

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIME SURVEY IN FRANCE: GAINING PERSPECTIVE

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Comparison of the International Crime Survey (ICS) findings with other empirical information on crime in France is a worthwhile but hazardous enterprise.

It is definitely worthwhile since there have been few opportunities to obtain French victimisation data on a national scale: the 1985-86 investigation conducted by the CESDIP² and the sample surveys conducted by the Institut Francais d'Opinion Publique³ themselves require comparison with other studies to determine the validity of their conclusions.

Comparing ICS findings is hazardous as well, since such comparisons are extremely difficult for a number of reasons: methodological choices often imply basic underlying options, and differences in method may in some cases open yawning chasms between the results of different research projects in which victims are approached. One anecdotal but significant illustration of these diverging approaches may be seen in the project titles: the international survey calls itself a "crime survey", whereas the French surveys obstinately retain the term of "victims" or "victimisation" in their title.

Several difficulties - more or less interrelated - will be evident from these differing positions. The ICS is, first of all, intent on studying "crime" in order to count it. This justifies the breakdown of victimisations into as many narrow, homogeneous categories as possible, with a broad spectrum of types of theft, in particular; as a result, the annual victimisation rate obtained may be (albeit crudely) compared to police statistics. The difficulty arises from the size of the sample; the fact that crime is statistically rare makes the absolute number of cases found for the sample of 1,500 people questioned in France extremely sensitive to fluctuations in sampling. A large margin of doubt then seems to surround the 36 car thefts, 96 thefts from cars, 9 thefts of motorcycles, 21 bicycle thefts, 5 thefts involving violence and 54 robberies, as well as the 101 instances of car vandalism, 12 burglaries, 9 sexual assaults and 32 instances of violence mentioned for 1988⁴. The instability of such findings seems all the more probable in view of the age distribution of the sample: despite statistical weighting, this variable shows considerable divergences for the distribution of the national population (see Table 1).

A procedure in the ICS to alleviate the problems of estimating annual victimisation with small samples was to extend the reference period to five years.

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² Zauberman, R., Ph. Robert, R. Levy and C. Perez-Diaz (1990) *Les victimes: comportements et attitudes*. Enquete nationale de victimisation, Vol. 2, CESDIP, Paris.

³ IFOP (1987) *Les victimes d'infractions*, April and October, Paris.

⁴ Interview (1989) *Crime survey 1988 - tabulations report France*, Amsterdam.

Actually, memories of often relatively unimportant incidents that occurred 5 years previously are quite unreliable: when victimisation levels for the year 1988 are examined along with those obtained for the past 5 years, the ratio found rarely approximates the theoretically predictable 1 to 5 ratio and comparisons between recent urban surveys in France⁵ show the highly erratic nature of these fluctuations (Table 2).

Table 1: Comparison of the age distribution of the ICS sample and of the overall French population.

	ICS sample France age ≥16* %	French population ≥16 on 1/1/1989** %
Under 25 years	14.5	17.6
25-34 years	23.9	19.3
35-49 years	32.5	25.2
50-64 years	17.3	20.3
65 or over	11.4	17.9
No answer	0.4	

* Source: Interview (1989) Table 322

** Source: INSEE (1989) Table B. 01-4

Table 2: Ratio of N victimisations over 5 years, over N victimisations for last year of reference period (1988 for ICS; 1989 for cities)

	ICS	SOFRES-DIV E.	SOFRES-DIV Ta.
Car theft	3	5.5	3.1
Theft from car	3.5	3.9	2.7
Burglary	4.5	5	3.1
"Ordinary" violence	3.6	3.7	2.7
Sexual assault	3.9	3.2	2.7

Clearly, in most cases there were never five times as many victimisations over a 5 year period as for the year immediately previous to the survey. The explanations for this are well known: either minor incidents are forgotten with time, or there is a telescoping of some incidents which occurred at an earlier date but which people are intent on mentioning, thus unduly swelling the figures for the previous year. Or again, the victimisation rate actually increases with time, making the last year more

⁵ More specifically, these surveys were conducted in two cities: E., a Parisian suburb, and Ta., one of the ten largest cities in the country. They were commissioned by the *Delegation Interministerielle a la Ville et au Developpement Social Urbain (DIV)*, and conducted by the SOFRES using a tool developed by the CESDIP (*Centre de Recherches Sociologiques sur le Droit et les Institutions Penales*). See Zauberman et al. *Les victimes...*, op. cit.

consequential than earlier ones. Be this as it may, the variations in the ratio, depending on the type of victimisation, or the urban or national scale in which it is observed, confirms the difficulty inherent in working on longer reference periods in attempts to estimate the extent of victimisation.

