

# What recent property crime trends in Western Europe tells us about the crime drop

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*In the early 2000s, the debate surrounding the “crime drop” focused primarily on the reasons for the drop in homicide rates in the United States. It expanded later to include drops in other crimes—violence in a wider sense and property crime—and other countries, such as Canada, England, and Wales. A series of interpretations of the sharp drop in vehicle theft and burglaries inspired by the theory of criminal opportunity merits particular attention because the hypotheses on which these interpretations are based can be compared with the results of crime victimization surveys such as the British Crime Survey (BCS) and International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS). The hypothesis outlined by the Dutch researcher Jan Van Dijk, “responsive securitization,” seems, however, to be undercut by the change in trends that have been observed since 2008 in terms of domestic burglary with forced entry in metropolitan France, as well as in Belgium and Germany. The first reporting on the data available on the characteristics of burglaries with forced entry in France and Belgium leads us to think that their recent rise is the result of the increased involvement of organized crime. This “hypothesis of professionalization” does not necessarily contradict the existence of a prior cycle of response in the form of improving security equipment, especially as it should elicit its own “responsive securitization.”*

**Keywords:** *Crime drop, Responsive securitization, Opportunity theory, Security hypothesis, Rational choice, Trends in crime, Hypothesis of professionalization.*

## Introduction

The statistical data available for metropolitan France as a whole allow us to establish that in 2009, after several years of decline, the number of home burglaries with forced entry began to increase, while the number of vehicle thefts continued to decline.

Until 2008, the reduction in the frequency of these two types of thefts could be understood within the framework of international research on the “crime drop.” This expression<sup>1</sup> comes from the title of a collection published in 2000, *The Crime Drop in America*, by Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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<sup>1</sup> Different phenomena of crime decrease have been described as a “crime drop.” As a result, there is no single definition of it. It depends on the infractions that are taken into account, the places, and the

Their approach at the time consisted of an attempt to explain, a posteriori, a period of sharp declines in the domain of criminality, and it was generalized during the first decade of 2000 (Bettaïeb and Rizk 2014).

Indeed, it appeared that this phenomenon did not only concern homicides or assaults more generally, but also property crime<sup>2</sup> such as motor vehicle thefts and burglaries.

Moreover, the geographic scale of the analysis had to change, as most Western countries began to show trends comparable to those observed in the United States.

Thus, in November 2012, Jan Van Dijk, Andromachi Tseloni, and Graham Farrell called their work on the trends in crime in the Western world over the past 20 years *The International Crime Drop* (Van Dijk, Tseloni, and Farrell 2012).

Yet at the same time, in France, it appeared that one of the offenses that was part of the crime drop, home burglaries with forced entry, had not followed the general trend since 2008, contrary, for example, to thefts of motor vehicles, which continued to decline (ONDRP 2012).

How can the rich debate on the causes of the crime drop integrate this change of trend, which also concerned Belgium and Germany, among others?

## **Closing the Doors**

The awarding of the Stockholm Prize in Criminology 2012 to Jan Van Dijk for his “sustained leadership of the International Crime Victims Survey [ICVS]” allowed him, during his acceptance speech in June 2012, to demonstrate how those international victimization surveys were capable of both measuring trends and testing the hypotheses that might explain them.

Thus, in his research on the “explanations for the crime decline,” he suggested the following approach: “Let’s now turn to criminal opportunity theory for a possible explanation and see whether ICVS data can be used to test relevant hypotheses” (Van Dijk 2012, 19). He offers a hypothesis, “responsive securitization,” for which he had defined the theoretical framework between the second and third rounds of the ICVS (Van Dijk 1994).

In 1993, in the report on the results of the ICVS survey in 1992, Van Dijk, with Patricia Mayhew, had already touched on the question of the impact of property protection on the observed trends in burglaries by emphasizing: “One might conjecture that the USA—where burglary rates have declined over recent years—exemplifies a situation where there are sufficient numbers of sophisticated alarm systems (and perhaps enough caretakers/security guards in apartment buildings) to influence overall burglary rates” (Van Dijk and Mayhew 1993, 56).

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times. In this article, however, the “debate on the crime drop” can be defined as the research and discussion related to a phenomenon of sharp decline.

<sup>2</sup> According to statistical sources, there are different boundaries of property crime. This type of infractions includes nonviolent thefts (vehicle-related theft, larceny theft), trespassing or breaking and entry (burglary), and, depending on the cases, acts of vandalism or specific acts, such as intentional fires (arson), or even crimes such as fraud and forgery.

In his 2012 speech, Van Dijk described the dynamic of “responsive securitization” as follows:

As long as the benefits of crime outweigh the costs of offending, the pool of offenders expands and crime rates go up. Resulting rises in the losses of victims to crime, makes investments in self-protection by potential victims more profitable. Pools of well protected potential victims expand, shrinking criminal opportunities of crime. When the scale of such responsive securitization reaches a critical level, potential new offenders are discouraged from entering the criminal market. And crime rates start to fall.

He specifies that this type of “rational choice” (rational choice theory) is “also related to the theory of situational crime prevention, developed by Marcus Felson, Ron Clarke, and Pat Mayhew.”

Van Dijk notes that the first references in this domain were published in the 1970s, and in particular in 1979 for the theory of routine activities:

In 1975, British criminologists Ron Clarke, Pat Mayhew and Mike Hough, in house researchers of the Home Office, published a seminal report called *Crime as Opportunity* (Clarke et al. 1975). Crime, they argued, is driven by the extent of viable opportunities of crime in the here and now. Some years later, in 1979, Marcus Felson ascribed the boom in volume crime in the USA to the increased availability of suitable targets for theft (such as cars and durable consumer goods) and a dispersal of activities away from family and home, eroding natural guardianship. In this equally seminal publication the term routine activity theory was first coined (Van Dijk 2012, 5).

He explains how “the empirical evidence presented by Felson for the causal relationships between routine activities and crime was based on a secondary analysis of data from the National Crime Victimization Surveys of the USA.” In 1979, it had already existed for a half-dozen years.

In the United Kingdom, still according to Van Dijk, “the three authors of *Crime as Opportunity*, ... , would soon become the main protagonists of the world famous British Crime Surveys.”

In 2004, when Mayhew and Hough looked back at the beginning of the British Crime Survey (BCS) in the early 1980s, they explained that “an important priority was to shed more light on which portions of the population were at risk and why” (Hough and Mayhew 2004, 273).<sup>3</sup>

At the time, they took inspiration from work that “was developing in terms of situational prevention (Clarke and Mayhew 1980) and the routine activities theory (Cohen and Felson 1979)” (Hough and Mayhew 2004, 274). As they recognized, “retrospectively, it was probably one of the most useful elements in the surveys, providing not only

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<sup>3</sup> Translator’s note: Quotations in this paragraph have been back-translated from the French-language version of this article.

explanations on the way that delinquency was distributed between social groups but also the factors that made the curve of delinquency rise or fall.”<sup>4</sup>

And, as Jan Van Dijk noted in 2012, “The historical links between the launching of victimization surveys and the elaboration of various versions of criminal opportunity theory have to my knowledge remained largely unnoticed. But they seem obvious nevertheless” (Van Dijk 2012, 6).

By allowing a determination of the most affected portions of the population and the causes of this overexposure, “victimization surveys have taught criminologists to look at the other side of crime.”

## **Evidence from the BCS**

In practice, when using the results of victimization surveys (BCS or ICVS), this approach has most often been applied to two categories of property crime: vehicle-related theft and burglaries.

Burglary is an offense that, contrary to what one might believe, covers more than the French term *cambriolage* alone. This term refers to theft with forced entry, while burglaries include any entry, forced or otherwise, with the intention to commit a crime.

As a result, while all *cambriolage* (other than attempts) is by definition burglary, an attempted *cambriolage*, or an attempted theft with forced entry, could either be a burglary, in the case of entry without theft, or an attempted burglary, if no entry took place.

A very detailed definition was given by Tracey Budd in 1999 in an article called “Burglary of Domestic Dwellings”:

Domestic burglary comprises the following:

- Burglary with entry—incidents in which the offender entered the dwelling as a trespasser with the intention of committing theft, rape, grievous bodily harm, or unlawful damage. To be classified as burglary with entry the offender must have entered the property but need not have carried out their intention.
- Attempted burglary—incidents in which there is clear evidence that the offender tried to enter the dwelling as a trespasser but failed.

Burglary against a domestic dwelling (burglary hereafter) therefore does not necessarily entail the theft, or attempted theft, of property, or involve forced entry (it may be through an open window or involve the use of false pretenses) (Budd 1999, 1).

