

SOC 4099 Victimology
Overheads Lecture 2.2: Measuring Victimization I1:
Victimization Surveys

* Victimization surveys have been the preferred methodological tool of victimologists since the 1970's.

*These gather information directly from victims. In the past, little was known relative to offenders

* Focus on crime:

- With direct, identifiable victims
- Direct, potentially identifiable offender
 - Victimizations for which information available

Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (1981)

* Findings:

- Gender differences (assault)
- Age and risk (youth)
- Income
- Lifestyle (nights out on town)
- Fear of crime
- Only 42% of crimes reported
- Reasons: “Too minor”
 - “Police can’t do anything”
 - “Inconvenient”
- Variation in sexual assaults
- Most likely to report when large financial loss

Violence Against Women Survey (1993)

* 51% of Canadian women experienced at least 1 incident of physical or sexual assault since the age of 18 (vs. 10% in the preceding year).

* Women were at greater risk of violence by men they know (45%)

than by strangers (23%). Many reported past violence from both.

* 39% of women had been victims of sexual assault (vs. 5% in the previous year). 17% reported physical threats or assaults by men other than spouses (vs. 1% in the previous year).

* 29% of women had been assaulted by a spouse or live-in partner (3% in prior year). More was reported in previous relationships than current ones (48% vs. 15%).

* There was a continued risk of violence to women from ex-partners despite a divorce or separation.

* The most common forms of violence were threats, followed by pushing, grabbing and shoving, slapping, throwing something, kicking, biting, and hitting with fists.

* The proportion who had been beaten up, choked, sexually assaulted, or had a weapon used against them were all less than 10%.

* A majority of respondents who have suffered violence had been victimized more than once. This was particularly evident in sexual violence.

* Women were at risk of sexual violence in a variety of locations/situations. 46% of sexual assaults occurred in a private place, 10% at work, and were not an uncommon risk in public locations

* Wife assault did not merely involve low level violence such as threats, pushing, grabbing and shoving.

* The majority of abused women were assaulted repeatedly, 1/3 more than ten times.

*Men from previous relationships were reportedly more violent than others.

The VAWS also detailed the *relationship dynamics* involved:

* The percentage reporting emotional abuse was higher than those reporting physical or sexual violence (35% vs. 29%).

* Emotional abuse was used in conjunction with violence by the majority of violent men

* Obsessive and controlling behaviors were prominent in serious battering relationships, & its frequency increased dramatically as the seriousness of the battering increased

* Controlling and abusive men often found a woman's pregnancy a threat to his exclusivity of attention and affection.

Finally, the VAWS indicated important *demographic* correlates:

* Young women 18-24 experienced rates of sexual assault twice that in the next age group (25-34), & had rates of wife assault 3 times higher.

* The rate of wife assault in new marriages (2 years or less) was almost three times the national average.

* Common-law relationships showed rates of violence 4 times higher than legal marriages.

* Single women & those with some (but not completed) postsecondary education reported the highest rates of sexual assault.

* In wife assault, both men with less than a high school education, & those who are unemployed, assaulted their partners at twice the rate of others

* Wife assault and sexual assault were twice as high among those with low incomes

* Witnessing violence in childhood was a very important risk factor for both abusers and potential victims

* Alcohol abuse was strongly correlated with violence & seriousness of injury.

* Rates of violent victimization varied from higher levels in Western Canada to lower levels in the east.

* When all of these associated factors are weighed statistically, the most important predictors were:

verbal abuse/putdowns,
sexual jealousy
efforts to limit womens' autonomy/social
contacts
age
the man's education
living in a common-law relationship
early exposure to violence
the man's unemployment.

* This VAWS picture of intimate violence contradicts lifestyle and routine activities theories of victimization.

General Social Survey 2019

- According to the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, more than three-quarters (78%) of Canadians were very or somewhat satisfied with their personal safety from crime in 2019.
- One in five (19%) Canadians or their households were impacted by one of the eight crimes measured by the GSS in 2019. There were 8.3 million incidents of sexual assault, robbery, physical assault, break and enter, theft of motor vehicles (or parts), theft of household or personal property, or vandalism.
- Almost seven in ten (69%) self-reported incidents were non-violent in nature. Theft of personal property, the most common crime type, accounted for more than one-third (37%) of all criminal incidents.

