Solicitor General Canada | Solliciteur général Canada

Canada

CANADIAN URBAN VICTIMIZATION SURVEY

Crime Prevention: Awareness and Practice

Bulletin 3

COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION

November 4-10, 1984 has been designated Canada's second annual National Crime Prevention Week. National Crime Prevention Week was launched jointly in 1983 by the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada and Canadians for Crime Prevention, a national organizing committee made up of representatives from professional and voluntary organizations, the police, the Bar, business and government. The goals of the Week are to heighten public awareness, broaden the crime prevention partnership and stimulate community-based crime prevention.

Crime touches all Canadians in some way. We all experience, to some degree, the social and economic costs of crime. In addition to the more tangible consequences, some crime victims are left to cope with a debilitating fear. Breaking through this barrier of fear is one of the major challenges facing crime prevention practitioners.

Crime prevention has always been central to criminal justice system activities. What is new is the growing recognition that the responsibility for crime prevention must be shared, that collective or community action is often more effective than individual action, and that the police, who have a central role in crime prevention, cannot do it alone.

There is an important distinction to be made between victimization prevention and crime prevention. Canadians have no doubt always taken some steps — however modest — to prevent their own victimization, and such prudence should, of course, be encouraged. But some of the measures taken by those who are most fearful can actually be detrimental in the long run, particularly when they take the form of extreme withdrawal from public life in an effort to minimize exposure to risk. Withdrawal from ordinary public life gradually diminishes important social support systems which themselves might help reduce both fear of crime and risk of victimization.

Community-based crime prevention, on the other hand, benefits the entire community, because citizens join together in a partnership with police to protect their communities from crime. We now have strong evidence that when such community action is based upon a careful analysis of local circumstances, the result is a reduction in overall neighbourhood crime, rather than in simple displacement of victimization from one household to another. Playing an active, cooperative part in "doing something about crime" fosters positive community attitudes, and helps to alleviate excessive fear of crime.

Community crime prevention means sharing the responsibility for making our communities and our homes more secure. Effective crime prevention programs require widespread community support, and an informed public whose perceptions about crime and crime prevention are based on the best available evidence. The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey provides extensive information on the risk of victimization, public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system, fear of crime, and awareness of, and participation in, crime prevention programs. The findings of the survey can help community crime prevention organizers to respond effectively to public concerns about crime, and to channel those concerns into community programs that do make a difference.

Crime Prevention: Awareness and Practice

Although we know that Canadians are concerned about crime, until now we have had very little systematic information about how those concerns are generated, or about how they do (or do not) get translated into crime prevention activities. Using data collected in the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey, however, we are now able to get a clearer picture of how Canadians view the crime situation, of their feelings of safety in their own neighbourhoods, and of the way in which lifestyle and every day practices affect risk of victimization[1].

A recent study conducted by Doob and Roberts[2] found that most Canadians over-estimate both the amount and the seriousness of crime in Canada when measured against offical data on the number and type of crimes known to the police. The authors suggest that one explanation for this apparent misunderstanding of the "true" extent of crime is that the public does not regularly have access "to systematic information against which to test this view."

Alternatively, it could be argued that what is "false" in the equation is the so-called "systematic information" — the official counts of the number of

[1] See Appendices 1 and 2 for further information about the survey.

[2] Anthony N. Doob and Julian N. Roberts, "*Crime: Some Views of the Canadian Public*," Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto, 1982.

crimes recorded by the police in their Uniform Crime Report returns. In other words, it could be the case that respondents reflect their own experience, and that crime intrudes into the lives of Canadians much more often and more seriously than was previously known.

It is certainly true that many crimes — some quite serious — never come to the attention of the police. A full 58% of all incidents reported to the survey were not reported to the police. One of the main reasons for the development of victimization surveys in recent years has been to try to provide an alternative measure of crime — one which is based on the victim's perspective and experience, rather than on police recording of incidents that have come to their attention.

Previous Bulletins in this series have dealt with the extent and distribution of crime, and with the factors which promote or inhibit victims from reporting their experiences to the police[3]. This Bulletin will focus upon public perception of crime, and on the relationship between perceptions of crime, estimated rates of victimization and the precautions citizens take to reduce the risk of being victimized.

Perceptions of Crime in Seven Cities

Most survey respondents (81%) said they believed that crime had increased in their city in the year or two prior to the survey, and there was a very rough correspondence between the proportion in each city who said crime had increased, and the percentage increase recorded in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) for each city in the two years prior to the survey. Given the large majority who believed that crime in the city had increased, it is important to realize that only 33% believed that crime in their own neighbourhood had increased (Figure 1).

In response to the question "Do you think your neighbourhood is an area with a high, average or low amount of crime?" most described their own neighbourhood as an area with a low (50%) or average (30%) amount of crime, and relatively few respondents (17%) described neighbourhood crime as a "serious" problem, identifying property loss, personal safety and vandalism as the most serious concerns. Comparing their own neighbourhood with the rest of the city, only 6% described their neighbourhood as having "more" crime (Figure 2).

It seems then, that the majority of urban residents perceived their own neighbourhood crime rates as low and stable, even when city crime rates were thought to be increasing.

