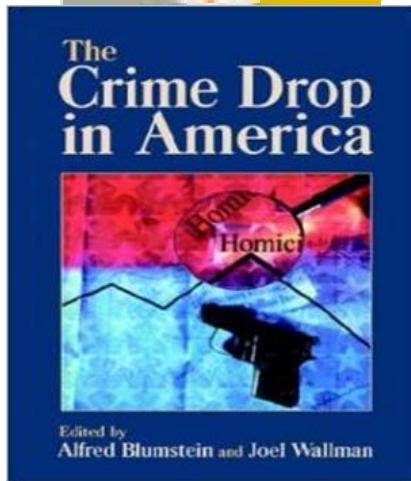
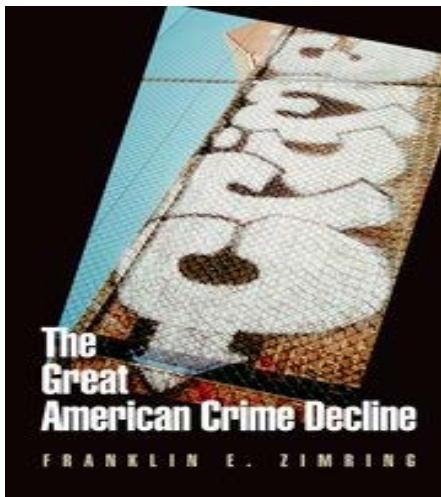
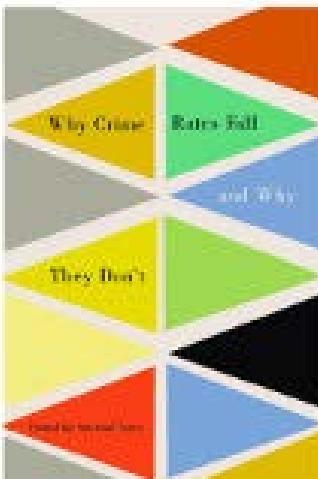
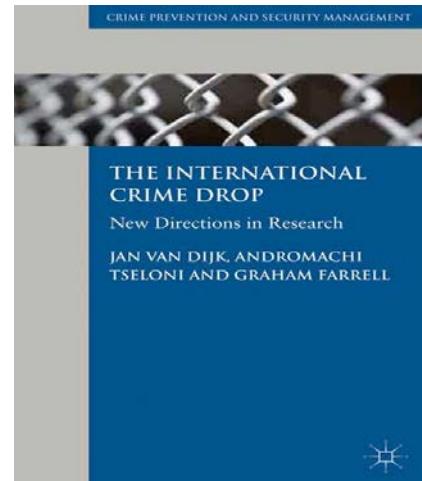




Ministry of Security and Justice



# Explaining the crime drop in The Netherlands:

The importance of comparisons with other industrialised countries

Presentation for the Stockholm Criminology Symposium 2015, Monday 8 June 2015

Jaap de Waard, Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice  
[j.de.waard@minvenj.nl](mailto:j.de.waard@minvenj.nl)  
+31 652 87 25 17



# What is this presentation about?



- Personal introduction and background
- Has there been a drop in crime in The Netherlands and other industrialised countries?
- A striking decline in the number of juvenile suspects
- Why has the crime drop occurred in The Netherlands and other industrialised countries? What explanations can be given?
- The Security Hypothesis explained
- Conclusions



# Has there been a drop in crime in The Netherlands and other industrialised countries?

**FIGURE 1**  
Violent and property victimization, 1993–2013

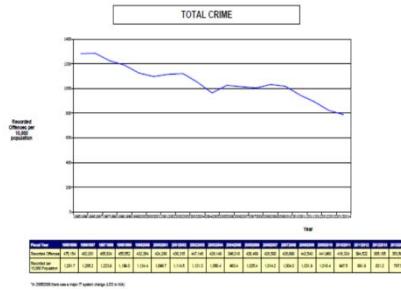


Note: See appendix table 1 for estimates and standard errors.

\*See *Criminal Victimization, 2007* (NCJ 224390, BJS web, December 2008)

for information on changes in the 2006 NCVS.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1993–2013.



