

Criminal Victimization and Victim Services across the World : Results and Prospects of the International Crime Victims Survey

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Abstract: *The International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) has to date been carried out in seventy countries among samples of over 1,000 citizens. The surveys collected information on crime directly from citizens, and independently from official records. On average, 28% of citizens living in urban areas had been victimized at least once in a conventional crime during the preceding 12 months. Victimization rates in Africa and Latin America were significantly higher still (35% and 46% respectively). Only a part of the victimizations had been reported to the police. Especially in developing countries the majority of victims refrain from reporting from a lack of confidence in the professionalism or integrity of the police. Worldwide, less than half of those who do report are satisfied with their treatment by the police. Very few victims who report to the police had received support from a victim support organization (7% of all victims of contact crime). Results revealed the pervasiveness of victimizations in crimes across the world and the gross inadequacy of official responses almost everywhere. The ICVS will continue to be conducted in countries across the world in the coming years. The surveys can help to raise awareness of the need to better protect citizens against threats to their personal security and to respect their human rights.*

In most countries public opinion is informed about the level and trends of crime through reports based on data from police administrations on recorded crimes. As we all know, not all crimes are reported to or noticed by the police and not all reported crime is accurately recorded. Therefore, police data cannot confidently be

used as a measure of crime. Public debates on crime problems are often based on statistical information of dubious validity.

Police data on recorded crimes are even less useful in comparing levels or trends of crime across countries. Reporting rates vary widely between countries. In countries where people have little confidence in the police, fewer victims report their experiences of crime to the police. On top of this, legal definitions of types of crime as well as recording practices of the police vary across countries. For these reasons, police figures cannot be reliably used for a comparative assessment of crime problems from an international perspective. There is general consensus among criminologists about this.

Over the past three decades more and more countries have started to conduct sample surveys among the general population on experiences with crime as an alternative source of information about crime. Such victimization surveys provide important additional information on crime as experienced by the public, rates of reporting crimes to the police, experiences of victims with the police, fear of crime and crime prevention measures. Initially, victim surveys were mainly confined to the developed countries, where their diffusion was relatively rapid and becoming more focused and regular. Several countries are regularly collecting information through such surveys, for example the Dutch and British Crime Surveys and the National Crime Victimization Survey in the USA. Surveys of this type are still less common in the developing world, partly because of their cost and partly because undemocratic governments are reluctant to allow the collection of information on security issues.

National crime surveys have yielded important results and have had a lasting impact on crime prevention and criminal justice policy. The availability of survey data on crime has strengthened the knowledge base of these policies and has helped to put the public debate on crime on a sounder empirical footing. Very importantly, victim surveys bring to the foreground the experiences of individual victims, both in respect of the actual event and, if the case is reported, the nature of the police's response. Partly in response to these surveys crime prevention and criminal justice policies in many countries have become more victim-centered.

By developing the methodology needed for crime surveys, victimology has broadened and deepened the empirical basis of criminological knowledge. The essence of the surveys is that crime is not studied from the perspective of state agencies with their own vested interests but from that of ordinary citizens. The surveys measure crime not as defined and recorded by the police but as experienced and recollected by individual citizens. They also provide information about the satisfaction of citizens with the performance of state agencies.

Crime victim surveys can be seen as an early operationalization of the concept of human security. In its final report *Human Security Now, Protecting and Empowering People*, the Commission on Human Security, chaired by Mrs. Ogata, former High Commissioner for Refugees, has defined human security as protection against threats to the vital areas of all human lives (Ogata 2003). Criminal victimizations can be regarded as one of the most important realms of human security.

Crime survey data provide a powerful, people-centered alternative to what the police themselves record. If the research methodology used is standardized, the surveys also offer a new opportunity for the collection of crime statistics, which can be used for comparative purposes. This will allow crime problems to be analyzed from a global perspective. The International Crime Survey (ICVS) was initiated in 1987 by the first author with this aim in mind. The main objectives of the ICVS include :

- providing comparative indicators of crime and victimization risks, as well as indicators of perception of crime and fear of crime, performance of law enforcement, victim assistance and crime prevention from as many countries as possible ;
- promoting crime surveys as an innovative policy tool at the international, national and local levels, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition ; and
- promoting international cooperation in crime prevention by providing an opportunity for experts from a large number of countries to share experiences through participation in a well-coordinated international project.

