



Bundeskriminalamt

**Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy  
Christoph Birkel  
Robert Mischkowitz (Eds.)**

# **Victimisation Surveys in Germany**

Volume 3

English Summaries

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in Germany**

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## Foreword

Police Crime Statistics (PKS) has been documenting the crime situation in Germany for 62 years now. However, PKS can only report on those crimes that come to the attention of the police—whether through reports from citizens or through their own investigations. These registered rates (the so-called *Hellfeld* or known figure) of crime stand alongside the ‘dark figure’ (*Dunkelfeld*), which varies in size depending on the kind of offence.

For more than four decades, researchers have been seeking to gain access to this dark figure by means of face-to-face, postal, telephone and, increasingly in recent years, online victim surveys. Depending on the research question and intention, either individual victim groups such as young people, the elderly or women have been surveyed, or the crime situation in limited local or regional areas has been examined (so-called ‘Criminological Regional Analyses’).

With this collection of articles, the BKA is continuing its efforts in the field of victim surveys with the aim of combining the existing individual research findings to produce a systematic presentation of the current state of research, which has been lacking until now. Besides the key documentation of the research findings, this work also provides stimulus for future research work and projects. This knowledge base is intended to be of interest not only to researchers but also to those directly involved in politics and police practice. This is achieved by specifically highlighting criminal policy suggestions and possibilities of implementation in police practice and presenting tips and interpretation aids to facilitate a better understanding of the findings, opportunities and limitations of victim surveys.

Realising a work of this kind is not possible without the support and involvement of many people. Deserving mention at this point are, first of all, the authors, who agreed to offer a portion of their often limited time resources free of charge to write the individual articles and therefore create the core of this collection. I would particularly like to thank Prof. Dr. Helmut Kury, Dr. Joachim Obergfell-Fuchs, Privatdozent Dr. Dietrich Oberwittler and Prof. Dr. Peter Wetzels for the work they invested, not only in their articles, but also in planning the structure of the collection. With the help of

everyone involved it has been possible to create a work that will provide a substantial and useful knowledge base for future victim survey projects.

Holger Münch  
President of the Bundeskriminalamt



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# **I. Objectives, benefits and state of research**

# Introduction

Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy, Christoph Birkel and Robert Mischkowitz

When in the 1970s—following up on endeavours made in North America and the Scandinavian countries—criminologists in Germany also began to conduct surveys of citizens to systematically collect information about the experiences they had when falling victim to criminal offences, they opened up new research prospects and also contributed to significant developments in crime policy: on the one hand, they provided a sound methodological basis which made it possible for the first time to illuminate the dark figure of crimes not recorded in the crime statistics, at least for some criminal offences (Heinz 2006; Schwind 2011, pp. 38ff., especially p. 47), and on the other, they caused criminological research, which had so far focused on the offenders, to increasingly shift its focus towards the perspective of the crime victims (Kunz 2001, p. 299), which ultimately found expression in corresponding efforts on the part of the police (we need only think of the numerous projects intended to improve how victim-witnesses were dealt with; see e.g. Balß 2001; Voß 2001) and in crime policy initiatives (Kaiser 1997, pp. 298f.)<sup>1</sup>.

While there have been only a limited number of nationwide victim surveys<sup>2</sup>, the number of local or regional, offence- or group-specific victimisation surveys carried out in Germany since then is confusingly high. It is also difficult to get an overview of their output in terms of content. A similar lack of ‘lucidity’ characterises the state of research in Germany regarding the methodical and methodological aspects of this type of survey; however, it is based on a relatively small number of explicitly methodological studies (e.g. Baurmann 1991; Kury 1994; Wetzels 1996; Schnell 2000; Treibel 2004) and essentially constitutes a by-product of surveys rather than the main focus.

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<sup>1</sup> The increased interest in the concerns of the victims of crime manifested itself, among other things, in the Victim Compensation Act (1976), the Victim Protection Act (1986) and the Act on Protection against Violence (2002).

<sup>2</sup> The terms ‘victim survey’ and ‘victimisation survey’ are used synonymously in this anthology.

There are a number of brief overview articles (Obergfell-Fuchs 2008; Obergfell-Fuchs 2009; Heinz 2006; Stock 2012) and monographic synopses (Weiß 1997; Feldmann-Hahn 2011), some of them not quite up to date, describing the state of research based on victim surveys in Germany—a detailed stock-taking has not yet been carried out, however.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a need for such a general overview, both for persons doing research in the field of criminology—especially scientists who themselves plan to carry out a victim survey—and teaching staff as well as for the (potential) ‘users’ of the results of victim surveys, i.e. practitioners from the areas of law enforcement and prevention, crime policy makers and citizens interested in crime policy issues.

In view of the situation outlined above, the criminological research group at the Institute of Law Enforcement Studies and Training of the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal Police Office)—which has repeatedly been involved in victimisation surveys since its formation in 1973—has decided to publish an anthology intended to close the gap described above. It provides an overview of the development of criminological research by means of victimisation surveys, a summary of the subject areas examined in this way and a view of the methodical and methodological foundations of victim surveys. The first two of these three aspects are treated in the articles presented in the first volume, while the second volume is dedicated to the presentation of the methodology and methods for conducting and assessing victim surveys.

This first volume of the anthology comprises four thematic sections:

The *first group* of articles describes the development of criminological victim surveys and takes stock of the surveys of this type carried out in Germany to date. First of all, *van Dijk* and *de Castelbajac* outline how victim surveys initially emerged in North America and Scandinavia and then devel-

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<sup>3</sup> In principle, this is also true of the international state of research and English-language literature; even though the frequently quoted book by Cantor from 2000 discusses the most important methodological aspects, it does so exclusively with respect to the US American *National Crime Victim Survey* (NCVS). The ‘Manual on Victimization Surveys’ prepared by the United Nations (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010) is just that—a brief guideline for conducting victim surveys, which also broaches the most important methodological issues. However, it does not include an overview of the state of research in terms of contents and methodology.

oped on an international scale. In his article, *Mischkowitz* traces their development in Germany, linking them to the progress of the general discussion on methodological issues in social sciences. The article by *Obergfell-Fuchs* finally provides a compressed overview of the victim surveys conducted to date and, in particular, the manner of their organisation and financing and the preferred methodological approaches.

In the *second part* of the volume, the significance of victimisation surveys, which was briefly outlined above, is explained in greater detail, namely from a police (*Kolmey*) and scientific point of view (*Oberwittler & Kury*).

The articles in the *third section* of this volume enlarge on and complement the overview given by *Obergfell-Fuchs* by describing the victim studies focusing on specific offences and individual groups of victims, ranging from common property, violent and fraud offences (*Birkel & Guzy*) to victimisations of elderly people (*Görger*) and companies as victims of criminal offences (*Bussmann*). Even though the articles in this section do not provide an exhaustive overview of all the topics and issues dealt with in victim surveys, they nevertheless show that studies of this kind help to obtain essential information on forms of crime receiving a great deal of public attention, although the limits these studies encounter are mentioned as well.

Victimisation surveys are usually not limited to collecting victims' experiences. It was, in fact, a substantial innovation that they moreover allow us to obtain information both on the—generally speaking—'subjective perception' of those affected by crime and on the viewpoint of citizens in general, on which conventional data sources such as crime statistics provide no information (Heinz 2006). The state of research on these topics is the subject of the *fourth part* of this volume. The articles in this section deal with research on the effects of being exposed to crime as a victim (*Greve et al.*) and on the responses of victims to such incidents—in particular whether they call in the police (*Enzmann*) and how they perceive the behaviour of the law enforcement authorities (also *Greve et al.*). In addition, victim surveys make it possible to gather information about the full range of crime-related perceptions and attitudes of 'normal' citizens, from the fear of crime (*Hirtenlehner & Hummelsheim*) to their notions of the penal sanctions adequate for specific criminal offences (*Kemme & Doering*). As the articles underline, the



knowledge gathered on these topics is indispensable for an evidence-based crime policy.

The essays compiled in this volume provide a comprehensive overview of the development, importance and range of topics of victim surveys in Germany. The final article of the first volume (*Guzy et al.*) seeks to make a brief assessment of the extent to which the existing studies satisfy the need for victim surveys on the part of various groups of recipients and with regard to different crime phenomena, as well as assessing the areas where there are gaps yet to be filled by research. To what extent these gaps can be closed is, of course, also a question as to what is methodologically feasible and, furthermore, what is financially affordable. The methods and methodology of victim surveys are dealt with in the second volume, at the end of which *Helmut Kury* returns to the 'limitations of victim surveys' mentioned above.

The present short volume in English constitutes a summary of the articles published in the two volumes of the anthology. Its purpose is to allow foreign researchers and practitioners an insight into the German research landscape and to draw their attention to the individual articles published.

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# **1. History and research overview**

# The hedgehog and the fox: on the history and future of victimisation surveys on both sides of the Atlantic

Jan van Dijk and Matthieu de Castelbajac

The leading idea behind the ongoing National Crime Victims Survey (NCVS) of the USA is to estimate the absolute numbers of acts falling under the official definitions of crime incorporated in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), e.g. aggravated assault, forcible rape, theft, burglary and motor vehicle theft. The Department of Justice and the USA Census Bureau have over the years retained this narrow legalistic approach. As a consequence, topics such as fear of crime, preventive responses, reasons for reporting or not reporting to the police and opinions about the police, although occasionally included in supplements to the questionnaire, have remained of marginal importance. On account of its single-mindedness, the NCVS model can, in the dichotomous typology of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, be classified as that of the Hedgehog, an animal focussed on harnessing just one superb trick.

The European protagonists of national victimisation surveys have, from the outset, pursued a different agenda. Firstly, the surveys' questioning on victimisation experiences has been less legalistic. The questionnaire items are formulated in concrete, colloquial language, which is closer to the respondents' perceptions of crime than the terminology used in the NCVS. Secondly, much attention in the questionnaires is given to questions on attitudes and opinions. This European model of crime surveying serves many purposes besides estimating the 'true volume of crime', and is more versatile. Using the terminology of Isaiah Berlin, it can be characterised as the Fox.

The first German national survey of 1988 was part of the first round of the International Crime Victims Survey, which was modelled after the existing European surveys. This international survey was repeated in Germany in 2005 and 2010 with funding from the European Commission. The independently run German survey of 2012 was part of a larger research project on security issues (Security Monitor Germany). The project contains exten-

sive modules on fear of crime, besides one on victimisation, and clearly stands in the European tradition of crime surveying.

The EU Action Plan 2006–2010 envisaged the development of comparative crime statistics among the Member States, including a common module for victimisation surveys. Technical groundwork for such a survey was done by an expert group from Eurostat, the statistical arm of the European Commission (Van Dijk et al. 2010). Following the European tradition, the planned survey ‘European Safety Survey (EUSASU)’ included a set of questions on feelings of safety, satisfaction with treatment by the police, general attitudes towards the police and the reception of victim support. With a view to collecting data on the treatment of victims by police forces in line with the 2012 EU Victims Directive, some additional questions were formulated. European criminologists looked forward to EU-wide follow-up to the ICVS. Unfortunately, in 2012 the European Parliament advised against the survey (Van Dijk 2012; A7-0365/2012 – European Parliament). The main argument raised against the EUSASU, besides its cost, was that it would duplicate existing national surveys. This argument is unconvincing because national surveys are annually executed in just a handful of Member States. In the majority of Member States such surveys have only been conducted once or twice, often within the framework of rounds of the ICVS. The survey was also criticised for its inclusion of ‘subjective’ and ‘sensitive’ questions. This criticism shows a lack of understanding of the proven methodology of victimisation surveys on personal experiences with common crimes. Ironically, the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency has conducted dedicated victimisation surveys on violence against women, hate crime and discrimination of LGBT people (e.g. FRA 2013). Arguably these topics are more sensitive and subjective than victimisation by common crime of the general public.

Without the EUSASU, the only available information on levels and trends of crime in the EU are the numbers of crimes recorded by police forces as collected by Eurostat (Clarke 2013). The use of the police figures of recorded crime by Eurostat will inevitably result in erroneous conclusions, for example that levels of crime are the highest in the countries of Northern Europe and the lowest in Bulgaria and Romania. Although the European Commission has a mandate to start collecting comparable statistics on crime, an EU-wide crime victimisation survey, building on the best practices of the Euro-

pean surveys, seems, for the time being, to be a missed opportunity for Europe due to opposition from the European Parliament.

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# Considerations on the history of research into unreported crime in Germany

Robert Mischkowitz

The beginnings of research into unreported crime in Germany, particularly the 1970s, are characterised by locally restricted surveys conducted in cities such as Göttingen, Stuttgart and Solingen, and by intensive debates on methodological issues and the significance of empirical results in terms of basic research. The background to these debates is the positivism dispute in German sociology which has, also in the field of criminology, led to arguments between the traditional, offender-oriented criminology approach and critical criminologists.

Based on the classification by Obergfell-Fuchs, the following three development stages can be roughly sketched: a relatively long early stage from the 1970s up until German reunification in 1990, witnessing significant progress in the development of socio-scientific methods of empirical social research, i.e. a ‘methodological innovation leap’; another stage in the 1990s was marked, on the one hand, by possibilities of ‘upheaval research’ comparing the new and old German Laender and, on the other, the great interest in criminological regional analyses in the context of municipal crime prevention. A critical view on the aforementioned methodological instrument also emerged during this stage, however; and finally there has been a third stage since the turn of the millennium during which regional and thematic studies have been expanded but which also evinced a stronger focus on the development and implementation of a national victim survey to accompany the statistics—a German victimisation survey.

The tendency—inherent to social sciences—to differentiate and improve methods of empirical social research received additional impetus through technical progress, in particular the digital revolution, which took the methods of both data collection and data processing and analysis to a new level of quality and which also decisively influenced the development and implementation of research projects regarding unreported crime.

From the very beginning, research into unreported crime in Germany was conducted in the light of international developments in this field. While in the early 1970s it was primarily the United States that essentially determined scientific discourse and the developments in research by creating the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), their work was supplemented and expanded by a European group of researchers introducing the British Crime Survey (BCS) and the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) in the 1980s. Studies in Germany conformed to the status of international research and German institutions also participated in international research projects.

Efforts to conduct a regular victim survey to accompany the statistics, which would expand and improve the database for a comprehensive presentation of the crime situation, date back to the early stages of research into unreported crime in Germany. In spite of various initiatives and expert opinions—including explicit demands expressed in the two Periodical Security Reports by the German federal government—it has not yet been possible to realise this project on a sustained basis. Detailed proposals by the expert group *Bevölkerungsumfrage zu Kriminalitätserfahrungen und Sicherheitsempfinden* (Population Survey on Experience of Crime and Sense of Security) and specific demands expressed by the working group for ‘optimisation of the existing crime statistics system in Germany’ have so far gone unheeded. The efforts made at European level have not yet progressed beyond a testing phase, either. This means for Germany that researchers continue to carry out only local, regional and thematic surveys and some German *Laender* have meanwhile decided to single-handedly introduce regular victim surveys to accompany the statistics.