The reliability of the ICS findings must therefore be evaluated by other means: a national victimisation survey for 1987⁶ and the two aforementioned urban surveys yield material for certain comparisons: however, these may only be partial and adjusted to specific situations, since none of these surveys investigated exactly the same offences and the same variables as the ICS.

Frequency of victimisations

A first point is the remarkable homogeneity for figures for violent incidents be they of a sexual or assaultive nature: between 0.5% and 1% for the former, and between 2 and slightly under 3% for the latter.

The fact that this order of magnitude, studied over a two-year period in the CESDIP study, is quite similar to that found for one year in the other survey should not thwart analysis: the instructions were formulated much more concisely in this study - only marginally concerned with the calculation of victimisation rates - than in the others. Furthermore, the significance of these rates lies less in their intrinsic value than in comparison with those for property offences.

Table 3: Annual victimisation rate (%)

	SOFRES-DIV E. 1989	SOFRES-DIV Ta. 1989	ICS 1988	IFOP 1987		CESDIP 1984-1985
Car theft	1.6	4.4	2.4		To this one-to-one comparison, may be added other data obtained by the CESDIP survey covering a two-year reference period and including a very broad category of thefts, like the IFOP survey	
Theft from car	9	15.7	6.4	6.9		8.8
Burglary	3.3 ¹	5.6 ¹	2.3	3.6 ¹		6.3
Sexual assault	0.9	0.9	0.6 ²	0.9		0.4
Other violence	2.2	2.7	2.1	2.7		2.6

1. These rates include burglaries in business premises and vacation homes, which conversely were excluded from the international survey.
2. Whereas the question was only addressed to women, the rate has been calculated for the sample as a whole, so that it could be compared with the other figures; the low number of positive responses to this question when it was put to men in the other surveys indicates that the magnitude of the rates would have been very much the same, had the question not been put to women only.

Thefts are undoubtedly of a greater magnitude as a whole. This latter restriction is commanded by the low proportion of car thefts, particularly in the International Survey and in E. However, the high proportion of thefts from cars, in those cases when they are differentiated, accounts for the considerable difference between thefts in general and violence. It should be recalled that comparison with other European

⁶ IFOP, Les victimes..., op. cit.; Zauberman et al., Les victimes..., op. cit., chap. 2.

countries and with the English-speaking countries participating in the survey showed France to be in a leading position for automobile-related thefts.

The case of burglary is more complex. Comparison of the surveys is complicated by a number of disparities. The first of these is difference in definition: the ICS only considers burglary in main homes, whereas all of the others also include burglary of business premises and of vacation homes. Secondly, differences in sampling techniques: it has been shown that the drop in burglary rates (and, to a lesser extent, in thefts) between the CESDIP survey and the IFOP surveys is attributable to the under-representation of inhabitants of the Paris area and of other large cities in the IFOP investigation, rather than to the difference in the reference periods (why indeed would it affect this category of offence exclusively?)⁷. A one-to-one comparison is therefore more risky here than elsewhere. It may be said that when theft is studied overall, burglary is in an intermediate position, somewhere between theft and violence. In those surveys where automobile-related thefts are differentiated, the proportion of burglaries is located somewhere between the figures for thefts from cars and those for violence.

One last remark on Table 3: the only two surveys that are strictly comparable, because they used the same tool and the same scale - the city - are the SOFRES Ta. and E. studies. Although the ratio of violence to property offences are broken down, the victimisation figures are systematically higher in Ta., a large provincial city, than in E., a Paris suburb. The uncovering of such diversity suggests the need to increase the collection of data on a local scale. Although their comparison with nationwide data remains essential, if they are to be kept in perspective, they alone are concrete enough to make the implementation of locally appropriate prevention policies feasible. Conversely, they also indicate certain limits of these: 83-84% of victims of thefts from car and car thefts questioned in the ICS claimed that the incident occurred in the district in which they reside. This high overall rate conceals major inconsistencies: the Ta. figures are nearly the same (78 and 86% respectively), whereas in E. they are quite different: only 61% victims of thefts from cars and 59% of victims of car thefts were affected in their home district.

