

## Attitudes to crime

The ICVS includes some questions on people's anxiety about crime, and the precautions they take. It also asks about attitudes to sentencing someone who has committed burglary. This chapter deals with these. In considering them, some attention is paid to how the various attitudes relate to national levels of victimisation, and to individual victimisation experience.

### 5.1 The likelihood of burglary

The ICVS provides a measure of concern about burglary through a question which asks respondents how likely they think it is that they will be burgled in the coming year. Figure 12 shows the percentage of people who rated the chance of burglary as 'very likely' or 'likely'. (Table 23 in Appendix 4 gives details across the survey sweeps.) Those in Portugal (58%), Belgium, and France (about 45%) were most pessimistic. There was least concern in the Scandinavian countries (under 20%), the USA, and the Netherlands.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Relationship with national burglary risks and victimisation experience*

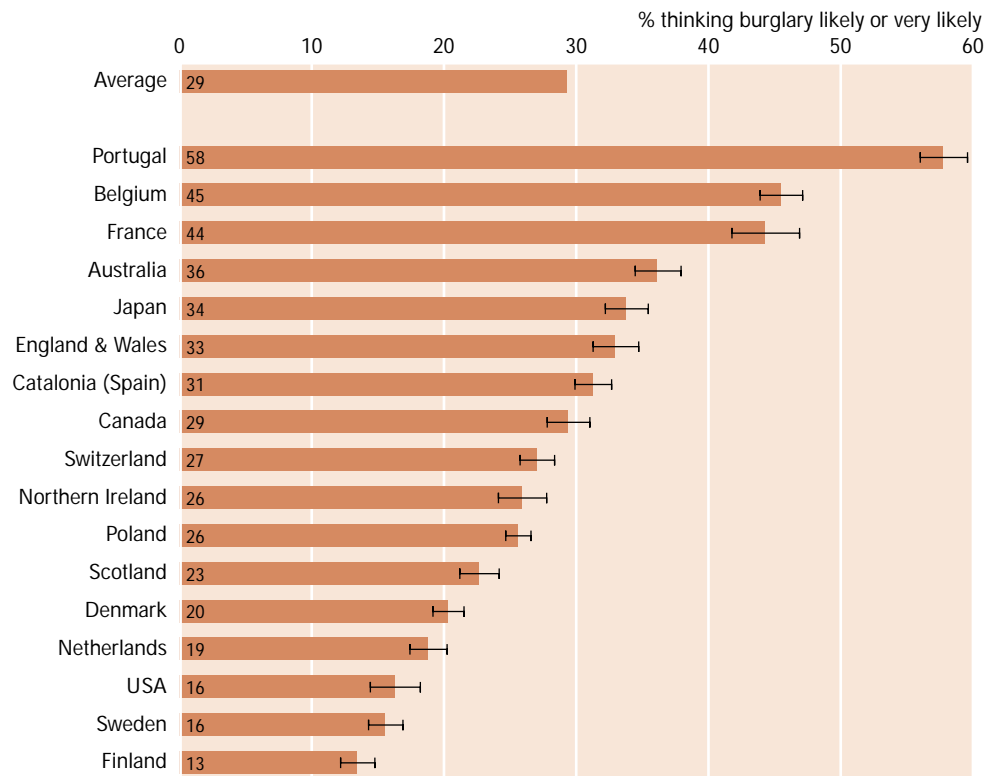
What of the relationship between people's concern about burglary and actual burglary risks at country and individual level? The ICVS has previously found that perceptions of the likelihood of burglary at national level are strongly related to national ICVS *risks* of burglary: i.e., countries where the highest proportion feel vulnerable to burglary in the coming year are those where risks are highest. In the 2000 sweep, the relationship was less strong when national burglary risks were compared with the proportion thinking those burglary was likely or fairly likely. This was mainly because there was comparatively higher levels of concern in Catalonia, France, Japan, and Portugal than the rankings on actual burglary levels. The relationship, however, was much stronger on the basis of those thinking burglary very likely.<sup>39</sup>

Whether there is undue wariness in countries where perceptions of risk are highest is not straightforward however. First, it is difficult to translate what people mean by

38 Taking those who thought burglary was 'very likely' gives a fairly similar picture. However, on this more restricted measure, concern in France was not quite as high relatively speaking, while in contrast those in the USA and the Netherlands ranked higher than on the broader-based measure. The same was true in Scotland (as was the case in 1996).

