

SWEDEN

Jerzy Sarnecki¹

Description of sample

The survey covered a representative sample of 1,707 Swedish households with telephone subscriptions. The breakdown of households and respondents according to selected variables is shown in Table 1.

Generally speaking, the sample is not entirely representative of all Swedish households. From a comparison of the figures in Tables 1 and 2, which present statistical data for Swedish households, it can be noted that the proportion of small households (1.2 persons) is somewhat smaller in the survey population than in the total population (59% and 71% respectively). A further comparison also reveals that the living conditions of the households covered by the survey are somewhat better than for the average Swedish household. For instance, 62% of the households in the survey have above average incomes, and 66% owned their house or flat. The reason for it being not entirely representative of all households in Sweden is to be found in the actual survey method.

The persons interviewed were aged 16 or over, the median age being around 40. Just over 49% were men and almost 51% were women.

Data collection technique

The survey was conducted with the aid of telephone interviews. This method is fairly appropriate for a country like Sweden which has a very high ratio of telephones to population. It has been estimated that in 1992 there were about 950 telephones for every 1,000 inhabitants.

The survey was conducted in Sweden by Burke Marketing Information AB of Goteborg, whose personnel has been trained in telephone interviewing techniques. The survey was commissioned by the National Council for Crime Prevention (BRA), which received a special government grant for the project. BRA supervised both the translation of the interview questionnaire into Swedish and data collection. Burke was informed about the need to minimise non-response.

A pilot survey took place between 27 and 31 January 1992. The actual collection of data was carried out in two stages in the winter of 1992, i.e. from 3 to 20 February and 21 January to 3 March.

No particular problems were encountered as far as data collection is concerned.

Response rate and recontacting

The response rate for the Swedish part of the survey can be termed satisfactory. Preliminary figures indicate that the non-response rate (31%) was lowest than any of the other countries carrying out the survey with the same methodology.

¹ Head, Evaluation Division, National Council for Crime Prevention, Stockholm, Sweden.

Reasons for non-response are shown in Table 3. The main single cause was that the respondents did not answer the phone. Altogether 246 (10%) of the sample did not answer the phone, in spite of eight (and often more) attempts to get in touch with them. The number of people who refused to take part in the survey was relatively small, amounting to 181 individuals (7%).

Victimisation rates

Victimisation rates are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Figures for five-year prevalence were compared with figures from countries taking part in the 1988 survey. The general impression is that although Sweden's victimisation rate is comparable to those of the other European countries taking part in the 1988 survey, its crime rate appears to be somewhat lower than those of the USA and Australia².

Victim surveys are carried out regularly in Sweden, using the same type of questions as in this study³. It is difficult to compare them with the ICS, however, because the SCB surveys are conducted on a sample of the national population, and not on households, and by means of face-to-face interviews rather than telephone interviews. Nevertheless, a preliminary comparison of results of these two types of study indicates a relatively good fit between the results, though victimisation rates appear to be consistently higher in the SCB survey.

A victim survey, using telephone interviews, was recently conducted in eight districts of Stockholm⁴. Data for Stockholm from the two surveys provide particular opportunities for comparison. Although the results seem to correspond from a very first glance, further analysis is necessary.

Reasons for not reporting

Table 6 shows reporting rates for the crimes covered by the survey. As might be expected, the highest reporting rates are related to car theft and the lowest are for crime against the person, especially sexual incidents.

Reasons for not reporting crimes are shown in Table 7. The main reason provided by respondents for not reporting a crime to the police was that they thought it was not serious enough. One important reason (which is not listed in the table) for a number of crimes not being reported is that the victim is not entitled to compensation from an insurance company. The results correspond in general with those of the SCB (1991) survey, though in the latter the percentage of respondents who thought the police would not do anything was higher than that shown in Table 7.

