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## *Crime, Punishment and Inequality in Ireland*

*Healy, D., Mulcahy, A. and I. O'Donnell*

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**GROWING INEQUALITIES' IMPACTS**

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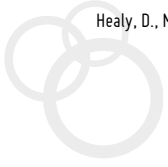
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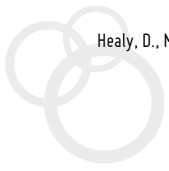


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# 1. Introduction

The linkages between crime, punishment, policing and inequality are multifaceted. There is good empirical evidence that certain types of offending, especially homicide, are positively correlated with inequality. In addition a theoretical argument can be made to the effect that inequality creates opportunities for the kinds of corporate and white collar misconduct which, even if not criminal in a narrow legal sense, have far-reaching and damaging social repercussions. For example, the enormous scale of reckless lending, balance sheet manipulation and cynical underestimation by Irish banks will place a greater financial burden on this country's taxpayers than the harms wrought by generations of robbers, burglars and thieves. Other countries caught up in the financial crises that defined the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century will have similar experiences. An exaggerated emphasis on financial success, to the virtual exclusion of other markers of achievement, becomes problematic in a context where there are few restraints on the means chosen to increase wealth. Traditional modes of crime prevention and control have proved insufficiently flexible to deal with a new category of harms perpetrated by a new class of offender; investigating financial malpractice requires new tools and new models of criminal justice.<sup>1</sup>

Insofar as punishment is concerned, an emerging literature shows how welfare regimes relate to penal practice (with more equal societies tending to be less punitive). A number of studies have found a strong relationship between the level of deprivation in an area and the number of prisoners resident there. The interpretation of this finding is that poverty generates the kind of conduct that the criminal justice system tends to prioritise (i.e. the crimes of urban streets rather than corporate suites) but also that the system compounds existing inequalities due to the reduced opportunities available to released prisoners whose presence can further disadvantage their host community. Not only are more equal societies more lenient but they also exhibit higher levels of trust in government and lower levels of fear.

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<sup>1</sup> A focus on social harms in general rather than crimes in particular would move the debate beyond criminal justice and raise a range of fresh explanatory challenges (Dorling et al., 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Alternative explanations have also been offered. For example, Murray (1990) suggested that the association between poverty and crime is fuelled by a culture of irresponsibility which has emerged among certain social groups – which he termed the ‘underclass’ – as a result of ineffective socialisation and public acceptance of such behaviour. In a more sociologically informed

## 2. Crime

Recent years have seen substantial and sustained reductions in recorded crime in the USA. What has been termed the 'great American crime decline' began in the early 1990s and ranged across all regions, all crime types, all demographic groups and all socio-economic strata (Blumstein and Wallman, 2000; Zimring, 2007). Other country-specific studies have resulted in similar findings. For example, Hoare's (2009) analysis of British Crime Survey data between 1995 and 2007 revealed falls in violent crime (down 49 per cent), burglary (down 59 per cent) and car theft (down 65 per cent).

This picture is replicated in cross-national studies, with Tseloni et al (2010: 388), in their analysis of trends in criminal victimisation, going so far as to describe the 'universal nature of the crime decline'. The picture across Western Europe is somewhat less clear cut, with police data showing falls in homicide and theft but increases in drug crime and non-lethal violence. The explanation offered by Aebi and Linde (2010) for this pattern, in their study of crime trends between 1988 and 2007, is that better household security and increased wealth have reduced the opportunity and motivation for property crime, while a growth in street gangs and episodic alcohol consumption has driven drug consumption and street violence upwards.

Tables 1 and 2 show recorded crime and victim prevalence rates. A strong correlation was found between inequality and recorded crime ( $r = -.586$ ,  $p < .001$ ), however, there was no statistical relationship between victimisation and inequality ( $r = -.057$ , ns). The latter finding is in line with existing research and may be explained by the fact that victimisation surveys focus predominantly on minor, non-violent offences which are not strongly associated with inequality. It is also somewhat surprising that recorded crime and, to a lesser extent, victimisation prevalence were negatively correlated with inequality, because this suggests that lower crime rates are associated with higher inequality. It is unclear why this might be the case but it may be that the total crime figure conceals different patterns for different offences. This issue requires further exploration.





**Table 1 – Offences per 100,000 population (2006)**

	Offenders	Offences	GINI
Russian Federation	955	2,706	45.6
Armenia	215	303	41.3
Ukraine	459	900	38.1
Latvia	766	2,724	37.7
Moldova	495	585	37.4
Portugal	2,495	3,784	36.7
Macedonia, FYR	924	1,079	36.5
United Kingdom	-	-	35.0
Lithuania	1,053	2,904	34.7
Italy	1,065	4,702	33.8
Greece	3,790	4,160	33.5
Estonia	1,296	3,858	33.0
Spain	-	5,145	31.5
Ireland	-	11,134	31.4
Romania	875	1,078	31.1
Poland	1,537	3,378	30.8
Bulgaria	840	1,601	29.8
Croatia	1,505	2,648	29.3
Cyprus	749	1,028	29.1
Hungary	1,233	4,229	28.8
Germany	2,774	7,659	28.5
France	1,787	6,049	27.9
Luxembourg	-	5,483	27.9
Netherlands	2,192	7,454	27.4
Malta	-	4,066	27.2
Austria	2,875	7,118	26.6
Iceland	2,099	4,430	26.3
Finland	7,244	9,796	26.0
Belgium	-	9,600	25.6

Czech Republic	1,193	3,271	25.4
Norway	-	5,944	25.1
Denmark	-	7,822	24.1
Slovak Republic	994	2,136	23.8
Slovenia	2,241	4,499	25.0
Sweden	1,208	13,490	23.5
UK: England & Wales	2,746	10,102	-
UK: Northern Ireland	-	6,954	-
UK: Scotland	-	10,250	-
Bosnia/ Herzegovina	776	1,087	-
Georgia	385	1,484	-
Switzerland	-	4,478	-
Turkey	-	1,230	-
Albania	288	286	-

Source: *European Sourcebook (2010)*

## Table 2 – One year prevalence of criminal victimisation

	Prevalence	GINI 2004/05
<b>Mexico</b>	18.7	45.8
<b>USA</b>	17.5	37.2
<b>Portugal</b>	10.4	36.99985
<b>United Kingdom</b>	21	34.63992
<b>Estonia</b>	20.2	34.27454
<b>Japan</b>	9.9	34.20865
<b>Italy</b>	12.6	33.99056
<b>Greece</b>	12.3	33.35422
<b>New Zealand</b>	21.5	32.92453
<b>Poland</b>	15	32
<b>Canada</b>	17.2	31.8



