

ATTITUDES TOWARDS PUNISHMENT

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Introduction

Attitudes towards punishment can be considered at two levels. The first, macro sociological level, considers objective attitudes towards punishment, i.e. a social characteristic such as the severity of the sentences imposed by the judges on the offenders. The second, somewhat micro sociological level, considers subjective attitudes towards punishment as being a characteristic of public opinion, i.e. the attitude of the persons who live in a given society and their desire to see sentences becoming more - or less - severe. It is within the frame of this second perspective that the present research takes place, since by attitudes towards punishment is intended the more or less repressive attitude of the interviewees towards the perpetrator of a crime.

For the determination of this variable, the interviewees submitted to the respondents of the fourteen countries participating in the First International Victimization Survey, the case of a 21 year old young man who, having stolen a colour television, is found guilty of a burglary for the second time. Interviewees were asked to determine the sentence which, according to them, would be the most appropriate for such a case².

The options offered to respondents range from a fine to a life sentence, through community service, suspended sentence and imprisonment with a variable length. This approach permitted the creation of a scale of attitudes towards punishment. The respondents who would give the house-breaker a prison sentence of more than six months were considered to have a very punitive attitude; those who would condemn him to prison for six months or less, a medium punitive attitude; and those who considered a non-custodial sentence appropriate, a low punitive attitude. Of course, the severity of the sentence to be imposed on a given offender is not the only way³ to operationalise the variable on "attitudes towards punishment"; it has, nevertheless, been utilised on various occasions and has provided positive results

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² The question was the following: "People have different ideas about the sentences which should be given to offenders. Take for instance the case of a man 21 years old who is found guilty of a burglary for the second time. This time he stole a colour TV. Which of the following sentences do you consider the most appropriate for such a case: fine, prison, community service, suspended sentence or any other sentence?". If the interviewee opted for imprisonment, he was asked to specify the length (see questions 291 and 292).

³ For instance, in a victimisation survey carried out in Switzerland, attitude towards punishment was intended as a repressive attitude aimed at solving the problem of crime through increased repression. Three indicators had been chosen, i.e. the standpoint of the interviewees on the living conditions in penal institutions, the increase in severity of the sentence imposed on offenders and the reintroduction of the death penalty. Killias, M. (1989) *Les Suisses face au crime*, Editions Ruegger, Grösch.

in many research studies.⁴ The following hypothesis was used to carry out the analysis:

- attitudes towards punishment vary according to a number of demographic variables, such as age, gender or educational level;
- attitudes towards punishment increase in severity following a victimisation experience. Victims tend to be more punitive than non-victims;
- attitudes towards punishment vary according to the level of the fear of crime. Persons who admit to a sense of insecurity would be more punitive than those who do not;
- in addition to the influence of demographic variables and victimisation rates, the difference in attitudes towards punishment in the various countries participating in the survey could be explained - at least in part - by the difference in the sentences imposed in various countries.

Attitudes towards punishment in the different countries

Table 1 shows the various attitudes towards punishment in the fourteen countries that participated in the International Victimisation Survey.

Table 1: Attitudes towards punishment in the different countries

	Attitudes towards punishment		
	Non-custodial sanctions	Imprisonment of six months or less	Imprisonment of six months or more
Germany	87.6	7.5	4.9
England & Wales	60.8	15.5	23.7
Australia	63.8	16.8	19.4
Belgium	74.1	15.2	10.7
Canada	66.9	16.4	16.8
Scotland	59.3	19.2	21.5
Spain	68.6	16.9	14.5
USA	44.7	12.8	42.5
Finland	85.3	9.2	5.6
France	86.8	10.6	2.6
The Netherlands	73.3	15.1	11.6
Northern Ireland	51.7	17.8	30.5
Norway	87.6	7.9	4.5
Switzerland	91.6	7.3	1.2

⁴ See for example Quimet, M. (1989) Tracking down penal judgment: a study of decision-making among the public and court practitioners, Newark, New Jersey: Quimet, M. and M. Cusson (1990) "La sévérité des sentences: une comparaison entre la France et la Québec" *Revue Internationale de Criminologie et de Police Technique* 43/1:26-34.

This table shows that attitudes towards punishment differ greatly among the various countries. In fact, if 92% of the Swiss, 88% of the German and Norwegians, 87% of the French and 85% of the Finns would give a non-custodial sentence to the burglar who stole a television set, 55% of Americans would impose a prison sentence (3/4 of which more than 6 months). Is the concept of the neutralising role of prison⁵ more widespread in Anglo-Saxon countries, particularly in the United States?

⁵ Neutralisation (or incapacitation) is the act of utilising imprisonment to prevent a criminal from committing other offences. See, on this matter, van Dine, S., J.P. Conrad and S. Dinitz (1979) *Restraining the wicked. The incapacitation of the dangerous criminal*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass./Toronto; Cohen, J. (1983) "Incapacitation as a strategy for crime control: possibilities and pitfalls" in Tonry, M. and N. Morris (eds.) *Crime and Justice* 5:193:1-84, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Shannon, L.W. (1985) "Risk assessment vs. real prediction: the prediction problem and public trust" *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 1/2:159-189; Haapanen, R.A. (1990) *Selective incapacitation and the serious offender*, Springer-Verlag, New York and Berlin.

Attitudes towards punishment and demographic variables

Gender

The intention is to establish whether gender has any bearing on attitudes towards punishment. In others words, an attempt will be made to ascertain whether males are more punitive than females or vice-versa.

