

ITALY¹

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Introduction

This is the first time that Italy has been involved in the International Victimization Survey. A first pilot study was carried out in 1991, on a sample of 195 respondents and with the use of an abridged questionnaire. The results of the pilot survey were presented at the UNICRI Preparatory Seminar in March 1992.

Description of the sample

The sample was representative of the composition of the Italian population. Its structure is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Data collection technique

The interviews were carried out by Demoscopea, which is a leading firm in this field. The CATI system was adopted; an ad hoc interviewing team of ten people was created, who were specifically trained by Demoscopea and a UNICRI representative who was present during the first stage of the interviews. No particular problems were encountered. The data were collected between February and April 1992. The questionnaire was translated into Italian and adapted to phone interviews.

Response rate and recontacting

Details regarding the response rate and recontacting are shown in Table 3.

Victimization rates

Tables 4 and 5 present prevalence victimisation rates for five years and one year respectively. Data refer to people who have become victims, on one or more occasions, of one of the crimes listed in the table between 1987 and 1991. Eight out of 100 car owners had their car stolen during this five-year period, of which 3% in 1991. The cars of 21 people were vandalised over the same five-year period, 8 cases of which occurred in 1991. Between 5 and 10% of the sample had been victims of a burglary (8.6%), robbery (4.8%), and personal theft (9.8%) in the five-year span; approximately one third of these crimes were committed in 1991. Sexual incidents were experienced by 6.4% (compared to 1.7% in 1991) of the female

¹ This is an outline of the Italian results comparable with other countries. A broader report on the 1992 Victim Survey in Italy can be found in Part I.

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component of the sample, while 3.4% of the total sample (0.8% for 1991) had experienced an assault.

Reporting crimes

Tables 6 and 7 show the dark figure of crime and reasons for not reporting, respectively. 94.7% of victims of a car theft (the most reported crime) reported the crime to the police. Of those who did not report the offence, 36% solved the problem directly, for example by finding the car themselves; the remaining victims did not report the incident because they believed that the police were unable or unwilling to help them. Two other reasons for not reporting were specifically included in the Italian version of the questionnaire: 2.4% of the sample did not report because they felt that the police are too slow and 1.8% because they were badly treated by the police.

Burglary was reported by 65.5% of the victims of this crime. 36.4% of those who did not report the offence thought that the police could do nothing about it and 30.2% thought that the crime was not serious enough.

Robbery and personal theft were reported by 41.6% and 43.1% respectively of the victims of these crimes. The main reasons for not reporting were that the crime was not serious enough and that the police could do nothing.

Sexual incidents were reported by 4.6% of the female victims of this crime. When asked why they did not report the incident, 32.8% of the victims replied that the crime was not serious enough, 23.8% had solved the matter themselves, 17.7% provided other reasons and 15.5% believed that the police could do nothing.

Crime seriousness

Different evaluations of the seriousness of the crime suffered were provided by the victims of the listed crimes. This is presented in Table 8. Seventy-two per cent of the victims of robbery and 61% of victims of sexual incidents replied that the crime suffered was very serious. Victims frequently assessed crimes which involved a small amount of money, such as personal theft, or goods of small value such as theft from a car, as fairly serious or not serious.

Victim support

Some questions referred to the support received by victims who had suffered from a crime. 38.3% of the victims of at least one offence received support from relatives, friends and neighbours and 14.1% from the police. Other organisations such as voluntary, religious or specialised agencies had done almost nothing; less than 1% of victims received support from these organisations. When asked if a specialised agency to help victims of crime might prove useful, 44% of the sample replied that it would not be useful and 40% that it would be useful.

Attitudes towards the police

50.7% of the victims were dissatisfied with the way the police dealt with their report. The reasons given for this dissatisfaction were that the police were not interested (42.4); that they did not do enough (33.9%); that they did not recover the property or goods of the victim (21.6%). Other reasons were that the police did not find or apprehend the offender (16.8%) and did not keep the victim informed

(13.2%). The sample was also asked about the frequency of controls by the police in the area in which the victims lived. 50.5% answered that the police patrolled the street in which they lived at least once a day; 13.8% at least once a week; 6.4% at least once a month; and 13.5% never. General satisfaction with the performance of the police in controlling the area was expressed by 49.5% of the sample.

Fear of crime

Sixty-four per cent of the sample considered the area in which they lived as either very safe or fairly safe, and 50.7% did not take any particular precautions to avoid streets, places or persons when going out at night. 46.5% did not think that someone was likely to attempt to break into their home within the next twelve months; only 4.3% had a strong fear of experiencing this type of crime.

Crime prevention measures

Table 9 indicates crime prevention measures adopted by the respondents. Forty-five per cent of the sample had not taken any crime prevention measures to protect themselves from crime. 35.9% had installed door locks, 12.5% burglar alarms, 12.3% watchdogs, 10.9% had installed window/door grills. Many of the respondents (33.4%) had asked someone to watch their home and 20.9% answered that the neighbours did this anyway. 18% of the sample declared to be in the possession of a firearm (10.7% of which were rifles). 23.4% of those possessing a firearm did so as a form of protection against crime.

