



Juristat

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



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CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Results of the 1996 International Crime Victimization Survey

by Sandra Besserer

HIGHLIGHTS

- According to the 1996 International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), 25% of the adult population in Canada reported being victimized in the previous year. In comparison to 10 other western industrialized countries, Canada's figure was about average.
- Results for the five countries that have participated in all three rounds of the ICVS (Canada, England and Wales, Finland, the Netherlands and the United States) indicate that victimization rates are fairly stable. In the 1996 survey, Canada's overall victimization rate fell slightly to 25%, from the 28% recorded in both 1989 and 1992. This mirrors the decline in Canada's police-reported crime rates over the past few years.
- Among the group of 11 western industrialized countries, Canadians were most satisfied with their police. In 1996, 80% of the population felt the police were doing a good job at controlling crime in their area. The Netherlands, which had the highest victimization rate, ranked their police lowest – only 45% of the population felt the police were doing a good job.
- When asked to decide on a sentence for a burglar convicted for a second time, people in Canada, England and Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the United States chose prison by a wide margin over other sanctions. By contrast, people in Austria, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland much preferred community service.
- People in Sweden felt safest walking alone in their area after dark: 87% of the population felt 'very' or 'fairly' safe. The figure was lowest for residents of England and Wales (65%). Canada's figure, at 73%, was third lowest among 11 countries.
- Fear of a break-in was highest in France, where 53% of the population felt the chances were 'likely' or 'very likely' that they would experience a break-in in the coming year. Canada had the third highest figure (30%), while Finland had the lowest (11%) in the group of 11 countries. Previous burglary victims were more fearful of a break-in than non-victims.
- A majority of households in the western countries are using home security measures. Usage of at least one of seven home security measures was highest in England and Wales (89% of households). In Canada, 78% of households reported using at least one of the measures. Special door locks were the most popular measure in nine countries, including Canada.



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Introduction

In 1996, the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) was conducted for a third time. Canada was one of more than 30 participating countries. Canada also participated in the two previous surveys (conducted in 1989 and 1992), one of only five western industrialized countries to do so. The purpose of the survey, which is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice in the Netherlands and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), is to provide comparable information on the incidence of victimization around the world.

A standard questionnaire is used to gather the information in each country and similar techniques are employed to conduct the survey. In 1996, a random sample of persons aged 16 years and older were asked for detailed information on 11 offences¹ (see Box 1), including when, where and how often offences occurred over the previous five years; whether offences were reported to the police; and whether victimization experiences were considered serious. The participants were also asked for their opinions on public safety, policing and sentencing. In most western industrialized countries (including Canada), respondents were interviewed by telephone. In other countries, where telephone ownership is not widespread, face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Box 1 Offence Categories	
ICVS Offences	Offence Groupings used in this <i>Juristat</i>
1. Robbery/Attempted Robbery (using force or threats)	1. Violent Offences
2. Sexual Assault (ranging from unwanted sexual touching to rape – asked of women only)	
3. Assault/Threats	
4. Theft of Personal Property (other than robbery, such as pickpocketing)	2. Theft of Personal Property
5. Burglary ² (residence)	3. Household Burglaries
6. Attempted Burglary (residence)	
7. Theft of Car/Van/Truck (attempts not included)	4. Motor Vehicle Offences
8. Theft from Car	
9. Vandalism to Car/Van/Truck	
10. Theft of Motorcycle/Moped/Scooter	
11. Theft of Bicycle	5. Bicycle Theft

To keep costs down and encourage participation by as many countries as possible, sample sizes were kept small. Usually, 1,000 to 2,000 persons were interviewed per country. The main drawback of this approach is that the data are subject to fairly large sampling errors. The size of the error varies, but can be as high as ±3%, meaning the actual value can differ from the estimated value by up to 3 percentage points in either direction (see Methodology section for more detail). Despite this shortcoming, the ICVS provides a unique opportunity to make international comparisons regarding experiences of crime and public opinion of justice issues in a variety of countries (see Box 2).

¹ A number of criteria were used to select the 11 offences, including: the offence has individuals as victims; the offence can be described in terms that respondents understand; and the offence has a similar meaning in all countries. In Canada, these 11 offences account for a fairly large proportion of incidents reported to police (approximately 70% of all Criminal Code incidents in 1996).

² The term 'burglary' is used by the ICVS. In Canada, burglary is more commonly referred to as 'break and enter'.

Box 2
Comparing National Crime Levels

How can levels of crime be compared across countries? One option is to examine the figures from police-recorded crime surveys. This method presents some problems, however. First, criminal codes differ from country to country, so police surveys can actually be measuring different kinds of crime. Second, these surveys use different methods to record and count crime, which can result in discrepancies from one country to another. Third, public attitudes towards reporting crime to the police vary from country to country, so that differences in crime rates may actually reflect different rates of reporting.

A second option, which eliminates some of the problems associated with police-recorded crime rates, is to compare results of national victimization surveys, such as the one conducted as part of Statistics Canada's General Social Survey. These surveys have the advantage of being able to capture crimes that have not been reported to the police. However, they exclude certain offences, such as homicide and drug

offences. There can also be important differences in survey methodology between countries, for example, the way respondents are chosen, the techniques used to gather the information, the time period of the survey and the types of crime being measured. As well, many countries do not conduct this type of survey.

The ICVS has been able to address some of the problems that arise in comparing data from various national sources. The survey uses a standard questionnaire, standard procedures in conducting the survey and standard techniques for producing the results. Unfortunately, problems remain which are inherent in conducting international surveys. For example, there can be cultural differences in the way people interpret certain questions (behaviour that is considered serious in one culture may not be in another) and in their willingness to tell interviewers about their experiences.

The focus of this *Juristat* is to present the results of the 1996 ICVS for the 11 western industrialized countries that participated, i.e., Austria, England and Wales, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and Canada. Most of the analysis is restricted to these countries, rather than the 34 countries that participated, for two reasons. First, these 11 countries have much in common in social, political and economic terms. Second, the survey methodology was most similar for this group of countries.³

An analysis of victimization survey results in Canada would typically include an examination of the associated risk factors, including age, gender, level of income and education. It was necessary to limit this type of analysis because of the small sample sizes for sub-groups of the population and the associated sampling error. The small sample sizes also made it necessary to collapse the 11 offences into 5 groups for some of the analysis (see Box 1).