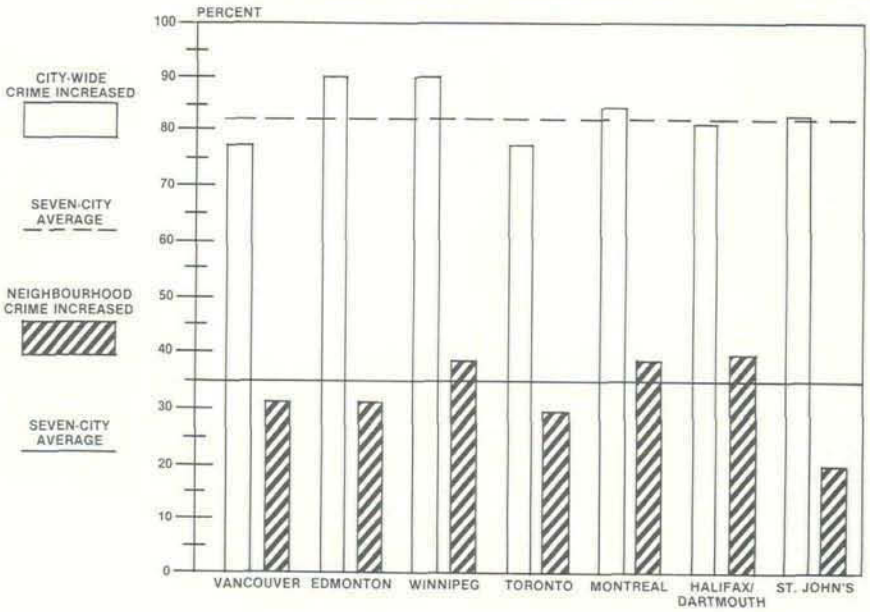
Not surprisingly, respondents who had recently been the victim of a violent crime or residential break and entry in particular, (and to a lesser extent, other household offences) were more likely than non-victims to perceive high neighbourhood crime rates, and increasing crime, particularly in their own neighbourhood (Figures 3 and 4).

Those who are assumed to be more physically vulnerable to the impact of crime — women and the elderly — were no more likely than males or more youthful respondents to perceive the level of crime to be high or rising. However, there were some differences in perceptions of the prevalence of crime based on other social characteristics of respondents. As we shall see in later sections, these perceptions are *not* closely tied to actual risk of victimization. Those with at least some post-graduate education were more likely (67%) to indicate that there was "less" neighbourhood crime than those who had completed only some high school (62%). Family income was also moderately related to perceptions about neighbourhood crime. The greatest differences were between those with incomes of $30,000 and over and those whose incomes were under $9,000. Seventy-two per cent of respondents in the higher income category said there was less crime in their neighbourhood than in other areas of the same city, whereas 54% of those in the lower income group were of this opinion. Higher income groups were also more likely (56%) than lower income groups (42%) to perceive their neighbourhoods as "low crime" areas.

Physical surroundings also influenced perceptions of crime. In particular, highrise (15%) and lowrise apartment dwellers (19%) more often felt their neighbourhoods had a high amount of crime than did residents of single family

FIGURE 1

IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO, DO YOU THINK THAT CRIME HAS INCREASED IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD? IN YOUR CITY?



[3] See Bulletin No. 1 "Victims of Crime" and Bulletin No. 2 "Reported and Unreported Crimes" available from the Communication Division, Programs Branch, Ministry of the Solicitor General, 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0P8

