

A European-wide survey of police officers' beliefs and perceptions on suspect interviews

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ABSTRACT



This study examined the beliefs and practices of police investigators regarding interviewing and interrogation processes across six European countries. To assess investigators' perspectives, we administered a survey adapted from Kassin et al. (2007). Police interviewing and interrogation: A self-report survey of police practices and beliefs. *Law and Human Behavior*, 31(4), 381–400 addressing (1) recording practices, (2) length and frequency of suspect interviews, (3) suspects' use of their right to silence, (4) prevalence of true and false confessions, (5) confidence in detecting deception, and (6) interviewing and interrogation techniques. Results revealed substantial cross-national differences. Dutch officers conducted the longest interviews, while Norwegian officers were the most likely to record interviews. The use of suspects' rights varied significantly, with Spanish officers reporting the highest invocation of the right to silence. False confessions were recognized across all subsamples, though voluntary false confessions were most frequently reported. Except in Norway, investigators significantly overestimated their deception detection accuracy. Overall, coercive tactics were infrequent, and most officers endorsed ethical, rapport-based strategies, aligning with the information-gathering approach. Despite cross-country variations, these findings suggest a broad adherence to non-coercive interviewing methods across Europe.


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Introduction

'No, I don't remember it, but it must have been me because everyone says so' (Gudjons-son, 2003, p. 593). These words came from a Norwegian man who, under intense police pressure and after nearly 180 h of interrogation, falsely confessed to murdering his cousin. His conviction was overturned in 1998. Similarly, Amanda Knox initially confessed to the murder of her roommate during an intense, multi-day interrogation by Italian police. She later recanted, stating that her confession was made under 'stress, shock, and extreme exhaustion' (Kassin, 2012, p. 431). Such cases of wrongful convictions exemplify the risks of coercive interrogation practices, especially for vulnerable and innocent suspects.

Every day, thousands of suspects are interrogated by police worldwide. These interrogations, though critical to criminal investigations, can be intimidating and coercive, especially for innocent suspects. Recent high-profile wrongful convictions in Europe, such as those cited above, underscore the risks inherent in coercive methods. Yet, little is known about actual practices in European interrogation rooms. This study aims to address this gap by exploring European police officers' experiences and perceptions of suspect interviews, shedding light on interrogation practices across six European countries.

Approaches to suspect interviews

Overall, there are two main approaches in suspect interviews: the accusatorial approach and the information-gathering approach (Kelly et al., 2013; Meissner et al., 2014). The accusatorial approach presumes guilt and aims primarily at securing evidence to confirm this. Interviews under this approach are rooted in a broader adversarial view of criminal investigations, in which the interview is considered a tool to build a prosecutable case rather than to uncover the full truth of an event. Accusatorial interviews typically involve the use of confrontational strategies aimed at eliciting a confession (Kassin et al., 2010; Meissner et al., 2017). Such tactics may include psychological pressure, presenting (sometimes fabricated) evidence, minimization tactics that imply leniency, and interrupting any denials from the suspect. From a psychological perspective, such tactics can elevate stress and promote compliance, and have been shown to increase the risk of false confessions (Kassin et al., 2025).

In contrast, the information-gathering approach focuses on eliciting accurate, comprehensive accounts through open-ended questioning, active listening, and a non-confrontational, rapport-based interaction (Bull, 2018; Meissner, 2021). Interviews under this approach aim to reduce a suspect's defensiveness by framing the interview as a cooperative exchange rather than a zero-sum confrontation. Rather than presuming guilt, this approach is grounded in the principle of neutral inquiry and aims at uncovering accurate, comprehensive, and reliable information regardless of whether this information supports or refutes the suspect's involvement (Milne et al., 1999). Thereby, a confession is a valuable outcome but not a primary goal of these interviews.

Importantly, the approach taken to suspect interviews can greatly impact the likelihood of a confession from both guilty and innocent suspects. Meta-analytic evidence shows that both accusatorial and information-gathering methods can increase true confessions relative to direct questioning. However, accusatorial tactics carry a substantially

higher false-confession risk; information-gathering preserves true-confession rates while reducing false confessions (Meissner et al., 2014).

Interrogation length, frequency, and recording practices

Interrogation length and frequency can critically impact the reliability of information obtained from suspects. Long or repeated interrogations can psychologically wear down suspects, especially those who are young, cognitively impaired, or highly suggestible (Gudjonsson, 2023; Kassin et al., 2010). Research has shown that cognitive fatigue resulting from prolonged interrogations impairs decision-making and increases compliance, thereby increasing the likelihood that a suspect's statements reflect what (they believe) police want to hear rather than the truth (Harrison & Horne, 2000; Kassin et al., 2010). They also increase the risk of internalized false confessions, where innocent suspects come to believe they committed the crime (Gudjonsson, 2023). Even when no coercive tactics are used, frequent interviews may sometimes still be seen as coercive, especially if spaced closely or used to isolate the suspect. Consequently, it is not surprising that prolonged and highly frequent interrogations are disproportionately present in known wrongful conviction cases involving false confessions (Drizin & Leo, 2004; Garrett, 2010). In an archival study, it was found that false confessors endured interrogations lasting an average of 16.3 h (Drizin & Leo, 2004).

In the United States, investigators face no formal restrictions on interrogation duration or frequency. In a landmark study, Kassin et al. (2007) found that North American police self-reported an average interrogation duration of approximately 1.6 h. Kassin et al. also inquired about the longest interrogation the officers had ever conducted, which averaged at approximately five hours. Suspects were interrogated about three times per investigation. In a more recent follow-up of Kassin et al.'s (2007) study, similar estimates were reported (Brimbal et al., 2024). In contrast to these U.S. findings, estimates for interrogation length and frequency among European investigators remain unknown.

Additionally, the electronic recording of interrogations is also considered critical to enhance transparency and reduce the risk of false confessions. Research indicates that people struggle to comprehend why a person may falsely confess even when informed that coercive tactics were used to obtain the confession (Kassin & Sukel, 1997; Leo & Liu, 2009). Seeing the coercion unfold on a videotape of the interrogation, however, may counterbalance the tendency to judge confessions as voluntary, particularly when both the suspect and the interrogator(s) are visible (Lassiter et al., 2007; Lassiter & Greers, 2004). Experts argue that recordings would therefore not only assist courts in identifying false confessions but also act as a deterrent against the use of coercive or illegal interrogation tactics (Kassin et al., 2010, 2025). Gudjonsson and Pearse (2011) emphasize that 'the electronic recording of police interviews, offering invaluable transparency and accountability, stands as the single best protection against police-induced false confessions' (p. 33).

Across Europe, requirements for recording suspect interviews vary. In Belgium, written summaries are standard (Malsch & de Boer, 2019) and the suspect has the right to request a verbatim transcription (art. 47bis § 1 Sv.), whereas audiovisual recordings are not mandatory but may be imposed by the investigative judge or public prosecutor (Article 112ter Sv). In Germany, § 168 and § 168b StPO require documentation of interrogations, though

verbatim transcription is only recommended (RiStBV § 45[2]), with audiovisual recording being mandatory solely in homicide cases or for vulnerable suspects since 2020 (§ 136 StPO; after the start of the current data collection). Spain has no general obligation to record interviews (Schell-Leugers et al., 2023). In the Netherlands, at the time of the data collection, audio recording was mandatory in serious cases (fatality or serious bodily injury, sexual offences punishable by ≥ 8 years, or any offence punishable by ≥ 12 years), and audiovisual recording was mandatory when a behavioral expert supports the interviewer or when the suspect is vulnerable within those audio-mandatory categories. However, since 2021, this directive has been converted into a non-binding instruction (Vanderhallen et al., 2022). In Norway and Sweden, recordings are not yet required by law; however, when they are used, the content may be either transcribed either word-for-word or in a summarized form. However, since a change in the Swedish law in 2022 (Rättegångsbalk. 35 chap. 15§), it has become increasingly common to record suspect interviews, especially in more extensive or complicated cases. For serious criminal offenses, Norwegian police are advised to record suspect interviews (Fahsing & Jakobsen, 2015).

In the United States, the adoption of recording practices has risen significantly over the past two decades. Brimbal et al. (2024) reported that 78% of U.S. law enforcement agencies now require the recording of interrogations, compared to only 16% in 2007 (Kassin et al., 2007). Furthermore, more than half (56.78%) of interrogations are now video recorded—a dramatic increase from less than 10% two decades ago, reflecting a shift toward transparency. Meanwhile, the UK has had mandatory recording of suspect interviews in place for years, following reforms prompted by the notorious ‘Confait Case’ (Gudjonsson, 2003). However, the situation in other European countries is not well understood.

Suspects’ rights

Suspect rights, such as the right to remain silent and the right to legal assistance during police custody, exist in numerous countries worldwide (Rogers et al., 2013). The *Miranda* rights, established in the United States in 1966, ensure suspects the right to silence and legal counsel. However, studies show that approximately 80% of suspects in police custody waive these rights (Kassin & Norwick, 2004; Moore & Gagnier, 2008; Wrightsman & Pitman, 2010). In Europe, the European Parliament and the European Council (2012) have recommended that all EU member states adopt the *Letter of Rights*, which outlines key procedural safeguards for suspects. Article 3, section 1 stipulates that:

[m]ember States shall ensure that suspects or accused persons are promptly provided with information concerning at least the following procedural rights, as they apply under national law, to enable effective exercise of these rights: (a) the right of access to a lawyer; (b) any entitlement to free legal advice and the conditions for obtaining such advice; (c) the right to be informed of the accusation, in accordance with Article 6; (d) the right to interpretation and translation; (e) the right to remain silent.