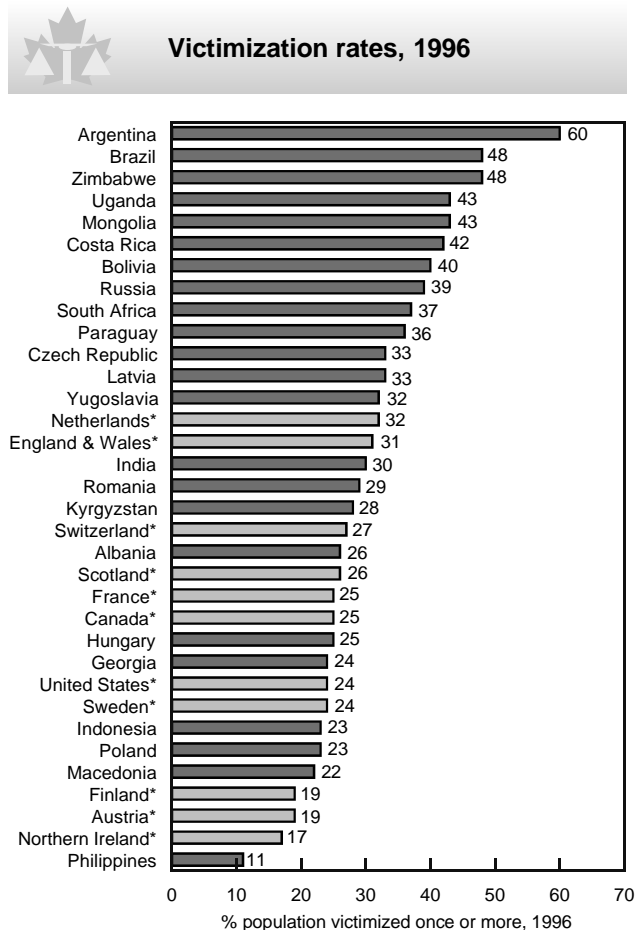
How do Canadian rates of victimization compare internationally?

For the 34 countries that participated in the 1996 ICVS, an average of 31% of the population reported being victimized in the year preceding the survey.⁴ The proportion of persons that fell victim to any of the 11 offences ranged from 11% in the Philippines to 60% in Argentina (see Figure 1). Canada's rate, at 25%, was in the lower third of the group of 34 countries.

³ For many of the other countries, the survey was not national in scope, but was conducted in a major city. As well, sampling was not done by random digit dialing and interviews were conducted face-to-face, rather than by telephone. In several countries, the ICVS questionnaire was used, but the survey was not co-ordinated by UNICRI.

⁴ For the 1996 ICVS, respondents were interviewed in the first few months of 1996. Thus, questions involving opinions about public safety, policing and sentencing relate to feelings at the time of the survey (1996). However, questions about victimization experiences relate to the previous year (1995) and the previous five years. To avoid confusion, the ICVS will be referred to as if it relates to the year in which it was conducted – 1996, 1992 or 1989.

Figure 1



* The 11 western industrialized countries are shown in light coloured bars.
Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

The victimization rate in the 11 western industrialized countries was much lower on average, with 24% of the population being victimized in 1996 (see Table 1). This figure varied from a low of 17% in Northern Ireland to a high of 32% in the Netherlands. Canada's rate was close to the average of these industrialized countries.

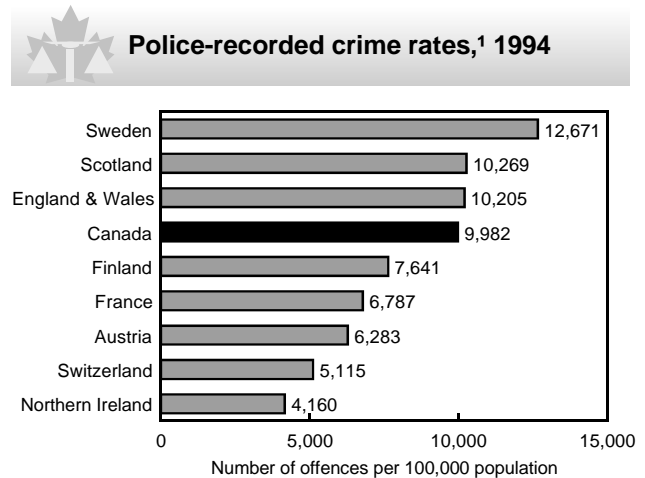
Table 1 also provides the victimization rates for the five offence groups. England and Wales had the highest proportion of victims for violent offences, household burglaries and motor vehicle offences. The Netherlands had the highest figures for theft of personal property and bicycle theft. Canada's rates were close to the average for each of the five offence groups. Van Dijk and Mayhew (1992: 11, 19) found that rates of car theft and bicycle theft are related to rates of ownership – thefts are higher in countries where ownership is higher. Thus in Table 1, the higher rates of victimization for motor vehicle offences and bicycle theft in some countries may be partially due to higher ownership rates in those countries.

Police-recorded crime

Another way to view international crime rates is to examine police-recorded data. These data, unlike the ICVS data, include all penal code infractions. Also unlike the ICVS, they only include incidents that victims report to the police (see Box 2). According to the Fifth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Sweden had the highest crime rate in 1994, followed by Scotland, and England and Wales (see Figure 2). Canada had the fourth highest rate out of nine countries. (Figures for the Netherlands were not available and the U.S. figures were not comparable.)

In Northern Ireland, both police and the ICVS report relatively low rates of crime and victimization, despite periods of civic unrest in that country. One interpretation of these data is that the types of crimes that are prevalent in terrorist activities (such as bombings) are not captured in this crime victim survey, and that apart from these high profile, but relatively infrequent events, Northern Ireland has lower rates of crime. One additional factor that might help explain the lower crime rates is the paramilitary ceasefire that was in effect for part

Figure 2



Figures for the Netherlands are not available.
 Figures for the United States are not comparable so were excluded.
¹ Rates are based on total penal code offences.
 Source: Fifth United Nations Survey of Crime.

of the period covered by the data. This ceasefire lasted from late 1994 to early 1996.