Table 2: Gender and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries)

Attitudes towards punishment	Males (%)	Females (%)
Non-custodial sanctions	69.0	73.5
Imprisonment of 6 months or less	14.7	12.0
Imprisonment of more than 6 months	16.2	14.4

G=-.10 Chi²=63.4 99.9% (N=11218) Df=2 Z=5.05 99.9% (N=13300) p≤.000

Males are slightly more punitive than females. Moreover, this orientation is present in all countries with correlations (Gamma) of between .01 (Belgium) and .24 (Norway). Nevertheless, not all these correlations are significant.⁶

Age

The problem here is to determine whether the age of interviewees has an influence on attitudes towards punishment.

Table 3 shows that the connection is non-significant⁷. However, it should be noted that this insignificant tendency varies from country to country. Thus, in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, France, the USA, Canada, Australia and Spain young people tend to be slightly more punitive than older people, whereas in England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Germany, Finland and Norway, young people are less punitive.

⁶ The results are not significant at the 5% level in the following countries: Scotland, Belgium, France, Finland, Australia and Spain.

⁷ The Chi² (significant) indicates only whether the distribution of the cases in the table cells have an aleatory character or not and the Z (non-significant) verifies whether an increasing or decreasing trend appears in the table.

Table 3: Age and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries)

Attitudes towards punishment	Age (%)			
	16-24	25-39	40-64	over 64
Non-custodial sanctions	68.8	71.6	73.4	69.3
Imprisonment of 6 months or less	13.9	13.1	13.0	13.8
Imprisonment of more than 6 months	17.2	15.3	13.5	17.0

G=-.02 Chi²=45.6 99.9% (N=3607) 100% (N=8631) 99.9% (N=8699) 100.1% (N=3404)
Df=6 p≤.000 Z=1.34 N.S.

As can be observed above, gender has more than a negligible effect on attitudes towards punishment;⁸ therefore, it was pertinent to ascertain whether the effect of age on attitudes towards punishment varies according to gender. The results obtained are very interesting. Whereas young men are less punitive than older men ($G=.04$; $P \leq .05$), young women are, for their part, more punitive than older women ($G=-.07$; $p \leq .001$). These trends were found in almost all the countries taking part in the International Victimisation Survey⁹.

Thus, age can also play a certain (although very small) role in determining the various attitudes towards punishment, and this in an opposite direction for the two genders.

Educational level

Since it is not possible to compare different, or even similar, educational levels in different countries, the interviewees were asked to indicate how old they were when they completed their full time education¹⁰. On the basis of the answers given to this question, it was subjectively estimated possible to divide the interviewees into four categories, corresponding to four different educational levels: very high (education completed after 20 years), high (17-19 years), average (15-16 years) and mediocre (less than 15 years). At this point what had to be clarified was whether the educational level - as defined above - had an influence on the various attitudes towards punishment.

⁸ See the section on gender.

⁹ For males, national results are non-significant and - except for the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and Spain - follow the general trend (i.e. that young people are less punitive than older people). For females, England and Wales, Scotland, Finland and Norway show opposite trends (but widely non-significant) to the general trend, whereas the Netherlands, Germany, France, Australia and Spain have significant trends, identical with the general trend (i.e. that young females are more punitive than older females).

¹⁰ Question No. 316 was as follows: "How old were you when you completed your full-time education at school, college or elsewhere?"

Research studies carried out in the past¹¹ showed that the educational level plays a key-part in matters of attitudes towards punishment. Table 4 shows also that the more a person is educated, the less punitive is his/her attitude. Except for the USA where there is a valueless and non-significant effect, this assertion can be made for all the countries participating in the survey, even if for some of them this trend is not significant at the 5% level¹². The result is the same for all age groups¹³ and for both sexes.¹⁴

Table 4: Educational level and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries)

Attitudes towards punishment	Educational level (%)			
	Mediocre	Average	High	Very high
Non-custodial sanctions	68.0	68.6	72.3	76.3
Imprisonment of 6 months or less	15.8	14.8	12.6	10.9
Imprisonment of more than 6 months	16.2	16.6	15.2	12.8

G=-.10 Chi²=121.1 100% (N=3794) 100% (N=6314) 100.1% (N=6820) 100% (N=5574)
 Df=6 Z=6.25 p≤.000

The particular method of measuring education used here has made it impossible to establish a strong relationship between educational level and the various attitudes towards punishment observed in most surveys carried out so far. As a matter of fact, in national surveys the answers provided better reflect the real educational level since the interviewees are asked which was the last school they attended (primary, secondary, technical school, gymnasium, college, university). Thus, the question is whether the measure of the standard of education used in the International Survey is really valid.

Since the educational level is generally considered as being directly related with the income - or more precisely, the income depends on the educational level - it would be reasonable to expect that the result obtained above would be the same if the independent variable "educational level" was replaced with the variable income of the interviewees. Nevertheless, a number of research studies¹⁵ revealed a difference in the relationship between attitudes towards punishment and educational level and that between attitudes towards punishment and income. This appears to

¹¹ Brillon, Y. (1983) "La peur du crime et les tendances répressives du public envers les criminels" *Revue Internationale de Criminologie et de Police Technique* 36/4:12-23; Killias, Les Suisses..., op. cit.

¹² This concerns Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Canada and Spain.

¹³ -.09≤G≤-.15, p≤.002.

¹⁴ Males: G=-.12, p≤.000; Females: G=-.09, p≤.000.

¹⁵ See, for example, Killias, M. (1984) "Strafvollzug und Punitivität" *Bulletin de Criminologie* 10/2:5.26, and texts mentioned in it.

arise from a lack of recognition of the socio-economic status, i.e. a shortfall in education in relation to income. This last hypothesis was tested using data provided by the International Victimization Survey for which such lack of recognition has not been observed. As a matter of fact, the relationship existing between income and attitudes towards punishment ($G=-.07$, $p \leq .000$) is very close to that between attitudes towards punishment and educational level ($G=-.10$, $p \leq .000$). This finding seems to confirm the first hypothesis, i.e. that the income depends directly on the educational level. Furthermore, this is confirmed by the relatively strong correlation existing between these two variables ($r=.36$, $p \leq .000$).