The ICVS shares with national crime surveys the objective of measuring crime beyond the information provided by police statistics. Indeed, one of the most important assets of the ICVS is its ability to measure the quantity of crime that is not reported to the police. The study has over the years developed into the most advanced survey instrument for measuring the extent, nature, and responses to conventional crime across different societies (Block 1993; Lynch 1993).

OVERVIEW OF THE ICVS 1989-2002

The ICVS was carried out for the first time in fourteen industrialized countries in 1989 at the initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Justice (van Dijk, Mayhew and Killias 1990). Subsequently in 1992, the United Nations Interregional Criminal Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) joined the collaborative effort. A special questionnaire for face-to-face interviews was developed to allow for the participation of countries in which telephone interviews would not have been feasible at the time. By doing so, it was possible to carry out standardized surveys on crime in a number of countries where no such surveys had ever been conducted and from which very little reliable information on crime was available.

The first ICVS took place in 1989, the second in 1992, the third in 1996, and the fourth in 2000. The fourth ICVS included 17 national surveys, and 31 city surveys, namely 16 in capital cities in Eastern-Central Europe, four in Asia, seven in Africa and four in Latin America. Since its initiation, surveys have been carried out in 24 industrialized countries altogether and in 46 cities in developing countries and countries in transition (van Kesteren, Mayhew and Nieuwbeerta 2000). Over 250,000 citizens have been interviewed in the course of the ICVS. This process has resulted in a body of victim survey data across a variety of countries, unmatched by any other data set (Kury 2001).

Table 1. Countries that have participated in the ICVS at least once, 1989-2002 and participants in the 2000 surveys

Region	Country	Survey Type ^a	Region	Country	Survey Type ^a
Africa	<i>Botswana</i>	c	Western Europe	<i>Austria</i>	n
	<i>Egypt</i>	c		<i>Belgium</i>	n
	<i>Lesotho</i>	c		<i>Denmark</i>	n
	<i>Mozambique</i>	c		<i>England & Wales</i>	n
	<i>Namibia</i>	c		<i>Finland</i>	n
	<i>Nigeria</i>	c		<i>France</i>	n
	<i>South Africa</i>	c		<i>Germany (West)</i>	n
	<i>Swaziland</i>	c		<i>Italy</i>	n
	<i>Tanzania</i>	c		<i>Malta</i>	n
	<i>Tunisia</i>	c		<i>Netherlands</i>	n
	<i>Uganda</i>	c		<i>Northern Ireland</i>	n
	<i>Zambia</i>	c		<i>Norway</i>	n
	<i>Zimbabwe</i>	c		<i>Portugal</i>	n
Asia	<i>Azerbaijan</i>	c		<i>Scotland</i>	n
	<i>China</i>	c		<i>Spain^a</i>	n+c
	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	c		<i>Sweden</i>	n
	<i>India</i>	c		<i>Switzerland</i>	n
	<i>Indonesia</i>	c	Eastern-Central Europe	<i>Albania</i>	c
	<i>Japan</i>	n		<i>Belarus</i>	c
	<i>Cambodia</i>	c		<i>Bulgaria</i>	c
	<i>Korea</i>	c		<i>Croatia</i>	c
	<i>Mongolia</i>	c		<i>Czech Republic</i>	c
	<i>The Philippines</i>	c		<i>Estonia</i>	c
	<i>Papua New Guinea</i>	c		<i>Georgia</i>	c
Latin America	<i>Argentina</i>	c		<i>Hungary</i>	c
	<i>Bolivia</i>	c		<i>Latvia</i>	c
	<i>Brazil</i>	c		<i>Lithuania</i>	c
	<i>Colombia</i>	c		<i>Macedonia</i>	c
	<i>Costa Rica</i>	c	<i>Poland</i>	n+c	
	<i>Panama</i>	c	<i>Romania</i>	c	
	<i>Paraguay</i>	c	<i>Russia</i>	c	
North America	<i>Canada</i>	n	<i>Serbia/Montenegro</i>	c	
	<i>United States</i>	n	<i>Slovak Republic</i>	c	
Oceania	<i>Australia</i>	n	<i>Slovenia</i>	c	
	<i>New Zealand</i>	n	<i>Ukraine</i>	c	