In this study, Budd analyzed the results of the BCS, in particular to determine what factors had an impact, “all things being otherwise equal,” on the risk of being declared a victim of “domestic burglary.” The specific effect of each factor taken into consideration was determined using the statistical technique of logistic regression (Lollivier et al. 2000).

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<sup>4</sup>Translator’s note: Quotations in this paragraph have been back-translated from the French-language version of this article.

On the basis of these results, she asserts that “the evidence from the BCS suggests security devices are very effective in reducing the risk of burglary victimization” (Budd 1999).

Moreover, the BCS survey was also able to measure that “ownership of security devices increased substantially between 1992 and 1998” (Budd 1999). She points specifically to the case of security lights and alarms, for which the rates of ownership rose sharply (Budd 1999, 36).

However, Budd does not suggest that this increase is a possible explanation for the observed downward trend: “Between 1993 and 1997 the number of burglaries fell by 8%” (Budd 1999, 7), probably because the variation at the time was “not statistically significant” (Budd 1999, 7).

The trend for “burglary with entry,” minus 14% between 1993 and 1997, is nonetheless “a statistically significant drop” and one would like to know if it could be explained by the increase in the amount of security devices. The size of the samples may have been a factor in limiting the possibilities of analysis of this subject.

Furthermore, the logical regression to determine, “all things otherwise being equal,” the factors having an impact on the probability of declaring oneself a victim of burglary was carried out on the combined results of the 1996 and 1998 BCS (the survey was not annual at the time), precisely in order to have a larger sample size.

In July 2001, in a note from the Home Office titled “Burglary: Practice Message from the British Crime Survey,” the lessons drawn from the BCS were presented from an operational perspective: “The findings are directly relevant to police and crime reduction partnership practice, in that they identify groups and circumstances which could profitably act as the focus for local analysis and prevention priorities” (Budd 2001, 1).

One of the objectives of this note is “raising public awareness about the efficacy of home security” (Budd 2001, 5). According to Budd, “one of the major contributions of BCS in recent years has been to demonstrate the efficacy of security devices” (Budd 2001, 4).

However, in the 2000 report by the Home Office on the BCS, the connection between the decline in burglaries and the increase in the level of security devices and equipment is mentioned in the conditional:

The BCS has shown that security devices are effective in reducing the risk of burglary (Budd 1999). For example, victims of burglary are less likely to have security measures in place at the time of the incident than non-victims. Furthermore, victims of burglary with entry tend to have less security than victims of attempted burglary suggesting security is effective in thwarting at least some offenders. Between 1998 and 2000, levels of home security continued to increase and this may partly account for the reduction in burglary over the period. For example, 26% of households said they had a burglar alarm in 2000 and 75% window locks. The figures in 1998 were 24% and 71% respectively (Kershaw et al. 2000, 18).

In July 2001, vehicle-related thefts were also the object of an operational guidance note based on the BCS results (Kinshott 2001).

As for burglaries, this note took the most recent information provided by the English victimization survey for reasons of prevention: “Much of the statistical information in this

note was contained in the main report on the 2000 British Crime Survey. . . , but here more explicit links are made between BCS results and implications for local crime reduction practice” (Kinshott 2001, 1).

For vehicle-related theft, the context was the same as for burglaries: “Between 1997 and 1999, the number of thefts of vehicles fell by 11%; thefts from vehicles fell by 16%; and, attempted thefts by 13%. Between 1995 and 1997 these figures fell, by 25%, 14%, and 27% respectively” (Kershaw et al. 2000, 25). In parallel, “levels of vehicle security have steadily increased since the early 1990s” (Kershaw et al. 2000, 27).

The possible relationship of cause and effect is once again presented as a hypothesis in the chapter “Explaining the Trends” of the Home Office report of 2000: “Security may also play a part in the fall in vehicle-related thefts” (Kershaw et al. 2000, 56).

The questions of the BCS on the progress of vehicle thefts were also used so that times and zones “where more vehicle crime occurs” (Kinshott 2001, 6) were taken into account “in shaping a vehicle crime reduction policy” (Kinshott 2001, 6).

The questions asked of victims of vehicle thefts during the BCS also allow an estimation of the proportion of crimes where the vehicle was later recovered. These numbers provide “some indication of [how] many thefts are likely to be at the more professional end of the scale (see Webb and Laycock 1992; Brown and Sallybanks 1999)” (Kershaw et al. 2000, 30).

In fact, it is considered that when “the intention is to use the vehicle temporarily for casual use—sometimes known as ‘joyriding’ or ‘twocing’ (taking without consent)—the vehicle is usually recovered after)” (Kershaw et al. 2000, 30).

When the number of vehicle thefts drop, “the declining recovery rate of stolen vehicles suggests that opportunist thefts are falling most, consistent with security improvements deterring less determined and accomplished thieves” (Kershaw et al. 2000, 56).

In his acceptance speech for the Stockholm Prize in Criminology, Jan Van Dijk approached this subject in the same framework, in light of the data collected during ICVS surveys:

Traditionally a large part of car thefts are committed by juveniles for temporary transportation, known in Britain as joyriding. A smaller part is committed by professional thieves for resale or sale of car parts. If the recent falls have indeed been caused by improved security, this effect is likely to have been stronger on theft for temporary transportation by opportunistic juveniles than on theft by experienced professionals. In the ICVS victims of car theft are asked whether the stolen car was ever recovered. To test the hypothesis that drops in thefts in car have been most pronounced among the category of theft for temporary transportation, we have looked at trends over time in recovered and non recovered car thefts in thirteen Western nations (Van Dijk 2012, 23).

It thus appears that, according to the ICVS survey, “In the thirteen Western countries together rates of joyriding dropped by 50% (from 1.4% in 1988 to 0.6 in 2005) while rates of car theft remained stable at a one year victimization rate of 0.4%” (Van Dijk 2012, 23).

## **The Crime Drop and the Security Hypothesis**

This type of results had led Van Dijk, Kesteren, and Smit to generalize their hypothesis, still presented as such, of the effect of security measures on the crime drop in their 2007 report on the ICVS and EU ICS surveys of 2004–2005 by noting that “the ICVS data on precautionary measures against burglaries shows significant increases in the use of such measures in all participating countries. Improved security may well have been one of the main forces behind the universal drop in crimes such as joyriding and household burglary” (Van Dijk, Kesteren, and Smit 2007, 16).

Graham Farrell, Nick Tilley, Andromachi Tseloni, and Jen Mailley have taken a particular interest in this hypothesis, which they call the “security hypothesis,” since 2008. At the time, they expressed a rather clear-cut opinion on the debate surrounding the causes of crime drop:

It is pretty embarrassing to criminology as a profession that nobody has come close to explaining the huge drops in crime experienced in industrialized countries in the last decade or so. There have been some fascinating attempts and much imaginative scholarship (since at least the set of studies in Blumstein and Wallman [2000]), but ultimately nothing convincing (Farrell et al. 2008, 17).

They also stated that criminologists, including themselves, keep as a secret that, in fact, “we do not really know what happened” (Farrell et al. 2008, 17).

Their response to this situation consisted of broadening the supposed impact of the hypothesis related to security devices. This security hypothesis was applied to the crime drop as a global phenomenon, and not in terms of its manifestations according to the types of offense: “Our hypothesis is that change in the level and quality of security has been a key driving force behind the crime drop.”

The first elements that they propose to support their thesis came from the BCS and concern vehicle-related thefts.

They do not stop at merely indicating that the drop in the number of vehicle-related thefts occurred during a period in which the amount of security devices increased:

The proportion of cars in England and Wales without immobilizers fell from 77% to 22% between 1991 and 2006, and those without central locking from 60% to 12%. . . . But still, of course, any simple correlation between crime and security does not establish causation. Triangulation from other indicators was therefore required (Farrell et al. 2008, 18).

To do so, Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, and Mailley cited two other results taken from the BCS. The first has already been mentioned, since it involves the evolution in recovered vehicles from among stolen vehicles: “Temporary theft, after which vehicles are recovered, accounted for two-thirds of the observed crime drop” (Farrell et al. 2008, 18).

The second concerns the method of entry into the vehicle. They observed that “the bulk of the decline in car thefts was accounted for by a decline in the forcing of door locks” (Farrell et al. 2008, 18).

They refined their analysis without establishing causality. The impact of the centralized door locking is still presented as a hypothesis—“This is consistent with central locking as the cause of the decline because better locks would reduce door-forcing more than window-breaking” (Farrell et al. 2008, 18)—and they state that “we hope to undertake this further step of analysis” (Farrell et al. 2008, 18).