Building on these procedural safeguards, a multidisciplinary initiative co-chaired by former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture (2010-2016) Juan E. Méndez and former Secretary General Association for the Prevention of Torture Mark C. A. Thomson introduced the Méndez Principles. These principles aim to propose a concrete alternative to

interrogation methods that rely on coercion to extract confessions. They provide guidance on obtaining accurate and reliable information in full respect of the human rights and dignity of all, including through the implementation of legal and procedural safeguards in the first hours of police custody (Schaeffer et al., 2023). The principles advocate for respectful treatment of suspects, focusing on rapport-building and transparency while ensuring the right to silence and legal representation are upheld. Despite the establishment of these legal rights in the US and many European countries, the extent to which suspects exercise these rights remains unknown.

Similarly, there is limited research examining the effectiveness of these procedural and ethical guidelines in safeguarding suspects' rights. However, equally important is how investigators interpret and respond when suspects invoke their rights. Ample prior research has shown that both lay and police observers tend to judge suspects who remain silent or invoke *Miranda*-type rights as more likely to be guilty, less trustworthy, and less cooperative than suspects who waive their rights and speak (DeCelles et al., 2021; Lawrence et al., 2024; Rogers et al., 2010; Shaffer & Case, 1982; Snow et al., 2023; Sukumar & Kassin, 2017). Paradoxically, especially innocent suspects are more likely to waive their rights (Kassin & Norwick, 2004; Scherr & Franks, 2015; Smalarz et al., 2016). A likely mechanism explaining this difference is the 'phenomenology of innocence', whereby innocent people (naively) expect their openness will ultimately exonerate them (Blackwood et al., 2015; Kassin, 2005; Mindthoff et al., 2018; Scherr et al., 2018). Treating silence as probative of guilt, however, is problematic: both guilty and innocent suspects may remain silent for several reasons – stress, fear, confusion or a misunderstanding of one's rights, legal advice, or mistrust of the police – not just to conceal culpability (Eastwood & Snook, 2010; Gudjonsson, 2023; Kassin et al., 2003). Therefore, it is important to also gain insight into investigators' perceptions of suspects using their rights. Most available empirical insights on these perspectives come from North American-focused studies, yet perceptions of European police investigators are lacking.

Deception detection

Accurate deception detection is crucial to avoiding wrongful convictions. Yet research consistently shows that law enforcement personnel often struggle to distinguish truth from lies, performing no better than the average person (Aamodt & Custer, 2006; Bond & DePaulo, 2006; Granhag & Strömwall, 2004). Bond and DePaulo's (2006) meta-analysis underscores this challenge, finding that individuals generally achieve only a 54% accuracy rate in distinguishing truth tellers from liars – a margin barely superior to chance. Despite this, many law enforcement officers overestimate their abilities, believing they achieve accuracy rates of 74% (Brimbal et al., 2024) to 77% (Kassin et al., 2007). Furthermore, investigators also often consider their deception detection abilities to be superior to those of laypeople (Chojnacki et al., 2008; Costanzo et al., 2010; Garrido et al., 2004) and report great confidence in their past assessments (e.g. Kassin et al., 2005, 2007; Masip et al., 2016; Meissner & Kassin, 2002). Research indicates that many police officers harbor a 'generalized communicative suspicion' that fosters a bias toward seeing deception (Masip et al., 2005). In fact, some detectives even attribute their abilities to a perceived 'sixth sense' (Leo, 1996b, p. 268).

This widespread overconfidence in deception detection can have significant implications for how suspect interviews are conducted. When investigators believe they can

reliably detect lies, they may prematurely judge a suspect as deceptive or guilty and proceed to conduct the interview with aims of confirming this judgment. As such, unwarranted confidence in deception detection can lead to biased framing of interviews and increased guilt-presumptive questioning (Davis & Leo, 2014; Granhag & Strömwall, 2004; Kassin et al., 2003; Lidén et al., 2018; Narchet et al., 2011). Drizin and Leo (2004) further found that many false confessions in known wrongful conviction cases occurred in interviews where investigators were convinced of the suspect's guilt early on, often based on faulty deception detection. Thus, police investigators' beliefs about their ability to distinguish truth from deception can indirectly but critically affect the likelihood of a false confession.

Rates of true and false confessions

Another critical issue concerns the rate of true and false confessions. Whether true or false, confessions of guilt are highly potent evidence in criminal proceedings and have been found to triumph over other types of evidence in court, even when other evidence exculpates the confessing suspect (Kassin et al., 2010; Kassin & Neumann, 1997; Mindthoff et al., 2024). Furthermore, once a confession is obtained, it can bias the interpretation of other evidence, such as eyewitness and forensic interpretations (Jenkins et al., 2023; Kukucka & Kassin, 2014).

Although wrongful conviction cases in which an innocent suspect falsely confessed provide insight into risk factors for false confessions and some indications of their prevalence, they do not shed light on the frequency at which false confessions are encountered in everyday police interrogations. Studies surveying police investigators on this matter provide valuable perspectives, however. In Kassin et al. (2007) foundational study, U.S. detectives reported that approximately 68% of suspects made self-incriminating statements during interrogation, with rates of 69.5% for guilty suspects and 4.8% for innocent suspects. These findings are consistent with earlier overall estimates in the U.S., which range from 64% (Leo, 1996a) to 46-69% (Neubauer, 1974; Witt, 1973). Two decades later, Brimbal et al. (2024) observed a slight decline in the overall confession rate, based on officers' self-reported estimates, with approximately 66% of suspects fully or partially confessing. The confession rate among guilty suspects (66.7%) has remained stable, indicating that evolving practices or increased awareness have not significantly impacted how often guilty individuals confess. However, the estimated rate of self-incriminating statements by innocent suspects (including full and partial confessions) rose sharply, from 4.8% in 2007 to 26.2% in 2024. These estimates should be interpreted with caution, as police officers may not always know the actual guilt or innocence of suspects. This apparent increase likely reflects greater awareness among law enforcement and researchers of the prevalence of false confessions, rather than a genuine rise in their occurrence. In Europe, on the other hand, rates of true and false confessions as experienced by police investigators remain unknown.

Interrogation techniques

The techniques that police investigators may use to elicit information from a suspect are largely informed by the interviewing approach taken. Here, distinct practices between the U.S. and European countries can be noted. Originally, U.S. police tend to use more guilt-

presumptive techniques. In 2007, Kassin and colleagues found that U.S. investigators took a predominantly accusatorial approach to suspect interviews. Most officers participating in their study reported frequently using confrontational and guilt-presumptive tactics, with approximately two-thirds admitting to using false evidence ploys at least occasionally. This may, in part, be explained by the fact that the most influential and widely taught method in the U.S., the Reid Technique, has a strong guilt-presumptive basis (Kassin, 2014; Kassin et al., 2010). Reid comprises two stages: the interview and the interrogation. During the interview phase, investigators assess the veracity of the suspect's statements. If the statements are deemed truthful, the suspect is no longer considered a target of suspicion; if suspicion of deception arises, however, the suspect undergoes interrogation (Inbau et al., 2013). Although no method or set of methods is used universally across the U.S., many U.S. police forces employ methods derived from or similar to Reid.

In Europe, the landscape of interrogation methods is more diverse. This can in part be explained by the variety in legal systems across countries. Many European countries have witnessed a notable shift from accusatorial methods to more science-informed, information-gathering approaches to suspect interviews (Vanderhallen & Vervaeke, 2014). For example, the United Kingdom and Norway have adopted the PEACE model, a non-coercive framework emphasizing investigative interviewing. Developed in 1992, the PEACE approach focuses on Planning and Preparation, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, and Evaluation (Halley et al., 2023). It prioritizes building rapport, avoiding confrontational tactics, and using evidence strategically to elicit reliable information. The transition to PEACE reflects a broader paradigm shift. In Norway, several false confession cases initiated the move from confession-driven techniques to investigative interviewing (Bull & Rachlew, 2019). Similarly, the 'Méndez Principles' (Méndez et al., 2021), the UN investigative interviewing manual (United Nations, 2024), and reviews of interviewing and interrogation research and practices since World War II until today, advocate for universal adoption of non-coercive interrogation methods to prevent rights violations and ensure effective investigations (Oxburgh et al., 2023). The Salduz ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, which mandates legal assistance for suspects (Salduz v. Turkey, 2008), has further reformed interrogation practices, ensuring procedural safeguards and promoting ethical standards.

It must be noted that in recent years, self-reported usage of interrogation techniques in North America has also shifted significantly from traditional accusatorial approaches to more science-based, information-gathering methods such as those proposed under the PEACE model. Brimbal et al. (2024) surveyed over 500 U.S. law enforcement officers, highlighting a widespread move toward ethical practices influenced by procedural justice principles and research-backed training initiatives, such as those promoted by the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). Officers reported a marked reduction in coercive tactics, such as threats and intimidation, and an increased reliance on rapport-building strategies and objective memory recall-enhancing techniques. However, while Brimbal et al.'s (2024) recent survey provides updated insights into what goes on in U.S. interrogation rooms, such insight has yet to be obtained in the European context.

The current study

This study seeks to address the gap by examining the beliefs and experiences of European police officers. Modeled after Kassin et al.'s (2007) self-report survey, the present study

surveyed police investigators from six European countries to examine the extent to which coercive interrogation methods are reflected in common or uncommon police practices. An adapted version of the original instrument (Kassin et al., 2007) was employed, covering six key areas: (1) investigators' beliefs and practices regarding the recording of interrogations, (2) the frequency and length of suspect interviews, (3) suspects' willingness to talk to the police, (4) investigators' perceived ability to detect truth and deception, (5) the rates of true and false confessions, and (6) the use of various interrogation techniques. This paper provides an integrative overview of findings. Data from four countries (Netherlands: Vanderhallen et al., 2022; Belgium: Schell-Leugers et al., 2024b; Germany: Schell-Leugers et al., 2024a; and Spain: Schell-Leugers et al., 2023) have already been published and findings from the remaining two countries (Sweden and Norway) are in the preparation phase. By summarizing these findings in a single manuscript, we aim to provide a comprehensive cross-national perspective on European police beliefs and practices, identifying commonalities and differences across legal and cultural contexts.

