

MOSCOW (RUSSIA)

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Introduction

The survey was partly sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, the Netherlands, with the support of Moscow City Council, which covered the field work.

Despite some errors it was possible to achieve the main objectives of the study. We are now aware of the real possibilities of conducting this and similar researches in our country, from the point of view of both contents and research technique. Our personal role here was simply to co-ordinate the efforts of most experienced Moscow professional sociologists who nowadays attempt to work according to Western standards. Most of the variable correlations and results of previous surveys carried out in other countries are rather similar to those of this research.

Sample

The gross sample of the research consisted of around 1,170 respondents, although it is not easy to present a precise figure. In some cases respondents did not even allow the interviewers to explain the reason for their visit. One reason for this reaction might be the absence of similar research techniques in Russia which results in a lack of public awareness and appreciation of such surveys.

Another reason is that Russia is now undergoing a period of psychological crisis and strong stratification processes, especially in the large cities. Compared to previous years, it is now possible to observe a wide variety of gamblers, beggars, and real and false refugees approaching people in streets, on public transport and even outside building entrances. Therefore, a person who is unexpectedly approached by a stranger mentioning such words as "crime", "victim" or other similar expressions, usually associates this with requests for help or money.

All the respondents were living, for some reason or another, within the administrative boundaries of Moscow. With the exception of the large industrial centre, these boundaries include areas that are atypical in European cities. In any case, all sorts of areas within Moscow are likely to be presented in the research. The sub-contractor commissioned for the survey had four years' experience in this particular field (i.e. in conducting various kinds of researches using Moscow only as a sample²).

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² It might be interesting to mention that the attention of sociologists has turned to the population of Moscow following the difficulties encountered in conducting a large sample research in most regions of the USSR, where the communist nomenclatures are less progressive than that of the capital. Another hypothesis has been proposed by Prof. T. Zeslavskaya, according to whom Moscow provides a model for the whole country with respect to people's social and political views and attitudes. The main idea of this hypothesis is that the Muscovites tend to be a year ahead of the rest of Russia as far as attitudes are concerned.

Therefore, the ideas expressed by the rest of Russia would be the same as those expressed in Moscow one year after the date of research.

Composition

The quota was based on age and gender, and then data were adjusted to include educational levels. Table 1 presents a percentage breakdown of the entire adult Muscovite population (16 years and over) according to age and gender. The first row of figures refers to estimates provided by the Moscow Branch of the Central Russian Statistical Agency; the second row presents the share according to the survey and the third row shows the figures obtained after adjustment.

A division into groups according to the level of education is then presented in Table 2.

Some problems of area definitions were encountered and these are mentioned in a subsequent paragraph.

Data collection technique

Only the method of face-to-face interviewing was adopted. Although it was initially attempted to use the CATI method, this proved unfeasible because, as was pointed out by both of the well-known Moscow research agencies specialising in telephone polls, it is not presently possible in Russia to carry out a random sample telephone interview for more than 10 minutes. One reason for this might be an unfamiliarity on the part of the population with such interviewing techniques. Another reason might be related to some specific features of the Soviet culture which reflect common suspicion towards the telephone, such as the widespread myths, but with an element of truth, about particular KGB interests in this field.

According to the rules of the Agency and the conditions in Moscow, the following technique was used: after 5 p.m. the interviewer usually identified an appropriate flat (using the six criteria adopted for this research, plus an extra one which will be described in the following paragraph) and marked it on his travel chart. He then called or knocked on the door, introduced himself, if necessary showed his interviewer's certificate and tried to contact the person. Each interviewer received age and gender shares according to the general quota of the field research. As a rule, the work of each interviewer was directly controlled once or twice by a supervisor who contacted the same respondent visited by the interviewer. Indirect contacts were also frequent.

Interviewing company and interviewers

The field work was carried out by a permanent team from VCIOM (Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research, formally known as the All-Union Center for Public Opinion and Market Research, or the "Zaslavskaya Center"). Given the unusual theme of the research for Russian sociological agencies, the coordinators intervened during the whole of the field work, especially in the pilot study (consisting of 20 interviews), and in all discussions on legal definitions.

The sample frame was selected using the standard methods for social and economic interviews in Moscow (which are the main areas dealt with by the contracting firm). The only amendment made was to include those types of dwellings and outbuildings which, according to Soviet criminological tradition, are likely to be a target of, or the ideal dwelling for, various types of criminals. Thus, the

distribution of the respondents was planned so as to cover people living in the central streets of areas with good transport, city infrastructures, lighting etc., as well as those living in areas with quite the opposite characteristics.