Another point of comparison among countries is the homicide rate. The pattern of police-recorded crime rates is generally reflected in homicide rates. That is, countries with higher overall crime rates tend to have higher homicide rates (see Figure 3). (Sweden, with its high police-reported crime rate, but low homicide rate, is an exception.) The country with the highest homicide rate in the group is the United States, with a figure that is at least three times larger than that of the nine other countries. The homicide rates for those nine other countries fall into three distinct groupings: Scotland, Canada, France and Northern Ireland have rates of about 2 per 100,000; England and Wales, Austria, Switzerland and Sweden have rates of about 1 per 100,000; and the Netherlands has a much lower rate of 0.2 per 100,000. The

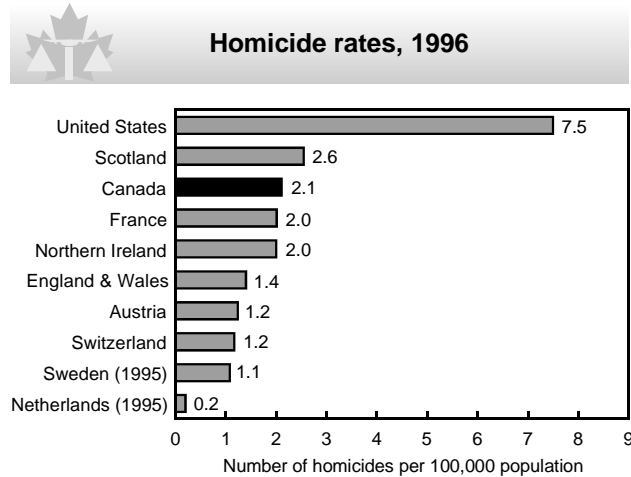
Table 1

	Violent Offences	Theft of Personal Property	Household Burglaries	Motor Vehicle Offences	Bicycle Theft	All Offences
Austria	4	5	1	8	3	19
Canada	6	6	5	12	3	25
England & Wales	8	5	6	18	4	31
Finland	6	3	1	7	5	19
France	5	4	4	15	3	25
Netherlands	6	7	5	14	10	32
Northern Ireland	3	3	3	10	1	17
Scotland	5	5	4	16	2	26
Sweden	6	5	2	9	9	24
Switzerland	5	6	2	11	7	27
United States	7	4	5	13	3	24
Average	5	5	3	12	5	24

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

homicide rate for Northern Ireland is substantially lower than what has been reported in previous years. The reason appears to be related to the paramilitary ceasefire discussed above.

Figure 3



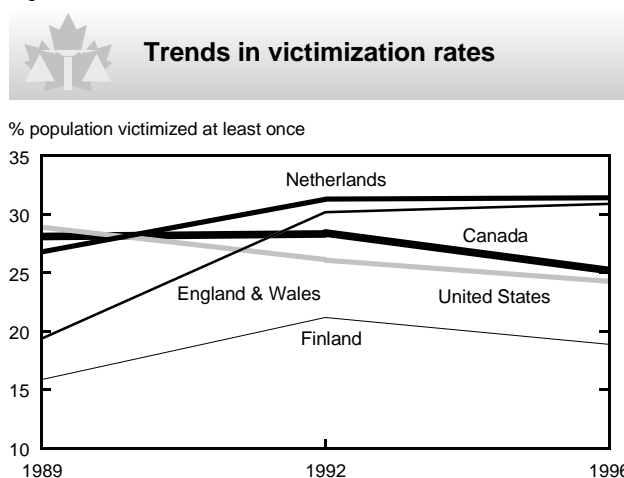
A figure for Finland is not available.

Sources: National Central Bureau – Interpol Ottawa and "A Commentary on Northern Ireland Crime Statistics 1996" by the Northern Ireland Office.

Are victimization rates rising?

An examination of the results for the five countries that have participated in all three rounds of the ICVS (Canada, England and Wales, Finland, the Netherlands and the United States) indicates that, overall, victimization rates are fairly stable. The victimization rate for these five countries averaged 24% in 1989, 27% in 1992, and 26% in 1996. There was more variation in the rate for individual countries, however (see Figure 4). The rate in the United States fell in both years. In Canada, the rate fell slightly in 1996 (to 25%) from about 28% in 1989 and 1992. Finland's rate increased between

Figure 4



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1989, 1992 and 1996.

1989 and 1992, but fell back in 1996. The two countries with the highest 1996 victimization rates – the Netherlands and England and Wales – experienced an increase in rates in both years. However, after increasing sharply from 1989 to 1992, the rates in 1996 were only slightly higher than their 1992 levels.

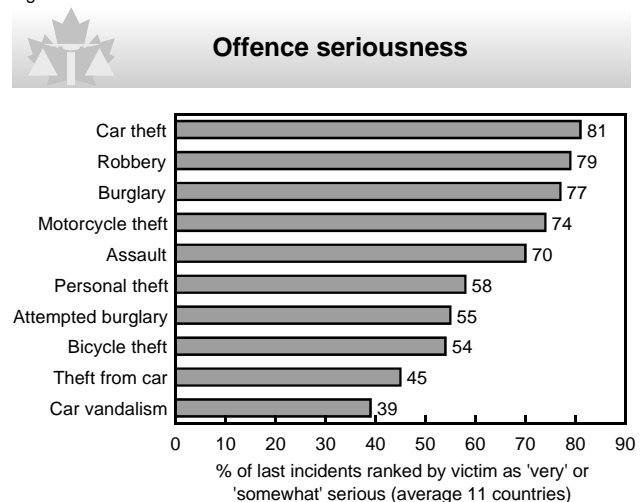
The victimization results for Canada are mirrored in police-recorded crime statistics. According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, the crime rate fell 2% in 1996.⁵ This was the fifth straight year that the rate declined, after having increased steadily over the previous three decades. Over the last five years Canada's crime rate has fallen a total of 15%.

Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (GSS) also provides similar results.⁶ According to the 1993 GSS, 24% of Canadians were the victims of at least one crime in the previous year. This was unchanged from the rate that was observed when the survey was first conducted in 1988.

What crimes do victims consider serious?

According to the 1996 ICVS, victims of car theft were more likely than the victims of the other offences to consider their victimization to be serious (see Figure 5).⁷ On average for the 11 countries, 81% of car theft victims felt this offence to be either 'somewhat' or 'very' serious. The offences considered to be least serious by victims were car vandalism

Figure 5



The figure for sexual assault is not included because not all victims of this offence were asked about its seriousness.