Method

Participants

A total of 1,631 police investigators participated in all studies combined, including 126 officers from the Netherlands (7.73%), 187 officers from Flanders, Belgium (11.47%), 427 officers from Spain¹ (26.18%), 368 officers from Germany (22.56%), 171 officers from Sweden (10.48%), and 352 officers from Norway (21.58%). The following inclusion criteria were applied: participants had to (i) be at least 18 years old; (ii) have at least one year of experience interviewing suspects; (iii) have conducted at least one suspect interview in the last 12 months; and (iv) have answered at least 24 of the 27 questions about interviewing techniques. In addition, outliers² were identified and omitted for each country separately, and respondents who completed the study in an insufficient amount of time were also excluded. After applying these criteria, the final sample ($N = 962$) consisted of 84 Dutch (8.7%), 130 Belgian (13.5%), 215 Spanish (22.4%, of which 89 GC and 126 PN officers), 321 German (33.4%), 57 Swedish (5.9%), and 155 Norwegian (16.1%) police officers. Because the two Spanish samples were different, each pertaining to one of the two nationwide police forces (González et al., 2024; Schell-Leugers et al., 2023), they were also analyzed separately in the present paper. The final sample consisted of 616 male officers (64.03%), 266 female officers (27.65%), and 80 officers who did not specify their gender (8.32%). The police officers had a mean age of 40.75 years ($SD = 9.39$, $Mdn = 40.00$, $Range = 21-70$). Ethical approval for data collection in all six countries was granted by the Ethics Review Committee Inner City faculties (ERCIC) of Maastricht University.

Materials

Across samples, minor changes were made to the questionnaire to account for differences in legal systems, cultural norms, and procedural practices across Europe. Certain questions were modified to align with country-specific contexts while maintaining consistency with the core framework established by Kassin et al. (2007). First, the items in

which officers had to estimate suspects' exercising of their legal rights were tailored to the European context and to each specific country. For the present study, the original questionnaire's inquiries about *Miranda* rights were replaced with questions about suspects' right to counsel from a lawyer³ and the right to remain silent throughout all or parts of the interview. Secondly, the questions about the officers' background in law enforcement were adapted to fit each country's context. For example, an additional question was included to differentiate between local and federal police forces in Belgium.

Lastly, the questionnaire was translated from English to each country's principal language following the survey translation guidelines outlined by Pan and de la Puente (2005). For each country-specific translation, two researchers who mastered both languages translated the survey from English into the target language. The two independent translations were then reviewed in cooperation with a questionnaire development expert and one expert in the research discipline to arrive at one final version. This version was piloted with a small number of police officers in each country before the study was initiated. The questionnaire was developed and distributed using Qualtrics.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of three parts. The first part focused on demographic and professional background information. Participants were asked to provide details about their age, gender, years employed in law enforcement, and current department. They were further asked how many suspects they had interviewed in the past year, their confidence levels in conducting suspect interviews, and their training history. The second part addressed various aspects of suspect interviews. Officers were asked whether they record interviews and, if so, by what means (audio, video, or both). Those who did not record interviews were queried about their views on whether recording should be implemented. Next, participants were requested to estimate based on their own experience how many suspects use the right to legal assistance and how many fully or partially use their right to silence. Further questions examined the average and maximum durations of suspect interviews, as well as their frequency. Participants were also asked about their perceptions of the primary goal of suspect interviews – whether to uncover the truth, obtain a confession, or gather accurate information. They also estimated the proportion of suspects across all their interviews who provided partial or full confessions versus those who denied all allegations. This section also explored officers' experiences with suspects waiving their rights to silence and legal aid, and whether this behavior was influenced by the suspect's guilt or innocence. Additionally, participants were asked to evaluate their ability to discern whether a suspect was lying or telling the truth and whether it matters if the suspect is denying or confessing. Lastly, in this part, officers were asked to report whether they had ever encountered a false confession, how frequently such cases occurred, and whether these false confessions were voluntary or coerced. The third and final part of the questionnaire presented 27 specific interrogation techniques. Participants indicated how frequently they used each technique on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*).

Procedure

All participants were invited to take part in the study via email, with the invitations disseminated through established police contacts in each respective country. These contacts had been formally approached in advance and provided approval for the research team to engage police personnel for the study. The country-specific police contacts acted as intermediaries, distributing the survey link through their internal communication channels, such as official email lists or intranet platforms. This approach ensured that the survey reached relevant personnel securely and confidentially, while maintaining compliance with each police organization's internal policies regarding research participation and data collection.⁴ The invitation outlined the basic background of the study, what participating in the study would entail, and a URL to the online survey. Upon opening the survey, participants were first presented with an informed consent form, which again outlined the study's purpose, the task description, and participant rights. Only participants who actively consented to participating in the study were presented with the main questionnaire.

Results

In this paper, we report only on data collected consistently across all participating countries.⁵ Questions that were available only for a subset of countries are excluded from the analysis to maintain comparability and consistency in the findings. One-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences in the estimates across subsamples. When the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, Welch's ANOVA was used as a robust alternative. Significant results were determined using a standard p -value threshold of $< .05$ and were followed by post-hoc comparisons with Bonferroni (in case of homogeneous variances) or Games-Howell (in case of heterogeneous variances) corrections to identify specific group differences while controlling for Type I error. We report all pairwise comparisons that reach a statistical significance of $p < .001$. For additional statistics, effect sizes, and 95% CIs for each comparison, see supplementary material.

Investigator characteristics

Across all subsamples, the police investigators had an average of 17.45 years of experience working in law enforcement ($SD = 10.38$, $Mdn = 16.00$, $Range = 0.75-47$) at the time they filled in the survey (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). The number of years of experience in law enforcement differed significantly between the groups of officers, *Welch's* $F(6,301.44) = 31.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. Post hoc comparisons showed that on average, Spanish GC officers reported the highest level of experience (24 years), significantly exceeding the experience of officers from Belgium (19 years), Germany (18 years), Norway (11 years), and Spanish PN (15 years). Norwegian officers consistently reported the fewest years of experience (11 years) compared to all other countries. Additionally, Spanish PN officers reported significantly fewer years of experience than Belgian (19 years), Dutch (23 years), and Spanish GC (24 years) officers. No other pairwise comparisons exceeded the significance threshold.

Respondents reported an average of 11.45 years of experience conducting suspect interviews ($SD = 8.35$, $Mdn = 10.00$, $Range = 0.50-42.00$). However, significant differences were

Table 1. Investigator characteristics.

| Country | Years employed in law enforcement | | Years of experience interviewing suspects | | Number of suspects interviewed in the past 12 months | | Self-rated interviewing skill | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------|---|----------|--|----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> |
| Netherlands | 22.69 (10.94) | 84 | 16.27 (9.10) | 84 | 27.19 (30.38) | 84 | 7.39 (0.75) | 83 |
| Belgium | 19.00 (8.44) | 130 | 9.80 (6.56) | 130 | 42.75 (39.02) | 129 | 7.34 (0.85) | 129 |
| Germany | 17.62 (10.94) | 321 | 13.67 (9.53) | 321 | 32.30 (37.14) | 320 | 6.82 (1.27) | 318 |
| Norway | 10.71 (9.25) | 155 | 8.90 (7.75) | 155 | 65.57 (62.01) | 155 | 6.47 (1.11) | 154 |
| Sweden | 18.41 (11.53) | 56 | 7.33 (5.94) | 57 | 69.19 (49.43) | 57 | 6.77 (1.35) | 56 |
| Spain PN | 14.85 (5.95) | 126 | 8.09 (4.41) | 126 | 27.62 (37.22) | 126 | 6.54 (1.47) | 125 |
| Spain GC | 24.45 (8.39) | 89 | 13.08 (7.08) | 89 | 11.81 (9.58) | 89 | 6.80 (1.19) | 88 |
| <i>Total</i> | 17.45 (10.38) | 961 | 11.45 (8.35) | 962 | 38.31 (44.42) | 960 | 6.84 (1.22) | 953 |

found between the countries, *Welch's* $F(6,309.59) = 23.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$. Post hoc comparisons showed that Dutch officers reported the most years of experience conducting suspect interviews (16 years), followed by German (14 years) and Spanish GC officers (13 years). Officers from these three countries reported significantly more experience than their counterparts in Belgium (10 years), Norway (9 years), Sweden (7 years), and Spanish PN (8 years), but did not significantly differ from each other. Additionally, Spanish GC officers (13 years) reported significantly more experience compared to Spanish PN officers. Other comparisons did not reach statistical significance above the threshold.

Police investigators reported conducting an average of 38.31 suspect interviews in the past year ($SD = 44.42, Mdn = 25.00, Range = 1-400$), but between subsamples, mean estimates differed significantly, *Welch's* $F(6,307.85) = 48.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$. Post-hoc comparisons revealed that Swedish officers reported conducting the highest number of suspect interviews annually (69 interviews), followed closely by Norwegian officers (66 interviews). Both groups conducted significantly more interviews than officers from Belgium (43 interviews), Germany (32 interviews), the Netherlands (27 interviews), Spain PN (28 interviews), and Spain GC (12 interviews) but did not differ significantly from each other. Conversely, with 12 interviews, Spanish GC officers conducted significantly fewer interviews than officers from all other countries. Other comparisons failed to reach statistical significance at the cutoff rate.