**Chart 2**  
Police-reported crime rates, Canada, 1963 to 2013

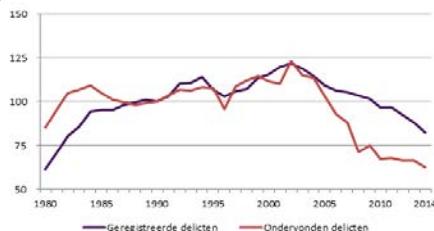
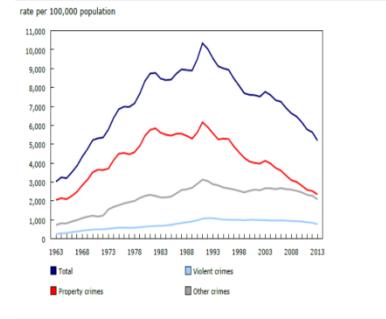
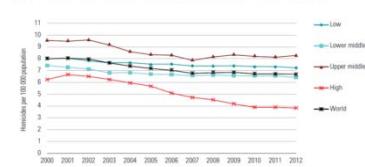


Figure 4: Trends in estimated rates of homicide by country income status, 2000–2012, world

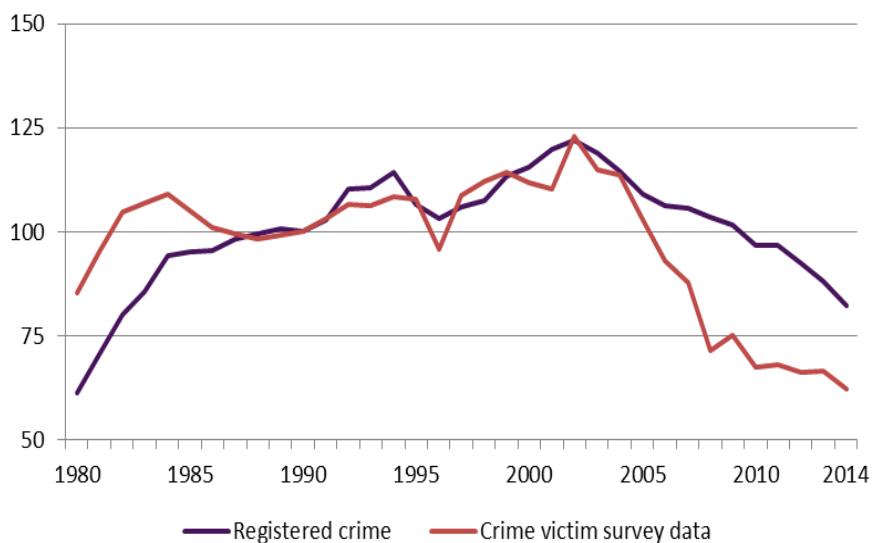


- There has been a significant and prolonged “crime drop” in The Netherlands and many other industrialised countries;
- This crime drop has been observed in property crime (vehicle theft, domestic burglary, theft from cars, shoplifting, street robbery, and pickpocketing) and violent crime (assault, sexual assault, rape, homicide and manslaughter);
- The extent and nature of the crime drop appear to be more similar between similar countries (for example The Netherlands and England and Wales);
- The extent of the evidence is such that the similarities are unlikely to be the result of coincidence. Explanations must therefore be sought mainly in causes shared by all industrialised countries;
- Striking is the strong decline in the number of juvenile suspects in The Netherlands and a number of other countries.