Spain	9.1	31.57463
Ireland	21.9	31.51415
Australia	16.3	31.38985
Switzerland	18.1	31.06505
Hungary	10	28.9
Germany	13.1	28.11079
France	12	27.76878
Luxembourg	12.7	27.41625
Netherlands	19.7	27.35991
Austria	11.6	26.80086
Bulgaria	14.1	26.00501
Finland	12.7	25.69222
Belgium	17.7	25.69165
Iceland	21.2	25.63346
Norway	15.8	25.6
Sweden	16.1	23.7
Denmark	18.8	23.4621
England and Wales	21.8	-
Northern Ireland	20.4	-
Scotland	13.3	-

Source: Van Dijk, J.J.M., van Kesteren, J.N. & Smit, P. (2008)

In any attempt to make sense of crime rates it is important to be as offence-specific as possible. Aggregate crime levels are most strongly influenced by changes in high volume offences such as theft and burglary and, as a result, overall trends can conceal important underlying variation. There are also significant difficulties associated with interpreting police statistics on crime, survey data on victimisation and self-reported delinquency (Maguire, 2007). Nonetheless it seems reasonable to conclude that since the early to mid 1990s, both the personal property and bodily integrity of the citizens of many developed countries have become less at risk of damage through crime.

An examination of the relationship between intentional homicide and inequality showed there was a strong positive correlation between them ( $r = .453$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This finding is in line with existing research. A recent meta-analysis identified clear links between inequality and violent crime (Hsieh and Pugh, 1993). There has been a particular focus in the literature on the social structure of homicide. This is a complex area of research, but there is evidence that lethal violence is related both to poverty (Williams, 1984) and to inequality (Messner, 1989). One study claimed that levels of income inequality appeared to be sufficient to account for the radically different rates of homicide in Canada and the US (Daly, Wilson and Vasdev, 2001; see also Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza, 2002). An extensive review by Pridemore and Trent (2010) found that there was relatively consistent evidence for a cross-national association between homicide and 'resource deprivation' (usually operationalised via the Gini coefficient). Inequality, they concluded, appears to be a robust predictor of homicide rates across countries (see Table 3). Certain factors may mediate the effects of inequality on lethal violence. Pratt and Godsey (2003) discovered that the amount of public spending on health and welfare in a society, which they used as a measure of social support, interacted with inequality to influence homicide rates. Inequality may also interact with the level of self-interest and trust in a society (Halpern, 2001).

**Table 3 – Differences in death: Homicide rates around the world**

	ES06	GINI 2006
Russia	19.3	45.56797
Armenia	3.2	41.30075
Ukraine	6.9	38.05093
Latvia	6.5	37.65265
Moldova	5.3	37.40186
Portugal		36.67998
TFYR of Macedonia	4.4	36.49666
Lithuania	8.7	34.71592
Italy	3.6	33.84007
Greece	2	33.50821
Estonia	8.9	33.03801
Spain		31.45345
Ireland		31.40786



Romania	4.2	31.0694
Poland	2.8	30.76818
Bulgaria	3.3	29.81507
Croatia	6	29.32813
Cyprus	1.8	29.07718
Hungary	3	28.8187
Germany	3.2	28.53007
France	3.4	27.93932
Luxembourg		27.86697
Netherlands	9	27.3555
Malta	1.2	27.16457
Austria	1.8	26.58539
Iceland	2.3	26.28903
Finland	7.7	25.96308
Belgium	8.3	25.64675
Czech Republic	2.2	25.44584
Norway	1.8	25.11526
Slovenia	3.8	25.04139
Denmark	3	24.10679
Slovakia	1.7	23.75864
Sweden		23.52378
<b>Albania</b>	<b>11.3</b>	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4.9	
Georgia	14.6	
Switzerland	2.6	
Turkey	3.6	
UK: England and Wales	2.6	
UK: Northern Ireland	8.2	
UK: Scotland	18.4	

Source: European Sourcebook (2010)

In addition to impacting on crime levels, socio-economic disadvantage may increase the risk of victimisation. Wohlfarth et al. (2001) found that unemployed people in Holland had an enhanced risk of criminal victimisation and were more likely to experience psychological distress as a result of their victimisation experience. However, people with higher education and socio-economic status also experienced a heightened risk in this study. A Swedish study found that the poorest segments of society experienced an increased risk of victimisation compared to other groups, particularly for violent offences (Nilsson and Estrada, 2006). The gap between rich and poor widened over the period of this study and the level of victimisation among the poor increased in parallel with growing inequality while victimisation rates in other economic groups stabilised. A similar trend has emerged in the USA (Thacher, 2004). Using data from the International Crime Victimization Survey, Soares (2004) found that inequality was positively and consistently correlated with victimisation rates across the regions studied whereas education and economic growth suppressed crime.

In contrast, a study involving 17 Latin American countries found that the rich and the middle classes were among the groups most likely to experience criminal victimisation, especially property offences (Gaviria and Pagés, 2002). Inequality also increased crime in these countries (see also Hojman, 2002). There is a growing literature concerning the impact of inequality on crime in Asia. In Korea, unemployment rates were found to be the best predictor of changes in crime rates over time (Yoon and Joo, 2005). A study of Japan, a country known for its low crime rates and high levels of social cohesion, found that measures of economic stress predicted crime trends more effectively than measures of social (dis)organisation (Roberts and LaFree, 2004).

There is some evidence in the literature to suggest that the experience of inequality, poverty or social exclusion can influence a victim's decision to report a crime, however, the relationship between reporting rates and inequality scores was not significant in this study ( $r = -.109$ , ns). Soares (2004) found that populations in richer countries are more likely to report crimes to the police (see also Table 4). Strong social cohesion appears to increase the level of crime reporting while socio-economic disadvantage decreases it (Gourdriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2006), although this effect may vary by crime type (Baumer, 2002).