When they turned to this question again in 2011, they took advantage of the BCS results but also the administrative data on vehicle-related thefts in Australia: “The data drawn on for Australia are from the Comprehensive Autotheft Research System database, held by the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council” (Farrell et al. 2011, 7).

They observed similarities in terms of the impact of security devices on temporary thefts: “In Australia, . . . the temporary/permanent theft signature is uncannily similar to that identified for England and Wales” (Farrell et al. 2011, 11).

Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, and Mailley also introduced a working hypothesis that “would suggest that different security devices impact differentially by crime type: immobilizers reduce most the risk of theft of cars; alarms reduce most the risk of theft from cars; and central locking will reduce the risk of both theft of and theft from cars” (Farrell et al. 2011, 15).

The BCS of 2006–2007 allowed them to calculate a “measure of protective effect” (Farrell et al. 2011, 16) by type of security device and by type of crime—theft of a car, theft from a car, and attempted theft. After taking precautions concerning the difficulty of isolating the distinct effect of each security device, it was possible for them to note that “not only are the protective effects distinguishable for each device but the variations across crime type and device accord with theoretical expectations” (Farrell et al. 2011, 16).

For them, all this reinforced the security hypothesis, since at the end of their work of “triangulation” based on multiple data sources, “the likelihood that the findings are spurious . . . now appears low” (Farrell et al. 2011, 17).

This allowed them to produce other hypotheses, which they call the “debut crime hypothesis” (Farrell et al. 2011, 18) and the “keystone crime hypothesis” (Farrell et al. 2011, 19). These follow on from the security hypothesis.

They consider that the reduction in the number of vehicle-related thefts and burglaries resulting from an improvement in security measures prevents entry into criminality since these crimes represent “debut crime.” In particular, in the case of car theft, a “keystone crime,” it also prevents them from having a means of transportation to commit other crimes.

The interest of these additional hypotheses is to describe a process that may have had an impact on the crime drop as a whole and not only in terms of crimes related to motor vehicles and burglaries. They are nonetheless difficult to test, like most of the many reasons suggested to explain the crime drop.

In his “Closing the Doors” speech in 2012, Jan Van Dijk presented this work as a promising extension of his theory of responsive securitization:

Farrell’s argument is that improved security has reduced opportunities for easy crimes such as car theft and burglaries and that this has in turn blocked access to the first stages of a criminal career for new would-be juvenile delinquents. . . . These hypotheses suggest promising new directions in criminological research (Van Dijk 2012, 32).



In 2012, Van Dijk had the results of the 2010 ICVS survey at his disposal. He could compare them with the 2005 results for six countries: Germany, England and Wales, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden. It allowed him to study the trends in burglary rates as a function of the data on the level of security equipment to verify the hypotheses of his responsive securitization theory:

The litmus test of the impact of responsive securitization on burglary rates is whether local or national trends in rates of victimization by burglary can be predicted by the penetration rate of security measures. In other words, are countries with a higher penetration of household security rewarded by lower burglary rates in the years ahead? The repeat of the ICVS in 2010 allows us to explore this issue empirically (Van Dijk 2012, 28).

Responsive securitization can be broken down into four stages:

- increase in the frequency of a type of theft, especially when valuable goods are poorly protected;
- recognition of the existence of increased risk;
- implementation of protective measures against theft;
- decline in its frequency by reducing opportunities.

Van Dijk used different statistics taken from ICVS to determine the stage that each country had reached, for example, in terms of recognition or security devices equipped:

In countries such as England/Wales, Canada, and Germany more people are concerned about their risks and more people have installed security. In Sweden and especially Denmark, the population seems less concerned and less inclined to take precautionary measures (Van Dijk 2012, 28–29).

Then he compared the changes measured between the 2005 (based on 2004) and the 2010 ICVS:

If we look subsequently at the trends in burglary victimization between 2004 and 2010, a divergent pattern emerges. In England/Wales, the Netherlands, and Canada rates have fallen, in Germany and Sweden rates remained stable, and in Denmark they went up (Van Dijk 2012, 29).

England and Wales were situated at the end of the responsive securitization cycle, with a strong drop in victimization rates in 2010, while the level of security equipment and the perceived risk of burglaries were high in 2004.

On the opposite end, in Denmark, while victimization rates increased in 2010, the risk was seen as small in 2004 and few security measures were taken. These elements, which reinforce the responsive securitization model, are nonetheless seen by Van Dijk as being “no definite proof” (Van Dijk 2012, 30).

He takes up this idea in his conclusion by insisting on the fact that “responsive securitization is as yet not a proven theory” (Van Dijk 2012, 33).

As with Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, and Mailley, who consider that “there is a need for further research to explore the relationship between securitization of various types and the crime drops experienced in the United States and elsewhere” (Farrell et al. 2011, 17), Van Dijk sees future work on responsive securitization as “a new agenda for comparative international criminology” (Van Dijk 2012, 33).

## **Trends in Crime: Decreases in Recorded Crime Except for Domestic Burglary**

In August 2013, Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, published an issue of its journal, *Statistics in Focus*, dedicated to “Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice, 2010” (Clarke 2013). Its subtitle presented the main trends: “Decreases in recorded crime except for domestic burglary.”

In the article, the definition of “domestic burglary” corresponds to the notion of *cambriolage* in French, in other words theft with forced entry: “Domestic burglary is defined as gaining access to a dwelling by force in order to steal goods” (Clarke 2013, 4). As we have seen, in English, the term “burglary” does not necessarily imply either forced entry or theft. Depending on the country, the statistics that Eurostat published in its Table 5 on domestic burglary do not necessarily correspond to what the French call *cambriolage*.

Eurostat’s announcement of a rise in the number of domestic burglaries reported by the police of the 27 member states of the European Union is no less remarkable when seen from France. It has since contributed to changing the research perspectives on *cambriolage* and attempted *cambriolage* of home residences, crimes that had known a constant and sustained increase since 2008. As with the American crime drop, once the trend was observed in other countries, the phenomenon deserved to be studied on a wider geographic scale.

In the Netherlands, the rates of “house burglaries” recorded by the police increased from 2005 to 2012: “Dutch police recorded 5.5 house burglaries per thousand inhabitants in 2012. In 2005 this figure was 4.3” (CBS 2013a), while “between 2007 and 2011 . . . the number of burglaries in homes, including attempted burglaries, rose from nearly 68 to over 89 thousand” (CBS Statistical Yearbook 2013b).

According to the Belgian Federal Police, in a July 8, 2013, communiqué:

The number of burglaries recorded in residences has never been as high as last year, and this is since the beginning of counting in 2000. The increase between 2011 and 2012 is 7.5%. The growing impact of the economic crisis as well as the attraction of the price of gold and jewelry for thieves are not unrelated to this increase. Alongside these facts, however, it must be noted that the number of attempted burglaries, compared to accomplished crimes, has increased each year since 2008. Of the burglaries recorded in 2012, 33.7% were attempts (this number was 32% in 2008). The increased attention to home security measures (or technoprevention) played a definite role in this increase. It is an encouraging sign. However, it is clear that the fight against domestic burglary is and remains an absolute priority for the

integrated police. Burglaries in other buildings (companies and businesses as well as public and government buildings) are on a downward trend” (Kaisin 2013).

In the chapter dedicated specifically to burglaries, it states that in Belgium:

The number of burglaries in residences recorded by the police services in 2012 increased by 7.5% compared to 2011 and by 28.2% compared to 2008. It is the highest number (75,268 cases) ever recorded by the police services since 2000. The fight against burglary is and remains an essential priority for the police! In 2012, for every ten thousand housing units, 155 domestic burglaries were reported. This number was 145.5 in 2011. The increase is found mainly in burglaries of houses (and not apartments, where the opposite trend can be observed) and in rural communities. . . . The Federal Police noted other factors that help understand the increase in the number of burglaries in residences recorded in 2012: the growing influence of the economic crisis; the attraction of current gold and jewelry prices on thieves (jewelry and money are the primary targets of burglars); the internationalization of crime, which explains the presence of itinerant gangs of perpetrators, mostly from Eastern Europe, which are active in Belgium. At the same time, “local” thieves are also active (Police Fédérale, 2012).

In the English version of the annual reports of the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) of the Federal Republic of Germany, titled *Police Crime Statistics*, one can observe that the number of crimes of “theft by burglary of a dwelling” (as a translation of *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl* in German) are equal to those for “domestic burglary” published by Eurostat in its issues of *Statistics in Focus*.

