

# Crimes In New York And Seoul: A Comparison

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**Abstract:** Across the world, highly populated urban areas are widely regarded as generators of various crimes. From petty crimes to organized crime activities, cities and other urban areas provide some form of haven for criminal activities and their proponents. In this paper, we look at two highly-urbanized areas, New York City and Seoul, South Korea. We look to compare the crime trends and activities in these two areas and see if there are points of comparison by which these two are similar or if they are separated by some factors..

**Index Terms:** Cities, Criminal, New York City, Organized Crime, Seoul, Sex Slavery, South Korea, Trends, Urban.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

CRIME is a crime, regardless of the culture, society or nation in which it occurs. For example, a robbery in New York, USA is not that different from one that occurs in Seoul, South Korea. A rape or sexual assault is no different from one that happens in either Seoul or in New York. In this light, it can be said that the parameters that define a criminal act is the same even if the countries are separated by thousands of miles physically and centuries culturally and societally. What can then be used to compare crimes in these two very unique locations? The answer seems to lie in the manner that these are reported to the public. In New York, there seems to be a drive in generating enough fanfare to save the reputation of the officials of the city as well of the city itself. Mayor Bloomberg, whether he knows the actuations found by researchers, must be able to account himself against the allegations of tampering with crime statistics in order to project a safe image for New York City. On the other hand, city officials in Seoul have come out in the open about the crime wave hitting their city. The manner by which even the highest official in the land expressing sadness and disappointment in the killing of a seven year old girl has seemed to galvanize his nation into addressing their crime problems head on. The means that they want to address their sex crime problem, though, may be headed for a wave of debate, given that there are those who want either harder or more lenient punishments.

## 2 CRIMES IN NEW YORK AND SEOUL

### 2.1 New York City Crime Rate

Detailed submission guidelines can be found on the author resources Web pages. Author resource guidelines are specific to each journal, so please be sure to refer to the correct journal. In a study conducted by Adamoli, Di Nicola, Savona and Zoffi (1998)<sup>1</sup>, in the North American region, trade in illegal narcotics was among the crimes that generated the highest level of policy response as well as lawmaking effort. This is due to the high level of extreme violence, degree of distribution and wide scale use. The groups that engage in these types of activities also engage in money laundering activities to avoid detection of their nefarious proceeds. The trend of engaging in the narcotics market is as lucrative in recent times as it was then. Grandoni (2011)<sup>2</sup> reports that as recently as two years ago, illegal possession of marijuana was considered as the most popular crime among the populace. In 2010, there were more than 50,000 arrests for "criminal possession of marijuana in the 5th degree across the city, a sharp rise from the 46,000 arrests in 2009 in the data released by the state's Division of Criminal Justice Services. At 616 arrests per 100,000 residents, illegal drug possession is

considered as the most popular crime in the state. According to Rayman (2012), the steadily rising crime rate in the city is considered as a blemish on the claims of New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg who seems to have a penchant of trumpeting his accomplishments as the city's Chief executive, among them the city's falling crime rate. In the Compstat sheet of the Police Department of the City of New York<sup>4</sup>, there is a rise in some criminal activities, while there is a seeming decrease in others.

- 1 Adamoli, S., Di Nicola, A., Savona, E. and Zoffi, P. (1998) *Organized crime around the world. European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control*, 31
- 2 Grandoni, D (2011). *New York City's most popular crime: Weed Possession*. Retrieved January 22, 2012 from <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2011/11/new-york-citys-most-popular-crime-weed-possession/44633/>
- 3 Rayman, G. (2012 October 3). *For the first time in 20 years, New York's crime rate is on the rise. The Village Voice News*
- 4 *City of New York-Police Department (2013). Report covering the week 12/31/2012 through 1/6/2013. Retrieved January 22, 2013 at [http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime\\_statistics/cscity.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cscity.pdf)*
- 5 Francescani, C (2012). *Violent crime takes a holiday in New York City*. Retrieved January 22, 2013 from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/29/uk-usa-newyork-crime-idUSLNE8AS00P20121129>

