



ARCHIVED - Archiving Content

Archived Content

Information identified as archived is provided for reference, research or recordkeeping purposes. It is not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards and has not been altered or updated since it was archived. Please contact us to request a format other than those available.

ARCHIVÉE - Contenu archivé

Contenu archivé

L'information dont il est indiqué qu'elle est archivée est fournie à des fins de référence, de recherche ou de tenue de documents. Elle n'est pas assujettie aux normes Web du gouvernement du Canada et elle n'a pas été modifiée ou mise à jour depuis son archivage. Pour obtenir cette information dans un autre format, veuillez communiquer avec nous.

This document is archival in nature and is intended for those who wish to consult archival documents made available from the collection of Public Safety Canada.

Some of these documents are available in only one official language. Translation, to be provided by Public Safety Canada, is available upon request.

Le présent document a une valeur archivistique et fait partie des documents d'archives rendus disponibles par Sécurité publique Canada à ceux qui souhaitent consulter ces documents issus de sa collection.

Certains de ces documents ne sont disponibles que dans une langue officielle. Sécurité publique Canada fournira une traduction sur demande.



CANADIAN URBAN VICTIMIZATION SURVEY

Cost of Crime to Victims

Bulletin

5

RARY
OF THE SOLICITOR
NOV 21 1985
BIBLIOTHEQUE
MINISTÈRE DU SOLICITEUR GÉNÉRAL

COST OF CRIME TO VICTIMS

Concern about the cost of crime — in all of its meanings — is not recent. Over the last fifteen years, however, the need for good cost data has become increasingly apparent. Information on the cost of crime can serve several purposes:

- a) cost data allow a complementary and, in some cases, a particularly meaningful way of quantifying the amount of crime in a society;
- b) by reference to such concepts as gross national product or constant dollars, cost data allow standardized historical comparisons of crime and the response to crime;
- c) cost data allow important comparisons between criminal justice and other basic social expenditures; and
- d) cost data allow comparative cost-benefit analyses to help evaluate social programs and contribute to social policy development.

Some might quarrel at such a cold, practical measure of crime. Certainly crime involves many issues of ethics and ethical choices. Moreover, many of the most important costs of crime — the psychological and emotional suffering of victims, the fear and insecurity of those who believe they are at risk, the pain and often anger of the families of victims, the loss of freedom and potential productive labour that incarceration

means for the criminal who is caught — cannot be measured in dollars. But these largely unmeasurable costs must be a significant part of any cost-benefit 'equations'.

The "cost of crime" is simply a convenient shorthand for a diversity of expenditures and damages, cost to victims, cost to society, cost to some segments of society, cost to criminals, private and public cost, direct and indirect cost and so on. Criminologists speak of average cost, marginal cost or total cost. Some seek a measure of the ultimate cost of crime — some estimate of national income as it would be in a crime-free society. We are very far from being able to estimate global or ultimate cost.

Nevertheless, until we link social issues to some economic cost concept, until we know more about the cost of crime to society, to victims, and indeed, to criminals, we will be unable to answer our ethical questions to our own satisfaction. That is, ethical choices about crime demand knowledge about the consequences of crime. Obviously, questions of efficiency demand cost information, but so too do the more fundamental questions about whether social programs and policies are working. If we think they are "working", we will still want to know at what price. When we wish to choose among beneficial programs, we will also want to know their relative cost. Social policy

and program development would benefit from knowledge about which crimes cause the greatest losses and which the least, and which groups or categories of people suffer the cost most heavily.

This bulletin focuses on the cost of crime to victims. Researchers and statisticians have only recently collected data on the cost of crime to victims as they have only recently become sensitized to victims' needs. The data presented in this bulletin are drawn from the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (CUVS) conducted by the Ministry of the Solicitor General with the assistance of Statistics Canada¹. The CUVS was carried out in seven major urban centres: Greater Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's. The data have a reference period of one year, January 1 to December 31, 1981, and the sample excluded all persons under 16 years of age. The survey collected information for eight types of offences: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism. For further information on the survey see Appendices I and II.