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

⁵ See Kong, Rebecca. Juristat Vol. 17, No. 8.

⁶ The General Social Survey examined the victimization rates for eight types of offences for persons aged 15 years and older. See Gartner and Doob, Juristat Vol. 14, No. 13.

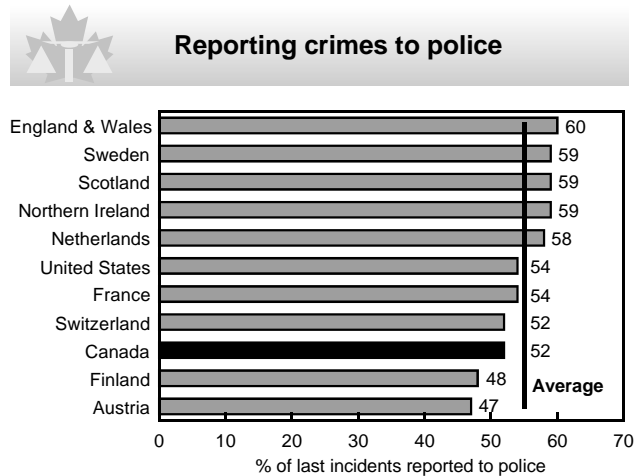
⁷ For 10 of the offences, victims were asked if they considered the last incident to be 'very serious', 'somewhat serious' or 'not very serious'. Last incidents include the most recent offence over the previous five years. The results for sexual assault are not included because not all victims of this offence were asked about the seriousness of the incident.

and theft from car. The four offences considered to be most serious (car theft, robbery, burglary and motorcycle theft) all involved theft of property. Only one, robbery, is considered a violent offence. These four offences were all considered to be more serious than assault. In Canada, police report that almost 80% of assault incidents are of the least serious kind (assault level 1).⁸ This might help explain why assault was judged by ICVS respondents to be less serious than four other offences.

Which crimes do victims report to the police?

A great many victimization incidents are not reported to police (see Figure 6). For the 11 industrialized countries, an average of 55% of incidents were reported.⁹ The five countries with the highest reporting rates were: England and Wales (60%), Sweden (59%), Scotland (59%), Northern Ireland (59%) and the Netherlands (58%). The difference in percentages for these five countries is not statistically significant – the difference is less than the size of the sampling error (see Methodology section). In Canada, the percentage of incidents reported to police was slightly below the average at 52%.

Figure 6

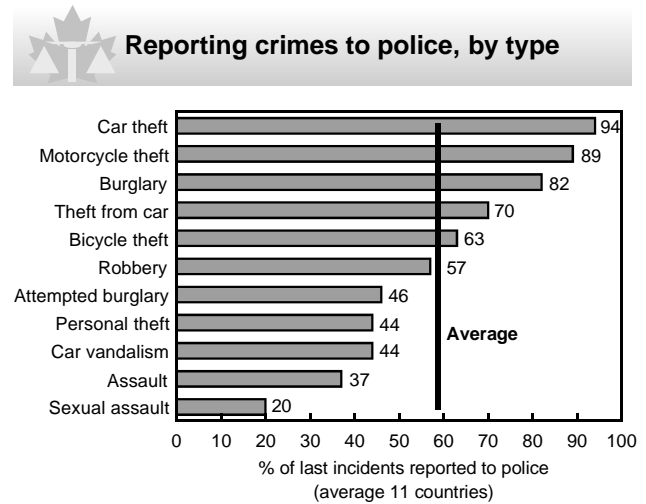


Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

Some types of offences are reported more often than others (see Figure 7). In general, property crimes were reported more frequently than crimes against the person. This is likely a consequence, at least in part, of having to report crimes involving insurance claims to the police. Of the 11 offences, car thefts were reported most often, followed by motorcycle thefts and burglaries. The two offences with the lowest reporting rates were violent offences – sexual assault and assault. The average reporting rate for the 11 offences was 59%.

The 1993 General Social Survey also found that, in Canada, offences against the person were reported to the police less frequently than property offences (33% of offences against the person were reported compared with 51% of property offences). The two offences with the lowest reporting rates were sexual assault, followed by assault.¹⁰

Figure 7



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

For five of the offences (theft from car, burglary, robbery, sexual assault and assault), ICVS respondents were asked why they did, or did not, report the incident (multiple responses were permitted).¹¹ By far the most common reason given for not reporting an offence was that it was 'not serious'. On average, for the 11 countries, this reason was mentioned in 44% of unreported incidents. The next most popular reason was 'solved it myself' (14%), followed by 'police couldn't do anything' (13%).

There was much more diversity in the reasons given for reporting the five offences. This is partially due to the nature of the offences. Two are property crimes, so insurance claims are often involved, while the other three are crimes against the person. The most common reason given for reporting crimes was 'for insurance reasons' (35%), followed by 'crimes should be reported' (34%), 'want offender to be caught' (27%), 'to recover property' (27%) and 'to stop it' (19%). Two of the reasons – for insurance and to recover property – were cited more frequently for property offences (46% and 33%, respectively for property crimes compared with 6% and 10% for crimes against the person). Two other reasons – want offender to be caught and to stop it – were cited more often for crimes against the person (34% and 32%, respectively for crimes against the person compared with 25% and 15% for property offences). (The reasons could not be examined in more detail because the number of incidents was too small in some offence categories.)

⁸ See Kong, Rebecca. Juristat Vol. 17, No. 8.

⁹ For each of the 11 offences, victims were asked if they reported the last incident to police. Last incidents include the most recent offence over the previous five years.

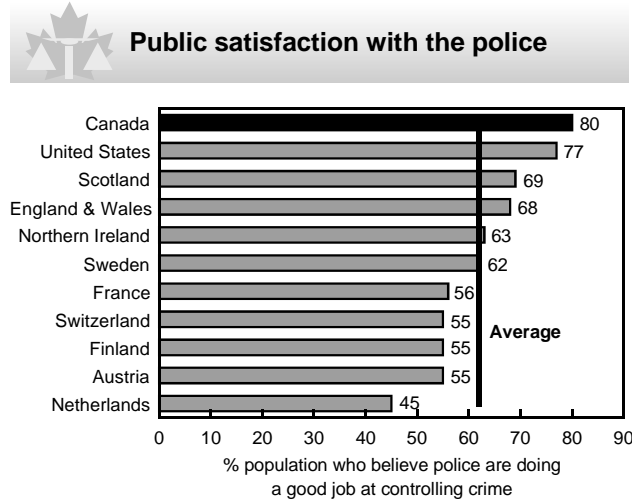
¹⁰ See "1993 General Social Survey. Tables in Victimization".

