

Comparative Criminology: **THREATS AND ASSAULTS**

Ranking Countries by Rate of Beer Consumption and Rate of Threats/Assaults

In this section, we explore the association between rate of beer consumption and rate of violence—specifically, assaults and threats.

One of the modern versions of deterrence theory is rational choice theory. Rational choice theory assumes that individuals are rational and weigh the potential benefits against the potential costs of engaging in a criminal act. However, modern studies discussed in this chapter have shown that individuals often engage in activities, both legal and illegal, that are not rational. Many of these acts that appear quite irrational are committed by individuals who have been drinking alcohol. This

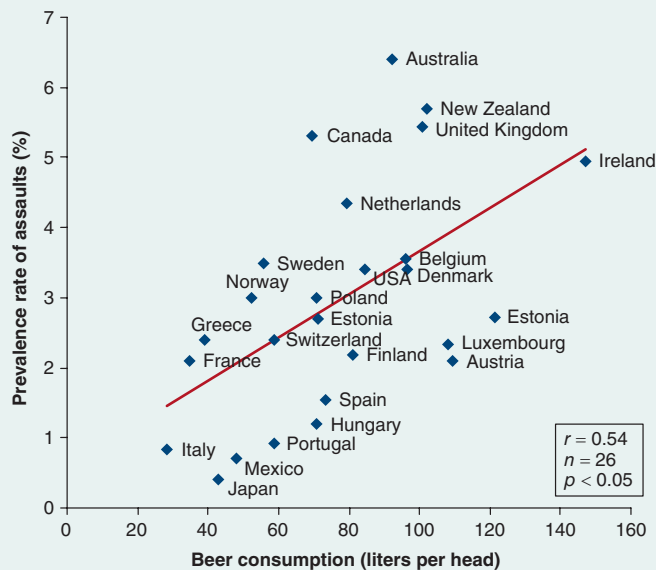
fits a concept known in the field as “bounded rationality,” in the sense that individuals are sometimes not thinking clearly or at the level of the average person—a situation to which alcohol often contributes.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What is meant by “bounded rationality,” and can you think of additional factors (other than alcohol) that may cause this?
2. Can you think of a true example of someone you know who appeared to have “bounded rationality” when he or she committed a delinquent/criminal act?

FIGURE 4.2

Rates of Victimization by Threats/Assaults in 1996–2005 and Beer Consumption (Liters per Head) in Developed Countries (2004)



Sources: Van Dijk, J., van Kesteren, J., & Smit, P. (2007). *Criminal victimisation in international perspective: Key findings from the 2004–2005 ICVS and EU ICS*. Meppel, Netherlands: Boom Legal Publishers; The Hague, Netherlands: Ministry of Justice, Research and Documentation Center. World Advertising Research Center. (2004). *World drink trends*. Published in association with Commissie Gedistilleerd (Commission for Distilled Spirits). Henley-on-Thames, UK.