¹ Some of the data have been published in the Ministry publication *Impact*, No. 2/1984.

Incident Patterns of Various Offences

For the year 1981, there were more than 700,000 incidents of personal victimization of people 16 and over (sexual assault, robbery, assault, and theft of personal property), and almost 900,000 household victimizations (break and enter, motor vehicle theft, household theft and vandalism) in the seven cities surveyed (Table 1).

A number of demographic and socio-economic characteristics seem to be associated with the risk of being a victim of crime. Women were more likely than men to be victims of sexual assault and personal theft. Men, on the other hand, were almost twice as likely to be victims of robbery or assault. Age also was an important factor in risk of victimization. The risk among elderly persons was much lower than among younger persons in all categories of personal offences. The risk of being victimized decreased rapidly with increasing age for most offences.

As one might expect, the rates of motor vehicle theft, household theft, theft of personal property and vandalism increased substantially with family income. The pattern for break and enter and robbery was, however, less straightforward; high rates occurred at both ends of the income scale (Tables 2 and 3). Lifestyle was another element in the determination of risk. Specifically, those who engaged in a large number of evening activities outside the home each month were more likely to have been victims of assault, robbery and theft of personal property, and to a lesser extent, sexual assault.

The Financial Cost of Victimization

Financial Loss

The financial cost to victims of crime in the seven cities surveyed is rather imposing for a single year: \$211,500,000 in unrecovered property and cash; \$41,900,000 in damage to property; and an additional \$7,000,000 (approximately) in associated medical expenses and lost wages. The victims reported an additional \$170,000,000 paid out to them through private insurance. Taken together, then, these figures give us a total cost of crime, including cost to insurance companies, in excess of \$431,000,000 in the seven cities for a single year.

Table 1
Estimated Incidents and Percentage with Economic Loss¹ Seven Cities

PERSONAL OFFENCES		Population aged 16 and older in seven cities = 4,975,900		
Type of Incident	Estimated Incidents	Rate per 1,000 Population 16 and older	% Incidents with \$ Loss	
All Personal Incidents	702,000	141	59	
All Violent Incidents	352,200	70	24	
Sexual Assault	17,300	3.5	32	
Robbery	49,200	10	56	
Assault ²	285,700	57	18	
Personal Theft	349,800	70	94	
HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES		Total households in seven cities = 2,424,900		
Type of Incident	Estimated Incidents	Rate per 1,000 Households	% Incidents with \$ Loss	
All Household Incidents	898,100	369	78	
Break and Enter	227,300	94	67	
Motor Vehicle Theft	40,600	17	72	
Household Theft	417,200	172	88	
Vandalism	213,000	88	73	

¹ Economic loss in this instance includes costs due to theft and damage to property only.

² Loss in cases of assault is for property damage only.

Table 2
Incident Rates by Household Income Seven Cities

Annual Household Income	Rates per 1,000 Population			
	Sexual Assault	Robbery	Assault	Personal Theft
Less than \$9,000	7	13	61	61
\$9,000—14,999	4	15	78	70
\$15,000—19,999	4	14	60	72
\$20,000—24,999	3*	9	57	77
\$25,000—29,999	**	7	52	66
\$30,000—39,999	3*	6	62	80
\$40,000 or more	2*	12	69	94

* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this rate.

** The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

Losses were incurred in 70% of the total incidents: in 59% of personal incidents and in 78% of household incidents (Table 1). The mean net loss² for all incidents involving financial loss was \$240 (Table 4). Among household crimes the mean net loss per incident was highest for break and enter (\$655)

followed by motor vehicle theft (\$459), household theft (\$144), and vandalism (\$132). In the personal crime category, economic or material losses are by no means the most serious or lasting cost of victimization. Nevertheless, some financial cost does occur through loss of or damage to property. This is obvi-

Table 3
Incident Rates by Household Income

Annual Household Income	Seven Cities			
	Break and Enter	Motor Vehicle Theft	Household Theft	Vandalism
Less than \$9,000	83	8	99	41
\$9,000—14,999	104	16	150	71
\$15,000—19,999	103	19	176	90
\$20,000—24,999	99	23	225	108
\$25,000—29,999	99	23	208	123
\$30,000—39,999	103	22	229	120
\$40,000 or more	113	20	241	128

ously the case among robbery (\$315) and personal theft victims (\$160) but also among victims of sexual assault (\$266), and assault (\$224).