Police investigators rated their own skill at interviewing suspects on a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 being excellent. On average, investigators rated themselves as moderately good at interviewing suspects, with an average score of 6.84 ($SD = 1.22, Mdn = 7.00, Range = 1-10$). However, average evaluations differed significantly between subsamples, *Welch's* $F(6,303.31) = 16.44, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$. Post-hoc comparisons showed that, on average, Dutch investigators rated themselves the highest (7.4), followed closely by Belgian officers (7.3). Officers from both countries reported higher self-rated skills than officers from Germany (6.8), Norway (6.5), and Spain PN (6.5). Other comparisons did not reach statistical significance at the cutoff rate.

Training

Investigators were also asked if they had ever received advanced training on how to conduct suspect interviews. Of the 950 officers who answered this question, 406 (46.8%) reported receiving advanced training in interviewing suspects in addition to

their standard police training. The proportions of investigators who had received additional training differed significantly across the samples, $\chi^2(6, N = 950) = 280.08, p < .001, V = 0.54$. Advanced training was significantly more common in the Netherlands (90.5%) and Belgium (85.4%), than in any of the other countries (see Table 2 for descriptives). In contrast, advanced training was least common among Spanish PN officers (7.1%) compared to other countries. Additionally, significantly more Norwegian officers (50.0%) had received advanced training compared to officers from Germany (27.7%). These findings highlight variability in access to advanced training across European countries.

Length, frequency, and aim of suspect interviews

The average interview conducted by European police officers lasts 1 h and 28 min ($SD = 59.80$ min). However, significant differences emerged across countries, *Welch's* $F(6, 310.69) = 38.71, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27$ (see Table 3 for descriptives). Dutch officers reported the longest average interview duration at approximately 152 min, followed by Norwegian officers with an average of about 122 min. Both were significantly longer than estimates from any other subsample. Belgian interviews averaged around 94 min, which was significantly longer than those conducted by officers in Sweden (65 min), Spain GC (70 min), and PN officers (53 min). German interviews averaged around 76 min, significantly longer than interviews in Spain PN. Other pairwise comparisons did not reach statistical significance at the $p < .001$ level.

Across Europe, the longest interview officers had experienced had a mean duration of 4 h and 14 min ($SD = 168.97$ min). However, significant cross-country differences were found, *Welch's* $F(6, 308.95) = 42.49, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20$ (see Table 3 for descriptives). On average, the Dutch (6.1 h), Belgian (5.2 h), and Norwegian (5.3 h) police investigators reported the longest interviews. These durations were significantly longer than durations reported by officers from Sweden (3.1 h), Spain GC (3.1 h), and PN (2.3 h). Dutch officers also reported significantly longer interview duration compared to German officers (4.1 h). German officers, in turn, reported significantly longer maximum interview durations than Spanish PN officers. Other pairwise comparisons did not reach statistical significance at the $p < .001$ level.

Officers were asked to estimate the frequency with which a suspect is typically interviewed about the same offense, with response options ranging from 1 to 10 times or 10 + times. Of the 956 police investigators who answered this question, three respondents (0.3%) indicated that suspects were interviewed more than ten times per offense (2 from Spain PN and 1 from Sweden). As these responses do not provide an exact frequency, these cases were excluded from the frequency analysis. Among the remaining officers (n

Table 2. Participants' responses to the questions whether they have received advanced training on suspect interviewing.

| Country | Yes | | No | | n |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | |
| Netherlands | 76 | 90.48 | 8 | 9.52 | 84 |
| Belgium | 111 | 85.38 | 19 | 14.62 | 130 |
| Germany | 86 | 27.74 | 224 | 72.26 | 310 |
| Norway | 77 | 50.00 | 77 | 50.00 | 154 |
| Sweden | 22 | 38.60 | 35 | 61.40 | 57 |
| Spain PN | 9 | 7.14 | 117 | 92.86 | 89 |
| Spain GC | 25 | 28.09 | 64 | 71.91 | 126 |
| <i>Total</i> | 406 | 46.78 | 544 | 53.22 | 950 |

Table 3. Duration and frequency of suspect interviews.

| Country | Average interview length (in minutes) | | Longest interview (in minutes) | | Number of interviews | |
|--------------|--|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> |
| Netherlands | 152.17 (71.02) | 83 | 368.13 (133.29) | 80 | 2.89 (1.32) | 84 |
| Belgium | 94.34 (49.40) | 129 | 311.33 (178.27) | 128 | 2.44 (1.21) | 130 |
| Germany | 75.77 (53.41) | 317 | 246.08 (168.22) | 315 | 1.37 (0.67) | 315 |
| Norway | 121.63 (63.60) | 151 | 320.23 (157.80) | 148 | 2.21 (1.17) | 155 |
| Sweden | 64.65 (33.34) | 57 | 188.33 (95.73) | 57 | 2.55 (1.28) | 56 |
| Spain PN | 52.64 (41.48) | 123 | 137.29 (114.30) | 120 | 2.07 (1.50) | 124 |
| Spain GC | 70.74 (34.65) | 88 | 183.65 (158.76) | 89 | 2.22 (1.43) | 89 |
| <i>Total</i> | 88.16 (59.80) | 948 | 253.75 (168.97) | 937 | 2.03 (1.24) | 953 |

= 953), an average of approximately two times emerged ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.25$) across all subsamples combined. However, mean estimates differed significantly between countries, $Welch's F(6,276.01) = 44.20$, $\eta^2 = .21$ (see Table 3 for descriptives). Post-hoc comparisons revealed that Dutch officers estimated the highest interview frequency at an average of 2.9 interviews per suspect, but they did not significantly differ from other countries except Germany. German officers reported the lowest frequency, averaging 1.4 interviews per suspect, which was significantly lower than estimates from all other countries: the Netherlands (2.9), Sweden (2.6), Belgium (2.4), Norway (2.2), Spain PN (2.1), and Spain GC (2.2).

When asked about the goal of the interrogation, a clear pattern emerged, with officers in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany more likely to report 'obtaining the truth' as a primary goal, while those in Norway, Sweden, and Spain prioritized 'gathering accurate information' (see Table 4 for descriptives). Across all countries, few officers indicated that obtaining a confession was a primary goal. Pairwise comparisons can be found in the supplementary material.

Electronic recording

The practice of electronically recording suspect interviews varied across the surveyed countries. Table 5 displays the individual results per country. Chi-square tests of independence were used to test whether the distribution of the answers regarding the usage of electronic recording in suspect interviews differed between the six countries. Results revealed significant differences across all questions: whether investigators typically reported electronically recording suspects interviews, $\chi^2(12, N = 959) = 714.12$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .61$, which mode of recording is used, $\chi^2(12, N = 426) = 332.18$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .59$, and whether participants believed that suspect interviews should be recorded, $\chi^2(12, N = 797) = 230.25$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .38$.

Table 4. Goal of interrogation according to surveyed officers.

| Country | To obtain the truth Count (%) | To gather accurate information Count (%) | To obtain a confession Count (%) |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Netherlands | 56 (67.5%) | 27 (32.5%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Belgium | 86 (66.2%) | 42 (32.3%) | 2 (1.5%) |
| Germany | 175 (54.7%) | 125 (39.1%) | 20 (6.3%) |
| Norway | 33 (21.3%) | 122 (78.8%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Sweden | 16 (28.1%) | 41 (71.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Spain PN | 27 (21.4%) | 97 (77.0%) | 2 (1.6%) |
| Spain GC | 24 (27.0%) | 64 (71.9%) | 1 (1.1%) |
| <i>Total</i> | 417 (43.4%) | 518 (54.0%) | 25 (2.6%) |

Table 5. Electronic recording of suspect interviews.

| Questions, response options and sample sizes | Netherlands Count (%) | Belgium Count (%) | Germany Count (%) | Norway Count (%) | Sweden Count (%) | Spain PN Count (%) | Spain GC Count (%) | Total Count (%) |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you typically electronically record suspect interviews? | | | | | | | | |
| Yes, always | 26 (31.0%) | 8 (6.2%) | 13 (4.0%) | 140 (90.9%) | 7 (12.3%) | 1 (0.8%) | 4 (4.6%) | 199 (20.8%) |
| Yes, in specific cases | 47 (56.0%) | 52 (40.0%) | 60 (18.7%) | 13 (8.4%) | 26 (45.6%) | 16 (12.7%) | 28 (32.2%) | 242 (25.2%) |
| No | 11 (13.1%) | 70 (53.8%) | 248 (77.3%) | 1 (0.6%) | 24 (42.1%) | 109 (86.5%) | 55 (63.2%) | 518 (54.0%) |
| <i>n</i> | 84 | 130 | 321 | 154 | 57 | 126 | 87 | 959 |
| If you record interviews, what mode of recording do you typically use? | | | | | | | | |
| Audio | 11 (15.1%) | 0 (0.0%) | 48 (81.4%) | 109 (71.2%) | 22 (66.7%) | 8 (47.1%) | 14 (45.2%) | 212 (49.8%) |
| Video | 3 (4.1%) | 53 (88.3%) | 2 (3.4%) | 18 (11.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (17.6%) | 4 (12.9%) | 83 (19.5%) |
| Sometimes audio, sometimes video | 59 (80.8%) | 7 (11.7%) | 9 (15.3%) | 26 (17.0%) | 11 (33.3%) | 6 (35.3%) | 13 (41.9%) | 131 (30.8%) |
| <i>n</i> | 73 | 60 | 59 | 153 | 33 | 17 | 31 | 426 |
| Should all interviews be electronically recorded? | | | | | | | | |
| Yes, video | 39 (46.4%) | 87 (66.9%) | 137 (42.8%) | 10 (6.5%) | 18 (31.6%) | 14 (82.4%) | 27 (79.4%) | 332 (41.7%) |
| Yes, audio | 37 (44.0%) | 15 (11.5%) | 107 (33.4%) | 133 (85.8%) | 31 (54.4%) | 2 (11.8%) | 4 (11.8%) | 329 (41.3%) |
| No | 8 (9.5%) | 28 (21.5%) | 76 (23.8%) | 12 (7.7%) | 8 (14.0%) | 1 (5.9%) | 3 (8.8%) | 136 (17.1%) |
| <i>n</i> | 84 | 130 | 320 | 155 | 57 | 17 | 34 | 797 |

The detailed post hoc comparisons are too complex to report in text but are available in the supplementary material. This section highlights the most notable findings from the data. On average, only 20.8% of investigators reported always recording suspect interviews, with the highest rates observed in Norway (90.9%) and the lowest in Spain PN (0.8%). An additional 25.2% reported recording in specific cases, with Belgium (40.0%) and Sweden (45.6%) having higher rates of conditional recording compared to other countries. Finally, 54% reported they do not record suspect interviews, with the highest proportion of responses coming from Spain PN (86.5%), Spain GC (63.2%), and Germany (77.3%), whereas Norway reported the lowest non-recording rate (0.6%).

