

Conclusions

This report has presented the main findings of the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) in 17 industrialised countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Catalonia (Spain), Denmark, England & Wales, Finland, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA. This is the fourth sweep of the ICVS in industrialised countries. Fourteen countries reported on here have taken part at least once before. Catalonia (Spain), Portugal and Denmark were countries fresh to the 2000 ICVS. The standardised nature of the ICVS makes it a unique calibrator of crime in different countries. Standardisation involves the use of the same questionnaire, similar methods of sampling, and co-ordination of data management and analysis.

There was a summary of main findings at the beginning of this report. This chapter expands on a few particular ones: (i) the nature and level of victimisation in the industrialised countries covered here; (ii) trends in victimisation; (iii) reporting to the police; and (iv) services to victims. It finishes by considering (v) results from industrialised countries alongside those in developing countries and countries in transition; (vi) the status of the ICVS in the context of other approaches to international comparisons; and (vii) developments for the future.

6.1 Victimization in industrialised countries

Country positions

Chapter 2 put emphasis on what are conventionally called 'league tables'. Although points about the reliability of the ICVS, discussed fully in Chapter 1, need to be borne in mind here, we make only modest apology for this. Criminologists tend to want comparative research to take forward theories about crime, and those involved with the ICVS are counted among them. But the public, and local criminal justice administrators (the main funders of the ICVS) have a simpler agenda: to assess their own performance on crime in comparison with others.

One notable finding of the ICVS is the general consistency in country positions across sweeps for those countries that have participated more than once. The main patterns are:

- Countries that have consistently ranked high relative to others are Australia, the Netherlands, and England and Wales – although the England and Wales position in the first (1989) ICVS was more favourable.
- Countries that have consistently ranked lowest are Japan, Northern Ireland and Finland. Switzerland has also had a low ranking, though less so in 1995.

- Only Canada and the USA have changed position markedly. They had comparatively high crime rates in 1989, but falls in victimisation mean that they now have lower rates, comparatively speaking.

The general consistency of country positions over sweeps adds to the credibility of the ICVS, despite relatively small sample sizes (usually 2,000 in each country).

The make-up of crime

An important feature of the ICVS is that it shows the contours of 'normal' victimisation against households. This has implications for preventive policies, especially those concerned more with alleviating the commonplace nuisance of crime than with reducing the number of 'headline' offences that more often appears in police statistics because of higher reporting and recording levels. Thus, Chapter 2 showed for instance that:

- Taking all countries together, car vandalism forms a full quarter of crimes experienced by ICVS respondents – and more in Catalonia, Portugal, France and Scotland. In truth, incidents are not regarded as particularly serious, though victims will still want them not to have happened. They are relatively infrequently brought to police attention (overall, only four incidents in ten were).
- Policies focused on preventing car crime as a whole will make a substantial impact on the burden of ordinary victimisation on householders. Car vandalism, theft from cars, and thefts of cars (the most frequently reported) comprise over 40% of ICVS crimes measured, and much more in Catalonia and Portugal.
- Bicycle theft is generally not well reported to the police, but it comprises a significant part of the crime problem in countries with high bicycle ownership. Those concerned with crime policy in Japan, Denmark and the Netherlands in particular should accept the challenge of reducing this particularly common type of theft.
- Contact crime – robbery, sexual incidents and assault and threats – comprise about a quarter of the crimes measured. Most of them are assaults and threats. These offences will feature much less in the police count of crime, despite the fact that their victims regard even threats moderately seriously.

Poland

To date, Poland has been mainly included within Central and Eastern Europe 'countries in transition' in analysis of ICVS results. It was covered as one of the 17 industrialised countries here as results were available, it is economically advanced, and it has adopted the ICVS questionnaire and methodology at national level. Its inclusion has added breadth. Results for Poland worth singling out are:

- Victimization rates are relatively high, particularly for car-related crime, thefts of personal property (including pickpocketing), and robbery.

- Recovery of stolen cars was the lowest observed, with fewer than half of victims getting their car back – a different pattern from the dominant one.
- Since 1992, overall risks have stayed much the same, whereas there have generally been falls elsewhere.
- The level of reporting to the police is still relatively very low, despite an increase in reporting since 1992. Among those who did report, satisfaction with the police response was poor, and both victims and non-victims assessed overall police performance less favourably than in most other countries (albeit attitudes have become more favourable since 1996).
- Concern about street safety was very high relatively speaking – though again with some improvement since 1992. And those in Poland had by far the most disquiet about safety at home after dark.
- Levels of home security were low compared to other countries, although risks of burglary were no more than average.
- Poland was the only country where corruption was mentioned with any frequency (by one in twenty).