Attitudes towards punishment

The sample was asked about sentences inflicted on offenders. The case presented to the respondent described a man of 21 years of age who had been found guilty of burglary for the second time, having stolen a colour TV. 46.5% of the sample answered that he should receive a community service order, 22.4% that he should be given a prison sentence, and 9.6% that he should receive a fine. Of those who answered that the thief should go to prison, 22.6% said that a sentence of between 2 and 6 months would be appropriate, 16.6% stated one year, 10.4% two years, and 8.7% one month or less. It is important to note that 5.3% of the respondents replied that a five-year sentence would be appropriate, while 2.5% were in favour of a sentence of between 6 and 10 years.

TABLES

Table 1: Sample structure according to geographical area and town-size

Town size	North-West	North-East	Centre	South-Islands	Total N
<10,000	201	154	94	217	666
10-50,000	141	102	118	242	602
50-100,000	50	26	38	87	202
100-500,000	29	108	50	95	281

500,000-1,000,000	21		100	23	44
>1,000,000	102		91	36	229
Total N	544	390	391	699	2,024

Table 2: Sample structure according to age and gender

Age	16-29	30-54	55+	Total N
Male	282	406	296	984
Female	270	433	337	1,040
Total N	552	839	633	2,024

Table 3: Response rate and recontacting

Gross sample	5,150
Not relevant	1,829
Relevant	3,321
Refusals	671
Other	764
Complete	2,024
Response (%)	60.9

Table 4: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	6.7
Theft from car	21.8
Car vandalism	18.6
Theft of motorcycle	3.6
Theft of bicycle	7.6
(Owners)	
Theft of car	7.6
Theft from car	24.7
Car vandalism	21.1
Theft of motorcycle	9.7
Theft of bicycle	11.1
Burglary with entry	8.6
Attempted burglary	6.7
Robbery	4.8
Personal theft	9.8
Sexual incidents	6.4
Assault/threat	3.4

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

Table 5: Prevalence victimisation rates (1 year)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	2.7
Theft from car	7.0
Car vandalism	7.6
Theft of motorcycle	1.5
Theft of bicycle	2.4
(Owners)	
Theft of car	3.0
Theft from car	7.9
Car vandalism	8.6
Theft of motorcycle	4.1
Theft of bicycle	3.4
Burglary with entry	2.4
Attempted burglary	1.7
Robbery	1.3
Personal theft	3.6
Sexual incidents	1.7
Assault/threat	0.8
Consumer fraud	10.6
Corruption	

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

Table 6: Reported crimes

	%
Theft of car	94.7
Theft from car	40.4
Car vandalism	15.1
Theft of motorcycle	77.2
Theft of bicycle	28.9
Burglary with entry	65.5
Attempted burglary	20.8
Robbery	41.6
Personal theft	43.1
Sexual incidents	4.6
Assault/threat	23.6

Table 7: Reasons for not reporting*

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/ threat %
Not serious enough		50.4	63.2	42.3	50.6	30.2	26.0	43.5	32.8	34.5
Solved it myself	36.3	3.5	2.0	21.2	6.7	7.0	10.1	10.7	23.8	18.4
Inappropriate for police		0.3	0.9			3.8	3.5	1.1		2.3
Other authorities	18.1	0.7	0.3		1.1	1.0				4.1
My family solved it		0.4	0.4	6.8	2.1	2.0			1.4	
No insurance		2.2	0.5		2.0	4.2				
Police could do nothing	30.8	25.2	27.6	21.7	27.7	36.4	39.9	27.3	15.5	10.1
Police won't do anything	27.7	11.9	7.3	6.8	9.9	9.8	11.2	7.8	4.9	11.3
Fear/dislike police		0.4					1.3	1.0		
Didn't dare							3.4	1.1	6.7	6.2
Other reasons		8.5	3.1		10.6	19.5	12.5	10.2	17.7	14.1
Don't know		0.9	0.7	6.6	2.1	1.7				3.7

* 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 8: Crime seriousness*

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/ threat %
Very serious	55.1	23.2	24.5	46.6	25.7	57.3	72.5	38.2	61.4	59.6
Fairly serious	35.9	39.2	37.2	37.1	32.6	29.8	23.6	37.0	21.4	23.3
Not serious	9.0	37.5	38.2	16.3	41.7	12.9	3.9	24.8	17.2	17.1

* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

Table 9: Crime prevention measures*

	%
Installed burglar alarm	12.5
Installed door locks	35.9
Installed window/door grills	10.9
Maintain watchdogs	12.3
High fence	3.8
House has a caretaker	5.4
None of these	45.0
Others	
Ask somebody to watch home	33.4
Neighbours watch anyway	20.9
Possession of firearms	18.0
House is insured against burglary	

* Percentages based on total sample of respondents - multiple answers possible.