# Overview of existing victim surveys

Joachim Obergfell-Fuchs

This paper gives an overview of German victim surveys, their organisation, their spatial and topical distribution, and their realisation. In comparison with the USA, German victimology does not have a very long tradition, even though research on victims of crimes has been conducted for more than forty years. Since the early 1970s a large number of studies with quite heterogeneous emphases have been executed. Beside general victimisation surveys on the national and the local level, the latter often being used for the planning of community crime prevention schemes, the last ten years have shown an increasing number of specialised studies on selected groups of victims. Among them were, for example, students, women, police officers and prison inmates. This short overview shows that German research on victimisation offers a broad range of topics. Adding the research on fear of crime and attitudes towards governmental institutions, such as the police or the prison system—topics that are often included in one instrument together with questions on victimisation experiences—there is significant correspondence with international research. However, it seems that sophisticated, in-depth analyses are more or less lacking. Reviewing the publications of the last few decades one can get the impression that German victimological research often only briefly addresses most topics, while a continuous and in-depth discussion has hardly occurred.

Looking at the German research one can ask critically about the scope of the studies. For specialised surveys on selected groups an answer seems to be easy. Often the identification and correction of grievances were the salient goals. Such scopes are rather obvious for surveys on violence among and against students, on the maltreatment of women in intimate relationships, on the safety of police officers or on the detection of assaults in the prison system. Based on such surveys, problems can be recognised and adequate measures can be planned and taken. But the scope of general victimisation surveys is not as apparent at first sight. Even with the quite frequent local surveys aimed at community crime prevention, it has not been the measured,

often low, victimisation rates that have gained most attention but rather the results on fear of crime or on problem areas of the community. But there is no doubt that such general surveys, especially periodic surveys, are also able to provide valuable additional information on the development of crime. They can contribute data to a differential analysis of the emergence of crime with regard to particular groups of offences. Furthermore these studies make it possible to identify and analyse particular high-risk groups, determining and sustaining factors of crime, and the consequences of crimes for victims.

Unfortunately, until now German victimological research has failed to provide a satisfactory answer to this initial and important question of using victim surveys to provide comprehensive and sophisticated research results. Many aspects are still only barely broached and there is still a broad gap between victimological research in Germany and in anglophone countries, especially in the USA. Cognitive interests alone are not sufficient to legitimise such surveys, especially not in times when money is short. The quite frequent and exclusive reference to a second source of crime data independent from registered offences is not enough. In fact, it would require continuous and periodic data collections in order to eliminate random fluctuations. But today German victimological research is far from this standard. Up to now German victimology has not succeeded in realising such periodic surveys with standardised methodology. The most important obstacle seems to be a lack of sufficient funding and the lack of a generally accepted body to lead it. Implementing such surveys could probably answer the question about the use of victimisation studies and could show their justification, similar to the USA or Great Britain. The possibility of longitudinal victimisation data and data on the fear of crime or attitudes towards institutions of formal social control would create a 'real' second database on national crime. Furthermore the analysis of reporting behaviour and its correlates over time would open up the possibility of a valid measurement of positive or critical developments.

Hitherto, the methodology used for victim surveys has been far from consistent. It is unquestionable that unconditionally maintaining one methodology or one instrument is neither productive nor does it make sense because society and technical possibilities are changing. But it would be reasonable to develop a uniform and standardised procedure, especially in order to ensure a reliable longitudinal approach. There have already been some at-

tempts in this direction but they have not yet been established. Beside longitudinal measurement, a standardised methodology could also facilitate cross-sectional studies. Today, differences in the probabilities of victimisations are often due to differences in methodology rather than to disparities in structural variables.

It would seem sensible for a particular research institution to become the 'guardian' of the methodology, but this would require a general acceptance of this institution. A national public authority could probably do this best. This institution should provide researchers with longitudinal as well as cross-sectional data sets for their own research questions and analyses. Such a demand is not unrealistic at all: the National Crime and Victimization Survey in the USA, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (formerly British Crime Survey), and the module of the *Enquête permanente sur les conditions de vie des ménages* in France show that it can be done. A comparable approach could lead to a real improvement in German victimological research.

## **2. Objectives and benefits of victimisation surveys**

# **The Survey on Safety and Crime in Lower Saxony – realisation, feedback and consequences of a periodic study on the dark figure of crime**

Uwe Kolmey

The strategy of German police authorities has mainly been determined by data from the Police Crime Statistics (PKS), in which all incidents reported to the police have been recorded for decades. Despite this good basis, something has been lacking over the years: police have had no knowledge of crimes that are not reported to them. The elucidation of this so-called ‘dark figure of crime’ is the aim of the Survey on Safety and Crime in Lower Saxony. This survey was established in 2012 as a second important source enabling police to assess the whole extent of crime. The ‘Criminological Research and Statistics’ unit of the Lower Saxony State Office of Criminal Investigation developed and carried out this victim survey, which is conducted every two years - the first time in 2013.

Each wave, a representative sample of 40,000 people from Lower Saxony aged 16 and older are asked to answer more than 50 questions on their neighbourhood, their fear of crime, personal experience of victimisation, whether the incidents were reported to the police and their evaluation of police work. Nearly 50 % returned the questionnaire of the first Survey on Safety and Crime and in doing so helped to create a huge data set as a foundation for extensive analyses.

29.7 % of all respondents said they had been victimised in the year 2012. Most of these persons experienced crimes such as types of cybercrime (12.5 %), theft (10.9 %) or vandalism (8.3 %). More serious crimes were recorded with lower rates of prevalence (assault 2.3 %, sexual offences 1.7 %, robbery 0.5 %). Men are more often victimised than women, the younger generation more often than elderly people.

Regardless of the type of crime, only one quarter of all crimes had been reported to the police. But a detailed look at different types tells us that

crimes are especially reported if the victims need the police's confirmation to make a claim on their insurance (car theft 92 %, burglary 84 %). Robbery (35 %) and assault (24 %) are less often reported. Generally, crimes against property are more often reported to the police than crimes against the person.

The Survey on Safety and Crime in Lower Saxony and its results have been widely discussed in the scientific community and covered in the media ever since it was first announced. The feedback has been positive without exception. It was acknowledged that Lower Saxony was the first German Land to set up such a periodic survey. Only within the police organisation itself, the results are not as widely spread as desirable because the information is often not passed from the superiors' level to the grass roots.

With the Survey on Safety and Crime the total extent of crime can be assessed because both sides of the situation are now known. Results of the survey were soon included in periodic police publications; they started to play an important role for future strategies soon after their first analysis. It was now possible to either back up or challenge previous interpretations based on the PKS alone. A few examples:

- In contrast to crime statistics, which show that 1/3 of all burglaries are not successful, the Survey on Safety and Crime identifies this proportion to be 2/3.
- Whereas public transport in big cities traditionally is associated with a high level of fear of crime, it was never regarded a problem in rural areas. The survey proved that wrong: there are notable levels of fear in both cases.
- New target groups for crime prevention were identified by looking closely at the survey results. For example, it was shown that the fear of crime of younger people is at least as high as the fear elderly people report, so future efforts will also concentrate on this newly identified group.

A main consequence is that the recording of victims' data in the PKS is going to be extended and optimised. Victims' information will be gathered for more crimes (so far it is only collected for certain offences) and also more variables will be provided. This step will ensure that information offered in the two sources – PKS and Survey on Safety and Crime – interrelates as much as possible.

The huge body of data is far from being fully analysed, thus making it necessary for the Lower Saxony police to cooperate with criminologists to make it possible to identify as many interesting and relevant facts as possible.

The Survey on Safety and Crime is to leave behind its project status and be integrated into everyday work. As it is periodic, it was carried out a second time in 2015; a third wave is planned for spring 2017. The relevance will increase further with comparative data available.

## Scientific perspective

Dietrich Oberwittler and Helmut Kury

Victim surveys have without doubt brought enormous progress to criminology, and their results have proven indispensable for research. The measurement of crime was for a long time exclusively focused on police- and court-registered crime, even though doubts about its validity started to spread early. During the 1960s and 1970s, survey methodology was adopted by German criminologists as part of the rise of social sciences. After some pioneering studies in cities such as Stuttgart and Bochum, the first nationwide victim surveys in Germany were conducted during the late 1980s. Contrary to other nations, however, Germany so far lacks a continuous national victimisation survey.

Victim surveys have helped to draw a clearer picture of the social reality of crimes and to enhance the knowledge of their causes and consequences. Also, they have contributed to the incorporation of the victim into criminological theories, most prominently in the form of the Routine Activities Approach, which explains crime as the intersection between motivated offenders and suitable targets in situations of weak control. In this perspective, an active urban lifestyle of potential victims can be a causal factor of crime. Contrary to offender-focused theories, which often tend to demonise crime, this perspective considers large parts of everyday crime as inevitable concomitants of 'freedom and wealth' (Cohen & Felson 1979). With a focus on the geographical distribution of crime, victim surveys have also contributed to the development and empirical testing of place-based theories of crime, such as the Collective Efficacy and Broken Windows theories.

Although the dark figure of crime will ultimately remain an unknown quantity, victim surveys have rendered it visible to some extent and have revealed its unequal scope: the dark figure is much larger for fraud and less severe violent and sexual offences than it is for property offences. Victim surveys have helped to understand the reasons why certain crimes are reported to the police or not, and repeated surveys have shown that a change over time of



reporting behaviour can be responsible for increases in the official crime statistics.

The knowledge of 'hidden' victims such as the elderly, prison inmates and migrants has improved considerably thanks to victim surveys, some of which have been especially targeted to difficult-to-reach groups such as migrant women. Victim surveys have shown that the consequences of crimes for victims can vary considerably and are surprisingly minor in many cases. However, surveys also brought to attention the phenomenon of repeat victimisations, which result in a high concentration of crime events on relatively few victims.

Victimisation surveys have been used to investigate crime-related attitudes and emotions of victims and non-victims, in particular fear of crime, trust in law enforcement and punitivity. This research has shown that fear of crime is only loosely linked to crime experiences and reflects more generalised feelings of insecurity.

Rational crime and victim policies rest to a large extent on survey findings. According to Kaiser (1996, p. 339), the 'most important relevance of victim surveys lies with their consequences for social and crime policies'. Longitudinal analyses on the development of crime, independent from the biases of the reporting and recording of crime, and cross-national comparisons of crime would be impossible without data from victim surveys. Research on the methodology of victim surveys should be increased, in particular on new survey modes such as cost-efficient web-based surveys. Rational and ultimately more cost-efficient crime policies are hard to achieve without profound knowledge of the causes and effects of offending. Thus, the question cannot be whether Germany can afford victim surveys on a regular basis, but whether Germany can afford to dispense with this instrument.

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### **3. Crime- and group-specific victimisation experiences**

# **Conventional offences of property crime, violence and fraud**

Christoph Birkel and Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy

A large proportion of crime registered by the police belongs to the category of conventional property and violent crime, i.e. burglary, theft of vehicles, personal theft, robbery, assault and fraud, committed by ‘conventional’ (without using modern information technologies) means. With respect to these crime categories, police crime statistics only partially provide reliable data (for motor vehicle theft, where virtually all cases are reported to the police), while victim surveys provide more valid estimates of the distribution of crime (in terms of prevalence and incidence), at the same time supplementing official crime statistics with more detailed information on victims and circumstances of offences.

The major methodological challenge in collecting data on ‘conventional’ crimes using victim surveys lies in translating legal definitions into compact items using colloquial terms. Furthermore, data on conventional property or violent crimes is often collected in general victimisation surveys that cover a broad range of offences, restricting the amount of space that can be devoted to each of them. Therefore, it is difficult to implement a state-of-the-art measurement with extensive cues and probes to facilitate the retrieval and reporting of victimisation experiences, as can be done in specialised crime-specific surveys. The collection of data on fraud poses special problems because the demarcation of illegal from dubious but legal business practices is difficult, and victims are often not aware of the fact that they have been defrauded. An additional difficulty lies in constructing questionnaires for general victimisation surveys in such a way that assaults committed within close relationships are also reported by the respondents, because they often do not subsume such incidents under the concept of ‘crime’.

Victimisation surveys on ‘conventional’ crime in Germany in most cases cover only single municipalities or regions; nationally representative samples are sparse, and a regular national survey does not exist. Therefore, while

recent surveys provide quite accurate information on the frequency and distribution of victimisation experiences in Germany, little is known about changes in the prevalence of victimisation experiences and the propensity to report crime to the police. According to existing studies, prevalence and incidence are highest for consumer fraud, bicycle theft, theft of personal property, theft from cars, and assault. On the other hand, individuals, or households, are relatively seldom victimised by completed burglary, robbery, theft of cars and theft of motorcycles. Available data of a national victimisation survey additionally shows that victimisation experiences are distributed differently between regions. For many crime types a divide between the north on the one hand and the south and east on the other can be observed. Furthermore, there is a higher level of crime in city states (the exception being Bremen) and the highly urbanised North Rhine-Westphalia. Besides that, the reporting behaviour, and thus the proportion of offences that are not recorded in police crime statistics, varies considerably between crime types. Victimisation experiences of consumer fraud are reported to the police least often, compared to vehicle thefts, which are notified to the authorities the most frequently.

In line with international research, analyses of risk factors of victimisation point to the influence of socio-demographic variables, especially age, as well as leisure activities and features of the neighbourhood context. Generalisations across crime categories are not possible, however, and the explanatory power of these factors is limited. It has therefore been suggested to pay more attention to situational and contextual variables.

Beyond the necessity to expand the range of variables included in multivariate analyses of victimisation reports, there is an urgent need to establish a periodic national victimisation survey in Germany that would provide information essential for a well-founded evaluation of registered crime and a more fine-grained understanding of crime trends. Furthermore, more research is needed on fraud victimisation, including an expansion of the range of types of fraud covered by victimisation surveys. Also, car theft is a crime to which more attention should be devoted, in view of the fact that from the perspective of victims it seems to be quite a serious crime.

# Sexual violence and domestic violence

Monika Schröttle

The article is concerned with national and international research and data on sexual violence and intimate partner violence. Prevalence data on the extent of these specific forms of violence that are often not reported to the police or other institutions is necessary for practice and policies. Here, specific methods have been developed to uncover the high number of unreported cases. The contributions and possibilities of prevalence studies and their limitations are discussed from a critical methodological and gender-sensitive perspective.

Quantitative prevalence studies on sexual and intimate partner violence have been conducted on national and international levels and predominantly for women. Some few national studies have been concerned with violence against men and/or both genders. They show that sexual violence is predominantly experienced by women and that severe forms of intimate partner violence are most often perpetrated by men against their female partners. Only a low percentage of cases were reported to the police. According to current European and German prevalence data, 12–13% of the female population have been exposed to sexual violence in adulthood and 22–25% have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners. Only 7% of the victims of intimate partner violence have ever reported the cases to the police; the percentage for sexual violence is even lower (2%, related to the most serious case).

For gender comparisons with regard to intimate partner violence it is extremely important to include and collect information on the severity, frequency and patterns of violence. Research shows that, in comparison with men, women have experienced more severe and frequent acts of intimate partner violence that are embedded in patterns of male dominance, threat, sexual abuse and control. Unequal gender relationships are a central risk factor for intimate partner violence and sexual abuse.