However, Francescani (2012)<sup>5</sup> notes that in November 2012, a peculiar event occurred in New York. On that day, there were no reports of violent crimes that took place in the city. The incident coincided with a yearend report that disclosed that the city's murder rate was to hit its lowest rate since the 1960s. Though according to New York City Police Department spokesman Paul Browne that the overall crime rate in New York is up by 3 percent that includes a 9 percent rise in grand larceny cases owing to a spike in smart phone thefts, the rate of murder cases is down by 23 percent. The rare incident did not go unnoticed among the foreign press. In the report of Katie Daley<sup>6</sup> for the BBC News group, the "crime less" wave lasted for more than 36 hours. The "freeze" in criminal activities started at 22:25 on Sunday and continued until 11:20 on Tuesday. For Alfred Blumstein, public policy professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, that considering there were 472 homicides in New York for that year, with the current year ready to show even fewer deaths, the statistics for a day without any violent incident is not a farfetched idea. Even with the reported decrease in crime activities in New York, the BBC<sup>7</sup> still reports an average 3% rise on the overall

crime rate in the city. Though there has been a surge in larceny crimes, owing to the rise in Smart phone thefts, killings are at a 50 year-low, down 23 percent compared to the same period from last year. Many have praised the NYPD in its implementation of the Stop and Frisk program, which netted hundreds of illegal guns, critics argue that too many Latinos and African-Americans are being stopped. The rise in Smart Phone thefts according to Mayor Bloomberg are the reason why the city's crime rate is up. According to Welch (2012)<sup>8</sup>, the Office of the City Mayor denies that there is an overall jump in the crime rate, placing the blame on the spike of thefts of Smart Phones despite repeated warnings to the public about the growing threat. In this light, can it be said that the statistics really show a downward spiral for crime in the city? Ruderman (2012)<sup>9</sup> reports that in an independent survey conducted among 2,000 retired police officers, the study showed that the deliberate alteration of crime reports- is not even a new phenomenon within the ranks of the NYPD. In the study, it was shown that victims and their families are discouraged in order to make the crime statistics look better. At the same time, suspects are stopped randomly on the streets and increasing the serving of summonses in order to increase crime response statistics. The study done reinforces the findings disclosed by Silverman, Eteno, and Levine (2012)<sup>10</sup> that reveals an extensive, system wide alteration of records to help protect the reputation of the city's police department, under Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly. The study showed that in the Bloomberg/Kelly administration (2002-), more than half of the surveyed personnel observed the deliberate misclassification of serious crimes into petty offenses, experiencing inordinate pressure from supervisors to downgrade crimes to reflect a low crime rate in the city.

## 2.2 Seoul Crime

In the report of the United States Department of State-Bureau of Diplomatic Security<sup>11</sup>, though relatively smaller compared to the crime statistics in the United States, there are still street crimes that occur in the country. Though there are still increases in overall crime rates, there are none or very few incidents involving foreigners in the Republic of Korea. According to the Chosunlibo<sup>12</sup>, the number of violent crimes, such as rape, robbery and arson have been on the upswing after the 1997 Asian financial debacle, the number of arrests and convictions have steadily been going down. The increase in the number of violent crime incidents have been out pacing the population growth rate and is still rising. Data shows that from 1967 to 2007, the South Korean population grows by an average of 70 percent annually. In the same period, violent crime cases rose from 3,495 in 1967 to over 20,000 cases in 2007. Analysts attribute the seeming deprivation factor that suspects have in committing these crimes, inculcating a sense of competition with others, hence fueling their resentment and hatred towards others. According to Cumorah.com (2013)<sup>13</sup>, though South Korea is experiencing a general state of economic prosperity, the nation is also vulnerable to the crime of corruption, prevalent in many levels of society. Many of the minor laws are not being implemented by the police, and many of these laws are being passed just to appease a sector of the Korean population.