The size and functions of the districts involved should be taken into account in interpreting this difference: whether they are business or commuter suburbs, for instance. The smaller the district the greater are the individual's chance of leaving it when going anywhere. In addition, since a great many districts, particularly in the suburbs of large cities, do not house all of the urban functions (housing, work, leisure activities, stores), their inhabitants are forced into increased mobility. It is not surprising, then, that people living in big cities claim to have been victimised within their home district more often than suburbanites. In other words, taken separately, local policy decisions in outlying districts can only have limited effects with respect to offences linked to their inhabitants' movements.

Circumstances

All the investigations mentioned so far are concerned with the more or less detailed description of the circumstances surrounding victimisations, and their

⁷ Zauberman et al., *Les victimes...*, op. cit., pp. 55-57.

immediate consequences. However, directly comparable data are rare, and differ with the type of victimisation.

Such comparisons further underline one remarkably uniform finding: these surveys show that 7 to 8 out of 10 victims were aggressed by strangers. This unanimously high figure provides an indirect indication of what victims mean by "aggression, assault, threat,...". Indeed, irrespective of whether violence by an intimate is explicitly excluded (as in the CESDIP survey), or not (as in the other surveys), the proportion of personally known offenders hardly varies. This means that violence between people who are intimate is spontaneously excluded from this category by victims. In fact, when questioned on the identity of the offender, few or very few mentioned intimates: 0.1% of the ICS sample, 0.3% in E., 0.6% in Ta. And yet, the relative frequency of such occurrences is well documented⁸; the CESDIP investigation like the IFOP surveys, in which the question was put directly, actually find a rate of 1.3% which, although low, is nonetheless considerably higher than the above-mentioned figures and, more importantly, represents half of the rates for ordinary violence found in the same surveys.

Slightly over one-third of victims of violence (exclusive of victims of sexual abuse) studied in the French investigations were assaulted with weapons. The ICS shows a comparable figure (34%), but for theft-related violence only. In the latter case the city surveys show weapons to be wielded more frequently: 42.1% of thefts aggravated by violence in E. and 46.2% in Ta.

It is difficult to compare the physical aftermaths of these assaults in the different surveys, since the available information never deals with exactly the same types of victimisation. The CESDIP national survey includes thefts with violence, whereas the local surveys include sexual violence in the same category. With these reservations, and with sometimes considerable variations, physical injury is far from the rule, and injuries requiring treatment even less so (Table 4).

Table 4: Physical injury resulting from violence (% of victims)

	ICS n = 114 %	SOFRES-DIV E. n = 198 %	SOFRES-DIV Ta. n = 154 %	CESDIP Violence n = 164 %	CESDIP Domestic violence n = 41 %
Physical injury	13.1	23	27	45.7	68.3
Injury requiring treatment	8.7	11.1	15.6	41.4	63.4

In fact, as shown by the only study in France to concentrate on this point⁹ it is the most private violent assaults - domestic, family related violence - that cause the greatest physical injury: in 45% of cases hospitalisation was required, as against 34.7% in ordinary violence; 43.9% of victims suffered sequelae as opposed to 13.4% of victims of ordinary violence.

⁸ Smith, L.J.F. (1989) Domestic violence, HMSO, London.

⁹ Zauberman et al., Les victimes..., op. cit., p. 84.

Comparable information on property offences is even more fragmented. Furthermore, contrary to the ICS, which asked the victims to estimate their losses, the other surveys simply questioned them on their sentiments as to the extent of loss. In an attempt to make some sort of comparison, the ICS figures have been divided into two categories, based on the premise that losses exceeding the mean are major. This is only an estimation, however, since the number of cases located on either side of the mean could not be calculated sufficiently accurately.

In the French surveys, slightly less than half (47-48%) of burglary victims report major losses. Above-average losses in the ICS survey represent 37% but this figure only includes the value of stolen goods, omitting the cost of damage suffered in connection with the burglary, which are evidenced in 45% of cases.