In-depth risk factor analysis concerning intimate partner violence has been conducted with the data of the German national study on violence against women. As found in several national and international studies, it was shown that violence in childhood and youth increases the risk of later victimisation for women to a high extent. Women who have experienced physical or psychological violence by their parents and/or sexual abuse in childhood have two to four times more often been exposed to intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence in adulthood. For them it seems to be more difficult to set limits and resist and leave violent partners. A higher risk of being victimised through (severe) intimate partner violence was also found for women with disabilities. Furthermore, specific life situations and partner configurations can increase the risk of intimate partner violence such as pregnancy and starting a family, difficult economic situations, alcoholism, divorce and social isolation. With regard to power imbalances between women and men as a risk factor for intimate partner violence, extreme unequal and traditional power relationships can be critical, as can changes to this when women get more independent with increased resources in education, employment and financial means. Thus, power dynamics seem to be important as well as attitudes towards gendered power relations and changes in these relations.

Finally the article reflects on some experiences of 15 years of prevalence research with regard to further methodological developments of prevalence studies in the field of intimate partner and sexual violence. First, the sampling method and the way of recruiting interview partners have to ensure that vulnerable and more isolated groups such as disabled persons, migrants and/or those who are controlled by their partners or family members can be reached. Furthermore, higher numbered samples and additional sampling for specific groups are necessary to allow a more differentiated analysis of background and risk factors. Another important point is the necessity to further develop research instruments for comparable analysis with regard to gender comparisons, comparisons in time and comparisons between countries. One reason is that the disclosure of victimisation might differ between countries, subgroups and in time. Another reason is the importance of researching patterns of violence rather than merely acts of violence. Here, more elaborate methodologies for quantitative research and more combinations of both quantitative and qualitative research would be productive.

# **Sexual and physical abuse of children and adolescents in the intimate social environment**

Lena Posch (née Stadler) and Stefanie Kemme

Representative victim surveys provide important insights into the frequency and phenomenology of sexual and/or physical abuse of children and adolescents in the intimate social environment. Studies differ methodologically with respect to their underlying definitions of sexual and physical abuse, their samples and the survey method. The inconsistent uses of definition criteria in various studies, and the lack of a generally accepted definition, demonstrate the difficulty of narrowing down and recording abuse experiences with high certainty based upon standardised investigation. The definitions used in the studies vary according to the criminal policy or health policy interests. If health issues are the focus, a rather wide definition is preferred, whereas if the focus is on criminal questions, a more narrow definition is preferable. With respect to the sample, a distinction has to be made between convenient samples of nearby college and high school students, and rare samples of the representative general public. German research on the epidemiology of sexual abuse experiences has focused exclusively on retrospective questionnaire samples whereas the investigation formats used for physical abuse are broader.

Studies show the following prevalence rates for sexual abuse in Germany. The prevalence of sexual abuse with physical contact is between 6.7% and 14.0% for women and between 1.4% and 3.9% for men. When including sexual abuse without physical contact the prevalence rates rise to between 21.0% and 25.2% for women and between 4.0% and 8.0% for men when university students are questioned. In the general public sample the prevalence-rate for women is 9.4% and for men 2.2%. The proportion of men to women is 1:4. The prevalence-rate for sexual abuse with physical contact within families is between 25.0% and 62.0% for women and between 19.0% and 44.9% for men. Adult perpetrators within families are typically uncles, biological fathers, and also stepfathers. Results are inconsistent concerning

the question of whether girls or boys are more often the victims of abuse within the family. Studies consistently show that sexual abuse within the family is generally a long-term event and more invasive than other perpetrator-victim-constellations. Moreover, the age of first victimization is lower for sexual abuse within the family. The social class does not indicate more or less sexual abuse. Nevertheless, being raised in a broken home positively influences the chance of being sexually abused. This effect especially emerges when sexual abuse happens within the family. Furthermore, studies indicate that sexually abused children are more often exposed to other stress factors and victimisations. Additional stress factors such as a parent-child relationship without positive attention can often be found in cases with incestuous sexual abuse. These findings are confirmed in a variety of international studies.

The majority of cases of parental physical abuse against children and adolescents are small and rare acts of violence. Generally the experience of any kind of physical abuse by parents has decreased in the last 15 years (from 79.9% in 1997 to 47.9% in 2012). Statistics of severe physical abuse of children by their parents are consistently 10–15%. Therefore, physical abuse has decreased for small acts of violence, but not for ongoing acts of violence. This indicates a higher level of awareness within the overall population and is connected with an increase in reports of physical abuse. Furthermore, there seems to be more willingness for interventions against physical parental abuse. However, the general decrease in small acts of physical abuse should be considered carefully as in surveys in which the parents are participants, social desirability can play an important role and lead to biased responses. There are inconsistent results concerning sex differences for physical parental abuse. One study for example might find higher prevalence rates of small and rare violence for boys than for girls and higher prevalence rates of frequent and severe violence for girls than for boys. Nevertheless, several studies do not find any sex differences in prevalence rates. Furthermore, studies show that children and adolescents with a low socio-economic status are more frequently (but not exclusively) affected by physical parental abuse than children and adolescents with a high socio-economic status. Children from broken homes tend to be more exposed to physical parental abuse than other children. In addition, mothers more often physically abuse their children than fathers—especially when they have been exposed to



physical abuse themselves. Moreover, children that are exposed to physical abuse generally live in households with a lot of overall violence.

The results of studies on sexual and physical abuse of children and adolescents are important for prosecution as they might help to prepare typologies of perpetrators and victims. Additionally, dark-figure studies provide an important supplement to official police data. Prevention programmes can only be targeted and useful if risk, protection and resilience factors of abuse, coping strategies or early detection indicators can be specified.

# Victimisation of children and adolescents beyond the close social environment

Dirk Baier

According to official crime statistics, adolescents (14 to 17 years old) and young adults (18 to 20 years old) have the highest risk of becoming violently victimised. Self-report studies confirm this finding except that younger adolescents show higher prevalence rates than older adolescents: in a Germany-wide self-report study, 13.2% of the pupils from the ninth grade (on average 15 years old) reported that they had experienced at least one violent act (e.g. assault, robbery) in the last twelve months. For a slightly older age group (16 to 20 years) another self-report study in the federal state of Lower Saxony revealed a victimisation rate of 11.2%. The discrepancy between crime statistics and self-reports on this matter may be attributed to the fact that violence experienced by younger adolescents is on average less severe and less often reported to the police.

Regarding the trends in victimisation, official crime statistics and self-report studies show similar results: violent victimisation is decreasing. In crime statistics, the prevalence rates for adolescents have declined by about one third in the last decade. Repeatedly conducted self-report surveys do not exist for the whole of Germany but only for single cities. In nearly all these cities victimisation rates have dropped since the end of the 1990s.

Important contexts of victimisations are schools, communications media and intimate relationships. Nearly two out of three pupils had experienced some kind of school bullying in the last school semester; one out of nine pupils can be classified as a bullying victim, meaning that he or she experienced negative behaviours by classmates at least several times a month. Regarding victimisation in communications media, self-report studies show that nearly half of the adolescents experienced some form of cyberbullying; 5.0% report cyberbullying at least several times a month. Victimisation in intimate relationships has very seldom been investigated in Germany so far. A survey in the federal state of Lower Saxony reports that one out of two adolescents in

an intimate relationship had experienced psychological forms of teenage dating violence (e.g. insulting), one in ten adolescents had experienced physical forms of teenage dating violence (e.g. beating).

Looking at the influencing factors of victimisation in German adolescents, analyses of self-report surveys show that they are very similar to risk factors of offending: adolescents with low self-control, with a high number of delinquent friends or with risk-oriented free-time activities (e.g. going to bars) report higher rates of victimisation. Additionally, an overlap between perpetration and victimisation can be found: violent perpetrators show a more than three times higher risk of becoming violently victimised than non-offenders. Protecting factors of victimisation are e.g. high neighbourhood cohesion or pronounced controlling behaviour by authorities such as teachers. Thus, in Germany assumptions of social disorganisation theory are also confirmed.

Existing research on victimisation can point out the negative impact of these experiences, too. Violent victimisation has an impact on psychological well-being to a greater extent than property crime victimisation. Victims report suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts more often; they have lower self-esteem or lower trust in their fellow human beings. In light of these findings the prevention of violent behaviour is of great importance in Germany, especially in schools.

# Victimisation of the elderly

Thomas Görgen

Against a background of demographic change and population ageing, older adults have increasingly gained attention in victimisation research. In Germany, several victimisation surveys conducted since the mid-1990s have shown that adults beyond the age of 60 have lower victimisation rates than young and middle-aged adults. There are only a few exceptions to this rule, such as handbag robbery targeted at older women, and in one recent survey also residential burglary. The general finding of victimisation risks declining with age is consistent with age-related trends in police crime statistics. Victimisation surveys also show that with increasing age experiences of intimate partner violence or violence by a family and household member become less common.

While older adults are often thought to have high levels of fear of crime, surveys have shown that neither emotional fear nor perceived personal probability of victimisation is elevated when compared to younger adults. However, older adults take more precautions against crime and tend to avoid risky situations and places.

While this data generally paints a rather positive picture of security in later life, the concept of 'old age' needs differentiation. Following the distinction between a third and a fourth age, the former can be characterised as the post-employment years when the majority of older people are in relatively good health and show a high level of adaptive flexibility. In contrast, the fourth age is mainly a period of decline with regard to health and functional capacities. These two stages of later life not only differ with regard to potential contexts of victimisation and victim vulnerability but also with regard to the visibility and detectability of victimisations in police crime statistics and via victimisation surveys. The third age is one of the safest periods in life, whereas much less is known about the fourth age. Very old people, care recipients, and especially the large group of people suffering from dementia are hardly accessible by victimisation surveys.

Research on the abuse and neglect of older care recipients mostly draws upon surveys and interviews with potential perpetrators and witnesses. They indicate a high prevalence of elderly mistreatment in (formal and informal) caregiving and point at risk factors. Risk factors can be found in characteristics of the victim (e.g. dementia) and the perpetrator (e.g. substance abuse); the relationship between carer and care recipient and structural features of the caregiving context (e.g. household's economic resources) are important as well.

Analyses of police data point to the fact that some types of property offences (some types of fraud, larceny-by-trick, theft from private dwellings) increase in prevalence after the age of 80. Data from victim surveys hardly match this. Here, survey research encounters the risk of mostly sampling those who are low in risk since the very factors that influence risk also have an impact on the possibility of being included in a standardised population survey on victimisation issues.

For a victimology of later life, victimisation surveys are an indispensable instrument. At the same time, their limitations with regard to victimisation research in the fourth age need to be recognised in order not to run the risk of taking the 'invisibility' of victimisations in survey samples as an indicator of low risk in later life.

# Violence against police officers

Thomas Bliesener, Thimna Klatt and Janine Jäger

Empirical research on violence against police officers in Germany has been conducted since 1938 (Manglkammer 1938). Several studies (Ellrich et al. 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Falk 2000; Jäger 1988; Ohlemacher et al. 2003) have consistently found that most attacks against police officers take place in public spaces and are committed by men, quite often under the influence of alcohol.

The present study focused on the subjective experience of police officers in North Rhine-Westphalia who were victimised in the year 2011. A detailed description of the study's design and method is provided. 18,443 police officers took part in an online survey that addressed their experience and perception with regard to the following five topics: 1. support and care, 2. education and training, 3. debriefing/follow-up, 4. equipment and 5. stress. Due to the lack of space, only results concerning the first three topics in relation to violence against police officers are presented here.

The results of the survey showed that, on average, each police officer who had contact with citizens in 2011 was physically attacked more than twice per year. Non-violent attacks (e.g. insult, threat of violence) occurred even more often (on average 13.7 times per officer in 2011). Male police officers had a greater risk of being victimised than their female colleagues when their respective length of service was taken into account.

With regard to the topic of support and care, the data showed that only 3.2% of the police officers made use of support or counselling services after the only or most severe attack against them in 2011. Most of the police officers who did not receive support or care from the respective services indicated that they did not wish to receive any support. However, almost 20% of the police officers mentioned reasons for not using support services that indicate a need for improvement within the police's support system (e.g. fear of disadvantages or lack of time).

The police officers were also asked questions about their education and training and the extent to which they were prepared to defend themselves against attacks. Almost 60% of the police officers indicated that they had practised handling a situation like the one in which they were attacked before. Of those police officers, more than 70% said that the training was helpful or even very helpful in preparing for the attack.

Regarding the debriefing or follow-up of an operation in which a police officer was attacked, the authors found that in more than 90% of the cases the debriefing took place in the form of informal discussions with colleagues. Formal debriefings were far less common. Of the police officers who did not take part in a follow-up but wished that they had had the chance to, more than 50% mentioned informal discussions with colleagues as their preferred type of debriefing.

Options for further improvements within the police and limitations of the present study are discussed.

# Hate crime

Marc Coester

The phenomenon of prejudice-driven crime, so-called hate or bias crimes that are targeted directly at people because of their social group membership and oriented on features such as skin colour, ethnic origin, religious belief or sexual orientation, has long been known and repeatedly discussed, particularly in Germany in the context of right-wing violence. Prejudices and hatred towards social groups, in addition to discrimination and everyday racism, lead to serious acts of violence and, in their most extreme form, to terrorism. The consequences of such acts both for the direct victim and for the victim's entire social group are devastating and thus show precisely the political dimension of hate crimes. A comprehensive definition describes bias crimes or prejudice-driven offences as 'actions that are usually relevant to criminal law that result in one or several person(s) or their property experiencing victimisation by the use of intimidation, threats, physical or psychological violence. The perpetrator(s) is/are partially or completely motivated by biases regarding specific attributes (such as race, origin, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender, physical or mental disability) which affect the victim's entire social group. The damage is therefore aimed not just at the direct victim, but carries a message of intimidation that is addressed at the identity of the victim's group and hence the foundation of a democratic society.' (Coester 2008, p. 27). Crimes directed against the social structure and the architecture of modern societies must be given special attention in legal policy and socio-political discourse. When people become victims of violence and other crimes just because of their identity-creating features, their symbolic status, their 'inner being' and their belonging to a social group, which the offender classifies as being strange, alarm bells should be ringing in a democratic community. In the USA and a growing number of other countries in the world and because of this sociopolitical dimension of hate crimes, laws with aggravating penalties have been enacted and police registration rules (hate crime statistics) have been introduced along with



training programmes for the detection and trial of such offences in the criminal justice system.

In the USA, the concept of hate crimes, and in particular the victim's perspective, has been extensively studied since the early 1990s. Representative victimisation surveys are in the foreground, providing important insights into the effects of such acts on victims and the victim's social group and thus contributing to evidence-based criminal policies. Since 2000 the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) has considered questions about hate crime victimisations. These results correspond with other findings of such studies worldwide: hate crimes account for about 4–5% of violent crime (ascending tendency in the USA) and are reported in about 40% of all cases. However, the police will only recognise about 14% of them as a hate crime, which shows a lack of clarity in the detection of such crimes. To strengthen accuracy in detection, the above-mentioned training programmes offered to the police and prosecuting authorities should be highlighted. In addition, other research studies on the phenomenon of hate crimes provide important insights: quantitatively oriented research shows that in hate crimes (and in contrast to other, non-bias-motivated crimes) usually larger groups of offenders use violence against individual victims. The choice of weapons and the brutality are more extreme than in other crimes. The proportion of dangerous bodily injury in violent hate crimes is higher than average. Potential for escalation is thus given and contributes to severe physical injuries. In addition, the property of the victims is involved. Often, for example, churches and cemeteries are damaged. Graffiti is used to deface houses with contemptuous and humiliating slogans or arson attacks are committed. Qualitatively oriented research on hate crimes also shows that hate crimes are aimed at the identity of the victims, their 'inner-being'. They send a message and have an impact at the social level within the entire social group of the direct victim. The irrationality, unpredictability and randomness of hate crimes unsettle and frighten potential victims, influencing their actions and thus affecting the freedom rights of citizens.