FIGURE 2

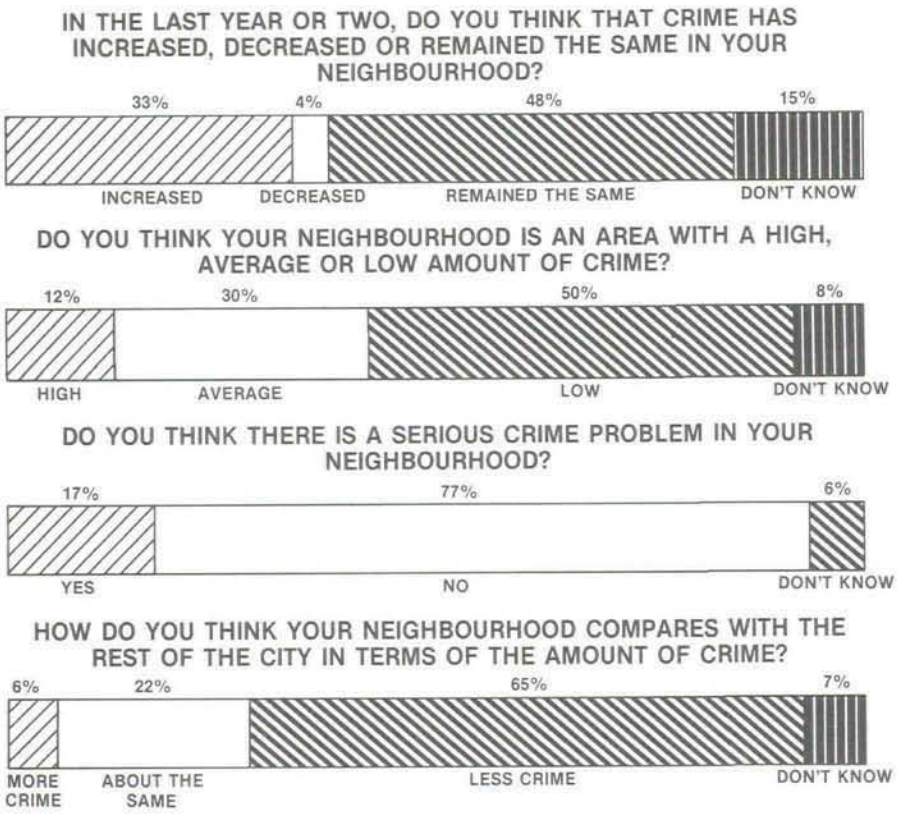
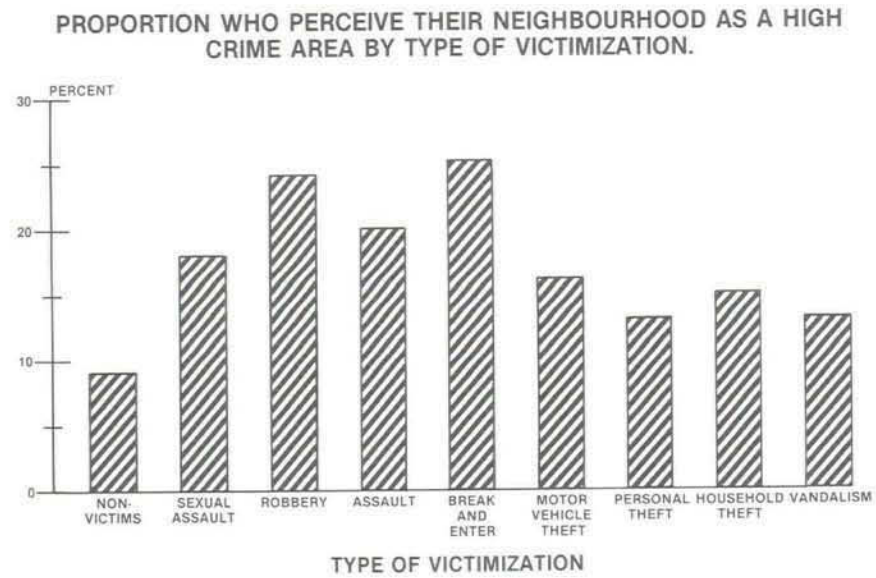


FIGURE 3



dwellings (8%). In addition, apartment dwellers (53% and 57%) were less likely than single family dwelling residents (71%) to perceive their neighbourhoods as having "less" crime than other areas of the same city.

Fear of Crime

Respondents were asked to indicate how safe they felt (very unsafe, somewhat unsafe, reasonably safe, and very safe) in two specific circumstances: walking alone in their own neighbourhood during the day; and walking alone in their own neighbourhood after dark. This question has been used in victimization surveys in the United States and elsewhere, and is considered to be a reliable indicator of fear of crime.

According to the Canadian survey, there was little variation in residents' perceptions of their personal safety during the day. In fact, fully 95% of urban residents felt "reasonably" or "very" safe walking alone in their neighbourhood during the day. Feelings of nightime safety were more variable; approximately 60% felt safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark, compared to the 95% who felt safe during the day. Residents were most likely to feel fearful walking alone after dark in Montreal (which had one of the lowest estimated rates of personal crime), Halifax/Dartmouth (with the second highest rate of personal crime), and Winnipeg, (where estimated rates of personal crime were close to the national average) (Figure 5 and Table 1).

Fear for personal safety apparently has less to do with statistical risk of victimization than with perceived vulnerability. Clearly, the consequences of crime are potentially more severe for those whose social or physical circumstances make them feel more open to attack, less able to resist, or less able to deal with the aftermath of crime, and this is reflected in their expressions of fear. Low income families, the less well educated, and those who live in high density housing were somewhat more fearful, but the greatest concentration of fear was among elderly people and women. For example one half (52%) of those aged 65 or older felt somewhat or very unsafe walking alone after dark as compared to 37% of those under 65 years of age, and 54% of all female respondents who had not been victimized in the previous year reported feeling unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. This figure rose to 62% for women who had been victimized in the survey year. As Figure 6 illustrates, fear was especially prevalent and high among females who had been recent victims of sexual assault, robbery or assault.

Few male respondents who had not been victimized (17%) or male victims (20%) reported feeling unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. Even males who had been the victims of robbery and break and entry said

FIGURE 4

PROPORTION WHO BELIEVE THAT NEIGHBOURHOOD CRIME AND CITY-WIDE CRIME HAVE INCREASED BY TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION.