**Table 4 – Percentage of crimes reported to the police**

	<b>%</b>	<b>GINI 2004</b>
Denmark	60	64.7134
Greece	49	52.9521
Bulgaria	35	52.3007
Sweden	64	50.7
Canada	48	49.5359
Mexico	16	48.0025
Australia	52	47.2176
USA	49	46.6408
Poland	46	45.8
Turkey	38	43.4156
China	24	42.8695
Switzerland	63	42.7185
Ireland	51	40.7733
Japan	54	40.0018
Northern Ireland	59	39.4146
Austria	70	39.2335
Portugal	51	38.739
Belgium	68	38.3622
Luxembourg	48	34.7697
New Zealand	57	33.1887
Spain	47	30.6717
Iceland	40	27.6445
Finland	48	25.307
Hungary	58	25.2
England & Wales	61	-
Scotland	61	-

Source: Van Dijk, J.J.M., van Kesteren, J.N. & Smit, P. (2008)

What are the connections between inequality and crime? How can this relationship be theorised? In one of the classic articles of sociology, Merton (1938) used the concept of *anomie* to describe a society that promised much to everyone but where many people's desires were inevitably frustrated. Thwarted ambition led to discontent. Describing the elusive nature of the American Dream in the 1930s, Merton observed that:

The cultural demands ... are incompatible. On the one hand, they are asked to orient their conduct toward the prospect of accumulating wealth and on the other, they are largely denied effective opportunities to do so institutionally ... Frustrated and thwarted aspiration lead to the search for avenues of escape from a culturally induced intolerable situation; or unrelieved ambition may eventuate in illicit attempts to acquire the dominant values. The American stress on pecuniary success and ambitiousness for all thus invites exaggerated anxieties, hostilities, neuroses and antisocial behaviour.

When the same value (i.e. wealth accumulation) is considered suitable for all members of society, but attainable only by a few, poverty may breed resentment and crime. The necessary conditions for *anomie* are material deprivation, limited opportunity and commonly shared symbols of success. An example of such a process would be involvement in drug dealing as a way to acquire the trappings of wealth and the associated respect. But the drug trade is a dangerous business and competition between dealers over supplies, prices, customers, debts and trading areas is regularly resolved through force. In this way an unequal society creates a context for violent crime; a legitimate social aspiration has damaging consequences.<sup>2</sup>

Merton's ideas are not limited to the typical crimes of marginalised males whose desires do not find legitimate expression. Shootings, drug deals and muggings that take place on urban streets and ruinous decisions that are made in executive suites may seem completely unconnected. But they are not. The callous young robber whose success depends on the persuasiveness of the threat that he poses, and the smooth-talking professional whose success depends on the extent to which he can instil confidence in potential backers, seem to inhabit entirely different worlds. But they share important characteristics. These include a readiness to 'innovate', a desire to maximise rewards with insufficient attention being paid to the associated costs, an entrepreneurial spirit,

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<sup>2</sup> Alternative explanations have also been offered. For example, Murray (1990) suggested that the association between poverty and crime is fuelled by a culture of irresponsibility which has emerged among certain social groups – which he termed the 'underclass' – as a result of ineffective socialisation and public acceptance of such behaviour. In a more sociologically informed argument, Wacquant (2008) disagreed, arguing that the state plays a central role in the creation of marginalised groups through its economic, social and spatial policies.



frustration with rules, and an urge to push forward and to make progress on their terms (for an elaboration of the consequence of such activity, see Reiman, 2004).

In *Crime and the American Dream*, Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) drew upon anomie theory to argue that American culture places a disproportionate emphasis on monetary success and a weak emphasis on the most appropriate route to such success. This contributes to crime by encouraging people to pursue a goal that is highly approved of and to deal with any perceived obstacles by ignoring, bending or breaking the rules. When the economy is allowed to dominate, the capacity of other parts of society – such as families, schools and the political system – to curb the pressure towards inappropriate or criminal conduct is severely reduced. In this way, so the argument goes, a society becomes organised for crime.

Such a scenario is played out in different ways across different layers of society. For someone existing at the fringes of social respectability with an incomplete education, a chaotic lifestyle and few community supports to draw upon, the outlook is bleak. In such circumstances the chances of achieving monetary success through legitimate means are slim. This renders crime attractive as a way of obtaining rewards that are immediate and that can, on occasion, be substantial. For an affluent individual engaged in, let us say, trading on the financial markets or speculating on property, where a good return has been made in the past and even greater rewards seem tantalisingly close, identifying the most direct route to their realisation becomes of paramount importance. Where money is concerned, and the stakes are high, an attitude of ‘anything goes’ can emerge.

### 3. Communities

Aggregate measures of inequality may conceal significant diversity within and between countries (Hojman, 2004) and indeed, across communities. Studies, such as the *International Self-Report Delinquency Study*, have not detected a relationship between socio-economic status and crime but this may be explained by the fact that self-report delinquency surveys focus disproportionately on minor offending behaviour (Junger-Tas, Terlouw and Klein, 1994). Minor offending is widespread across society and is only weakly linked to social class and neighbourhood composition (Oberwittler, 2004). Nevertheless, young people living in economically deprived communities are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour and tend to desist from crime later than those living in more affluent areas (McVie and Norris, 2006). Again there is variation by crime type with cannabis use being higher among adolescents living in affluent areas (McVie and Norris, 2006).

Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) argued that collective efficacy, defined as mutual trust and a willingness to intervene for the common good, is particularly important in determining local crime rates. According to this view, neighbourhoods with high collective efficacy have strong informal social controls and therefore have less need to resort to formal control mechanisms. Neighbourhood disadvantage and instability play a significant role in determining the levels of collective efficacy in an area. A Scottish study failed to isolate a significant impact of collective efficacy on crime rates (McVie and Norris, 2006). However, the researchers found that desistance was less likely to occur in disordered neighbourhoods with high levels of resident dissatisfaction (Smith, 2006).

While neighbourhood characteristics appear to influence criminal behaviour, individual characteristics can mediate their effects. Oberwittler (2004) discovered that young people living in socially disadvantaged high-crime areas were capable of actively shaping the impact of the neighbourhood context on their behaviour. In particular, young people with friendship networks that extended beyond the geographical confines of their neighbourhoods were often able to resist the temptations of criminal involvement. In Edinburgh, McVie and Norris (2006) found that individual characteristics, such as impulsivity, were more important determinants of behaviour than neighbourhood characteristics.



## 4. Policing

The police are the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, and all subsequent decisions and processes are reliant in the first instance on the activation of police powers in some respect. While the police are key symbols of order and authority, and often are closely aligned with particular visions of social structure and national identity (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003), the role of the police and the powers available to them give them a unique ability to impact on the freedom of individuals, as well as on wider aspects of community safety and security.

Despite the prominence of media imagery of the police as determined crime fighters, most policing is far more prosaic in nature, and routine patrol – rather than determined detective work – is a more accurate representation of the realities of policing (Reiner, 2000). Patrol units account for a majority of police personnel in the UK (55 per cent), while detectives (in Criminal Investigation Departments) comprise a relatively small minority of officers (15 per cent) (Morgan and Newburn, 1997). The precise proportion of officers allocated to patrol varies from society to society (e.g. 65 per cent in the US, 64 per cent in Canada, 54 per cent in Australia), but the broad pattern holds true: patrol and surveillance rather than criminal investigation absorbs most police resources.