The research on hate crimes in Germany is still little developed. Firstly, consideration of the phenomenon has traditionally been largely confined to the aspect of right-wing extremism. Doing so is not wrong, because every right-wing offence usually has a prejudice-driven motivation. This view, however, is too limited and distracts the focus away from bias crimes as a

social, everyday phenomenon affecting the whole of society. Secondly, the victim's perspective and supporting dark figure research has been neglected. In Germany, there exists no regular, nationwide and long-term victimisation survey (e.g. along the lines of the NCVS in the USA); the current exceptions of representative (but not long-term) dark figure surveys (on the national or regional level) have also rarely asked about the subject of hate crimes. Where questions concerning hate crime victimisations were explicitly asked, interesting findings for the criminological and criminal policy debate and similar insights to those of international, especially US, studies were found. In conclusion, a regular and representative victimisation survey for Germany including questions about hate crimes must be implemented. In addition, the criminological research should be intensified and awareness in the criminal justice system should be raised through appropriate training programmes. The EU will probably demand special hate crime laws in the near future in Germany. For this purpose a concept for an evidence-based, national strategy (prevention and repression) by representatives from the practical field, science and criminal justice is strongly recommended.

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# Organisations as victims

Kai Bussmann

For many years, by concentrating on classic offences, criminology's primary interest was in offenders and victims as individual persons. It took Sutherland's work on white-collar crime to shift attention to the criminality of high-status offenders. However, when it came to the further development of criminological theory, social status itself proved to be less important than the far more productive differentiation according to social contexts: the differentiation between *occupational crime* and *corporate crime* was born. From then on, attention no longer focused merely on high-status offenders, who take advantage of the opportunities given to them by their jobs to commit offences, but also on companies as offenders.

Viewing companies or public administrations as corporate offenders suggests that they may also be seen as corporate victims. That is, they are not just victims of private persons, but also of offenders holding jobs as staff or managers in the same or another company (occupational crime) or of companies engaging in *systemic criminality* (corporate crime). Once this door opened, criminological research could no longer avoid considering companies and administrations as victims. Our understanding of economic crime will only become more complete when we survey organisations as victims, because many economic crimes occurring within companies or administrations are almost impossible to perceive from the outside. Surveys of organisations are one way of studying the dark figure of crime, because these are offences that frequently do not come to the attention of the law enforcement authorities.

This paper will discuss particular methodological aspects of surveying organisations as victims. These include how to define a company, because a company as a business concern may possess a multitude of subsidiaries along with stakes in other companies. One practical solution when carrying out research is to define the unit of a corporate actor in terms of its legal independence. Furthermore, every research project has to decide which rele-

vant target persons should be surveyed as the representatives of a company or public administration. For criminological research, the recommendation is to survey the compliance officer or the legal department. When carrying out telephone interviews, the willingness to participate, and thus the response rate, is generally about 30%. Nonetheless, contacting the right target persons is relatively time-consuming.

Basically, we have to assume that interview partners representing companies and public administrations do not suffer from the same exposure to fear or trauma with which we are familiar from research on fear of crime. As representatives of an organisation, their answers to questions on victimisation and crime risks are far more factual. Nonetheless, their answers are more reticent when it comes to critical offences such as corruption and cartel law infringements. As a result, reports on victimisation through these offences tend to be greatly underestimated. However, these weaknesses can be compensated by applying certain additional questioning strategies. These are addressed in the present paper.

Surveys of companies and public administrations can also be used to gather reliable data on the three main pillars of effective compliance: *prevention*, *detection* and *response*. The information companies deliver on their *prevention* measures provides a very good understanding of developments in economic crime. For example, companies with well-organised control and prevention systems report higher victimisation rates because they discover more crime. We have called this effect the control paradox. This higher rate of reported victimisation can take several years to decline despite a reduction in offences falling within the dark figure of undetected crime. Since the widespread introduction of compliance programmes in larger companies—approximately 70% of those with more than 500 staff had introduced them in Germany by 2013—there actually does seem to be a decline in reported economic crime. Although the reported frequency of crimes is always clearly an underestimation, such reports from companies do deliver a reliable impression of how economic crime is developing—at least insofar as companies are capable of detecting it.

Studies on the victimisation of companies and public administrations also permit classical analyses of offender profiles. However, simply asking respondents to describe the characteristics of offenders in general is not to be

recommended. It would be too much for them and force them to make generalisations. One way to overcome this is to ask about a concrete victimisation, namely, the most recent or the most serious case during the last two years. It is hardly a surprise to find that the average economic offender does not stand out socially or legally and tends to be relatively highly educated.

In addition, surveys of organisations reveal that it is largely internal and external whistle-blowers who draw attention to a criminal incident. Hence, it is not primarily internal control measures or even law enforcement authorities that lead to *detection* but mechanisms of *informal social control*. A fundamentally familiar finding in the domain of classic crime as well is that the majority of criminal offences are reported to the police by victims and witnesses. Basically speaking, the same applies to company-related economic crime.

Finally, surveys of organisations and public administrations allow us to collect reliable data on the third pillar of effective compliance: the *response*. They reveal that public administrations consistently follow up serious offences, and the suspected public servants involved are charged in 80% of cases. In contrast, the reporting rate in companies is at most 50%. In addition, surveys of companies reveal a clear tendency to grant privileged treatment to high-status offenders.

# Consumer victimisation in cybercrime

Edith Huber

Developments in technology have changed the environment of crime, which, in some of its new forms, poses a serious threat to society. At the same time the technologies of crime control are being transformed. If criminology is to respond adequately to this changed environment, it must make radical changes to its mission, its theories and its methodologies in order to make the discipline more directly relevant to crime control and prevention. One of the most important questions is how to reduce the dark figure of cybercrime victims. The digital age not only provides established criminals with new ways of committing crime, but has also empowered previously non-deviant individuals to use new cybercriminal behaviour. Many individuals are unaware of online threats and fail to take advantage of measures to protect themselves against online risks. This article describes the situation in Germany. Current research is focused primarily on cybercrime victims such as companies and states. But the changes must address criminology's mission, its theories and its methodologies with the collective result of making the discipline more directly relevant to crime control.

## 1 Cybercrime – definition

No singular agreed-upon definition of cybercrime exists. Various definitions have been offered by industry experts and scholars, and several have been formulated within the federal government. Kshetri (2009) says: '(...) cybercrime is defined as a criminal activity in which computers or computer networks are the principal means of committing an offense or violation of laws, rules, or regulation.' (Kshetri 2009, in Kshetri 2010, p. 3)

Cybercrime includes a wide range of activities, depending on the local law, but these can generally be broken into two types of categories: Firstly, crimes that target computer networks or devices. These types of crimes include viruses, spam emails, denial-of-service (DoS) attacks and so on. Sec-

ondly, there are crimes that use computer networks to execute other criminal activities include cyberstalking, cyberbullying, consumption of child pornography, phishing and fraud or identity theft (Kshetri 2010, p. 5ff.). Cybercriminals can exhibit a wide range of self-interests, deriving profit, notoriety, and/or gratification from activities such as hacking, cyberstalking and online child pornography. Literature in psychology and economics suggests two types of motivations. Intrinsic motivation is based on the premise of human need, e.g. in cyberstalking (Huber 2012); extrinsic motivation shows that the attack has escalated from being of a destructive nature to financial or political gain, e.g. through fishing or targeting for bank account details (Kshetri 2010, p. 23ff.).

## **2 Dark figure in cybercrime**

At the moment it is not easy to elicit the dark figure of cybercrime. The major issue is that cybercrime victimisation surveys only measure crimes with identifiable victims. But there are a lot of unidentifiable victims. Here three areas of problems are defined: difficulties that are a) due to general problems with the law, b) due to the victimisation surveys and c) due to the methods of research.

### **a) General problems**

No general definition exists, so the incidents cannot be clearly described. Victims are rarely ready to report an offence to the police because they do not know that they have become cybercrime victims. Furthermore, as digital technology pervades modern society, we have become increasingly dependent upon it to manage our lives This development is rapidly accelerating.

### **b) Victimisation surveys**

There are different possibilities to survey cybercrime, depending on the category (technical or juridical). Considering victimisation surveys, it could be said that many victims do not know what kind of offences exist. In addition, cybercrime victims in some countries may not want to get involved with the police, either, because they feel the police would not be able to do anything to help. Victim research and relevant empirical surveys have fundamentally contributed to a more objective assess-

ment of the cybercrime situation. Cybercrime victim studies and the critical discussion on the derived findings have also promoted the discussion and refinement of survey methodology (Oberfell-Fuchs 2009). In addition there is often a redefinition of offenders and victims, e.g. in cyberstalking. Victims are often told they bear part of the blame.

c) **Methods of research**

Cybercrime victim surveys should capture both criminal incidents reported to the police and those not reported to the police by randomly selecting a sample of the population and asking them directly about their experiences of criminal victimisation. Cybercrime victimisation surveys could be one measure and can be particularly valuable as they ask people in the community directly about their experiences of crime. Presently, no results from cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys on cybercrime victims are available with which to make statements about the development of the respective offences.

### **3 What do we know about cybercrime victims?**

The number of people who fall victim to cybercrime is enormous and, sadly, it is getting higher and higher every day. One noteworthy factor affecting the availability of data on cybercrime prevalence and its impact is that much of the available data on cybercrime is self-reported. This underestimation may be due in part to victims' lack of knowledge that a specific crime has occurred.

#### **3.1 Based on intrinsic motives**

##### **Child pornography**

The high accessibility of the internet has changed the consumption of child pornography. First of all, we may find the victims in Latin America. Most studies on this topic investigate patients directly. So there is no valid dark figure of child pornography victims. The trend is that the number of teenage victims is increasing rapidly. Due to social media applications such as chats, blogs and so on, teenagers often share nude pictures.



## Cyberstalking, cyberbullying

Stalking according to Meloy (1998) means ‘(1) to gather private information on the target to further a pursuit; and (2) to communicate (in real time or not) with the target to implicitly or explicitly threaten or to induce fear’. Telecommunication and information technologies are used to harass and terrorise people and to put them under psychological pressure. Huber (2012) investigated cyberstalking behaviour for the first time ever in Austria with representative results. To evaluate the dark figure, a household survey among internet-using people<sup>4</sup> was conducted. The dark figure is very high. 35% of the informants confirmed that they were cyberstalking victims, in the area of email stalking: 35%, text message stalking: 17%, chat stalking: 6%, and web-based stalking: 2%. Similar to classical stalking, men and woman are equally victims.

Cyberbullying is the use of information technology to repeatedly harm or harass other people in a deliberate manner.<sup>5</sup> Concerning cyberbullying, Su and Holt analysed Chinese web content and found out: ‘Using a sample of threads from a series of Chinese middle and high school forums, this study explored the prevalence of various forms of cyberbullying, and the nature of the relationship between victims and bullies. The findings suggest that the overwhelming majority of bullying incidents involved denigration, outing, and flaming. Individuals regularly made comments about the physical appearance, intelligence, or sexual activities of other students’ (Su, Holt 2010). The number of people in Germany who fall victim to cyberbullying is not clear. There are many teenagers who have become victims.

### 3.2 Based on extrinsic motives

As for all other kinds of offences, such as fraud, blackmail, identity theft and alteration of data, DDos attacks, malware and vulnerability exploitation, studies are only conducted if the private persons are regarded as customers. Banks such as Paypal (2008) and software companies such as Adobe Systems Inc. commission such studies.

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<sup>4</sup> N = 4.502.600, n = 747.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/>, (accessed 25 February 2015).

Most individual victims of core cybercrime do not report the crime to the police. Underreporting derives from a lack of awareness of victimisation and of reporting mechanisms, victim shame and embarrassment, and perceived reputation risks for corporations.

#### **4 Methods to reduce the dark figure**

Cybercrime victimisation surveys are one measure and can be particularly valuable as they ask people in the community directly about their experiences of crime.

- However, the prevalence of cybercrime does not mean that victimisation is inevitable or that people should avoid using the internet. Users can make themselves aware of the vulnerabilities its use creates and can take steps to reduce their risks.
- Development of technologies: It is necessary to support companies and research institutions to develop software that finds perpetrators operating online.
- Establishment of legal cooperation: It is essential for nations to cooperate and to fight together against cybercrime based on a common legal definition of cybercrime. It is also necessary to harmonise the right to data protection on an international level.
- Prevention: Prevention should not only be focused on schools. A wider range of people should be reached to foster the understanding of existing knowledge gaps among groups. Investigating current Sinus Milieu studies may support classifying people according to their views of life, their lifestyles and their understanding of communication technologies. Such classification facilitates the design of appropriate awareness measures.
- Establishment of scientific cooperation: Recent research focuses mainly on technologies. It is also necessary for different research areas to cooperate. Multidisciplinary teams should work together (e.g. computer scientists, lawyers, sociologists and psychologists). They should develop approaches, models and theories for a better understanding of the development of crime.

- Establishment of industrial cooperation: To reach a wide range of people, effective cooperation with the business world (banks, online stores, etc.) is recommended, e.g. concerning the need to inform one's customers about risks of cybercrime.
- Integration of the mass media: It is necessary to cooperate with journalists and mass media to spread an awareness of the cybercrime phenomenon among people.

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# Victimisation in institutions

Thomas Görgen, Frank Neubacher and Daniela Hunold

With regard to two types of institutions—prisons and nursing homes—this chapter focuses upon victimisation of institutionalised populations and discusses potentials and challenges for research in this field. While residential institutions differ very much from each other, individual and organisational features that characterise them strongly support the need for victimological research. Standardised victimisation surveys, while usually being restricted to community-dwelling respondents, face specific challenges in institutional contexts.

This is immediately evident with regard to victimisations of residents in institutional long-term care. Although they are an especially vulnerable segment of the older population, access to nursing home residents via standardised surveys is limited due to the very physical and intellectual restrictions that are at the basis of nursing home placement. Research usually draws upon alternative methodological approaches such as surveys and interviews among nursing home staff or residents' relatives or analyses of data provided by authorities in charge of surveillance of institutional care of the elderly. Findings point to high victimisation rates and show a broad range of types of victimisations, including physical and sexual violence, verbal aggression and psychological mistreatment, neglect, and problematic types of restraint of residents' freedom. Residents are not only affected by abuse from staff. Resident-to-resident aggression appears to be widespread in institutions, and nurses are the target of physical violence, verbal aggression and sexual harassment by residents. Due to the institutional context, relationships and interactions in nursing homes are characterised by inequality and differential power. This provides the frame for conflict, which may lead to violent encounters. Beyond individual characteristics, institutional policies, e.g. regarding the use of restraints, are important determinants of potential for victimisation.