No newcomers were included among the interviewers, who totalled around 60 persons. At least half of the employees have carried out interviewing in Moscow as a regular secondary occupation for some years. All the interviewers attended a complete course in the VCIOM premises. The supervisor of the interviewers tried to select the most reliable persons for the job, given, firstly, the unusually complicated nature of this research, and secondly, the relatively novel theme under survey for both the Agency and the other institutions of applied sociology.

Previous experience with surveys carried out by VCIOM has shown that if each interviewer was provided with a large number of questionnaires, this produced a negative influence on the results of the study. Therefore, for this survey each interviewer was given no more than 15 to 18 questionnaires.

Particular problems encountered

Problems related to interviewers, respondents and reactions on the part of the authorities were considerably less than had been foreseen by the organisers of the research, including those from VCIOM. Virtually no problem was encountered when discussing such unfamiliar topics for Russian society as sexual offences, possession of weapons and many other offences. Furthermore, only three linguistic amendments were made to the whole text.

During the formulation of the questionnaire a few minor problems were solved as follows:

- a) a direct translation of the word "victim" was avoided since, in common Russian slang, the word "æetra" can be used in a negative context, reflecting some features of former Soviet ideology. We therefore used similar phrases with clear meanings and expressions such as "You have probably suffered from ...".
- b) It was soon realised that, even nowadays, it is very difficult to provide a reliable estimate of the status of any Moscow region. The structure of territories in the city are not the same as either those described in Western social ecologists' studies, or as the territories found in large European cities. Most regions present a real mixture not only of areas, but also of housing and other non-residential buildings. For decades most of the inhabitants of the city have had no real opportunity to move to different regions from those inhabited by their parents. For example, it used to be considered an offence to pay money in order to move from one house (which was rented from the state) to a better one (under the same rent regime). Of course, the Party and administrative oligarchy built their own housing estates which were mostly micro zones either in the centre or in the finer new areas of the city. But even this policy was uncommon: some of the most prestigious buildings are "hidden" in the new central part of the city and masked by other housing and landscape features. In short, it was not possible to identify the area status. It was therefore decided to use a method specially created for the Moscow territory by the Soviet Academy of Science Institute of Geography in 1986. The interviewer's task for this part of the work was simply to

mark the exact position of the respondent's house on a large map. It was thus left to another specially delegated person to identify the status of the area.

- c) Information on the quartile distribution of personal incomes, which was necessary for the research, was not provided by either the Central Statistical Agency of Russia or its Moscow Branch. For technical and political reasons, the Agency and other similar state bodies have avoided providing current figures of personal incomes for the winter and spring period. Their average 3-monthly figures are unreliable because of the uneven rate of inflation (which sometimes varies from month to month). The interviewers were therefore simply instructed to ask the respondent to calculate the average income per family member for February 1992 (this is not a common definition for the population) and then record the figures. The average income of 853 rubles per month was close to the results of a research on Muscovite incomes, carried out in February by an independent sociological agency "Opinion", and sponsored by the Russian National Bank, which indicated 900 rubles as an average income.

During field work, the interviewers were faced with the problem of explaining to the respondents how to calculate the value of the losses or damages resulting from the victimisation. In the first place, officially unrecognised hidden inflation has existed in Russia for years. It is difficult, therefore, to reconstruct its rate as well as to follow step by step the tremendous new rate of inflation since the beginning of the last year. During this period (up to March 1992) consumer prices in Moscow have increased approximately 16 fold (and by 20-30% in March). Secondly, different social groups paid different prices for consumer products -especially "non-essential" goods and services - a phenomenon that continues today³. In Moscow there are many administrative bodies, including the former All-Union Center, whose staff is entitled to various consumer privileges. Since the people in the city belong to one particular strata or another, no one knows the real so-called "average price". It was therefore decided to ask the respondents to state the actual costs incurred at the moment of the crime.

Data collection

All the data, without exception, were collected between 3 and 30 March 1992. The pilot study took place in late February 1992. The interviews were administered in Russian.

Response rate and recontacting

As already mentioned, the gross sample amounted to approximately 1,170 persons. A total of 1,002 completed questionnaires were received; i.e. 85.6% of the gross sample. Comments on the various reasons for refusals have already been provided in the paragraph on sampling. Most of the refusals, whether specific or

³ Cars, motorcycles, television sets, videos, jewelry and other items that are "most popular" among thieves, belong to this category.

not, came from the most prestigious buildings. Practically no recontacting was made except to control interviewers.

