

Experiences of *Crime* across the World

Key findings
of the
1989 International
Crime Survey

Jan J.M. van Dijk

Second Edition

Pat Mayhew

Martin Killias

KLUWER

Experiences of Crime across the World

Key findings from the 1989 International Crime Survey

Jan J.M. van Dijk, *The Hague*
Pat Mayhew, *London*
Martin Killias, *Lausanne*

Second Edition

1991

Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers
Deventer • Boston

Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers

P.O. Box 23	Tel.: 31-5700-47261
7400 GA Deventer	Telex: 49295
The Netherlands	Fax: 31-5700-22244

Second Edition

Cover design: Eset

ISBN 90 6544 544 7

© 1991, Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers, Deventer, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publishers.

Acknowledgments

The international survey, of which the main findings are reported here, has in all stages been a joint venture of many different organizations and individuals. We want first of all to thank the Research and Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands for its overall funding and administrative support. We also want to express our appreciation of the other ministries and national research centres who accepted our invitation to join this rather adventurous undertaking.

In all participating countries we have been aided by national experts who were involved in the preparation and translation of the questionnaire and in the execution of the fieldwork. Without their continuous support, the survey could never have been carried out.

We are greatly indebted to Aad van der Veen of Inter/View (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) who supervised the preparation of the computer-programmed questionnaires and the performance of the subcontracted local firms.

We are indebted, also, to a circle of colleagues from various countries who generously offered us their help and advice. Of these we want to mention in particular Wesley Skogan, Ron Clarke, Francesco Pascual Mayol and Jacob Sahetapy.

We want to thank Sjaak Essers, Monique Overwater, Iris Passchier, Margreet Slis and Rebecca Lawrence for their invaluable help with the data analysis and preparation of the manuscript.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Purpose of the survey	1
Background	2
The Working Group	3
Participating countries	4
Details of the survey	5
Sample sizes	6
Fieldwork	6
Computer assisted telephone interviewing	6
Survey companies	7
Sampling	8
Response rates	8
Weighting	9
Statistical significance	9
Coverage of the questionnaire	9
Outline of the report	10
 Chapter 2: Victimization rates	 13
Introduction	13
Theft of cars	15
Theft from cars	16
Vandalism to cars	19
Theft of motorcycles/mopeds/scooters	20
Theft of bicycles	21
Household burglary (with entry)	23
House type and burglary risks	24
Reporting patterns and insurance	25
Attempted burglary	26
Robbery	27
Other theft of personal property	28
Sexual incidents	32
Assaults/threats	35
Overall patterns of victimization	39
Incidence victimization rates	42
Victimization rates in Warsaw (Poland)	
and Surabaya (Indonesia)	43
Methodological aspects	43
Results	43
A preliminary analysis of international differences	45
General findings	45
Urbanization	46
Vehicle ownership	47

Opportunity and vehicle theft	49
Bicycle theft and car theft	52
Victimization rates and police recorded crime	53
Chapter 3: Offences and victims	59
Place of crime	59
Victim characteristics	60
Gender differences	61
Going out	61
Independent risk factors	62
High income as a risk factor	63
Within country results	64
Gender, victimization and employment	65
Overall patterns of reporting to the police	67
Reasons for not reporting	69
Satisfaction with the police on reporting	70
General satisfaction with the police	71
Victim assistance	72
Assistance received	72
Interest in victim support	74
Chapter 4: Responses to crime	77
Fear of crime	77
Street crime	77
Burglary	79
Attitudes to punishment	81
Public opinion and imprisonment rates	83
Community service orders	84
Chapter 5: Crime prevention measures	85
Crime prevention	85
Caretakers	85
Burglar alarms	87
Lighting	89
Surveillance by neighbours	91
Insurance	93
Gun ownership	94
Chapter 6: Summary and conclusions	95
Summary	96
Discussion	103
Telephone ownership	104
Response rates	105
Comparison with other indicators	105
Police figures	106
Independent surveys	106
Other comparative studies	107
The future	108