Note : The regional breakdown used in the ICVS is only meant to be an approximate grouping of countries geographically close and probably sharing some cultural values. Countries within each region may show major differences in relevant features such as GDP and Human Development Index (HDI). Legend : c = city surveys ; n = national surveys ; countries in *italics* took part in the ICVS 2000.

a. Only the region of Catalonia participated in the ICVS 2000.

METHODOLOGY

The ICVS targets samples of households in which only one respondent is selected aged 16 or above. National samples include at least 2,000 respondents who are generally interviewed with the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) technique. In the countries where this method is not applicable because of insufficient distribution of telephones, face-to-face interviews are conducted in major cities, generally with samples of 1,000 to 1,500 respondents.

The questionnaire includes sections on 11 types of "conventional" crime, of which each question provides a standard definition.¹ Furthermore, questions on consumer fraud and corruption are included, also accompanied by standard definitions. The questionnaire also explores whether crimes were reported to the police, reasons for not reporting, attitudes toward the police, fear of crime, and crime prevention measures.

Among the 11 "conventional" crimes, some are "household crimes," that is, those which can be seen as affecting the household at large, and respondents report on all incidents known to them. A first group of crimes deals with the vehicles owned by the respondent or his or her household :

- Theft of car,
- Theft from car,
- Car vandalism,
- Theft of bicycle,
- Theft of motorcycle.

A second group refers to breaking and entering :

- Burglary,
- Attempted burglary.

A third group of crimes refers to victimization experienced personally by the respondent :

- Robbery,
- Theft of personal property,
- Assault/threat,

- Sexual incidents (women only).

The questionnaire finally addresses two more types of crime that may have been experienced by the respondents :

- Consumer fraud,
- Bribery/corruption.

The ICVS provides an overall measure of victimization in the previous year by any of the 11 “conventional” crimes included in the questionnaire (thus excluding consumer fraud and corruption). As stated, it tries to measure crime independently of police administrative records. Indeed, one of the most important findings of the ICVS deals with the possibility of respondents to explain reasons for non-reporting of crimes, thus, providing comparative information on why police statistics often do not reflect the full crime picture. Those who have reported the victimization to the police are asked to assess the way the police has handled their report. Furthermore, all respondents are asked to assess the performance of the police in preventing and controlling crime in their areas and their use of common crime prevention measures.

MAJOR FINDINGS ON LEVELS OF CRIME

The ICVS 2000 shows that on average, approximately 28% of citizens living in urban areas suffered at least one form of victimization over the twelve months preceding the interview. Overall victimization around 27% was observed in five out of seven regions of the world (Western Europe, Eastern-Central Europe, North America, Australia and Asia), while in Africa and Latin America much higher levels of victimization were observed (35% and 46% respectively).

Globally, over a five-year period, two out of three inhabitants of big cities were victimized by crime at least once. Criminal victimization has become a statistically normal feature of urban life across the world.

Unlike the rates of police statistics, the prevalence rates presented here are not affected by differences in reporting or police recording.

