

Summary

Introduction and methodology

This report presents the key results of the crime victim surveys that were carried out as part of the fifth sweep of the International Crime Victim Surveys conducted in 2004/2005. A large portion of these data are derived from the European Survey on Crime and Safety (EU ICS), organised by a consortium led by Gallup Europe and co-financed by the European Commission, DGRTD. Wherever possible, results on 2004 have been compared with results from surveys carried out in earlier rounds since 1989.

The ICVS project was started back in 1989 because there was a need for reliable crime statistics that could be used for international comparisons. Statistics on police-recorded crimes cannot be used for this purpose because the legal definitions of the crimes differ across countries.

Besides, there are large differences in willingness of the public to report crimes to the police. Recording practices and counting rules of the police vary greatly as well. Results of nation-specific crime victim surveys have become the preferred source of information on levels of crime in many developed countries. However, surveys such as the National Crime Victim Survey in the USA and the British Crime Survey differ in questionnaires and other key design features to the extent that results are incomparable across countries. The International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) is a programme of sample surveys to look at householders' experiences with crime with the use of standardised questionnaires and other design elements. Reviews by independent scholars have confirmed that ICVS results are more comparable across nations than those of nation-specific surveys (Lynch, 2006).

Nevertheless, the limits of the ICVS must also be recognised. Full standardisation of all design aspects has proven to be unattainable, especially if surveys in developing countries are included. Although there are no reasons to assume that comparability has in any way been systematically compromised, divergent design features such as the mode of interviewing and the period in which the fieldwork was done, may have affected results of individual countries in unknown ways. Also, since the samples interviewed were relatively small (2000 in most countries and 800 in most cities), all estimates are subject to sampling error.

The ICVS and EU ICS cover ten conventional crimes, broken down into vehicle related crimes (theft of a car, theft from a car, theft of a motorcycle or moped, theft of a bicycle), burglary, attempted burglary, theft of personal property and contact crimes (robbery, sexual offences and assault & threat). In most countries in this report, questions have been added to the questionnaire on experiences with street level corruption, consumer fraud, including internet-based fraud and credit card theft, drug-related problems and hate crime. For most categories of crime trends over time can be studied in a broad selection of countries. Other subjects

covered by the questionnaire are reporting to the police, satisfaction with the police, distribution and need of victim support, fear of crime, use of preventive measures and attitudes towards sentencing.

This report presents data from 30 countries, including the majority of developed nations. Also the data from 33 main cities of a selection of developed and developing countries are presented in this report. Altogether data are presented from 38 different countries. For the first time data are available on Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China – SAR China) and Istanbul (Turkey). Surveys were also done in Mexico, Johannesburg (Republic of South Africa – RSA), Lima (Peru), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Sao Paulo & Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and Maputo (Mozambique). In the tables and graphs results of developed countries are presented as a special subcategory.

Victimisation by any common crime

On average, an estimated 16% of the population in the 30 nations participating in the country level surveys have been a victim of at least one of any of ten common crimes in the course of last year (mainly 2003 or 2004). The countries with the highest scores are Ireland, England & Wales, New Zealand and Iceland. Lowest overall victimisation rates are found in Spain, Japan, Hungary and Portugal. Most of the countries about which trend data are available show a distinct downward trend in the level of victimisation since 1995 or 2000 (see below for details).

Victimisation in the main cities in developed countries is about one fourth higher on average than in countries (19.9% per year). The main cities in developing countries show much higher victimisation rates on average. At the top of the list are Phnom Penh, Maputo, and Buenos Aires. Johannesburg and the two cities in Brazil show percentages at a European level. The cities in developed countries with the lowest victimisation rates are Hong Kong, Lisbon, Budapest, Athens and Madrid. Highest victimisation rates are found in London and Tallinn.

Victimisation by vehicle related crimes

Theft of bicycles and motorcycles are highest in countries where such vehicles are the most common. In countries where bicycles are most popular, like the Netherlands and Denmark, rates of bicycle theft are very high. In some South European countries many young people drive a scooter which goes together with large numbers of thefts of motorcycles. Theft of a car is a more complicated issue, it is most common in countries that combine high ownership rates and low alternative means of transport (bicycles and motorcycles/mopeds), but this rule does not hold up completely. Theft is highest in England & Wales and New Zealand but only just above average in the USA and Australia.

Cars are stolen for two main reasons. Professionals steal cars and strip them to sell spare parts or to give a car a complete new identity. This kind of theft is generally well organised. Another motive for stealing cars is temporary transportation or joyriding. In recent years overall rates of car theft have gone down almost everywhere. Trend data on 13 countries show that this downward trend is fully caused by a drop in the less professional forms such as theft for joyriding. Anti-theft devices limiting easy opportunities for amateur thieves seem to be the most likely explanation for this universal drop.