In terms of recording modes, on average, almost 50% of European officers reported that if they would electronically record the suspect interview, they would use audio recording, 19.5% reported using video recording, and 31% reported using a mix of both. Audio recording was predominant in Germany (81.4%), Norway (71.2%), and Sweden (66.7%), while video recording was more common in Belgium (88.3%) but rare in other countries. The Netherlands stood out for using a mix of audio and video recording (80.8%), significantly higher than in any other country.

Regarding preferences for universal recording, 41.7% of investigators believed all interviews should be video recorded, with Belgium (66.9%), Spain PN (82.4%), and Spain GC (79.4%) showing the strongest support. Conversely, 41.3% had a preference for audio recording, with Norway (85.8%) and Sweden (54.4%) showing the strongest support. A minority (17.1%) expressed opposition to universal recording, with the highest resistance observed in Belgium (21.5%) and Germany (23.8%).

Suspects' rights to remain silent

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of suspects who fully make use of their right to remain silent when questioned at the police station. Results revealed significant differences between the subsamples, *Welch's F*(6,298.12) = 296.69, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .57$ (see Table 6 for descriptives). Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections revealed that Spanish officers (PN: 82.9%; GC: 79.1%) reported the highest estimated rates of suspects who fully use their right to remain silent, significantly higher than all other countries. The estimates from Norway (11.2%), Belgium (13.9%), and Sweden (14.5%) were significantly lower than those from Germany (54.6%) and the Netherlands (34.4%), but did not differ significantly from each other.

Additionally, the officers estimated what percentage of suspects who fully use their right to remain silent are guilty. Interestingly, all percentages were considerably high ($M = 86.24\%$, $SD = 16.32$; Range = 82–92%), but significant between-group differences emerged, *Welch's F*(6,282.76) = 8.12, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (See Table 6 for descriptives). On average, Spanish GC officers (91.9%) estimated a significantly higher percentage of these suspects to be guilty compared to officers from Germany (84.4%) and Norway (82%). Similarly, officers from Belgium (90.9%) estimated higher guilt rates compared to those from Germany. Other pairwise comparisons did not reach statistical significance at the $p < .001$ level.

Police officers were subsequently asked to estimate the percentage of suspects who make only partial use of their right to remain silent. Again, we found a significant effect of country on the estimated percentages, *Welch's F*(6,296.96) = 19.15, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$ (See Table 6 for descriptives). Post-hoc tests revealed that the Dutch estimates (49.11%) were significantly higher than those from Belgium (30.7%), Germany (27.5%), Norway (14.6%), and Spanish PN (25.4%). Norwegian officers (14.6%) provided the lowest estimate for suspects who partially use their right to remain silent, significantly lower than estimates from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden (36%). Other pairwise comparisons did not reach statistical significance at the $p < .001$ level.

The officers were subsequently asked to also estimate what percentage of suspects who partially use their right to remain silent are typically guilty. Again, percentages were generally high ($M = 79.66\%$, $SD = 21.72$; Range = 73–91%), but the estimates differed significantly between the six countries, *Welch's F*(6,296.48) = 13.52, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (See Table 6 for descriptives). Spanish GC officers (90.8%) considered a significantly higher proportion of suspects who partially use their right to silence to be guilty compared to Belgian (81.2%), Dutch (80.0%), German (76.3%), and Norwegian (72.7%) officers. Similarly, Spanish PN sample (85.0%) estimates were higher than the mean estimates from German and Norwegian officers. No other comparisons reached statistical significance at the set threshold.

Beliefs about deception detection

Police officers were asked to estimate their accuracy in distinguishing truthful from deceptive statements on a scale from 0–100%. For comparison, the average accuracy rate on truth/lie discrimination tasks based on behavioral cues is 54% (Bond & DePaulo, 2006), which was used as the cutoff in this analysis. Compared to this benchmark, all subsamples

Table 6. Estimates of suspects' use of the right to remain silent.

| | Metric | Netherlands | Belgium | Germany | Norway | Sweden | Spain PN | Spain GC | Total |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| How many suspects use their right to remain silent? | | | | | | | | | |
| Full | <i>M (SD)</i> | 34.44 (31.53) | 13.88 (16.91) | 54.64 (27.28) | 11.17 (15.89) | 14.52 (19.51) | 82.90 (20.11) | 79.11 (23.05) | 44.10 (35.24) |
| | <i>n</i> | 84 | 129 | 321 | 153 | 54 | 125 | 89 | 955 |
| Partial | <i>M (SD)</i> | 49.12 (28.66) | 30.71 (26.91) | 27.54 (27.13) | 14.60 (20.26) | 36.04 (30.15) | 25.44 (35.36) | 30.69 (34.27) | 28.30 (29.62) |
| | <i>n</i> | 84 | 129 | 319 | 154 | 57 | 126 | 89 | 958 |
| How many suspects who use their right to remain silent are guilty? | | | | | | | | | |
| Full | <i>M (SD)</i> | 83.94 (16.29) | 90.87 (13.01) | 84.39 (15.11) | 81.97 (21.52) | 91.40 (17.41) | 87.51 (14.27) | 91.85 (11.39) | 86.24 (16.32) |
| | <i>n</i> | 71 | 100 | 321 | 155 | 57 | 126 | 89 | 919 |
| Partial | <i>M (SD)</i> | 80.00 (17.54) | 81.19 (18.71) | 76.27 (22.71) | 72.73 (25.00) | 85.11 (21.19) | 85.01 (19.44) | 90.76 (13.89) | 79.66 (21.72) |
| | <i>n</i> | 75 | 108 | 321 | 155 | 57 | 126 | 89 | 931 |

except Norway significantly overestimated their accuracy (all $ps < .001$; $d_{\text{Netherlands}} = 1.03$, $d_{\text{Belgium}} = 1.33$, $d_{\text{Germany}} = 0.61$, $d_{\text{Sweden}} = 0.73$, $d_{\text{Spain PN}} = 2.11$, $d_{\text{Spain GC}} = 1.82$). Across all subsamples, the mean estimated accuracy was 69.18% ($SD = 17.96$).

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on accuracy estimates, *Welch's* $F(6,284.52) = 39.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$ (see [Table 7](#) for descriptives). Post-hoc tests revealed that Spanish PN (81.4%) and GC officers (80.2%) rated their accuracy as significantly higher than did officers from all other countries, apart from the differences between Spain GC and Belgium that did not reach the significance cutoff. In contrast, mean accuracy estimates from the Norwegian sample (55.2%) were significantly lower than estimates from all other countries except Sweden (66.2%). Additionally, Belgian officers rated their accuracy significantly higher than German officers (64.8%). No other pairwise comparisons reached the significance threshold.

Furthermore, most police officers (72.6%) across all countries reported that their ability to detect deception did not vary based on whether the suspect was confessing or denying. A smaller proportion (10.9%) believed they were more accurate when the suspect was confessing, while 16.5% reported better accuracy when the suspect was denying. See supplementary materials for pairwise comparisons.

Rates of true and false confessions

Police officers estimated the percentage of suspects across interviews who provided a full or partial confession. The officers estimated that, on average, 45.56% of suspects confessed ($SD = 24.87$, $Mdn = 50.00$, $Range = 0\text{--}100\%$). See [Table 8](#) for descriptives. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the estimates differed significantly between countries, *Welch's* $F(6,297.39) = 17.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$. Post-hoc comparisons revealed that on average, Belgian (58.5%) and Dutch (57.3%) investigators provided the highest estimated percentages of suspects who gave a full or partial confession compared to investigators from all other samples. The Belgian and Dutch investigators did not differ significantly from each other. In addition, Norwegian officers' estimates were significantly higher than those of the Spanish GC (37.4%) and PN officers (35.6%). No other significant differences emerged.