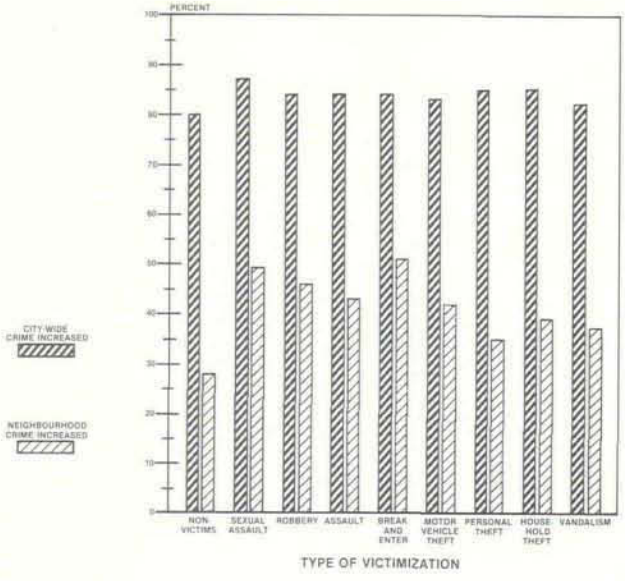
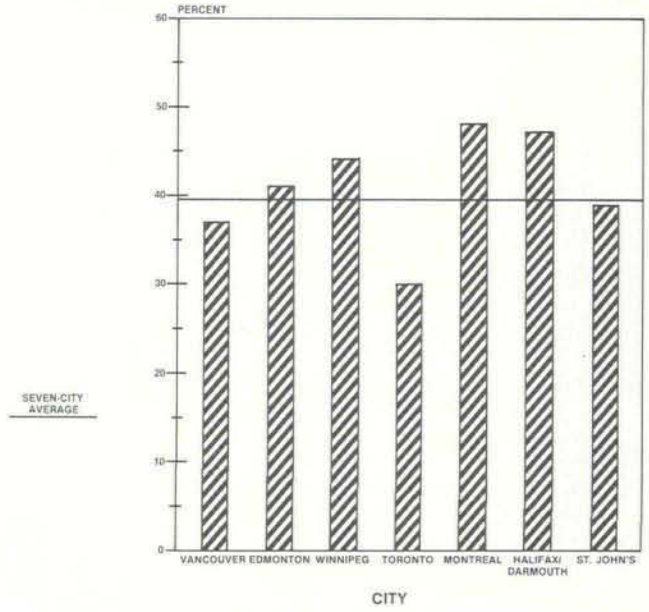


FIGURE 5

PROPORTION WHO FELT UNSAFE[1] WALKING ALONE IN THEIR OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD AFTER DARK BY CITY.



(1) Combines "very unsafe" and "somewhat unsafe" categories.

they felt relatively safe, and the male victims of assault appear to be no more fearful than all other respondents, despite their victimization.

The woman or older person who has been victimized by crime may see this experience as confirmation of her (or his) vulnerability, whereas the young male may suffer fewer serious physical consequences, and recover quickly from them. Young males may also simply be less willing to admit feeling afraid, either to interviewers or to their companions.

How long does the emotional impact of victimization last? Respondents were asked whether they had ever been the victim of a serious crime prior to the survey year. It is significant that those who remembered and reported a personal attack or threat which had occurred more than one year prior to the survey were even more likely to report that they felt unsafe in their own neighbourhoods than any of the other respondents, including those who had been victimized during the survey year. Many had obviously been profoundly affected by their experience, and the consequences were still measurable years later.

The Risk of Victimization

There were more than 700,000 personal victimizations (sexual assault, robbery, assault and theft of personal

Table 1

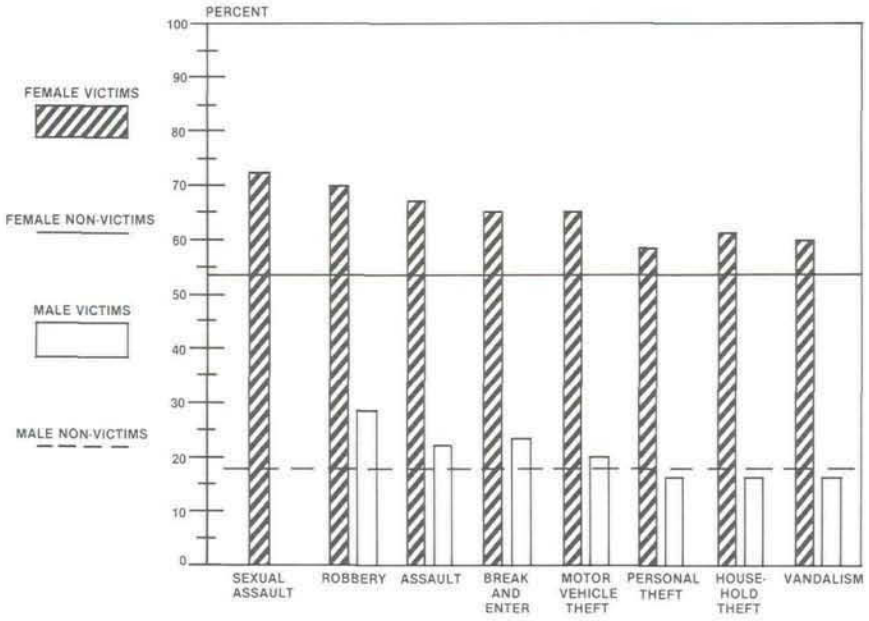
Grouped Incident Rates by City

	Vancouver	Edmonton	Winnipeg	Toronto	Montreal	Halifax/ Dartmouth	St. John's	All Seven Cities
Estimated Rates per 1,000 Population								
Personal Incidents[1]	192 (1)[4]	143 (3)	134 (4)	125 (7)	128 (5)	158 (2)	127 (6)	141
Personal Violent Incidents[2]	100 (1)	71 (3)	68 (4)	64 (5)	61 (6)	76 (2)	58 (7)	70
Estimated Rates per 1,000 Households								
Household Indicents[3]	458 (2)	393 (4)	463 (1)	277 (7)	382 (5)	377 (6)	405 (3)	369

(1) Personal incidents include sexual assault, robbery, assault and theft of personal property.
(2) Personal violent incidents include sexual assault, robbery and assault.
(3) Household incidents include break and entry, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property and vandalism.
(4) Figures in brackets show rank ordering of cities.