¹¹ Only five offences were chosen so that the survey would not be too long. There were two primary considerations in choosing the five offences: survey organizers wanted offences that would have a large enough number of victimization incidents to permit analysis and they wanted offences that would exhibit some differences in results among the countries.

Do people believe the police are doing a good job?

Of the 11 western industrialized countries that participated in the 1996 ICVS, Canada had the highest percentage (80%) of the public who believed the police in their area were doing a good job at controlling crime (see Figure 8). This compares to an average of 62% for all 11 countries. The United States ranked second at 77%. The Netherlands, the country with the highest overall victimization rate in 1996, had the lowest figure. Only 45% of the population felt the police were doing a good job. In contrast, the people of England and Wales had a fairly high opinion of their police, despite that country having the second highest victimization rate in 1996. Many respondents did not appear to hold strong opinions one way or the other. The percentage of 'unknown' responses ranged from 6% in the United States to 29% in the Netherlands. In Canada, one-tenth of responses were 'unknown'.

Figure 8



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

Table 2

	Public Perception of Police Performance (% population)								
	Do police in your area do a good job at controlling crime?								
	Yes			No			Unknown		
	1989	1992	1996	1989	1992	1996	1989	1992	1996
Austria	..	..	55	..	..	20	..	..	25
Canada	89	82	80	11	12	10	-	7	10
England & Wales	70	66	68	17	21	20	14	13	12
Finland	64	53	55	18	23	24	18	24	22
France	62	..	56	21	..	18	18	..	27
Netherlands	58	50	45	20	24	26	22	27	29
Northern Ireland	63	..	63	21	..	20	16	..	17
Scotland	71	..	69	16	..	21	13	..	9
Sweden	..	58	62	..	20	14	..	22	25
Switzerland	50	..	55	11	..	21	39	..	24
United States	81	..	77	17	..	18	2	..	6

- nil or zero.

.. figures not available.

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1989, 1992 and 1996.

The high opinion that Canadians have of their police is confirmed by a recent CTV/National Angus Reid poll, entitled *Crime and the Justice System*.¹² The poll, conducted in May 1997, asked a representative sample of Canadians aged 18 years and older for their opinions on crime and the justice system. When asked how much confidence they had in their local police, 86% of the population responded 'very' or 'somewhat' confident.

Table 2 shows the responses on satisfaction with the police for all three rounds of the ICVS. In general, public opinion of police performance has declined. For example, for the 9 countries that participated in both the 1989 and 1996 surveys, the average proportion of 'yes' responses (police doing a good job) fell from 67% to 63% and the average proportion of 'no' responses rose from 17% to 20%. For Canada, the picture is unclear. The percentage of 'yes' responses has declined over time, but the percentage of 'no' responses has remained about the same. Instead, there has been an increase in the proportion of 'unknown' responses. The only country to show any clear improvement in public opinion of police performance is Sweden, where the 'yes' responses have increased and the 'no' responses have decreased.

Not surprisingly, previous victimization experience appeared to influence a person's opinion of the police. In all 11 countries in 1996, victims¹³ were less satisfied with police performance than were non-victims. On average, 59% of victims felt that the police were doing a good job at controlling crime compared with 65% of non-victims.

For five offences—theft from a car, burglary, robbery, sexual assault, and assault—victims who reported the offence were asked if they were satisfied with the police handling of their report. The majority (70%) responded affirmatively. For the five offences combined, the figure ranged from 53% in Austria

¹² See "Crime and the Justice System" on the Angus Reid webpage [www.Angusreid.com].

¹³ This refers to anyone who was a victim of any of the 11 offences in the previous five years.

to 77% in Finland. In Canada, 73% of those who reported the offence were satisfied with the police handling of their report. (The number of incidents in individual offence categories was not large enough to examine the results by offence type.)

Public satisfaction with the police does not appear to be directly related to the number of police officers available to people. Figure 9 shows the number of police officers per capita for 10 of the industrialized countries.¹⁴ In 1994, the number of police officers varied considerably, from a low of 165 per 100,000 population in Austria, up to 335 per 100,000 in Northern Ireland. The two countries with the lowest number of police per capita, Austria and Finland, also ranked low on the ICVS in terms of public satisfaction with police performance. Canada, on the other hand, which had the third lowest number of police officers, had the highest ICVS score on police performance. Northern Ireland and France, which had the highest number of police officers per capita, were about average in their level of satisfaction with police performance.

Figure 9



A figure for the Netherlands is not available.
Source: Fifth United Nations Survey of Crime.

Table 3

	Community Service	Prison	Fine	Suspended Sentence	Other ¹
Austria	62	10	14	8	6
Canada	30	43	8	8	11
England & Wales	29	49	8	6	8
Finland	49	18	15	13	6
France	68	11	9	6	6
Netherlands	42	31	9	9	8
Northern Ireland	28	49	15	4	5
Scotland	27	49	13	5	7
Sweden	50	22	13	6	9
Switzerland	61	9	10	13	7
United States	23	56	8	1	12
Average	43	32	11	7	8

¹ Includes 'unknown' responses.
Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

How should offenders be punished?

Respondents to the 1996 ICVS were presented with the following scenario: a man, aged 21, is found guilty for a second time of breaking into a house and stealing an item. This time the item was a colour television. Respondents were then asked which of five possible sentences was most appropriate for this person: a fine, prison sentence, community service, probation/suspended sentence, or some other sentence. The results, shown in Table 3, indicate that community service, followed by prison, are the two preferred methods of punishment.