Crime seriousness

2 Sarnecki, J. (1992) Ungdomsbrottslighet en kungskapsöversyn. Delbetänkande från ungdomsbrottskommitten.

3 SCB (1991) Offer för vålds- och egendomsbrott 1978-1989, Statistiska Centralbyrån, Stockholm.

4 Wikström, P.O. (1991) "Sociala problem brott och trygghet", Brottsförebyggande Rådet Rapport, No. 1.

The respondents' assessments of the seriousness of each crime are shown in Table 8. A considerable proportion of both reported and unreported crimes were considered serious.

Victim support

A large proportion (73%) of the victims stated that they had not received any support from relatives, friends and neighbours in coping with the effects of crime. Percentages were particularly low among men, elderly people and people with low levels of education.

Most of the respondents had not received help from any other source either (see Table 9).

Although the majority of victims had not received any support, on the whole the respondents were not favourable to the idea of some kind of crime victim assistance. 82% of the victims replied that help of this kind would not be of any use to them.

Attitudes towards the police

The police, then, was the most important public institution for support to victims of crime. The great majority (75%) of the victims were satisfied with the way in which the police handled their reports. Women were somewhat more satisfied than men and elderly persons somewhat more satisfied than younger ones, although the differences were small (5-7 percentage units).

The main reason for dissatisfaction with the police was that they did not do enough in solving the case (51% of those who were dissatisfied stated this reason), and that they did not take enough interest (35%).

Taking the interviewees as a whole, 58% were satisfied with the measures taken by the police in controlling their own area of residence, 20% were dissatisfied, and 22% were undecided.

One interesting finding is that a majority (64%) of the respondents felt that the police passed by their streets often enough, while 33% thought that this was not the case. In this respect, differences between the various groups of respondents were small, but it is worth noting that the interviewees in small communities were more satisfied with police patrol than those living in larger ones.

The results of the survey confirm other Swedish survey findings, which suggest that the police are relatively well accepted in Sweden.

Fear of crime

Comparisons with data from other countries suggest that Swedes express a greater fear of crime (above all violent crime) than the other Nordic countries.

When asked how safe they felt when walking around their residential area alone after dark, the majority (48%) replied that they felt very safe; 38% felt fairly safe; 9% a bit unsafe; and 4% very unsafe.

Nineteen per cent of the respondents avoided certain places or persons for safety reasons. On the other hand, only a small proportion (3%) of the interviewees

believed that their homes were very likely to be burgled within the next year, and 61% considered this very unlikely.

Generally speaking, the results of the survey concerning fear of crime can be summarised as follows: women felt less safe than men, elderly persons less safe than younger ones; persons with a lower level of education and low incomes felt less safe than others; those living in large communities felt safer than those living in small ones. These results correspond to a familiar pattern⁵. Persons who are more exposed and more vulnerable to crime express more fear than others.

⁵ Wikström, Sociala..., op. cit.

Crime prevention

Table 10 shows figures concerning measures taken by the respondents to protect themselves against crime. The most common measures were to ask somebody to keep an eye on the house (57%) and to fit locks (44%).

Only a small proportion of Swedes own firearms and these are mainly hunters, members of the armed forces, police officers or amateur marksmen. The authorities are very strict about providing gun licences for self-defence; this explains the very small proportion of respondents (3.6%) who stated that they kept firearms at home with which to defend themselves.

Attitudes towards punishment

Attitudes towards punishment were measured by describing the case of a 21-year-old recidivist burglar who, on this occasion, had stolen a colour TV set and then asked the respondents what sentence they thought he should receive. The results can first be interpreted by comparing them with replies from other countries. They seem, however, to suggest that Swedes are fairly skeptical about prison as an adequate penalty for crime; only 26% of the interviewees thought the man should be sent to prison (median sentence about 1 year). One very interesting result is the large proportion (47%) of respondents who thought the man should receive a community service order. Community service was recently introduced in Sweden on an experimental basis and, at present, can only be ordered by five of Sweden's 100 or so local courts. Nevertheless, the experiment has attracted widespread favourable coverage by the news media. Community service in Sweden is slightly different from the type of service indicated in the survey questionnaire. In Sweden, people ordered to perform community service do not work in hospitals or day nurseries, but they can work for so-called voluntary organisations. The positive attitude towards community service, however, has also been highlighted by a Swedish opinion poll⁶.