An examination of thefts from cars again shows relatively similar figures for "major" losses - ranging around 40% - in both the local surveys and the International Survey.

Data from the city survey indicates that claims of major losses are most frequent among victims of car thefts (over 60%), and this is apparently true irrespective of whether or not the vehicle is recovered. Recovery occurs in three-quarters of cases, according to the ICS, but this figure masks considerable disparities, since it is corroborated in Ta., but not in E., where only 57% of victims recovered their car. The rate of recovery of stolen objects is very small for all other types of theft, except for motorcycle theft (32.4% according to the ICS).

The consequences of victimisation are not, of course, limited to financial losses. There is also an emotional dimension, whose relationship with the material aspects must be understood if the impact of victimisation is to be entirely comprehended. The various French studies show that certain victims - especially burglary victims - are greatly affected although the material value of the goods stolen may be minimal. Even more than the sensitivity to physical injury, this extreme sensitivity to assaults on property is one expression of the anxiety-ridden, conservative Weltanschauung that constitutes one pole of the French debate on law and order.

Reporting to the police

The ICS shows that France as a whole ranks first, with Great Britain, as regards frequency of reporting crime to the police¹⁰. The rate of reporting varies with the type of victimisation, and as shown in Table 5, there is considerable agreement between the different investigations on this point.

Table 5: Reporting rate (% of victims)

	ICS ² %	SOFRES DIV E. %	SOFRES DIV Ta. %	CESDIP %
Car theft	96.5	97	98	72.6
Theft from car	68.1	59	64	
Burglary	82	82 ¹	80 ¹	76.2 ¹
Sexual assault	17.1	25	35	26.3

¹⁰ van Dijk, J.J.M., P. Mayhew and M. Killias (1990) Experiences of crime across the world: key findings of the 1989 International Crime Survey, p. 69, Kluwer, Deventer, the Netherlands.

Other violence	37.7	41.9	42.9	43.3 ³
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1. Same remark as under Table 3.
2. The question put was: reporting by "you or someone else", whereas only the person interviewed was motivated in the other surveys.
3. Thefts with violence are included here.

Not only are the magnitudes relatively similar, but the offences are ranked in the same order in the different surveys. The reporting rate is highest for property offences, with car thefts ranking highest, followed closely by burglaries, and then by thefts from car. Reporting of violent offences is much less frequent.

The rate of reporting property offences apparently closely parallels the frequency of insurance contracts, inasmuch as companies require that a complaint be filed before compensating for losses. Automobile insurance is compulsory in France, and most contracts cover car thefts. In addition, the necessity of disclaiming one's liability to avoid being accused in case the car is involved in an accident explains why the report rate for this offence is one of the highest in the ICS. Insurance contracts provide little protection in case of thefts inside cars, on the other hand. They often exclude certain objects (car radios) and/or define franchises or even penalties, so that reporting is not worthwhile unless loss is considerable.

The agreement is striking in the case of burglaries: 82.6% of the ICS sample claimed to be insured for this risk, as did 82.6% of burglary victims in the Zauberman et al. study¹¹. Nonetheless, this reporting rate is in no way exceptional, since it is about average for all countries investigated in the International Survey.

For comparative purposes, the definition of different types of violence raises more problems than that of different types of theft. It is perhaps justifiable, however, to retain one unchanging point. With the exception of rapes, reporting of sexual offences as a whole is consistently less frequent than reporting of other types of assault: 17.1% versus 37.5% for violence and 47.7% for thefts with violence, according to the ICS¹². The same difference is seen for all countries participating in this survey: a 12% average for reporting of sexual violence, as compared to one third for other types of violence¹³.

The reasons most frequently alleged for not informing the police of the affair were very much the same in the different surveys. Between one-third and one-half of the victims interviewed in the ICS and the city surveys claim it was not serious enough; this proportion ranges from one-half to two-thirds in the CESDIP survey. This figure is similar to ICS findings for other countries¹⁴. It is difficult to push this comparison much further, since the varying length of the multiple choice list of causes results in variable scattering of responses, aggravated by the possibility of choosing several reasons in some surveys. Two other types of responses come to the forefront, however, albeit to varying extents depending on the victimisation and the surveys. They indicate the sentiment that the nature of the affair is too private

¹¹ Zauberman et al., *Les victimes...*, op. cit., p. 96.