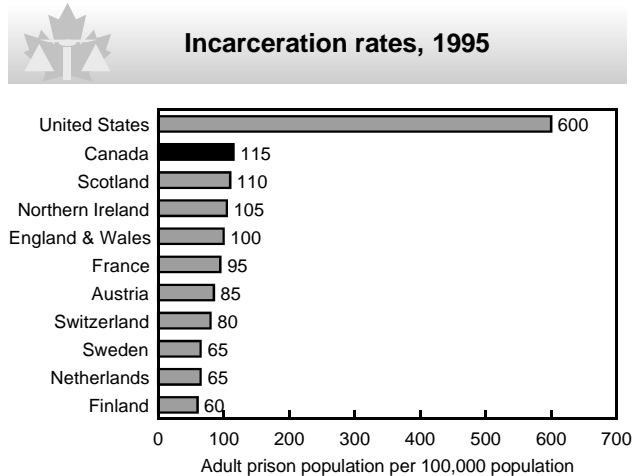
Countries fell into two distinct groups with respect to choosing one of the two sanctions. Residents in five countries – Canada, England and Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the United States – favoured prison by an average margin of 2 to 1 over community service. Residents in the remaining countries – Austria, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland – favoured community service by an even larger margin (by an average of 4 to 1).

There was no association between a country's overall victimization rate and its citizens' preference for prison. In other words, countries with higher overall victimization rates did not necessarily favour prison as a sanction. However, there was some relationship between the victimization rate for burglary (including attempts) and the choice of a prison sentence. Countries such as England and Wales and Canada, which had higher than average burglary rates, also tended to prefer a prison term for a recidivist burglar.

National opinions about imprisonment appear to be reflected in national incarceration rates. The five countries in the ICVS that favoured imprisonment over community service also had the highest incarceration rates in 1995 (see Figure 10). Incarceration rates ranged from 60 per 100,000 population for Finland to 600 per 100,000 population in the United States. The rate in the United States far exceeded that of any of the other ten countries.

¹⁴ These data come from the Fifth United Nations Survey of Crime and are the most recent available. A figure for the Netherlands is not available.

Figure 10



Source: "Americans Behind Bars" by Marc Mauer.

According to the ICVS, the majority of Canadians felt a prison sentence was the appropriate punishment for a recidivist burglar. Comparing with actual court outcomes, in the provincial/territorial courts of nine provinces and territories, a prison sentence was the most frequently imposed sanction for break and enter in 1995/96. Of the almost 20,000 convictions for break and enter, a prison term was imposed three-quarters of the time.¹⁵ The next most popular sanction was probation (59% of convictions), followed by 'other' sanctions, such as an absolute discharge or suspended sentence (29% of convictions). These figures total more than 100% because multiple sanctions can be imposed.

Do citizens feel safe?

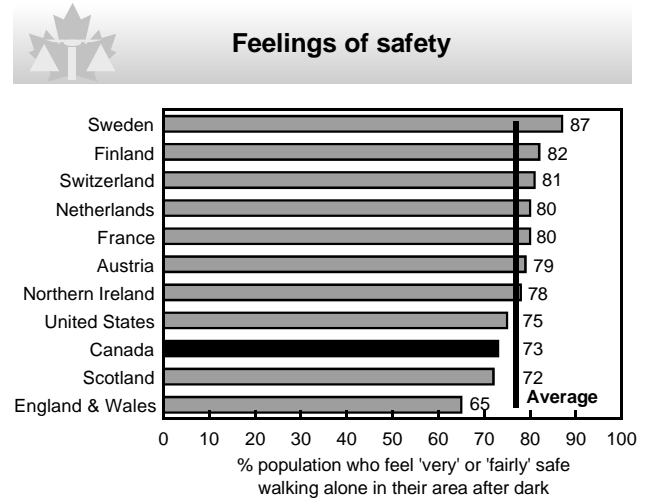
The ICVS asked respondents how safe they felt walking alone in their area after dark – very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe, or very unsafe. The response, illustrated in Figure 11, indicates that the majority of people felt safe in this situation. The proportion of the population that felt very or fairly safe ranged from 65% in England and Wales up to 87% in Sweden. Canada ranked near the bottom at 73%. The average for all 11 countries was 77%. Not surprisingly, males felt safer than females. In 1996, for the 11 countries combined, 89% of males felt very or fairly safe compared with 65% of females.

The same question was asked once before in the 1992 ICVS. Four of the five countries that participated both times (England and Wales, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden) showed no significant change in opinion from 1992 to 1996. In Canada, there was a noticeable decline in the percentage of the population feeling safe – from 78% in 1992 to 73% in 1996.

Statistics Canada's General Social Survey asked respondents a similar question about walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark. In 1993, 72% of the population felt 'very safe' or 'reasonably safe'. This was virtually unchanged from the figure five years earlier. However, between the two surveys, the proportion of people that felt 'very safe' fell and the proportion feeling 'reasonably safe' increased.¹⁶

The ICVS asked participants what they felt the chances were of someone breaking into their home in the coming year.

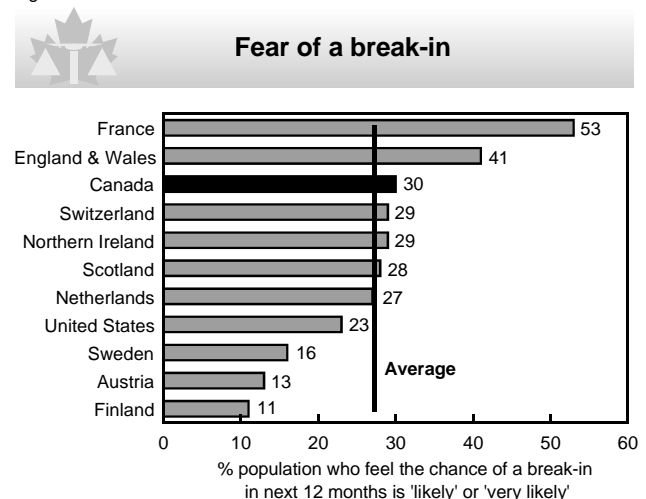
Figure 11



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

Response categories were: 'very likely', 'likely' or 'not likely'. There was quite a wide range in responses (see Figure 12). The percent of the population that felt the chances were 'very likely' or 'likely' ranged from 11% in Finland up to 53% in France. The figure for Canada (30%) was third highest, but four other countries had very similar results. In all 11 countries, fear of a break-in was higher among previous burglary victims (i.e. those persons who had been the victim of a burglary or attempted burglary in the previous five years). Overall in 1996, 47% of burglary victims felt the chances of a break-in were very likely or likely. This compared to a figure of 23% for non-victims. In 1996 for the 11 countries combined, fear of a break-in was the same for women as for men.