Violence among inmates of correctional institutions is a frequent phenomenon, especially in young offender institutions. Studies show that up to 50% of young inmates commit violent acts against other inmates; prevalence rates for bullying are even higher. Violent acts frequently take place in the prison cell and while inmates are out in the prison yard. Influences of the prison subculture reinforce the problem. Prisons are characterised by an accumulation of persons with a history of violence-related convictions. While such problems are brought into correctional facilities by the prisoners, the influence of the institution itself must not be disregarded. Studies show that inmates with a history of previous detention have a higher probability of being physically violent against fellow inmates, as well as committing acts of coercion and extortion. At the same time they feel more secure and have a lower risk of being attacked by others. This points to processes of habituation and learning with regard to violence. Violence is linked to deprivation among inmates (loss of autonomy, sexual deprivation, lack of security due to living in fear of being assaulted). Behaviour problems arise as a kind of attempt to compensate for everyday deprivation experienced under the conditions of being incarcerated. Studies also show that violence is linked to a lack of perceived procedural justice within the institution. This provides opportunities for violence prevention. Negative influences of the inmate subculture can be mitigated by inmates' trust in the correctional institution's problem-solving capacity. The transparency, equity and predictability of institutional procedures and decisions need to be augmented.

Victimisation rates are high in prisons and in institutions of residential care of the elderly. Both kinds of institutions are characterised by residents/inmates' limited opportunities to avoid victimisation risks. Up to now, institutions have rarely been the focus of victimisation surveys. This implies that some especially vulnerable populations are at risk of being neglected and ignored by victimological research. With regard to institutions such as nursing homes, obstacles for research are especially high, while—this becomes very clear for persons suffering from dementia—accessibility for research and vulnerability to victimisation are closely intertwined.

## **4. Experiences with and reaction to crime**

# Fear of crime and feelings of insecurity

Helmut Hirtenlehner and Dina Hummelsheim-Doss

This article gives an overview of the current state of research on fear of crime and crime-related feelings of insecurity. The article starts with the definition and measurement of fear of crime. Subsequently, the description of the social and demographic distribution of fear of crime in the population leads to the discussion of the prevailing theoretical explanations. We conclude by identifying some gaps in fear of crime research and suggestions of how to close them.

Attitudes towards crime are complex and multifaceted. Fear of crime is only one of these facets. The focus of this article is on the affective fear of crime, i.e. the emotional reaction to perceived personal threats caused by crime or symbols associated with crime.

Although there is no end in sight to the debate about the usefulness of fear of crime measures, some well-established instruments offer a satisfactory level of reliability and validity. These include the standard fear of crime indicator ('How safe do you or would you feel walking alone in your area after dark?') and multi-item measures asking about the intensity of worry/fear about becoming a victim of specific crimes, e.g. burglary or robbery. New indicators focus on the frequency of worry/fear in a specific time span, e.g. the last week. But it is not entirely clear whether respondents are actually able to provide the number of fearful moments. All in all, fear of crime is a multidimensional theoretical construct. Therefore it requires multiple items and different question stimuli for empirical assessment. A theory-based approach is indispensable.

In spite of the controversial discussion about its measurement, empirical evidence regularly—and independently of the indicator used—shows that fear of crime is unequally distributed in the population. Some groups are more affected by fear than others: particularly women, younger and older people report higher levels of fear of crime than men and middle-aged per-

sons. Furthermore education, income and characteristics of the living environment prove to be good determinants.

There are numerous theoretical approaches trying to explain crime-related anxieties and worries. The major perspectives identify specific factors linked with fear of crime: 1. (direct or indirect) experiences with crime (victimisation), 2. the impact of the mass media (especially the news coverage on burglary and violence), 3. insufficient coping skills and resources (vulnerability), 4. characteristics of the neighbourhood (incivilities) and 5. broader social fears (generalisation thesis).

Empirical support can be found in particular for the last two approaches. But due to a lack of longitudinal data it is difficult to differentiate between cause and effect (causality) and to observe developments over time. In contrast to other European countries such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, a periodical national survey on victimisation and fear of crime still does not exist in Germany.

With regard to the contents of previous fear of crime research it appears that there is a lack of studies on interrelations between economic crises and feelings of insecurity as well as between migration, xenophobia and fear of crime. Also the connection between fear of terrorism and the conventional fear of crime deserves closer attention.

Furthermore there is a deficit in research that considers preventative factors and resilience. For instance interpersonal and institutional trust seem to play a crucial role. Interdisciplinary research that links fear of crime with risk research and quality of life research could be promising. Finally, comparative studies might explore how culture and institutions influence perceptions of (in)security and produce dispositions of trust or mistrust in the population.



# **The consequences of criminal victimisation and the treatment of victims**

Werner Greve, Farina Rühs and Cathleen Kappes

The consequences of criminal victimisation are often serious and sometimes lasting, for both victims and indirectly affected persons (e.g. relatives or witnesses). The duration and quality ('severity') of these consequences, however, depend to a lesser extent on 'objective' attributes of the offence: consequences within offence categories vary to a large degree between persons. Thus, it seems plausible to assume that the impact of victimisation is influenced or mediated by individual processes: the very experience of a victimisation depends on (violations of) normative expectancies, the burdens it causes are subjectively experienced, and coping processes regulate the cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences. Thus, the resources of the affected persons are expected to be decisive in predicting the developmental consequences of criminal victimisation.

In addition, the long-term developmental consequences of criminal victimisation are so far under-investigated. Longitudinal studies investigating time spans beyond a few years are rare; even rarer are studies incorporating processes of dealing with the aversive experience of victimisation. Even the actual coping processes and the immediate consequences are not sufficiently understood. Hence, we still do not know in sufficient detail which resources contribute to the maintenance or recovery of well-being, health and quality of life after experiencing criminal offences. In particular, we are short of evidence as to which individual and social configurations contribute to the development or growth of coping resources following criminal victimisations.

These questions have considerable practical consequences. How do coping processes influence the individual's capabilities and motivation to report their victimisation experiences, for example in the context of therapeutic interventions or as a witness in court? If the institutional treatment of a criminal offence takes a long time (which is the case more often than not), does

the individual's processing alter the inner representation, and hence his or her reporting, of this experience? Most important for institutional encounters with criminal victims is the consideration of processes of change in both the of one's description and evaluation experiences over time. Depending on the individual's processing of and coping with this critical life event, persons might (and often will) report their experiences differently at different points of time. Instead of being judged as a sign of 'unreliability', these differences (changes) should be understood as an expression of regular, functional and sometimes necessary processes of overcoming the consequences of victimisation. This holds for both victims and otherwise involved individuals (e.g. relatives, witnesses). This entails the necessity to record changes in victims' or witnesses' reports not simply as an indicator of their invalidity, but rather in order to avoid premature evaluations. With respect to the individual interpretation of an experience, the tendency of both victims and witnesses to blame the victim, though possibly inappropriate from a moral point of view, might be functional from a psychological perspective: it may contribute to reducing the experience of helplessness or to regaining a sense of mastery and control over one's life. As a consequence, it might be detrimental to intervene into this attributional tendency (at least at a certain point in time). However, detailed knowledge of these changes and processes is lacking.

Beyond the interest of legal institutions (police, prosecution, courts), it is both a moral and social obligation to take care of criminal victims. Hence, we need to know how the divergence between perspectives of victims, offenders, relatives or otherwise involved individuals can be understood and used for the appropriate treatment of victims in private or public contexts in therapy. In order to support the process of victims recovering and regaining personal well-being and health, it is important to widen the scope beyond the immediate physical or psychological injuries caused by a criminal victimisation. The investigation of influences of critical life events such as a criminal victimisation on the individual's further development might be promising in several respects. First, even victimisations that were not consciously evaluated as 'traumatic' (by the individual him or herself or by any other person: spouse, therapist, etc.) may have long-term consequences for the individual's development. These may include the growth of coping resources, the recovery of one's quality of life, as well as lasting burdens or even a change in

one's developmental pathway that may or may not be evaluated as a positive turning point.

According to current models of developmental regulation (e.g. "the two-process model of developmental regulation"), the change in one's evaluation of burdensome experiences that cannot be altered is an essential prerequisite to maintain a sense of mastery and identity that are threatened by these experiences. Although the interplay of these processes with social reactions is not well understood either, it is important to consider victims' reactions not just from a truth-seeking point of view, but rather from different angles. Thus, a developmental perspective on criminal victimisation that encompasses psychological (e.g. functional) and social aspects (e.g. divergence of evaluations) may lead to higher sensitivity in interactions with crime victims.

# Reporting behaviour and police recording practices

Dirk Enzmann

The decision of victims or bystanders to report victimisations to the police and police recording practices constitute the major filtering mechanisms between crimes actually committed and crimes reported in official crime statistics. Knowledge of reporting rates and police recording practices is important not only for the interpretation of the official crime data of the police (and consequently for the priorities of crime prevention activities). Reporting behaviour and reporting rates also indicate the selectivity of formal social control as well as a society's methods of informal conflict resolution.

Based on the small number of representative studies available in Germany one can assume that less than 50% of victimisations are reported to the police. The rates strongly depend on the nature of the crime: reporting rates of serious and rare crimes are higher than rates of minor or more frequent offences.

Theory and empirical facts of international research both suggest long-term rising reporting rates regarding property crimes and violent offences. Available German data, however, does not provide adequate statistical coverage according to conventional standards. Additionally, international trends are not unequivocal: for example, between 1985 and 2005 reporting rates of property offences were increasing in the USA but not in England and Wales.

The most important motives of (non-)reporting are the seriousness (triviality) of the offence and the expected benefit. Additionally, the victim-offender relationship is important: the readiness to report offences in intimate social environments is reduced. Empirical studies of theoretical models of reporting behaviour that include not only individual characteristics of the reporting person but also contextual factors are rare (for a noteworthy exception see Goudriaan et al. 2004). Particularly lacking are reliable trend studies, information about the reporting behaviour of minority populations such as elderly persons and marginalised groups, and studies on data quality.

Apart from the willingness of victims to report incidences to the police, the police recording practice is a second and probably underestimated filtering mechanism in the transition of crimes from the area of the dark figure into official data. Older studies show that a significant proportion of crimes reported to the police are not recorded, despite the principle of legality applicable in Germany.

Considering the characteristics of crimes, police recording rates of property offences seem to be higher than police recording rates of violent offences. The rates are especially low for petty crimes. Additionally, there is some evidence of crimes being upgraded in the process of recording. International studies show that recording rates (similarly to reporting rates) are unique regarding the nature of the crime and victim characteristics, and vary regionally and over time. Thus, the assumption of 'constancy of conditions' is invalid not only for reporting but also for recording rates.

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# Victimisation and attitudes towards sanctioning

Stefanie Kemme and Bettina Doering

Punitivity and attitudes towards sanctioning affect the public debate about crime and punishment. If a large part of the population thinks that harsher penalties are needed, politicians will deal more intensively with the topic and stricter criminal laws might be the consequence. Judges also feel influenced by society's demands regarding sanctioning (Pfeiffer et al. 2004; Kemme et al. 2011). That is why it is important to know how specific attitudes towards sanctioning arise and which factors are influencing the desire for harsher punishment. In the past, the experience of victimisation was often discussed as an influencing factor of punitivity. After defining the concept of attitudes towards sanctioning, the relation between victimisation and punitivity should be examined by looking at different studies on a national and international level.

Attitudes are individual statements about social facts. Attitudes towards sanctioning can be divided into the following categories: goals of punishment, forms of penal sanctions, intensity of penal sanctions and specific (non-)punitive sentencing policies. It occurs as a multidimensional construct, and many studies do not measure the same things because not every dimension is represented, making comparisons difficult. There are divergent concepts of punitivity, too, regarding cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects. All these differences are the reason why a broader definition is necessary, taking into account every dimension: punitivity is defined as the tendency towards more severe sanctions.

Methodologically, most studies use quantitative surveys where punitivity is operationalised by means of several items, scales and case vignettes. A general finding is that most of the population, no matter what their nationality, thinks that penalties are not harsh enough. An overview of some international and national studies is given to identify some common theses about the causes of punitivity. The influence of gender and age for example is ambiguous, while higher education was found to reduce punitivity. On a psycho-

logical level, conservative and authoritarian personalities tend to be more punitive, as do deeply religious people. Furthermore, it is especially fear of crime that is assumed to play a central part in the development of attitudes towards sanctioning.

The assumption that attitudes towards sanctioning are influenced by personal experiences of crime and victimisation can be theoretically explained in two ways: direct and indirect victimisation can influence punitivity directly, motivated by feelings of revenge and retaliation. Or, it can be mediated by fear of crime, because victims of crime feel less safe and are afraid of being victimised again, which leads to the desire for harsh punishment.

But national and international empirical research has shown that victims of crime are not more punitive compared to non-victims. Several international studies are discussed concerning the relation between punitivity and victimisation, as well as fear of crime. In Germany, analyses of representative surveys by KFN about perceptions and attitudes towards crime (2004, 2006, 2011) did not determine a link with experienced victimisation. Overall, it turns out that critical life events such as victimisation are not reliable predictors of punitivity.

The influence of parental corporal punishment in childhood and adolescence, however, was confirmed by Kemme and Hanslmaier (2010), and by Kemme, Hanslmaier and Pfeiffer (2014). Parents teach their children that they approve of the use of violence. It is not about the experience of victimisation itself, but about imparting punitive social values, which can be characterised by authority, revenge, rigidity, repression and domination (see Lautman & Klimke 2004). This is consistent with the prior findings: later victimisations do not influence punitivity because adults already have quite stable attitudes.

Another empirical finding is that police officers victimised within their professional field and with low professional self-esteem are more punitive than non-victimised police officers (see Ellrich 2012). Victimised police officers are thus more likely to use harsh strategies towards offenders and therefore have a higher risk of being victimised again. Hence, it is important to help victims of crime in their professional field and to educate them in prevention and intervention strategies (e.g. self-defence, knowledge about crime prevention, de-escalation).

It has been shown that victimisation has no significant impact on punitive attitudes. How can this be explained? First, attitudes are more prevalent than direct or indirect victimisation, so the former cannot be explained by the latter. Second, the memory of victimisation fades quickly and most experiences have not happened just recently. Third, victimised persons lower their risk of becoming victimised again by taking precautions, while fear of crime and punitivity stay the same. Fourth, politics and media are able to cause both fear of crime and punitivity regardless of personal victimisation. And fifth, most experiences of victimisation are not so severe as to change personal attitudes.

The fact that experiences of parental corporal punishment do influence punitivity, in contrast to other forms of victimisation, indicates that attitudes towards sanctioning depend on stable social values, which are gained during childhood. It can be argued that punitivity is less influenced by perceptions and experiences of crime, but rather it is a human disposition. Punitivity represents social values and therefore cannot be altered by recent life events or victimisation. Besides the impact of socialisation, the influence of media usage must be emphasised.

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## **5. Summary and lacks of research**

## Summary and lack of research

Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy, Christoph Birkel and Robert Mischkowitz

At the end of the overview presented in this volume, what conclusion can be drawn on the development, importance and current status of research based on victim surveys in Germany?

First of all, it is important to note that victimisation surveys have proved to be an important means of gathering information on the prevalence, distribution and consequences of (recorded and unrecorded) crime, which is required and used not only by experts from science, politics and the police but also by practitioners e.g. from law enforcement and prevention-related areas, such as persons working in the penal system or executive staff in care facilities.