Some other points about ICVS findings for industrialised countries in general compared to countries in transition and developing countries are returned to later.

6.2 Trends in crime victimization

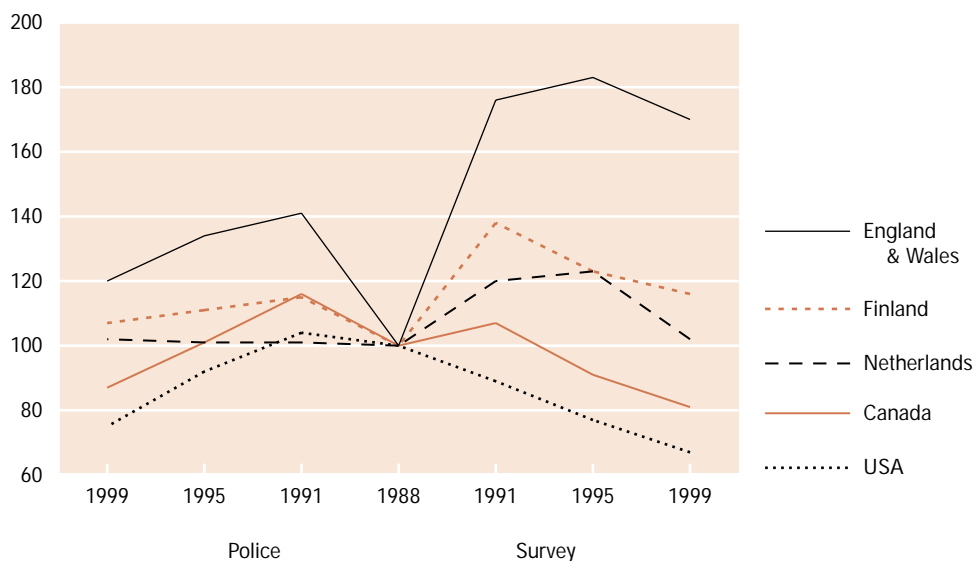
The ICVS has been carried out more than once in the majority of the seventeen industrialised countries considered here. Countries have re-entered the survey to align with others in the ongoing sweep rather than to provide any solid indicator of trends over time. ICVS information on trends nonetheless merits inspection.

The main points from Chapter 2 were that:

- Generally speaking, the ICVS suggests that crime rose between 1988 and 1991, stabilised or fell in 1995, then fell back more in 1999. This is the dominant pattern in many individual countries.
- The picture in North America differs from that in Europe. Crime levels are lower than in 1988. In the three European countries with four ICVS measures (England and Wales, Finland, and the Netherlands), crime levels are still higher than in 1988. Compared to 1991, risks also fell more in North America than in five of the seven European countries showing falls.
- Since 1995, there has been more consistent falls in property crime. Changes in contact crime are variable.

We return to trends here by looking at the picture of crime recorded by the police as well as the ICVS. The per capita rate of *all* offences recorded by the police is taken. The constituents of this rate will vary by country, but for considering trends this is not important as long as the constituent parts have not changed over time, and

Figure 15 Police and survey trends, five countries: 1988-1999 (index 1988=100)



changes in recording practices can be accounted for. Thirteen countries are considered who have taken part in the ICVS at least three times.

For this analysis, we use ICVS incidence risks since they are a more complete measure of all crimes experienced. They cover crimes covered by all four sweeps, excluding threats (from within the assaults and threats category) and offensive sexual behaviour (from within the sexual incidents category). This is because (i) these are unlikely to be counted as 'crimes' by the police, and (ii) they are more likely to be susceptible to changes in the propensity to report to interviewers over time. This has involved some estimation.⁵¹

We look first at the five countries that have taken part in all four sweeps. We then turn to four other countries that have measures for 1988, 1995 and 1999. (As explained, ICVS risk levels are for the year prior to the survey.) Finally, mention is made of countries with an ICVS measure for 1999 and other variants of previous years.

51 The ICVS does not allow for precise 'last year' incidence risks of sexual assaults (ie, sexual incidents less offensive sexual behaviour) or assaults with force, (ie, assaults, less threats). Results on the ratio of the prevalence levels for (i) sexual assaults to all sexual incidents, and (ii) assaults with force to all assaults and threats were applied to incidence level risk for the two categories taken as a whole. Some additional estimation has also been applied for the USA in 1992 for which incidence level data were not available. Estimates for seven crimes in Switzerland in 2000 were also made.

Five countries: 1988, 1991, 1995, and 1999

Figure 15 presents changes in crime between 1989 and 1999 in England and Wales, Finland, Netherlands, Canada, and the USA according to both police figures and the ICVS. Both police and survey figures are indexed at 100 for 1988 to ease comparisons.