¹² Interview, *Crime...*, op. cit., Tables 216, 236 and 249.

¹³ van Dijk et al., *Experiences...*, op. cit., pp. 35 and 39.

¹⁴ van Dijk et al., *Experiences...*, op. cit., p. 69.

for police involvement (in the study by Zauberman et al., this reason ranks second among reasons for non-reporting), or that the police could do nothing: this explanation ranked first or second in the city surveys.

When a person refrains from reporting an offence because of doubts about police efficacy, the implications for victim-police relations are not at all the same as when the reason given is that the incident was not serious enough. Such scepticism has rational grounds, given what victims know about the efficiency of the police. According to victims, clearance rates - that is, the arrest of a suspect - ranges from 1 case out of 10 (for car thefts in Ta., for instance) to 1 out of 20 (all thefts¹⁵). These rates are far lower than those shown in police statistics, where 13% of car thefts, 8.4% of thefts from car, 11.4% of burglaries of main homes and 75% of violences and threats are elucidated¹⁶. Some explanations may of course be offered for these discrepancies: there can be little control over the way in which victims define incidents. Further, there is no reason to believe that they are necessarily informed of all of the cases cleared up claimed by the police;¹⁷ the different surveys conducted in France indicate that victims tend not to be informed of follow-up of cases: at most, in 1 out of 2 cases of car theft, 1 out of 3 cases of violence, 1 out of 5 burglaries, 1 out of 8 thefts from car¹⁸. In addition, police tallies are based on the number of offences, whereas the basis of calculation of the above-mentioned clearance rate is the number of victims. The fact remains though that there is often a change in magnitude between the two levels of observation.

Table 6: Percentage of victims stating reason for non-reporting*

	ICS**				
	Car theft	Theft from car	Burglary	Sexual assault	Other violence
	n= 3	n= 106	n= 26	n= 29	n= 71
Not serious enough	33.3	46.2	30.8	34.5	33.8
Victim prefers to deal with it personally	0	2.8	23.1	3.4	9.8
Innapropriate for police	0	1.9	0	6.8	4.2
Police could nothing	66.7	22.6	7.7	20.7	16.9

¹⁵ Zauberman et al., *Les victimes...*, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁶ Intérieur (1980) *Aspects de la criminalité et de la délinquance constatées en France en 1988 par les services de police et de gendarmerie, d'après les statistiques de police judiciaire*, La Documentation Française, Paris.

¹⁷ In corroboration of this see: Burrows, J. (1986) *Investigating burglary: the measurement of police performance*, HORPU, London.

¹⁸ SOFRES-DIV (1989) *Enquête Victimation à E": principaux résultats*, SemaGroup, Montrouge; Zauberman et al. (1990) *op. cit.*

	CESDIP**			
	Theft	Burglary	Sexual assault	Other violence
	n=109	n=67	n=14	n=93
Not serious enough	62.4	64.2	50	59.1
Victim prefers to deal with it personally	35.8	34.3	42.9	35.5
Innapropriate for police	30.3	13.4	21.4	33.3
Police could nothing				

	SOFRES - DIV**							
	Car theft		Theft from car		Burglary		Assault	
	E n=5	Ta. n=3	E n=270	Ta. n=242	E n=54	Ta n=53	E n=124	Ta n=91
Not serious enough	20	0	35.9	40.1	40.7	42.6	34.7	38.4
Victim prefers to deal with it personally								
Innapropriate for police	0	0	1.5	1.6	5.5	7.5	3.2	2.2
Police could nothing	0	33.3	52.6	52.9	29.6	35.8	48.4	38.4

* All the reasons mentioned are not included in the table.

** The ICS and CESDIP surveys allowed multiple answers, the SOFRES-DIV survey only accepted a single response.

In short, from the victim's point of view, no action is taken: rarely for violence, never for thefts; there is an enormous gap between the propensity to call in the police and the actual service provided. Other earlier research based on the analysis of police statistics has shown that cases treated successfully by the latter were not those involving private citizens as victims¹⁹.