Concluding remarks

Although, on the whole, the results of the 1992 crime survey tend to confirm already existing data on crime and crime related matters in Swedish society, a much deeper analysis of the available data is necessary.

⁶ Andersson, T. and L. Alexandersson (1991) Samhällstjänst som alternativ till fängelse. Sammanställning över det första årets försöksverksamhet, Brottsförebyggande Rådet, Stockholm.

TABLES

Table 1: Composition of respondents' household by selected variables

	Total	Gender		Age			Household income		
		Male	Female	16-34 yrs	35-54 yrs	Over 55	Below avg.	Above avg.	Unknown
Base: all respondents	1707	843	864	554	563	589	550	1065	92
No. persons in household									
1	400	173	226	121	62	217	280	100	20
%	23.4	20.6	26.2	21.9	10.9	36.8	50.9	9.4	21.5
2	612	320	293	143	142	327	179	400	33
%	35.9	37.9	33.9	25.8	25.3	55.5	32.6	37.5	36.0
3	280	143	137	113	133	35	51	216	13
%	16.4	17.0	15.9	20.3	23.6	5.9	9.3	20.3	13.8
4	282	142	140	128	144	9	24	236	21
%	16.5	16.8	16.2	23.1	25.5	1.6	4.3	22.2	23.4
5	102	51	51	39	61	1	13	84	5
%	6.0	6.0	5.9	7.0	10.9	.2	2.3	7.9	5.3
6	32	15	17	10	22		3	29	
%	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.9	3.9		.6	2.7	
Total	1707	843	864	554	563	589	550	1065	92
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	2.51	2.55	2.48	2.73	3.12	1.73	1.76	2.90	2.55

	Education completed at			Town size				House	
	< 15 yrs	16-19 yrs	> 20 yrs	< 10 inh.	10-50 inh.	> 50 inh.	Unknown	Owned	Rented
Base: all respondents	397	600	557	589	511	582	25	1129	571
No. persons in household									
1	133	111	114	96	129	167	8	170	226
%	33.6	18.4	20.4	16.3	25.3	28.6	32.1	15.1	15.1
2	200	192	179	212	191	199	10	396	215
%	50.3	31.9	32.1	35.9	37.5	34.2	40.3	35.1	37.6
3	34	112	107	95	76	107	3	209	70
%	8.6	18.7	19.3	16.1	14.9	18.3	10.3	18.5	12.2
4	17	126	107	120	83	75	4	242	39
%	4.3	21.0	19.3	20.4	16.2	12.9	14.3	21.4	6.8
5	8	40	42	46	23	31	1	82	20
%	2.1	6.7	7.5	7.8	4.6	5.4	3.1	7.2	3.5
6	4	20	8	21	8	4		30	2
%	1.1	3.3	1.4	3.5	1.6	.6		2.7	.3
Total	397	600	557	589	511	582	25	1129	571
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	1.95	2.75	2.66	2.78	2.42	2.34	2.16	2.79	1.98

Table 2: Swedish population data (weighting base)

TOTAL POPULATION (all ages)	8,590,630	
POPULATION OVER 16 YEARS OLD	6,935,793	
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS (all ages)	3,830,000	
1 person	1,515,000	-40%
2 persons	1,190,000	-31%
3 persons	471,000	-12%
4 persons	453,000	-12%
5 persons	157,500	-4%
6 persons	43,500	-1%
REGIONS - NUMBER OF PERSONS (all ages)		
		%
1:	Stockholm area	19
2:	East-central Sweden	17
3:	Smaland incl. islands	9
4:	Southern Sweden	14
5:	Western Sweden	20
6:	North-central Sweden	10
7:	Central and Upper Norrland	11