There is some symmetry in the trends since 1988 in the five countries. On both measures, crime levels rose between *1988 and 1991*, the USA being an exception on surveys figures, and the Netherlands on police figures. The steepest rise was in England and Wales, according to both measures.

Between *1991 and 1995*, police figures fell in all countries except the Netherlands, where they were stable. The fall in Finland too was fairly marginal. On ICVS figures, risks in the USA, Canada and Finland fell, and they stabilised somewhat in England and Wales and the Netherlands.

Between *1995 and 1999*, police figures fell in all countries, except the Netherlands where they remained the same. The ICVS indicates falls in all countries. (Figures for England and Wales for 1999 have been adjusted to take account of an inflationary effect of changes to police 'counting rules' introduced in 1998.)

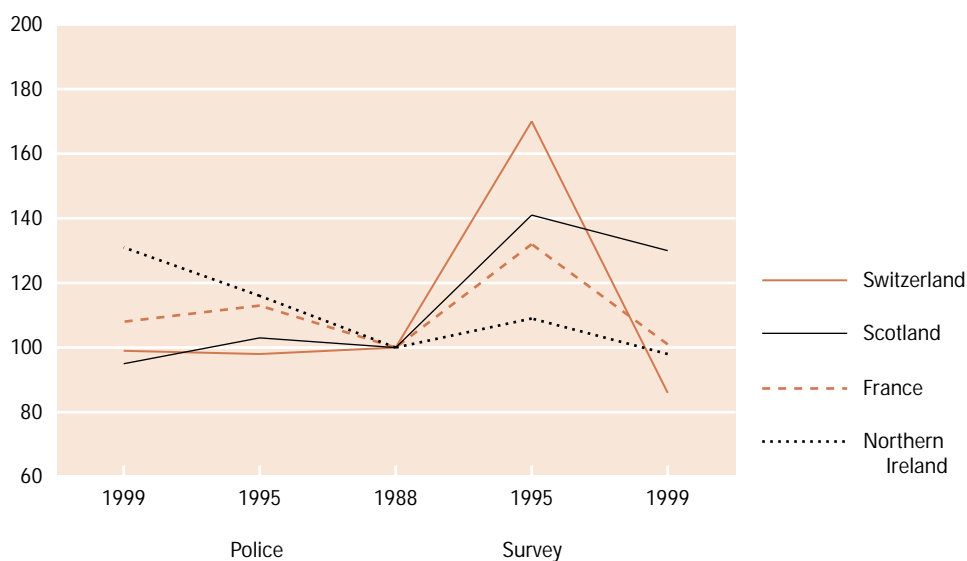
One would not necessarily expect exact correspondence between the two sets of figures.

- For one, the ICVS profile of offences is rather different from that in police figures, with the ICVS including a greater proportion of less serious and less often reported offences.
- Secondly, the rather less marked swings in police figures may reflect a greater number of recorded violent crimes. In the 13 countries considered in this section, violence has increased over the 1990s in all except Canada and the USA.⁵² This may signify a 'real' increase, although it may also reflect the fact that the police in many countries are *recording* more violence (especially related-party incidents). Police figures for the Netherlands, for instance, show a drop of more than 20% in burglary since 1995, whereas violent crime has risen by a third.
- Thirdly, the less marked swings in police figures may also reflect some degree of change in reporting behaviour by victims.⁵³

52 Violence here is a combination of figures for violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery, taken together. They have been largely on statistics compiled by Barclay and Tavares (2001).

53 For instance, the ICVS showed a drop in reporting to the police between 1991 and 1995 in the Netherlands, which is consistent with the much flatter trend in police figures – ie, the police may have fewer crimes known to them to record. Reporting levels have also fallen in England and Wales since 1991 (in line with British Crime Survey results).

Figure 16 Police and survey trends, four countries: 1988-1999 (index 1988=100)



Four countries: 1988, 1995 and 1999

There are three ICVS measures for Switzerland, Scotland, France, and Northern Ireland – for 1988, 1995 and 1999. Figure 16 shows the trends, with figures for 1988 again indexed at 100. Because of missing information, it is not possible of course to judge whether there were higher crimes levels in 1991 (as was shown in Figure 15 for the other five countries), with the 1995 levels representing a fall from that date. Nonetheless, a notable feature of Figure 16 is the falls in survey-measured risks since 1995, and the falls in police measures in Scotland and France.