Much routine police patrol-work appears to have little to do with crime – perhaps only slightly more than a half of calls to the police involve what could potentially be viewed as crime (Morgan and Newburn, 1997: 82), and instead involves a wide range of order maintenance and service provision activities. Patrol-work and responses to calls for assistance from members of the public involve significant amounts of discretion on the part of individual police officers in determining how to respond to the wide variety of often ambiguous situations they face. Although arrests are relatively rare outcomes when the police are called, the discretion they enjoy provides an opportunity for differential and discriminatory application of police powers. Moreover, given the prominence of patrol within conventional policing, the default exercise of police powers is the regulation of public space, and this ensures that police attention is largely focused on particular groups of people who are most reliant on and who spend more time in public locations – broadly speaking, those who lack the resources to conduct their lives in more private settings and who therefore are correspondingly more likely to be subject to police surveillance: marginalized groups, young people, the homeless, and so on.

The wide licence the police historically enjoyed when dealing with such communities signified that they were, in effect, 'police property' (Lee, 1981), on the grounds that the police could, and often did, treat them as they wished, particularly in terms of extra-legal and oppressive measures. Choongh (1997) argued that marginal communities often were policed through informal means – being stopped and searched, 'moved on', etc – rather than through strict strategies of law enforcement, and that the purpose of such strategies was to impose social discipline on the 'dross' of society. For example, one observational study of policing conducted in Dublin found that the policing style in 'Parkway', a suburb with an 'established, negative history' in the eyes of the police, was noticeably 'more confrontational' than that evident in the city centre (Institute of Criminology, 2003: 67-9). The police viewed 'Parkway' negatively, and routinely resorted to belligerent language to resolve public order situations, telling members of the public to 'fuck off home, now'. Overall, the authors noted that: 'Gardaí feel no sense of obligation to engage sympathetically with potential public order offenders at 'Parkway'. They simply asserted their authority and appeared unconcerned about the nature of the reaction that might be elicited as a consequence' (p.69).

The nature of police enforcement strategies also has a significant impact on inequality. The case of drugs policing demonstrates this. Most drugs offences are detected through proactive policing, and drug-related arrests therefore are a sharp reminder of the level of attention devoted to this issue. Most drug-related policing focuses on street-level drug use – in effect, it specifically targets marginalized communities and visible drug use therein. The drug use of wealthier communities is generally spared such attention: it is conducted in locations to which the police do not have ready access, and by constituencies who are not considered a significant policing problem and therefore worthy of police enforcement. Disparities in penalties impact disproportionately on ethnic minorities and poor inner-city residents. In the US for instance, conviction for possession of five grams of crack-cocaine resulted in an automatic five-year prison sentence, whereas it required 500 grams of powder cocaine to earn the same sentence (Wacquant, 2000; Bourgois, 2004). As Bourgois (2004: 311) notes, in the late 1980s: '96 per cent of those prosecuted for violating [US] federal crack laws were African American.' Marginalized communities have suffered hugely disproportionately through the manner in which the 'War on Drugs' has been policed.

In other settings where societies are marked by profound political division, policing frequently is deeply contentious. In 'divided societies' (Brewer, 1991), where profound cleavages exist in

terms of political affiliation, ethnicity, or wealth, the police often are identified with one section of society. Such contexts are characterized by polarization in terms of support for the police, and policing itself may be marked by high levels of militarization and violence. This is the case where the status and legitimacy of particular states may be challenged (see, for example, Brogden and Shearing, 1993; Mulcahy, 2006), or where large sections of society live in conditions of acute poverty (Chevigny, 1997; Huggins, 1998; see also Jacobs and O'Brien, 1998). These factors in themselves pose particular challenges for police reform during processes of political transition (Caprani and Marenin, 2004; Hinton and Newburn, 2009).

The levels of attention the police give to marginalized communities is itself a complex affair. Often such communities are characterized by high levels of crime, especially violent crime, and therefore police attention may be appropriate. However, the policing style in marginalized communities is typically characterized by resort to abrasive intrusive and contentious policing methods. These methods in turn have the potential to be profoundly damaging in terms of public trust and confidence in the police. As Skogan (2006) notes, negative experiences of policing are likely to register a significantly greater impact than positive experiences on the nature of people's attitudes and dispositions towards the police. To solve most crimes, the police are reliant on information provided by members of the public. If the trust in the police is low, then the information flow to the police is likely to be similarly low, with the result that the police resort to more intrusive and heavy-handed strategies, for example, greater use of stop and search. Dissatisfaction with the police response to local problems of crime and disorder, as well as concern over the actions police engage in can severely erode police legitimacy, resulting in an escalating cycle of conflict between police and public (Lea and Young, 1993). Ironically, this 'over-policing' often co-exists with 'under-protection', whereby the police fail to accord due significance to the victimization of particular communities. This can take several forms: not appearing at the scene of the crime; attending but failing to recognise that the complainant has been victimized; or accepting that victimization occurred but failing to treat the complaint with due seriousness either by failing to investigate thoroughly or by devoting insufficient resources to the case. Such a failure amounts to a double victimization, first from the crime itself, and then from the failure of the authorities to provide an appropriate professional response to it (see for example, Bowling, 1999). This dynamic of over-policing and under-protection is a persistent finding in research in the policing of ethnic minorities (Bowling, Parmar and Phillips, 2008; Chan, 1997; Rowe, 2004), young people and other marginalized groups (see for example, Mulcahy and O'Mahony, 2005).

In terms of the wider issue of public confidence in and satisfaction with the police, it is clear that a number of factors may have an effect on this. These include the nature of one's individual contact with the police, levels of inequality in one's neighbourhood, assessments of local police performance, and their adherence to procedural justice (see for example, Bridenball and Jesilow, 2008; Jackson and Sunshine, 2007; Kääriäinen and Sirén, 2011; Skogan, 2006; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Weitzer and Tuch, 2005). Inequality impacts on this issue in a number of ways. First, it is clear that levels of trust in the police vary considerably across societies. In Europe, as Kääriäinen (2007) demonstrates, it is highest in the Nordic countries and lowest in former socialist countries in Eastern Europe, and high levels of trust in the police are associated with low levels of political corruption. Second, when we look within societies, trust in the police also appears related to inequality. The focus of police attention – both as suspects/perpetrators and victims – typically comprises individuals and groups who are marginalized in some way (people who are on low incomes, young in age, and of an ethnic minority background are typically overrepresented within the criminal justice system). Generally these groups – who comprise the bulk of the volume of police-public contacts – typically express lower levels of trust/confidence/satisfaction in the police than other groups. In Ireland, for example, Travellers (an indigenous ethnic group) have a significantly shorter life expectancy than the settled population – 15 years less for men, and 11 years less for women. A police survey in 2007 found that only 52 per cent of Traveller respondents expressed satisfaction with the police, compared to 81 per cent of the overall population.