FIGURE 6

PROPORTION OF VICTIMS WHO FELT UNSAFE(1) WALKING ALONE AFTER DARK BY SEX OF RESPONDENT.



(1) Combines "very unsafe" and "somewhat unsafe" categories.

property) of persons over 16 in the seven cities surveyed, and almost 900,000 household victimizations (break and entry, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property and vandalism) in 1981 (Table 2). The more serious the incident, the less likely it was to occur. Most frequent were thefts of personal property (without contact between victim and offender), and non-sexual assault. Similarly, theft of household property was the most common household offence, followed by break and entry and vandalism, with relatively few motor vehicle thefts.

Paradoxically, those who perceive that they live in high crime neighbourhoods are not necessarily those who are at greatest risk of personal or household victimization. For example, one might have assumed (as did the survey respondents) that lower income neighbourhoods have more crime than affluent neighbourhoods. In fact, although lower income individuals were as likely or more likely than others to suffer a personal violent victimization, they were *less* likely to experience some form of household victimization or theft of personal property. Further, respondents with at least some post-secondary education (who were most likely to state there was "less" crime in their neighbourhood) suffer a higher proportion of both personal and household crime than those with less education, and single family dwellings (not apartment units) were the hardest hit by the four household offences covered by the survey.

It should be noted that these estimated rates of victimization include both incidents that came to police attention and those that were never reported to police, so one cannot explain the "errors" in perception by assuming that unreported crimes were excluded from the risk calculations. What these findings indicate is that it is not enough to follow our "common sense" hunches, or even to rely exclusively upon residents' perceptions of the amount and type of crime in their own neighbourhoods. What is needed is a careful local assessment which can ensure that prevention strategies are custom-made to fit the particular needs of each neighbourhood.

Personal Victimization

Although we found males and young people feared crime the least, they are actually much more likely to be the victims of violent crimes than women and older people. As shown in Table 1, women face a much greater risk of sexual assault than men, but the risk of both robbery and assault is twice as high for men. Similarly, the higher fear expressed by elderly people cannot be accounted for by a greater risk of victimization. In fact, respondents under 20 had the highest rates in all categories of personal offences. As age increases, victimization rates declined rapidly.

The survey also showed that those who are unmarried (single, separated and divorced) are at higher risk for personal victimization than those who are married, living common-law or widowed. The highest personal victimization rates occurred among students, and those who were looking for work — much higher than the rates of those who were retired or those who were employed for most of the year in question.

These seemingly disparate findings are connected by what others in the United States and in Britain have called "lifestyle-exposure" factors. One of the most powerful predictors of risk of victimization found in the survey was the average number of evening activities outside the home each month. As the number of evening activities increased, risk of personal victimization increased — for both sexes, and all age groups. When number of evening activities was held constant, differences in relative risk for males and female, young and old, were greatly reduced. Obviously, marriage, family responsibilities and full time work all produce constraints on how much leisure time one has available, and how much of that leisure time is likely to be spent in high risk areas of the city. Similarly, those who feel most vulnerable are unlikely to expose themselves to high risk areas. They are, because of their prudence, far less likely to become victims than young males.

Consistent with the lifestyle-exposure model is the seasonal variation of risk. Almost one-third of personal victimizations occurred during the summer months (30%), and an additional third in the autumn (32%) (Figure 7). Outdoor activities of all kinds increase in warmer months, and with this comes an increase in opportunity for the type of

Table 2

Estimated Incident Rates

PERSONAL OFFENCES

Population aged 16 and older in seven cities = 4,975,900
Males = 2,357,000
Females = 2,618,900

Type of Incident	Estimated Incidents	Rates per 1,000 Population 16 and older		
		Total	Males	Females
All Personal Incidents	702,000	141	154	129
All Violent Incidents	352,200	70	90	53
Sexual Assaults	17,300	3.5	0.8	5.8
Robbery	49,200	10	13	7
Assault	285,700	57	79	39
Personal Theft	349,800	70	66	74

HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES

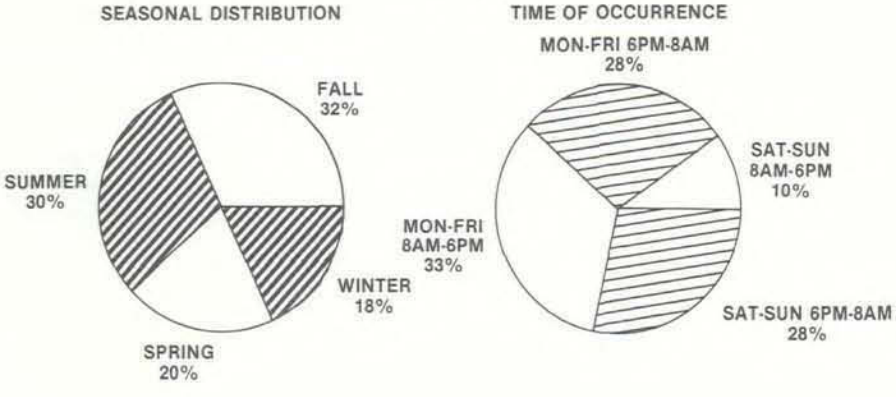
Total households in seven cities = 2,424,900