Northern Ireland and Switzerland merit comment. The increase in police figures in *Northern Ireland* between 1995 and 1999 are out of line with other countries. However, police recording changes may be an issue. Adjustments were made to account for changes to police ‘counting rules’ introduced in 1998 (as in England and Wales). It is not possible, though, to take as full account of all the inflationary effect of these changes as in England and Wales – so some are likely to remain. The larger increase in recorded crime between 1988 and 1995 than in the ICVS is consistent with a rise in reporting to the police. Reporting continued to increase between 1995 and 1999, and this may be another factor in the rise in police figures in 1999.

Switzerland shows a very high ICVS count in 1995, and a much lower one in 1999. This was mainly due to a sharp drop in motorcycle and bicycle thefts – common in Switzerland. The pattern is not reflected in the police figures. However, crime recording is not standardised throughout the country and for parts of Switzerland

only reflect cleared cases. Killias et al. (2000) show police data for theft of personal property, bicycle theft and burglary also show higher crime rates for 1995, although not as extreme as in the ICVS.

One factor behind the rise in victimisation in Switzerland in the mid-1990s may have been the high prevalence of drug-related crime. Since then, a new drug policy (making methadone and heroin available to perhaps three-quarters of heroin users) has been shown in local studies to have considerably cut offending among addicts. Moreover, Switzerland experienced gangs operating from Eastern Europe during the mid 1990s, though these have now declined due probably to changing conditions in Eastern retail markets.

Trends for other countries are commented upon next.

Australia and Belgium: 1988, 1991 and 1999

According to the ICVS, risks increased in *Australia* in 1991 in line with most other countries) and then fell back in 1999 (by about 10% on 1991) – again consistent with the dominant picture. Police figures also increased between 1988 and 1991, but unlike many countries elsewhere have further increased since. Increased reporting levels according to the ICVS are at least consistent with this.

In *Belgium*, ICVS risks were much the same in 1991 as in 1988, but they then rose fairly modestly (by 7%) in 1991. Substantial changes to the collection of police figures in Belgium in the mid-1990s make comparisons over time difficult.

Poland and Sweden: 1991, 1995 and 1999

ICVS risks in *Poland* have remained much the same since 1991 (the fractional fall not being statistically robust). Recorded crime in Poland has risen substantially since 1991, although better police administrative systems cannot be ruled out.

Sweden is singular in ICVS terms in having had a fairly sharp increase in crime between 1991 and 1995, and a continuing – though much shallower – one since. (Risks are 26% higher in 1999 than in 1991 on the current measure.) Police figures are more in line with the picture from other countries, with levels lower in 1995 than in 1991, albeit no further decrease in 1999.

In sum, then, there is not an *entirely* neat picture as regards trends in crime in these 13 industrialised countries, either as regards ICVS measures themselves, or their correspondence with crimes recorded by the police. Nonetheless, the broad picture is striking. Both ICVS and police figures suggest that overall levels of crime seem to have peaked in many countries in the early 1990s, and fallen since then. Because of volatility in ICVS measures of violent crime due to small numbers, no attempt has been made to differentiate trends in violence as opposed to property crime – though certainly the picture for property crime alone is more consistently downward. Police figures for violence, as said, have increased over the 1990s in all except Canada and the USA – although some recording ‘inflation’ may an issue here. Figures for

domestic burglary have fallen since 1993, for instance, in all 13 countries except Switzerland and Australia. Thefts of motor vehicles have fallen in six out of eleven countries for which there are figures.

It is clearly difficult to explain these widespread falls coming as they do after fairly universal upswings in property crime during the 1970s and 1980s. There is little insight as yet (indeed few criminologists have so far even acknowledged the differing pattern – though see Killias and Aebi, 2000). The drop in crime in America, which has been sharper and started earlier than in Europe, has attracted more scrutiny, but no real consensus. Blumstein and Wollman (2000) provide elegant explanations for the drop in violence in the USA since the early 1990s – focussing for instance on gun control efforts, the decline of crack cocaine, increasing imprisonment rates, and economic buoyancy. But their analysis lacks any international dimension – even for instance reference to the fact that violence trends in Canada have been favourable (though not as favourable) against a rather different backcloth. Moreover, the drop in violence is not set within the context of the longer-term fall in property crime in the USA, which would demand consideration of a rather different set of explanatory variables.

