

## CANADA

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### Introduction

This report provides a summary of the Canadian component of the 1992 International Crime Survey. It was prepared for the conference sponsored by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) entitled, "Understanding Crime: Experiences of Crime and Crime Control". This report was organised according to specific guidelines that were provided by UNICRI.

It should be noted that data are "preliminary", and that final analyses will be contained in a full report that is being prepared by the International Crime Survey Working Group.

The Department of Justice Canada co-ordinated and partially funded the Canadian survey, and technical assistance and partial funding was received from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. These government departments and the Canadian public are indebted to the Ministry of Justice, the Netherlands, for initiating and co-ordinating this international endeavour.

### Description of sample

The universe for this survey was defined as all individuals residing in Canada who were 16 years of age and older. In total, 2,152 persons across the country were randomly selected and interviewed.

In terms of composition, 51% were female and 49% male. Approximately 39% of respondents were aged 16 to 34; 35% were 35 to 54 years of age; and 26% were aged 55 and over<sup>2</sup>.

Forty-two percent of the respondents reported that their households earned a below average income (Canadian \$ 35,000), and 48% reported an above average income. Forty-six percent reported that they were aged 16 to 19 years-old upon their final year of full-time education; 31% were 20 years of age or older; and 11% reported that they were less than sixteen years of age.

Forty percent indicated that they lived in an urban centre with a population greater than 50,000; 15% lived in an urban area of 10,000 to 50,000 population; and 30% lived in a community of less than 10,000, which includes rural areas. Seventy-one percent owned their residence and 27% lived in a rented dwelling.

### Data collection technique

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<sup>2</sup> The proportions in the original sample differed slightly from Canadian census data, and as such, the sample was made representative through statistical weighting procedures.

The survey firm, Canadian Facts, was subcontracted by the central survey company in Amsterdam, Inter/View, to administer the survey. All interviews were conducted by telephone, using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) method. Interviewers in ten locations across the country were given training by the firm, and in addition to the specific directions contained on the computer screens, each interviewer received an instruction guide. The language of the interview was either English or French, depending upon the region of the interview and the language choice of the respondent. All initial and follow-up interviews were completed from January 29 to March 7, 1992.

The sample was allocated according to population size within different regions. Telephone numbers were randomly selected from up-to-date telephone directories, and by randomly altering the last digit of telephone numbers, unlisted households were included in the sample. Individuals within households with more than one occupant were randomly selected for interviews, and substitutes were not permitted.

Few problems were encountered during the course of the survey. Within the pretest, it was found that some respondents became suspicious of the survey when asked questions related to crime prevention (e.g. whether their house contains a burglar alarm), and some respondents abruptly terminated the interview. It was decided to move these questions to the end of the interview, and to provide a brief introduction which reminded respondents that their answers would be treated confidentially and that they had the option of not responding to specific questions. This appeared to remedy the problem.

The installation of a toll-free line, as recommended by the Working Group, was an effective method for both ensuring a high response rate and allaying the concerns of survey respondents. The line was staffed for the full duration of the survey (a handicapped person was trained and enabled to answer calls from her own residence), and altogether, 121 calls were received. Of the 27% who had called prior to consenting to the interview, the majority were satisfied that the survey was sponsored by the Federal Government. Forty-six percent had called after the interview, seeking assurance that the survey was legitimate.

For those citizens who preferred to trust their local police department more than the interviewers and staff on the toll-free line, advance notice of the survey was sent to all police agencies. In many instances, it was clear that survey respondents had contacted police, and police officers' prior knowledge of the survey served to alleviate the concerns of both survey respondents and police alike.

### **Response rate and recontacting**

In total, there were 3,170 eligible telephone numbers for the survey - this excludes numbers that were not-in-service, non-residential, etc. With a total of 2,152 completed interviews, the survey response rate for Canada was 67.8%.