7 *British Broadcasting Corporation (2012). New York celebrates day without violent crime. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from [\*canada-20536201\*

- 8 \*Welch, C. \(2012\). Mayor Bloomberg blames Apple thefts for rise in New York City crime rate. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from <http://www.theverge.com/2012/12/28/3811498/nyc-officials-apple-thefts-responsible-for-increased-crime-rate>\*
- 9 \*Ruderman, W. \(2012\). Crime report manipulation is common among New York police, study finds. The New York Times N.Y/Region\*
- 10 \*Silverman, E.B., Eteno, J.A., and Levine, J. \(2012\). Manufacturing Low crime rates at the NYPD: reputation versus safety under Bloomberg and Kelly. Huffington Post\*
- 11 \*United States Department of State-Bureau of Diplomatic Security \(2011\). South Korea 2011 OSAC crime and safety report. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from <https://www.osac.gov/Pages/ContentReportPDF.aspx?cid=11211>.\*
- 12 \*Chosunlibo. Violent crime soared since IMF crisis. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from \[http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\\_dir/2009/06/23/2009062300292.html\]\(http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\_dir/2009/06/23/2009062300292.html\)\*
- 13 \*Cumorah.com \(2013\). South Korea. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from \[http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=missiology\\\_articles&story\\\_id=40\]\(http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=missiology\_articles&story\_id=40\)\*
- 14 \*Ibid.\*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-</a></i></p>
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Crime rates are still low in general, owing to the influences of Confucianism that gives a strong sense of community within the Korean community. even with these influences, there are still criminal activities that occur, of which prostitution and sexual crimes are the most common<sup>14</sup>. In the report of the Korea Times<sup>15</sup>, an increase in the number of violent crimes such as murder and rape led to the reporting of the highest number of crimes reported in the city of Seoul in the last eight years. In the data released by the metropolitan government, more than 405,000 crime incidents occurred in the Korean capital, more than the 410,000 crime incidents in 2001. The largest jump came from crimes by foreigners up by 23 percent at more than 7,700 crimes in the given period. Crimes such as prostitution and adultery also rose by double at more than 6,200 cases in the given period. According to the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, as reported in the Dongguk Post<sup>16</sup>, 2012 has seen more than 19,000 sex crimes that have been reported to the police. Thirty-two of the crimes were reported in the city's subway, increased to 186 by the second quarter of the year. The reasons why the crimes happen seem to be simple; there are weak laws and ineffective implementation of the laws. In response to this growing menace, the Yonghap News Agency<sup>17</sup> reports that police officials have established autonomous departments within subway stations across the country that have the sole task of preventing sex crimes from occurring within the system. This after the National Police Agency disclosed a series of measures designed to prevent violent sex crimes that have disturbed and shocked the Korean people. According to Lee Sang-man, one of the senior police officers in the Seoul subway team, the crimes occur between the Jamsil and Seoul National University stations. One of the reasons, according to the officer, is that many women commute to the Gangnam region coupled with the prevalence of women who wear very short skirts and low cut dresses<sup>18</sup>. According to Future Hope alliance legislator Yoon Sang-il, the number of sex crimes

occurring in the city's subway system is double from 2007, rising from 557 cases that year to more than 1,100 in 2010<sup>19</sup>. In response to this increasing sex crime cases, South Korea has become the first nation in Asia to adopt chemical castration as a means of punishment under its criminal code of justice<sup>20</sup>. The first convict to be handed down this punishment, known only by his surname Pyo, was convicted of raping several teenage girls and then using their photos and videos to blackmail them. According to Amlin (2013)<sup>21</sup>, high levels of testosterone can be linked with levels of aggression, thus the high number of sexual crimes. Injecting the convict with Depo-Provera has the effect of limiting or reducing the production of testosterone that stimulates the male organs and thus reduce the sexual drive in men. There are those in Korea, however, who argue for more humane measures to be applied against these offenders. according to Kim Hyun-Chung, who works at the National Medical Center in Seoul, culture is a great barrier in seeking medical help, particularly if the condition is a psychiatric or medical one<sup>22</sup>. In the report of News Track India (2013)<sup>23</sup>, violent sexual crimes took a turn for the worse after Korean President Lee Myung-bak offered a public confession after a seven year old girl became the latest violent sex crime victim. According to the National Police Agency, the rape happened a day earlier in the Naju area in the South Jeolla Province. The police has since arrested the man, known only as Koh, while the victim is confined in a hospital to treat a possible ruptured intestine. The case of the girl came on the heels of another rape case, where a 42 year-old convicted sex criminal who was wearing an electronic anklet attempted to sexually assault and then killed a 37 year-old woman in eastern Seoul. In the data released by the police, there were more than 19,000 sex crimes committed last year, averaging 53 a day, an increase of 6.7 percent from 2010.