Type of Incident	Estimated Incidents	Rate per 1,000 Households
All Household Incidents	898,100	369
Break and Enter	227,300	94
Motor Vehicle Theft	40,600	17
Household Theft	417,200	172
Vandalism	213,000	88

Please note that since the release of Bulletin Number 1, editing of the data tape has lead to minor alterations in some estimated numbers. Incident rates have not been affected by these changes.

FIGURE 7

PERSONAL OFFENCES



public interaction which may lead to thefts of personal property or assaults, and even to robbery and sexual assault.

The importance of opportunities for interaction and the time of victimization is illustated further by the temporal distribution of personal crimes. The most common time of occurrence for personal crimes was the evening and night hours from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. (Figure 7). The exception was theft of personal property, which occurred most often during the day (56%).

While thefts of personal property are most likely to occur in public places wherever large numbers of people are carrying easily stolen property — for example handbags and wallets, violent victimizations are most likely to occur under three different conditions (Figure 9). First and most obviously, violent offences occur in outside areas — parkings lots, fields, or empty streets — at night. A second common place of occurrence for assault is in bars and pubs, where many victims describe offenders as being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. But a further significant proportion of violent offences, particularly sexual assault (30%) also occurred in or around the victim's home, and almost one-quarter of robberies took place on streets or sidewalks in the immediate vicinity of the victim's neighbourhood or work place (23%).

Our findings are consistent with some of our common sense notions about high risk areas and high risk activities, but they also illustrate that very serious victimizations can and do intrude into our neighbourhoods. It is clear that we cannot simply avoid violent personal victimization by confining our activities to our homes and immediate neighbourhoods. In light of this evidence, and evidence about the value of community crime prevention measures it appears advisable to include community approaches as a central component of any crime prevention endeavour. Community "watch" programs encourage residents to be alert to suspicious individuals or activities in the neighbourhood and to report anything out of the ordinary to the police. Neighbours who know one another may recognize suspicious behaviour long before a police officer would, and by alerting each other may prevent a crime from occurring.

Household Victimization

Reports of violent crimes against the person capture the attention of the public but it may well be that household crimes are of greater concern to most people. Household crimes are more common, and often produce profound consequences for the victims, quite apart from the suffering caused by simple material loss. In these incidents, the offender is typically a stranger, or at least is perceived to be a stranger, which may make the experience more threatening and less predictable. Furthermore, crimes which occur in and around the household may be experienced as a violation of personal security and privacy that leaves victims feeling helpless and unable to protect

FIGURE 8

HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES

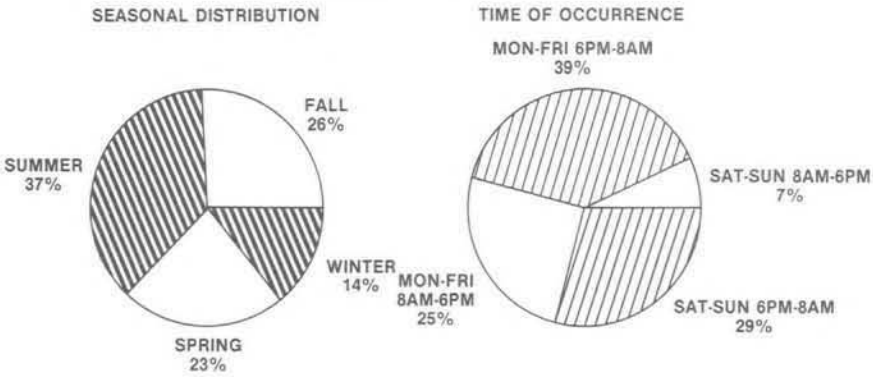
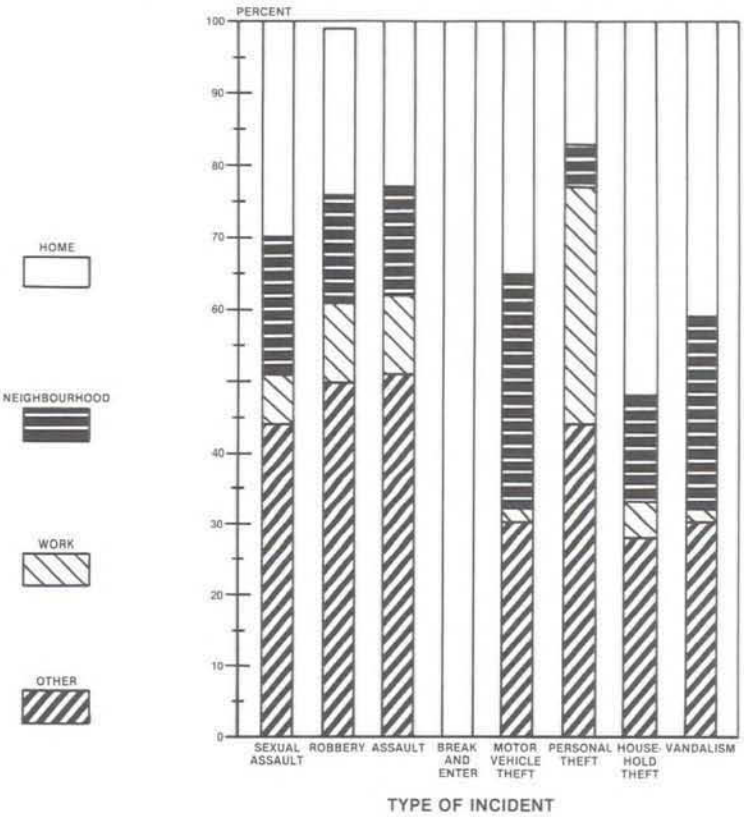