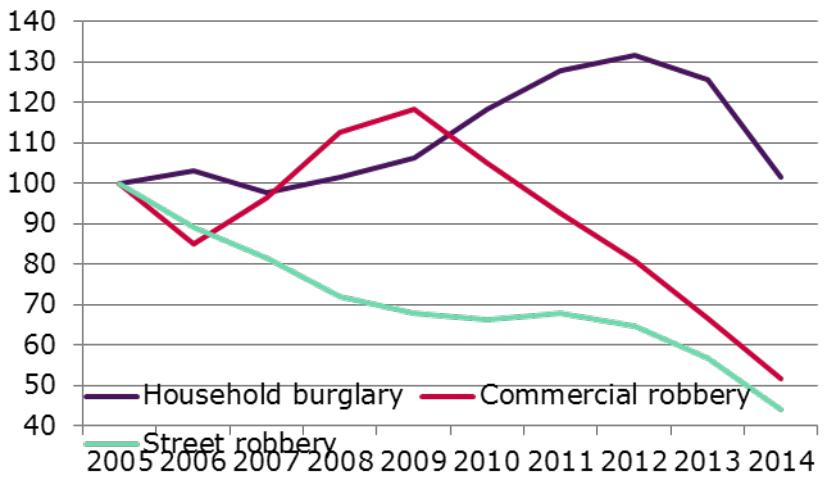


# Some recent trends in crime in The Netherlands: I

**Figure: registered crime and victimisation trends in The Netherlands, 1980 - 2014**



**Figure: development household burglary, street robbery and commercial robbery (index: 2005 = 100)**





## Some recent trends in crime in The Netherlands: II

Crime victim rates and feelings of unsafety, 2005-2014

% who say they perceive this as a problem

110

100

90

80

70

60

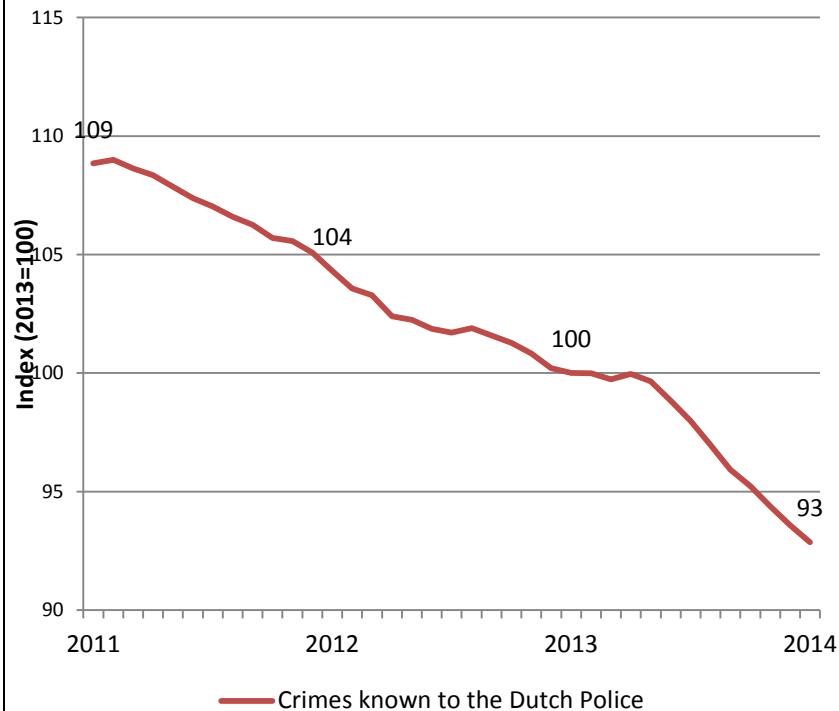
50

2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014

Total victim rate — Violent crime — Property crime — Vandalism  
Unsafety feelings

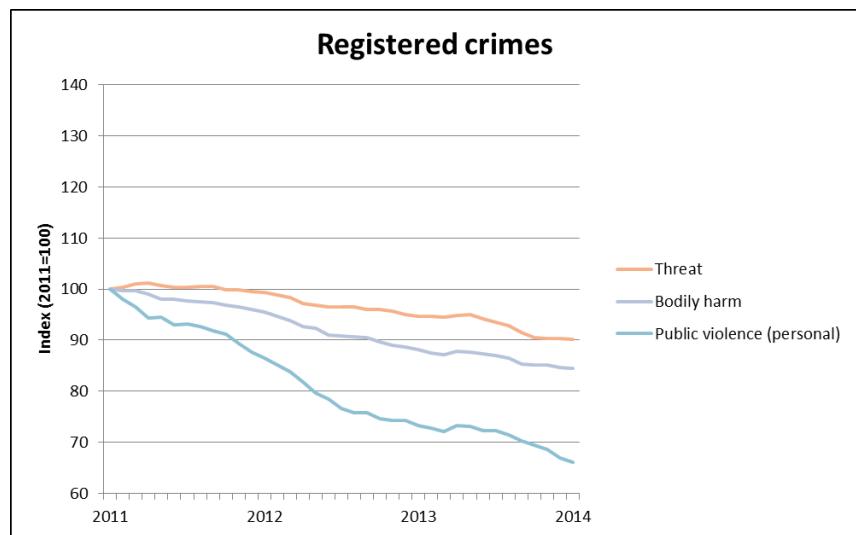
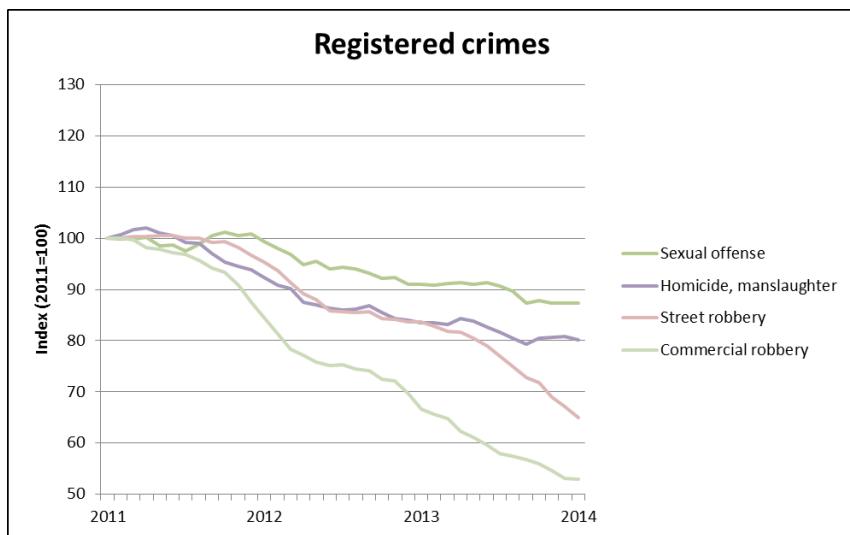