Chapter 7: Summaries in French and German	111
Resumé	111
Zusammenfassung	122
Annex A: Survey methods	133
Fieldwork execution	133
Telephone penetration	134
Telephone sampling methods	135
Response information	137
Face-to-face interviewing in N.Ireland and Spain	140
Annex B: Weighting procedure	145
Annex C: Statistical significance	151
Annex D: The International Victimization Survey Questionnaire	153
Annex E: Additional tables	173
References	183

1 Introduction

Purpose of the survey

The international victimization survey reported here measured experience of crime and a number of other crime-related issues in a large number of European and non-European countries. It used tightly standardized methods as regards the sampling procedure, method of interview, questions asked, and analysis of the data. By asking respondents directly about a range of offences that they had experienced over a given time period, the survey provides a measure of the level of crime in different countries that is independent of the conventional one of offences recorded by the police. The police measure has well-known limitations for comparative purposes as it is based only on those crimes which are reported to the police by victims, and which are recorded by the police.

The value of the survey is that it:

- enables individual countries to see how they are faring in comparison with others in relation to crime levels;
- provides some rough picture of the extent to which survey-measured crime in different countries matches the picture from figures of offences recorded by the police;
- provides some basis for explaining major differences in crime experience in terms, for instance, of socio-demographic variables;
- allows some examination of the types of people most at risk of victimization for different types of crime, and whether these vary across the jurisdictions in the survey; and, finally,
- provides information on responses to crime in different countries, such as opinions about the police, appropriate sentences, fear of crime, and the use of various crime prevention measures.

These survey results should not be seen as giving a definitive picture of crime, and responses to it in different countries. The samples of respondents interviewed in each country were relatively small, only those with a telephone at home were interviewed, and response rates were not always high. The significance of these factors is taken up in more detail in the final chapter, but the fact remains that the comparable information provided by the international survey is unique.

Although the study serves mainly descriptive purposes, some results about victimization risks are interpreted within the perspective of criminal opportunities theory (Mayhew, Clarke et al., 1976; Cohen, Felson, 1978; Van Dijk, Steinmetz, 1984).

Background

There has long been a need for comparable information about levels and patterns of criminal victimization in different countries. Researchers have principally wanted to test theories about the social causes of crime by means of cross-national comparisons. Policymakers have principally wanted to understand better their national crime problems by putting these in an international perspective. To date, by far the major effort has been put into analyzing crime rates in different countries on the basis of offences recorded by the police (hereafter 'police statistics'). Compilations of these statistics by the United Nations and Interpol, for instance, have often been used, even though they tend to be incomplete, marred by language difficulties, and often restricted to unhelpfully broad crime categories.¹

More critically, however, police statistics have substantial limitations for comparative purposes. First, reports of crime by victims form the major bulk of incidents that the police have available to record; any differences in the propensity to report to the police in different countries will seriously jeopardise comparisons, and rather little is known about these differences.² Second, comparisons of police statistics are severely undermined by differences in culture and law, and by technical factors to do with how offences are classified, defined and counted. Even within a single country, research has confirmed that different police agencies can 'count' crime differently; at national level the differences can only be greater.

In many countries recently, an alternative count of crime has been obtained through victimization (or 'crime') surveys. These ask representative samples of the population about selected offences they have experienced over a given time, whether or not they have reported them to the police. Typically, such surveys also gather information on what 'typical' offences are like, and ask respondents' opinions about crime, fear of crime, and so on. They have done much to elucidate the 'truer' level and nature of crime, the extent of

-
1. For a history of attempts to make comparisons see, eg, Neuman and Berger (1988). Many studies have been restricted to developed countries and to selected crime types, while some studies look not at levels and patterns in criminality, but at the relationship between crime and socio-economic factors. Kalish (1988) presents one recent comparison of levels and trends for a range of countries reporting to Interpol, with additional information on homicide from WHO statistics.
 2. Skogan (1984) has examined reporting crime to the police from data in some national and local surveys. He shows reasons for *not reporting* to be broadly similar, with seriousness of the incident a major factor. Few firm conclusions could be drawn about levels of reporting because of differences in survey design.