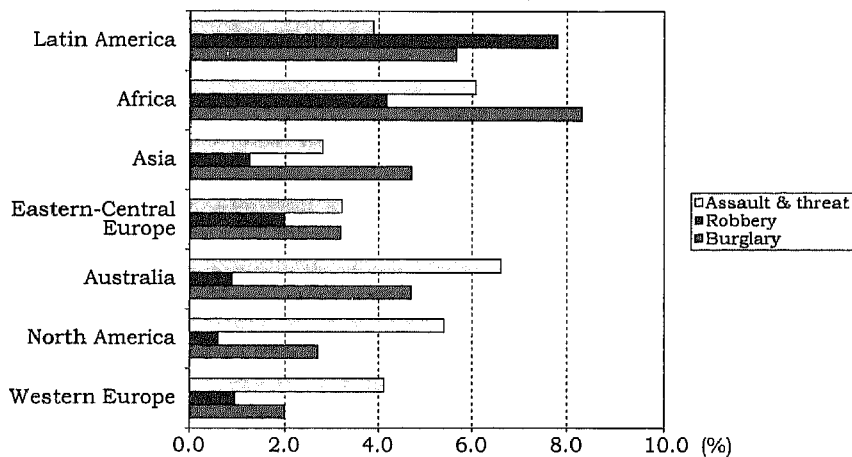
Although the estimated rates are subject to sampling error, the relative positions of regions and countries are likely to reflect true differences in the level of crime as experienced by citizens.

Figure 1 shows regional distribution of one year victimization rates for burglaries, robberies and assaults and threats as observed in the ICVS. The differences among the regions were larger for the two crimes involving property, which were highest in Africa and Latin America. Burglary in Africa was four times more frequent than in Western Europe. Robbery in Latin America was eight times higher than in Western Europe, North America and Australia.

The data in respect of robbery confirm the general concern about an upsurge in urban violence in several main cities in Latin America and Africa, including some of the newly established democracies (Shaw, van Dijk and Rhomberg 2003).

The ICVS defines burglary as house-breaking for purposes of theft. It is a crime against the household that may either occur against very secure or poorly protected residences. While in the industrialized world burglars frequently steal objects of a very high value, such as jewelry or hi-fi equipment, burglary in developing

Figure 1. Victimization rates by burglary, robbery and assault/threat in the course of one year



Source: ICVS, 2000

countries is often aimed at stealing food, house appliances, linen or cutlery. In the regions where households have installed various levels of protection against burglary, such incidents involve more damage to doors, locks or windows. The ICVS shows this to occur more frequently in Western Europe, North America and Australia. Interestingly, Africa also shows high levels of damage during incidents of burglary.

The consequences of burglary in terms of monetary value may be very different in different contexts, although its seriousness is generally considered very high since it is a violation of the domestic sphere. It is, therefore, a crime that is well remembered by survey respondents and provides a reliable indicator of property crime.

Robbery is defined as theft from the person by use of force, involving direct contact between victim and offender ("contact" crime). The crime category of assault and threat is defined in the ICVS as personal aggression, either by a stranger or a relative or friend, without the purpose of stealing. It is another "contact" crime and although physical consequences may be minor in most cases, it may well have important emotional repercussions for victims. Assaults on women are more likely to be domestic in nature than assaults on men. In a third of the cases of violence against women, the offender was known at least by name to the victim. In one of five of the cases the crime was committed in the victim's own house.

As mentioned previously, rates of assault/threat showed smaller variations among regions. They were lowest in Eastern-Central Europe and Asia and highest in Africa, North America and Australia. Data on threats and assaults from crime surveys reflect levels of everyday violence, often involving intimate partners, neighbors, and recreational situations fuelled by alcohol. Instances of lethal violence are not adequately measured by surveys and may well show a different distribution. Homicide is known to be the most prevalent in African and Latin American cities and in the countries of Eastern Europe (WHO 2002 ; Shaw et al. 2003).

The level of violent crime as measured by the ICVS is the lowest in Asian cities, in line with common perceptions. Nevertheless, a breakdown of victimization experiences by gender reveals interesting differ-

ences across regions. In all regions men are more often victimized by violence. When victimization by sexual violence is added to the equation a different picture emerges. In Europe and North America, men and women are approximately at equal risk of being victimized by violent crime, including sexual violence. In other regions, female victimization by violence is more common than male victimization if sexual violence is included. In Asia, women are twice as likely as men to be victimized by violence, including sexual violence. The notion of high personal security in Asian cities clearly needs qualification in terms of gender. For the female population in Asia, life is not necessarily safer than for those living in Europe (van Dijk et al. 1999).

IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTI-CRIME POLICIES

Although victimization by many types of crime, especially thefts of cars and other luxury goods, is fairly common in developing countries—rates of car theft are the highest in West European countries, North America and Australia—overall victimization by crime tends to be more prevalent in the poorer regions of the world. Previous analysis by using the ICVS data at the aggregate level showed a negative correlation between country scores on the Human Development Index and victimization rates for property crime (Alvazzi del Frate 1998). The ICVS 2000 data confirm that levels of victimization by most types of crime are more pronounced in developing countries than in the more affluent parts of the world. Due to lack of insurance and other coping resources, the impact of victimization upon citizens is more severe as well. At the macro level, then, the burden of crime rests most heavily on the citizens of the third world. In fact, with victimization rates in North America and Europe stabilizing or decreasing and such rates still continuing to rise in many countries in Latin America and Africa, a distinct “security divide” between the North and the South has come into being. This “divide” which may well become even more pronounced in the years to come since countries most affected by crime seem often least equipped to bring it under control (van Dijk 2003).

The ICVS results confirm conventional criminological thinking about the importance of human development for the prevention of serious crime. Poverty, unemployment and inequality are clearly linked to levels of crime. For many developing countries the nexus of lawlessness and poverty seems a self-perpetuating phenomenon. Safety problems in major urban areas in developing countries are not only a result of low economic growth and of under-funded state agencies. Internal security problems are at the same time a factor inhibiting economic development, for example, by deterring foreign investments. A sufficient level of personal security should not only be seen as an aspect of quality of life but as a prerequisite for sustainable human development. The skewed distribution of criminal victimization, as revealed by the ICVS, should persuade governments and international cooperation agencies to give more attention to the promotion of citizens' safety through better crime prevention and strengthening of the rule of law.

Two more specific policy implications must be made here. One of the most promising approaches to the prevention of serious violent crime is stricter control of gun ownership (Killias 1993). Where guns are more readily available, gun-related violence is more prevalent. In some countries the level of gun ownership is gradually going up rather than down. These trends are a cause of grave concern to the governments of countries where gun ownership is traditionally low such as Japan and the Netherlands. A global action plan for stricter control of hand guns and other small arms seems to be called for.

In relation to violence against women, continued attention to the social emancipation of women is an obvious priority and should remain high on the agenda of the United Nations. Violence against women is a universal evil, closely related to their status in society (Alvazzi del Frate and Patrignani 1995; WHO 2002). In many Western countries violence against women remains a major problem, in spite of improvements in the status of women (Kangaspunta, Joutsen and Ollus 1998). In all regions the existing norms tolerating violence as an instrument of controlling women in intimate relationships should be officially combated through information campaigns and stringent law enforcement and prosecution.

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT : POLICE RESPONSES AND VICTIM SUPPORT

Modern criminal justice systems have traditionally focused on the investigation of criminal cases and the prosecution, sentencing and punishment of offenders. More recently, criminal justice agencies in more and more countries have set themselves the task of rendering services to crime victims as an independent goal. Many other governmental and voluntary organizations have also improved their provision of services to crime victims. International standards for these services were formulated in the Declaration on the Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1985.

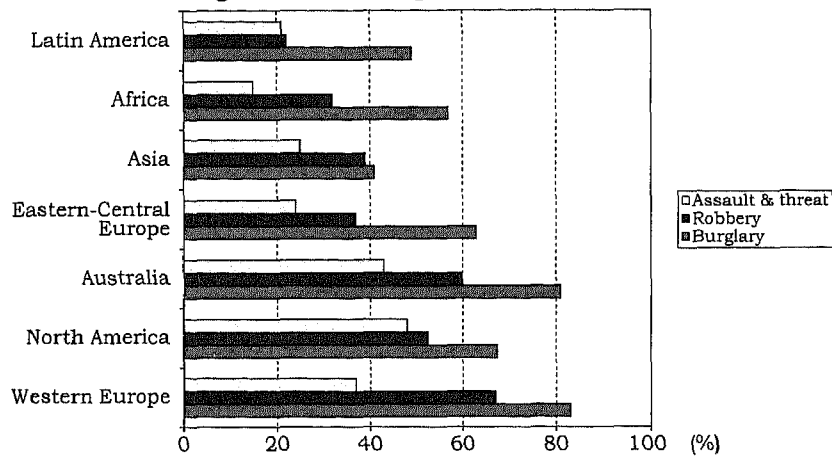
By satisfactorily addressing the needs of victims that arise from their victimization, state agencies can offer effective redress to those they have failed to protect. The recognition and practical and emotional support given by police and other criminal justice personnel helps victims to cope better with the consequences of their victimization and to regain confidence in the rule of law and human solidarity.