39 The Spearman correlation was 0.73 ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 16$ , based on incidence risks for burglary with entry and attempts).

Figure 12 Perception of the risk of burglary in the coming year



'very likely' or 'likely' into a quantified risk. For instance, the ICVS indicates that 3.6% of householders in the Netherlands in 1999 had a burglar get in, or try to get in their home, representing annual average odds for the 'typical' household of 1 in 28. But whether this equates with an assessment of 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' is simply unknown. Moreover, the proportion thinking that there is a fair chance they will be burgled is an overall national figure. There is no reliable way of assessing risks simply for the most anxious. The ICVS identifies a number of factors that influence risks (see Chapter 3), but it cannot accurately predict the likelihood of burglary for *particular* individuals whose residential and social circumstances might heighten vulnerability, or reduce it.

At the individual level, the 2000 ICVS results are in line with a considerable body of evidence from victim surveys conducted locally in different countries that personal experience of victimisation raises anxiety (see e.g. Killias and Clerici, 2000). Thus, taking all countries together, 27% of those who had *not* been burgled in the past five years said they thought they were likely to be burgled in the coming year. But this

**Table 17** Perceptions of the risk of burglary: percentage thinking burglary very likely or likely in the next year<sup>1</sup>

	1989	1992	1996	2000
Australia	44	↑ 47		36
Belgium	28	↑ 31		↑ 45
Canada	33	33	30	29 ↓ *
England & Wales	35	↑ 45	↓ 41	↓ 33
Finland	9	↑ 14	↓ 11	↑ 13
France	36		↑ 53	↓ 44
Netherlands	28	28	27	19
Northern Ireland	23		↑ 29	↓ 26
Poland		40	↓ 24	26 ↓ *
Scotland	30		↓ 28	↓ 23
Sweden		34	↓ 16	16
Switzerland	46		↓ 29	27
USA	31		↓ 23	↓ 16

<sup>1</sup> Countries that participated less than three times are omitted.

↑ and ↓ indicate that the difference compared to the previous survey is statistically significant (t-test; p<0.10).

↑ indicates an increase over the previous sweep; ↓ denotes a decrease.

\* indicates, where appropriate, that the difference with the 1992 survey is statistically significant (t-test, p<0.10).

rose to 47% for those who had been burgled once in 1999, and to a full 62% for those who had been burgled more than once. These results are shown at the end of this chapter in Table 20. (This also shows other relationships between victimisation experience and the various attitudes to crime considered in the chapter.) Table 28 in Appendix 4 also shows results for individual countries. The effect of burglary victimisation on concern about burglary is evident in each country (although results for France are a bit less clear-cut).

#### *Trends over time*

Table 17 shows results on feelings about the likelihood of burglary for countries that have participated in the ICVS at least three times. The ranking of countries is reasonably stable over the years. For example, those in France and England and Wales have been consistently more worried about the likelihood of burglary, as have those in Canada and Australia. Finland in contrast has shown relatively consistent low levels of worry, as has the USA at least in 1996 and 2000.

Concern about burglary has changed over time – essentially rising in general between 1989 and 1992, then falling. An exception is Belgium where there has been a statistically significant increase in concern, moving Belgium from a relatively aver-

age position to a high one in 2000. Another is Finland, where the trend has not been consistent, but where concern remains relatively low nonetheless.

Relating ICVS trends in national burglary levels to trends in worry about burglary shows a few inconsistencies at the level of individual countries, and sampling error could explain this to a degree. But the general tenor of results is that perceptions of the likelihood of burglary broadly match trends in ICVS burglary levels. Thus, for instance, there was a drop in concern about burglary between 1996 and 2000 in nine of the eleven countries with two relevant measures (with concern staying the same in Sweden and rising in Finland). In the nine countries in which concern fell, the actual likelihood of burglary also fell. Moreover, in the countries in which there was the strongest fall in concern since 1989, actual levels of burglary also fell more than on average.