There is no parsimonious explanation of the broader trends considered above, but some of the factors worth considering are mentioned briefly (and in some cases speculatively) below:

- *Demographics factors.* There has been a general ‘ageing’ of populations in Western Europe and North American with a drop in the number of young men in the most crime-prone age groups. The general consensus is that demographic effects play only a part in influencing crime trends, but some part nonetheless.
- *Improved security.* The ICVS has shown clear evidence that the penetration of household security measures has increased, particularly since the 1992 survey. This may be very pertinent to the fairly consistent and marked drops in burglary in police figures mentioned above. Similar improvements in security measures and precautionary behaviour taken against other forms of crime (e.g., bicycle theft) would be consistent with falling risks as most crimes recorded by the police and registered by the ICVS involve property. Householder’s behaviour is of course not the only issue. There has been more attention to ‘designing out’ crime from physical environments, both by social landlords and others (e.g., car manufacturers). A challenge to this argument is that one would have expected security to have increased as much before 1991 as after it, given the increasing crime levels of the late 1980s. It may be, though, that there has been a ‘step change’ sufficiently large to make an impact.
- *Police performance.* Police performance in many countries could have improved substantially recently – although again this might have to be a ‘step change’

since many current policing strategies were also evident in the 1980s, when crime trends were less favourable. Different countries are likely to have employed different techniques, but to the extent that they share a common base of more targeted and pro-active policing, and better technological solutions such as CCTV and forensic science for instance, a contribution from policing cannot be ruled out.

- *Sanctions.* That harsher criminal justice policies underlie the international experience seems hard to sustain. Thus, while some US commentators have held the floor in seeing the US record as due to a substantial increase in imprisonment rates, Europe provides a counter to this since there have been marked variations in imprisonment trends not particularly consistent with the idea that heavier sanctions underlie the reduction in property crime (Aebi et al., 1999). Imprisonment apart, Killias and Aebi (2000) compute a European average for changes in the probability of conviction for offenders known to the police between 1990 and 1996. This shows that the likelihood of conviction has fallen for most offences in most countries (Killias and Aebi, 2000). This again offers little support for the idea that reducing crime levels have come about because of criminal justice system activities.
- *Economic effects.* The current favourable economic climate in North America and Western Europe, with low levels of unemployment and relatively high economic growth may also have depressed levels of property crime, by reducing the need for the proceeds of crime (cf. Field, 1990). It might also be that the tradable value of some stolen goods has declined because of a fall in the price in real terms of items such as TVs, videos and in-car entertainment systems.
- *Drugs.* The use of illegal drugs in the general population is slowly increasing in Europe (EMCDDA, 2000), although this largely involves growing recreational use of cannabis. Bennett's research with arrestees in the UK suggests that cannabis use is associated with a slight inflation in criminal involvement, but the relationship is fairly weak and might be confounded by other factors. Rather, the rise in use of cannabis alongside the drop in property crime would support the notion that regular cannabis use blunts the attractions of offending. This is a 'long shot' but not entirely without empirical support (Johnson et al., 2000). The link between use of hard drugs and offending is much more clearly attested. One issue here, then, is whether the falling street price of hard drugs has dampened criminal demand, as less money needs to be raised to sustain a drug habit.
- *Culture change.* Finally, and most speculatively of all, it is conceivable that intricate cultural and social change is at work. It is tall order to document this, but not preposterous to wonder whether change is operating in some way to 'civilise' at least at the margins those who in the past would have offended, or whether crime is simply becoming a less fashionable pursuit for high-risk age groups.

6.3 Reporting to the police

Non-reporting

Across the 17 industrialised countries overall, only half of the offences that ICVS victims experienced were reported to the police. The proportion reported was highest for stolen vehicles, and nearly eight out of ten burglaries with entry were made known to the police. About two-thirds of thefts from cars and bicycle thefts were reported, but on average only nearly half of attempted burglaries and robberies were. About four in ten incidents of theft of personal property, car vandalism and attempted burglary were reported, and about three in ten incidents of threats and sexual assaults.

There is, then, a substantial 'dark figure' of crime not captured in police statistics simply because many offences are not drawn to police attention at all. The varying reporting rates *across* offence types means, of course, that the picture of crime drawn by police statistics will differ from the picture of 'crime on the ground'. Results in Chapter 3 showed that offences regarded more seriously by their victims were more often reported. The police picture, then, will better reflect these, although not completely by any means since more than a quarter of offences rated most seriously were *not* reported.

Variations in reporting

The 'dark figure' of unreported crime in different countries will differ given variations in reporting levels in the industrialised countries. On the basis of six crime types taken to look at differences, reporting rates varied fairly considerably.⁵⁴ About 60% of incidents were reported in Denmark and Sweden, Northern Ireland, and the Netherlands, about 50% in Belgium, England and Wales, Switzerland, France and Scotland, but less than 40% in Portugal, Japan, Catalonia, and Poland. To some extent this might be due to differences in the types of crimes experienced in the countries. But it may also reflect other factors to do with confidence in the police and public perceptions of how far they are likely to help. High reporting rates improve effective crime prevention and control since the chances of arresting offenders and obtaining a conviction largely depend on information supplied by victims.

54 The six crime types were: thefts from cars, car vandalism, bicycle theft, burglary with entry, attempted burglary, and thefts of personal property. These were chosen as reporting rates were variable, and/or experience of victimisation was comparatively high.