This need is covered quite unevenly by the existing studies: while players at the municipal level (especially in mid-sized cities, as described by *Obergfell-Fuchs*) are well ‘supplied’ due to a large number of regional and local studies—something that is also true for the German *Laender* (federal states), owing to an increasing number of surveys carried out at the *Laender* level in recent years—there are very few studies conducted nationwide. In particular, there is a lack of a survey repeated at regular intervals, which would allow us to observe changes in the occurrence of victim experiences, in the reporting behaviour and fear of crime, etc. As described in the article by *Mischkowitz*, all efforts to establish such a periodical, nationwide victimisation survey have failed up to now, be it in the framework of a ‘central’ solution under the exclusive control of the federal authorities or on the basis of co-operation between the federal government and the *Laender*. New prospects for the latter variant could arise from the victim surveys recently carried out in a number of *Laender* using a similar instrument (Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein: Lower Saxony Criminal Police Office 2013; Schleswig-Holstein Criminal Police Office 2015; Ministry of the Interior and Sports of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania 2015). This variant would certainly be more in keeping with the federal

structure of the political system in the Federal Republic of Germany (and would therefore stand a better chance of being realised) than a survey centrally conducted by federal authorities. However, this option remains to be explored more fully.

A certain degree of imbalance can be seen not only in geographical terms but also with regard to the various areas of crime and groups of victims examined: conventional theft-type property offences and violent crimes are well researched, as are the experiences of juvenile victims. There are also a number of solid studies on violence against women—especially acts of violence committed within their immediate social environment (even though these surveys are no longer very up to date). Important studies have also been carried out in recent years focussing on violence against police officers, elderly people's experiences as victims of crime (including in the context of care homes) and victimisations in the penal system. As regards the two last-mentioned phenomena and—more generally speaking—the risk of becoming a victim to which persons from institutionalised groups are exposed, there is a considerable need for further research. The same holds true, perhaps to an even greater extent, for the little-researched area of men's experiences as victims of violence in the immediate social environment and the area of hate crime, as well as the dynamically growing field of cybercrime. With regard to the last-mentioned phenomenon, it is somewhat astonishing how little attention it receives from criminological researchers, not only in the form of victim surveys—which would not seem to be the most appropriate method for each and every type of offence in this area—but also viewed on a more general scale. The reference to methodological obstacles—which can sometimes be quite considerable in studies targeting other crime areas or groups of persons, as is pointed out in the relevant articles (e.g. by *Schröttle* and *Görger*)—provides a partial explanation at best. For instance, it is hard to see that interviewing men about their experiences as victims of violence in the immediate social environment would be more difficult than interviewing women on the same subject. And it is not any easier to understand why it should not be possible to examine, by means of victim surveys, at least those forms of victimisation in connection with the use of the internet that are usually perceived as such by the persons concerned (e.g. certain forms of

fraud, extortion via ‘ransomware’<sup>6</sup> and the like).<sup>7</sup> It is to be hoped that criminological research will increasingly turn to the subject areas mentioned in the near future.

The articles of this volume frequently address issues of methods and methodology, such as the survey mode to be chosen, the appropriate sampling procedure and the adequate formulation of questions, without being able to deal with these issues in general terms and with due thoroughness. This task is reserved for the articles of the second volume of the anthology, to which interested readers are referred in this context.

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<sup>6</sup> Ransomware is a type of malicious software that encrypts or blocks access to data on another party’s computer and demands payment of money to decrypt or release the data.

<sup>7</sup> For an example from international research, see Pratt (2010). Data on how frequently and in what way persons or entities are affected by such offences is indeed collected by means of surveys. So far, however, this is mostly done not in the context of scientific victim surveys but in connection with (partly poorly documented) commercial surveys on behalf of companies (e.g. AVG 2009) or business associations engaged in the internet sector (e.g. BITKOM 2011).

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## **II. Methods and methodology**

# Introduction

Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy, Christoph Birkel and Robert Mischkowitz

It can be assumed to be undisputed nowadays among both methodologists and laypersons that the methodological approach applied in a survey significantly impacts the survey's results. Only a small proportion of usually specialised methodologists are able to answer the following question, however: In what direction(s) and to what extent do individual methods influence results and how should one ideally and methodically deal with such effects in the context of various (substantive) questions?

Similar to the state of research on (offence-specific) results derived from dark figure victim surveys, the state of research on methods and methodology is characterised by a great number of individual, sometimes obsolete research papers mostly written in English and based on foreign data records. Most of the publications are based on data from the American National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which served as the basis for various methodological studies conducted especially during the 80s and 90s (e.g. Skogan 1981, 1986). Even though a significant proportion of the results generated by that survey can be used for German or European victim surveys (regarding problems such as the telescoping bias, the honesty of answers or the order of questions), one must doubt that many of the results can be applied to German dark figure victim surveys without any problems—which is not least due to the special methodology of the NCVS.

There have also been a few German studies and publications dealing with the methods used in victim surveys. However, their number is low and/or they only focus on selected (sub-)issues. Furthermore, many of these studies are rather old. For this reason, it has to be assumed that, at least in part, they are obsolete in terms of the issues addressed and in terms of the methodological approaches that have been applied and that they thus no longer represent the methodological state of the art.



This is why this second volume of the anthology focuses on the processing and critical discussion of the methodological foundations and the problems encountered when applying and evaluating them.

This second volume thus has the following two objectives: the first objective is to provide readers with the most comprehensive basis possible to conduct their own victim surveys in such a way that they are in line with the present state of research at the national or (if this is lacking) international level. The second objective of this volume is to impart the methodological knowledge deemed necessary to assess and interpret the results of victim surveys adequately, i.e. against the backdrop of the methodology used in them.

The setup of this second volume of the anthology is very similar to the ‘Survey Life Cycle’ and the error model developed by Groves and colleagues (2009) that is based on it. The following aspects have been identified as being particularly relevant for conducting and evaluating victim surveys: sample selection, effects of the survey mode, the questionnaire design and the statistical analysis—especially in consideration of the survey design (from a causal-theoretical point of view). What also had to be taken into account was the victim-survey-specific field of contrasting dark figure data with reported crime data. Fortunately, it has been possible to enlist renowned authors for all these topics.

The first part on the foundations of survey methods in the context of victim surveys begins with an introduction by *Schnell and Noack* on the foundations and characteristics of sample selections in victim surveys, the interaction between survey mode and selection principles, and the problems caused by non-response. In their article, *Kury, Guzy and Leitgöb* then look at the various effects, and the advantages and disadvantages, of individual survey methods with a special focus on lessons learnt from victim surveys. The part on survey methods is rounded off by *Killias’* article on rather new (internet-based) survey methods and mixed-mode surveys, which are looked at separately due to current technical and methodological developments. In the article by *Faulbaum*, the foundations of questionnaire and item development are explained with a special focus on victim surveys. This topic is complemented by the piece written by *Waubert de Puiseau, Hoffmann and Musch*, who illustrate the issue of socially desirable responses and questions on sensitive experiences of victimisation. The first part of the second volume is

completed by the article by *Hatt* dealing with data-protection-related issues and problems arising in the context of victim surveys.

The second part of this volume deals with contrasting official data from crime statistics with data from victim surveys. Due to a lack of regular victim surveys accompanying statistics, there is only limited experience in Germany in this respect. For this reason, *Norris* first presents lessons and prospects resulting from the British Crime Survey (now called Crime Survey for England and Wales). *Heinz* subsequently explains the methodological difficulties in contrasting data from police crime statistics with victim surveys in Germany.

The third part of the volume is focused on analysing the results of victim surveys. In their article, *Hanslmaier and Baier* use examples to present established statistical analysis processes as well as the problems they bring when victim surveys are analysed adequately. *Leitgöb and Seddig* then look at established research designs of victim surveys and associated opportunities to detect causal effects (this being one of the main objectives of victim surveys).

The volume ends with the article written by *Kury* on the limits of victim surveys and a summary of crucial findings as well as an outline of their practical implications provided by the editors.

# **1. Methodological foundations**

# Sampling, non-response and weighting methods for victimisation surveys

Rainer Schnell and Marcel Noack

We describe the design, sampling and weighting procedures of national general population samples for cross-sectional victimisation surveys. The article starts with the definition of the target, frame and inferential population. Due to the lack of complete sampling frames, overcoverage and undercoverage will occur. Despite the best efforts made, special subpopulations will be excluded either by definition or through frame deficiencies. Examples of such subgroups are institutional populations (e.g. prisoners, people living in military installations or psychiatric institutions) and people living in non-permanent dwellings (e.g. trailers or houseboats). Furthermore, there are clandestine populations that try to avoid administrative acts. Most surveys exclude subpopulations suffering from serious health problems. Finally, in many practical cases of implementing victimisation surveys, members of language minorities will be excluded from almost all surveys. Since for these populations higher victimisation probabilities are plausible, their exclusion will lead to different population estimates. Therefore, special attention has to be given to documenting the kind and size of the population excluded in victimisation studies.

Given a suitable sampling frame, the choice of the actual selection method is the obvious next step. Of course, only probability samples will yield correct statistical inferences. Probability samples are defined by the fact that the selection probability for each element of the population can be calculated. Therefore, neither convenience samples (such as students) nor non-probability samples (such as quota samples, ad-hoc web surveys, web panels or snowball samples) can be justified mathematically. Since quota samples are widely misunderstood by non-experts as examples of stratified samples, we explain correct stratification procedures at great length. For practical applications very often cluster samples are used (e.g. area samples), therefore we describe application and resulting effects (design effects) of clus-

tered samples in detail. Most face-to-face general population surveys use combinations of stratification and clustering at different stages of selection. Most commonly all these different combinations are denoted as ‘complex samples’.

Traditionally, only the standard error of the estimate is used to assess the precision of a survey result. This is misleading in more than one way. For example, naive calculations of standard errors are based on the assumption of simple random sampling. Since this assumption is rarely given in practice, these kinds of calculations underestimate the true sampling variance. We demonstrate this by comparing all German polling results (1957–2013) with election results: here the empirical coverage probability is 69% instead of the alleged 95%.

Modern assessments of survey error account for sampling and non-sampling error. The ‘Total Survey Error model’ explains the total error as the sum of the squared bias and the variance of an estimate. Usually, the components of the total survey error (specification bias, non-response bias, coverage bias, measurement bias, processing bias, sampling variance, measurement variance, data processing variance) are assessed separately.

Every data collection mode for victimisation surveys has implications for sampling. The limitations set by available sample frames may seriously impact estimated victimisation rates. Therefore, differences in victimisation rates due to sampling frames are likely. For example, computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) surveys usually rely on variants of Random Digit Dialling, but—depending on the available information and the technical infrastructure—this sampling method might be inefficient. Under many jurisdictions, special techniques for mobile phones might be required, for example the use of dual frame surveys. However, their application has to rely on additional information, which usually has to be estimated. Face-to-face surveys usually either rely on population registries, address lists or ad-hoc enumerations. Access to registries or address lists may be difficult in practice. Furthermore, registries and address lists are subject to over- and undercoverage. Ad-hoc enumerations and address lists are subject to various forms of interviewer error or interviewer cheating. The unavailability of population covering frames usually prevents the use of mail surveys for general population surveys. Finally, for web surveys in general no sampling

frames are available. Therefore, with the exception of surveys within an organisation, no probability sampling is possible and therefore the use of web surveys for victimisation surveys has to be avoided. We discuss all these frame problems in considerable detail.

Of course, unit non-response is of utmost importance for victimisation surveys. The statistical consequences of non-response depend on the missing data mechanism. The more recent statistical literature differentiates between missing completely at random (MCAR), missing at random (MAR) and missing not at random (MNAR). MCAR implies just a reduction in sample size without any bias. Despite its misleading name, MAR will cause biased estimates if the sample is not corrected by the appropriate statistical adjustments. These adjustments will work only if the missing data generating mechanism is modelled correctly by the adjustment method. There is ample evidence that non-response in victimisation surveys is precisely of this type. For example, the response rates of very old and very young people in victimisation surveys might be lower than the average; the response rates of victims might be higher than those of non-victims. It has to be noted that, in the case of MNAR, correcting for non-response is not possible based on data alone: very strong assumptions on the generating mechanisms have to be made. We are not aware of any study demonstrating a successful correction for MNAR in victimisation surveys.

In general, the size of non-response bias depends on the amount of non-response and the non-response mechanism. There is no doubt that the amount of non-response has increased during the last 50 years of survey research. However, for unbiased estimates the differences between respondents and non-respondents are crucial. These differences may vary between different variables and different causes for non-response. In general, at least non-response due to 1. refusal, 2. non-contact and 3. illness should be analysed separately. Refusal can be explained by rational choice theory applied to low-cost decisions. Therefore, minimal cues in an interview situation may cause large differences in response rates. The inability to participate due to health-related reasons will cause bias if health is related to the topic of the survey. An example for victimisation surveys are persons who are unable to participate due to a victimisation. Non-contacts might be the largest problems for victimisation surveys. These persons might have higher victimisation probabilities. Solutions include calling back at different times of days

and changing the interviewer in face-to-face surveys, associated with different contact strategies. To summarise, it is necessary to analyse the causes of non-response for every victimisation survey

We report on a recent non-response study covering 49 German victimisation surveys conducted in the new millennium. On average, a response rate of about 41% was observed. The cumulative effects of seemingly trivial details such as prior notification, length of field period, incentives, conversion attempts, etc. resulted in large differences in response rates. However, the response rate alone is no direct evidence of the presence or absence of non-response bias.

Correcting for non-response is usually done by different weighting methods. All of them require additional information for auxiliary variables, which have to be strongly related to the non-response mechanisms. The current state of the art is the calibration approach. We explain in detail that weighting decreases non-response bias if and only if the weighting variables are highly correlated with the non-response mechanism. Demographic variables have to be shown to be sufficient for reducing non-response bias; there is no guarantee of this bias reduction. Finally, we mention the often neglected fact that the possible bias reduction might be more than compensated by the increase of variance to the weights.

The future of victimisation surveys might lie in concentrating on very large, but methodologically sound surveys. The financial resources required for such surveys will reduce their number.

# Effects of survey mode

Helmut Kury, Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy and Heinz Leitgöb

The administration mode for surveys, as numerous national and international studies show, has a considerable influence on the estimates of interest. For this reason, results from surveys must be interpreted with caution and under consideration of the applied survey method. The following paper gives an overview of (i) the definitions and aetiology of mode effects, (ii) the way in which the administration mode affects the response process and (iii) the mode-related differences when making use of specific administration modes.

## 1 Definition and aetiology of mode effects

While the mode of data collection refers to the way in which data is collected in surveys (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, online or web-based), the term ‘mode effects’ encompasses all the influences that a particular survey mode has on the response behaviour of respondents (Groves et al. 2009; Jans 2008). In this sense, mode effects can be understood as the reactivity of the response process to a survey mode and—from a methodological perspective—as a specific type of measurement error, which is responsible for at least part of the divergence between the ‘true value’ and the response actually given. This definition of mode effects exclusively based on the response process is referred to as the ‘narrow definition’. It can be characterised as restrictive in the sense that it ignores the fact that the survey mode also affects other phases of the survey process, such as questionnaire construction, selection of sampling frame, sampling and recruitment of respondents. As a consequence, it must be assumed that different modes of collection—apart from varying measurement errors—are also subject to different coverage, sample and non-response errors. This holistic understanding of mode effects is introduced as a ‘broad definition’.

The causes of mode effects following the narrow definition are due to differences in a number of dimensions. While de Leeuw (1992, 2008) has devel-



oped three classes of central factors (interviewer effects, media-related factors, factors influencing information transmission), the following five causes of mode effects have been established over recent years (cf. Groves et al. 2009; Jans 2008): (i) degree of interviewer involvement, (ii) degree of interaction with the respondent, (iii) degree of privacy, (iv) channels of communication, (v) technology use. All of these characteristics have different effects on the results in surveys and should be taken into account when choosing a suitable survey mode and when evaluating results from victim surveys. In this paper each of these tasks are described and assessed with regard to differences caused by the survey mode, with particular reference to the measurement of victimisation rates.