These factors raise considerable difficulties when considering issues relating to crime prevention and improving police-community relations (see generally, Crawford, 1999). Rix et al. (2009) suggest that efforts to improve public confidence in the police are more likely to be successful if such strategies are based on improving engagement and communication with communities. However, the fact that communities which demonstrate low levels of confidence in the police typically have relatively high crime levels poses a dilemma. Enhancing the role of the police in those areas is likely to be made more difficult by the history of police-community relations in those areas. Moreover, the efficacy of those communities is also likely to be diminished by levels of crime and disorder. The capacity of the public police to provide robust solutions to local crime problems raises a wider question surrounding the role of private security.



## 6. Private Security

Recent years have witnessed a significant expansion of the private security sector (Button, 2002; Jones and Newburn, 1998). While often viewed as a ‘junior partner’ to the public police – in terms of size, powers and significance – increases in the scale and range of private security activities ensures that it can no longer be characterized in this way, and must instead be understood as a significant component of the broad field of crime prevention and public safety (Johnston and Shearing, 2003). The relationship between private security and inequality is complex. The purchase of private security reflects at one level a straightforward differential in purchasing power. However, it also serves as a marker of distinction, insofar as it confers on those who avail of it the promise (realized or not) of exclusivity. Having private employees whose role is, in effect, to offer protection not only against potential crime, but also against unwanted encounters with or incursions by the homeless or others considered an inconvenience, nuisance, or of low social standing, is a powerful symbol of one’s relative standing in society. While the expansion of the private security sector reflects a number of factors, including the decline of ‘secondary’ social control occupations which historically performed a surveillance or quasi-policing function (such as park wardens, bus conductors, and so on) (Jones and Newburn, 2002), it does not appear to be related primarily to crime rates. D’Alessio, Eitle and Stolzenberg (2005) suggest that the scale of private security instead reflects the relative size of the ethnic minority population (in their research, Black and Hispanic residents) and economic inequality. In this respect, inequality is likely to encourage members of the public to turn to market solutions to address more fundamental concerns relating to security.

## 7. Punishment

There is more variation internationally in imprisonment rates than in crime rates (Table 5). For example, the trend in the USA over the past twenty years has been emphatically upward. Similar trajectories are to be found in a number of other countries such as England and Wales and New Zealand, although the extreme nature of the American experiment with incarceration has no true parallel.<sup>3</sup> Other countries have seen their prison populations fluctuate (e.g. France and, more

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<sup>3</sup> The World Prison Brief maintained by the International Centre for Prison Studies in King’s College London shows that in 2009 the rate of imprisonment per 100,000 population was 748 in the USA. This was the highest rate in the world and equates to almost 2.3m individuals. It compares with 117 in Canada, 99 in Ireland, 88 in Germany and 154

recently, the Netherlands), some have been relatively stable (e.g. Canada, Norway), and others have fallen (e.g. Finland).

A number of commentators have attempted to explore the relationship between national characteristics and the use of imprisonment. In particular the focus has been on the extent to which punishment regimes vary systematically along with welfare arrangements. An early attempt at such an analysis was attempted out by Kilcommmins et al. (2004). Drawing on the typologies of welfare regimes formulated by Esping-Andersen (1990) and others, these authors found 'that countries with well-developed, universalistic, generous welfare regimes tend to have lower prison populations than those with low levels of welfare provision' (p. 278). Similar conclusions were arrived at in subsequent, independent, analyses (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Enzmann et al., 2010; Lacey , 2008). In an authoritative review, Lappi-Seppala (2008: 352) observed that 'Looked at globally, increased income inequality seems to produce more prisoners.' The strength of this relationship is noteworthy. Statistical analysis conducted for this paper also found a strong association between increased inequality and higher imprisonment rates ( $r = .536, p < .001$ ).

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in England and Wales. The lowest rates were to be found in the Nordic countries (e.g. Finland – 60; Sweden – 78; Norway – 71). See <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/law/research/icps/worldbrief/?search=europe&x=Europe>; site accessed 2 December 2010.





**Table 5 – The scale of punishment: Imprisonment rates and inequality**

	Imprisonment rate	Gini
Slovakia	148	23.0
Sweden	74	23.0
Norway	69	24.1
Denmark	63	25.0
Slovenia	65	25.4
Belgium	93	25.7
Finland	64	26.0
Austria	95	26.7
Netherlands	100	27.8
France	96	28.0
Luxembourg	155	28.4
Poland	221	29.7
Germany	89	30.0
Ireland	76	30.7
Switzerland	76	31.1
Spain	160	31.3
Canada	116	31.5
New Zealand	185	32.6
Italy	92	33.3
Australia	129	33.5
Greece	109	33.5
United Kingdom	152	35.8
Portugal	104	35.9
USA	756	36.0
Turkey	142	43.9
Russian Federation	629	46.2

[Source: World Prison Population List (8<sup>th</sup> Ed, KCL)]

While there are some difficulties associated with using a country's imprisonment rate – usually expressed as the average daily number of prisoners per 100,000 population – as a measure of its punitiveness (O'Donnell, 2004; Pease, 1994) this has become the standard approach (see Table 5). It can be supplemented with the results of public opinion surveys which yield insights into the extent to which the public espouses values of leniency. Residents of countries that are parsimonious in their use of imprisonment tend to be unenthusiastic gaolers (see Table 6) and seem to be less fearful as they go about their daily lives (Table 7). Levels of tolerance in society were significantly correlated with inequality. Public attitudes towards recidivist burglars appear to be more punitive in societies characterised by higher levels of inequality ( $r = .587, p < .001$ ). A significant positive relationship between fear of crime and inequality was also found ( $r = .536, p = .003$ ). This is supported by existing research. Lappi-Seppala (2008: 364) found that levels of trust in political and legal institutions as well as in other people are 'inversely associated ... with fear, punitiveness and income inequality. They all increase as the degree of trust decreases.' High levels of trust were associated with more generous state provision of welfare.