Next, the officers were asked whether they had ever personally encountered a false confession. Across all subsamples, 56.7% of officers responded affirmatively (see [Table 8](#)), yet the estimates between countries differed significantly, $\chi^2(6, N = 961) = 169.39$, $p < .001$, $V = .42$. Spanish investigators (GC: 86.5%; PN: 82.5%) reported the highest

Table 7. Estimated deception detection abilities.

| Country | Accuracy (%) | | Accuracy as a Function of Suspect Behavior | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|----------|--|--|---|----------|
| | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | <i>n</i> | No Difference <i>Count</i> (%) | Better When Confessing <i>Count</i> (%) | Better When Denying <i>Count</i> (%) | <i>n</i> |
| Netherlands | 70.27 (15.88) | 81 | 65 (77.54) | 11 (13.1) | 8 (9.5) | 84 |
| Belgium | 72.37 (13.77) | 127 | 107 (82.9) | 9 (7.0) | 13 (10.1) | 129 |
| Germany | 64.84 (17.71) | 317 | 230 (71.1) | 37 (11.5) | 54 (16.8) | 321 |
| Norway | 55.22 (18.25) | 104 | 127 (83.6) | 13 (8.6) | 12 (7.9) | 152 |
| Sweden | 66.16 (16.74) | 55 | 49 (86.0) | 3 (5.3) | 5 (8.8) | 57 |
| Spain PN | 81.40 (13.02) | 125 | 70 (55.6) | 17 (13.5) | 39 (31.0) | 126 |
| Spain GC | 80.23 (14.38) | 88 | 47 (54.0) | 14 (16.1) | 26 (29.9) | 87 |
| <i>Total</i> | 69.18 (17.96) | 897 | 694 (72.6) | 104 (10.9) | 158 (16.5) | 956 |

number of false confessions, significantly higher than all countries except Belgium (76.0%). Belgian officers also reported higher numbers than officers from the Netherlands (45.2%), Germany (33.4%), and Sweden (40.4%). Lastly, Norwegian officers (62.6%) reported significantly higher estimates than German officers.

The number of false confessions experienced also differed significantly across samples, Welch's $F(6,147.14) = 9.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. On average, officers reported encountering approximately 13 false confessions. By their own report, Spanish investigators from both subsamples (PN: 15.3; GC: 24.6) had experienced significantly more false confessions than investigators from Germany (4.3) and Norway (5.2). Additionally, the Spanish GC officers also provided higher estimates than officers from Sweden (6.7). No other pairwise comparisons reached the significance threshold.

Most officers having experienced false confessions had encountered voluntary false confessions only (79.9%), though a few also reported having experienced coerced false confessions only (11.1%), or false confessions of both kinds (8.9%). Descriptive data for individual countries are displayed in [Table 8](#).

Interrogation techniques

[Table 9](#) displays the self-reported frequency of usage of 27 interviewing and interrogation techniques within each country. There was strong consistency across countries in the extent each technique was employed; that is, those techniques used more often in one country were also used more often in the other countries. [Table 10](#) shows the Pearson correlations across the 27 interview techniques for the self-reported frequency of usage among countries. These data reflect the extent to which the techniques that are used more often in a specific country are also used more often in a different country. As shown in [Table 10](#), all correlations were high and significant (all $ps \leq .001$). The mean correlation (i.e. the mean of all correlations reported in [Table 10](#)) was .82 ($SD = .12$; Range = .60-.98; $Mdn = .86$).

The analysis reveals a consistent emphasis on ethical, respectful, and evidence-based approaches. As shown in [Table 9](#), among the most employed strategies is treating suspects with respect, which consistently scores high on usage (mean ratings approximately 3.42–4.93 on a scale of 1–5). Similarly, being patient with suspects is often reported as a standard practice, with mean scores ranging from 3.88 to 4.38.

Evidence-based techniques are also widely used. Strategic disclosure of evidence, with mean ratings between 3.27 and 4.29, is a frequent practice, allowing investigators to present information methodically to elicit cooperation or confessions. Additionally, confronting suspects with actual evidence is another commonly reported approach, with mean scores ranging from 3.26 to 4.69.

Rapport-building techniques, particularly in countries where information-gathering frameworks are emphasized, also feature prominently in interrogation practices. Establishing rapport scores between 3.32 and 4.32, underscoring its critical role in promoting open communication and fostering trust. Another technique, stimulating the suspect's free recall, is especially notable in countries like Sweden ($M = 4.36$) and Belgium ($M = 4.23$).

In contrast, coercive, aggressive, and manipulative techniques are rarely used, aligning with ethical and legal standards. Physical intimidation, for instance, is universally reported as infrequent, with mean scores around 1.0–1.41. Similarly, expressing anger or frustration

Table 8. False confession experiences.

| Country | Suspects who gave full/ partial confession | | Experienced a False Confession | | Number of False Confessions | | Type of False Confessions | | | | |
|--------------|---|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------|
| | <i>M (SD)</i> | <i>n</i> | Count (%) | <i>n</i> | <i>M (SD)</i> | <i>n</i> | Only Voluntary Count (%) | Only Coerced Count (%) | Both Voluntary & Coerced Count (%) | | <i>n</i> |
| Netherlands | 57.28 (20.01) | 82 | 38 (45.2%) | 84 | 15.97 (49.30) | 37 | 29 (78.4%) | 4 (10.8%) | 4 (10.8%) | | 37 |
| Belgium | 58.47 (19.47) | 125 | 98 (76.0%) | 129 | 21.54 (66.22) | 92 | 80 (87.9%) | 4 (4.4%) | 7 (7.7%) | | 91 |
| Germany | 42.76 (23.69) | 321 | 107 (33.4%) | 320 | 4.27 (6.19) | 100 | 61 (63.5%) | 24 (25%) | 11 (11.5%) | | 96 |
| Norway | 48.14 (20.75) | 153 | 97 (62.6%) | 155 | 5.20 (5.83) | 93 | 86 (92.5%) | 2 (2.2%) | 5 (5.4%) | | 93 |
| Sweden* | 44.04 (26.41) | 57 | 23 (40.4%) | 57 | 6.73 (6.80) | 22 | 20 (90.9%) | 2 (9.1%) | 0 (0.0%) | | 22 |
| Spain PN | 35.60 (28.14) | 126 | 104 (82.5%) | 126 | 15.32 (19.21) | 93 | 68 (74.7%) | 12 (13.2%) | 11 (12.1%) | | 91 |
| Spain GC | 37.39 (28.65) | 89 | 77 (86.5%) | 89 | 24.60 (33.69) | 77 | 58 (79.5%) | 8 (11.0%) | 7 (9.6%) | | 73 |
| <i>Total</i> | 45.56 (24.87) | 953 | 544 (56.7%) | 960 | 13.52 (35.50) | 514 | 402 (79.9%) | 56 (11.1%) | 45 (8.9%) | | 503 |

*1 Swedish response ('101010101010') was omitted as an outlier.

Table 9. Self-reported frequency of usage of 27 interviewing techniques.