## **2 Mode effects on the survey and response process**

A helpful model to systematically determine mode effects according to the broad definition is the so-called ‘survey lifecycle’ model by Groves et al. (2009). The model distinguishes between two groups of sources of error: the measurement itself and the representativeness of the data. Based on this distinction, the following paper explores in detail the way in which mode effects can influence the operationalisation of the constructs (validity), the response process (measurement) and the processing and representativeness level with recourse to mode-specific selection frames (coverage error), sampling design (sampling error) and non-response and weighting procedures (adjustment error). In this process it will be noted that—although all sources of error have the potential to produce different results depending on the survey mode—mode effects associated with the sampling (coverage and sampling errors), systematic processes of missingness (non-response error) and the response process (measurement error) have proved to be particularly relevant (Groves et al. 2009).

For analysing mode effects on the response process, the cognitive model of survey response introduced by Tourangeau et al. (2000) appears appropriate. This approach divides the response process into four tasks: (i) comprehension of the question, (ii) retrieval of the information needed to answer the question, (iii) formation of an opinion or judgement and (iv) response selection and reporting. Tourangeau et al. (2000) argue that each of these tasks

can be influenced by the survey mode. In this paper we intend to find out on which levels of the response process mode effects are thought to appear when asking about victimisation experiences or crime-related attitudes, in addition to the pros and cons of the various administration modes.

### **3 Mode effects and specific administration modes**

While the preceding sections described the way in which the causes of mode effects are to be framed (especially within the framework of a survey lifecycle and response process), the last part of the paper focuses on the state of research on the expected occurrence of mode effects when using a specific administration mode. While differentiating between telephone, postal and face-to-face surveys, mode-specific levels e.g. on acquiescence and recency effects, cognitive demand or social desirability are explained. Although—according to the current research—the face-to-face interview still appears to have the greatest chance of providing a high response rate and valid information (at least under the assumption that the interviewers are well trained), some mode effects and bias must be anticipated when recording non-attitudes or answers to sensitive questions. However, telephone and postal surveys also entail some advantages such as cost efficiency, interviewer control and high standardisation (telephone surveys) or good coverage and anonymisation (postal surveys) leading to the conclusion that a global recommendation regarding the best administration mode for victimisation surveys cannot be provided. The mode of data collection must be carefully chosen against the background of the offences being surveyed and the survey conditions (e.g. main interest, financial budget, etc.).

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## How can we realise high-quality crime surveys at acceptable costs?

Martin Killias

Crime surveys require substantial funds, as empirical research methods generally do. For interviews, the critical cost factor is interview costs. If funds cannot be extended, the affordable size of the sample is often the simple calculation of maximum expenses divided by costs per interview. This results all too often in samples far too small to address essential issues, such as the connection between crime and victimisation, on the one hand, and lifestyle, risk-taking and other forms of deviance, on the other hand. Getting control over interview costs is, therefore, the best way out of this dilemma.

Unfortunately, researchers have been rather reluctant to accept cheaper methods of interviewing people. For many, 'cheap' may still be synonymous with 'poor quality', although there is ample evidence that expensive methods, such as face-to-face interviews, are by far not the best suited to address sensitive issues, such as deviant behaviour or personal or even sexual victimisation. This bias among the scientific community was well visible when, in the early 1990s, the international crime victimisation surveys were harshly criticised for having used computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), far cheaper at that time than any other method and the only one capable of making an international survey of that kind ever possible. Later, the use of online questionnaires for studies of self-reported delinquency was accepted very reluctantly, despite elegant randomised controlled trials in Switzerland, Finland and now Austria and Germany that showed similar outcomes to paper-and-pencil questionnaires. New methods allow far larger samples at similar overall costs and, perhaps even more importantly, make highly filtered questionnaires feasible, with many follow-up questions.

Obviously, new interview techniques, such as CATI some 30 years ago and, more recently, online questionnaires at schools require a few adaptations. One is the sampling method, another is the structure of the questionnaires. Regarding sampling, national or regional crime victimisation surveys can

greatly benefit from national, computerised databases of the entire population. For the ongoing Swiss Crime Victimization Survey, for example, the population (census) register can be used, providing a sample of excellent quality at fairly low costs. Given that telephone interviewing is becoming increasingly difficult to realise due to the mass diffusion of mobile phones, an adaptation is certainly required regarding the way of contacting pre-selected respondents. In Switzerland, all persons in the sample receive a letter, signed by the local police commander, through which the links to the survey questionnaire are communicated, along with an explanation of the purpose and the expected benefit of the survey. Those who do not respond within 15 days will be called for a CATI interview. In 2011, nearly 60% of prospective respondents were reached and interviewed, even without any reminder. Roughly half of all those interviewed responded to the online questionnaire, allowing substantial cost savings. Unfortunately, no randomised controlled trials have been conducted yet on possible effects on outcomes. A randomised controlled trial (RCT) conducted in the past in the Netherlands that seemed to suggest higher victimisation rates in the online condition may not be conclusive because a possible ‘methods effect’ was not separated from an equally (if not more) feasible ‘selection effect’. In the Swiss Crime Victimization Survey of 2011, victimisation rates also tended to be somewhat higher in the online condition, but these respondents turned out to be more motivated to participate—presumably because of preceding experiences with crime. To sum up, there is no evidence so far that different interview methods provide different results.

Given this state of knowledge, combining several interview techniques, such as computer-assisted web interview (CAWI) and CATI, may be the best solution to maximise participation. In fact, CAWI may reach younger and possibly more mobile respondents, whereas CATI may be the option for reaching older respondents who are less familiar with internet use. Together, the two methods produce surprisingly high response rates.

# Reporting rates as indicators of ignorance: issues of measurement and design

Dirk Enzmann

Research on rates of reporting victimisation experiences to the police requires a careful consideration of measurement and design issues. The method of measuring reporting behaviour and the choice of statistical analysis methods greatly affect the results and their interpretation.

Apart from defining the reference period when asking people to recall previous victimisations in victim surveys, one basic decision is whether to ask about the reporting behaviour of only the last victimisation experienced, of all victimisations in a summary manner, or of each victimisation experience separately (e.g. as in the American National Crime Victimization Surveys). The most flexible strategy is the latter, which also yields the most reliable results. Having notified the police about a crime should be sufficient to indicate that it was reported to the police. Nevertheless it is advisable to additionally ask respondents whether a document was signed because there is often uncertainty regarding the formal requirements of reporting to the police – especially if studies are conducted in countries where it is not at the discretion of the police to record reported crimes or not.

When analysing data from victim surveys, it is possible to restrict the analysis to the last victimisation experienced, or to use incidence-based or prevalence-based reporting rates. Whereas incidence-based reporting rates measure the volume of crime reported to the police, prevalence-based reporting rates measure the percentage of victims who reported victimisations to the police.

Reporting rates based on information about the last offence experienced will be at a similar level to prevalence-based reporting rates. It is reasonable to expect that reporting rates based on the last experienced offence predominantly capture serious offences. They seem to be systematically inflated due to telescoping effects and socially desirable responding. Generally, inci-

dence-based reporting rates are only about half as high as prevalence-based reporting rates or rates based on information about the last offence experienced. This has to be taken into account when comparing reporting rates across studies. Otherwise method-related differences will be wrongly interpreted as regional or temporal differences.

For substantive and methodological reasons, incidence-based reporting rates should be preferred to prevalence-based reporting rates or rates based on information about the last offence experienced. However, there are two problems involved when using incidence-based reporting rates: 1. The incidence measures of victimisations experienced and reported may be unreliable because respondents may roughly guess or not comply with the instructions – this is mostly a problem when using only summary estimates of frequencies. The article shows ways of dealing with the problem of outlying or unrealistically high incidence measures. 2. More advanced statistical methods (generalised linear models of clustered data) are necessary to describe and analyse incidence-based reporting rates. By now this should not be a serious problem because modern software packages provide tools to account for the nature of count data clustered within individuals.

When analysing incidence-based reporting rates, attention should be paid to the fact that tests of significance and confidence intervals require specific statistical procedures such as bootstrapping or the analysis of clustered data. As a general rule, when presenting information about reporting rates, confidence intervals should always be shown as they indicate the size of sampling error. This holds equally well for prevalence-based reporting rates and rates based on information about the last offence.

# Questionnaire design

Frank Faulbaum

One of the biggest challenges for surveys is the reduction of measurement error and the assurance of question and item validity. Since these two aspects are intimately related to question wording, question meaning and a careful selection of response scales, a well-thought-out design of questionnaires and their layout seems to be absolutely necessary. The article above deals with some of the basics of questionnaire construction. Moreover, the most central question evaluation methods are discussed.

Answering questions requires the execution of specific mental/cognitive processes. Under certain circumstances, such as weak motivation or reduced capability and mental capacity, some or all of the mental processing steps may be skipped meaning that, in the most severe case, answers are only guessed and not carefully produced. This phenomenon has been called ‘satisficing’. Satisficing may also occur if the task the solution of which is requested in the question is too complex. An example is complex tasks of estimation and computation. In the case of victimisation surveys, sensitive effects of certain questions are to be expected meaning that procedures of transforming sensitive wording into less sensitive phrasing are required in order to reduce possible effects of social desirability. Since questionnaires are always presented in at least one communication mode, such as interviewer or self-administrated mode, the mode and the questionnaire have to be carefully harmonised.

Of course, only a subset of the whole set of question construction and evaluation methods can be dealt with in the article. Nevertheless, it should highlight how important this aspect is for achieving high data quality.



## Social desirability in victimisation surveys

Berenike Waubert de Puiseau, Adrian Hoffmann and Jochen Musch

Victimisation surveys are usually based on self-reports. A typical question (cf. Wetzels & Pfeiffer 1995) may read ‘Have you ever been raped?’, and it is assumed that both victims and non-victims will answer truthfully. However, self-report may be distorted by response biases. One such response bias results from social desirability: the tendency to present oneself in a positive manner. To comply with social norms or to avoid disapproval from others, respondents may choose not to answer honestly (Borkenau & Amelang 1986; Edwards 1957; Paulhus 1991, 2002). Therefore, socially desirable responding is a fundamental threat to the validity of victim surveys.

Response biases resulting from social desirability have largely been neglected in victim surveys. However, empirical findings suggest that social desirability may indeed lead to under- or overestimates of victimisation prevalence rates. For example, in a study on 840 couples, of which the male partners participated in a treatment programme for perpetrators of domestic violence, women reported significantly fewer victimisations (19%) than their abusive partners admitted (29%, Heckert & Gondolf 2000). Another study found large discrepancies between victimisation reports to the police and responses in a victimisation survey. For almost one fifth of the sample, reports to the police and responses in the survey were incompatible (Averdijk & Elffers 2012).

To date, no study exists that investigates the social (un)desirability of specific forms of victimisation (Averdijk & Elffers 2012; Görden 2009; Heinz 2009). It is therefore difficult to predict the magnitude and direction of possible response distortions. However, research suggests that sexual or domestic violence and abuse are associated with a stigma that makes it socially undesirable to admit to being a victim of these crimes (e.g. Cook et al. 2011; Greve et al. 1994; Koss 1993, 1996). Therefore, surveys in these fields are likely to suffer from large dark figures (see Koss 1993, 1996; Skogan 1975).

There are different ways to tackle the problem of socially desirable responding. On the one hand, individual differences in the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner may be measured. This makes it possible to exclude individuals that show high levels of socially desirable responding, or to statistically control for social desirability in responses (see Paulhus 1991). On the other hand, experimental methods may be employed to improve the anonymity or confidentiality of the data collection situation. For example, a large-scale study on 11,195 US Navy recruits investigated the influence of confidentiality and anonymity on victimisation self-disclosure. Participants were most likely to report sexual victimisation when the study was administered by independent researchers and not by members of the Navy, and when the participants were not required to note their social insurance number on the questionnaire (Olson et al. 2004). These and other findings show that confidentiality and anonymity are central to the validity of sensitive self-report data.

Indirect questioning techniques, such as the Randomized Response Technique (Warner 1965), are another promising approach to control for influences of social desirability on responding. In particular, the recently proposed Crosswise Model (Yu et al. 2008) has been shown to reliably increase the confidentiality of the questioning situation, and to lead to an increase in the validity of responses (Hoffmann, Diedenhofen, Verschure, & Musch 2015; Hoffmann, Waubert de Puiseau, Schmidt, & Musch, 2016). Indirect questioning techniques can be employed independently of the interviewing technique. A drawback of these techniques is that they require large sample sizes (Ulrich et al. 2012), which are however usually achievable in victimisation studies. To date, only few studies have employed indirect questioning techniques to increase the validity of victimisation survey data despite early recommendations stressing their usefulness (Fox & Tracy 1980). Our recommendation is to use indirect questioning techniques, especially the Crosswise Model, more often to quantify the influence of social desirability and to increase the validity of self-report data in victimisation surveys.

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# Principles of data privacy laws and socio-scientific or criminological studies about hidden crimes

Janina Hatt

Victims who are objects of research regarding hidden crimes are usually keen to remain anonymous. Hence, a high level of data privacy is required. Such a requirement is contrary to socio-scientific or criminological research aiming to make data as accurate and subdivided as possible. Hence, a high level of data privacy will be the precondition for the victims' willingness to provide the information sought and for a representative survey. From the researchers' point of view, in many cases a personal reference to the participant is necessary.

The first step in the implementation of a research project is to get a solid database. Before starting to collect information, thorough deliberations should be made as to whether personal data is really required or not. Data is not personal but anonymous if it cannot be associated with the respective person without requiring disproportionate effort. If only anonymous data is used, the restrictions regarding the application of data privacy laws can be avoided.

If personal data is required for the database, the first step is to find out which of the numerous data privacy laws is applicable. As there are both federal and regional (within the German Laender) data privacy laws in Germany, it is important to specify the institution that is responsible for the study. The federal law applies to studies being conducted by federal public authorities or private institutions whereas the regional data privacy laws apply to those research studies initiated by an authority or institution under the control of regional law. Research projects arranged by a university or other academic institution, which are probably the majority, are usually under regional supervision.

Every pool of personal data requires either a legal basis or the participant's explicit acceptance. As for research regarding hidden cases, probably only a

few existing databases will fit this purpose; most data has to be collected on the basis of the participants' acceptance. This acceptance must be based on free and informed consent. If there is no legally valid consent, the related personal data has to be deleted.

A special problem arises in certain cases: personal data of one participant reflects personal data of another individual automatically. Studies regarding hidden cases often handle data that refers to both the victim and the perpetrator. The perpetrator's consent to his or her personal data being collected cannot be considered in most cases and usually a specific legal basis is required in these situations. Additionally, this legal basis has to allow personal data to be collected without the knowledge of the respective person. But this kind of data collection constitutes significant interference into the right of informational self-determination. Therefore, any legal provision allowing data collection in this way must meet high standards in terms of the lawfulness of this kind of data collection. The person who is the object of this data collection must not be harmed with regard to his or her rights worthy of protection.