## 5.2 Feelings of safety on the streets

Since 1992, the ICVS has asked the question below, often used in other crime surveys, to measure vulnerability to street crime:

‘How safe do you feel walking alone in your area after dark? Do you feel very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe or very unsafe?’

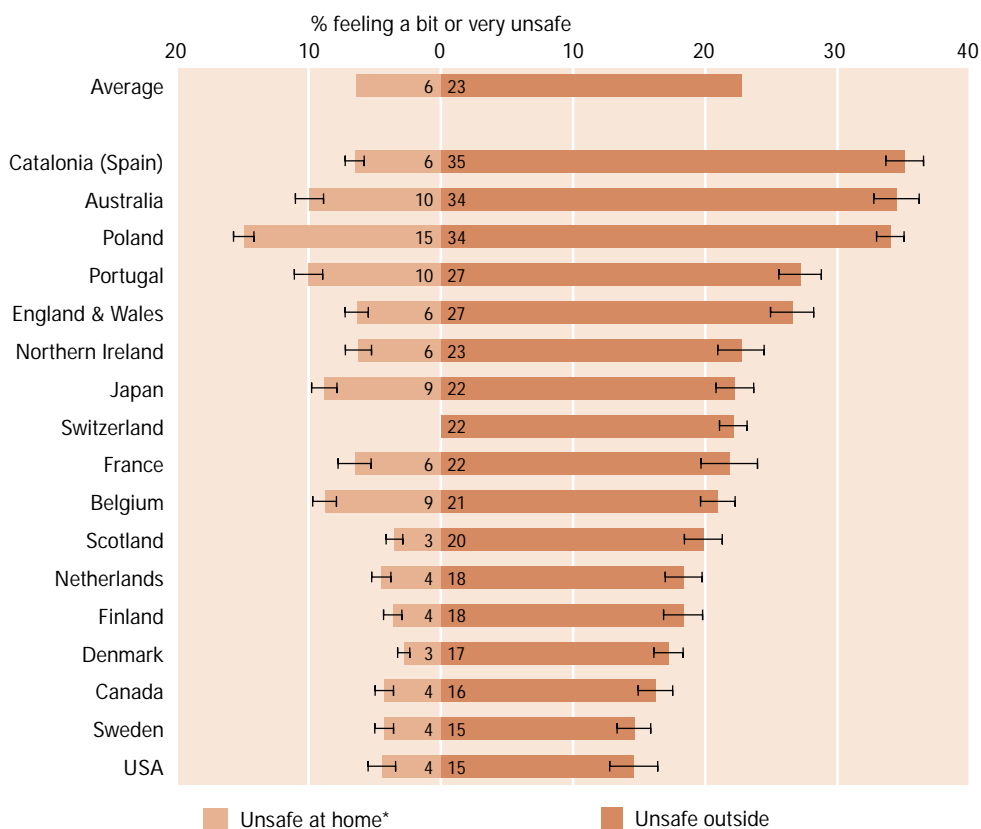
This question has typically been shown to paint a different picture of ‘fear of crime’ to that from questions which, for instance, ask about perceptions of risk. Typically, women and the elderly emerge as most fearful on this ‘street safety’ question. This may be because for some people the prospect of being out after dark evokes anxiety about a greater range of mishaps (e.g., accidents as well as crime). The question is also hypothetical for those who are rarely alone outside after dark – although interviewers were instructed to ask ‘how safe *would you* feel ...’ in such circumstances. For cross-country comparisons, though, exactly what the ‘street safety’ question measures is secondary insofar as it is likely to be similarly interpreted.

On average, just under a quarter felt very or a bit unsafe. Details are in Figure 13, which also shows results from a new question on safety at home – discussed below.