**Figure : Development registered crime by the Dutch police, 2011 – 2014 (index: 2013 = 100)**





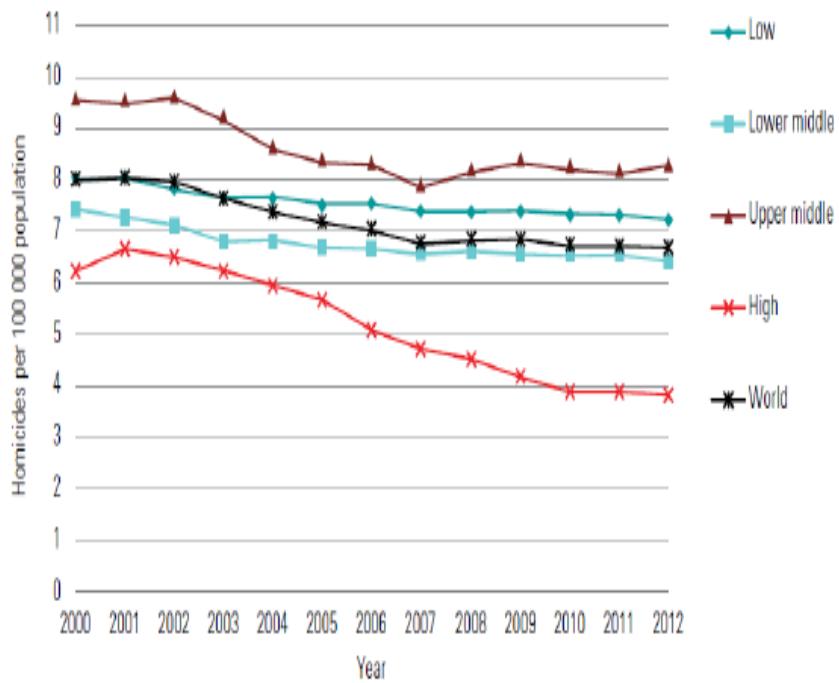
## Some recent trends in crime in The Netherlands: III



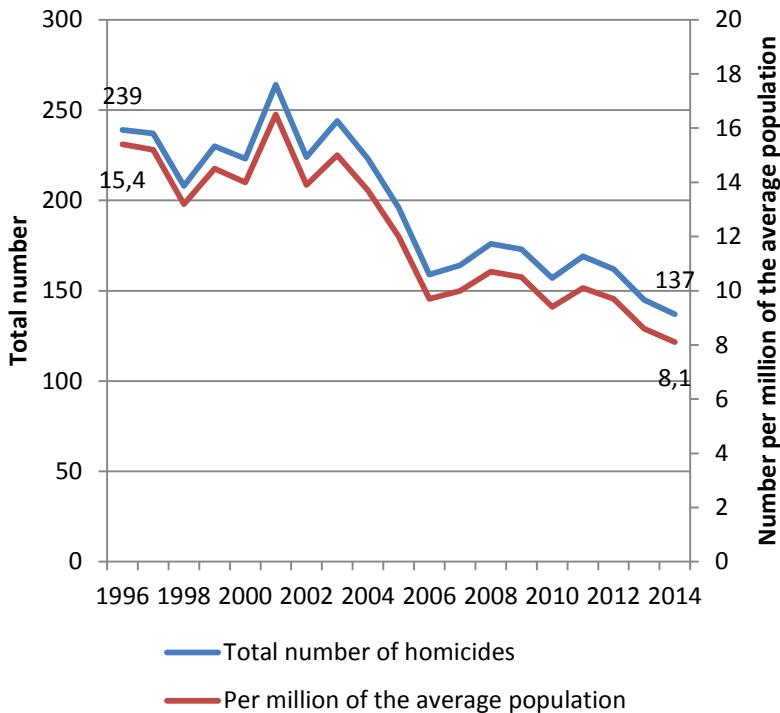


## Trends in homicide in The Netherlands and at the international level

Figure 4: Trends in estimated rates of homicide by country income status, 2000–2012, world