unrecorded offences for different crime categories, and in particular the distribution of risks across different groups - upon which police figures generally say rather little.³ However, by no means all countries have conducted such surveys, and those that have done so have used different methods which make their results extremely difficult to use for comparative research. Differences in the basis of sampling, method of interview, coverage of offences, and procedures for classifying offences etc, all influence the number and types of crimes counted.⁴

The case for a standardized survey in different countries has been clear to many. A proposal by the OECD in the early 1970s resulted in some pilot work in the United States, the Netherlands and Finland (Tornudd, 1982), but thereafter the initiative flagged. The idea of different countries funding an international polling agency to add victimization questions to ongoing polls has never been seen as attractive, perhaps because of doubts about how criminologically informed such a venture would be.⁵

The Working Group

The climate ripened for a standardized international survey as more was understood about the methodology of crime surveys, and the value of their information. At a meeting in Barcelona of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe at the end of 1987, Jan van Dijk formally aired plans for a standardized survey (Van Dijk et al., 1987). The momentum was continued through a Working Group comprising Jan van Dijk (overall coordinator), Ministry of Justice, the Netherlands; Pat

-
3. See Skogan's (1986) discussion of technical aspects of victim surveys; Block's (1984a) collection of studies for a useful review of the features of various surveys; Sparks's (1982) comprehensive assessment of their origins and value; Mayhew (1985) for a review of major findings, and Gottfredson (1986) for another coverage of these, albeit from a North American perspective.
 4. The best comparisons can be made with surveys designed to be similar, though these have been restricted in country coverage. For example, Mayhew and Smith (1985) looked at results from the 1982 British Crime Survey, which was conducted in England and Wales and Scotland. Comparisons have also been done of surveys carried out since the early 1970s in the Scandinavian countries (eg, Sveri, 1982). A similar questionnaire was used in postal surveys about crime in Texas (USA), Baden-Württemberg (W.Germany) and Hungary (Teske, Arnold, 1982). With independently mounted surveys, data need to be directly manipulated to improve consistency. Access to data is one problem, but even with access some differences cannot be accounted for. Some comparisons which have standardised design differences are taken up in Chapter 6. Avoiding the problems of comparing victimization levels, some work recently has instead assessed whether *patterns* of victimization are the same from selected surveys. For instance, Van Dijk and Steinmetz (1983) have considered the relationship between 'lifestyle' factors and crime on the basis of the Greater Vancouver and Dutch surveys. Comparisons of the British Crime Survey and the US National Crime Survey have been done by, eg, Maxfield (1987), Sampson and Wooldredge (1987), and Sampson (1987). See also Block (1984a).
 5. On its own initiative, Gallup included some victimization questions in polls in 1984, though there were substantial comparability problems, and unhelpful offence definitions (Gallup International, 1984).

Mayhew, Research and Planning Unit, Home Office, England; and Martin Killias, University of Lausanne, Switzerland. The Working Group accepted responsibility for the questionnaire, appointing the survey company, issuing invitations, and preparing the preliminary report on results which is presented here.⁶

Participating countries

A formal invitation to join in the survey was sent to some twenty-odd countries. Fourteen countries eventually took part in a fully co-ordinated survey exercise, each appointing a survey coordinator to liaise with the Working Group. The countries and their sponsors were:

- Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology)
- Belgium (Ministry of Justice)
- Canada (Department of Justice, Research and Development)
- England and Wales (Home Office)
- Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeskriminalamt, Max-Planck Institut)
- Finland (National Research Institute for Legal Policy)
- France (Ministry of Justice)
- The Netherlands (Ministry of Justice)
- Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office)
- Norway (Ministry of Justice)
- Scotland (Scottish Home and Health Department)
- Spain (Ministry of Justice)
- Switzerland (l'Office Federal de la Justice)
- USA (US Department of Justice)

In addition, local surveys using the same questionnaire were conducted in *Poland* (Ministry of Justice), *Indonesia* (Guru Besar Kriminologi, Penologi, Victimologi dan Hukum Pidana, Surabaya), and *Japan* (National Research Institute of Police Science; Japan Urban Security Research Institute). The fieldwork in these three countries was organized independently from the Working Group. This report concentrates on results from the fourteen full participants, with an occasional reference to results from the local surveys in Warsaw (Poland) and Surabaya (Indonesia). Some basic data from Japan were included in Table E.1.