Those in Catalonia, Australia and Poland were most anxious about being out alone at night: about a third felt very unsafe or a bit unsafe. The next most fearful were those in Portugal, and England and Wales. By contrast, feelings of vulnerability on the streets at night were lowest in the USA, and Sweden, although there were several other countries with only marginally higher figures.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> The position as regards those who said they felt ‘very unsafe’ is reasonably similar. The main differences are that those in Catalonia, Portugal and Japan were relatively less fearful on this measure, while those in Switzerland and France were more so.

Figure 13 Concern about being out alone and at home after dark



Countries are sorted by 'unsafe outside'.

\* Results on safety at home are not available for Switzerland.

*Relationship with national risks and victimisation experience*

As has been the case in previous sweeps of the ICVS, this measure of street safety is not consistently related to levels of contact crime (robbery, sexual incidents, and assaults and threats).<sup>41</sup> In Catalonia and Portugal, for instance, risks are low, but fear of street is much higher than in Canada and Sweden, say, where actual national risks of contact crime are greater. One implication of the lack of much relationship between anxiety and risks is that fear of street crime may be influenced by specific 'cultural' pressures, such as media presentations of violent crime.

41 The Spearman correlation between the current measure of contact crime (prevalence risks) and the proportion feeling a bit or very unsafe on the streets is low ( $r=-0.31$ ; ns;  $n=17$ ).

**Table 18** Percentage feeling a bit or very unsafe alone after dark in their area<sup>1</sup>

	1992	1996	2000
Australia	31		↑ 34
Belgium	20		21
Canada	20	↑ 26	↓ 16 ↓ *
England & Wales	33	32	↓ 27
Finland	17	17	18
France		20	22
Netherlands	22	20	↓ 18
Northern Ireland		22	23
Poland	43	↓ 34	34 ↓ *
Scotland		26	↓ 20
Sweden	14	↓ 11	↑ 15
Switzerland		17	↑ 22
USA		25	↓ 15

<sup>1</sup> Countries that participated at least once before. This question was introduced in the 1992 survey.

↑ and ↓ indicate that the difference compared to the previous survey is statistically significant (t-test;  $p < 0.10$ ).

↑ indicates an increase over the previous sweep; ↓ denotes a decrease.

\* Indicates, where appropriate, that the difference with the 1992 survey is statistically significant (t-test,  $p < 0.10$ ).

At the individual level, there is some evidence of increased anxiety about street safety among victims of violence, but the relationship is much less strong than is the case with burglary discussed above. One reasons for this may be that while women and the elderly register most concern about street safety (Skogan, 1993), it is younger people and males who most often fall victim (see Chapter 3). Details are in Table 20, where the measure of contact crime is robbery, sexual incidents and assaults and threats.

#### *Trends over times*

There are several countries for which trends can be examined since 1992 (Table 18). The ranking of countries is relatively stable over the years.<sup>42</sup> Those in Poland, England and Wales and Australia consistently show the highest levels of unease, whereas those in Sweden and Finland show the least. The most pronounced changes between 1996 and 2000 have been in Canada, the USA and Scotland, where residents have become less fearful than they were previously compared to other countries. In contrast, Switzerland has moved from a low position to a relatively high one.

<sup>42</sup> The Spearman correlation between levels of fear in 1992 and 1996 was 0.94 ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 6$ ). Between 1992 and 2000 it was 0.81 ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 8$ ). It was weakest between 1996 and 2000 (0.43 ( $p = 0.19$ );  $n = 11$ ).

Overall, there has been a small fall in concern about street safety based on a comparison for six countries in three sweeps, and for 11 countries in the two most recent ones.<sup>43</sup> Since 1992, unease has fallen most in Poland, England and Wales, and albeit rather less so in Canada and the Netherlands. Since 1996, unease has fallen in the USA and Scotland, although it has risen in Switzerland.

There is little justification for relating these changes at country level to ICVS risks in contact crime since, as said, feelings of street safety do not relate well to measured risks. Moreover, the ICVS measure of contact crime over time is not especially robust due to low victimisation levels, and possible changes in the propensity of respondents to tell interviews about interpersonal crime. This said, there is some evidence that falls in feelings of insecurity have tracked falls in contact crime in Canada, Poland and the USA. In England and Wales, the Netherlands and Scotland, however, falls in fear have not been matched by falls in risks.