Victimisation rates

There is a particular interest, on the part of the public, the mass media and law enforcement agencies in Moscow, in vehicle-related crimes and especially theft from cars. They are considered by the public as one of the main criminal problems for the inhabitants and, as a result, people avoid leaving anything in their cars. Although this fear can be explained by the obvious phenomena of increasing social stratification and increasing poverty, other explanations are also pertinent. The period of perestroika has witnessed the purchase, on the part of many new business agencies and businessmen, of cars that were considered rather prestigious and fashionable according to Russian standards. This has not been matched, however, by the creation of real parking areas or car storage systems of the type found in American and European cities, on the part of the Moscow authorities. As a result, alongside the other vehicles, these new cars are parked all over the city, except in garages and supervised zones. These easy new targets for criminals have encouraged the professionalisation of thieves, who at the same time, have made other forms of city transport more vulnerable.

Car vandalism in Moscow is of an exclusively economic nature; people usually regard it as simply stealing spare car parts (see Table 4).

A brief introduction is necessary to understand the figures related to bribery. From the point of view of people living in most other countries, Soviet society can be characterised by an abnormal distribution of power. Given the impossibility to find any goods or services regularly on the market, people responsible for providing consumption goods of any form, such as porters and shop assistants, assume the same significance as the official responsible functionaries. Therefore, although a legal notion exists in Russia, as in other legal systems, whereby bribery is associated with officials, the Soviets usually consider any person with the real power to do so as a bribe taker.

Reasons for not reporting

Figures related to the reporting of motorcycle thefts and reasons for not reporting car thefts are not reliable (see Tables 5 and 6). Items for the car, such as television sets, videos, modern radios and car refrigerators are not as common in Russia as in Western and even some developing countries. For this reason more importance is given to thefts from a car in Russia compared to other countries.

The constant supply shortage and expensive black market prices of spare parts do not allow victims of this form of crime to consider car vandalism as a minor offence.

The greater negative attitude of the public towards the Moscow militia (the Soviet name for the police force) and its professional responsibility and effectiveness, compared to other countries (see the results of the previous International Crime Survey), can be explained by two distinctive features of the militia. First of all, the Russian militia is a highly militarised and complete force. The real responsibility and motivation of its officers exist only within the boundaries of

the whole organisation, and this does not allow for a serious interest in community and public needs. Secondly, the Moscow militia is directly involved in political struggle and is often used, by both old and new politicians, for political and other purposes that are not related to crime control. These characteristics obviously do not add popularity to the forces.

Crime seriousness

As a result of strong old ideological influences, people do not usually consider personal violence to be as dangerous as crimes against society, the state and its institutions. This partly explains the relatively low importance given to personal violence in comparison with other crimes (see Table 7).

Victim support

Given the long-term negative ideological association of the term "victims", the rights and interests of this group of people are still not seriously represented in legislation, law-enforcement and social security agencies. Hence no cases of assistance from special victim support agencies or the Church were mentioned. More than half of the victims who had reported the crime (55.7%) were favourable to the idea of a special support agency. Those who had not reported the crime were also of the same opinion (50.4%). Victims who had reported a crime received most support from friends (38%) and the militia (31%).

Attitudes towards the police

Common attitudes towards the role of the militia in society (mentioned in an earlier paragraph) have a great impact on particular attitudes towards this aspect of its activity. The attitudes of people living in traditional prestigious areas which are controlled by the militia are very different from those of the new rich who are decisively dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the militia. This could be explained by the fact that the militia still tends to focus its attention on those areas that are traditionally occupied by the former Party and administrative nomenclature (see the remarks about Moscow housing in a previous paragraph), and has not yet directed its attention to the residential areas of the new rich.

Fear of crime

The emergence of fear of crime in Moscow can be considered a relatively new socio-psychological phenomenon which emerged in the mid-eighties (in the same way that it emerged in Western countries in the late seventies). It can partly be explained by the rise of "glasnost", which gives more freedom to the mass media, greater access to statistics, and a totally new experience for society - the right to criticise. Almost nine out of ten respondents had discussed the issue of crime during the two weeks before the interview; and fear of crime ranked third among the most popular crime-related topics of conversation (8% of all respondents and 9.3% from those talking). The crime that people expressed most fear of during conversation is burglary. On the other hand, 64.2% of the respondents thought that

there was a likely or very likely possibility of their being burgled within the next twelve months.

Crime prevention

The relatively small number of burglar alarm systems in use can be explained by the long-term official monopoly on the part of the militia in this field. Most of the housing in Moscow consists of apartment blocks built according to a small variety of designs, and old two-to-five-storey buildings in poor conditions. This might explain the small number of high fences and caretakers employed.

In Russia, the possession of firearms by ordinary citizens is prohibited and considered an offence (with the exception of guns for officially registered hunters).

The small percentage of houses covered by an insurance policy corresponds with the low insurance rate of personal property in general, and reflects the people's suspicious attitude towards state-run insurance agencies (private companies are a rather new phenomenon).