Since considerable differences have been encountered in this area between the various countries participating in the International Survey, the issue of recognition of socio-economic status deserves further study.

Attitudes towards punishment and victimisation

It would be important to know whether, as a consequence of an experience of victimisation, the attitudes towards punishment tend to increase. In other words, determining whether victims are perceptibly more punitive than non-victims.

Table 5: Victims and non-victims of one of the offences taken into consideration over the five years preceding the survey and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries)

Attitudes towards punishment	Victims (%)	Non-victims (%)
Non-custodial sanctions	72.3	70.7
Imprisonment of 6 months or less	12.7	13.8
Imprisonment of more than 6 months	15.0	15.5

$G=.03$ $\text{Chi}^2=.8.5$ 100% (N=12293) 100% (N=12225) $\text{Df}=2$ $Z=1.68$ $p \leq .05$

Table 5 shows that, contrary to expectations, it is not the victims that are more punitive but the non-victims. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the correlation observed is low (.03); thus, one might wonder whether this correlation would be different if it was verified by gender or age. It is not. As a matter of fact, for males ($G=.06$; $p \leq .02$) and females ($G=.01$; NS) and for all age groups ($.004 \leq G \leq .04$; NS) the direction is the same: non-victims are slightly more punitive than victims.

The question then arose whether this result, contrary to the initial hypothesis, was constant in the various countries that participated in the survey, or whether it was due to a strong deviation in one of the participating countries in relation to the others. With the exception of Northern Ireland, Spain, USA and Canada, for all the other countries the victims were less punitive than non-victims. All the national results observed are non-significant, irrespective of the direction. Thus, there is no

real difference between victims and non-victims as far as attitudes towards punishment are concerned.

Is this conclusion, which is valid for victimisation in general, also valid for different types of victimisation? In order to answer this question, the offences covered by the survey have been subdivided into three categories¹⁶:

- all vehicle-related offences, i.e. theft of car, theft from car, car vandalism, theft of motorcycle and theft of bicycle;

¹⁶ This subdivision is the one used by the Interview Netherlands B.V., Marketing & Sale Information in the "International Crime Survey 1988 Tabulations Report 14 Countries", June 1989, Table 10.

- property crime, i.e. burglary with entry, attempted burglary and larceny;
- personal crime, i.e. robbery, sexual assaults and bodily injuries,

Table 6 shows that victims of personal crime cannot be distinguished in any way from non-victims; that victims of a vehicle-related offence are slightly less punitive than non-victims; and that victims of property crime are slightly more punitive than non-victims¹⁷. This last finding can be explained by the fact that the indicator of attitudes towards punishment relates to property crime and that a person who experienced such an offence over the five years preceding the survey is not able to dissociate his victimisation from the fictitious case presented to him.¹⁸

Table 6: Victims and non-victims of one of the three categories of crimes over the five years preceding the survey and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries).

Attitudes towards punishment	Offences related to cars		Property crime		Personal crime	
	Victims	Non-victims	Victims	Non-victims	Victims	Non-victims
Non-custodial sanctions	73.2	70.5	70.2	71.9	71.6	71.5
Imprisonment of 6 months or less	12.7	13.6	13.0	13.3	12.8	13.3
Imprisonment of more than 6 months	14.1	15.9	16.8	14.8	15.6	15.2

(N=8726) (N=15792) (N=5518) (N=19000) (N=3192) (N=21326)
 G=.06 p≤.001 G=.04 p≤.03 G=-.00 N.S.

Thus, a reasonable question would be whether the same statement could be made for all the countries or whether important divergences could be found between them. For offences related to vehicles, the greater part of the trends is not significant¹⁹ and goes in the same direction than the one observed above, i.e. that victims are less punitive than non-victims²⁰. For property crime, instead, none of the national results are significant but most of them confirm the affirmation that victims are slightly more punitive than non-victims²¹. For personal crime, none of the national results are significant²².

¹⁷ van Dijk, J.J.M., P. Mayhew and M. Killias (1990) Experiences of crime across the world: key findings of the 1989 International Crime Survey, Kluwer, Deventer.

¹⁸ See the Introduction.

¹⁹ Except for England & Wales and Scotland, where victims are significantly less punitive ($p \leq .05$) than non-victims of offences related to vehicles ($G = .11$ in both cases).

²⁰ Except for the Netherlands and Canada where the trend is inverted, but very clearly non-significant.

²¹ Except for Belgium, France, Finland and Norway for which non-victims of property crime are more punitive than victims (non-significant trends).

²² In England & Wales ($G = .09$), Scotland ($G = .04$), the Netherlands ($G = .04$), Germany ($G = .04$), France ($G = .16$) and Australia ($G = .03$), the non-victims are slightly more punitive than the victims, whereas in Northern Ireland ($G = -.14$), Switzerland ($G = -.07$), Belgium ($G = -.00$), Finland ($G = -.04$), Norway ($G = -.11$), USA ($G = -.04$), Canada ($G = -.08$) and Spain ($G = -.04$), the victims are slightly more punitive than the non-victims.

It would also appear from the analysis based on gender and age that the observed trends are valid for both males and females, as well as for all age groups.

Thus, the conclusion can be drawn from these analyses that the influence of victimisation on the various attitudes towards punishment is very close to zero. This conclusion must, however, be interpreted very carefully, as the international victimisation survey is not a chronological study and cannot take into account the development of the phenomena over the years.

Attitudes towards punishment and fear of crime

According to an hypothesis, which is as plausible as it is popular²³, fear of crime increases punitive attitudes towards punishment. We will put this hypothesis to the test here using the figures of the International Victimisation Survey.