Altogether, 671 eligible survey respondents (21%) had refused to participate in the survey - the remaining 11% of non-responses were due to a language barrier, the respondent not being available, etc. Seventy-one (2%) provided stern refusals, such that they were not contacted more than once. According to survey procedures, the remainder of initial refusals were re-contacted after a two week period, and second refusals were followed-up one week later. At the time of writing, data were

not available on the number of initial refusals that eventually became completed interviews.

### **Victimisation rates**

Although a fuller analytical context will be available once data are compared with the results of other countries, in general terms, data were found to be generally consistent with the results of the 1989 International Crime Survey and other Canadian victimisation surveys.

Table 1 presents the prevalence of victimisation among Canadians for the five years previous to the survey (1987 to 1991). It can be seen that crimes involving automobiles rank highest, with 21.1% of the sample reporting car vandalism, and 20.4% reporting theft from their car. Eleven percent of the sample reported theft of their bicycle. When property crimes are based upon a subsample of "owners" of individual property items, there is a about a 5% increase in the prevalence of both motorcycle theft and bicycle theft.

Within personal crimes, Table 1 also shows that 15.4% of survey respondents experienced personal theft, and 12.7% were victims of assault or threat of assault. In total, 10.8% of female respondents reported sexual incidents, although only a small proportion involved an actual assault.

Table 2 presents the prevalence of crime among Canadians for the most recent year only (1991). The rank ordering of the different crimes remains generally the same, though the rates of prevalence for one year are generally one-third the rates for five years shown in Table 1. The fact that rates are one-third as opposed to one-fifth, which would be the case if crimes were equally distributed across the five years, suggests the following possibilities: that crimes have increased over the last year, that some respondents were victimised in more than one year or, more likely, that respondents have difficulty in recalling crimes over five years.

### **Reasons for not reporting**

Table 3 illustrates the percentage of respondents who were victimised and who reported the incident to the police. In total, 53.4% of victims who had been victimised at least once in the previous five years reported the crime to the police. The table shows that figures range from a high of 91.6% (theft of car) to a low of 12.9% (sexual incident) and, clearly, there was a greater likelihood that property crimes would be reported to the police than personal crimes. As generally found in the research literature, it is expected that insurance claims are frequently a motive for reporting certain property crimes to the police.

For respondents who were victimised but chose not to report the crime to the police, a variety of reasons are presented in Table 4. The most frequent answer was that the crime was not serious enough, though this reason was more likely to be given for property crimes than personal crimes. Other frequent responses were that the police could not do anything, or that the victim had already solved the crime on his or her own.

Some of the reasons given for failure to report to the police were somewhat disturbing. Of robbery victims, 8.3% indicated that they did not report the crime because they believed that the police would not do anything, and 11.1% said that it

was because they fear or dislike the police. Also, 9.9% of victims of a sexual incident and 6.5% of victims of assault or threat of assault did not report the crime because of their fear of reprisal.

### **Crime seriousness**

Table 5 presents respondents' rating of the seriousness of each type of crime they had experienced. The majority of crimes were rated by more than one-half of victims as either serious or very serious - except theft from a car, car vandalism, and theft from a garage, which were more often rated as not serious. The crimes that were most often rated as very serious include: robbery (47.9%), burglary with entry (46.7%), car theft (45.8%), motorcycle theft (41.2%), sexual incident (38.8%), and assault or threat of assault (37.0%).

### **Victim support**

Respondents were asked whether they received assistance from different sources to cope with the effects of their victimisation. Forty-one percent of respondents indicated that they received support from relatives, friends or neighbours, and 31.6% received support by the police. Other possibilities, including social welfare agencies, religious organisations, voluntary organisations, and specialised victims agencies were all indicated as sources of support by less than 2% of the respondents.

When asked whether the services of a specialised victims agency would have been helpful, 20.9% replied affirmatively. Although it is evident that the majority (78.1%) have no need for victims services, it also appears that many more victims would have actually used such services, if programmes were available and if victims were aware of them.