Article 244 of the penal code that defines *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl* effectively allows us to verify that it corresponds to the French *cambriolage du domicile*. *Einbruchdiebstahl*, like *cambriolage*, refers to thefts involving forced entry. In German, the *Wohnung* prefix indicates that the burglary took place in a house or apartment.

Each year, from 2005 to 2008, fewer than 110,000 *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl* were recorded by the German police. In 2009, this number grew by more than 5% compared with 2008 and the increase continued in subsequent years: +6.6% over the year in 2010, +9.3% in 2011, and +8.7% in 2012, resulting in a +33.1% rise over four years (Bundeskriminalamt 200–201).

For France, the sum total of “home thefts with forced entry” [*cambriolages de locaux d’habitations principales*] and “secondary home thefts with forced entry” [*cambriolages de résidences secondaires*] recorded by the police and the gendarmes gives the number of “domestic burglaries” for Eurostat.

In the current state of available information, crimes of this nature have not had a break in the series in 2012, when one of the French police forces, the Gendarmerie nationale, launched a new application for data collection.

In 2007 and 2008, approximately 166,000 home thefts with forced entry (primary and secondary) were reported in metropolitan France by the police or the gendarmes. This number has since undergone four consecutive annual increases: it reached more than 234,000 cases in 2012, having increased by 40.1% since 2008 (+67,840 cases).

Using the population data placed online by the Statistics Institutes of France (INSEE), Belgium (Statbel, Direction générale Statistique et Information économique), and Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt),<sup>5</sup> we propose to calculate, for each one of the three countries under consideration, the per capita crime rates recorded by the police for  *cambriolages de résidences* in France, for  *cambriolages dans les habitations au sens strict* (Belgium),<sup>6</sup> and for *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl* (Germany).

It was possible to find the annual data going back to 2000 for all three countries. The changes in per capita crime rates between 2000 and 2012 are represented by choosing the level measured in each country in 2008 as a basis for comparison.

This method, known as “base 100,” allows a comparison of trends in relation to the chosen year of reference, independently of the differences in the level of rates between countries. By its construction, the value for 2008 is equal to 100 for each country in this comparison (Graph 1).

In Belgium,  *cambriolages dans les habitations* rate recorded by the police per 1,000 inhabitants decreased starting in 2001 and reached its lowest level for the period studied in 2004 and 2005, a decrease of more than 45 percentage points compared with 2000 (2008=100).<sup>7</sup> While it increased in 2006 (+13 points), it did not vary over the two following years.

In Germany, the number of *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl* per 1,000 inhabitants dropped by 28 points between 2000 and 2005 and it also remained relatively stable over the subsequent years, including 2008.

In France, the reported cases of  *cambriolages de residences* per 1,000 inhabitants increased rather significantly from 2000 to 2002 (+22 percentage points, 2008=100).<sup>7</sup> The trend then reversed and the rate dropped by more than 40 points in five years, from 2002 to 2007. In 2008, it remained at the level of the preceding year.

The rates in question evolved in a much more homogenous way after 2008, when they all began a period of increase. For example, in 2009, they increase respectively in Belgium, France, and Germany by +5.4 points, +7.3 points, and +9 points in one year (2008=100).

In 2011, the pace of increase rose for each country, especially in France (+17.1 points between 2009 and 2010), but also in Germany (+12.6 points) and in Belgium (+9.6 points).

Thus, between 2008 and 2012, the number of crimes recorded by the police per 1,000 inhabitants grew 38% in Germany for *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl*, +35.6% for  *cambriolages de residences* in France, and +24.45% for  *cambriolages dans les habitations* in Belgium.

In these three countries, after a period of sharp drops in domestic burglary crimes (in the Eurostat meaning) recorded by the police, which began in 2000 in Germany and

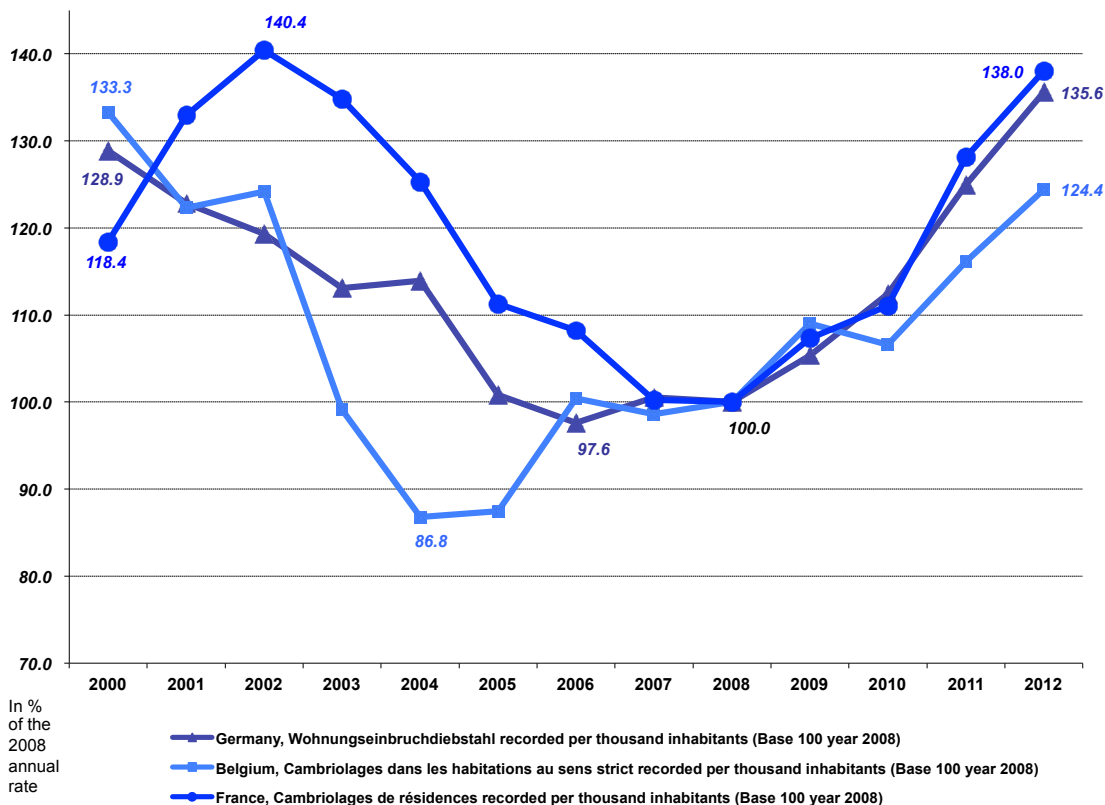
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<sup>5</sup> For Belgium, <http://statbel.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/organisation/dgsie/>; for France, <http://www.insee.fr/en/>, and for Germany, <http://www.destatis.de/EN/Homepage.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Theft with entry, climbing, or fake keys, with or without violence, in a dwelling (house, apartment, garage, and so on).

<sup>7</sup> With each annual rate expressed in proportion of the value observed in 2008, the point differences are also expressed in relation to this reference, or in base 2008 points. A rate passing from 90% of the 2008 value to 80% of this same value would therefore drop by 10 base 2008 points.

**Graph 1. Evolution of the crime rates recorded by the police per 1,000 inhabitants for Cambriolages de résidences in metropolitan France, Cambriolages dans les habitations au sens strict in Belgium, and Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl in Germany (2008=100)**



**Sources:** DCPJ, INSEE, France; Police Fédérale, Statbel, Belgium; Bundeskriminalamt, Statistisches Bundesamt, Germany

Belgium and started in 2002 in France, a reversal of the trend toward an upturn began at the same time between 2008 and 2009.

The phenomenon of increase picked up pace in 2011, so much so that after four years, the rate of *cambriolages* recorded returned to levels close to those observed in the early 2000s (Belgium, France) or higher (Germany).

Eurostat’s publication deals with the case of motor vehicle theft (automobiles or two-wheeled motor vehicles). It does not include what is called *vols à la roulotte* (theft from a vehicle) or thefts of motor vehicle accessories.

The resources available on the website of the Belgian Federal Police allow us to find the numbers of “auto thefts” and “thefts on or in vehicles” recorded since 2000. At the same time, for some motor vehicle thefts, especially two-wheeled vehicles, the data for 2001–2004 were not found.

The *Bundeskriminalamt* nomenclature for recording crimes in the Federal Republic of Germany contains two categories for theft related to motor vehicles: motor vehicle theft (*Diebstahl von Kraftfahrzeugen*) and theft from vehicles (*Diebstahl in/aus Kraftfahrzeugen*).