Within the frame of this survey the fear of crime was represented by two variables. The first was related to the fear of frequenting certain streets or areas at night²⁴ and the second dealt with the fear of going out at night unaccompanied²⁵. Since the correlation between these two variables was very high ($G=.80$; $p\leq.000$)²⁶ but not perfect, it was decided that the respondents²⁷ could be divided into three categories according to their degree of fear of crime on the basis of the work carried out by the authors of the International Survey. The first category, people with no fear, includes all the respondents who answered "no" to the two questions; the second, those with some fear, includes all those who replied "yes" to one of the two questions and who gave a different reply to the other; the third category, those with a high level of fear, includes all respondents who answered "yes" to the two questions²⁸.

Table 7: Fear of crime and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries)

Attitudes towards punishment	Fear of crime (%)		
	Not afraid	Afraid	Very afraid
Non-custodial sanctions	71.5	72.9	70.4

²³ See, for example, Kunz, K.L. (1983) "Die Verbrechensfurcht als Gegenstand der Kriminologie und als Faktor der Kriminalpolitik" *Monatsschrift für Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform* 66/3:162-174; and Schneider, H.J. (1987), *Kriminologie*, pp. 727 et seq., Berlin/New York.

²⁴ Question No. 252 was as follows: "Please try to remember the last time you went out after dark in your area for whatever reason. Did you stay away from certain streets or areas to avoid crime?".

²⁵ Question No. 253 was as follows: "The last time you went out, did you go with someone else to avoid crime?".

²⁶ At a national level, this correlation is situated, for all countries, between .74 (Belgium) and .92 (Norway), all these trends being highly significant ($p\leq.000$).

²⁷ van Dijk et al., *Experiences...*, op. cit., pp. 77 et seq.

²⁸ We can wonder whether this way of measuring the feeling of non-safety is valid and really operationalises the "fear of crime" variable. The reason why we utilised, as it was, the method of doing of the authors of the survey is that no other question covered better the fear of crime in the questionnaire.

Imprisonment of 6 months or less	13.6	12.7	12.5
Imprisonm. of more than 6 months	14.9	14.4	17.1
	100% (N=14923)	100% (N=5164)	(N=2940)
G=.003	Chi ² =15.1	Df=4	p≤.005
			Z=0.16
			N.S.

Table 7 shows that the relationship between the fear of crime and attitudes towards punishment is very weak (G=.003) and non-significant²⁹. When carrying out a similar analysis for each of the countries in the International Victimization Survey, again non-significant trends are obtained everywhere. If gender is considered in the relationship between fear and attitudes towards punishment, a non-significant trend for both males and females can again be observed. Age has no effect on the relationship between fear and attitudes towards punishment. It should be noted, however, that in view of the transverse nature of this victimisation survey, it is not possible to take into account the development of phenomena over time; thus these results must be interpreted with care.

Since the measure of punishment relates to an act of burglary³⁰, it was thought it would be interesting to carry out the same analyses with another indicator of the fear of crime, i.e. whether the respondent feels he is unlikely or very likely to be the victim of a burglary during the year following the survey³¹. Table 8 shows that the results obtained are very similar (G=.001, N.S.) with this second indicator of insecurity.

Table 8: Chances of experiencing a burglary in the coming year and attitudes towards punishment (without distinguishing between countries)

Attitudes towards punishment	Probability of experiencing a burglary (%)		
Non-custodial sanctions	71.3	73.7	63.4
Imprisonment of 6 months or less	13.4	12.6	15.5
Imprisonm. of more than 6 months	15.2	13.7	21.1
	99.9% (N13939)	100% (N=7703)	(N=1311)
G=.001	Chi ² =63.1	Df=4	p≤.000
			Z=.04
			N.S.

²⁹ The Chi2 (significant) indicates the aleatory character or not of the distribution of the cases in the table cells, whereas Z (non-significant) verifies whether a trend towards an increase or a decrease appears in the table.

³⁰ See the Introduction.

³¹ Question No. 254 was as follows: "What would you say are the chances that over the next twelve months someone will try to break into your home? Do you think this is very likely, likely or not likely?".

This finding is confirmed by the non-existence of significant relationships between the degree of satisfaction expressed by victims with regard to the work done by the police in cases which involve them personally and victims' attitude towards punishment³⁵.

Attitudes towards punishment at country level

As noted earlier,³⁶ there are strong differences in the attitudes towards punishment among the various countries participating in the International Victimization Survey. An attempt will be made here to determine the reasons for these geographical differences.

Attitudes towards punishment and victimisation rates

The first step is to determine whether attitudes towards punishment relate to rates of victimisation. To do this, the victimisation rate with the percentage of respondents who favoured imprisonment for a recidivist burglar who stole a colour television will be compared for each of the fourteen countries participating in the survey.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who favoured imprisonment and victimisation rates over the five years preceding the survey.

³⁵ $G=.009$, N.S. See questions 272-274.

³⁶ See the section on attitudes towards punishment in different countries.