There is nothing surprising, then, in the ambiguous satisfaction expressed by victims with respect to police efficiency. While 60.5% of the individuals questioned by the ICS feel that police control of criminality is satisfactory in their home area - ranking France a mediocre 10th among the countries participating in the survey - only 48.8% are satisfied with the way in which the police treated the last case reported by them, placing France 12th out of 14²⁰; the most frequently mentioned reason for dissatisfaction is the indifference shown by the police.

¹⁹ Robert, Ph. (1985) *Les comptes du crime: les délinquances en France et leurs mesures*, Sycomore, Paris; Levy, R. and F. Ocqueteau (1987) "Police performance and fear of crime, the experience of the left in France between 1981 and 1986" *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 15:259-280.

²⁰ van Dijk et al., *Experiences...*, op. cit., pp. 70 and 72.

Table 7: Percentage satisfied among victims reporting cases to police

	CESDIP	SOFRES - DIV E.	SOFRES - DIV Ta.
All thefts	34.5		
Car theft		47.6	45.2
Theft from car		22.6	23.2
Burglary	34.8	38.9	37.6
Violence	37.4	37.7 ¹	39.7 ¹

1. Sexual violence included.

Table 7 shows that the police are only awarded a better score for car thefts. It should be recalled that car thefts are the category in which the victims' fate is most acceptable, since half of them are kept informed of the outcome of their case and up to three-quarters of them finally recover their property. Victims of thefts from car, on the other hand, are in the opposite situation: they are practically never informed, never recover anything, and express the lowest rate of satisfaction.

Given the low clearance rate, even lower scores might have been expected: however, as shown in the case of car thefts, arrest of a suspect is probably not the only criterion for satisfaction, nor the main reason for turning to the police. When asked why they reported the event, victims of property offences in E. and Ta. emphasized the desire to recover their property or to receive compensation from their insurance company. Punishment of the offender only ranks first among the expectations of victims of physical violence, and to a lesser extent, for certain victims of burglaries. In both cities, such repressive tendencies are expressed mostly by elderly people with modest incomes - of varying social status however, since they include workers as well as farmers and trade and craftspeople - with conservative opinions. These findings are similar to those uncovered by Zauberman *et al.* in their national survey, which showed that retired people, housewives and the self-employed have a stronger tendency than other victims of burglary to demand punishment²¹.

In addition, this study brought out the widespread feeling, among French victims, that it is a civic duty to report offences to the police: the 80 to 90% of victims who gave this answer have no equivalent in the other countries studied. A relation may be seen between this finding and the high rate of trust (over 80%) expressed by the French population in the ability of the police forces to "solve the problem of insecurity" according to a recent opinion survey²².

Other forms of recourse

Do victims have any other sort of recourse aside from the police and "gendarmerie"? The International Survey only questioned victims on a single other institution, victim assistance services. Actually, the only reason for mentioning these is the emphasis placed on them by current criminal justice policies. The CESDIP survey found 0 to 2% victims using this type of recourse, with a peak of 5% for

²¹ Zauberman et al., *Les victimes...*, op. cit., p. 270.

²² Percheron, A., P. Perrineau, D. Boy and N. Mayer (1990) "Attitudes des Français à l'égard des problèmes de sécurité" *Cahiers de la Sécurité Intérieure* 1:17-52.

domestic violence, for which the small number of victims involved greatly tempered the validity of the figure. It is true that these findings date back to 1986, and there was a possibility that the publicizing of the increasingly numerous services available would enhance the rate of utilisation. Subsequent studies show that this did not materialise; in E. and Ta., they were hardly visible in late 1989 - early 1990: 7 to 8 out of 10 victims questioned were unaware of the existence of this service within their district. 20% of victims in E. and 11% in Ta. were informed of it. Figures for utilisation are ridiculously low: in 1988, 4 out of 296 victims questioned by the ICS claimed to have used it. The rates range from 1 to 3%, depending on the type of victimisation, in the city surveys.