### 5.3 Safety at home

The 2000 ICVS introduced a new question about feelings of safety at home alone after dark; it was asked in all countries except Switzerland. The question was:

‘How safe do you feel when you are at home alone after dark? Do you feel very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe or very unsafe?’

A much smaller proportion of people feels unsafe at home after dark (6%) than they do on the streets (23%) – see Figure 13. Those in Poland felt most insecure at home (15% felt a bit or very unsafe), followed by Portugal, Japan, Australia and Belgium (9% to 10%).

At country level, there was a fairly close correspondence between feeling unsafe at home and on the streets.<sup>44</sup> The main differences were that those in Belgium were rather more afraid at home relative to other countries than was the case on the streets. In contrast, in Catalonia and Scotland, unease on the streets was higher compared to other countries than was unease at home.

#### *Relationship with national risks and victimisation experience*

There is perhaps some question as to what types of victimisation the safety at home question is measuring. Some people may be thinking of a burglar intruding. Others possibly have in mind domestic incidents, when a partner comes home late and the worse for wear. In any event, there was no statistically significant association at country level between national burglary risks and feelings of safety at home. The

43 The average proportion of those feeling very or a bit unsafe in the six countries in all three sweeps was 25% in 1992, 23% in 1996 and 21% in 2000. The average for the 11 countries in 1996 was 23%, falling to 21% in 2000.

44 The Spearman correlation is 0.84 ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 15$ ).

ICVS does not allow a robust enough measure of domestic violence at country level to test this.

At individual level, though, the proportion feeling unsafe at home was higher among victims of burglary than among non-victims – albeit the differential was less strong than with experience of burglary and perceiving burglary to be likely in the near future. For instance, 7% of non-victims felt unsafe at home after dark, but this rose to 13% for those who had been burgled once in 1999, and to 19% for the few who had been burgled more than once (see Table 20). There was also some increase in unease at home according to experience of contact crime.

#### 5.4 Security precautions

Since the 1992 ICVS, there has been a fairly consistent set of questions on measures taken against household property crime, in particular burglary. In all, eight home security issues were asked about in the 2000 ICVS (full details are in Table 26 in Appendix 4).

For some items, residential differences may play a bigger part than deliberate precautionary behaviour. For instance, very few householders in Denmark, Sweden, Japan and Poland said they had a 'high fence', whereas about a third in England and Wales and Australia did so. Having a caretaker or security guard on the premises was also more common in Belgium, Canada, Finland, and France (about 10% mentioned them), but was much less common in many other countries. Special grilles on doors and windows were also asked about, but this too may reflect 'architectural culture'. Grilles were uncommon for instance in Poland, Japan, and the Scandinavian countries, whereas they were said to be very common in Australia, England and Wales, and Scotland.