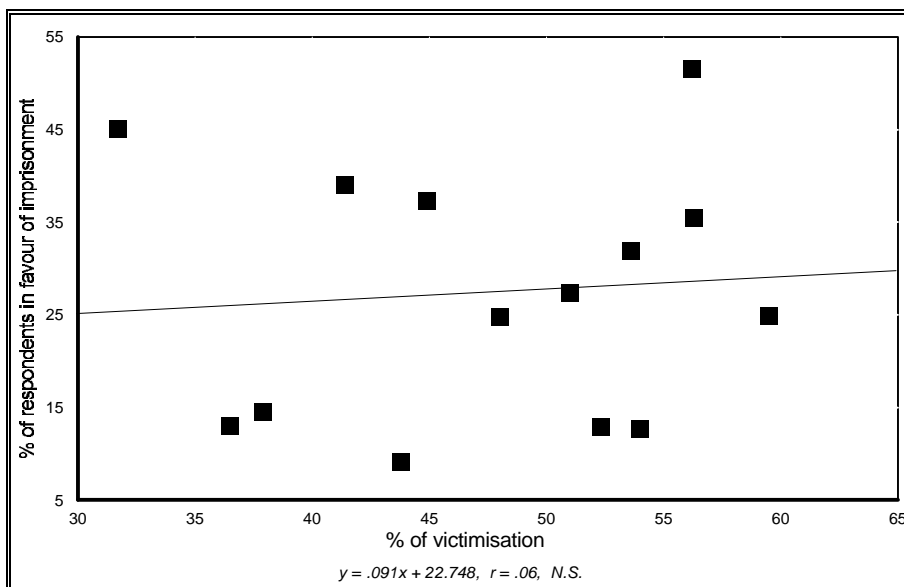


Figure 1 shows that the correlation between the percentage of respondents in favour of a prison sentence and the national rate of victimisation is minimal and, in addition, non-significant to a threshold of 5%. This result is not too surprising since we saw in earlier that the victims of a crime are not more punitive than non-victims and thus that victimisation does not contribute to an increase in punitive attitudes. It should, however, be noted that if, rather than taking into account general victimisation, the fact of having been the victim of the offence which is the object of the question on punitiveness (i.e. burglary)³⁷ is looked into, this correlation increases to .58.

Attitudes towards punishment and detention rate

Is the relationship between attitudes towards punishment and the percentage of detainees in the different countries similar to the relationship between attitudes towards imprisonment and the victimisation rate?

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who favoured imprisonment and percentage of victims who experienced a burglary over the five years preceding the survey

³⁷ See the Introduction, as well as van Dijk et al., *Experiences...*, op. cit., p. 82.

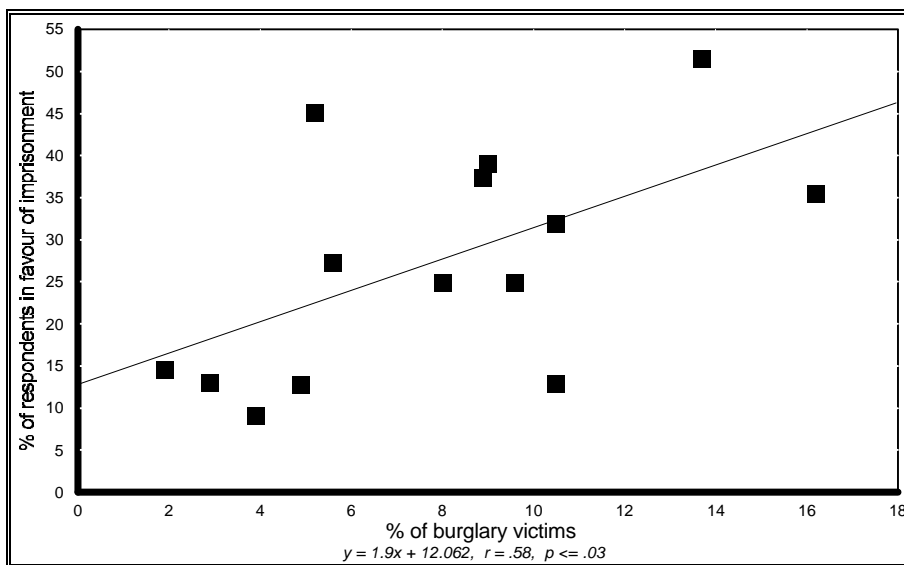


Figure 3 shows clearly that the link between the percentage of detainees per 100,000 inhabitants and the percentage of interviewees who favoured imprisonment is very strong and, by the same token, significant³⁸. However, this finding does not allow us to determine the direction of the causality: is it because the population of a given country is very punitive that there is a large number of persons in prison, or is it because there are a lot of people in prison that the prison sentence is considered justifiable and, therefore, favoured by the respondents? Due to the transverse nature of a victimisation survey we are not in a position to answer this question.

The same applies to the relationship between the average length of the sentence proposed by the respondents in favour of imprisonment and the number of persons in detention per 100,000 inhabitants. Figure 4 is interesting as it confirms the existence of a close relationship between the number of detainees - and thus, indirectly, the frequency and the length of prison sentences pronounced by national judges - and the attraction of prison sentences for the population³⁹.

³⁸ It should be noted that if a recalculation of the same correlation is done excluding the marginal case of the USA, the result obtained is completely identical: $r = .62, p \leq .03$.

³⁹ It should be noted anyway that if the same calculation is made excluding the marginal case represented by the USA, we obtain a lower and non-significant correlation: $r = .26, N.S.$

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who favoured imprisonment and detention rate per 100,000 inhabitants⁴⁰