### **Attitudes towards the police**

It generally appears that Canadians have favourable attitudes toward their police. In general terms, 82% of respondents felt that the police do a good job in controlling crime in their area - only 11.6% felt that they do not do a good job. 58.3% felt that the police pass by their street a sufficient number of times, though 32.9% thought that the police should pass by more often.

The survey also contained questions on respondents' direct experience with the police. As indicated earlier, 53.4% of respondents who had been victimised in the previous 5 years had reported the crime to the police. Of this group, 75.5% were satisfied by the way in which the police dealt with their report.

Of 22.1% of victims who were dissatisfied with the police, a variety of reasons were given: 33.3% of respondents felt that the police did not do enough; 31.6% believed that the police were not interested; and 22% said that the police failed to keep them sufficiently informed about their case. Some survey respondents were also dissatisfied because, in their view, the police did not show adequate results. 19.3% of respondents stated that the police did not recover their stolen goods, and 17.4% were dissatisfied because the police failed to apprehend the offender.

## **Fear of crime**

In responding to the question of how safe respondents feel when walking alone in their area after dark, 41.1% felt very safe, 37.2% felt fairly safe, 12.8% felt a bit unsafe, and 7.4% felt very unsafe. This fear of crime is higher among women; for female respondents alone, 24.6% felt very safe, 40.9% felt fairly safe, 18.9% felt a bit unsafe, and 13.5% felt very unsafe. The differences in fear of crime among persons aged 55 and over, and persons who live in large urban areas, were not as distinct as among females.

The last time that respondents walked alone in their area after dark, 21.4% reported that they stayed away from certain streets, places or people for reasons of safety. 71.1% replied that they made no effort to avoid certain places or people. Again, more women (32.7%) reported that they took these preventative measures.

When asked about the likelihood that someone would try to break into their residence over the next year, 62.8% said that it was not very likely, 27.5% felt that it was likely, and 5.9% felt that it was very likely.

## **Crime prevention**

Table 6 shows the crime prevention measures that are most often taken by Canadians. It can be seen that two-thirds of respondents rely upon their neighbours to watch their household while they are away. Forty-two percent of respondents have installed special door locks; 25% have installed window locks or grills; and 24.7% have a dog which would deter a burglar. Although it is indicated that 26% of respondents own a firearm, less than 10% claim that they have it for protection against crime.

## **Attitudes towards punishment**

The survey showed mixed views among Canadians regarding the appropriate form of punishment for a particular case. Respondents were asked what sentence would be suitable for a 21 year-old man who was found guilty of burglary a second time. The following responses were given: fine - 9.6%; prison - 38.9%; community service - 30.3%; suspended sentence - 9.8%; other - 6.9%; and don't know - 4.5%. This distribution of responses did not appear to vary according to the demographic statistics (i.e. gender, age, income, education, etc.).

Those respondents that selected prison as the appropriate penalty were subsequently asked how long the offender should go to prison. Again, a variety of sentence lengths were chosen: less than 1 month - 7.6%; 2 to 6 months - 36.5%; 6 months to 1 year - 7.9%; 1 year - 20.2%; 2 years - 15.6%; and more than two years - 8.8%. The median sentence was ten months.

## **Conclusion**

These data on crime levels and public attitudes are highly informative and their implications for criminal justice policy in Canada will be considered. However, the true value of the 1992 International Crime Survey will only become apparent once data from other countries become available, and representatives from the

Department of Justice Canada and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics look forward to further analyses and discussion.

## TABLES

**Table 1: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)\***

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	3.9
Theft from car	20.4
Car vandalism	21.1
Theft of motorcycle	0.8
Theft of bicycle	11.0
(Owners)	
Theft of car	4.3
Theft from car	22.9
Car vandalism	23.8
Theft of motorcycle	6.3
Theft of bicycle	15.7
Burglary with entry	9.9
Attempted burglary	7.2
Robbery	3.3
Personal theft	15.4
Sexual incidents	10.8
Assault/threat	12.7
Theft from garage	9.2

\* Prevalence - percentage of respondents who have been victims of a specific form of crime once or more.