Victimisation by burglary and other theft

On average, 1.8% of households in the 30 countries have seen their houses burgled in the course of the last year. This type of crime is most common in England & Wales, New Zealand, Mexico and Denmark. The figure stays below one percent in Sweden, Spain, Finland, Austria and Germany. Rates of burglary in the main cities in developed countries are on average higher (2.3%). Four cities in developing countries stand out, Phnom Penh, Maputo, Lima and Johannesburg show victimisation rates higher than in any city in a developed country.

Attempted burglaries show similar patterns as completed burglaries. The main differences are that, compared to the number of completed burglaries, Luxembourg, Belgium, Northern Ireland, Austria and the Netherlands have quite many attempted burglaries. Compared to attempted burglaries, completed burglaries were relatively prevalent in Denmark and Estonia.

Theft of personal property has the highest victimisation rate of the ten common crimes under investigation. Almost 4% of the population in the thirty countries and 6% in the main cities have fallen victim to a simple theft in 2003/04. Rates of theft lie above 6% in Ireland, Iceland and England & Wales and below 1% in Japan. Phnom Penh, Lima and London are the cities with the highest rates of theft of personal property, above 10%. Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo show figures below 3%. A special type of theft is pickpocketing which makes up about half of all thefts of personal property in the developed countries. The pattern is quite similar to that of general thefts except that Greece and Estonia join the ranks of countries with high victimisation in this respect. In Phnom Penh, Lima and Maputo, pickpocketing makes up the larger part of all thefts of personal property. Victimisation rates are 10% or higher.

Victimisation by contact crimes

On average 1% of the population is victimised by robbery in countries and 2.4% in the main cities. This breaks down in 1.4% in the main cities in developed countries and 6.1% in developing countries. Highest victimisa-

tion rates are found in Mexico and in the main cities in other developing countries. Only Phnom Penh is within the range of cities in developed countries. In Japan and Hong Kong robberies are rare (victimisation rates below 0.5%).

Measuring sexual offences has proven to be difficult because of cultural differences in what type of behaviour is perceived by female respondents to constitute an offence. To minimise cultural bias in the results, the report focuses on rates of sexual crimes, whereby the victim has been physically assaulted. Above one percent of the female respondents in the USA, Iceland, Sweden and Northern Ireland indicated to have been a victim of a sexual assault in 2003/04. Less than 0.1% did so in Hungary and Mexico. Victimization in main cities is not much more common than in the countries as a whole. The city of Maputo shows the highest victimisation rates with a victimisation rate just below 2%. As said, results on sexual victimisation must be interpreted with great caution.

Assault & threat is the most frequent of the three contact crimes. Actual assaults make up less than half of the incidents. The other incidents are threats including those with the use of a weapon. Cultural differences may play a role in perceptions of what constitutes a violent crime but probably less so than in the case of sexual offences. Populations in main cities experience much higher rates of victimisation by violent crime than people living elsewhere in the country. Johannesburg has victimisation rates for assault & threats of over 10% per year. Northern Ireland, Iceland, Ireland, England & Wales, New Zealand and the Netherlands are the countries with rates above 4%. Lowest rates are found in Portugal, Italy and Japan (below 1%).

According to the survey gun ownership is more common in the USA (29% of households) than in Western Europe (4). Both robberies and threats & assaults are more likely to involve guns in the USA than in Europe.

Victimization by non-conventional crimes

Over one in ten of the people have on average been a victim of consumer fraud in the course of one year. Estonia, Greece and Bulgaria stand out with rates of over 20%. At the other end of the scale, Japan has less than 2% victims. Victimization rates in the cities are higher, with Phnom Penh and Maputo showing the highest rates. Consumer fraud is the only crime type for which rates of victimisation in Hong Kong are above the average of the participating countries.

Victims of consumer fraud were asked whether the incident had involved buying goods over the internet. 9% mentioned that it happened while shopping on the internet. This implies that over a twelve month period 1%

of the national respondents have been victimised by fraud on the internet. Victimization by this type of crime is most common in the USA (3.3%), Poland, Germany, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom. Among the cities, Lima and London stand out with highest rates of victimisation.

In a separate question respondents were also asked whether the reported consumer fraud had been a case of credit card fraud. Nationally 7% said it was. In main cities 10% of fraud victims said it was credit card fraud. This implies victimisation rates for credit card fraud of 0.9% nationwide and 1.5% in main cities respectively. The highest percentage of respondents victimised by credit card fraud were found in London (7.5%) and New York (4.5%). Internet-based frauds and frauds with credit cards have become much-occurring crimes and may soon develop into one of the most common types of property crime, overtaking traditional forms such as pickpocketing or theft from cars.