The mean net losses in incidents of sexual assault and assault were much higher than in incidents of personal theft, household theft and vandalism in large part because these victims recovered relatively little from the police and private insurance for their losses. The mean recoveries for sexual assault and assault incidents were \$25 and \$37, respectively.

It is not surprising that motor vehicle theft produced the largest mean gross loss; however, because recovery was high—through insurance or directly through police action—motor vehicle theft did not produce the largest mean net loss. The greatest mean net loss was produced by break and enter. More than 227,300 break and enter incidents (94 per thousand households) occurred in the seven cities during 1981. Of the very large number of households affected by this type of crime about 67% suffered some financial loss. In those incidents where some loss did occur, the average gross loss (through theft or damage) was about \$1,142. After recovery through police and private insurance, net loss to victims was \$655. Most recovery was through private insurance.

Relatively little was directly recovered through the police in break and enter

incidents. Further, when stolen goods are found they may be held by the police as evidence for pending trials, exacerbating the sense of loss and leading, perhaps, to further feelings of frustration. Recent initiatives to speed up the return of stolen property should have a positive impact upon the satisfaction of victims with the workings of the criminal justice system. But actual material recovery may not alleviate the increased fear, sense of invasion and sometimes long-term stress associated with residential break and enter offences.

Quite apart from the losses caused by car theft, the car was the focus of much crime. For example, over three-quarters of the incidents of vandalism

involved damage to a car. When damage accompanied theft of personal or household property, it was the car that received the damage in the large majority of instances. In over 70% of the instances which involved damage, the mean net loss to the victim was less than \$100.

Financial Impact

Clearly the financial cost to victims of crime was substantial. The gross figures, however, may be somewhat less informative in terms of the impact upon victims. The actual dollar figures do not reveal the suffering that financial loss can mean for individual victims. The impact of similar financial loss will be experienced differently depending on the income of victims and their ability to recover the loss through private insurance or other sources. Obviously, the financial impact of victimization falls most heavily on those with lower and fixed incomes. Even if they were to make some recovery the waiting period is likely to produce significant hardship.

In the great majority of incidents involving economic loss through theft of and damage to property no recovery of the loss was made. Stolen property was returned to the victim in about 13% of incidents involving loss and full or partial recovery through private insurance was reported in about 19% of these incidents. As Table 5 shows, about 77% of victims in the lowest income group who experienced loss of property

Table 4
Economic Loss¹ and Recovery for Incidents Involving Loss

Type of Incident	Seven Cities		
	Mean Gross \$ Loss	Mean \$ Recovery	Mean Net \$ Loss
Personal Incidents			
Sexual Assault	291	25	266
Robbery	576	261	315
Assault ²	261	37	224
Personal Theft	225	65	160
Household Incidents			
Break and Enter	1,142	487	655
Motor Vehicle Theft	3,512	3,053	459
Household Theft	264	120	144
Vandalism	224	92	132

¹ Economic loss in this instance includes costs due to theft and damage to property only.

² Loss in cases of assault is for property damage only.

² Mean gross loss, mean recovery and mean net loss figures are based only on those incidents involving financial loss. The mean gross loss is the average of the actual amount of loss reported. The mean recovery is the average amount of loss recovered. The mean net loss is the difference between mean gross loss and mean recovery.