**Table 2: Prevalence victimisation rates (1 year)\***

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	1.3
Theft from car	7.3
Car vandalism	8.5
Theft of motorcycle	0.2
Theft of bicycle	3.7
(Owners)	
Theft of car	1.5
Theft from car	8.3
Car vandalism	9.6
Theft of motorcycle	1.9
Theft of bicycle	5.3
Burglary with entry	3.3
Attempted burglary	2.7
Robbery	1.2
Personal theft	5.5
Sexual incidents	3.8
Assault/threat	4.8
Theft from garage	3.5
Consumer fraud	8.1
Corruption**	

\* Prevalence - percentage of respondents who have been victims of a specific form of crime once or more.

\*\* Data regarding corruption were not collected within the Canadian survey.

**Table 3: Reported crimes**

	%
Theft of car	91.6
Theft from car	59.7
Car vandalism	49.9
Theft of motorcycle	70.6
Theft of bicycle	64.6
Burglary with entry	82.2
Attempted burglary	44.2
Robbery	47.9
Personal theft	35.6
Sexual incidents	12.9
Assault/threat	36.3
Theft from garage	53.8

**Table 4: Reasons for not reporting\***

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Attempted burglary %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Theft from garage %	Assault/threat %
Not serious enough	20.0	61.8	63.8	0.0	38.3	25.0	41.2	25.0	40.7	28.7	28.0	56.2
Solved it myself	0.0	4.0	3.2	0.0	8.6	16.7	8.2	16.7	9.6	14.9	20.8	14.6
Inappropriate for police	0.0	12.1	11.8	0.0	9.9	8.3	5.9	8.3	11.0	9.9	12.5	7.9
Other authorities	0.0	1.2	2.7	0.0	2.5	2.8	1.2	0.0	15.3	7.9	9.5	3.4
My family solved it	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	2.5	8.3	1.2	0.0	2.9	3.0	1.2	0.0
No insurance	0.0	3.5	0.5	33.3	6.2	5.6	1.2	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Police could do nothing	0.0	11.6	13.6	0.0	16.0	8.3	15.3	8.3	13.9	12.9	7.7	13.5
Police won't do anything	0.0	5.8	5.9	0.0	7.4	8.3	11.8	8.3	10.5	5.0	4.8	2.2
Fear/dislike police	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	1.2	5.6	0.0	11.1	1.0	6.9	3.0	1.1
Didn't dare	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.0	2.8	1.0	9.9	6.5	1.1
Other reasons	80.0	11.0	10.9	66.7	19.8	30.6	16.5	33.3	10.0	18.8	19.0	12.4
Don't know	0.0	1.7	1.8	0.0	2.5	0.0	3.5	2.8	1.9	1.0	2.4	1.1

\* Percentages calculated on victims who said they had not reported the last incident of each type of crime to the police - multiple answers possible.

**Table 5: Crime seriousness\***

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Attempted burglary %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/threat %	Theft from garage %
Very serious	45.8	15.3	12.7	41.2	23.2	46.7	29.5	47.9	23.3	38.8	37.0	19.3
Fairly serious	34.9	28.5	29.9	29.4	34.2	36.4	28.8	28.2	36.9	37.9	34.4	30.5
Not serious	16.9	55.8	56.5	17.6	40.9	15.4	39.1	21.1	38.4	22.4	26.4	49.2
Don't know	2.4	0.5	0.7	5.9	1.7	1.4	2.6	2.8	1.5	0.9	1.8	1.0

\* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

**Table 6: Crime prevention measures\***

Measures	%
Installed burglary alarm	13.0
Installed door locks	41.6
Installed window/door grills	25.0
Maintain watchdog	24.7
High fence	13.9
House has a caretaker	8.6
None of these	26.3
Others	0.0
Ask somebody to watch home	57.1
Neighbours watch anyway	10.5
Possession of firearms	26.0
House insured against burglary**	

\* Percentages based on total sample of respondents.

\*\* Data regarding "insurance against burglary" were not collected within the Canadian survey.