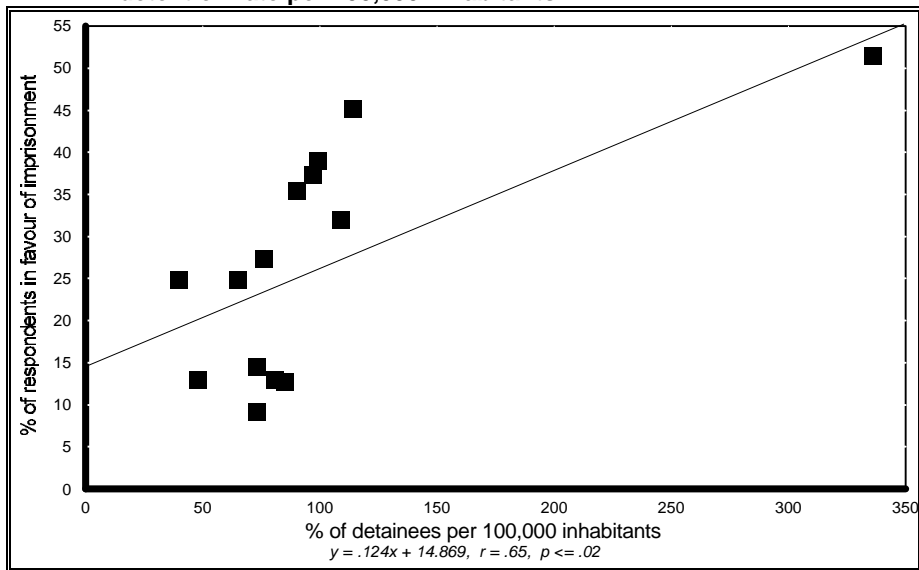
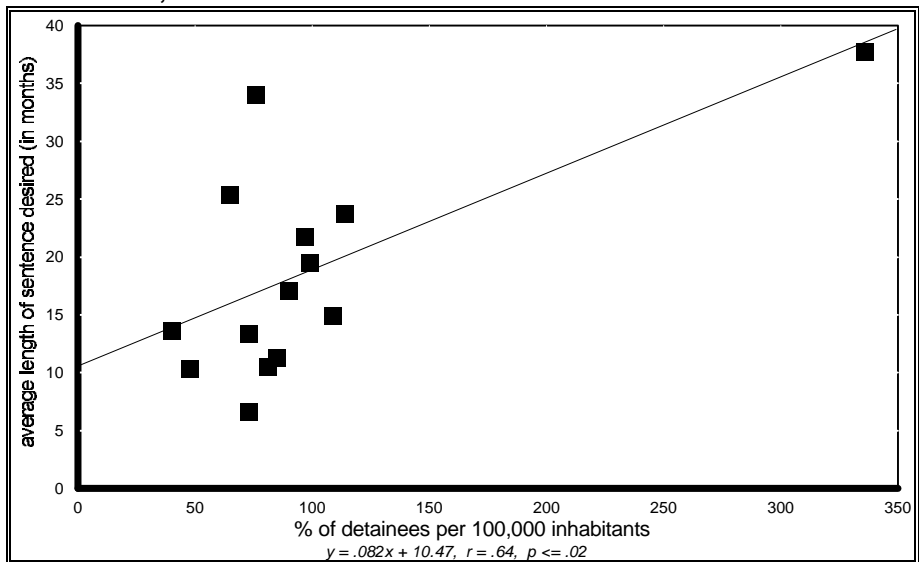


Figure 4: Average length of sentence desired and percentage of detainees per 100,000 inhabitants.



⁴⁰ From van Dijk et al., Experiences..., op. cit., Fig. 41, p. 83.

Community service

Table 10 shows the existence of important differences between the various countries participating in the survey as regards the popularity of community service.

Table 10: Percentage of respondents who favoured community service in the different countries⁴¹

	Community service (%)	Any other service (%)
Germany	62.5	37.5
England & Wales	40.3	59.7
Australia	47.6	52.4
Belgium	43.3	56.7
Canada	40.2	59.8
Scotland	36.3	63.7
Spain	28.5	71.5
USA	31.2	68.8
Finland	38.1	61.9
France	56.5	43.5
The Netherlands	49.3	50.7
Northern Ireland	32.4	67.6
Norway	50.8	49.2
Switzerland	58.9	41.1

In this report community service is understood to be an alternative to a prison sentence which involves asking the delinquent to perform a specific task or a certain number of hours' work to the benefit of the community. But is this definition what the respondents understand by the term "community service"?

The author attended the institute responsible for the survey when the Swiss interviews were being carried out. He had the opportunity to note that a great number of Swiss respondents thought that community service was a means of ensuring that offenders worked under supervision, so that they are too busy and tired to commit any further offences. In other words, an important proportion of the respondents were confusing community service with forced labour. This perception of community service denotes high punitiveness; respondents who confused community service with forced labour were not to appear as persons with low punitive attitude.⁴²

⁴¹ The difference of the absolute numbers existing between Tables 1 and 8 originate from the fact that the respondents who answered "any other sentence" to question No. 291 (see Note 2) are not taken into account in Table 1 and are taken into account in Table 8.

⁴² It should be noted that, in the framework of this study, persons with a weak punitive attitude were those who did not favour imprisonment for a recidivist burglar found guilty of having stolen a colour television set, including those who favoured community service (see the Introduction).

One would expect that the populations of the countries that do not practice community service would not really be aware of what it actually involves and confuse it with forced labour, whereas residents of countries in which this sentence is often applied would be more familiar with it.

In order to confirm this theory we will start from a finding of the authors of the survey⁴³, according to which, in most countries respondents with a high standard of education were in favour of community service significantly more often than respondents with an average education.

Table 11: Educational level and percentage of respondents who favoured community service (without distinguishing between countries)

	Educational level			
	Low	Middle	High	Very high
Favourable to community service	38.8%	43.3%	48.2%	51.6%
Favourable to another sentence	61.2%	56.7%	51.8%	48.4%

$G = -.13$ $\chi^2 = 195.1$ 100% (N=4211) 100% (6720) 100% (7249) 100% (N=5962)
 DF=3 Z=9.06 $p \leq .000$

This trend is confirmed again for both males ($G = -.13$; $p \leq .000$) and females ($G = -.14$; $p \leq .000$), as well as for all age groups ($-.23 \leq G \leq -.10$; $p \leq .001$). The same trend is observed for England & Wales ($G = -.24$; $p \leq .000$), Scotland ($G = -.29$; $p \leq .000$), Northern Ireland ($G = -.13$; $p \leq .02$), Belgium ($G = -.31$; $p \leq .000$), France ($G = -.27$; $p \leq .000$), Finland ($G = -.21$; $p \leq .004$), Norway ($G = -.17$; $p \leq .02$), Australia ($G = -.11$; $p \leq .03$) and Spain ($G = -.18$; $p \leq .007$). For the countries that participated in the International Victimization Survey, i.e. the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, USA and Canada, the trend is identical but not significant⁴⁴.