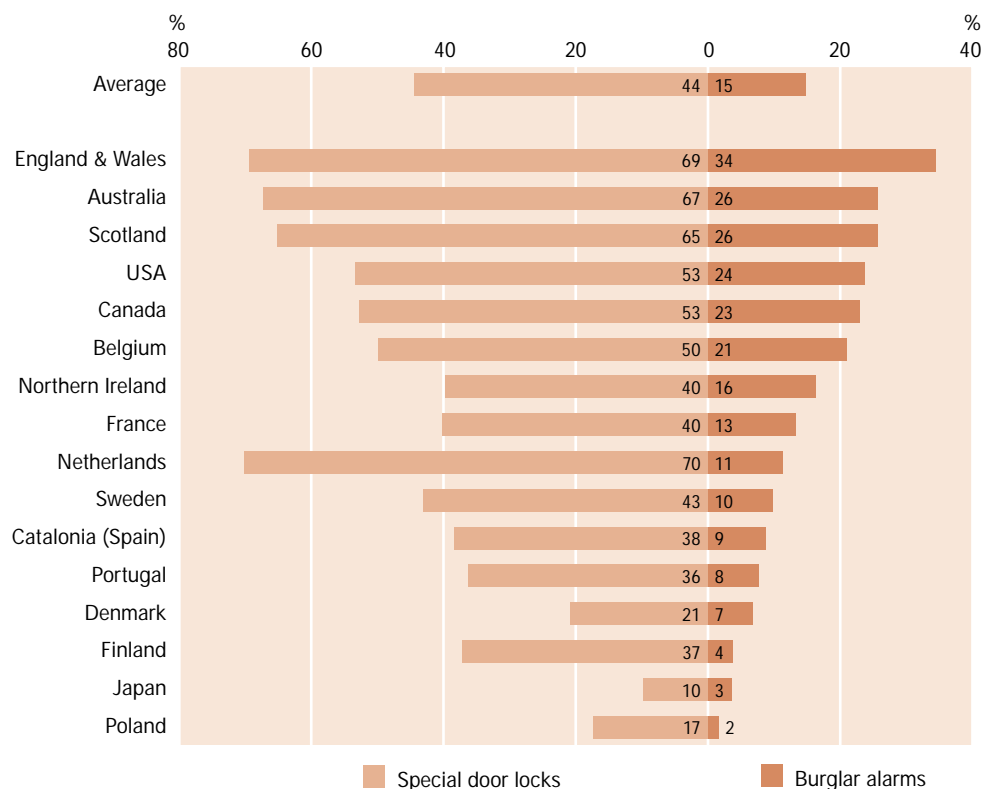
For this reason, we focus here on two items to assess the 2000 ICVS results: whether a burglar alarm was installed, and whether special (high-grade) door locks had been installed. The figures given are often high (see Table 26 in Appendix 4). It cannot be ruled out that some people claimed they had the security measures on account of residual mistrust about the credentials of the survey, or at least wariness about admitting to unknown interviewers that their homes were vulnerable.

Figure 14 shows that a full 34% of householders in England and Wales claimed they had a burglar alarm.<sup>45</sup> There were also above average levels of alarm ownership in Australia, Scotland, the USA, Canada and Belgium. Alarm ownership was very low in Poland, Japan, and Finland.

Approaching half (44%) of householders on average said they had special door locks. In general, householders in countries with the comparatively high alarm ownership

45 This is a higher figure than the 26% in the 2000 British Crime Survey (Kershaw et al., 2000).

Figure 14 Percentage of homes with burglar alarms and special door locks



Countries are sorted by 'burglar alarms':

also ranked comparatively high on special door locks. However, the Netherlands in particular was out of line. It had the highest proportion having special door locks, but a below average figure for alarms.

#### *Relationship with national risks and victimisation experience*

As has been the case in previous ICVS sweeps, levels of precaution at national level were positively related to national burglary risks:<sup>46</sup> i.e., those in countries facing higher risks were generally more likely to have alarms and special locks. The main differences were that Denmark and Poland came fairly low in terms of precautions taken, although burglary risks were comparatively high. In contrast,

46 The Spearman correlation was 0.64 ( $p < 0.10$ ;  $n = 16$ ).

those in Northern Ireland and Scotland were comparatively well-protected relative to their position on burglary risks.

To look at current levels of household protection in terms of victimisation experience would be misleading, because victims are likely to improve their protection directly as a response to having been burgled. Rather, one needs to take account of what level of security was in place at the time of a burglary. A set of questions in the 1996 ICVS (not repeated in 2000) addressed this in relation to burglar alarms.<sup>47</sup> For those with alarms installed at the time of the offence, 1.1% had a burglar enter the house, as against 1.8% of those without alarms – a statistically robust difference. For attempted burglaries, the picture was different. The level of risk for those with alarms at the time of an attempt was higher (2.1%) than for those without alarms (1.8%). This was taken to suggest that homes with alarms were likely to be more attractive targets, and thus targeted more often on that account. However, the figures also show that entry is more often thwarted. For those with an alarm at the time of the offence, entry was achieved in 35% of incidents, whereas for those without alarms the figures was higher, at 50% (Mayhew and Van Dijk, 1997). A similar relationship between countries with the highest security levels having a higher proportion of attempted burglaries was reported in Chapter 2.