- Women (106 incidents per 1,000 women) were violently victimized at a rate nearly double that of men (59 incidents per 1,000 men) in 2019. This gender difference is a result of the fact that women were five times more likely than men to be a victim of sexual assault (50 versus 9 per 1,000).
- When controlling for individual characteristics, women, lesbian, gay, or bisexual people, and younger people have a greater likelihood of being violently victimized.
- Higher violent victimization rates were observed among Indigenous people (177 incidents per 1,000 population), particularly among Métis (225) and Inuit (265^E).
- After controlling for other factors such as age, gender, and other lifetime experiences, Indigenous identity on its own was not associated with increased likelihood of being a victim of violence.
- Childhood maltreatment, including physical or sexual abuse, witnessing violence in the home, or harsh parenting or neglect each increased the likelihood of experiencing violent victimization as an adult.
- Residential mobility and victimization were linked, with those who had changed residences more often in the past 5 years more likely to be victimized, both personally and their household.
- In 2019, about three in ten (29%) Canadians indicated that the victimization that they or their household experienced was reported to police. Reporting varied widely depending on the type of crime, from about half of all motor vehicle thefts, break and enters, and robberies, to 6% of sexual assaults.
- The most common reasons given by victims of crime for not reporting to police was that the crime was minor, the incident wasn't important enough, or that nobody was harmed. For household victimization in particular, another common reason was a belief that the police would not have been able to recover what was stolen.

- More than any other incident characteristic, the presence of a weapon or an injury increased the odds of reporting a violent incident to police.
- One in six (16%) victims of violent crime reported three or more longer-term psychological consequences consistent with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

International Crime Victimization Survey 2004

This was the fifth round of this survey, previously conducted in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2010, with subjects 16 and over responding from 30 participating countries. Of the 10 offences covered, key findings from 2004 (more comprehensive than 2010) include:

* 17% of Canadians aged 16 and over had been victims of at least one crime measured by the ICVS during the year preceding the survey. This rate was similar to the overall international victimization rate (16%).

* Victimization prevalence rates for 2004-2005 varied from one country to another, with Spain, Japan, Hungary and Portugal registering the lowest victimization rates (between 9% and 10%). In contrast, Ireland, England & Wales and New Zealand were among the countries with the highest overall victimization rates.

* For almost all countries participating in the ICVS, the offences with the highest victimization rates were theft of personal property, theft from a car and theft of a bicycle. In Canada, the highest victimization rate was for theft from a vehicle. Nearly 5% of persons aged 16 and over had property taken from their vehicle.

* Not all incidents of criminal victimization are reported to the police. Across all participating countries, slightly more than half the population (53%) reported a victimization incident.

* Canada, along with Finland and Luxembourg, ranked relatively low with respect to reporting. With a rate below the international average, 48% of

Canadian victims of such incidents reported the incident to the police. Austria and Belgium had the highest reporting rates (70%) on the international scale. Victims in Mexico were much less likely to report their victimization incidents to the police compared to all other countries surveyed (16%). The next lowest rate of reporting to the police was in Iceland (40%).

* While Canadians reported a lower proportion of incidents, when they did report, they were satisfied with the police response. In cases where Canadians reported theft from a car, burglary, robbery, sexual offences or assault, two-thirds reported that they were satisfied with police response. Additionally, 86% believed that the police were doing a good or excellent job at controlling crime in their area. Canada, along with Finland and the United States, were among the participating countries in the ICVS whose population was the most satisfied with the job done by the police.

The ICVS thus provides a great deal of information on victimization but provides the added value of placing Canada's experiences in a broader international context.

Victimization Surveys: A Critique

* Advantages of victimization surveys compare to UCR statistics:

- Respondents get asked about theoretically relevant issues
- Weed out public decisions not to report
- Weed out police decisions not to record
- Improve estimates of crime and victimization

* Problems:

- Victims have to know they have been victimized
- Standardized survey questions can be interpreted differently
- Dishonesty in responses
- Faulty memories of respondents
- Giving most socially desirable answers

- Limiting offences inquired about affects outcome
- Selection of respondents
- Large samples needed/ inflates cost

* Again, we must see these as useful constructions, to be used with other sources