It can be seen from the list of full participants that the survey does not give complete European coverage: notable exceptions are Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Italy, Portugal and Greece. Nonetheless, its coverage is extensive

6. Although the Working Group has had overall responsibility for the questionnaire, drafts were commented upon by a number of criminologists experienced in crime surveys, including: Wesley Skogan, Richard Block and Ron Clarke (USA); Jacques Van Kerckvoorde (Belgium); Kauko Aromaa (Finland); Carl Steinmetz (The Netherlands); Renee Zauberman (France); Irvin Waller (Canada); Helmut Kury (FRG); Helen Reeves and Joanna Shapland (England); and Juli Sabate and Francesco Pascual (Spain).

within Europe, and there is a very useful non-European perspective (from the USA, Canada, and Australia).

Details of the survey

The present survey has many features of other independently organized crime surveys with respect to the types of crime it covers, and how well it measures these. It is based on only a sample of the population, so that results are subject to sampling error, which is a limitation especially for the more rare types of offences. (Sampling error is taken up again below.) The survey is confined to counting crime against clearly identifiable individuals, excluding children. (Crime surveys cannot easily cover organizational victims, or victimless crimes such as drug abuse.) Even discounting crime unreported to the police, the survey will take a broader and probably more value-free count of incidents than police statistics, which filter incidents which *could* be punished, and which the police regard *should* occupy the attention of the criminal justice system. In many ways, however, this broader count of crime is itself a strength of the survey.

As against this, it is likely judging by methodological work, that the survey will provide an *undercount* of the extent of crime. Adequate representation of the population is always problematic in sample surveys, and those who are and who are not contacted may differ from each other - a point returned to. It is also well established that respondents fail to report in interview all relevant incidents in the 'recall period'; that they 'telescope in' incidents outside this period and that they may under-report various offences, for instance involving people they know, and sexual offences. There is also evidence that certain groups (eg, the better educated) are more adept at answering victimization questions, and that thresholds for defining deviant behaviour as criminal can differ across groups. There is little way of knowing how far these response biases are constant across country. The tendency to forget more trivial incidents may, for instance, be a relatively universal phenomenon, and some types of differential 'response productivity' may also be constant. Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that respondents *as a whole* in different countries will have different views as to what constitutes criminal victimizations against them, and this should be borne in mind.

It should also be remembered that the results of the present survey are only at country level. Crime risks and even attitudes to crime may vary as much between jurisdictions within countries as between countries themselves.

The major features of how the international survey was conducted are described below. Fuller details of fieldwork execution, etc. are given in Annex A.

Sample sizes

To encourage as full participation as possible, it was clear that the survey should be relatively modest in cost terms, affecting sample sizes and length of interview. Most countries were thought unlikely to be able to afford a large sample and on the basis of preliminary costings, the Working Group recommended 2,000 interviews.⁷ Most countries opted for this, though there were smaller samples in Switzerland (1000), France (1502), Norway (1009), Finland (1000) and a larger one (5274) in W.Germany. Samples of this size, of course, produce relatively large sampling error, and restrict the scope for detailed analysis of issues on which a small proportion of the sample would have provided information.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork in most countries started in January 1989 and lasted six to seven weeks (see Table A.1, Annex A). Fieldwork in a few countries (Spain, N.Ireland and the USA) started somewhat later. An average interview lasted about 10-15 minutes depending mainly on the extent of victimization experience reported.

Computer assisted telephone interviewing

Cost was one consideration in deciding to interview by telephone, using the technique of computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) - a relatively new technology. More important, however, was the scope for much tighter standardization of questionnaire administration. The merits of CATI are considerable. It allows all interviewers to work with the same questionnaire on which routing is identically programmed. This itself produces fewer mistakes and errors in filtering patterns since interviewers have to enter an in-range response for each question before they can move on. CATI also allows a sample to be drawn which is geographically unclustered, and based on full coverage of telephone owners, including those with unlisted numbers. Telephone interviewing provides good opportunities to contact respondents who are often away from home since selected telephone numbers can be called at different times at no great cost. Two minor disadvantages are seen as the inability to edit the completed interview and correct mistakes (though these should be few); and loss of face-to-face contact which prevents the interviewer from seeing that a respondent is confused and does not understand the question.