Annual series can be constituted back to 2001 using data posted online, knowing that the number of thefts from vehicles for 2012 was indicated not to be comparable with that of 2011 in the report *Police Crime Statistics 2012—Federal Republic of Germany*.

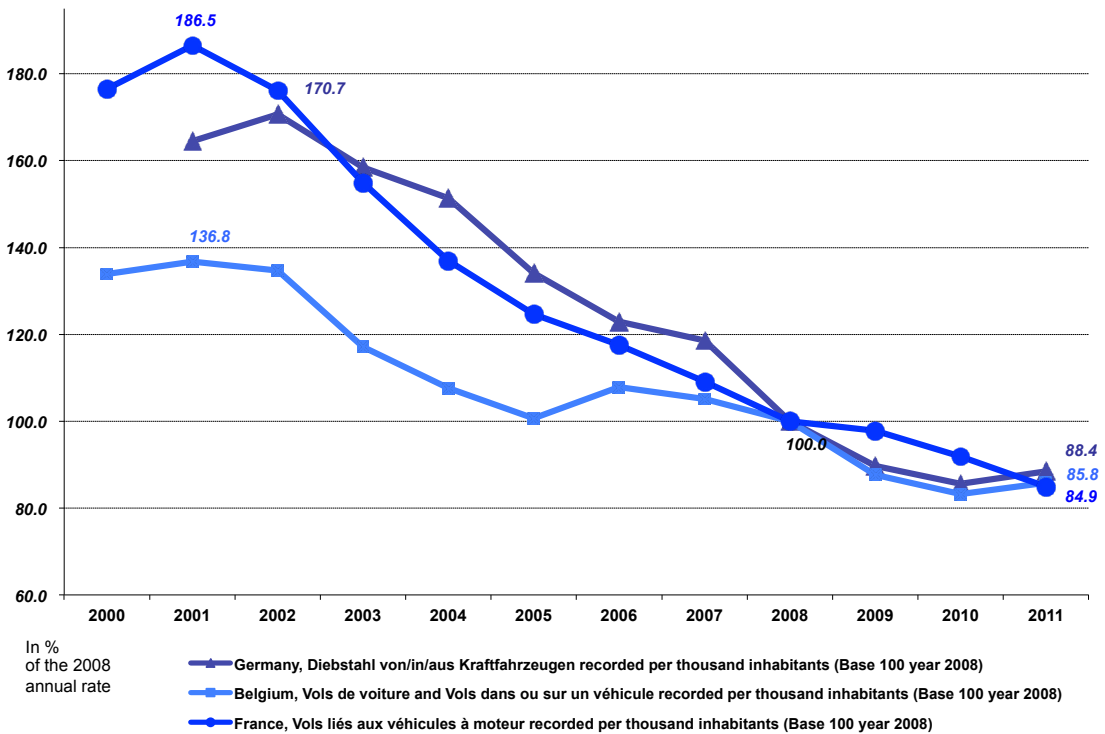
In France, the reported motor-vehicle-related crimes are composed of “automobile thefts,” “thefts from automobiles,” “theft of accessories from registered motor vehicles,” and “thefts of two-wheeled motor vehicles.”

In the three countries, the crime rates for “motor-vehicle-related thefts” recorded by the police dropped sharply between 2001 and 2011: it dropped 51 points in Belgium (2008=100), 76 points in Germany, and even more than 100 points in metropolitan France (Graph 2).

In 10 years, the rate of *vols de voiture* and *vols dans ou sur véhicule* recorded per 1,000 inhabitants was reduced by a third in Belgium. Motor vehicle theft and theft from vehicles fell by almost half in Germany. And the rate of reported cases of motor-vehicle-related thefts in metropolitan France fell by more than 54%.

In France and in Germany, approximately 85% of the variation described took place between 2001 and 2008. This proportion is situated at 72% for Belgium. Then, between 2008 and 2011, the intensity of the drop observed in the three countries was on the same order of magnitude: -14.2 points in Belgium over these three years (2008=100), -11.6 points in Germany, and -15.1 points in metropolitan France.

**Graph 2. Evolution for crime rates recorded by the police per 1,000 inhabitants for thefts related to motor vehicles in metropolitan France, for automobile thefts and theft from vehicles in Belgium, and for Diebstahl von/in/aus Kraftfahrzeugen in Germany (2008=100)(2008=100)**



**Sources:** DCPJ, INSEE, France; Police Fédérale, Statbel, Belgium; Bundeskriminalamt, Statistisches Bundesamt, Germany

It therefore appears that in the neighboring countries compared here, a decrease in recorded crime rates took place between the beginning of 2000 and 2008, both for domestic burglaries and motor-vehicle-related thefts.

After 2008, while the phenomenon continued almost at the same pace in Belgium, Germany, and metropolitan France for motor-vehicle-related thefts recorded by the police, the trend reversed in a comparable way for domestic burglary.

In France, it is possible to compare these changes with the annual victimization statistics provided by the *Cadre de vie et sécurité* ["Quality of Life and Security"] crime survey developed by the National Statistics Institute, INSEE, and ONDRP (Observatoire national de la délinquance et des réponses pénales) [French National Supervisory Body on Crime and Punishment].

## **Convergence in Trends between 2006 and 2011**

In 2010, the ONDRP was brought to comment, in its bulletin on crimes reported to the police in 2009, on the end of the drop in reported home thefts with forced entry in metropolitan France:

Among the detailed categories of thefts that underwent the greatest increase over one year,  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  can be cited, for which the number passed from 151,737 in 2008 to 164,150 in 2009, +8.2%. This variation does not mean that the number of  *cambriolages*  recorded is at an intrinsically high level: over five years, it dropped by 9% (or -16,229 cases). Nevertheless, it brings to an end the sequence of drops that began in 2002, the year when 3.3 burglaries of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  were recorded per thousand inhabitants. In 2007 and 2008, this rate was at 2.4‰, a decrease of nearly one point. In 2009, it returned to the level of 2006 of 2.6 cases per thousand inhabitants (*Bulletin annuel*, ONDRP 2010).

In the introduction to this document, the role of annual victimization surveys in measuring trends was mentioned:

In the absence of victimization survey results, which became available in November 2010, we cannot be exhaustive in terms of the evolution of different crime phenomena. . . . It should be recalled that the cases reported correspond to the portion of crime that is brought to the knowledge of the police and the gendarmes. Any assimilation of this portion to the entirety of crimes committed means ignoring the existence of many infractions that are not followed up with a complaint. It is precisely by carrying out surveys about victimization, that it becomes possible to estimate crime rates that are not limited to those reported to the police (*Bulletin annuel*, ONDRP 2010).

However, in November 2010, while the results did not diverge, there was no significant increase between 2008 and 2009, whereas a significant decrease was measured between 2006 and 2008:

Between 2008 and 2009, the rate of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry rose slightly by 0.1 offenses per hundred households. According to the statements of households, it was established at 1.6 home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry per hundred households, for an estimated number of 430,000 victimizations. In 2008, the rate of 1.5 home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry per hundred households allowed an estimation of fewer than 405,000 victimizations. The variation over one year is not significant.

The victimization rate per hundred households in 2008 was significantly inferior to those of the preceding two years, 1.8 home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry in 2006, and 1.7 in 2007, for an estimated volumes of more than 470,000 victimizations in 2006 and approximately 455,000 in 2007 (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2010).

In January 2012, in the annual newsletter on crime recorded in 2011, the ONDRP presented an accentuation of the rise in reported cases:

In 2011, almost 202,000  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  were recorded by the police forces. This number increased very rapidly over one year: +17.1% compared to 2010 (+29,501 reported cases). In 2008, the number was at less than 152,000 reported cases. In three years, it grew by 33.1% (+50,261 reported cases). From 1996 to 2010, the annual number of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  recorded was never greater than two hundred thousand. It approached this level in 2002, a year in which more than 195,000  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  (3.3 per thousand inhabitants). This rate dropped regularly until 2007 and 2008. It reached 2.4‰ at the time, a decrease of 0.9 points compared to 2002. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of reported cases of home thefts with forced entry per thousand inhabitants passed from 2.4‰ to 3.2‰. In 2011, the rate returned to a level very close to the one in 2002 (*Bulletin annuel*, ONDRP 2012).

And in the next annual report, in November 2012, for the first time, the rates of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry per 100 households, estimated based on the results of the  *Cadre de vie et sécurité*  victimization survey by INSEE-ONDRP, was significantly higher, even “very significantly”:

In 2011, the number of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry was estimated to be more than six hundred thousand, or 2.2 per hundred households. This rate is very significantly higher than those of the previous four years, in particular compared to the rate in 2010, or 1.7 home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry per hundred households (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2012).