### Table 6 – Cross-national contrasts in tolerance.

Percentage favouring immediate imprisonment for recidivist burglar

	%	GINI 2005
Mexico	70	46.04571
Istanbul (Turkey)	53	43.92083
Hong Kong	58	43.54539
USA	47	37.04594
Portugal	15	36.99985
Japan	55	35.87954
United Kingdom	-	34.63992
Italy	24	33.99056
Estonia	26	33.59335
Greece	30	33.35422
New Zealand	40	33.07498
Canada	44	31.68298
Spain	17	31.57463



Australia	33	31.57074
Ireland	38	31.51415
Poland	34	31.29297
Switzerland	12	31.06505
Hungary	29	28.9
Germany	19	28.11079
France	13	27.76878
Luxembourg	16	27.41625
Netherlands	32	27.35991
Bulgaria	50	27.16198
Austria	13	26.80086
Finland	15	25.69222
Belgium	17	25.69165
Iceland	16	25.63346
Norway	29	25.33828
Sweden	33	23.7
Denmark	18	23.4621
Northern Ireland	53	-
England and Wales	51	-
Scotland	49	-

[Source: Van Dijk, J.J.M., van Kesteren, J.N. & Smit, P. (2008)]

**Table 7 – Inequality and anxiety: Variations in fear of crime Percentage feeling unsafe alone after dark in their area**

	2004/5	GINI 2005
Mexico	34	46.04571
USA	19	37.04594
Portugal	34	36.99985
Japan	35	35.87954
United Kingdom	-	34.63992
Italy	35	33.99056
Estonia	34	33.59335
Greece	42	33.35422
New Zealand	30	33.07498
Canada	17	31.68298
Spain	33	31.57463
Australia	27	31.57074
Ireland	27	31.51415
Poland	33	31.29297
Switzerland	-	31.06505
Hungary	26	28.9
Germany	30	28.11079
France	21	27.76878
Luxembourg	36	27.41625
Netherlands	18	27.35991
Bulgaria	53	27.16198



Austria	19	26.80086
Finland	14	25.69222
Belgium	26	25.69165
Iceland	6	25.63346
Norway	14	25.33828
Sweden	19	23.7
Denmark	17	23.4621
England & Wales	32	-
Northern Ireland	26	-
Scotland	30	-

[Source: Van Dijk, J.J.M., van Kesteren, J.N. & Smit, P. (2008)]

Whatever about the overall level of imprisonment in a country and how this relates to income differentials and national priorities relating to welfare spending, every country experiences the challenge of connecting ex-prisoners with relevant services. This is crucially important from a penal planning perspective. While studies of recidivism have a long history, what has become known as the process of ‘re-entry’ is beginning to attract a great deal of attention (Petersilia, 2003), especially in the USA where the social and economic costs associated with a bloated penal system have become vividly clear (Western, 2007).

Personal characteristics, such as age, gender and race can also constitute a source of inequality. A series of US studies found that young, ethnic minority males were significantly more likely than other social groups to receive a prison sentence, all other things being equal (see Spohn and Holleran, 2000). Poverty has been found to increase the probability of imprisonment in Ireland (Bacik et al., 1998). (Of course, a different picture would emerge if as much attention was paid to white collar criminality as to the disorder, theft, criminal damage and burglary that give rise to so much of the work of the criminal justice system.) Some theorists have argued that adolescents

commit crime because they are in the midst of a 'maturity gap' where they are psychologically ready to take on adult roles and responsibilities but are structurally excluded from adult opportunities by dint of their age (Moffitt, 1993; Barry, 2007). Once they reach maturity and gain access to legitimate avenues of success, they no longer need to engage in crime. These theorists are attempting to explain the age crime curve, which shows that criminal activity peaks in adolescence but declines in early adulthood (see for example, Farrington et al., 2006).

Young people who become involved in crime may inadvertently cut themselves off from sources of future conventional success in work and family life. Persistent offending may result from this experience of 'cumulative continuity' (Braithwaite, 1989; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Once a young person becomes embedded in criminal networks and behaviour, it is increasingly difficult for them even to envisage an alternative future. In fact, young people who offend often perceive the crime-free life to be risky and unrewarding and choose instead to remain in the familiar roles and relationships of their deviant lifestyle, despite the associated risks (Kemshall, 2008).

It has been suggested that the journey from crime to desistance involves a parallel pathway from social exclusion to social inclusion (Farrall, Bottoms and Shapland, 2010). This is not just a task for the ex-offender. Wider society also plays a significant role by either integrating or rejecting the putative desister. Community members can provide 'social recognition' to an ex-offender through a de-labelling process which authenticates and legitimises the reform effort (Maruna et al., 2004). In addition, local social networks often provide opportunities for an ex-offender to make a positive contribution to community welfare by enabling them to care for others, engage in generative pursuits or gain access to new pro-social roles and resources, particularly in work and family life (Maruna, 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2003). While social capital can suppress crime, it also has a dark side. Strong social bonds with deviant groups make it difficult to trust outsiders and this, in turn, can undermine opportunities for upward mobility (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005).

Communities with high levels of social capital are better equipped to reintegrate offenders and provide them with the social resources necessary to help them desist. Cohesive societies tend to shame the offence without permanently stigmatising the offender (Braithwaite, 1989). This serves to keep the crime rate low. Yet, while socially cohesive societies tend to have low crime rates, the recidivism rates of convicted offenders in these countries are comparable with the recidivism rates

of offenders elsewhere (see e.g. O'Donnell, Baumer and Hughes, 2008). This indicates that the social processes involved in desistance may differ from those that precipitate involvement in crime. Not a great deal is known about these differential processes despite their clear theoretical and practical significance.

A study of the geography of reintegration in Ireland found that in the most deprived areas of the country there were 145.9 prisoners per 10,000 population (see Table 8). This compared with 6.3 in the least deprived areas (O'Donnell et al., 2007). With the exception of sexual offences, the rates increased with increasing urbanisation and the differences were most pronounced for crimes against property and violent offences. The magnitude of these differences demonstrates that it is the urban areas already marked by serious disadvantage that must bear the brunt of the social problems that accompany released prisoners. This creates a potentially destabilising situation given the propensity for ex-prisoners to re-offend – more than a quarter are back in prison within twelve months of release and around half are re-imprisoned within four years (O'Donnell et al., 2008) – the demands they place on services for drug and alcohol treatment, and the negative implications of concentrating offenders in small areas. Even the best-motivated individual will find it more difficult to desist from offending when they find themselves surrounded by friends who are involved in crime or who have also served time in prison (Burnett, 2004; Healy, 2010).

**Table 8 – The geography of disadvantage in Ireland: Prisoners per 10,000 population (selected offences)**

Level of deprivation	1	2	3	4	5
Violent offences	1.6	4.1	10.7	20.9	47.3
Sex offences	0.5	0.6	1.3	1.0	1.6
Robbery	0.5	1.5	6.0	25.1	29.7
Drug offences	1.8	3.7	13.7	28.1	57.8
Property offences	1.5	5.7	24.6	84.8	148.2
Any crime	6.3	15.7	47.6	86.3	145.9

Note: 1 is least deprived and 5 is most deprived.  
[Source: Based on Table 2 in O'Donnell et al., 2007]

As Fagan (2004: 41) has shown with respect to New York, areas that experience high levels of incarceration can become locked into a vicious cycle, whereby: ‘Incarceration begets more incarceration, and incarceration also begets more crime, which in turn invites more aggressive enforcement, which then resupplies incarceration.’ This is a dynamic process that, once established, can be difficult to disrupt, condemning areas with few resources to unstable and unsafe futures. (See also Clear (2008) on the negative collateral consequences of high imprisonment rates and the likely criminogenic impact of concentrated incarceration on those communities that bear the brunt of large numbers of their adult men being committed to prison.)