6.4 Servicing victims

The police

A feature of criminal justice policy in many countries over the past two decades has been increasing recognition of the interests, rights and needs of victims. One consequence of this has been that many police agencies have tried to improve their response when victims report crime. There is good sense in this as for the vast majority of victims the police is the single most important agency representing the criminal justice system, and indeed the only one with which most victims will they have contact. Another development has been the growth of specialised support agencies.

In many countries, about seven in ten victims were satisfied with the police response when they reported property crime, although the figure was somewhat lower when contact crime was involved. This may be because, having been at the scene, victims felt more involvement. It could also be, though, that reporting property crime has often rather more to do with insurance considerations than with expectations that the police would or could be able to do much.

But there was disparity in satisfaction levels. Highest levels were in Denmark, Catalonia and Switzerland, with figures in several other countries not far behind. Satisfaction was lowest in Portugal, Poland, France and Japan. Different cultural expectations of the police may be one factor here, but a more obvious one is real differences in the demeanour and efficiency of the police.

Another finding of note was that victims who reported crimes they rated most seriously said the police response was less good than victims reporting less serious crimes. Van Dijk (2000b) has also shown that repeat victims are also more dissatisfied. It seems unlikely that the police actually do a poorer job when 'serious' or repeat crimes are reported. More likely is that victims have higher expectations of how the police should have reacted. Nonetheless, there are lessons for the police here in understanding which types of crime are most seriously regarded: namely, car thefts, sexual and other assaults, robberies with weapons, and burglary with entry. In general there was relatively little change in satisfaction levels between the 1996 and 2000 ICVS sweeps. This may mean either that there has been no improvement. Or, more probably, it could indicate that the police have to 'run to stand still' to cope with increasing expectations from service users. The main complaint, as in previous ICVS sweeps, was that the police 'did not do enough', and 'were not interested'. The message is clear for police agencies everywhere.

Victim support

There has been an undoubted growth in specialised services to victims since the early 1980s, and previous sweeps of the ICVS have indicated an increasing proportion of victims receiving help. This round of the survey did not show further

evidence of this (Northern Ireland was an exception), although ICVS estimates are somewhat too fragile to mount a strong case that there is stagnation in victim support.

As before, support was more often given to victims of contact crimes (10% were offered help across the 17 countries overall) than to victims of burglary (5%). And as before again, victims in the UK seemed best provided for – although there was also comparatively good support for victims in the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, the USA, and Denmark. Services to those in Portugal, Japan, Finland, France and Poland lagged most behind.

Many more than actually received help said they would have welcomed it (around one in three burglary victims, and four in ten victims of contact crime). Most need was expressed by those in Catalonia, Poland, Portugal, Japan, and Northern Ireland (despite the relatively high level of help actually given). In many countries the gap between provision and expressed need was greater for burglary than contact crime: exceptions were the UK and Catalonia, where more burglary victims were helped than average.

6.5 Comparisons with countries in transition and developing countries

There is no attempt here to provide anything like a full account of ICVS results to date regarding patterns and levels of victimisation from a global perspective (sources for this are Alvazzi del Frate et al., 2000; Van Dijk, 2000a and 2000b; Van Dijk and Kangaspunta, 2000; and Zvekic, 1998 and 2000.) Rather, we simply give a flavour of how the present results from industrialised countries sit in broader context. The comparisons draw on results for industrialised and other countries prior to the 2000 ICVS sweep.

A broader ICVS perspective is important since most theories of crime and people's responses to it have been generated from crime dynamics in the industrialised world. Countries in transition and developing countries have in the nature of things added rather little because of lack of reliable information. The various disparities between industrialised countries and the rest of the world are also important in strengthening the case for criminal justice assistance to countries with poorer resources.

Thus, ICVS results for world global regions have shown for instance that:⁵⁵

55 These analyses have typically taken the world 'regions' of: Western Europe, the New World (the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand); Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Results from counting within these regions have usually been combined. All countries are usually given equal statistical weight. To enable comparisons between national and city surveys, the former are restricted to respondents living in localities of 100,000 or more inhabitants.