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Sweden (1992) Official Statistics of Sweden, SCB (Statistica Sweden)

Table 3: Victims of crime: complete sample disposition

COMPLETE INTERVIEWS	1,707
NON-RESPONSES:	
Non relevant contacts	882
- Disconnected	494
- Business	388
No answer after 8 or more attempts	246
Contact but no complete interview	339
- Hearing problem/language problem	96
- No eligible person (too old/ill)	108
- Not available during field work	43
- Other reason	44
- Terminated	48
Refusals	181
Total	3,355
TOTAL VALID NUMBERS (3,355-882=)	2,473

Table 4: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	5.7
Theft from car	15.2
Car vandalism	15.5
Theft of motorcycle	1.3
Theft of bicycle	21.5
(Owners)	
Theft of car	6.8
Theft from car	18.1
Car vandalism	18.4
Theft of motorcycle	7.8
Theft of bicycle	23.6
Burglary with entry	4.8
Attempted burglary	3.3
Robbery	1.3
Personal theft	14.1
Sexual incidents	4.1
Assault/threat	9.7

* 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	1.7
Theft from car	3.9
Car vandalism	4.5
Theft of motorcycle	0.6
Theft of bicycle	7.0
(Owners)	
Theft of car	2.0
Theft from car	4.7
Car vandalism	5.4
Theft of motorcycle	3.6
Theft of bicycle	7.6
Burglary with entry	1.3
Attempted burglary	0.8
Robbery	0.3
Personal theft	4.2
Sexual incidents	0.9
Assault/threat	2.7
Consumer fraud	3.7
Corruption	n.a.

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

Table 6: Reported crimes

	%
Theft of car	96.8
Theft from car	69.9
Car vandalism	51.0
Theft of motorcycle	85.0
Theft of bicycle	66.9
Burglary with entry	65.8
Attempted burglary	30.6
Robbery	81.3
Personal theft	49.6
Sexual incidents	19.7
Assault/threat	28.6

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		52.9	59.7		40.1	62.0		55.0	42.8	38.1
Solved it myself			6.3		16.1	5.8	14.7	6.2	13.1	21.8
Inappropriate for police		2.2	5.6		5.5	9.4		6.3	4.9	9.6
Other authorities			2.4		1.7	3.7	17.1	3.1	2.5	2.8
My family solved it	29.4		0.8		6.6			1.0	2.8	1.8
No insurance		4.3	0.8	63.3	5.6	7.0		0.8		
Police could do nothing		11.2	6.5	35.6	8.9	5.0		11.3	14.3	12.0
Police won't do anything		7.6	10.8		7.0	2.9		7.5	13.8	14.6
Fear/dislike police			0.8		0.9		18.8	1.8		4.2
Didn't dare									6.3	7.3
Other reasons	70.6	6.9	6.9	36.7	16.5	5.7	49.4	17.4	30.4	14.5
Don't know		3.9	1.3		1.9	2.8		2.6		3.1
Insurance will not pay		26.5	18.3		11.5	22.3		4.0		

* 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 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	36.2	8.2	7.4	31.4	10.8	26.1	45.8	20.5	31.3	32.4
Fairly serious	39.6	30.6	24.1	49.5	36.7	34.6	35.2	32.7	42.6	37.1
Not serious	24.2	61.2	68.6	19.1	52.5	39.3	19.0	46.8	26.1	30.6

* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

Table 9: Victim support

Source of support	%
Police	22.7
Social services	0.8
Religious organisations	0.4
Other voluntary organisations	0.7
Crime victim refugees	0.7
Other persons/organisations	9.0

Table 10: Crime prevention measures*

	%
Installed burglar alarm	5.4
Installed door locks	43.9
Installed window/door grills	4.7
Maintain watchdogs	3.9
High fence	0.9
House has a caretaker	4.2
None of these	47.5
Others	
Ask somebody to watch home	56.9
Neighbours watch anyway	7.4
Possession of firearms	16.0
House is insured against burglary	

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