If in these five countries the correlation between the educational level and the percentage of respondents who favoured community service is very low and not significant, this means that as far as their opinion of community service is concerned, the respondents with a low educational level do not differ greatly from those with a higher educational level. This, however, is contrary to the general finding drawn from Table 11.

As noted before⁴⁵, people with a lower educational level are also those who are more punitive. It is quite possible that in the countries where community service is not well known, respondents thought of it as being similar to forced labour. Thus, if it became apparent that the countries deviating from the general trend of Table 11 are also those in which the sentence of community service is less known, an explanation would have been found in the fact that the people with a mediocre

⁴³ See van Dijk et al., Experiences..., op. cit., p. 84.

⁴⁴ The correlations between the educational level and the percentage of respondents who favoured community service in these five country vary between $-.004$ (The Netherlands) and $-.09$ (Switzerland).

⁴⁵ See the paragraph on educational level.

education do not differ from the others as far as their opinion on community service is concerned.

The five countries deviating from the general trend are Germany, Canada, USA, the Netherlands and Switzerland. These are the countries where community service is not well known. As a matter of fact, in Switzerland this sentence exists only in juvenile criminal law and is, furthermore, rarely applied; in Germany, it has recently become possible to replace imprisonment for debt with the recovery of fines and it is now possible to order a suspension of sentence probation in the form of community service⁴⁶ but, so far, these options have only been rarely used; in the United States the prison sentence is so widespread that it is hard to imagine that it is possible to impose a punishment other than confinement; in Canada, community service has been introduced in the national penal system but is still only rarely applied⁴⁷, in the Netherlands the experimental phase of community service in adult criminal law has just come to an end and such sentences are still not widely known.⁴⁸

On the contrary, in the United Kingdom, where the "Community Service Order" was introduced as long ago as 1972 as a complete penal sentence⁴⁹, the relationship existing between the standard of education and the attraction for community service is relatively strong. In fact - as opposed to what happens in the countries where community service is not well known - the English have integrated community service into their general conceptions of life and criminal policy; in other words they have integrated it into their "Weltanschauung" (philosophy of life).

These few findings allow us to conclude that, in conformity with our theory, the differences recorded with regard to attitude towards punishment in the different countries depend for a great part on the knowledge the general public has of the sentences and, therefore, indirectly of the sentences imposed by the national courts.

Multivariate analysis

The foregoing led us to think that to the role of socio-demographic variables is, perhaps, not as strong as that of socio-cultural variables, such as the national level of imprisonment and belonging to an Anglo-Saxon, Latin or other culture.

⁴⁶ Kerner, H.J. and O. Kästner (1986) *Gemeinnützige Arbeit in der Strafrechtspflege*, Bonn; Sessar, K. (1989) "Substituts aux peines d'emprisonnement en République Fédérale d'Allemagne" *Revue de Science Criminelle et de Droit Pénal Comparé* 4:699-709.

⁴⁷ Albrecht, H.J. (1985) "Ansätze und Perspektiven der Gemeinnützigen Arbeit im Strafrecht" *Bewährungshilfe* 32:121-134; Albrecht, H.J. and W. Schädler (1986) *Community service, Gemeinnützige Arbeit, Dienstverlening, Travail d'intérêt général. A new option in punishing offenders in Europe*, Freiburg i.Br.

⁴⁸ Albrecht, H.J. (1990) "Un travail d'intérêt général comme peine de substitution aux peines privatives de liberté" in *Un travail d'intérêt général, une peine nouvelle*, Compte-rendu 1/90:41-55, Caritas Suisse; Tak, P. (1990) "Holländische Erfahrungen mit der gemeinnützige Arbeit" in *Gemeinnützige Arbeit - Eine Alternative zur Freiheitsstrafe*, Compte rendu 1/90:39-46, Caritas Suisse.

⁴⁹ Albrecht, *Un travail...*, op. cit.; Huber, B. (1990) "Die Praxis der gemeinnützigen Arbeit in England" in *Gemeinnützige Arbeit - Eine Alternative zur Freiheitsstrafe*, Compte rendu 1/90:31.38, Caritas Suisse; Huber, B. (1980) "Community service order als Alternative zur Freiheitsstrafe" *Juristenzeitung* 35:638-643.

This theory has been confirmed by multiple regression analysis in which the number of respondents in favour of imprisonment - with respect to the average length of sentence desired by the respondents advocating a prison sentence - was considered to be a dependent variable, for the fourteen countries covered by the survey. Two types of independent variables are taken into consideration:

- a) the "individual" variables referring to the actual character of the respondent (sex, age, standard of education) or their perceptions (fear of crime);
- b) the "contextual" variables linked to the culture of the country (whether or not a person belongs to an Anglo-Saxon or Latin culture).

The two models made up of the "individual" variables - i.e. where the dependent variable is the number of respondents in favour of imprisonment, with respect to the average desired length of the sentence - show that these independent variables do not significantly explain part of the variance of the dependent variables. On the other hand, when considering the two models made up of the "contextual" variables, an important and significant explanatory weighting in belonging to the Anglo-Saxon culture⁵⁰ and a lesser weighting to belonging to the Latin culture⁵¹ can be noted. These four models highlight that the inter-cultural differences are more important than demographic differences in explaining attitudes towards punishment, at least where the sentences under consideration are generally less disputed (this is certainly the case for imprisonment, as opposed, perhaps, to capital punishment).