FIGURE 9

PLACE OF OCCURRENCE OF PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES.



their homes against further victimization. The resulting fear is often disproportionate to the likelihood of loss or injury.

Judging by the time of occurrence of most household crimes, opportunity seems to play a crucial part. Break and entry, motor vehicle theft, household theft and vandalism are all most likely to occur during the summer when households are left unattended for longer periods of time (Figure 8). Theft of household property, in particular, increases in the summer months when household belongings are more visible and more accessible to theft.

Household victimizations are relatively evenly spread throughout the week, although vandalism is more likely to occur on Saturday and Sunday. Vandalism is a young person's crime, more likely to occur when school is out.

As with personal crimes, the majority of household victimizations took place between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. (68%), presumably under cover of darkness, but still a full third occurred during daytime, including nearly half of all break and entries (45%). The growing trends toward women in the work force and single parent families has meant a corresponding increase in the number of homes left unoccupied during the daytime. It has become clear from this survey and other studies that risk of break and entry is closely related to the amount of time a residence is left unoccupied. Households which were usually unoccupied during the day had victimization rates of 113 per 1,000 households, substantially higher than those in which someone was usually home all day (79 per 1,000) or even part of the day (96 per 1,000).

Motor vehicle thefts were especially likely to occur during the evening and night hours (80%), and significantly, 68% of these thefts also occurred near the home. This may reflect the confidence of the majority of residents that their own neighbourhoods are protected by a "barrier", even when they perceive crime rates as rising elsewhere. Many people may relax their normal security precautions once they have parked in their own neighbourhoods. Again, given the amount of personal and household crime that intrudes into neighbourhoods and homes, and given the importance of unattended homes as an invitation, broad based community strategies in which neighbours watch out for one another make a great deal of sense.

Protection and Prevention

A large majority of urban Canadians did take the basic precaution of keeping their doors locked, particularly at night and especially when no one was

home, and burglar alarms had been installed in about 8% of all households surveyed. Nevertheless, approximately 36% of the 227,300 break and entry incidents involved no evidence of forced entry. In other words, entry was gained through unlocked doors and windows or through doors and windows so easy to open that no evidence of force was left.

Routine personal precautions are important, but it seems they are not enough. Home security checks by police for example, can identify specific security problems which households can correct, and for those residences that must frequently be left unoccupied, homeowners can create the appearance of someone being in the home, or arrange to have someone else watching over their home. In the experience of many community "watch" programs, an occupied dwelling or at least the appearance that the dwelling is occupied, may be the single most effective deterrent against residential break and entry and theft.

We might naturally assume that fear leads people to take extra measures to protect their homes from crime or to participate in Operation Identification. While it is true that those who felt unsafe walking alone in their own neighbourhood at night were more likely to keep their homes locked during the day or night, they were less likely to be involved in Operation Identification programs. In other words, they were less likely than others to take advantage of the very types of programs which may offer them the greatest reassurance and protection.

Only a few households in the seven cities (15%) participated in Operation Identification; ranging from 4% in Toronto to a high of 26% in Vancouver (Table 3). Awareness of community-based crime prevention programs was much higher than actual participation: 42% of the survey respondents had at least heard of Neighbourhood Watch, 51% had heard of Operation Identification, and 73% were aware of the Block Parent program (see Table 3). Wide variations exist among the seven cities which cannot be explained entirely by local police initiatives. For example, the efforts of some local police forces in promoting these and other programs in the two years preceeding the survey were reflected in the high awareness levels of the residents. Other residents were less well-informed despite similar attempts by local police to promote these programs. Some residents were well-informed without the benefit of locally sponsored police programs.

These findings are consistent with other recent studies undertaken for this Ministry which show that media campaigns alone will not persuade citizens to get involved in crime prevention programs. Police need the support of volunteers experienced in mobilizing the resources in their own communities. A successful crime prevention program depends on an organized approach and a strong sense of commitment — qualities which are usually readily available in existing community organizations.