When comparing the results of the French national victimization survey and the number crime recorded by the police forces between 2006 and 2011, it could be noticed that:



From 2006 to 2010, the number of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry victimizations was never estimated to be more than 475,000. It increased by 28.2% between 2006 and 2011. In 2011, 201,988  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  were recorded by the police forces in metropolitan France. This number increased by almost 25% in five years ( +40,234 reported cases). In 2006, it was at 161,764 (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2012).

Moreover, the two sources compared agree on the year when the trend began to change (Graphs 3a and 3b):

According to the two sources, the *Cadre de vie et sécurité* survey, and *État 4001 [police forces statistics]*, between 2006 and 2008, the numbers observed were in decline: the number of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry victimizations per hundred households went from 1.8 in 2006 to less than 1.5 in 2008, which represents a significant drop. The number of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  recorded by the police forces dropped by 6.1% in those two years (–10,027 reported cases). Since 2008, still according to the two sources, the increase was constant: the estimated number of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry per hundred households increased by 0.1 points over one year in 2009 and 2010, then by 0.3 points in 2011. Their estimated number, which was at less than 405,000 in 2008, increased by almost 50% in three years. The reported cases of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  grew successively by 8.2% in 2009, by 5.1% in 2010, and by 17.1% in 2011, resulting in a 33.1% rise in three years. Their number went from less than 152,000 in 2008 to more than 202,000 in 2011 (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2012).

The ONDRP concluded that:

In light of the multisource evolutions described, . . . the ONDRP considers that in metropolitan France, starting in 2009, the number of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry has changed to an upward trend. In 2011, the phenomenon increased in such a way that over three years, the variation may go above +33%, and maybe very far above (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2012).

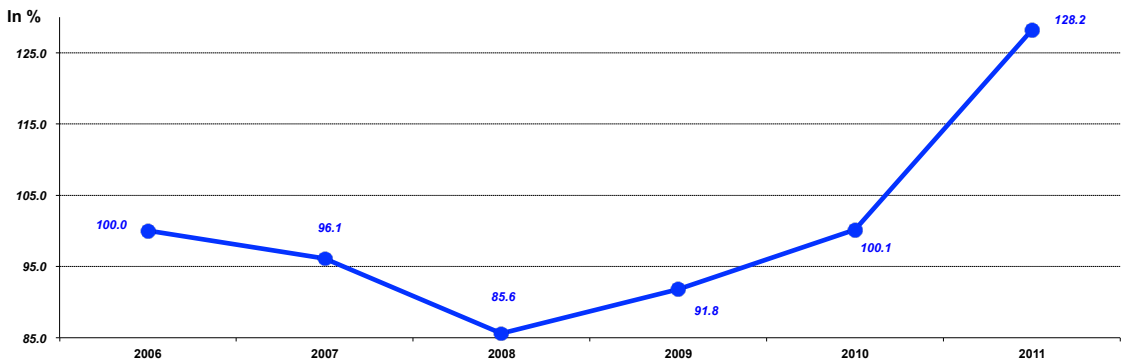
As a reminder,  *cambriolages*  of home residences and attempted  *cambriolage*  in the sense used in the *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys do not correspond to what the BCS calls “domestic burglary.”

It is a specific case that has been called “home theft with forced entry,” with the caveat of including by extension thefts with entry by climbing or the use of fake keys.

In this respect, it is useful to mention that according to the statistics on the “Method of entry in incidents of burglary” (“Nature of Crime Tables 2012/13—Burglary”) published by Britain’s National Statistics based on the results of the “Crime Survey for England and Wales” (the new name of the BCS) for 2012/13, burglary with forcible entry corresponds to the most frequent case of burglary.

In metropolitan France, the proximity between variations in the number of cases of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*  recorded by police forces and home

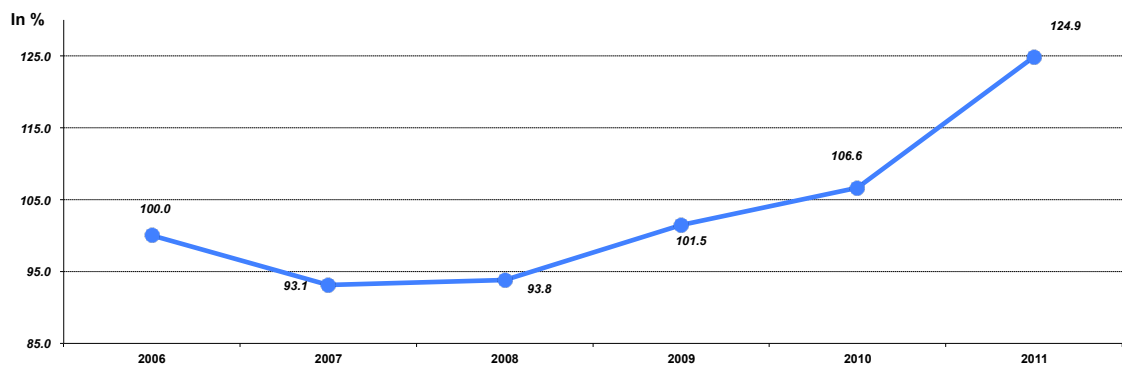
**Graph 3a. Evolution of the estimated number of home thefts and attempted thefts with forced entry reported by households from 2006 to 2011 in metropolitan France (2006=100)**



**Field:** Households

**Source:** *Cadre de vie et sécurité Surveys, 2007–2012, INSEE*

**Graph 3b. Evolution of the number of reported cases of cambriolages de locaux d’habitations principales recorded in metropolitan France from 2006 to 2011 (2006=100)**



**Source:** *Source: État 4001 annuel, DCPJ*

thefts and attempted thefts of residences reported by households during the annual *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys between 2006 and 2011 means that during this period, the drop and then the rise measured by police crime statistics very likely indicates the trend in the crime itself and not only in the number of cases actually recorded.

This hypothesis can be extended to Belgium and Germany, which, as we have seen, have displayed variations similar to those in France in terms of  *cambriolages dans les habitations au sens strict* (Belgium) and *Wohnungseinbruchdiebstahl* (Germany) recorded by the police.

At the same time, the continued decrease in motor-vehicle-related thefts in metropolitan France has also been established in the framework of a multisource analysis of trends (Graphs 4a and 4b):

The estimated number of motor-vehicle-related thefts and attempted thefts reported by households declined steadily over the period studied, going from 6.9 per hundred households in 2006 to 4.6 per hundred households in 2011, or, in estimated numbers, from more than 1.8 million thefts and attempted thefts to fewer than 1.3 million. It therefore decreased by more than 30% in five years. The variation between 2006 and 2011 of the number of reported cases of motor-vehicle-related thefts recorded by the police and gendarmes provided by *État 4001* presents a great number of similarities with the estimated numbers taken from the *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys. In 2011, 551,844 cases of motor-vehicle-related thefts were reported. This number dropped by 25.8% over five years (–191,852 reported cases). In 2006, 743,696 motor-vehicle-related thefts were recorded by the police and gendarmes (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2012).

It can be deduced that from 2006 to 2008, in metropolitan France, but also by comparison and extension in Belgium and Germany, motor-vehicle-related thefts and domestic burglary with forced entry underwent a major drop—a “crime drop.”

After 2008, the trend continued for motor-vehicle-related thefts but not for domestic burglary with forced entry. The latter began an upward trend in 2009 and the increase has continued to pick up pace over the subsequent years.

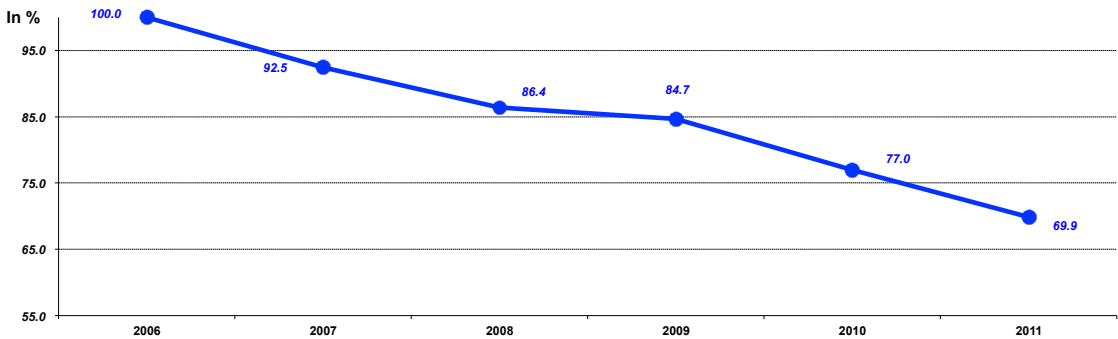
How can we explain the disconnect since 2008 between two types of crimes that were described as being part of the shared crime drop in previous years using the same hypothesis, the “security hypothesis,” within the theoretical framework of “responsive securitization?”