recent surge in sex crimes. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from <http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/08/31/210-S-Korea-s-Lee-apologizes-for-recent-surge-in-sex-crimes-.html>

24 Tae-Hoon, L. (2011, August 22). Crimes by foreigners increase rapidly. *The Korean Times National*

### 3 FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INFLUENCE

#### 3.1 Crimes Involving Foreigners

According to columnist Lee Tae-Hoon in his article in the *Korean Times*<sup>24</sup>, expatriates are getting involved in crimes is increasing in proportion to the local population. According to the National police Agency, the number of expatriates getting involved in criminal activities such as rape, theft, robbery and even murder rose by 22 percent to 8,086, up from 6,615 in 2008. According to the report, the highest increase was robbery cases, with 221 arrests up from 133 cases. The same was true for cases of rape, increasing from 114 to more than 150 cases, while assault cases rose from 4,940 to 5,885. All of these cases handled by the government with kid gloves. This accusation in light of the report that the government reduced the number of police officers handling these types of cases, from 408 to 326<sup>25</sup>. Is the crime rate accurate? As mentioned in ROK Drop<sup>26</sup>, a leading Korean military weblog, though there is indeed a rise in the crime rate involving foreigners, this still is not enough to surpass the crime rate in Korea done by locals. In the contention of the authors, out of a population of 1.2 million foreigners in the ROK, there were 154 incidents. On a per capita basis, this would translate to 1 major crime per 93 Koreans, compared to the earlier figure for the expatriate population in the country.

15 *The Korea Times* (2010). Number of crimes in Seoul hits 8-year high. *The Korea Times Issues*

16 Kang-su, K. (2012). A response to exploding sex crimes. *The Dongguk Post Social* <http://www.dgupost.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1353>

17 *Yonhap News Agency*. (2012). Police reinforce teams to prevent sex crimes. Retrieved January 31, 2013 from <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2012/11/20/0302000000AEN20121120004500315.HTML>

18 *ChosunLibo*. Most sex crimes happen on Subway line No. 2. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2009/08/03/2009080300241.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/08/03/2009080300241.html)

19 *ChosunLibo*. (2011). Seoul sex crimes double in four years. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2011/09/22/2011092201061.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/09/22/2011092201061.html)

20 Boroweic, S. (2013). Seoul puts castration to the test. Retrieved January 31, 2013 from <http://www.dw.de/seoul-puts-castration-to-the-test/a-16513280>

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### 3 FOREIGN

Cities and urban areas generate some degree of criminal activity, given the sheer volume of people in these areas. In the study of comparison between Seoul and New York, it can be seen that many of the crimes that occur are in many ways the same. From petty crimes to serial criminal activities, both cities have been known to have their fair share of these things. The seeming difference, however, is how these are presented to the media as well as the general public. New York officials seem to be concerned with presenting a "good face" to the public to hide their criminal statistics, while in Seoul officials are more concerned in coming up with ways to address their problems. In this light, Seoul officials are on the right track in resolving their crime problems as opposed to New York. Not to say that the NYPD is remiss, in this regard, it is better to get the community involved rather than trying to hide the problem from them, until it gets out hand and no amount of covering up will do.

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