| Interviewing Technique | Netherlands (n = 84) M (SD) | Belgium (n = 130) M (SD) | Germany (n = 321) M (SD) | Norway (n = 155) M (SD) | Sweden (n = 57) M (SD) | Spain PN (n = 126) M (SD) | Spain GC (n = 89) M (SD) | Total (N = 962) M (SD) |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Techniques used frequently (4-to-5 scores)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Treating the suspect with respect | 4.80 (0.40) | 4.83 (0.38) | 3.60 (0.29) | 4.93 (0.26) | 3.42 (1.55) | 4.74 (0.48) ^g | 4.72 (0.50) | 4.32 (0.84) |
| Being patient with the suspect | 4.33 (0.52) | 4.23 (0.59) | 3.88 (0.69) | 4.38 (0.56) | 4.26 (0.44) | 4.25 (0.72) | 4.29 (0.69) | 4.16 (0.67) |
| Confronting the suspect with contradictions in his/her story | 4.50 (0.57) | 4.34 (0.70) | 4.35 (0.67) | 3.79 (0.83) | 3.98 (0.81) | 3.70 (0.93) | 3.66 (0.89) | 4.10 (0.82) |
| Confronting the suspect with actual evidence of his/her guilt | 4.69 (0.47) | 4.32 (0.61) | 4.37 (0.64) | 3.50 (0.94) | 3.26 (1.53) | 3.64 (0.86) | 3.71 (0.88) | 4.03 (0.92) |
| <i>Techniques used sometimes (3-to-4 scores)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Strategically disclosing evidence | 4.29 (0.57) ^a | 4.23 (0.62) | 3.67 (0.88) | 4.13 (0.72) | 4.18 (0.73) | 3.27 (0.94) | 3.35 (0.76) ^h | 3.82 (0.87) |
| Establishing a rapport | 4.32 (0.82) | 3.32 (1.17) | 3.49 (0.89) ^d | 0.00 (0.00) | 4.07 (0.68) | 4.17 (0.69) | 4.19 (0.69) | 3.77 (0.95) |
| Stimulating the suspect's free recall | 3.71 (0.88) ^a | 4.23 (0.74) ^b | 4.04 (1.02) ^d | 2.94 (1.11) | 4.36 (1.10) ^f | 3.41 (0.93) | 3.37 (1.07) | 3.73 (1.09) |
| Emphasizing the importance of telling the truth | 3.25 (0.94) | 3.83 (0.77) | 3.27 (1.18) | 4.01 (1.06) | 3.26 (1.32) | 3.82 (0.91) | 3.55 (1.07) ^h | 3.56 (1.10) |
| Exploring an alternative scenario | 3.82 (0.82) | 3.42 (0.99) | 3.18 (1.07) ^d | 3.86 (1.33) | 3.12 (1.17) | 2.65 (0.92) ^g | 2.76 (0.87) ^h | 3.27 (1.13) |
| Offering the suspect sympathy | 3.26 (0.95) | 3.08 (0.86) | 2.85 (0.88) | 3.64 (0.80) | 2.54 (0.98) | 3.25 (0.80) | 3.18 (0.73) | 3.11 (0.90) |
| <i>Techniques used occasionally (2-to-3 scores)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Emphasizing the advantages of confessing | 2.40 (1.00) | 2.91 (0.94) | 3.12 (1.02) | 2.98 (1.34) | 1.81 (0.85) | 3.47 (0.99) | 3.20 (1.10) | 2.98 (1.13) |
| Confronting the suspect with consequences of not cooperating | 3.11 (0.86) | 3.25 (0.86) | 2.91 (1.21) | 2.43 (1.10) | 1.68 (0.81) | 3.59 (0.92) | 3.34 (1.20) | 2.95 (1.13) |
| Appealing to the suspect's conscience | 2.93 (0.79) | 3.02 (0.88) | 3.13 (0.97) ^d | 2.21 (0.99) | 1.96 (0.91) | 2.81 (0.95) | 2.65 (0.88) | 2.79 (1.00) |
| Expressing doubts about the suspect's innocence | 2.55 (0.90) | 2.81 (0.74) | 3.20 (0.82) ^c | 2.32 (0.85) | 2.37 (0.84) | 2.76 (1.01) | 2.54 (0.97) | 2.78 (0.92) |
| Making the suspect doubt his/her story | 2.38 (0.93) | 2.90 (0.92) | 2.41 (0.95) ^d | 1.70 (0.88) | 1.98 (1.01) | 3.22 (0.99) | 2.85 (1.06) | 2.48 (1.06) |
| Offering the suspect a way out | 1.77 (0.78) | 1.77 (0.84) | 2.78 (1.03) ^c | 0.00 (0.00) | 1.47 (0.89) | 3.02 (1.00) | 2.70 (0.96) | 2.45 (1.10) |
| Interrupting the suspect's denials | 2.15 (0.70) | 2.27 (0.82) | 2.33 (0.82) ^c | 1.72 (0.64) | 1.25 (0.58) | 2.67 (0.96) | 2.36 (0.91) ^h | 2.19 (0.88) |
| Offering the suspect moral justifications | 2.13 (0.95) | 2.60 (0.10) ^b | 1.93 (0.96) | 1.17 (0.41) | 1.72 (0.96) | 2.70 (0.92) ^g | 2.40 (0.93) | 2.05 (1.02) |
| Showing the suspect photographs of the victim | 2.04 (0.87) | 2.22 (0.96) ^b | 1.85 (0.92) ^c | 2.36 (0.93) | 2.07 (1.00) | 1.70 (0.91) | 2.03 (0.92) | 2.01 (0.95) |
| <i>Techniques used only rarely (1-to-2 scores)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Expressing frustration at the suspect | 1.81 (0.65) | 1.88 (0.68) | 2.17 (0.92) | 1.65 (0.64) | 1.63 (0.67) | 1.63 (0.70) | 1.70 (0.79) | 1.87 (0.80) |
| Discouraging interventions of the lawyer | 1.49 (0.78) | 1.75 (0.91) | 1.74 (0.84) ^e | 1.96 (1.14) | 2.09 (0.97) | 2.06 (1.02) ^g | 1.66 (0.84) | 1.81 (0.95) |
| Minimizing the seriousness of the offense | 1.75 (0.74) | 1.97 (0.85) | 1.37 (0.67) | 1.34 (0.56) | 1.30 (0.57) | 2.63 (1.04) | 2.21 (0.90) | 1.72 (0.89) |
| Expressing anger at the suspect | 1.81 (0.67) | 2.04 (0.76) | 1.82 (0.81) | 1.23 (0.43) | 1.44 (0.57) | 1.45 (0.65) | 1.34 (0.54) | 1.64 (0.74) |
| Pretending that there is evidence against the suspect | 2.25 (0.83) | 2.47 (0.97) | 1.11 (0.33) | 1.22 (0.50) | 1.14 (0.40) | 2.25 (0.92) | 2.00 (0.92) | 1.64 (0.88) |
| Appealing to the suspect's religion | 1.73 (0.84) | 1.57 (0.73) | 1.38 (0.70) ^c | 0.00 (0.00) | 1.05 (0.23) | 1.23 (0.62) | 1.29 (0.61) | 1.39 (0.70) |
| Confronting the suspect with false evidence | 1.36 (1.12) | 1.37 (0.97) | 1.09 (0.40) ^c | 1.21 (0.74) | 1.11 (0.59) | 1.54 (0.84) | 1.38 (0.78) | 1.26 (0.75) |
| Physically intimidating the suspect | 1.04 (0.19) ^a | 1.05 (0.21) | 1.04 (0.21) | 1.01 (0.11) | 1.00 (0.00) | 1.41 (0.64) | 1.31 (0.60) | 1.11 (0.36) |

Note. All techniques were rated on a 5-pt. Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always). ^a n = 83 ^b n = 129 ^c n = 320 ^d n = 319 ^e n = 316 ^f n = 56 ^g n = 125 ^h n = 88.

Table 10. Pearson correlations for the self-reported frequency of usage of the 27 techniques between countries.

| Country | Netherlands | Belgium | Germany | Norway | Sweden | Spain PN |
|----------|-------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|----------|
| Belgium | .956 | – | – | – | – | – |
| Germany | .891 | .894 | – | – | – | – |
| Norway | .711 | .799 | .669 | – | – | – |
| Sweden | .890 | .872 | .857 | .666 | – | – |
| Spain PN | .829 | .857 | .818 | .595 | .730 | – |
| Spain GC | .900 | .903 | .864 | .645 | .805 | .981 |

Note. All $ps < .001$, except for the correlation between Norway and Spain PN, with $p = .001$.

at suspects is uncommon, with reported usage typically between 1.23 and 2.04 for expressing anger and between 1.63 and 2.17 for expressing frustration. Techniques involving the presentation of false evidence, such as pretending that evidence exists, are also rarely employed. Mean scores range from 1.11 to 2.47 for these manipulative practices. Minimizing the seriousness of an offense, with mean scores ranging from 1.34 to 2.63, is generally uncommon, but reported most frequently in Spain (2.21 and 2.63).

Other rarely used techniques include emotional manipulation, such as appealing to a suspect's religion or offering moral justifications for their actions. These approaches have mean scores between 1.05 and 2.70. Overtly confrontational strategies, such as discouraging lawyer interventions or making suspects doubt their own accounts, are also infrequent. The use of such approaches varies, with mean scores ranging from 1.49 to 3.22.

Discussion

The current study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of police interrogation and interviewing practices in Europe. By synthesizing findings from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden, this study offers unique insights into the shared practices and cultural differences shaping interrogation processes across Europe.

Interrogation length, frequency, and recording practices

The findings highlight notable variability in the average duration and frequency of suspect interviews across Europe. On average, interviews lasted approximately 88 min, but significant differences were observed. The longest average interview times were reported in the Netherlands (i.e. 2 h and 32 min), potentially reflecting a more thorough approach to suspect questioning. Conversely, the shortest average time was reported in Spain PN (i.e. 53 min), which may indicate differences in procedural priorities or interrogation practices. The frequency of interviews averaged just over two per investigation across Europe. Compared to the United States, where interrogations average 96 min per session and occur approximately three times per investigation (Brimbal et al., 2024; Kassin et al., 2007), European practices appear to favor slightly shorter durations and fewer sessions overall.

The adoption of recording practices varied widely across European countries. On average, only 21% of the surveyed officers reported always recording their suspect interviews, with an additional 25% indicating that they recorded interviews only in specific cases. Norway stood out with 91% of officers always recording their interviews

– a figure far exceeding other countries. The next highest was the Netherlands, where just 31% of officers reported always recording interviews. Despite these disparities, 83% of European officers believed that suspect interviews should be either video or audio recorded. These findings align with trends observed in the United States, where recording practices have expanded considerably. The proportion of agencies requiring the recording of interrogations increased from 16% in 2007 to 78% in 2024 (Brimbal et al., 2024). This shift highlights a growing recognition of the importance of recording interviews to enhance transparency and protect both suspects and investigators.

The primary goals of interrogations also differed across countries. Dutch, Belgian, and German officers were more likely to prioritize ‘obtaining the truth’, whereas officers in Norway, Sweden, and Spain emphasized ‘gathering accurate information’. Although these goals may seem similar, they reflect distinct orientations in investigative practice (Vanderhallen et al., 2022). ‘Obtaining the truth’ can imply that the interviewer assumes a single, knowable version of events and that it is possible to recognize when this truth is revealed. In contrast, ‘gathering accurate information’ reflects a process-oriented goal that prioritizes the collection of verifiable, testable, and reliable details, regardless of whether they confirm or contradict investigative hypotheses. This latter goal is more consistent with the information-gathering approach. Overall, these distinctions illustrate how European countries increasingly adopt information-gathering models that focus on eliciting reliable information over securing confessions. In contrast, North American interrogation practices have historically been more confession-focused, as exemplified by the guilt-presumptive Reid Technique (Leo, 2008).

Suspects’ rights

The findings reveal significant variability across European countries in how suspects exercise their right to silence. In Spain, officers estimated that approximately 80% of suspects fully invoke their right to remain silent, the highest rate reported among the surveyed countries. In contrast, Norway and Belgium reported much lower estimates, with only 11-14% of suspects exercising their right to silence. These variations may reflect differences in legal culture, procedural safeguards, and how rights are communicated to suspects. For instance, the high invocation rate in Spain may be influenced by the structure of their legal system, which emphasizes the protection of suspects’ rights through mandatory legal assistance (Salduz ruling). Spanish attorneys meet their clients prior to the police interview and typically advise their clients to adhere to their right to silence (see Schell-Leugers et al., 2023). In comparison, studies from the United States indicate a starkly different trend: approximately 80% of suspects waive their *Miranda* rights, choosing to forgo their right to silence and legal counsel (Kassin & Norwick, 2004; Moore & Gagnier, 2008). This high number likely stems from suspects perceiving silence as an admission of guilt and fearing that invoking their rights may intensify suspicion or impede their ability to assert their innocence effectively (Lawrence et al., 2024). Additionally, the *Miranda* warning system in the U.S. requires suspects to actively assert their rights, placing the burden on individuals to protect themselves. In contrast, many European systems offer stronger procedural safeguards, ensuring suspects are not only informed of their rights but also supported in exercising them (e.g. in Spain, legal assistance is mandatory). Furthermore, the collaborative nature of investigative frameworks in

European countries potentially encourages suspects to engage more openly with investigators.

