

Comparative Criminology: **DRUGS**

Contact With Drug-Related Problems in the Area of Residence

Since 1973, the European Commission has been involved in conducting public opinion surveys on various topics with participating member states. These surveys and studies focus on topics that affect European citizenship, such as enlargement, social situation, health, culture, technology, environment, and defense. These surveys are referred to as the "Eurobarometer."¹³⁷ One item on the 2002 *Public Safety, Exposure to Drug-Related Problems and Crime* public opinion survey asked respondents the following question:

Over the last 12 months, how often were you personally in contact with drug related problems in the area where you live? For example, seeing people dealing in drugs, taking or using drugs in public spaces, or by finding syringes left by drug addicts? Was this often, from time to time, rarely or never?¹³⁸

Van Dijk adapted the results from this survey (see Figure 16.3). The figure is based on results from 15 European Union

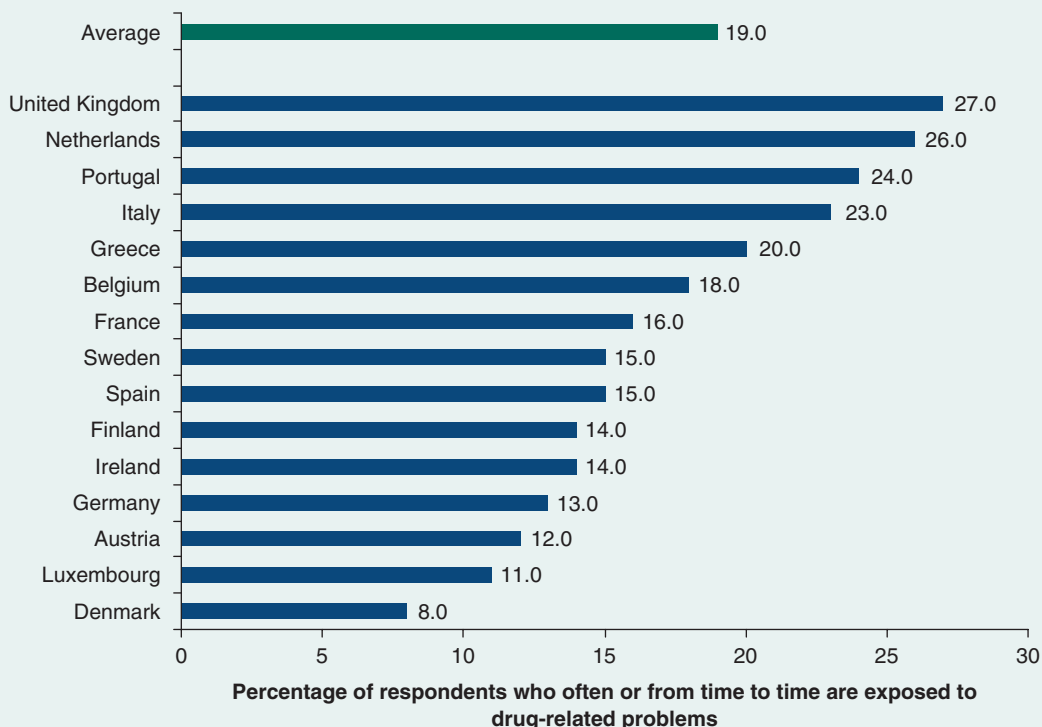
countries. About 19% of the respondents noted that they have been in contact with drug-related problems, either often or from time to time. This was the average percentage. One can note that countries such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, and Greece were above this average. Van Dijk further noted that the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were also engaged in political debates about incivilities occurring in their countries. Thus, perceptions of feeling unsafe in the street were strongly associated with perceived exposure to drug problems.¹³⁹

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What other factors would you consider when asking United States citizens about their exposure to drug-related problems and crime?
2. Why do you think there is a strong association between the perceptions of feeling unsafe in the street with perceived exposure to drug problems?

FIGURE 16.3

Contact With Drug-Related Problems in the Area of Residence (in %) in 15 European Union Countries (2002)



Sources: Eurobarometer (2003), adapted, in Van Dijk, J. (2008). *The world of crime: Breaking the silence on problems of security, justice, and development across the world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, p. 108.