For most crime victims the police are the first and foremost agency with which they come into contact. Impressions of police reception are often decisive for victim appreciation of the state's response to their victimization. In the ICVS, several questions deal with the interactions of the victims with the police. This part of the paper presents an overview of the main findings.

Reporting to the Police

The ICVS shows that victims in Western Europe, North America and Australia are more likely to report their victimization to the police than those in other regions (Figure 2). The picture of regional reporting rates is the reverse of that of victimization rates. In the regions where more crimes occur, fewer of those crimes are reported to the police. This general pattern introduces a fatal flaw into international police figures of crime by systematically deflating crime in developing countries. Regional levels of reporting did not show any significant changes since previous analysis of the ICVS 1996 results.

Figure 2. Crimes reported to the police



In general, burglary is the most frequently reported crime (apart from car theft, which that is almost universally reported). Burglary was most frequently reported in Western Europe, North America and Australia. Important factors determining reporting are insurance coverage (the requirement for making a claim for compensation being dependent on reporting the incident to the police) and the ease of reporting (determined by factors such as access to the local police, availability of telephones, etc.).

Robbery was also frequently reported in Western Europe, but much less in the remaining regions, with a minimum in Latin America, where only one victim of robbery out of five reported to the police. In places where robberies are rampant, victims are less likely to report them. In the case of robberies, reporting seems to be dependent on confidence in the police. Those refraining from reporting often have no trust in their local police. This is supported by the finding that more than 50% of the Latin American victims of robbery who did not report to the police said they did so because "the police would not do anything," and approximately 25% said that they feared or disliked the police.

Finally, assault/threat was the least frequently reported crime. Globally less than half of violence victims report to the police. Less

than one in three of the female victims of threat/assault had filed a complaint with the police. Reporting rates are again lowest in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia (one in five). As a general rule, the most vulnerable categories of victims such as women in developing countries are the least likely to seek assistance from the police.

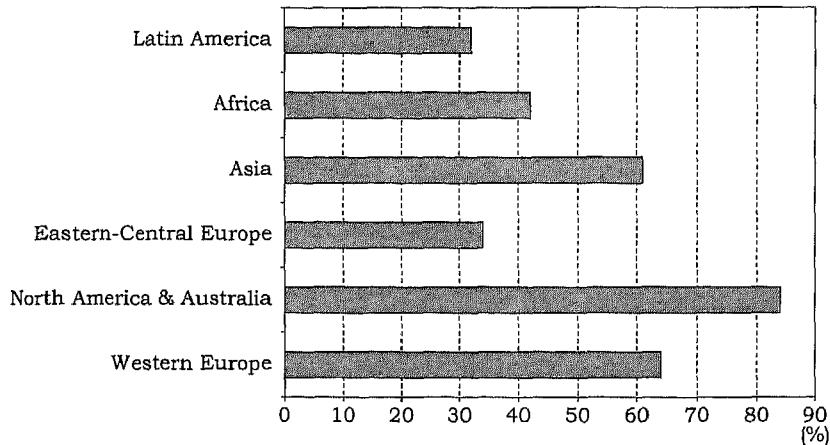
Victim satisfaction and trust levels

Among those who reported, less than half were satisfied with the way the police dealt with their case. Those least satisfied were the respondents from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central-Eastern Europe. On the other hand, in Western Europe and North America and Australia more than 60% of victims who reported to the police positively evaluated the treatment received. In most parts of the world police agencies fail dismally to meet the expectations of citizens reporting criminal victimizations. The most common reasons for dissatisfaction were that the police “did not do enough,” or “were not interested.” Roughly one in five victims was unhappy that the police had not kept them sufficiently informed. Around 10% said the police had been impolite or incorrect. This reason was given most often by victims of violence against women, especially by those from Latin America.