- The highest victimisation risks across a range of offences were generally in Latin American and (sub Saharan) Africa. Risks in countries in transition were higher than in the industrialised countries, but there was some variation within them. Risks in Asia were lowest of all.
- Thus, the ICVS overturns much traditional literature on ‘crime and modernisation’ – based on police counts – which posits that property crime is higher in developed countries because of greater volume and value of material goods, which itself generates property crime (e.g., Shelley, 1981). This idea clearly needs revisiting. The burden of ICVS results is that less developed countries have lower rates of property crime because of less police efficient recording systems, and less frequent reporting by victims (see below).
- The gender difference in risks of interpersonal assaultive crime is much wider in less developed countries where women are substantially more at risk than men – especially in Latin American, Africa and Asia. A number of analyses have related ICVS findings here to measures of gender inequality and economic hardship among young men.
- Repeat victimisation, which has attracted much criminological and policy interest in developed countries recently, is common worldwide. It is particularly pronounced in Latin America and Africa (van Dijk, 2000b).
- While not a significant problem in industrialised countries, as seen, street level corruption (attempts at bribery by public officials) is highest in Latin America and Asia, with countries in transition on a par with Africa.⁵⁶
- Victims in industrialised countries are more likely to report to the police. Reporting levels are generally lowest of all in Latin American countries (Argentina being an exception), followed by Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and then Africa. The greatest disparity in reporting levels between the developed countries and the rest is with regard to property crime. Lack of insurance – and the need to report to the police to facilitate claims – may be one issue here.
- Differences in reporting levels underscore the point that police figures on crime levels in developing countries and countries in transition seriously underestimate real levels of crime. The ‘dark figure’ of property crime would seem to be especially large.
- Satisfaction with the police after reporting crime was considerably lower outside the industrialised world. One reason for this may be that with lower insurance levels, the police bear more of the brunt of victims’ frustration about financial losses. General assessments of police performance were also considerably lower

⁵⁶ Additional questions were added to the 2000 ICVS questionnaire for countries in transition and developing countries. These focus on who was told about the attempts at corruption, why victims did not report, and whether those who did were satisfied. There was also more specificity about the type of official involved, and whether corruption levels have changed compared to ten years ago.

outside the industrialised world. There was the least confidence in the police in Latin America and countries in transition.

- Compared to developed countries, expressed need for specialised victim support was extremely high in Asia and Africa. It was also higher in countries in transition and Latin America. While some victims of property crime in less affluent countries may see support as an avenue of financial redress, the fact that the pattern is similar for contact crime suggests other underlying deficiencies in the responses of the police and other agencies.

6.6 The current status of the ICVS

The ICVS is by now an established criminological data source, covering 24 industrialised countries, and another 46 cities in Eastern and Central Europe and developing countries. Certainly, many of the surveys have been small in scale, and have been done at varying times since 1989. Nor has complete standardisation been achieved in all surveys – particularly those in less developed countries where the potential value of new information has led local sponsors to substitute their own victim survey agenda at the expense of strict ICVS consistency. Nonetheless, the breadth of ICVS coverage is striking.

The value of the ICVS is reflected in growing interest from key international agencies. ICVS results, for instance, have featured in the *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics*, sponsored by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 1999). They have also featured in HEUNI's ambitious attempt to construct a multi-source picture of crime in different countries drawing on the ICVS, the United Nations World Crime Survey, and a number of other data sources (see Newman, 1999; Kangaspunta et al., 1998).⁵⁷ The World Health Organisation's *Global Atlas of Violence* has also drawn on ICVS results (WHO, 1999). ICVS information on levels of street corruption has been linked to (and found to be highly correlated with) other data from Transparency International and the International Institute for Management Development, which collects information on improper business practices.

Both the Council of Europe and HEUNI initiatives try to document the extent of *non-standardisation* in administrative crime statistics – through, for instance, explaining in detail how offences are defined, and how offence coverage differs. This does much to highlight the hazards of comparing police *levels* of crime in different countries – hazards that apply across a broad range of offences, even those (such as burglary) that might seem relatively unproblematic. It also helps more informed comparisons

57 HEUNI is the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control affiliated with the United Nations. The World Crime Survey information used was that from the Fifth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems 1990-1994.

of *trends* over time using police statistics insofar as changes in offence definitions, counting practices etc are pointed out.

International comparisons of police statistics may in the future, then, be better explained to researchers and others, and thus less liable to mislead. The ICVS survey-based approach will nonetheless continue to be vital as an alternative comparative measure since (i) consistency will be maintained in measuring victimisation; (ii) it covers both unreported and unrecorded offences; and (iii) offers pointers as to change in levels of reporting by victims, which will of course have a bearing on how much crime the police have available to them to record. The ICVS will also remain the best survey-based approach to international comparisons since there is no evidence that independently organised national victimization surveys are being brought more into line: indeed, if anything the opposite is true.