The CESDIP study explored a series of other types of recourse from their diversity. Two patterns finally emerge, for thefts of all sorts and violence, which in fact correspond to different logics of offender/victim acquaintanceship. The question of a link between acquaintanceship and reporting to police is definitely debatable: in his broad compilation, Skogan does not find it to be demonstrated for any given offence²³. On an overall level, however, for each type of offence, there is unquestionably a link between rate of acquaintanceship and rate of reporting, in our opinion:

- when the offender is always or almost always anonymous, as in thefts and burglaries, people resort massively to the police and to insurance companies, sometimes completing the picture by repairmen and the purchasing of various kinds of equipment;
- as soon as the offender and the victim are acquainted, recourse to the police loses its importance: for physical violence it only occurs in 3 or 4 out of 10 cases, and attempts at direct settlement are seen.

Some attitude-related issues

Fear of Crime, feeling of insecurity

There have been two phases in the development of the theme of insecurity in France. A first phase, in the early 70s, was a legacy of the great fear of political violence generated by May 1968. Insecurity was conceived only in the form of physical violence, perhaps because fear of the latter, broadly shared by the population at large²⁴, provided a simple, common language. From the 1977 Peyrefitte report entitled "Responses to violence" to the Security and Freedom (Sécurité et Liberté) law of 1981²⁵, the issue of insecurity was addressed, in both political speech and action, in terms of violence. This conception subsided during the second phase, to be replaced by concern with the security of property -

²³ Skogan, W.G. (1984) "Reporting crimes to the police: the status of the world research" *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* XXI, 2:126.

²⁴ Robert, Ph. and C. Faugeron (1980) *Les forces cachées de la justice: la crise de la justice pénale*, p. 188, Centurion, Paris.

²⁵ Lazerges-Rothe, Ch. (1982) "L'objection dans le droit pénal moderne, a propos de la loi Sécurité et Liberté" *Deviance et Société* VI, 3:227-258.

something like a property-holders fear - quite possibly related to the fact that the reins of power were then in the hands of the left. Petty property offences, especially burglaries, then became the focal point for public discourse on insecurity and fear of crime.

Is there any empirical evidence of a more marked fear of attacks on property at present? The ICS findings apparently do not record any noteworthy difference in apprehension of the two sorts of victimisation. Provided the comparison of a question evaluating the risk of being burglarised with two questions measuring precautions taken when going out at night is viewed as legitimate, the magnitude of fears is seen to be comparable: approximately one third of the sample²⁶. The local surveys, which questioned victims only on this point, did not find any noteworthy differences between fears of burglary and of physical assault (frequency of fear of burglary 40%; of violence 41% in E., 39 and 49% respectively in Ta). The fact that victims express a slightly higher level of fear than the population at large is not overly important: first of all, because there can be no one-to-one comparison of these investigations, given the variety of questions asked; secondly, it has been observed that victims always claim to be slightly more frightened of the particular victimisation that they have just discussed in detail²⁷.

This similarity in the frequency of fears requires some discussion. It is a long known fact that fear of victimisation cannot be reduced to the anxiety caused by a threat of physical harm: there is the fantasized sudden encounter with one's burglar; the intense emotion experienced by the victim by intrusion into his or her private territory, likened to physical intimacy, whence the metaphorical assimilation with rape; the fusion, in certain social groups, of the object possessed with the possessor... actually, the property attacked quite frequently is viewed as part and parcel of the person's individual.

In another line of thought, it has been shown that the fear of public places expressed by the fear of being aggressed is constitutively linked with the enclosure of social life in private spaces.

As a whole, the feeling of insecurity owing to crime may be measured by the place occupied in the individual's social life by the domestic sphere: the more one leaves it, the less one is frightened, whereas the objective risk of being aggressed increases; the less one leaves it, the greater is the investment in the protective cocoon represented by the home, and the greater the fear of crime, which would be susceptible of endangering it. Fear of physical violence and fear of burglary may, then, be seen as the two faces of the same apprehension. This would explain their similar frequencies.

²⁶ Interview, Crime..., op. cit., Tables 252 and 254.

²⁷ Zauberman et al., Les victimes..., op. cit.