The re-entry experience is crucially important and this can differ qualitatively across countries. Ex-prisoners face particular barriers to civic engagement and labour market participation. These include felon disenfranchisement laws, legal exclusion from certain employment sectors, the limited nature of provisions for expunging prior convictions, and possibly some form of post-release supervision or surveillance. The cumulative impact of these measures serves to sharpen inequalities. In other words, imprisonment increases inequality as well as inequality increasing imprisonment.

**Table 9 – Percentage of Europeans who would not like to have a person with a criminal record as a neighbour**

Country	%	GINI
Russia	57.6	43.4
Estonia	69.0	36.1
Portugal	43.9	35.3
United Kingdom	-	34.5
Spain	31.8	33.6
Greece	68.1	33.3
Italy	47.4	33.3
Latvia	56.8	33.2
Lithuania	66.0	32.8





Ireland	55.6	31.3
Croatia	73.4	31.1
Ukraine	72.1	30.5
Malta	80.0	30.0
Poland	67.9	28.8
Belgium	27.7	27.9
France	21.2	27.8
Hungary	88.5	27.7
Germany	25.0	27.5
Romania	68.9	27.2
Luxembourg	29.5	26.0
Austria	26.9	25.7
Belarus	72.4	25.6
Czech Republic	63.9	25.5
Netherlands	33.0	25.2
Sweden	33.0	25.2
Slovenia	40.5	24.8
Slovakia	81.5	24.6
Finland	39.4	24.6
Bulgaria	74.8	24.5
Denmark	30.6	22.5
Great Britain	48.1	-
NorthernIreland	47.5	
Iceland	25.7	

Source: *European Values Survey (2000)*

There is another dimension to this issue, namely that many communities are ambivalent about the offenders who live among them. The most recent sweep of the European Values Survey found that half of all Europeans would not like to live next door to someone with a criminal record (Table 9). However, statistical analysis found no relationship between these attitudes and inequality ( $r = .104$ , ns). Some offender groups are particularly vulnerable to violence and stigmatisation. In some jurisdictions, local vigilante groups have threatened or attacked sex offenders living in their community (Burchfield and Mingus, 2008). When people are excluded from mainstream society and cut off from pro-social influences, they are less likely to desist from crime.

Any attempt to prevent crime must take account of wider political considerations including the extent to which a country's political arrangements are perceived to be corrupt. As Table 10 shows, corruption and inequality are strongly related and by ameliorating one, it is likely that there will be a beneficial impact on the other. There was a very strong positive correlation between the belief that police are affected by corruption and high inequality ( $r=.532$ ,  $p < .001$ ) but no relationship was found between perceived political corruption and inequality ( $r = .112$ , ns).

### Table 10 – Average Corruption Scores (2010)

To what extent do you perceive the following institutions in this country to be affected by corruption (1 = not at all corrupt)

Country	Political Parties	Police	GINI 05
South Africa	3.9	4.4	67.75555
Bolivia	4.2	4.1	52.80572
Papua New Guinea	4	3.5	51.60936
Colombia	4.2	4	51.32864
Zambia	3.6	4.1	50.89763
Peru	4.2	3.9	50.74681
Chile	4	3.1	49.09065
Brazil	4.1	3.8	49.05716
Kenya	3.8	4.6	48.22004
Argentina	4.1	3.8	46.09718
Mexico	4.4	4.4	46.04571



El Salvador	4.4	4.3	45.54602
Russia	3.5	3.9	45.04164
Sierra Leone	3.5	4.4	44.6958
Turkey	3.2	3.1	43.92083
Hong Kong	3.3	3.4	43.54539
Lebanon	3.8	3.7	43.1148
Phillipines	3.6	3.6	42.65344
Venezuela	4	4.4	42.05518
Ghana	4.1	4.6	41.47975
Liberia	2.9	4.1	41.10483
Morocco	2	3.3	41.00046
Uganda	3.1	4.6	40.25185
Armenia	3.6	4.1	40.22468
Georgia	2.9	2.1	39.55403
Bangladesh	3.8	4.4	39.14215
Moldova	3.8	4.1	38.29658
Vietnam	2	3.8	38.11039
Singapore	2.9	2.8	37.914
Malaysia	4	4.1	37.10292
United States	4.3	3.3	37.04594
Israel	4	3.5	37
Portugal	4.2	3.2	36.99985
Senegal	4.4	4.6	36.69426
Latvia	4	3.3	36.67271
Serbia	4.2	3.6	36.1303
FYR Macedonia	3.7	3.3	35.90602
Japan	4.2	3.7	35.87954
Indonesia	3.5	3.5	35.50843
United Kingdom	4	3.1	34.63992
India	4.2	4.1	34.62756
Lithuania	4.2	3.7	34.57559
Italy	4.4	3	33.99056

Bosnia & Herzegovina	4.1	3.5	33.8672
Mongolia	4.2	4	33.77788
Ukraine	4	4.3	33.38864
Greece	4.6	3.7	33.35422
New Zealand	3.5	2.7	33.07498
South Korea	4	3.7	31.84465
Canada	3.9	2.9	31.68298
Spain	4.4	3.1	31.57463
Australia	3.7	3.3	31.57074
Ireland	4.4	3	31.51415
Poland	3.6	3.2	31.29297
Switzerland	2.9	2.1	31.06505
Pakistan	4.1	4.5	30.80117
Taiwan	3.5	3.9	30.5
Romania	4.5	3.9	29.76511
Hungary	3.9	3.2	28.9
Croatia	4	3.7	28.44746
Germany	3.7	2.3	28.11079
France	3.6	2.7	27.76878
Luxembourg	2.9	2.5	27.41625
Netherlands	3	2.6	27.35991
Bulgaria	4.1	3.8	27.16198
Austria	3.2	2.6	26.80086
Finland	3.7	1.9	25.69222
Iceland	4.3	2.2	25.63346
Czech Rep	3.8	3.5	25.44918
Norway	3	2.1	25.33828
Belarus	3.2	3.6	24.8905
Slovenia	4.3	3.2	24.49715
Denmark	2.8	2	23.4621
Azerbaijan	2.6	3.6	18.48572

Source: Transparency International (2010)



## 7.1 Policy

In order to fully understand the causes of crime, it is necessary to examine the broader socio-political contexts that help to create the levels, and shape the locales, of poverty, inequality and crime in a given society. Over the last twenty years or so, many Western societies have undergone a noticeable socio-political shift, marked by a move away from the welfare-oriented policies of the past towards a new penology. The new approach is concerned with responsabilisation, risk management, allaying public fears, and increasingly harsh responses to crime (Garland, 2001). In general, societies with high levels of inequality tend to imprison more people (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). A recent international study found that populations in countries with higher levels of inequality were more likely to support more severe sentencing options (Van Kesteren, 2009).

