indicators of primary and secondary prevention, we find, as we would expect, that there are generally significant correlations among those which did correlate with crime, while those which did not correlate with crime – for example, prisoners, police:violent crime ratio, unemployment, and male employment – generally do not show significant correlations with the correlating factors, nor with each other. We can be fairly sure that those relating to police numbers are simply alternative indicators of the single factor of the failure of police numbers to keep pace with rising crime rates.

Unemployment shows no significant correlations with any factors other than female employment one decade later (a very high correlation), although it almost reaches a significant negative correlation with male employment. Divorce is significantly correlated with female employment immediately and one decade later, but not two decades later. Ex-nuptial birth is significantly associated with immediate female employment and two decades later, but not one decade later, and single parent household shows high correlations (above 0.9) with female employment one and two decades later, which did not reach significance due to too few data points.

In relation to inferences that ex-nuptial birth does not necessarily mean fatherless families (that is, represents considerable numbers of de facto marriages), it is of interest that it correlates significantly with single parent family (despite only three data points). A discouraging sign for the future is the presence of significant correlations between divorce rate and maternal age <20 and <25 one and two decades later, and with ex-nuptial birth immediately and one decade later (but not two).

It was not possible to take the calculations of relationship beyond simple correlation, the data set being insufficient to separate out individual variables by, for example, multiple regression, in order to identify higher order factors within which those identified might be subsumed – that is, we do not know if the various significant factors are independent of one another, or mutually representative of one among them, or of some other still undocumented factor, as the fundamental cause of the rise in crime.

Lucy Sullivan

Finally, it should be borne in mind that simple correlations or failures to correlate may reverse with multiple regression, and so must be accepted with caution.

Table 1
Data Used in Correlations 1894 - 1993

	year (approximate)											
	1894	1903	1913	1923	1933	1943	1952	1963	1972/3	1981/2	1993	
crimes vs the person (violent) - rate	52	48	42	26	21	15	18	24	35	55	145	
homicide - rate		6.4	5.2	2.7	2.8	2.5	3.4	6.4	7.9	7.3	11.5	
murder + - rate		4	3.8	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.7	2	3.9		5.6	
rape - rate		11.2	7.1	0.8	1.5	1.8	1.2	3.8	9	16.8	54	
assault - rate		30	30	22	17	11	14	14	18	31	80	
crimes vs property - rate	116	106	82	82	69	71	96	143	532	987	1523	
robbery - rate						10	9	9				
serious crime - rate	2357	1749	1400	1521	1759	2184	2081	3569	5072	5894	9340	
prisoners - rate	778	523	340	269	296	250	279	340	345	329	445	
serious crimes: prisoners - ratio	3	3.3	4.1	5.7	5.9	8.7	7.5	10.5	14.7	17.9	21	
violent crimes: prisoners - ratio	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.1	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.1	0.17	0.33	
police: population - ratio		732	743	597	664	635	704	727	903	1088	1183	
police: serious crimes - ratio	0.31	0.42	0.53	.039	0.38	0.29	0.34	0.2	0.19	0.18	0.13	
police: violent crimes - ratio	13.9	15.3	17.7	23	31.6	42.3	39.1	30.1	25.8	19.8	8.2	
unemployment - %		5.7	6.5	7.1	25.1	1.1	3.3	3	1.8	9.9	7	
divorce - rate	51	50	65	131.5	152	311.5	446.5	326.5	735	1404	1304.5	
female employment - %					22.1	29.9	26.1	27.9	49.1	41.7	51.7	
male employment - %					71.2	92	87	82.5	86.8	70.2	74	
Australian birthplace - %			82.3	84.5	86.3	90.2	85.7	83.1	79.8	78.2	77.1	
British birthplace - %			97	97.4	97.8	97.9	93.6	90.7	88.9	87.1	85.9	
female population - %	46.3	47.6	48.1	49.2	49.2	49.9	49.4	49.4	49.7	50.1	50.2	
median age of population				22.5	25.8	27.7	30.7	29.4	27.5	29.6	32.4	
population aged 10 - 25 - %		36.9	35.1	31.6	31.7	27.5	25.1	28	30.2	28.7	25	
maternal age <20 - %			5	5.1	6.9	4.6	5.3	8.8	10.8	6.9	5.6	
maternal age <25 - %			29.3	27.5	32.3	30.7	33.4	40.1	40.6	33.5	25.9	
ex-nuptial births - %		6	5.5	4.6	4.7	4.4	4	5.7	9.7	14.7	24	
never married aged 15+ - %			30.3	31.1	28.7	29.5	22.2	17.8	18	25		
single parent households - %		96.1	96.5	95.6		85.9		3.8	5.2		9.1	
Christian population - %		2.5	3.2	0.7		0.6		86.7	86.2	76.4	74	
no religion - %								0.6	6.7	10.8	12.9	
religion not stated - %						11		10.5	6.4	11.4	10.5	

Notes: 1. rate = per 500,000 population

2. crime figures are for convictions and estimated convictions

Table 2
Crimes Recorded by Police 1964 - 1993
per 500,000 population

	1964	1971/2	1981/2	1993
crimes against the person	112	200	276	731
homicide	12	15	15	23
murder & attempted murder	11	13		18
murder	6	7		8
rape & attempted rape	12	22	42	135
assault	87	163	220	573
crimes against property	3165	8088	9546	14482
robbery	27	119	160	365

Endnotes

1. The 1965 *Year Book* states that, 'The statistics would be provided from police records ... to provide information on ... certain selected categories of reported crime ...' The rise in crime in police records should not be attributed to shifts in the categories of crimes recorded. The 1995 *Year Book* notes that assault (as distinguished from serious assault) is not a category recorded by police (although it is for 'victims of crime', a more recently instituted statistic). There were 334,200 victims of assault in Australia in 1995, but only 20,075 serious assaults were recorded by police in 1993. Similarly there is a large disparity between records of and victims of robbery (160,000 victims, 12,000 recorded) and of sexual assault.

2. New South Wales crime statistics from 1992/3 indicate the following conviction percentages in that year:

Against the person homicide – 27.5%

murder – 26.5%

sexual assault – 15%

assault – 10%

Against property robbery, theft, entry etc – 10.5%

car theft – 9.5%

3. The *Year Books* 1923-63 include a category 'other offences against females', and that for 1993 a category 'sexual assault', which do not appear in other years. Although it is possible that they are new subcategories of 'other offences against the person' and of 'serious assault', respectively, I have not included them in the 'all violent crime' totals, although they are included in the 'all serious crime' figure (later), as it is not clear that they are necessarily violent crimes. The numbers are very low except in 1963 and 1993, where their omission, if inappropriate, results in an underestimation of the increase in violent crime in recent decades.

4. From 1894 to 1933, crimes against property and good order in higher courts were presented simply as a total and combined figure. From 1943-63, crimes against property represented about 45% of total crimes against property and good order. This percentage is used to estimate crimes against property from the combined figure for 1894-1933.

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