Punitiveness

For the second time, a 21 year old man is found guilty of burglary: this time he stole a colour TV set. 14.5% of the sample would grant him a suspended sentence, 10.2% would fine him, 53.8% would sentence him to community service work and 12.7% to a prison term. Those who gave the latter answer were asked how long a sentence they recommended²⁸. It is difficult to discuss these responses, since the fact that the interviewees were only asked to judge a single act lends an absolute character to the range of solutions proposed, whereas it would be preferable to dispose of elements for the analysis of their options in a relative fashion; relatively to the punishment they would advocate for other acts, and within a given context of severe or lenient punishment. The sense of sentencing a burglar to a one year prison term is not the same for the individual who would send all law-breakers to prison for long years, and for another who would only apply severe prison sentences to a business executive responsible for the dumping of toxic wastes in a river. In other words, the analyst has no frame of reference.

No "punitiveness" question of this type is put in the French surveys. However, several studies do apply criminality index techniques, but they interpret them in terms of preferred priorities for repression. The most recent²⁹ study shows a general consensus on the seriousness of assaults on physical integrity, and quite deep disagreements as to the rest; however, there is a remarkable strong rise in concern with the protection of private property over the last 12 years, along with rising concern with some community interests such as environmental conservation.

Another term of comparison for these questions may be found in the answers given by interviewees in other countries: the disinclination of the French to send people to prison - close to the German position - contrasts with the attitudes seen in Great Britain. In this respect, it should be recalled that in France as in Germany, it is essentially the length of time spent in prison rather than the number of entries that conditions overcrowding. As in Germany again, there is a strong preference for sentences to community service work rather than to fines: but in France, there is a marked contrast between these opinions and the facts, since sentencing to community service work is extremely rare³⁰.

Conclusion

The types of victimisations measured in the ICS correspond to 60% of the cases recorded in police statistics. They are characterised by two features:

- they tend to be recorded following reporting by victims rather than on police initiative;
- they represent types of cases which are rarely cleared up.

²⁸ Interview, *Crime...*, op. cit., Tables 291 and 292.

²⁹ Ocqueteau, F. and C. Perez-Diaz (1990) "Comment les Français reprovent-ils le crime aujourd'hui?" *Déviance et Société* XIV,3.,253-273.

³⁰ Aubusson de Cavarlay, B. (1990) "Du parquet au jugement: la sélection des affaires des personnes poursuivies" *Données Sociales 1990*, p. 432, Paris.

Victimisation surveys generally corroborate these two features, but their added value definitely resides in a better differentiation of the types of behaviour involved in reporting. They show - and this is particularly true of the ICS - the categories in which it is systematic, the majority, a minority or even rare.

Conversely, it would be illusory to present the results of these surveys as portraying criminality, or as the best portrayal of it. At most, they represent a collection of information relative to incidents that self-designated victims judge important to present to interviewers as relevant to crime. Forty percent of the cases recorded by the police are composed of offences not covered by this survey. To these, one might add the 18 million-odd traffic offences, as well as cases dealt with by other agencies (eg. internal revenue, customs), all of which are similarly outside of the purview of a survey of this nature.

Can it be said, at least, that these data provide the best picture of criminality involving direct, individual victims? Even this is not clear: the national survey conducted by the CESDIP included several other types of victimisation such as consumer-related offences, which reached significant scores.

In other words, the image of criminality yielded by these surveys depends entirely on the range of offences chosen for exploration. Their essential value resides elsewhere: in the refining of understanding of victims' behaviour and expectations, and of the diversity of these. This has been illustrated in the example of the variety of reporting practices. Others may be found: for instance, two opposite patterns may be seen among victims of thefts and burglaries: it is not so much the incidents themselves or the steps taken afterward that differentiate them, as the more or less dramatised reactions to them. Everyone, or almost everyone, files a complaint, but this procedure takes on a very different meaning, depending on whether the affair is taken calmly, with detachment, or is viewed as of the utmost importance. Some victims feel that they are going through a formality aimed, at best, at providing them with a certificate for their insurance company; they actually care little about police inaction. Others are much more concerned with police action, are anxious to see the criminal justice institutions function effectively, and they in particular clearly express punitive intentions when reporting offences³¹.

Will public policies succeed in adjusting to this multiplicity of expectations? This is clearly what is at stake at present. Centralised policy making cannot be expected to show this ability to adjust; the necessity for victimisation surveys to confine themselves to a city or an urban centre is increasingly cogent. It is at this scale that information may be obtained and be used in the closest possible adequation with local needs.

³¹ Zauberman et al., *Les victimes...*, op. cit.