Attitudes towards punishment

The long-term practice of severe sentencing in the USSR is reflected in the results of the survey. Half of the respondents considered imprisonment as the best method for dealing with burglars, the average sentence chosen being five years or more (preference for imprisonment is stronger among victims). It must be emphasized that early release from custody was less common in the former USSR than in most other countries. Also, after 70 years of non-market society, only 9.5% of the respondents favoured a fine. Despite the fact that current Russian legislation does not envisage community service in the strict sense, more than one-fifth of the Moscovites recommended this measure despite its unfamiliarity. The relatively small number of people applying for a death penalty or physical punishment (2.5% in all) is an indication of an increased public awareness of the complicated, contradictory nature of crime.

TABLES

Table 1: Breakdown (in percentages) of adult Muscovite population according to age and gender.

	Gender		Age				
	Male	Female	16-20	20-24	25-39	40-54	53 and over
Central Russian Statistical Agency estimates	44	56	2	5	21	27	45
Survey sample (gross)	45	55	7	9	33	23	28
Survey sample (final)	44	56	6	9	33	23	28

Table 2: Breakdown (in percentages) of adult Muscovite population according to level of education

	Higher education	Completed secondary education	Other education
Central Russian Statistical Agency estimates	36	50	14
Survey sample (gross)	17	48	35
Survey sample (final)	17	49	34

Table 3: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	1.4
Theft from car	13.7
Car vandalism	9.1
Theft of motorcycle	0.3
Theft of bicycle	8.2
(Owners)	
Theft of car	4.9
Theft from car	48.1
Car vandalism	31.9
Theft of motorcycle	11.1
Theft of bicycle	18.7
Burglary with entry	6.2
Attempted burglary	11.1
Robbery	7.7
Personal theft	26.0
Sexual incidents	9.5
Assault/threat	12.8

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

Table 4: Prevalence victimisation rates (1 year)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	0.8
Theft from car	6.3
Car vandalism	4.7
Theft of motorcycle	0.2
Theft of bicycle	2.8
(Owners)	
Theft of car	2.3
Theft from car	22.1
Car vandalism	16.5
Theft of motorcycle	7.4
Theft of bicycle	6.4
Burglary with entry	2.0
Attempted burglary	3.9
Robbery	3.4
Personal theft	10.7
Sexual incidents	3.4
Assault/threat	5.0
Consumer fraud	51.5
Corruption	11.8

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

Table 5: Reported crimes

	%
Theft of car	85.7
Theft from car	43.1
Car vandalism	22.1
Theft of motorcycle	100.0
Theft of bicycle	25.6
Burglary with entry	56.5
Attempted burglary	32.4
Robbery	16.9
Personal theft	19.9
Sexual incidents	7.4
Assault/threat	19.5

Table 6: 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		14.1			22.0	8.3	27.3	23.2	18.4	31.4
Solved it myself		5.1	13.9		11.9	37.5	13.6	9.5	28.6	13.7
Inappropriate for police		5.1	23.6		10.2	12.5	27.3	18.6	20.4	17.6
Other authorities	20.0	1.3			1.7		1.5	2.9	4.1	1.0
My family solved it		2.6	8.3		5.1	4.2	3.0	2.9	8.2	1.0
No insurance		7.7	5.6		1.7		1.5			1.0
Police could do nothing	20.0	46.2	34.7		39.0	25.0	33.3	38.6	20.4	15.7
Police won't do anything	20.0	42.3	29.2		39.0	29.2	21.2	26.2	16.3	18.6
Fear/dislike police		5.1	8.3		5.1	4.2	9.1	9.5	14.3	10.8
Didn't dare			1.4				6.1	1.0	12.2	4.9
Other reasons	40.0	6.4	8.3		3.4		4.5	6.2	6.1	8.8
Don't know		1.3	1.4		1.7			1.4	2.0	1.0

* 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 7: 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	66.7	13.1	5.6	33.3	10.3	36.4	11.7	18.0	27.8	16.1
Fairly serious	33.3	40.9	37.8	66.7	39.7	41.8	19.5	34.0	40.7	30.6
Not serious		46.7	56.7		50.0	21.8	68.8	48.0	31.5	54.0

* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

Table 8: Crime prevention measures*

	%
Installed burglar alarm	5.7
Installed door locks	21.2
Installed window/door grills	4.2
Maintain watchdogs	14.6
High fence	0.2
House has a caretaker	3.8
None of these	50.3
Others	6.6
Ask somebody to watch home	25.8
Neighbours watch anyway	14.9
Possession of firearms	5.7
House is insured against burglary	14.7

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