#### *Trends over time*

There is reasonable stability in the figures over ICVS sweeps as regards relative levels of protection in different countries. But it is clear that security has increased in most. For instance, in six countries in the last three ICVS sweeps, average alarm ownership increase from 8% in 1992, to 11% in 1996, and to 14% in 2000. There have been particularly steep increases since 1992 in England and Wales, Australia, Canada and Belgium. The proportion of homes with special door locks has also generally increased since 1992, particularly in Belgium, Finland, Canada, and the Netherlands.

### **5.5 Attitudes to punishment**

The ICVS asked respondents what sentence they considered most appropriate for a recidivist burglar – a man aged 21 who is found guilty of burglary for the second time, having stolen a colour television. Table 19 shows the percentage opting for different sanctions. (Table 27 in Appendix 4 also shows results for other sweeps). A community service order was seen as the most appropriate sentence in the 16 countries overall providing results in the 2000 ICVS: 41% of respondents recom-

47 The questions allowed those who had a burglary at a previous address to be identified. These were deleted from analysis since it was not known whether an alarm was installed at those premises. A further simplification was to restrict analysis to those who had one burglary or attempt only, since to ascertain an 'alarm condition' for each victimisation would have been complex.

Table 19 Sentence preference for a young recidivist burglar (percentages): 2000 ICVS<sup>1</sup>

	Fine	Prison	Community service	Suspended sentence	Other sentence	Don't know	Average length of imprisonment (months) <sup>2</sup>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
USA	9	56	20	1	8	6	31
Northern Ireland	8	54	30	4	2	3	21
Scotland	11	52	24	5	4	4	21
Japan	17	51	19		1	13	38
England & Wales	7	51	28	5	4	5	24
Canada	9	45	32	4	7	3	23
Netherlands	11	37	30	10	5	6	19
Australia	8	36	46	3	3	4	27
Sweden	11	31	47	4	3	4	11
Portugal	9	26	54	1	6	4	23
Belgium	11	21	57	5	3	3	17
Poland	10	21	55	6	4	5	31
Denmark	9	20	50	13	4	4	7
Finland	15	19	46	16	2	2	8
France	8	12	69	5	2	5	14
Catalonia (Spain)	15	7	65	1	3	9	23
Average	11	34	41	6	4	5	34

1 Countries are ranked based on the percentage in favour of 'sending to prison'

2 Asked if prison sentence was recommended.

mended it.<sup>48</sup> It was the first choice of sentence in half of the countries, with particularly strong support in France (69% opting for it), Catalonia (65%) Belgium, Poland and Portugal (over 50%). There was, however, a fairly wide divergence of opinion: a community sentence was seen as most appropriate by only about 20% in Japan and the USA, and by under 30% in the UK.<sup>49</sup>

Imprisonment was recommended by 34% of respondents overall, and was the first choice in eight countries. There was again a wide divergence across countries. Support was highest in the USA, where 56% opted for it. Over 50% also favoured imprisonment in the UK, and Japan. Those in Catalonia (7%) and France (12%) were least in favour of imprisonment.

The length of sentence recommended did not track preference for having *some* prison sentence particularly well. Although those in the USA were both keenest on

48 There was no information for Switzerland. In 1996, the Swiss gave strong support to a community service order (61% opted for it), and weak support for imprisonment (9%).

49 The percentage opting for a community service order in Finland increased markedly after 1989, when they were introduced in Finland, suggesting that formal sentencing change can increase support for alternatives to imprisonment. Support has fallen back somewhat since 1992, although it is still higher than in 1989.

imprisonment and opted for the longest sentence (an average of 2.5 years), elsewhere there were divergences. For instance, those in Poland were not particularly supportive of imprisonment comparatively speaking, but those who favoured it recommended relatively long sentences. In Catalonia, too, the small proportion that favoured imprisonment also favoured long sentences. In the Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, those who favoured imprisonment tended to opt for a relatively short time in prison.