7. The costings per 1,000 respondents were 23,000 ECU's on average in the European countries (app. 14,000 pounds sterling, 45,000 German marks and 150,000 French francs) and around 33,000 US dollars elsewhere. The costings of samples of 2,000 were 30 per cent higher.

Telephone interviewing, and in some instances CATI, has been used for some time in victimization surveys in Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the USA, for example. Methodological work has shown that, in general, victimization counts from telephone interviews are similar to those obtained in face-to-face ones. In a comparison of interviewing methods used in victimization surveys in several countries, Killias et al. (1987) concluded that the problems that arise when people are interviewed about crime depend less on the survey method used (eg, face-to-face interviews, CATI, or mail questionnaires) than on the efforts made to secure high-quality fieldwork.⁸

It was acknowledged that those with a telephone in the home might differ from those without. However, in all 12 countries where only CATI was used at the very least 70% had telephones, and in most countries the figure was nearly 90% or higher. In Spain, telephone penetration was much less than 70% outside urban areas. Thus, most interviews in non-urban areas were conducted by face-to-face personal interview (58% of all interviews); most interviews in urban areas were conducted through CATI (42% of all interviews). In N.Ireland, where national telephone penetration was estimated to be under 70%, all interviews were personal. Details of telephone penetration are shown in Table A.2 in Annex A.

Annex A discusses in more detail whether any bias has been introduced into the results on account of interviewing mainly those with telephones. Briefly, it is argued there that the present results may not be greatly distorted on this account. Telephone ownership does not relate to the experience of different crimes in any consistent way, and there is no evidence to suggest that victimization counts are lower than if fuller representation of the population had been possible. Because of this it was considered inappropriate to weight the data to take account of differential telephone ownership.

Survey companies

Inter/View (the Netherlands) were appointed as the contractor for the survey as they had experience of using CATI internationally on social science topics and indeed were probably the only company then able to mount surveys on the scale needed (Burke Source, 1987). Fieldwork was sub-contracted by Inter/View to companies abroad - often their own subsidiaries. Each participating country took out a contract with Inter/View, who prepared the

8. Some other earlier assessments which showed little difference in victimization counts were Catlin and Murray (1979) in Canada and Klecka and Tuchfarber (1978) and Roman and Silver (1982) in the USA. In contrast, a study by Woltman et al. (1980), concluded the number of reported victimizations were less when telephone interviews were used as the major mode. Very recent work (McGinn, 1989) is now suggesting that since the US National Crime Survey switched from ordinary telephone interviewing to CATI at the beginning of 1987 for a proportion of its sample, CATI is increasing the number of victimizations that respondents are reporting - for reasons which are as yet unclear.

computer-programmed questionnaires in different languages, and had technical responsibility for the performance of the sub-contracted local firms. Piloting of the questionnaire was done in English, French, German, Dutch and Finnish (see Annex A).

Sampling

Telephone number sampling frames differ somewhat across country, and precise techniques for sampling differed a little on this account (details are given in Annex A). However, in all countries using CATI, a regionally well-spread selection of households was sampled with some variant of random digit dialling techniques. Within each household contacted by telephone, a procedure was used to select randomly a respondent of 16 years of age or older, based on the composition of the household. No substitution of the selected respondent was allowed. Face-to-face interviews applied standard national quota sampling procedures; this was because of the considerable cost savings over other methods of probability sampling which strictly give a more representative population sample.

Response rates

Response rates were variable, and in some cases rather low. In the 13 countries using CATI, the average response rate was 41% (ie, completed interviews with the household members selected for interview out of 100 eligible households that were successfully contacted.) In four countries response rates of over 60% were achieved, while in seven the level was less than 45%. Response rates in some countries may have been lower than was expected due to the rapid growth of telephone interviewing which has reduced people's willingness to respond to surveys over the phone; low response in W.Germany and the USA in particular may partly have been influenced by this. The sensitivity of crime as a survey topic may also have played a part, as well as increasing awareness of data protection - though in some countries these factors seemed to pose no problem. There is some suggestion that good response was positively related to high telephone penetration, though there are notable exceptions to this (eg. W.Germany and the USA).