A special section of the ICVS deals with the assessment of police performance by respondents. The results confirm that respondents in Latin America, Eastern-Central Europe and Africa show a poor appreciation of police efforts in preventing and controlling local crime. Percentages of respondents satisfied with the job that the police were doing were much lower in these regions (Figure 3). The results suggest that in many developing countries the public remains skeptical about the capacity of the police to control local crime.

A correlation was observed between the levels of satisfaction with the police and the rates of reporting to the police for the various types of crime. In the case of assault/threat, which is the least reported type of crime, the correlation is relatively high ($r=0.47$, $n=47$). It appears, therefore, that a favorable perception of police

Figure 3. Satisfaction with the police in controlling crime



Note: "Taking everything into account, how good do you think the police in your area are at controlling crime? Do you think they do a very good job, a fairly good job, a fairly poor job or a very poor job?" The table shows percentages for "very good" and "fairly good" answers.

performance increases public cooperation with the police and drives up police figures of recorded crime.

Ironically, low levels of police recorded crime in a country should not be seen as a good sign. Rather than as evidence for low levels of crime, low police figures may actually point to poor performance of the police and a resulting low trust level among the public, limiting the proportion of crimes reported to the police.

Victim support services

Victims of more serious crimes who had reported to the police were specifically asked whether they had received support from a specialized agency. In most countries few victims had received such help. The figures are variable across offense type. Of those who reported burglaries to the police, 4% had received help. The level of support was the highest in the Western European countries, especially in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Of all victims of contact crimes (Contact crimes here include robberies, sexual assaults and assaults) who reported to the police,

7% had been given such help. The highest rates were in the North America, Australia and Western Europe. In these region levels of support for victims of violence have gone up over the past years. In all other countries, equal or even lower percentages of such victims had been clients of victim support schemes.

Approximately 16% of women victims of sexual offenses who had reported to the police received specialized support in North America, Western Europe and Africa. Elsewhere the percentages were lower. In all regions a relatively low percentage of male victims (4%) of assaults had received specialized help.

Victims who had not received help from a specialized agency were asked if they would have appreciated help in getting information, or practical or emotional support. Two-thirds of victims of serious crimes who had reported to the police indicated they had unmet needs. Levels of demand were highest in Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Globally three out of four victims of violence against women, including sexual violence, reported they would have appreciated help. There is obviously a huge gap between the need for help and its actual provision.

Although no mention was made of financial support, some victims might have understood it as such. This could help to explain why support is most often wanted in countries where few victims are covered by insurance. Financial considerations, however, do not prevail. Many victims would like to receive other types of support.

REPORT VICTIMIZATION AND VICTIM ALIENATION

Analyses of the ICVS data have confirmed that many victims of crime are re-victimized by the same type of crime within the same year and often even within weeks or months after their first victimization. Globally, more than 40% of those victimized by any crime are re-victimized the same year at least once (van Dijk 2000). The rates of repeat victimization are the highest for minor car-related crimes and for sexual and other violent offenses which often show a cyclical pattern. Repeat victimization is not uncommon for burglaries and

robberies either. One in every five victims of such crimes is re-victimized within a 12-month period.

Our results on repeat victims indicate that repeat victims, even more than other victims, feel neglected by the police. Repeat victims of both property and violent offenses are often in urgent need of protection against the criminal activities of known offenders. If they report, they are especially likely to be dissatisfied with the services delivered. In many cases the police apparently fail to offer the protection needed. Many repeat victims have no confidence in the usefulness of the police and refrain from reporting when victimized again.

This lack of police services for repeat victims are wasted opportunities of successful crime prevention and detection. For the citizens involved, these negative experiences have an alienating effect. Many repeat victims express a distinct lack of confidence in their local police. Since they tend to be more fearful of crime and often live in socially less integrated neighborhoods, repeat victims are in danger of losing their trust in institutions and the community in general as well as their respect for the law.