*Relationship with national burglary risks and victimisation experience*

ICVS results to date have shown that popular support for imprisonment is generally stronger in countries with higher risks of burglary. This was not evident from the 2000 ICVS results, although it remains so on the basis of 'meta' analysis in which the full range of industrialised countries in all sweeps is included (n=52). In 2000, the countries most out of line were Japan and Northern Ireland. Here, there was more support for imprisonment than national burglary levels would suggest. The same applied to Scotland, though to a lesser extent.<sup>50</sup>

As regards personal experience of burglary, there was a modest increase in support for imprisonment among those who had been a victim of burglary over the past five years (Table 20). Previous ICVS analysis has shown the same result, although in multivariate analysis being in an 'anglophone' country was of more import, as was a lower standard of education (Kuhn, 1993; Mayhew and Van Dijk, 1997).

*Trends over time*

For countries for which sentencing preferences can be examined over time, there is much consistency in opinion. For instance, of the ten countries with measures for both 1989 and 2000, rank order positions on support for imprisonment were near identical – with 'anglophone' countries most supportive (the USA, the UK, Australia and Canada). Comparing results for 1992 and 2000 (possible for eight countries), the picture is much the same, although those in Poland are relatively less in favour of imprisonment than they were, and those in the Netherlands more so. Country positions in 1996 and 2000 were generally similar (ten countries).

Community service shows slightly more shift over time. For instance, those in the Netherlands in 2000 were less in favour of a community sentence than they were in 1989. In contrast, there was more support in Belgium and Finland in 2000 than in 1989. Between the 1996 and 2000 ICVS sweeps, though, there was little change. Leaving aside changes in *relative* levels of support for different sentencing options, the 2000 ICVS show a general hardening of attitudes towards punishment. For instance, average support for imprisonment increased from 35% favouring it in

50 In contrast, given relative rankings on national burglary risks, the proportion favouring imprisonment was relatively low in Belgium, Australia, and Denmark.

Table 20 Reactions to crime, by victimisation experience: 2000 ICVS, all countries<sup>1</sup>

	Perceiving burglary as likely <sup>2</sup>	Feeling unsafe outside after dark <sup>3</sup>	Feeling unsafe at home after dark <sup>3</sup>	In favour of prison sentence for burglar
	%	%	%	%
<i>Victim of burglary</i>				
Non-victims <sup>4</sup>	27*	23*	7*	31*
Victims 2-5 years ago	44+	32+	12+	34
Victims once in 1999	47•	34•	13•	35
Victims more than once, 1999	62	40	19	37
<i>Victim of contact crime</i>				
Non-victims <sup>4</sup>	28*	23*	7*	31*
Victims 2-5 years ago	35	32+	10+	33
Victims once in 1999	36	31•	11	36
Victims more than once, 1999	36	38	13	36

1 For Switzerland only data on feeling unsafe outside was available. Other columns are based on 16 countries.

2 'Very likely' and 'fairly likely'.

3 'Very unsafe' and 'a bit unsafe'.

4 Not been victimised in the last five years.

\* Indicates that differences between any victim and non-victims are statistically significant.

+ Indicates that differences between victims 2-5 years ago and victims last year are statistically significant.

• Indicates that differences between single and multiple victims last year are statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  tests,  $p < 0.10$ ,  $df=1$ ).

1989, to 42% in 1996, and to 45% in 2000. (This is on the basis of seven countries in each sweep). Between 1996 and 2000, support for imprisonment increased from 34% to 38% (ten countries). The most marked switch since 1989 has been in Canada, England and Wales, Scotland, and the Netherlands. Support for imprisonment has also increased in Sweden since 1992.

Increase in support for imprisonment goes alongside a general decline in support for community sentences. For instance, community sentences were preferred by 36% in 1989 on average, down to 33% in 1996, and to 30% in 2000 (seven countries in each sweep). Between 1996 and 2000, support for a community service order fell from 41% to 38% (ten countries).

