

## 5. SURVEY DATA

### 5.A GENERAL COMMENTS

#### 5.A.1 Introduction

1. Additional information on the level of crime and offending behaviour can be obtained from the alternative source of surveys, in which a sample of the population is asked about their experiences. Several types of surveys exist. The so-called *victimisation surveys* which are based on interviews of a representative cross-section of the general population are well-known. Specific surveys have also been conducted with a view to ascertaining to what extent businesses and other organisations have become «victims» of crime. A rather different approach underlies *surveys of self-reported delinquency*, where the respondents - mostly juveniles - are asked to provide information on their own criminal or deviant behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

2. Such surveys have been carried out, over the last 10 years, in a number of member States of the Council of Europe, mostly by universities and national or local authorities. However, as the scope, offence definitions, interview techniques, sampling methods etc. of these surveys differ widely, reliable international comparisons are at least as difficult to achieve as comparisons of official crime data.

3. There is one source, though, which can be regarded as a sufficiently reliable basis for international comparisons. It is the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) which, up until now, has been carried out three times, covering the years 1988, 1991 and 1995/1996 (cf. Mayhew & Van Dijk, 1997). In this survey, standardised questionnaires and data collection methods have been used with a view to obtaining comparable results for the participating countries. In this chapter, a selection of the main results will be presented. First, however, some important aspects of the methodology used by the ICVS will be discussed.

#### 5.A.2 International Crime Victim Survey: methodology

4. The ICVS is a project in which governmental and academic organisations co-operate. The questionnaire and methodology were originally designed by a small working group (van Dijk, Mayhew, Killias 1990). A reformed working group reviewed both the questionnaire and the methodology used after each ‘sweep’ of the survey and took into account the practical experience gathered.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Business Crime Survey (Dijk, J.J.M. van & G.J. Terlouw, An international perspective of the business community as victims of fraud and crime, In: *Security Journal* 7 (1996), pp. 157-167, and The International Self-Report of Delinquency Study (Junger-Tas, J., G.J. Terlouw & M.W. Klein (ed.), *Delinquent Behavior among young people in the western world; first results of the international self-report delinquency study*, Den Haag, 1994, RDC / Ministry of Justice.) covered only a very limited number of European countries, and are, therefore, not included in this Sourcebook.

5. A great number of countries all over the world participated in (one or more) sweeps of the survey. The methodology used by the different countries varied to some extent. Basically, Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing was used to approach a random sample of at least 1,000 individuals in each country. In countries where telephone ownership was not widespread, face-to-face interviews were conducted. In a number of countries, smaller samples of the population were interviewed (sometimes drawn from certain parts of the country only), mainly for financial and practical reasons. In several countries only individuals from the capital or another major urban area were included in the sample; in some cases, this sample was complemented by an additional sample from one or more rural areas.

6. In the tables the 'geographical' reference point is made clear by presenting three columns for each offence. The figures indicated in the first column («national») are representative at national level. The figures in the second column («urban») are representative of all urban areas (if figures are given in the first column), or one major urban area only (if no figures are given in the first column). The figure in the third column («rural») are representative of all rural areas (if figures are given in the first column), or one small rural area only (if no figures are given in the first column). Note that the breakdown between «urban» and «rural» is based on information provided by the respondents (see technical information).

### **5.A.3. International Crime Victim Survey: results**

7. Tables 5.B.1, 5.B.2 and 5.B.3 present some results of the survey. The figures represent the average victimisation rates over the three sweeps of the survey. They were computed by summing up the yearly victimisation rates for each of the sweeps (and for a given country, and then dividing the sum by the number of sweeps (for details, see the technical information). This procedure was used to ensure a high level of comparability, in particular, in relation to countries which did not participate in each of the three sweeps. Under each of the data tables, the relevant part of the screening question i.e. the question about victimisation over the past five years is given (for complete wording, see technical information).

8. The tables show that in many countries victimisation rates differ considerably between urban and rural areas. Overall, they are higher in urban than in rural areas, but not in all countries and not for all offences. Comparing countries does not produce a consistent picture over all offences, with the exception of Estonia, where victimisation rates tend to be high for all types of offences. In general, countries differ much less with regard to victimisation rates than in relation to police data, which suggests that the latter reflect not only the actual volume of crime but also differences in recording crime.