In this context, attention should be given to the outcome of an evaluation of the effects of a better treatment of victims by the police, the prosecutors and the courts (Wemmers 1995). The results of a carefully designed experiment in the Netherlands show that victims who have been treated better by the police generally have a more positive attitude towards them and to the criminal justice system. More to the point, they are also more inclined to feel an obligation to abide by the law and are, therefore, less likely to commit (petty) offenses themselves. This result confirms the notion that citizens as reporting victims are very sensitive to the treatment given them by the police and the judicial authorities. Since almost all citizens in urban areas are victimized several times during their lifetime, the impact of adequate victim policies on respect for the law and its institutions cannot be overstated. By treating victims more considerately, police forces can foster a "culture of lawfulness" in the communities they serve. A better treatment of crime victims is often regarded as an additional burden by the police but might in fact be

the most cost-effective crime prevention policy the criminal justice system can pursue. It seems at any rate a most recommendable way of preserving “social capital” and preventing an upward spiral of lawlessness in high crime environments.

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT : IMPLEMENTING THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION

The ICVS findings on victim empowerment show that in most countries the standards of the 1985 UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power have not become a reality. Especially in many developing countries criminal policies are still insufficiently victim-centered. In relation to this, many victims are reluctant to report their victimizations to the police. This lack of confidence in the police implies that crime victims often have no authority to turn to and feel alienated from the state. Low reporting rates are also an impediment for effective crime prevention and control. The chances of arresting the offenders and getting a conviction are largely dependent on the information supplied by the victim. If many victims are, as is clearly the case in most developing nations, doubtful as to whether reporting to the police will do them any good, the effectiveness of the police is severely undermined. For more effective criminal investigations the cooperation of the victims is essential. This is another reason why the proportion of satisfied victims—currently globally below 50%—ought to be used as a performance measure for police forces across the world.

According to the survey, few victims who had reported to the police receive specialized help. Half of the reporting victims, however, would have welcomed it. Clearly there are many unmet needs among the many victims of crime, especially among female victims of violence.

A better deal for crime victims seems an obvious priority for national and international crime prevention strategies. In developing countries and countries in transition, the consequences of criminal victimization are often very severe since financial support is not

available. Donor countries and international organizations should consider the promotion of better victim services across the world. Initiatives such as the pilot project of the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to offer grants for the launching of victim support initiatives in developing countries deserve the full support of the donor community (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html>).

THE WAY AHEAD

By disclosing aspects of crime and victimization at the international level, the ICVS has become an indispensable source of information for researchers, policy makers, and the international community. It is expected that in the future the ICVS will become even a more solid source of data, due to the fact that a greater number of countries will be included and that those who have already participated will continue to do so, thus reinforcing the longitudinal series. In this respect the decision of the European Commission to fund the execution of the survey in all member states of the European Union is a major breakthrough. An effort in the direction of further expansion and standardization of data collection is currently being made by the group coordinating the project. It is also expected that in the future the International Crime Business Survey (ICBS) and the International Violence against Women Survey (IVAWS), both currently in their initial stages, will play an important role in complementing the ICVS in the areas of crimes against businesses and violence against women respectively.

The demand for comparative global data on crime and criminal justice issues has not declined since the ICVS was first conducted. Problems of crime and corruption are now generally regarded as important dimensions of human security. Fear of crime undermines the quality of life of many citizens living in urban areas almost everywhere in the world. Violent crime, organized crime and corruption are also seen as major impediments to peace and sustainable human development. Crime has become an integral

aspect of the international discourse on human security, peace and development. This confronts the ICVS with a number of new challenges - the most critical being the collection of data in societies where survey research is relatively unknown and resources for social research are generally scarce. Recent political developments also require a re-focusing of the questionnaire on the international policy agendas of today with a greater emphasis on organized crime, including trafficking of persons and the threat of terrorism. Just like the field of victimology, the ICVS has to be an open-ended endeavor, constantly adapting itself to the changing realities of criminal victimization across the world.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Much attention has been paid to the issue of translation of concepts and terms into the various languages. Regular meetings of survey coordinators from participating countries have facilitated the exercise.

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