Figure 12



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

¹⁵ This information comes from the Adult Criminal Court Survey. The data are supplied by provincial/territorial courts in seven provinces and two territories, representing 80% of the national provincial/territorial criminal court caseload. Break and enter includes businesses as well as residences. The ICVS only asked about household burglaries.

¹⁶ See Gartner and Doob, Juristat Vol. 14, No. 13.

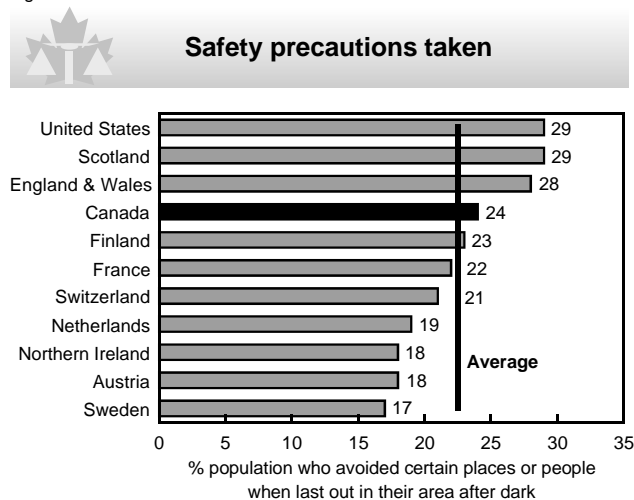
Between the 1989 and 1996 surveys, the figure for France jumped from 36% to 53%, while that for Switzerland dropped from 46% to 29%. Apart from those two notable exceptions, expectations of a break-in have not changed dramatically over time. The average for the 9 countries that participated in both 1989 and 1996 is the same – 30%. Canada's figure in 1996 was down slightly from the 1989 level of 33%.

The *Crime and the Justice System* poll conducted by Angus Reid asked Canadians, "To what extent do you fear being a victim of crime in your community? Would you say you have a great deal of fear, a fair amount of fear, a little fear, or no fear." The results showed that 21% of Canadians have either a great deal (5%) or a fair amount (16%) of fear. This was virtually unchanged from the figure obtained when the same question was asked in a 1990 poll.

Are crime prevention measures being used?

Close to one-quarter (23%) of the population in the 11 industrialized countries avoided certain places or people for reasons of safety when out alone after dark.¹⁷ The figure ranged from a high of 29% in the United States and Scotland to a low of 17% in Sweden (see Figure 13). Canada had the fourth highest figure (24%). This was up slightly from 20% in 1989 and 21% in 1992. For the nine countries that participated in both the 1989 and 1996 surveys, results were mixed. Four countries, including Canada, showed an increase in the percentage of persons taking precautions; three countries showed a decrease; and two countries had virtually the same result.

Figure 13



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

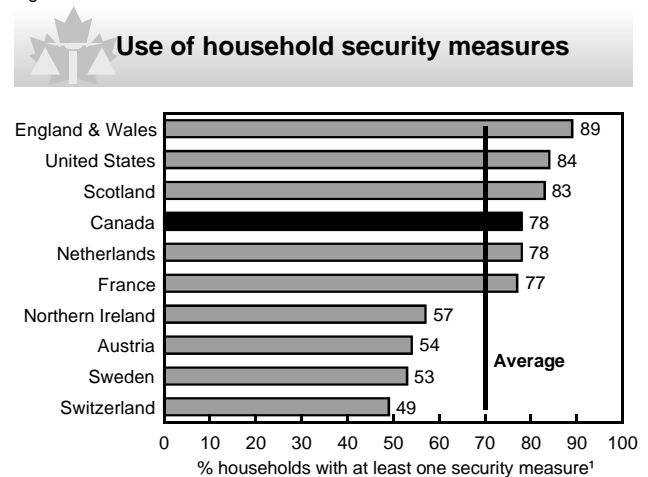
Females were more cautious than males when out alone after dark. For the 11 countries in 1996, an average of 32% of women avoided certain places or people for safety reasons. The comparable figure for males was 14%.

¹⁷ The ICVS asked respondents if they had avoided certain places or people for safety reasons the last time they were out alone in their area after dark.

People who feel unsafe walking alone after dark tend to take more precautions when outside their homes after dark. According to the 1996 ICVS for the 11 countries combined, 50% of the people who felt unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark also avoided certain places or people when out alone after dark. In contrast, only 16% of the people who felt safe walking alone after dark avoided certain places or people.

The ICVS asked respondents if they had any of the following seven home security measures: a burglar alarm, special door locks, special window/door grills, a watch dog, a high fence, a neighbourhood watch scheme or a caretaker/security guard. The results indicate that the use of these measures was quite common in most countries. England and Wales had the highest percentage of households (89%) possessing at least one of the seven home security measures (see Figure 14). The United States was second, followed by Scotland and then Canada. The figure for Switzerland was the lowest, with slightly less than half of all households having one of the home security measures listed. (Data for Finland were not available for this question.)

Figure 14




A figure for Finland is not available.

¹ Measures include: burglar alarm, special door locks, special door/window grills, watch dog, high fence, neighbourhood watch scheme, or caretaker/security guard.

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

Special door locks were the most popular home security device, with an average of 48% of households in the 11 countries having this device (see Table 4). Next were watch dogs and neighbourhood watch schemes (see Box 3), which were both used on average by about one-fifth of households. The use of each of the seven measures was higher than average in Canadian households. As well, use of the measures by Canadian households appears to be increasing. For example, between the 1992 and 1996 survey, burglar alarm use in Canadian households increased from 12% to 19%, the use of special door locks was up from 42% to 52% and the proportion of households with watch dogs increased from 23% to 27%.

Table 4



	Special Door Locks	Watch Dog	Watch Scheme	Special Grills	High Fence	Burglar Alarm	Caretaker/ Security Guard
Austria	38	14	2	12	6	6	1
Canada	52	27	34	20	19	19	12
England & Wales	68	25	47	27	41	27	4
Finland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
France	35	22	42	14	13	14	13
Netherlands	68	16	9	11	13	10	8
Northern Ireland	33	24	2	12	14	11	-
Scotland	62	23	28	21	29	25	3
Sweden	39	12	6	7	2	6	1
Switzerland	28	13	4	11	1	5	6
United States	59	36	38	22	14	21	8
Average	48	21	21	16	15	14	6

- nil or zero.

.. figures not available.