Nevertheless, it appears that the "contextual" variables play a much more important role in the choice between prison sentence and another type of sentence (71% explained variance)⁵² than on the choice of the length of prison sentence (12% explained variance)⁵³. As mentioned above⁵⁴ the length of the sentence appears, therefore, to be more linked to the level of imprisonment.

The findings that have been made do not allow us, however, to confirm whether a punitive nature is a negative characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon culture. Actually, both the indicators of the attitudes towards punishment⁵⁵ and the belonging of a country to this culture ($r=.53$, $p\leq.05$) have a strong correlation with the level of detention. We are not in a position to say whether the intervening variable of the level of detention in the various countries results from any cultural belonging. In other words, it is not possible to determine whether the fact that a country is Anglo-Saxon leads to a higher rate of detention or whether the level of detention is higher

⁵⁰ $R^2=.745$, adjusted to $R^2=.724$, Standardised Beta Weight =.897, $p\leq.001$ if the percentage of respondents who favoured imprisonment is considered as a dependent variable; $R^2=.147$, adjusted to $R^2=.076$, Standardised beta Weight =.507, $p\leq.10$ if the average length of the sentence imposed is considered as a dependent variable (given that the number of countries is low, it has been considered that the significance level of .10 does not make this result fully significant).

⁵¹ Standardised Beta Weight =.097, N.S. if the percentage of respondents who favoured imprisonment considered as a dependent variable; Standardised Beta Weight =.35, N.S. if the average length of the sentence imposed is considered as a dependent variable.

⁵² $R^2=.753$, adjusted to $R^2=.807$, $p\leq.001$.

⁵³ $R^2=.254$, adjusted $R^2=.118$, N.S.

⁵⁴ See Figure No. 4.

⁵⁵ See the section on Attitudes towards punishment and detention rates.

due to other reasons. The fact that the correlation existing between belonging to the Anglo-Saxon culture and attitudes towards punishment is higher than that which exists between the latter and the level of detention (when attitudes towards punishment are described by the number of respondents in favour of imprisonment⁵⁶), is the only indication leading to believe that this belonging may involve a harsher attitude towards punishment.

Placing a value on socio-cultural (or "contextual") variables and the importance of their role in explaining the various attitudes towards punishment is certainly one of the most interesting results of this research, since only an international survey allows such comparative analysis between countries.

Conclusion

In the area of relationships between demographic variables and the degree of punitiveness, the International Victimization Survey corroborates the results of other studies. As a matter of fact, it can be observed that males are slightly more punitive than females, that age has a certain effect on the various attitudes towards punishment when the two sexes are considered separately, and, finally, that the standard of education plays a considerable role in the field of punitiveness, even though certain caveats must be mentioned with regard to the validity of the measure of the standard of education⁵⁷.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the demographic differences (concerning the degree of punitiveness) observed in numerous national studies appear less significant in the International Survey. As a matter of fact, the role of sex, age and standard of education is much less than that of the socio-cultural variables such as the level of imprisonment and cultural belonging. This finding has been confirmed by multiple regression analysis which has shown that inter-cultural differences are much more important than demographic or structural differences in explaining the various attitudes towards punishment.

Since only an international survey allows such comparisons between different countries and, therefore, various cultures, this evaluation of socio-cultural variables is certainly one of the most interesting results of the present research.

Another important result of this research is the confirmation that the attitude towards punishment is very rarely influenced by the fear of crime or by crime itself. In other words, the attitude towards punishment essentially depends on an individual's "Weltanschauung" (philosophy of life) and certain variables that influence it, such as the standard of education, but remains largely insensitive to demonstrations of the object of suppression, i.e. crime. Nevertheless it should be noted once again that the International Victimization Survey is only a photograph of the situation in a given moment and does not allow for consideration of the evolution of the phenomena over time. It is possible that victims of crime were less punitive than average before the experienced victimisation but became average after having experienced a crime; this sort of development of the attitudes towards punishment would, of course, escape the International Victimization Survey. The

⁵⁶ .87 against .65.

⁵⁷ See the paragraph on educational level.

same applies to the relationship between victimisation and the fear of crime⁵⁸. It is possible that more confident people take less precautions, run a greater risk and, therefore, fall victim more often than those who are frightened; the fact that the former do not differ from the other respondents may mean that their fear has increased after victimisation to stabilise at the same level as that of the other respondents⁵⁹. Furthermore, fear of crime certainly depends on a variety of personal characteristics which cannot be controlled here. A certain amount of prudence is, therefore, needed when interpreting results. Prudence is especially needed as the attitudes towards punishment and fear of crime are described in the International Survey by a very limited number of variables.

⁵⁸ Skogan, W.G. (1987) "The impact of victimization on fear" *Crime and Delinquency* 12, 33/1:135-154, who studied the evolution of victimisation and fear of crime through a longitudinal study on a panel of 1,738 people. This research showed an important impact of victimisation on fear.

⁵⁹ Hindelang, M.J., M.R. Gottfredson and J. Garofalo (1978) *Victims of personal crime: an empirical foundation for a theory of personal victimization*, pp. 189, 200 et seq., Baillinger, Cambridge, Mass.; Kellens, G. (1982) "Victimisations, insécurité et système pénale" *Journal des tribunaux* 101:537-542, Brussels; Maxfield, M. (1987) *Explaining fear of crime: evidence from the 1984 British Crime Survey*, p. 46, HMSO, London; Killias, Les Suisses..., op. cit., p. 151; Killias, M. (1991) *Précis de criminologie*, Section 906, Editions Staempfli & Cie SA, Berne.