## **The Hypothesis of Professionalization**

According to the responsive securitization model based on the theory of opportunities, “Rates of victimization are determined by interactions between the rational choices of offenders and victims on a market of crime. As long as the benefits of crime outweigh the costs of offending, the pool of offenders expands and crime rates go up” (Van Dijk 2012, 19).

In its July 2013 communiqué, the Belgian Federal Police proposed several factors to explain the rise in domestic burglaries with forced entry: “the growing influence of the

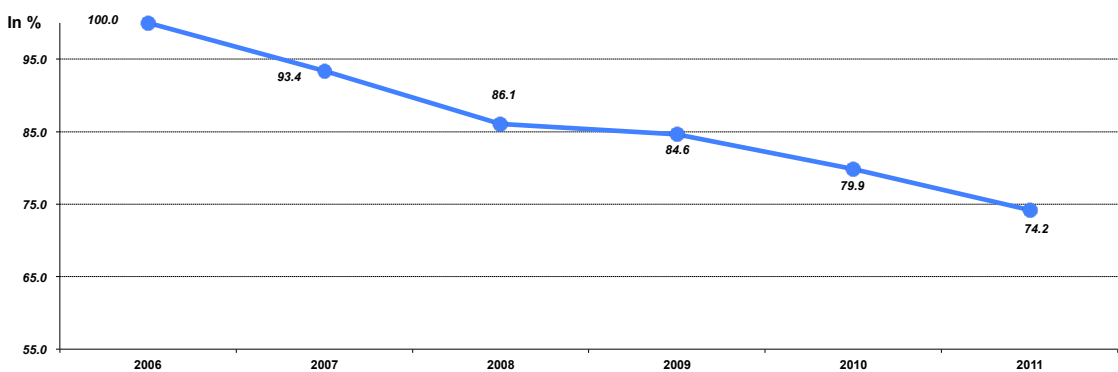
**Graph 4a. Evolution in the estimated number of motor-vehicle-related thefts and attempted thefts reported by households in metropolitan France between 2006 and 2011, expressed in base 100 for the year 2006**



**Field:** Households

**Source:** *Cadre de vie et sécurité Surveys, 2007–2012, INSEE*

**Graph 4b. Evolution in the number of reported cases of motor-vehicle-related thefts recorded by the police and gendarmes from 2006 to 2011 in metropolitan France, expressed in base 100 for the year 2006**



**Source:** *Source: État 4001 annuel, DCPJ*

economic crisis,” “the attraction of current gold and jewelry prices on thieves,” and “the internationalization of crime.”

A simple test of the pertinence of a hypothesis for a trend is its calendar: it has to match the calendar of the variations observed. The economic crisis of 2008, and in particular one of its consequences, the rise in gold prices, are from this point of view potential candidates to explain the rise in domestic burglary with forced entry starting in 2009.

The wording of the cause itself, expressing its “attraction” for “thieves,” refers to the economic interest of stealing gold in a context of an increase in its value on the official market, and especially on the stolen-goods market.

The hypothesis of the role played by gold in the rise in domestic burglary with forced entry was supported, in December 2013, by the publication by the ONDRP of data on the characteristics of home thefts and attempted thefts described by households that declared themselves to have been victims during the *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys. The data show that:

Considering only thefts of objects in the home itself (and not in dependencies) described by the households concerned, it was measured that the proportion of those who stated that jewelry had been stolen went from 54.4% in the 2007–2010 surveys to 66.4% in the 2011–2013 surveys. The following qualitative information can be deduced: it is estimated that two times out of three, a theft with forced entry, climbing, or fake keys in a dwelling involved jewelry among the stolen objects (Perron-Bailly 2013, 5).

The first signs of the possible phenomenon of internationalization mentioned by the Belgian police were observed in metropolitan France at the beginning of the period of increase in the reported cases of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*. It relies on data about the people suspected (*mises en cause*)<sup>8</sup> of crime by the French police forces (Police or Gendarmerie):

Depending on the type of nonviolent crime, the comparative number of French and foreign suspects changed between 2008 and 2009: either both numbers increased or only the number of foreign suspects rose. For example, for motor-vehicle-related thefts, French suspects declined (–3% or –1,142 suspects) and the foreign suspects rose by +6% (or +180 suspects). The proportion of foreign suspects, or less than 9% in 2009, was nonetheless small, especially when compared to that for other nonviolent thefts. When the number of French suspects for a type of nonviolent theft grew over one year, the increase was higher for foreigners: for  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*, the percentage growth rates are respectively +11.6% (+1,453 French suspects) and +28.5% (+574 foreign suspects). As a result, the proportion of foreigners among the suspects of  *cambriolages de*

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<sup>8</sup> *Mise en cause* is used for a person “who has been taken in for questioning and against whom facts or serious information corroborating guilt have been gathered, proving his or her participation in the commission of the crime.”

*locaux d'habitations principales* rose by almost 2 points and reached almost 16% in 2009 (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2010).

The proportion of foreigners among the suspects for *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales* continued to grow after 2009, as can be seen in the statistics of the Police Nationale:

The number of foreigners suspected of thefts with forced entry by the Police Nationale increased by 86.9% between 2008 and 2012. Over four years, the foreigners suspected of *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales* more than doubled (+107.7% or +1,321 suspects). . . . Thus, between 2008 and 2010, the proportion of foreign suspects of thefts with forced entry rose by 4.4 points to reach 18.5% in 2010. Between 2010 and 2012, this proportion continued to rise to reach 22.9% in 2012. . . . Over those two years, the number of foreign suspects increased (+22.8% or +848 suspects) while it decreased for French citizens (−6.9% or −1,142 suspects) (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2013a 6).

By using a database that provides detailed information on the nationalities of suspects, it can be seen that persons of Romanian nationality and from Balkan Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, and the countries of ex-Yugoslavia) account for close to 60% of the increase in foreigners suspected by the police for theft with forced entry between 2008 and 2012.

The Belgian Federal Police described the “internationalization of criminality” as the result of “the presence of traveling gangs of perpetrators, primarily from Eastern Europe, which are active in Belgium.”

The ONDRP presents the hypothesis of the role of organized crime coming from Eastern European countries based on its reasoning and the following example:

We suggest the hypothesis that a very specific change in terms of the profile of suspects and the type of thefts . . . has very likely as its source activities related to organized crime. . . . The characteristics of persons of Georgian nationality provide, according to the ONDRP, another example of a special profile very probably included in the context of organized criminality. Between 2008 and 2012, the proportion of Georgians among those suspected of theft by the Police Nationale passed from 0.3% to 1.3%. In total, 80% of this increase can be explained by adult males of Georgian nationality suspected of theft with forced entry or shoplifting (Rizk 2013, 22).

It then goes on to develop what might have been at the origin of the phenomenon:

The idea that the thefts would be perceived by the authorities as local crimes may have incited organized criminals to become involved using what could be called a transnational format, either because the objects would have been intended for resale outside the country where they were stolen, or because the majority of the proceeds of the thefts would be transferred to the heads of networks located

abroad. By choosing methods of operation with lower gravity—in the penal sense of the term—such as pickpocketing, shoplifting, and nonviolent burglary, the organized crime networks may have invested more strongly in recent years in an illegal activity for which the profitability relies on the volume (numerous thefts with smaller loot) or value (theft of gold in homes and minerals, for example copper, in infrastructure or construction sites) (Rizk 2013, 22).

When it analyzes all of the data at its disposal together, the ONDRP predicts a process that is in conformance with the theory of rational choice:

According to the ONDRP, the “risk/benefit” relationship of some thefts changed over the course of the 2000s due to the strong increase in the price of metals and especially gold. The increase in thefts and attempted thefts in homes may be the domestic variation of the growing phenomenon of the thefts of metal to which business and industries are exposed. . . . By bringing together the hypotheses suggested by the available data, it can be supposed that the gold present in homes, and more generally any object of high value on the current stolen-goods market, exposes these places to an increasingly high number of thefts, especially in the context of organized crime, and including that originating in foreign countries (*Rapport annuel*, ONDRP 2013b, 8).