6.7 The future

Country coverage

The ICVS in industrialised countries has now settled into a 4-year cycle. The next target, then, is for a repeat in 2004. If the ICVS continues to be energetically sustained, it will for one provide good coverage of the European Union. To date, all but three of the fifteen member states have participated in the ICVS at national level, albeit some not recently. And of the thirteen Central and Eastern European countries waiting to join, there have been ICVS sweeps in eleven: eight at city level, and three at national level.⁵⁸

One issue for the future is what countries should be included in the industrialised group. The issue of 'grouping' of countries might be formalised by adopting major world aggregates from international organisations. (According to the United Nations, for example, 'industrialised' countries include all European, North American and CIS countries, plus Australia, Japan and New Zealand (a total of 47 countries). Another approach might be the adoption of the developmental perspective, using the UNDP classification that ranks countries as high, medium and low on the Human Development Index.

More globally, while the ICVS has taken reasonably firm hold in industrialised countries, there is more progress to be made in developing countries that account for such a sizeable proportion of the world's population. This is a particular challenge for the future since survey methodology is poorly developed, and local funding is scarce.

58 Of the current member states, Greece, Luxembourg and Ireland have not been in the ICVS. Of the countries waiting to join, there has been no coverage of Cyprus, Turkey or Luxembourg. The three countries with national surveys are the Czech Republic, Estonia and Slovenia.

Links with other comparative information

In the same way that other databases of international information on crime have drawn on the ICVS, so too should the ICVS be fully cognisant of other data sources. It would be useful for the main ICVS database to have as many related crime indices as possible included. Some analyses of ICVS results have already drawn on 'external' social and economic indicators, such as GDP, and women's employment rates. These could be usefully expanded. (The proportion of one-parent families might be one interesting measure. Police per capita and likelihood of conviction might be others – the latter, though, much more problematic than the former.)

There are plans in hand for a comparative International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) drawing on the administrative and data management lessons of the ICVS, as well as the content of 'bespoke' surveys of victimisation of women recently developed for instance in Canada, Australia, and the USA. The IVAWS, to be co-ordinated by HEUNI, UNICRI and Statistics Canada, will clearly be an important counterpoint to the ICVS as regards the level and nature of assaultive crime that women experience.

The ICVS content

Maintaining consistency of measurement in the ICVS is a significant constraint on changing the questionnaire. Another is the need to keep the length of interviews within reasonable bounds, both to prevent increases in fieldwork costs, and to maintain response rates. This said, there is probably some scope for considering whether all questions are 'earning their keep', and if they are not, what might be better substitutes.

Probably the most problematic area of measurement in the ICVS concerns assaults and sexual victimisation – though in truth this applies to most other national and local surveys. One change was made in the 2000 ICVS by adding an additional screener question involving assaults involving people well known to the victim. How far additional improvements could be made would need careful consideration. A markedly different approach to screening for assaultive offences might indeed produce more valid estimates. The cost would be the loss of trend information and comparisons with past ICVS surveys for countries entering for the first time. The IVAWS initiative might be a better route to reliable international comparisons – at least as regards the experiences of women.

Better measures for 'lifestyle' are another candidate. One criminologically attractive – but very high risk – addition would be to ask respondents' about their own offending, given its link to higher victimisation levels (e.g., Mayhew and Elliott, 1990). Respondents' alcohol consumption would be useful in the light of its strength in predicting victimisation risks in other independent surveys (see, e.g., Mirrlees Black et al., 1998; Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2000). Regularity and type of journeys made on public transport might be another contender. The main

constraint as regards expanding lifestyle questions is the difficulty of doing justice, with limited questionnaire space, to the nuances of lifestyle or 'routine activities' that might impact on risk.

Methodological tests

Chapter 1 rehearsed the evidence as regards possible biases in ICVS results due to varying response rates, and different modes of interview (i.e., telephone as against face-to-face interviews). While it did not indicate a great deal of room for concern, there is nonetheless scope for further tests of mode and response effects. One possibility might be to assess non-response levels among different groups – for instance by linking non-responding telephone numbers to post (or zip) codes and thereafter to the socio-economic indicators that can be attached to these. It would also be helpful to do more by way of qualitative research to see whether particular ICVS questions are subject to different cultural interpretations.

Forthcoming reports

Further reports will emerge from the 2000 ICVS. For one, the Dutch Ministry of Justice and countries who took part in the 2000 ICVS are sponsoring the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Criminality and Law Enforcement (NSCR) to hold a workshop in June 2001. Researchers from a number of countries have been invited to present their analyses of the data, which have been made available to them. Publications are likely to merge from the best of these.

UNICRI intends to update results from Central and Eastern Europe cities, comparing them with the respondents in urban area in Western Europe. Another report will focus on results from the latest surveys held in Asia, South America, and Africa. (The University of South Africa has been active in promoting surveys in eight countries in southern Africa.) In due course, too, all the latest ICVS results are likely to be brought together again to look afresh at victimisation and responses to it from a global perspective.

