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**TOWARDS COMPARABLE INFORMATION ON CRIME AND VICTIMISATION
The International Crime Victim Survey and the International Crime Business Survey**

Submitted by UNODC*

I. International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS)

1. The International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS) provide information on crime and victimization through a standard questionnaire, the results of which are internationally comparable. To ensure this, all aspects of the methodology have been standardized to the maximum possible extent.

2. The first round of international surveys was done in 14 countries in 1989, providing a measurement of crime in 1988, by the Ministry of Justice of The Netherlands in cooperation with the Home Office of the United Kingdom and the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. The interviews were done by phone using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) technique. That year pilot studies were also done in Indonesia (Jakarta) and Poland (Warsaw). [UNICRI](#) (United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute) became involved in 1991 with the aim of providing a wider geographical coverage to the project to include countries where telephone interviewing was not possible. A specific face-to-face methodology was developed for this purpose and to increase comparability it was agreed that face-to-face surveys would be mainly conducted in the capital (or largest) cities in participating countries. Pilot studies were carried out to test the comparability of results obtained with the two different methods.

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3. The second round of surveys took place in 1992 with a total of 33 participating countries, including 20 done by the face-to-face technique. The third round of surveys was done in 1996 in 48 countries (36 face-to-face). The last round of surveys was done in 2000 with a total of 48 participating countries again, including 30 face-to-face. To date, over 140 surveys have been done in over 70 different countries.¹ Datasets are downloadable from the UNICRI website www.unicri.it/icvs

4. The fifth round of surveys (2004-2005) is currently being carried out. It is expected that 18 EU Member States will participate in the project *International Crime Survey* (ICS), funded by the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission. The project, starting from the International Crime Victims Survey, has developed a slightly revised instrument in view of addressing the need for EU-comparable data for policy-makers. It is however expected and desirable that the major victimisation indicators will remain comparable with the world-wide ICVS and the data series already existing in the ICVS main database.

Definitions

5. The standard questionnaire² has been translated in the languages of all participating countries. The ICVS deals with thirteen types of crime defined as follows:

Theft of car	<i>have you or other members of your household had any of their cars/vans/trucks stolen</i>
Theft from car	<i>have you or have members of your household been the victim of a theft of a car radio, or something else which was left in your car, or theft of a part of the car, such as a car mirror or wheel</i>
Car vandalism	<i>have parts of any of the cars/vans/trucks belonging to your household been deliberately damaged (vandalised)</i>
Theft of bicycle	<i>have you or other members of your household had any of their mopeds/scooters/motorcycles stolen</i>
Theft of motorcycle	<i>have you or other members of your household had any of their bicycles stolen</i>
Burglary	<i>did anyone actually get into your home/residence without permission, and steal or try to steal something? (not including thefts from garages, sheds or lock-ups)</i>
Attempted burglary	<i>do you have any evidence that someone tried to get into your home/residence unsuccessfully. For example, damage to locks, doors or windows or scratches around the lock?</i>
Robbery	<i>has anyone stolen something from you by using force or threatening you, or did anybody try to steal something from you by using force or threatening force</i>
Theft of personal property	<i>Apart from theft involving force there are many other types of theft of personal property, such as pickpocketing or theft of a purse, wallet, clothing, jewellery, sports equipment, This can</i>

¹ Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England & Wales, Estonia, Finland, France, FYR of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Malta, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Serbia and Montenegro (formerly FRY), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, USA, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

² Downloadable in English from the UNODC website http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/research_icvs.html

Sexual incidents (women only)	<i>happen at one's work, at school, in a pub, on public transport, on the beach, or in the street. Have you personally been the victim of any of these thefts? People sometimes grab, touch or assault others for sexual reasons in a really offensive way. This can happen either at home, or elsewhere, for instance in a pub, the street, at school, on public transport, in cinemas, on the beach, or at one's workplace. Has anyone done this to you?</i>
Assault/threat	<i>have you been personally attacked or threatened by someone in a way that really frightened you, either at home or elsewhere, such as in a pub, in the street, at school, on public transport, on the beach, or at your workplace?</i>
Consumer fraud	<i>were you the victim of a consumer fraud. In other words, has someone - when selling something to you, or delivering a service - cheated you in terms of quantity or quality of the goods or services?</i>
Bribery/corruption	<i>In some countries, there is a problem of corruption among government or public officials. Has any government official, for instance a customs officer, a police officer or inspector in your country asked you, or expected you to pay a bribe for his or her services?</i>

The time reference normally used in ICVS data analysis is the calendar year preceding the survey.