Table 5**Economic Loss and Recovery for Incidents Involving Property Loss by Household Income**

Seven Cities

Annual Household Income	Estimated Incidents	Mean Gross \$ Loss	Mean \$ recovery		Mean Net \$ Loss	% Incidents with Theft Insurance
			Through Police	Through Insurance		
Less than \$9,000	78,800	466	60	129	277	23
\$9,000-14,999	94,300	395	60	94	235	33
\$15,000-19,999	106,100	457	74	158	225	40
\$20,000-24,999	117,200	561	119	168	272	42
\$25,000-29,999	83,200	535	177	181	236	47
\$30,000-39,999	108,800	595	116	169	308	49
\$40,000 or more	145,300	635	124	274	236	50

Table 6**Economic Loss and Recovery for Incidents Involving Damage to Property by Household Income**

Seven Cities

Annual Household Income	Estimated Incidents	Mean Gross \$ Damage	Mean \$ Recovery	Mean Net \$ Damage	% of Incidents with Redress for Damages
\$9,000-14,999	38,000	220	78	141	21
\$15,000-19,999	46,300	179	75	104	24
\$20,000-24,999	49,200	204	79	125	24
\$25,000-29,999	38,200	203	84	119	27
\$30,000-39,999	47,200	172	89	82	28
\$40,000 or more	58,000	285	162	121	33

had no insurance. The proportion of victims having insurance assistance increased substantially with household income to about 50% for higher income groups.

Although higher income groups incurred greater mean gross losses, the mean net losses were not significantly different among income groups because higher income victims recovered more through police and insurance. The impact on lower income groups, however, was much greater since their net losses represent a larger proportion of their total household income. Similarly, the mean gross damage in incidents involving damage to property ranged from \$167 for the lowest income group to \$285 for the highest income group, and the mean recovery ranged from \$54 to \$162 (Table 6). In part because they were

more likely than lower income groups to have had the cost of the damaged property recovered through insurance or other sources, upper income households suffered comparatively lower costs in damage.

In this context, the financial impact of the victimization experience was also more severe for elderly people than for any other age group. The mean net dollar loss was no higher for elderly people than for others on average, but because of their relatively low annual incomes, loss as a percentage of income was more than twice as high for elderly victims as for others (Table 7). What may represent an insignificant loss to many represents a substantial loss to elderly victims as to all victims who have reduced income. The data indicate that elderly people should be considered a special group, not only

because they are more frail or vulnerable, but also because of their lower incomes.

The Physical and Emotional Cost of Victimization

Financial loss is only one measure of the cost of crime to victims. The emotional suffering and the physical pain victims often experience and their responses to the suffering may alter their lifestyles and the overall quality of their lives.

Physical Cost

Of the approximately 1,600,000 victimization incidents reported in the seven cities, fewer than 350,000 incidents (404,000 victims) could be classified as involving personal contact with the offender. Nevertheless, these resulted in 50,500 nights in hospital and 405,700 days lost due to some form of incapacitation. About 54% of those who were victims of assault, robbery or sexual assault were actually attacked physically; about 27% (110,500) of these victims were injured and 8% (34,000) had to seek some form of medical or dental attention (Table 8). Although serious injury was relatively rare, again the cost of victimization falls more heavily on some than on others, on those who have only basic medical coverage and of course on those who are physically frail and vulnerable.

Were elderly victims more likely to be injured? The survey results show that elderly people had a comparatively low occurrence of injury. Slightly fewer elderly victims of personal violent crimes suffered some injury as a result of the victimization than did younger victims. However, when victims reported suffering some degree of injury, those 65 and over were most likely to require medical or dental treatment (though the numbers are too small to draw firm conclusions).

Some offences were more likely to result in serious injury than others. Victims of sexual assault, in particular, were more likely to be injured and when injured were more likely to require medical attention.

Emotional Cost

Researchers have only recently begun to collect information on the emotional damage caused by victimiza-