The level of experiences with bribe-taking or bribe-seeking by public officials (street level corruption) remains very low, 1% or less, in the industrialised countries. But public officials seeking bribes are comparatively common in Greece and in the countries in Eastern Central Europe that have recently joined the European Union. Levels of corruption are also high in the main cities outside the Western world. Analysis showed that the level of corruption as measured in the ICVS is strongly correlated with the scores on the composite index of perceived corruption published annually by Transparency International.

The EU ICS contained a broadly defined question about experiences with crimes motivated by hatred because of race, religion or sexual orientation. Three percent of the citizens in the 15 'old' EU member states indicated that they, or family members, had been victim of a crime that seemed motivated by racial hatred or other prejudices. Percentages of such victims are highest in France, Denmark, the United Kingdom and the Benelux countries. Among those that could be considered immigrants, ten percent said they or family members had been victim of hate crimes in the course of the last year.

Contact with drug-related problems in the neighbourhood was only inquired after in the EU ICS and in the USA and Australia. On average about 10% of the population has been confronted with drug problems in the neighbourhood. Greece stands out with over 25%. Rates in Sweden, Hungary and Finland remain below 5%. There is an increase in perceived drug-related problems in several European countries.

Crime trends

The ICVS provides data that are fit for international comparison, although country specific circumstances do not always allow for fully standardised methodology. Among all countries participating in the ICVS since 1989, there are 15 developed countries about which information is available from at least four different sweeps, enabling an analysis of trends in crime over the last 10 or 15 years. The average for the 15 countries shows that the level of victimisation has peaked halfway the 1990s and has since shown a slow but steady decline. Victimization rates of nearly all individual countries show the same curve-linear curve over the past 15 years. The drops are most pronounced in property crimes such as vehicle-related crimes (bicycle theft, thefts from cars and joyriding) and burglary. In most countries, crime levels in 2004 are back at the level of the late 1980's. The USA has acted as trend setter with levels of victimisation already declining in the second sweep of the ICVS in 1992.

The near universal drop in volume crime is arguably the most striking result of the fifth round of the ICVS and poses a clear theoretical challenge to criminologists. Criminal policies show great variation across countries. The ICVS data on precautionary measures against burglaries shows significant increases in the use of such measures in all participating countries. Improved security may well have been one of the main forces behind the universal drop in crimes such as joyriding and household burglary.

Victimization and police recorded crime

A comparison was made between the level of victimisation by crime according to the ICVS and numbers of police-recorded crimes taken from the European Sourcebook on Crime Statistics (an effort to harmonise such statistics). Correlations between the two measures of the levels of different types of crime among industrialised nations were stronger when victimisation rates were adjusted for reporting to the police. In other words there is closer correspondence in relative risks of crime when account is taken of differences in reporting to the police. Correlations between unadjusted victimisation rates and police figures are mostly weak and rarely statistically significant. These results confirm that levels of recorded crimes cannot be reliably used for comparing levels of common crime across countries. Crime victim surveys seem a better source of information on levels of crime across countries. Secondly, trends in victimisation and in police recorded crime during the last four or five years were also analysed. The two measures were found not to be correlated or to be correlated negatively. Available evidence suggests that at least over a brief period of time, police recorded crime data cannot be reliably used to estimate changes in the level of crime either.

Reporting crimes to the police and victim's satisfaction

Unlike crime victimisation rates, reporting to the police and other victim responses differ little between victims living in main cities from those living elsewhere. Results from the 30 countries are therefore combined with those from main cities. Whether crimes are reported to the police depends mainly on the seriousness of the crime and whether such a report is necessary for claiming insurance. The reporting rates vary from almost 100% for car thefts and thefts of motorcycles to less than 10% for offensive sexual behaviour. The analysis was focussed on the reporting of five types of crime: theft from car, theft of bicycles, theft of personal property, completed and attempted burglary. On average one in four of these crimes are reported. The highest reporting rates (about 60% or more) can be found in Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, England & Wales, Scotland and Denmark. In Istanbul, Bulgaria and Hong Kong reporting rates are less than 40%. The developing countries show the lowest reporting rates for these five crimes. In half of them less than 20% is reported.

Trends in reporting can be studied for 15 countries that participated at least three times. More than half of them show that reporting rates are going down for the combined five crimes. This is partly because the composition of crimes has changed; the share of crimes that have traditionally low reporting rates has increased. Reporting rates have significantly gone up in Poland and Estonia.

About half of the victims who reported a crime were satisfied with the way the police treated their case, varying from over 70% in Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, Australia, Scotland and New Zealand to less than thirty percent in Estonia, Lima, Maputo, Greece, and Mexico. In several countries where levels of satisfaction used to be comparatively high, the rates of satisfaction have decreased since 2000. This group of countries includes the USA, Canada, England & Wales, Sweden and the Netherlands, countries where better treatment of victims is actively promoted.