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996

Box 3 Neighbourhood Watch

In Canada, many communities have Neighbourhood Watch programs. The objective of these programs is to reduce crime by getting neighbours to work together. Program participants are made aware of how best to protect their homes. They are also encouraged to watch for suspicious activities in their neighbourhood and to report such activities to the police. A Neighbourhood Watch program can be developed with the help of local police.

The use of home security measures by Canadians did not appear to be closely associated with their fear of a break-in. For example, for the people believing the chance of a break-in was very likely or likely, 53% had special door locks, 37% participated in a watch scheme and 33% had a watch dog.¹⁸ The comparable figures for people believing the chance of a break-in was unlikely were 52%, 34% and 30%, respectively. As well, Canadians who had been victimized during the previous five years were no more likely to have one of these three home security measures.

Methodology


In 1996, the International Crime Victimization Survey was conducted in 34 countries, including the 11 western industrialized countries that are the focus of this *Juristat*. Fieldwork for the survey was co-ordinated by the Dutch company Inter/View International B.V. Local companies were hired to conduct the survey in participating countries. In the 11 industrialized countries, the survey was national in scope. In most other countries, the survey was conducted in a major city.

¹⁸ These figures are expressed as a percentage of the population and are not comparable to the data in Table 4 which are expressed as a percentage of households.

Sampling

In all 11 industrialized countries except Northern Ireland, households were selected using random digit dialing techniques. In Northern Ireland, the Electoral Register was used to select a random sample. With random digit dialing, households without telephones are excluded from the sample. Table 5 below indicates that this is not a serious problem, as telephone ownership is quite high in most of the industrialized countries surveyed.

Table 5



	Telephone Ownership (% households with telephones)
Austria	..
Canada	99
England & Wales	93
Finland	..
France	98
Netherlands	96
Northern Ireland	76
Scotland	93
Sweden	90
Switzerland	98
United States	..

.. figures not available.

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

Once households were chosen, an individual 16 years or older was selected at random to respond to the survey.

Data Collection

A standard questionnaire was used to gather the information. A typical interview lasted 15 minutes. In the industrialized countries, interviews were conducted by telephone using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The one exception was Northern Ireland, where computer-assisted face-to-face interviews were conducted. (It was felt that because of the security situation, face-to-face interviews would produce a better response rate.) Computer assistance helps to better standardize the interview process.

Response Rates

In 1996, as in 1992, a call back procedure was used in an effort to improve response rates. The 1996 response rates are shown in Table 6.

It is difficult to know what impact, if any, the varying response rates had on survey results, although the very low response rate in the United States may be cause for concern. According to an analysis of 1992 ICVS response rates, "there is inconclusive evidence on the effects of non-response, which may suggest it has not biased results to any great degree" (van Dijk and Mayhew, 1992: 7).

Data Limitations

It is important to note that the ICVS data are estimates. They are based on information collected from a small fraction of

Table 6

ICVS Response Rates, 1996

	Total Sample	Completed Interviews	Response Rate ¹ (%)
Austria	1,983	1,507	76
Canada	2,873	2,134	74
England & Wales	3,697	2,171	59
Finland	4,509	3,899	86
France	1,651	1,003	61
Netherlands	3,206	2,008	63
Northern Ireland	1,247	1,042	84
Scotland	3,496	2,194	63
Sweden	1,328	1,000	75
Switzerland	1,794	1,000	56
United States	2,506	1,003	40
Total	28,290	18,961	67

¹ Response rate = (completed interviews/total sample*100).
Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

the population. The sample sizes, as indicated in Table 6 (completed interviews), ranged from 1,000 to just under 4,000 respondents. A single respondent can represent anywhere from 1,000 to over 200,000 people, depending on the country. As a result, the data are subject to sampling error. The size of the sampling error depends on many factors, including the sample size, the percentage observed, and the level of confidence chosen. The sampling error for the ICVS, using a 95% confidence interval, is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Sampling Error (with 95% confidence level)

Percentage Observed

Sample Size	2 98	5 95	10 90	15 85	20 80	25 75	30 70	35 65	40 60	45 55	50 50
25	5.5	8.5	11.8	14.0	15.7	17.0	18.0	18.7	19.2	19.5	19.6
50	3.9	6.0	8.3	9.9	11.1	12.0	12.7	13.2	13.6	13.8	13.9
100	2.7	4.3	5.9	7.0	7.8	8.5	9.0	9.3	9.6	9.8	9.8
200	1.9	3.0	4.2	4.9	5.5	6.0	6.4	6.6	6.8	6.9	6.9
300	1.6	2.5	3.4	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.2	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7
400	1.4	2.1	2.9	3.5	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.9
500	1.2	1.9	2.6	3.1	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4
600	1.1	1.7	2.4	2.9	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.0
700	1.0	1.6	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.7
800	1.0	1.5	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5
900	0.9	1.4	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3
1,000	0.9	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1
1,200	0.8	1.2	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8
1,400	0.7	1.1	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6
1,600	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.5
1,800	0.6	1.0	1.4	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.3
2,000	0.6	1.0	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2
3,000	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
4,000	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5

Source: International Crime Victimization Survey, 1996.

As an example of how this table should be used, consider the overall victimization rate for Canada. The ICVS estimates that 25% of the population was victimized in 1996. Using the table, for a sample of 2,000 (closest to the Canadian sample size of 2,134) and an observed percentage of 25, the sampling error is 1.9. This means that the 95% confidence interval is between 23.1% and 26.9% (25 ± 1.9). The interpretation of the confidence interval is as follows: if repeated samples of this size were drawn, each one leading to a new confidence interval, then in 95% of the samples, the confidence interval would include the true value for the population.

For the same observed percentage, the sampling error will be larger for smaller sample sizes. The United States, for example, had a sample size of 1,003 and an overall victimization rate of 24% in 1996. Using the table, for a sample of 1,000 and an observed percentage of 25, the sampling error is 2.7 (compared with the figure of 1.9 described above). This means the 95% confidence interval is between 21.3% and 26.7% (24 ± 2.7).

Because the results are subject to sampling error, the difference between some figures will not be statistically significant. For example, the difference between the 1996 victimization rate for the Netherlands (32%) and England and Wales (31%) is not statistically significant. The confidence interval for the Netherlands (32 ± 2) overlaps the confidence interval for England and Wales (31 ± 2).

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