Table 7

**Loss as a Percentage of Household Income
for All Incidents by Age of Victim**

Seven Cities

Age Group	Mean Household Income	Mean Gross \$ Loss	% of Income	Mean \$ Recovery	% of Income	Mean Net \$ Loss	% of Income
16-17	27,200	168	0.6	62	0.2	106	0.4
18-20	25,000	178	0.7	97	0.4	81	0.3
21-24	23,400	261	1.1	120	0.5	141	0.6
25-29	25,900	359	1.4	191	0.7	168	0.6
30-39	28,600	394	1.4	182	0.6	212	0.7
40-49	29,800	419	1.4	228	0.8	191	0.6
50-59	27,000	435	1.6	217	0.8	218	0.8
60-64	21,100	285	1.4	136	0.6	149	0.7
65 and over	12,600	320	2.5	143	1.1	177	1.4

tion. Studies have shown that the fear produced by some forms of victimization can become crippling and can turn victims inward, closing them off from social support when they most need it. The effects of certain kinds of offences — sexual assault, child abuse, wife battering and other domestic violence — can be emotionally crippling not only for the victims but for the victims' families and not only in the short term but long after the offender has been dealt with by the criminal justice system. Moreover, victims' emotional suffering may be made more acute by their experiences with the criminal justice system.

About one-quarter of the victims said that victims of their type of crime should have emotional or psychological

counselling available to them. This includes victims of property crimes and other offences generally considered to be less serious.

Various local victim needs assessment surveys conducted by the Ministry of the Solicitor General and by the Department of Justice show that victims of property crime often suffer crisis reactions previously assumed to arise only with crimes of violence. These local surveys confirm that victims of both personal and property crimes have an immediate need for someone to talk to about the incident — someone to provide a sympathetic ear. These surveys also uncovered a need for reassurance of personal safety. Victims of both personal and (to a lesser extent) property crimes indicated

that their levels of fear and stress would have been reduced immediately after the crime if they had a "companion for security" — someone to stay with them for a few days.

Secondary Victimization

Many victims encounter inconvenience and difficulties in making the necessary arrangements to attend court, and many also suffer significant costs not compensated by low witness fees. Complex domestic arrangements made to enable a victim to attend court or appear as a witness may have to be disrupted at the last moment as court schedules are revised without warning. In the CUVS, 17% of victims who had to appear in court said they had difficulties making arrangements to appear. Over 20% said the court date was inconvenient or that cancellations or postponements created difficulties for them.

Certain material and emotional needs result from victims' contact with the criminal justice system. Although victims were generally very positive about how police handled their cases overall, about 30% expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which police kept them informed about the progress of the case. Generally, residents of the seven cities expressed the desire for more information on crime prevention, and victims for specific information about their own cases.

The local victim needs assessment studies indicate that many victims of property crimes need immediate practical advice on remedies available to them, on procedures for claiming compensation and insurance, on reporting stolen credit cards and identification and on procedures for replacement of such important documents. Victims also expressed a need for information on strategies which may prevent a reoccurrence of their loss.

Conclusions

These data provide the first systematic, empirical demonstration of what those within the criminal justice system have come to understand, if only intuitively: the criminal justice system must be responsive to the needs of victims.

Although relatively few incidents uncovered by this survey involved substantial losses through theft or damage, and even fewer involved serious physi-

Table 8

Nature and Consequences of Personal Violent Crime

Seven Cities

	Estimated Number	Percent of All Victims
Number of Victims	404,000	100
Threatened Only	183,800	46
Physically Attacked	220,200	54
Injured	110,500	27
Received Treatment for Injuries	34,000	8
Received Hospital Treatment	24,200	6
Hospital Overnight or Longer	3,300	1

Victims could be counted in more than one category.

cal injury, the cost of crime obviously falls more heavily on some victims than on others. For a few, the burden is exceptionally heavy.

Criminal justice processes and procedures that recognize the needs of victims are now being explored. Many

programs now exist to offer victims protection and support, and these will undoubtedly increase in number and effectiveness with better information about the consequences of different kinds of crimes on different categories of victims.

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.

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.
4. Break and entry 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.

The **Canadian Urban Victimization Survey Bulletin** is produced by the Research and Statistics Group and the Communications Group, Programs Branch, Ministry Secretariat, under the authority of the Hon. Perrin Beatty, P.C., M.P., Solicitor General of Canada. It is available free from the Communications Group, Programs Branch, Solicitor General Canada, 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P8.

© Minister of Supply and Services Canada 1985

Cat. No. JS42-18/5-1985

ISBN 0-662-52811-5