The question of the relationship between the level of protection of homes and the change in the rate of *cambriolage* of home residences (burglary with forcible entry or attempted burglary) and especially of burglary (entry with or without forcible entry and attempted burglary) will soon be dealt with by the ONDRP.

Another observation by the Belgian Federal Police can already provide us with a connection to the theory of opportunities: “The increase is found mainly in burglaries with forced entry of houses (and not apartments, where the opposite trend has been observed) and in rural communities.”

This observation suggests that houses, especially those outside urban areas, may be the main target of burglars, since apartments located in cities are much less accessible.

Two results published in December 2013 based on the results of the “*Cadre de vie et sécurité*” surveys allow us to expand the elements of this hypothesis to France. On the one hand, the increase concerns houses, as in Belgium:

It is estimated that more than 3.6% of households living in a house reported being victims of a home thefts or attempted thefts with forced entry over two years. This proportion underwent a very significant increase compared to the one measured over the previous four years (+0.5 points). This variation increased the disparity in the frequency of victimization of different types of residence, house, or apartment that was already observed in the *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys of 2007 to 2010: 3.1% of households living in a house reported having been the victim of home thefts or attempted thefts with forced entry over two years, compared to 2.7% for households occupying an apartment. Moreover, in the last three *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys, the home thefts or attempted thefts with forced entry rate for

households living in an apartment was estimated at 2.9%, or at a level that did not vary significantly in the statistical sense of the term. Thus, between the two periods compared, the difference in rate almost doubled between households occupying a house and those in an apartment: it went from less than 0.4 points during the first four *Cadre de vie et sécurité* surveys to almost 0.7 points during the 2011 to 2013 surveys (Perron-Bailly 2013, 3).

Moreover, the proportion of attempted burglaries, and therefore failures, is greater for apartments:

The proportion of attempted thefts with forced entry is higher for households living in an apartment (55.8%) than for those in a house (45.5%) (Perron-Bailly 2013, 3).

Thus, a rise in thefts with forced entry concerning solely houses may be the result of a choice by thieves to target more vulnerable residences.

Moreover, given the number of reported cases recorded by the police and gendarmes between 2008 and 2013, the increase was even greater outside the major cities, in areas under the jurisdiction of the Gendarmerie Nationale:

In 2008, the gendarmes recorded a little more than 53,000  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales*. This number has since risen by more than 34,000 reported cases, or +63.9% in five years. In areas of police jurisdiction, the number of reported cases of  *cambriolages de locaux d'habitations principales* has also risen each year since 2008 ... . It therefore passed from less than 98,500 in 2008 to more than 142,000 in 2013, or 44.4% (*Bulletin annuel*, ONDRP 2014).

There is descriptive information on the rise in home thefts with forced entry in metropolitan France and Belgium that supports the interpretations based on the theory of opportunities and the theory of routine activities.

Yet how then does the upturn starting in 2008/2009 fit with the “security hypothesis” that explains the crime drop of the 2000s in terms of domestic burglaries with forced entry?

Why, after a period of very steep drops in the rate of domestic burglary with forced entry recorded by the police per inhabitant, did improvements in the level of home-security equipment that were supposed to be at its origin no longer seem to have their presumed effect?

The emergence of a new type of perpetrators can resolve this apparent paradox. A “responsive securitization” that could have taken place during the 2000s would have been an answer to the burglars methods at the time. Facing a known risk, an effective response could have been found. If methods of operation change, prior measures might lose their preventive value.

This scenario is not the only possible hypothesis, but it has the advantage of being compatible with the interpretations of the increase mentioned above: the context may have changed after 2008 through the effect of the rise in the price of gold and the arrival of perpetrators from Eastern Europe into France and Belgium in the framework of criminal networks.



The involvement of organized crime in domestic burglary with forced entry may have led to the introduction of “professional” methods of targeting and breaking into residences that, for the moment, has not found a response in terms of situational prevention. This hypothesis of “professionalization” should, according to the responsive securitization theory, lead to a reaction by potential victims due to the size of the phenomenon today and the awareness it has raised.

The ONDRP does not have a question related directly to the perception of the risk of burglary, but it has established that the increase in the proportion of people aged 14 and older stating that they sometimes feel unsafe at home was explained in part by individuals from households that declared themselves to be victims or had heard of burglaries with forced entry in their neighborhood:

Among people aged fourteen and older, the proportion of those belonging to a household that declared itself a victim of a crime against their residence or that knew of burglaries with forced entry in the neighborhood increased by almost 5 points between 2007–2009 and 2010–2012, going from almost 35% to more than 40%. These are factors that have a strong impact on increasing the feeling of being unsafe at home. The ONDRP estimates that this growth in the population is a structural variation that explains almost one-third of the increase of 1.8 points of the proportion of people age 14 and older who declared that they sometimes feel unsafe at home between 2007–2009 and 2010–2012 (Scherr 2013, 5).

## **Conclusion**

Taking inspiration from the English model, the ONDRP, in partnership with INSEE, was able to provide France with a national victimization survey, which allows a measurement of annual trends of the main crimes that affect individuals and their property.

In the United States and in England/Wales, more longstanding annual crime surveys have allowed observation and analysis of a phenomenon of strong decrease in the rates of victimization that began in the 1990s.

Since 2000, this underlying trend, called the “crime drop,” has been at the center of debates about its causes that have been very rich in interpretative hypotheses. The most general among them have not been able to be verified on the basis of empirical data, and, when possible, the conclusions of analyses using different methodologies have sometimes been contradictory (Bettaïeb and Rizk 2014).

Some explanations of the drop in motor-vehicle-related thefts and domestic burglary have nonetheless been suggested and then supported by results taken from victimization surveys, mainly the BCS and the ICVS international survey.

Inspired by the theoretical ideas that emerged in the 1970s with the development of the notion of situational prevention, especially under the impetus of British researchers of the Home Office, namely Ron Clarke, Pat Mayhew, and Mike Hough (“crime opportunity theory”) and the American researcher Marcus Felson (“routine activity theory”), a process called “responsive securitization” was defined by the winner of the Stockholm Prize in Criminology 2012, the Dutchman Jan Van Dijk. He bases it on the following economic reasoning:

When crime rates go up, marginal benefits of protective measures increase and at a certain point outweigh marginal costs. Potential victims will be ready to invest in security. When levels of crime prevention rise, the costs/benefits ratio of offending becomes less favorable. At some point offending starts to become economically unattractive. At this juncture crime rates will start to fall (Van Dijk 2010, 2).

Citing the work of Graham Farrell, Nick Tilley, Andromachi Tseloni, and Jen Mailley on the “security hypothesis” in terms of vehicle thefts and a study by Ben Vollaard and Jan van Ours on burglaries, Van Dijk notes that:

Several studies have demonstrated that the fall in car thefts has indeed been largely caused by in-built security (e.g. Farrell et al. 2008). In a recent study, Ben Vollaard and Van Ours (2010) of Tilburg University assessed the effects of legislation that made state-of-the-art household security mandatory in houses built after 1999 in The Netherlands. He shows that burglary victimization rates in newly built houses were a quarter lower than in the older ones. There were no signs of displacement to other neighborhoods in the city. The implementation of the new legislation alone has prevented the commission of 10,000 burglaries (... from 2001 to 2009) (Van Dijk 2010, 2).

The change in the trend of domestic burglary with forced entry that occurred in 2008, and the sharp increases that followed in metropolitan France, Belgium, and Germany after a period of several years of distinct decline, appear to weaken the hypothesis according to which Jan Van Dijk’s process of “responsive securitization” “may well have been the main driver of the crime falls.”

Analysis of the characteristics of the increase of burglary in Belgium and metropolitan France offers the possibility of envisaging a “hypothesis of professionalization” that does not necessarily call into question the origin of the previous drop, especially because it takes inspiration from the theories mentioned, the “crime opportunity theory” and the “routine activity theory,” and also from the theory of rational choice.

Motivated by the lesser penal risk of nonviolent burglary and by the rising price of gold, the arrival of new actors working within the context of organized crime may have changed the balance of the crime market. Existing protective measures would no longer be enough to protect homes due to the use of more effective methods of operation.

The pertinence of responsive securitization at a given moment does not exclude that the behavior of actors can subsequently change. In the equation determining the level of victimization rates, the impact of victim response can be reduced by perpetrators adapting their techniques.

It is therefore possible that we are now engaged in a new cycle of responsive securitization that responds to a much more elaborate form of burglary with forced entry than before. The existence of an annual victimization surveys in France should now allow multiple empirical verifications related to this subject.

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