**Figure: Development in the number of homicides in The Netherlands, 1996 – 2014**





## A striking decline in the number of juvenile suspects in The Netherlands, Canada and the United States of America

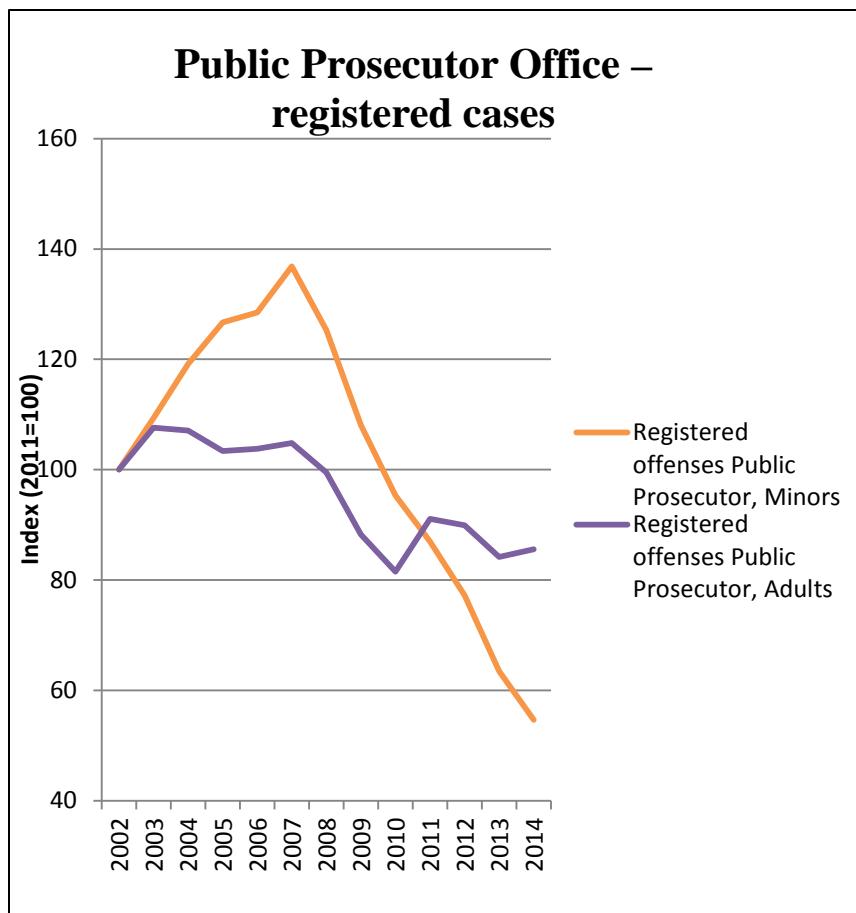
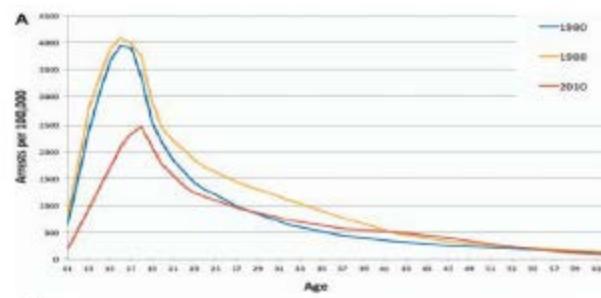
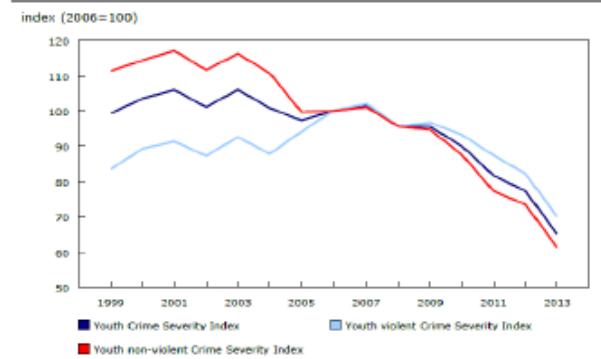