Farrall et al. (2010) noted that recent structural changes in employment practices, family structure, housing arrangements and criminal policy all reduce the likelihood of desistance. For example, as the manual labour sector declines and white collar employment expands, the employment prospects for poorly qualified individuals, especially those with a criminal record, shrink. As desistance is known to be associated with the assumption of conventional social identities built around work or family life, these structural barriers augment the difficulties associated with moving away from crime. Given that most ex-offenders possess limited social capital, they must rely disproportionately on their inner resources to bring about change (Healy, 2010).

Furthermore, ex-prisoners in many jurisdictions now face a range of structural barriers that preclude them from participating fully in social life. Some of the legal restrictions imposed by US states on those possessing a felony conviction include removal of the right to vote, receive welfare assistance, live in certain areas and work in certain fields (Uggen, Manza and Thompson, 2006). In some states, sex offenders are required to register their name and address and this information is made publicly available. The experience of imprisonment is harmful. Increasing the number of prisoners and creating substantial barriers to their successful reintegration increases this harm.

There are five sets of policy issues that flow from the ideas and findings briefly reviewed above. *First*, any meaningful appreciation of the harms caused by crime requires a shift in focus so that the behaviour of the powerful is taken into account in any discussion of preventive mechanisms or punishment options. The criminal justice landscape would look quite different if

the rule breaking of senior establishment figures met the same response as the rule breaking of their indigent and marginalised peers. Part of the answer, then, lies in the creation of a system that pays as much attention to the misery caused by white collar arrogance as it does to the nuisance caused by shoplifters and drug addicts.

*Secondly*, crime rates do not drift inexorably upward and their downward trajectory in recent years presents an opportunity to reassure citizens and to introduce innovative and humane practices that might be unpalatable under other circumstances (for instance the more widespread adoption of restorative justice principles or healthcare-based approaches to drug and alcohol misuse). This opportunity must be seized before the trend reverses.

*Thirdly*, there is no simple inverse relationship between the number of prisoners and the number of crimes. The former is more immediately amenable to policy intervention and, given the social, personal and economic costs associated with high incarceration rates, there is a strong argument for pursuing a policy of parsimony here. Different decisions about how to respond to crime can have a transformative penal impact; the deliberate reduction of the prison population in Finland is a case in point (Lappi- Seppala, 2001).

*Fourthly*, there are a number of practical steps that can be taken to promote the civic engagement of prisoners and ex-prisoners, thereby reducing the entrenchment of inequality and disaffection that is associated with their enforced marginalisation. These include, for example, restoring their right to vote (Behan and O'Donnell, 2008) and broadening the basis upon which prior convictions become spent so that they no longer act as an impediment to employment (Kilcommins and O'Donnell, 2003). More generally speaking, there are implications for social welfare spending as more generous provision is associated with fewer prisoners. There would appear to be a diffusion of benefits here also in that countries with modest rates of imprisonment tend to have more trusting publics that are less frightened and less angry about crime.

*Fifthly*, policing is central to people's sense of safety and security, both at a symbolic and material level. In terms of crime prevention, and responding to victimisation, the adequacy of the policing response is a significant factor in determining people's quality of life: whether people feel safe in their homes and on the street, and whether their concerns are recognised by the state and given due regard. Higher levels of inequality are likely to reduce the public's trust in and satisfaction with the police, although the provision of effective policing characterised by

consultation, accountability and attentiveness to local concerns may help alleviate some of the more debilitating social consequences of inequality. Much policing activity is now undertaken by a variety of private security agencies, as well by a range of other public or quasi-public organisations (such as local authorities, schools, transport companies, etc), and ensuring adequate regulation of and coordination between the diverse range of agencies involved is another significant challenge in the provision of security.

## 8. Conclusion

Unequal societies tend to be murderous, punitive, fearful and mistrustful places. For these reasons reducing inequality is likely to yield important individual and social benefits.





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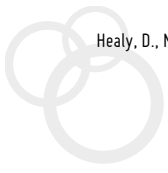
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## Information on the GINI project

### Aims

The core objective of GINI is to deliver important new answers to questions of great interest to European societies: What are the social, cultural and political impacts that increasing inequalities in income, wealth and education may have? For the answers, GINI combines an interdisciplinary analysis that draws on economics, sociology, political science and health studies, with improved methodologies, uniform measurement, wide country coverage, a clear policy dimension and broad dissemination.

Methodologically, GINI aims to:

- exploit differences between and within 29 countries in inequality levels and trends for understanding the impacts and teasing out implications for policy and institutions,
- elaborate on the effects of both individual distributional positions and aggregate inequalities, and
- allow for feedback from impacts to inequality in a two-way causality approach.

The project operates in a framework of policy-oriented debate and international comparisons across all EU countries (except Cyprus and Malta), the USA, Japan, Canada and Australia.

### Inequality Impacts and Analysis

Social impacts of inequality include educational access and achievement, individual employment opportunities and labour market behaviour, household joblessness, living standards and deprivation, family and household formation/breakdown, housing and intergenerational social mobility, individual health and life expectancy, and social cohesion versus polarisation. Underlying long-term trends, the economic cycle and the current financial and economic crisis will be incorporated. Politico-cultural impacts investigated are: Do increasing income/educational inequalities widen cultural and political 'distances', alienating people from politics, globalisation and European integration? Do they affect individuals' participation and general social trust? Is acceptance of inequality and policies of redistribution affected by inequality itself? What effects do political systems (coalitions/winner-takes-all) have? Finally, it focuses on costs and benefits of policies limiting income inequality and its efficiency for mitigating other inequalities (health, housing, education and opportunity), and addresses the question what contributions policy making itself may have made to the growth of inequalities.

### Support and Activities

The project receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million. The work will result in four main reports and a final report, some 70 discussion papers and 29 country reports. The start of the project is 1 February 2010 for a three-year period. Detailed information can be found on the website.

**[www.gini-research.org](http://www.gini-research.org)**





**GINI** GROWING INEQUALITIES' IMPACTS

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