Victim support

Whether the victim received any victim support after reporting to the police was asked for four types of crime. Most likely to receive such support are the victims of sexual offences (30%). Slightly less than 10% of victims of robbery and assault & threat received support. On average, victims of burglary received the least support. The Anglophone countries (sharing a common law system) plus the Netherlands and Sweden most frequently provide support to victims. Victim support is also comparatively well developed in Johannesburg, the only city in a developing country where this is the case. There is a modest increase in victim support in most countries for which trend data are available.

Many more victims would have appreciated help than actually received it. Among the participating countries/cities, 8% of victims of serious crimes who have reported to the police had received specialised help, while 43% of those who didn't, express a need of it. The proportion of victims whose expressed needs are met can be approached by dividing the number of victims who received support by the numbers of those who received it and of those who would have wanted it (times 100). Such calculation shows that agencies of victim support provided services to roughly 21% of victims with expressed needs. Using the same formula, victim support organisations reach 38% of the victims of sexual offences demanding specialised help, 20% of victims of robberies with such needs, 19% of victims of threat & assaults and 10% of victims of burglaries. For all four groups the supply of specialised agencies falls short of the demand. The gap between supply and demand of victim support is by far the largest for the group of burglary victims.

Percentages of victims whose expressed needs are actually met by the agencies vary across countries. The proportions of victims of serious crimes with manifest support needs who were actually contacted by victim support are the highest in New Zealand (47%) and the UK, with percentages as high as 40 in Scotland, 37 in Northern Ireland and 31 in England & Wales. Other countries where victim support offers help to reasonably high proportions of victims in need of help are Austria, the Netherlands, USA, Canada and Japan.

Fear of crime

Respondents were asked how likely they think it is that a burglary will take place in their house in the coming year. Levels of concern are correlated to actual burglary rates. Concern is most common among the public in Japan, Greece and Italy, and least common in Finland, Denmark, USA, Sweden and the Netherlands. The top ranking main cities are Istanbul, Athens, Sao Paulo and Lima. There is a downward trend in concern about burglary, in tandem with the declining burglary rates.

Feelings of unsafety in the streets are most widespread among inhabitants of Bulgaria, Poland and Greece. Such feelings are least common among the public in the Nordic countries, Canada and the Netherlands. The main cities in developing countries are the least safe in the opinion of their inhabitants. Responses to the question 'How safe do you feel when walking alone on the street after dark' do not show a relation with actual levels of street crime. Perceived safety is fairly strongly related to perceived drugs problem in the neighbourhood though.

Security precautions

More and more households install an electronic burglar alarm and/or special door locks to protect their houses against burglary. The highest rates are found in more affluent countries. In many Nordic countries and in the Netherlands burglar alarms are less popular than in most Anglophone countries but an increasing number of houses are protected with special door locks. The use of both burglar alarms and security locks shows a distinct upward trend since 1988 in nearly all countries, probably reflecting improved security against crime across the board.

Attitudes to law enforcement

All respondents were asked how well they think the police do their job in controlling crime in the local area. In most countries the opinion of the public was stable or has improved. Most prominent improvements since 1989 and 1992 have been observed in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal and Austria. Police forces seem to get credit from citizens for dropping crime rates.

Public satisfaction with the police, reporting rates of crime victims and satisfaction of victims with how the police deal with reported crimes can be combined into a composite police performance measure. The police in Hong Kong, Finland, USA, Canada and New Zealand score highest on this combined score. The three large cities in the southern part of Latin America (Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires) score the least favourably.

Public attitudes to sentencing

Respondents were asked what type of punishment would be appropriate for a recidivist burglar who had been arrested for stealing a colour TV. Those favouring imprisonment were asked what length of prison sentence seemed desirable. The Mexican respondents proved to be most in favour of imprisonment, followed by those in the USA and other Anglophone countries. Most of the people in the large cities in developing countries believe a long prison sentence would be appropriate, even more than in the Anglophone countries.

The public in the Nordic countries, France and Switzerland are most in favour of a community service. Less than half the people in the former socialist countries Poland, Estonia, Bulgaria and Hungary believe a prison sentence is appropriate, but those who do, prefer above average lengths of prison detention. The attitude of the population towards sentencing does not correspond very well with the actual incarceration rates in countries.

The future of the ICVS

Repeats of the ICVS in 2007 and 2008 are under preparation in several countries. It is hoped that plans made in the framework of the European

Union for a standardised EU crime survey will allow for a continuation of the ICVS-based series by using elements of the ICVS methodology including its core set of questions.