Table 3

Awareness of Crime Prevention Programs

	Vancouver	Edmonton	Winnipeg	Toronto	Montreal	Halifax/ Dartmouth	St. John's	All Seven Cities
Percent Respondents Aware								
Neighbourhood Watch	84	64	40	27	23	72	49	42
Block Parents	74	92	90	72	62	89	72	73
Operation Identification	82	59	61	31	48	69	67	51
Percent Households Participating								
Operation Identification	26	14	10	4	14	19	9	15

Conclusions

Crime is an unavoidable part of our everyday lives and consciousness. The media confront us daily with reports of crimes which have brought injury, grief and loss to victims in our cities and sometimes in our own neighbourhoods. Crime cannot escape our attention, nor are any of us immune. It is little wonder then that crime is a matter of concern to many Canadians, and that some of us should react with fear, with a sense of helplessness or with anger.

Until recently we could reasonably assume that such strong emotional reactions would automatically motivate people to improve their own household security, and to take appropriate measures to prevent crime in their neighbourhoods and cities. Unfortunately, a growing body of evidence, including evidence from the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey indicates that fear and concern about crime can have quite the opposite effect, leading to a sense of hopelessness, fatalism, and to social isolation.

Three important lessons can be learned directly from the survey — that most crime is directed against property rather than people; that serious violent crime is relatively rare; and finally, that many crimes could be prevented by employing simple target-hardening techniques (better locks, careful storage of small items, making houses look "lived in" during periods of absence and so on).

Awareness of the true nature and extent of crime in our communities should help us place our fear and our concern into clearer perspective, and encourage us to take appropriate self-protective measures. At the same time it is important to know that community programs can make a real contribution to the prevention of crime. Community crime prevention can take many forms, including watch programs, block parent programs, programs for women, programs for elderly persons, and even environmental change. Experience has taught us that such programs work

most effectively when they are based upon a detailed assessment of local crime patterns and when they have widespread community support.

Community approaches to crime prevention can do much to reduce crime, to reduce the debilitating effects of fear and social isolation and to improve the quality of life for all Canadians. The challenge for program organizers is to persuade the community — through careful crime analyses — that effective action can be taken, and to give community members the opportunity to replace their fear with a sense of control and security.

If you would like further information about community crime prevention programs please contact your local police department, or write to the Communication Division, Programs Branch, Solicitor General Canada, 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P8.

Appendix 1

About the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey

Early in 1982 the Ministry of the Solicitor General, with the assistance of Statistics Canada, conducted a victimization survey in seven major urban centres: Greater Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's. A random sample of 61,000 residents 16 years of age or older were asked about their perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system, their experience of certain crimes, and the impact which criminal victimization may have had upon them.

Because of the relatively low incidence in any one year of some types of crimes included in the survey, very large samples are required to ensure that enough cases are "caught" to be statistically representative of all actual cases in the community under study. Sample sizes ranged from 6,910 in one city to 9,563 in another, with more than 61,000 telephone interviews completed by Statistics Canada interviewers overall. Telephone interviews were used because the cost of interviewing in person for such a large survey was prohibitive. Careful pretests in Edmonton, Hamilton and Greater Vancouver had proven that reliable data could be obtained through telephone interviews.

To maximize reliability of recall, respondents were asked to report on only those incidents which had occurred between January 1 and December 31, 1981. On the basis of these interviews, statistical estimates were made for the general population 16 and over in the seven cities. These statistically derived estimates for the population are used throughout this bulletin.

Victimization surveys can provide information about most, but not all types of crimes that are of major concern to the general public. Crimes such as murder or kidnapping cannot be uncovered using survey techniques, and were therefore excluded. "Victimless" crimes and crimes committed against commercial establishments were also excluded from this survey.

The eight categories of crimes included in this survey are: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism.

Incidents involving the commission of several different criminal acts appear in the tables only once, according to the most serious component of the event. For example, if sexual assault, theft of money and vandalism all occurred at the same time, the incidents would be classified in these tables as sexual assault. An incident would be classified as vandalism (least serious on the hierarchy) only if no other more serious crime occurred at the same time. Full definitions of the eight offence categories are given in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2

Definitions and Limitations

The eight categories of crimes included in this survey are: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and entry, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism. These offences are ranked in descending order of seriousness.

1. Sexual assault includes rape, attempted rape, molesting or attempted molestation, and is considered the most serious crime.
2. Robbery occurs if something is taken and the offender has a weapon or there is a threat or an attack. The presence of a weapon is assumed to imply a threat. Attempted robberies are also included in this offence category.
3. Assault involves the presence of a weapon or an attack or threat. Assault incidents may range from face-to-face verbal threats to an attack with extensive injuries.
4. Break and enter occurs if a dwelling is entered by someone who has no right to be there. "No right to be there" differentiates, for example, between a workman who is in a dwelling with the permission of the owner and steals something, and someone illegally entering the dwelling to take property. The latter would be classified as a break and enter as are attempts to enter a dwelling if there is some evidence of force or knowledge of how the person tried to get in.
5. Motor vehicle theft involves the theft or attempted theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle or other motor vehicle.
6. Theft or attempted theft of household property.
7. Theft or attempted theft of money or other personal property (not household property).
8. Vandalism occurs if property is damaged but not taken.

Incidents which involved the commission of several different criminal acts appear in the tables only once, according to the most serious component of the event. Thus for example, if sexual assault, theft of money and vandalism all occurred at the same time, the incident would be classified in these tables as sexual assault. An incident would be classified as vandalism (least serious on the hierarchy) only if no other crime which is higher on the seriousness scale occurred at the same time.

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