Chart 4  
Police-reported youth crime severity indexes, Canada, 1999 to 2013





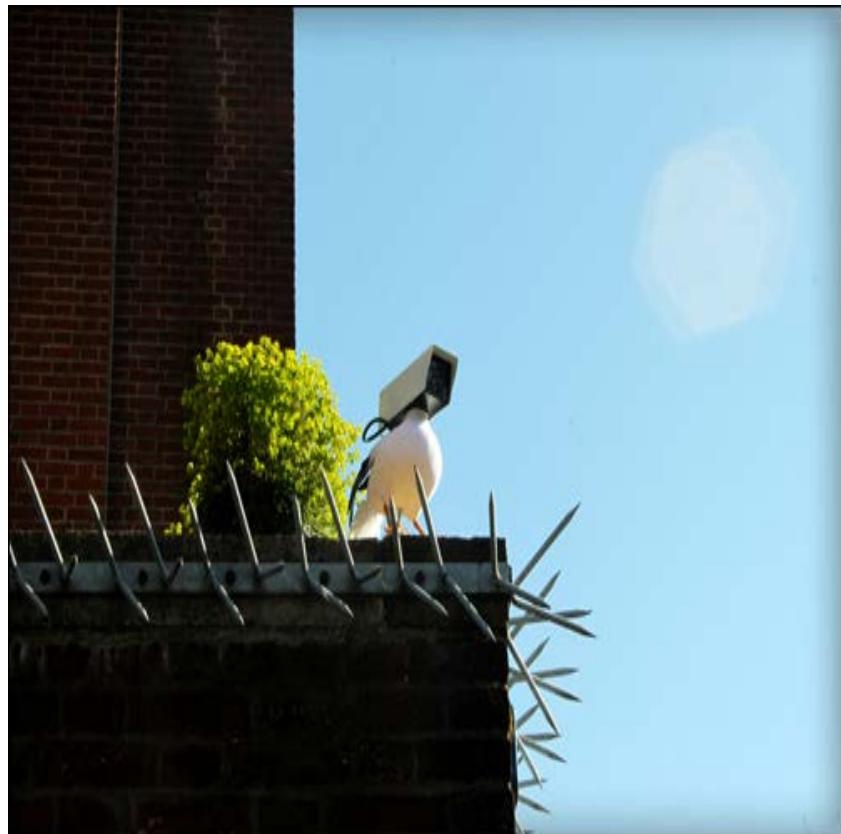
## Why has the crime drop occurred in The Netherlands and other industrialised countries? What explanations can be given?



- Only recently evidence based (inter)national criminological research has come available to explain the crime drop;
- There are many possible explanations available, from a strong economy, policing strategies, gun control laws, imprisonment to improved security;
- There is no *magic bullet* explanation for the Dutch and international drop in crime;
- Many explanations are country specific and do not apply to a number of other different countries;
- For the Netherlands four major related explanations can be given: (1) improved security; (2) restoring the capacity and authority of the criminal law; (3) demography and a declining heroin market (4) a strong active and stimulating role from central government;
- Since the crime drop has occurred at different times in different countries in relation to different crime types we will look for explanations that we can apply in many countries.



# The Security Hypothesis explained



- On the basis of our current knowledge and evidence the *security hypothesis* is the most important and solid explanation for the drop in crime;
- There is a general (international) increase in improvement of preventive behaviour, the quality of and financial investment in crime prevention by individuals, governmental organisations, the business world and producers. The private security industry has been an outstanding growth market;
- The security hypothesis especially applies when to explaining the drop in property crime (especially vehicle theft, shoplifting and domestic burglary). It is less clear how it applies to violent crime, such as certain types of (sexual) violence and assault.



## In conclusion



- There has been a significant and prolonged “crime drop” in The Netherlands and many other advanced countries;
- There seems to be a magnitude of theories and hypotheses that have been used to explain the drop in crime;
- There has been significant progress in (international) crime drop research;
- The so-called *Security Hypothesis* appears to be the most evidence-based and solid international explanation.
- There are still many unanswered questions when we try to explain the drop in crime;
- Hopefully during The Stockholm Criminology Symposium, June 8-10, 2015, some of these questions will be answered;
- And finally, congratulations to the 2015 Stockholm Criminology Prize winners Pat Mayhew and Ronald V. Clarke, the ‘mother and father’ of situational crime prevention.