Some methodological issues on the ICVS

Sample sizes

6. In each country a sample of approximately 2,000 respondents is interviewed either by telephone (CATI method) or face-to-face. Sample sizes in the ICVS are small by the standards of most national crime surveys. However, the risk of sampling errors is balanced by keeping the costs within reasonable limits. Comparative analysis of risks can be safely conducted on the main variables, while caution should be used in looking at issues about which a small proportion of the sample would provide information.

Telephone and face-to-face interviewing

7. Most countries using the CATI method draw national samples, while the face-to-face method is used in urban areas, usually the capital city, of countries where telephone penetration is not sufficient to carry out telephone surveys. The advantages of telephone interviewing are well known: lower costs, standardised sampling and questionnaire administration. However, there may be different results obtained through telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews. Although the ICVS has not shown major discrepancies and some tests have confirmed that the method does not affect the results, there is always some concern that the two methods may produce different results. Furthermore, with the advent of mobile phones, the number of ground lines is decreasing rather than increasing, thus reducing the scope of potential survey respondents.

Response rates

8. On average, response rate to the ICVS was 60%. However, in some countries where the interviews were conducted by telephone rates were as low as 40%, while in many face-to-face countries

more than 90% of the contacted households accepted being interviewed. Variability in response rates may result in higher or lower victimisation recorded by the survey? The ICVS and other surveys have demonstrated that low response rates are not necessarily related to a higher proportion of victims (people “with something to say”) responding to the survey.

Response error

9. This is about the risk of different interpretation of questions across countries, which may also have to do with the *translation of the questionnaire* into different languages. Some concepts that may be clear to English speaking respondents may not be obvious when presented in different languages/contexts. There may be some cultural sensitivity related to sexual incidents, which is demonstrated by the high rates of victimisation recorded by the ICVS in some countries where women are particularly aware of their rights and tend to resent offensive sexual behaviour more than in other parts of the world.

II. The International Crime Business Survey

10. The business sector incurs victimisation by various types of crime, from theft to robbery, assault, extortion, corruption and fraud. The cost to businesses experiencing such crimes and protecting themselves from them has an effect on the economy, not only in terms of prices paid by the public on the final products but also on the risk of the financial loss producing a damage on the society. Closure of businesses means loss of income and jobs, and – if the activity is not taken over by others - risk of degradation of the premises where the business was located as well as the surrounding area. It is therefore extremely important to explore business victimisation patterns and extent.

11. The important findings of the ICVS lead the organisers to attempt at expanding the scope of research to address the problem of victimisation of businesses through a specific survey. Further to a first international survey in eight countries in 1994, the questionnaire was revised to focus in particular on the issues of corruption, fraud and extortion. The International Crime Business Survey (ICBS) was conducted in nine Central-Eastern European capital cities in 2000.

City	Country	Method
Tirana	Albania	<i>Face-to-face</i>
Minsk	Belarus	Face-to-face
Sofia	Bulgaria	Face-to-face
Zagreb	Croatia	<i>Telephone</i>
Budapest	Hungary	<i>CATI*</i>
Vilnius	Lithuania	<i>Face-to-face</i>
Bucharest	Romania	Face-to-face
Moscow	Russia	<i>CATI*</i>
Kiev	Ukraine	Face-to-face

12. The questionnaire, originally based on the ICVS, has extended sections on fraud, corruption, extortion and intimidation. As in the ICVS, victims were asked whether they reported crimes to the police and their assessment of the police performance. Results confirmed the validity of the chosen approach: similar levels of victimisation were observed among businesses and households in the nine participating countries. The types of crime that businesses reported to the survey tended to indicate a prevalence of economic crime (fraud, several types of theft, extortion, requests for bribes), while violent crime was much less frequent.

Some methodological issues on the ICBS

13. Several methodological issues may be looked at when reading the survey findings: as any international comparative exercise, standardisation is crucial. In the case of a business survey, the comparability of samples should be taken into special account. The majority of businesses interviewed in all cities were very small (less than 10 employees), and this may add to the reliability and comparability of the results.

14. Samples were even smaller than in the ICVS (500 businesses in each city), thus with big problems of analysis of variables answered by few respondents. As regards the suitability of victim survey to deal with businesses, the ICBS revealed that there is a great potential in such an instrument. There may be a general problem of response, taking into account that businesses may be less ready to disclose and discuss with the interviewer events that may throw some negative light on their image. However, response rates, especially in the cities where the face-to-face method was used, confirmed a keen interest among the participating businesses (65% on average).