The question of whether the results from the survey have been influenced by the variable, and sometimes low response rates is addressed in full in Annex A. Briefly, the issue is a complex one, and few firm conclusions can be drawn as to the size and direction of any bias that might have occurred. The fact that the evidence is equivocal suggests the bias may not be substantial. Uncertainty as to how response rates affect estimates made it inappropriate to consider any weighting of the data to account for differential response.

When people did complete an interview, their response to it was reasonable. The victimization questions themselves appeared to cause respondents less concern than those on crime prevention habits (eg, use of a burglars alarms and locking behaviour). A proportion of respondents phoned the police or survey coordinators to check the credentials of the survey, though the numbers varied somewhat by country.⁹

Weighting

Results presented throughout this report are based on data which have been weighted to make the samples as representative as possible of actual national populations aged 16 or more in terms of gender, regional population distribution, age, and household composition (see Annex B for more details). Current international statistics on variables such as income, tenure or urbanization were too inadequate to allow further weighting in these terms. These variables however were collected in the survey itself and analysis by them is possible. As said, there is no satisfactory information available on which weighting for differential telephone ownership could have been made.

Statistical significance

The statistical significance of differences between the various national victimization rates and other key findings can be determined on the basis of the nomogram given in Annex C.¹⁰

Coverage of the questionnaire

Eleven main forms of victimization were covered as shown below. For three crimes, sub-divisions are possible.

Household property crimes

- theft of car

9. Each country was asked to ensure that someone was available during the fieldwork period to deal with enquiries from respondents. The interview started with a preamble explaining local sponsorship of the survey, and emphasising that it was an international exercise. In all countries instructions were given to coordinators to make sure that respondents were given the opportunity before continuing to telephone them or administrative personnel in the survey company for further details.

10. With samples of 2,000 and an overall victimization rate of say 5%, deviations of more than 1% will be statistically significant at the 95% level. For an overall victimization rate of, say 1%, deviations of 0.5% would be significant. When the sample is 1,000 (of women only for example), deviations from an overall average of 5% of more than 1.4% will be significant, and with an average of 1% deviations of 0.7%. When the overall average is about 50%, with a sample of 2,000, deviations of 2.2% will be significant. Strictly, sampling error should take into account the fact that data has been weighted.

- theft from cars
- vandalism to cars
- theft of motorcycles/mopeds/scooters
- theft of bicycles
- burglary
- attempted burglary

Personal crimes

- robbery
- theft of personal property
 - . pickpocketing
 - . non-contact personal thefts
- sexual incidents
 - . sexual assaults
 - . offensive behaviour
- assaults/threats
 - . assaults with force
 - . threats without force

Respondents who had been victimized were asked short questions about the place where the offence occurred; its material consequences; whether the police were involved (and if not why not); satisfaction with the police response; and any victim assistance given. In addition, some basic socio-demographic and lifestyle data were collected. Some other questions were asked about: fear of crime; satisfaction with local policing; crime prevention behaviour; and the preferred sentence for a 21-year old recidivist burglar.

Outline of the report

This report is intended to give an overview of the key findings of the survey. In-depth analysis is continuing and more details of the full range of data in the survey will be available in due course.

Chapter 2 presents, by country, rates of victimization in 1988 and over the past five years for crimes covered in the survey. The findings of the local surveys in Warsaw (Poland) and Surabaya (East Java/Indonesia) are reported on separately. For most types of crime, some additional information on the nature of the victimizations is presented, albeit not all that is available from the survey. At the end of Chapter 2, the relationship between some global social and economic characteristics of the countries and victimization risks are taken up, and how vehicle ownership rates relate to risks of vehicle crime. Comparisons for some types of crime are also made between survey victimization rates and police statistics of recorded offences.

Chapter 3 presents some comparative data on the distribution of risks of victimization in terms of age, gender, size of place of residence, income and