Moreover, officers across countries often associated silence with guilt, though this tendency was less pronounced (though still strong) in Norway. This tendency aligns with findings from North American studies (e.g. Lawrence et al., 2024; Snow et al., 2024). Although commonly held, the belief that silence is probative of guilt would risk undermining the multitude of reasons for remaining silent by guilty and innocent suspects alike (Gudjonsson, 2023; Kassin et al., 2003). Therefore, the observed patterns underscore the need for further research into how rights are upheld and perceived across jurisdictions, particularly given the emphasis on procedural safeguards in the Letter of Rights and Méndez Principles. Ensuring that suspects are informed and empowered to exercise their rights remains a cornerstone of fair investigative practices.

Deception detection

Despite empirical evidence showing truth-lie discrimination accuracy from behavioral cues hovers around chance levels (54%; Bond & DePaulo, 2006), European officers' self-reported accuracy was markedly higher at 70%. At 55%, Norwegian officers reported the most realistic assessment of their deception detection abilities compared to their European counterparts, most of whom significantly overestimated their skills (ranging between 65% and 81%). This pattern mirrors findings from the U.S., where officers reported similar overconfidence, estimating their accuracy at 77% (Kassin et al., 2007) and 74% (Brimbal et al., 2024).

Overconfidence in deception detection skills introduces the risk of biases in investigative decision-making, particularly when officers rely on subjective impressions over evidence-based methods. Most European officers (80.3%) believed their deception detection abilities were unaffected by whether a suspect was confessing or denying. However, research suggests otherwise: innocent suspects who deny involvement are often perceived as deceptive, triggering confrontational and guilt-presumptive questioning (Kassin et al., 2003). These adversarial interactions heighten the risk of false confessions and wrongful convictions.

Although European and U.S. officers share a tendency to overestimate their deception detection abilities,⁶ Europe's broader adoption of ethical, information-gathering frameworks provides an advantage in addressing these biases. Training programs emphasizing evidence-based methods, such as verbal content analysis and strategic questioning (Driskell, 2012; Hauch et al., 2016; Meissner & Lyles, 2019), could further reduce reliance on intuition, fostering more systematic and reliable credibility assessments.

Rates of true and false confessions

On average, European police officers estimated that 45.56% of suspects confessed during interrogations, with significant variation between countries. The highest confession rates were reported in the Netherlands and Belgium, where over half of suspects confessed (57.3% and 58.5%, respectively). These figures significantly exceed estimates from countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Spain. However, the European averages

remain lower than those reported in North America, where approximately 66% of suspects are estimated to confess (Brimbal et al., 2024; Kassin et al., 2007). These differences may reflect contrasting interrogation strategies: North American law enforcement often employs confession-focused methods like the Reid Technique, while many European countries increasingly adopt information-gathering approaches, such as the PEACE model. Additionally, procedural safeguards in Europe, such as the Salduz ruling requiring legal counsel during interrogations, may reduce suspects' likelihood of confessing.

Regarding false confessions, 56.7% of European officers reported encountering at least one during their careers, with an average of 13.38 false confessions reported per officer. Most false confessions (79.92%) were classified as voluntary, with significant variation across countries. Comparatively, U.S. data show a stark increase in the estimated rate of false confessions, rising from 4.8% in Kassin et al. (2007) to 26.2% in Brimbal et al. (2024). The higher awareness of false confessions among European officers may be attributed to legal safeguards and training programs emphasizing ethical practices. However, the predominance of voluntary false confessions raises questions about suspects' motivations and their interpretation of interrogation pressures, underscoring the need for further research and tailored training to address these issues.

Interrogation techniques

When compared to the U.S., European practices align closely with the emerging trends highlighted in Brimbal et al. (2024), though significant contrasts remain. Historically, Kassin et al. (2007) documented a higher prevalence of coercive tactics in the U.S., such as presenting false evidence, minimizing the seriousness of the offense, and appealing to suspects' conscience. Brimbal et al. (2024), however, indicate a shift in the U.S. toward more ethical and evidence-based methods, a development further corroborated by recent comprehensive reviews (Kassin et al., 2025; Kelly & Redlich, 2026).

Consistent with the principles of investigative interviewing, European investigators predominantly reported employing respectful, patient, and rapport-building strategies, demonstrating alignment with the ethical, non-coercive practices emphasized in the investigative interviewing framework. Techniques such as treating suspects with respect and being patient were commonly reported across countries, reflecting a commitment to fostering a conducive environment for accurate information gathering. Evidence-based strategies, including strategic disclosure of evidence and confronting suspects with actual evidence, were also widely employed. Cognitive interviewing principles, such as stimulating free recall, stood out in certain countries like Sweden and Belgium, underscoring the influence of training programs designed to enhance memory retrieval and the accuracy of suspect statements.

Conversely, coercive, aggressive, and manipulative techniques were reported infrequently, aligning with the principles of investigative interviewing and legal safeguards like the Méndez Principles and the Salduz ruling. While some variation was noted – for example, slightly higher usage of manipulative strategies in Spain and Belgium – the overall low prevalence of such techniques reinforces the adherence of European investigators to non-coercive, evidence-based methodologies.

Limitations

This study was not without limitations. First, as we relied on self-report data, officers' responses may have been influenced by social desirability bias or inaccurate recollections, potentially leading to a misestimation of certain skills or practices. Additionally, participation was voluntary, meaning those who chose to take part may have held different attitudes toward investigative interviewing than those who declined, which could lead to an overrepresentation of certain perspectives. Furthermore, the generalizability of results is also contingent on the representativeness of each country's subsample. For example, the Flemish sample may not be optimally representative as data from German- and French-speaking Flemish officers was collected later and therefore not included in the present comparison.

Additionally, some countries (i.e. Sweden) had substantially smaller participant pools, which may not fully capture national practices and reduce statistical power in post-hoc comparisons. Moreover, variation in legal and procedural contexts across countries presents a challenge for direct comparability. Differences in interrogation traditions, procedural safeguards, and legal requirements mean that reported variations may reflect structural differences rather than fundamental distinctions in investigative approaches. Lastly, question interpretation across languages and cultures could have influenced response accuracy, as officers from different legal systems may have understood survey questions in ways shaped by their procedural norms. However, we believe that despite these limitations, this study provides one of the most comprehensive cross-national examinations of European police interviewing and interrogation methods to date.

Conclusions

This study highlights key trends and variations in European police interrogation and interviewing practices, demonstrating a strong alignment with the principles of the information-gathering approach. By emphasizing ethical, evidence-based, and rapport-building strategies, European investigators show a clear commitment to fostering reliable information collection while safeguarding suspects' rights. However, the findings reveal important areas for improvement, including the need to standardize recording practices, enhance training on evidence-based deception detection methods, and address biases such as overconfidence and the misinterpretation of silence. Despite notable variations between countries, the overarching trend reflects a progressive adoption of the investigative interviewing model across Europe, prioritizing fairness, accuracy, and the prevention of false confessions.

Notes

1. Responses obtained from Spanish police officers were separated in two groups: *Guardia Civil* (hereafter 'GC') and *Policía Nacional* (hereafter 'PN').
2. Responses were labeled as outliers if computed z-scores were greater than three. If a z-score was over three but with a reasonable explanation (e.g. 40 years of experience working in law enforcement for a respondent who indicated being 60 years old), the response was not omitted.

3. Following Kassin et al. (2007), police officers from Germany, Sweden, and Norway were asked to estimate the percentage of suspects who make use their right to legal counsel at the police station, and what percentage of suspects who make use of this right they believed to be guilty/innocent. However, in the Netherlands and Belgium, suspects additionally have the right to receive legal assistance *prior to* being questioned by police, as determined by the *Salduz* act. Consequently, Dutch and Flemish investigators were asked about legal assistance prior to (*consultatiebijstand*) and during police questioning (*verhoorbijstand*) separately. In Spain, legal counsel is mandatory (except for traffic offenses); therefore, this question was not included in the Spanish survey. For more information on country specific adaptations, the individual country publications can be consulted.
4. Country specific recruitment procedures can be found in the individual publications per country.
5. Please note that for Belgium only the data from the Flemish police is included since the data from the German and French speaking police officers was collected later. All data can be found in the individual country specific publications.
6. The European police estimations were compared to Bond and DePaulo's (2006) meta-analytical estimates. Note, however, that while Bond and DePaulo's findings refer to deception detection from passive observation of behavioral cues alone, officers may also have had other aspects in mind in responding to the survey, such as strategic questioning and nonbehavioral deception indicators (such as evidence, third-party information, etc.). Strategic questioning and nonbehavioral indicators increase accuracy compared to fallible behavioral cues (e.g. Levine, 2015; Vrij & Granhag, 2012).

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Ethical approval

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee Inner City faculties (ERCIC) of Maastricht University in the Netherlands under approval number ERCIC_051_19_10_2017. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to inclusion in the study, and their privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process.

AI disclosure statement

This manuscript was prepared with the assistance of ChatGPT-4 (OpenAI, Version February 2024) for specific tasks related to language refinement, clarity improvements, and formatting guidance. All substantive intellectual contributions, research interpretations, and conclusions remain the sole work of the authors.

Data availability statement

The data used in this study were collected from law enforcement agencies under strict confidentiality agreements. Due to legal and ethical restrictions, the data cannot be publicly shared.

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