German data privacy laws contain numerous clauses forcing the legal practitioner to weigh up several affected interests. These clauses result from the appropriate European directive. The clauses set for deciding whether the collection and use of personal data, especially by researchers, is allowed or not, require the same weighing up of interests as well. These clauses make it difficult for researchers to obtain a solid answer to their question as to whether collecting or using data in a particular case is lawful or not. A weighing up of interests has to take all relevant factors of the particular case into account: in the case of studies about hidden crimes, the participants' strong concern to remain anonymous always has to be considered when it comes to the subjects' interests. The most secure way, of course, is to avoid collecting personal data. If this is necessarily required, it is to be deleted as soon as possible. During the period in which personal data is used, the safest way of keeping it from abuse is to ensure those handling the data are bound by the obligation of professional secrecy and additionally to have a high level of data security. There are several methods of making personal data partially anonymous. Usually, a combination of a number of methods is required to achieve a degree of anonymity that is secure enough to ensure that no individual person can be identified.

Regarding the researchers' interest it should be taken into consideration that freedom of research is stated in the constitution. That means that such studies usually cannot be limited in a way that causes them to fail.

Conducting a study about hidden crimes therefore involves a demanding challenge: on the one hand researchers have to deal with the problems resulting from the fact that information about hidden cases is not easy to get. On the other hand they have to handle this information very carefully in terms of data privacy laws. But the existing data privacy laws do not explicitly allow or forbid any particular kind of data processing. They shift the decision and the related risk to the users' level and impose on them the responsibility of handling the situation by weighing up the affected interests. Most researchers will need the support of a legal professional to be able to focus on the important contents of such studies.

## **2. Administrative data versus survey data**



## **Official crime statistics versus data from victimisation surveys – comparing difficulties and combination possibilities: experience in the United Kingdom**

**Paul Norris**

The growth of victimisation surveys over the last 30 years can be seen as part of a wider pluralisation of crime statistics. It owes much to a desire to understand the ‘dark figure’ of crime: victimisation that is not recorded in official crime statistics, either because it is not reported to the police or due to police actions when they are informed of an event. Despite increased methodological sophistication and wider substantive coverage, victimisation surveys remain subject to limitations meaning that, like recorded crime statistics, they provide only a partial picture of victimisation. However, the additional data recorded in surveys, such as demographic characteristics and whether a crime was brought to the attention of the police, can help to contextualise patterns present in recorded crime statistics. The design of a victimisation survey will involve compromises around the range of crimes covered, the period of time respondents are asked to report on and the extent to which crimes are classified consistently with definitions used within the criminal justice system. Rather than seeing victimisation surveys as a measure of crime in absolute terms, analysts should consider how the data can be used to better understand the context of victimisation and the interaction between victims and the criminal justice system.

The recording of a crime in police statistics represents not simply the taking place of an event, but also reflects the public’s willingness to engage with the criminal justice system (which varies between individuals and across types of crime) and the working of an administrative process (which varies over time as a result of changes in policing policy and practice and between jurisdictions). This results in recorded crime underestimating overall victimisation and means that apparent changes in the level of victimisation might be caused by changes in reporting and recording practices rather than shifts in victimisation. Furthermore, since reporting and recording practices vary

between crimes and over time, comparisons based on police recorded data are fraught with difficulty. Finally, recorded crime statistics provide no contextualisation of the crime they report. For instance, has the make-up of the population changed due to societal shifts to include more of those at risk of a particular type of victimisation?

While crime surveys, first developed in the USA in the 1960s, were originally envisaged as a tool to overcome the shortcomings of recorded crime statistics for understanding levels of crime, they are themselves subject to several methodological limitations, which impact on the complementarity of crime surveys and recorded crime statistics. Crime surveys cover a restricted range of crimes, typically focusing on individuals, their experiences and those of their household members. This means they often exclude crimes committed against businesses, or those crimes where an individual may not be aware they have been victimised (for instance fraud). Furthermore, crime surveys often focus on specific sections of the population. Notably, national surveys in the UK have typically focused on individuals aged 16 and over and living in private households, excluding particular groups of the population from their analysis (for instance children and those living in care homes) who might experience patterns of victimisation different from the wider population.

Definitions of crime employed in constructing a survey will vary depending on the purpose of the survey. A survey that is intended to provide data comparable to recorded crime statistics must therefore define crimes in a way that matches the legal definition within the relevant jurisdiction. Hence the UK is covered by three separate crime surveys (one covering England and Wales, one covering Scotland and one covering Northern Ireland) which, while broadly similar in the questions they ask, may code similar incidents differently to reflect the different legal definitions used in each jurisdiction. This illustrates how understanding the purpose of a specific victimisation survey will affect the way the survey is constructed, with a survey intending to study victimisation within one jurisdiction often adopting definitions to mirror the relevant legal setup, while surveys intended to compare across jurisdictions will use definitions independent of any specific legal definitions. Those analysing trends in survey data, or making comparisons between surveys, therefore need to be aware of the definitions employed in each dataset they consider.

The development of the UK's three crime surveys illustrates how survey methodology has evolved over time, for instance the early 2000s saw the surveys shift to continuous interviewing (asking about victimisation in the 12 months prior to the interview), having previously occurred at irregular intervals (and asked questions about victimisation in a specific 12-month period). This change in interviewing approach has impacted on the way victimisation levels are calculated compared to previous surveys. Other aspects of survey methodology that have varied over time have included sample size, sampling frame and the method by which an interview is conducted (paper, computer-assisted personal interview and telephone interview). All of these aspects are likely to affect the comparability of data collected, and it is important that the possible impact of such issues is considered by researchers making claims based on survey data.

The anonymous nature of victimisation survey data means that it is not possible to link specific survey respondents to specific incidents in police recorded crime data. Instead, comparisons are made at the aggregate level. The process of comparing estimates of crime from recorded crime statistics with those from a survey involves two, apparently simple, tasks:

- (1) Identify comparable offences, both in terms of types of crime and the population of victims
- (2) Multiply up survey-based estimates of victimisation to represent the whole population from which the sample was drawn

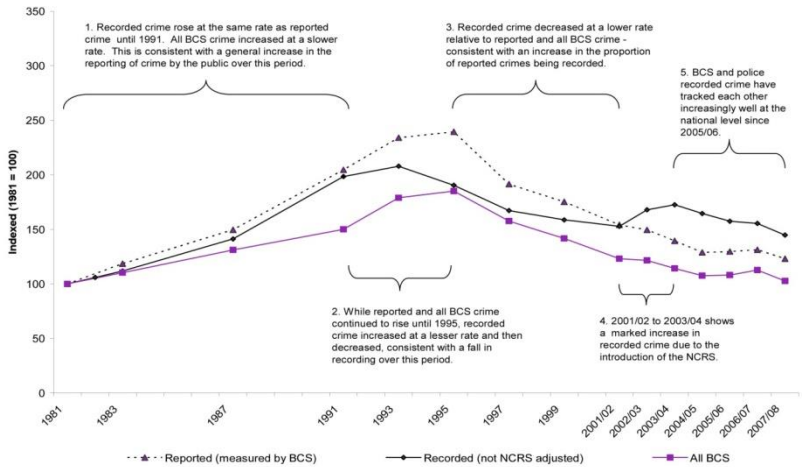
Yet the need for such standardisation can see further imprecision introduced to estimates of victimisation. For instance, multiplying survey estimates to represent a whole population requires precise information about that population. This information can be difficult to locate. In the UK, such population estimates are based on the decennial census, with adjustments made year on year to try to account for births, deaths and migration. Since such adjustments are based on various estimated data sources, their accuracy is likely to vary over time.

Figure 1 illustrates shifts in police recorded crime and victimisation survey estimates for England and Wales between 1981 and 2007/08. It serves to illustrate how the differing patterns revealed by different data sources can help to identify where changes in the public's willingness to report crime to the police and police recording practice have influenced the level of crime

present in police recorded crime statistics. Hence, comparing survey data with police recorded crime statistics can illustrate the possible impact of changes in policy and policing practice on recorded crime statistics.

Figure 1:

**Victimisation in England and Wales 1981–2007/08 (Kershaw et al. 2008, p. 41)**



At an aggregate level both police recorded crime statistics and victimisation survey data both present an incomplete picture of victimisation. When combined together they can help add contextualisation to patterns present in recorded crime statistics. However, the level of contextualisation offered by survey data is much greater when patterns of victimisation are considered alongside other variables collected within the survey (notably demographic variables and whether specific victims reported their experience to the police). For example, analysing how the willingness to report crime to the police varies depending on the type of crime and the characteristics of the victim can give important insights into those policies that might increase public interaction with the police. At the same time, survey data also allows for an understanding of how victimisation is unevenly spread across the population (something not apparent in the aggregate level police recorded

crime statistics); this information can help with developing policing strategies targeted towards the needs of specific groups within the population.

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# Official crime statistics data versus data from victimisation surveys – comparing difficulties and combination possibilities: opportunities in Germany

Wolfgang Heinz

## 1 Crime – a phenomenon that is not directly observable

'Crime' is not - unlike the weather - directly observable. What is perceived as 'crime' is the result of both prior legal definitions and of (usually) multi-stage processes of perceiving, interpreting and evaluating situations. Dark figure research measures the self-report and self-disclosure of the respondents (often in a mostly pre-structured survey situation). In other words, data is gathered on how respondents define, evaluate, categorise and remember certain actions, and the extent to which they are willing to provide information on this. Police Crime Statistics (PKS) measures reconstructed courses of events that, in the judgement of an investigator or police statistics administrator, constitute a specific criminal offence. Such reconstructions are limited, however, to the segment of offences that have come to the attention of the authorities—mostly having been reported. The same is true of the subsequent statistics of the public prosecutors, law courts and penal institutions. These likewise reflect processes of filtering out and (re-)evaluating. There is therefore no *one* measuring instrument with which *the* crime rate can be measured, but rather there are (extremely varying) perceptions and (extremely varying) evaluations at each level of activity.

## 2 Differences between Victimization Surveys and Police Crime Statistics

The results of victim surveys and PKS only exhibit partial overlaps in all the points of comparison (offences, victim groups, data collection rules, refer-

ence periods). The extent to which it is possible to make comparisons depends both on the extent to which victim surveys relate to the offences in PKS defined by the German Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*) and the extent to which the nationally differently designed police crime statistics allow for approximate comparability through additional characteristics about the victims. In Germany, the following obstacles exist, which need to be overcome to achieve the best possible comparison:

(1) Crime coverage: With the exception of road traffic offences, PKS covers those situations that are dealt with by the police and considered criminally relevant by those handling the cases ('crimes' reported to and registered by the police) with a crime scene in Germany. The data is collected irrespective of whether it is a so-called victimless offence, whether the victim is part of the resident population or not, whether they are a German national or a foreigner, and whether they are a natural person or legal entity. Victim surveys, on the other hand, only cover incidents that a respondent can provide information about; this is usually the victimisation experience of a natural person or of a household (via a member of that household). In contrast to PKS, occurrences with a foreign crime scene are usually also covered. A prerequisite for comparability is, on the one hand, that victim surveys with their statements on offences succeed in translating the criminal offence definitions into colloquial language and record the crime scene and, on the other hand, that PKS at least records whether the victim is a natural person or member of a household.

(2) Parent population: In PKS, cases are covered irrespective of the characteristics the victim has, i.e. irrespective of their age, whether they can communicate in the German language, where they live (e.g. in a closed establishment), whether their place of residence is in Germany or whether they are a tourist, etc., and irrespective of which year the reported situation occurred. Crimes committed abroad, on the other hand, are not covered even if they are directed at German nationals. In victim surveys, by contrast, owing to the investigation methods used, certain groups of people are either not covered (e.g. legal entities, persons without residence in the country, those who are too young or too elderly, those with communication problems due to language, and persons living in closed institutions or in subcultural settings) or are under-represented (e.g. persons who are more mobile than average). Depending on the investigation method, the excluded victim groups

may vary. The possibilities for comparison could be increased by improving the victim data recorded in PKS so that at least the prevalence rates in certain offence fields would be roughly comparable.

(3) Counting rules: The counting of cases in PKS, e.g. when there are multiple victims of one offence or serial crimes inflicted on one victim, and the recording of victimisation experiences deviate from one another in certain circumstances that are admittedly not very significant in quantitative terms.

(4) Reference periods: PKS covers all the situations for which processing was completed in the calendar year in question, irrespective of the year in which the offence was committed. In victim surveys, by contrast, only those incidents are covered that occurred within the reference period as far as the respondent recalls. Comparability could be improved through special PKS analyses according to the time of the crime, provided this is known. In victim surveys there admittedly still exists the problem of telescoping effects with their offence-specific implications, particularly with regard to the over-coverage of serious offences.

(5) Validity of the data: The comparison between victim survey data and PKS data is a comparison of definitions made, with all the associated consequences, including the fact that specific offences are over or under-covered and statistical recording may not occur at all in some circumstances. Certain configurations will have concordant effects, e.g. lack of awareness of an incident, evaluating an incident as a non-offence, fear of possible punishment if reported, offences within the family, etc. In these cases, usually neither a report will be made nor will the information be disclosed in a victim survey. Other configurations, by contrast, will lead to systematic bias in victim surveys, such as if non-victims more frequently refuse to participate than victims, if serious crimes are more likely to be remembered, or if the way the offence categories in the survey are understood varies according to socio-economic characteristics. The case coverage in PKS, on the other hand, which is largely dependent on incidents being reported, leans structurally more towards serious forms of crime and is not a scaled-down image of the 'reality of crime', even with regard to the development of the registered crime rate. The extent, structure and development are largely dependent on people's willingness to report offences, which is subject to change.



(6) Comparability of suspect rates and prevalence or incidence rates: Owing to the anonymity of victim surveys, comparisons of individual data are not possible. Only aggregate data is comparable and even then not the absolute figures but only standardised quantities. For PKS, offence rates, suspect rates and rates of victimisation risk (for victims) are each calculated on the basis of 100,000 residents. The results are overestimated because persons who are not included in residential registration numbers or not obliged to register are not counted among the resident population but are still included in PKS as suspects or as victims (with their experiences). The parent population of victim surveys for calculating prevalence or incidence rates, by contrast, is well known. Comparability can be improved on the part of PKS by recording victim characteristics in a comprehensive and differentiated way.

### **3 Limited comparability of crime rates and victimization rates**

The differences in the parent populations, the reference periods and the calculation of suspect rates are obstacles to the simple comparison of PKS frequency or risk rates with extrapolated prevalence or incidence rates. For meaningful comparison, it is necessary for the PKS data to be prepared and selected in such a way as to facilitate the greatest possible comparability of the two data sources with regard to these aspects.

Alternatives are often seen in the comparison of extrapolated information from respondents on reported offences. This is of course conditional, first of all, on incidences being recorded and the reporting behaviour for each victimisation incident being surveyed. Distorted results can be expected if the reporting behaviour is only established for the last or for the most serious offence. It is further conditional on the statements about reports not being systematically biased, whether because (as apparently often seems to be the case) socially desirable answers have been given or because the victims mistakenly believe they made a report.

## 4 The value of independent measures of crime

Victim surveys are no substitute for PKS, but they are a necessary supplement and addition because

- firstly, they provide victim-related insights into several fields important for criminal policy (victims' experience and processing, fear of crime, need for support and counselling, acceptance of the police and justice system, evaluation of offences, scope for action in criminal policy) that are not recorded for PKS,
- secondly, they provide information about victimisations that have not been reported and about the consequences of such victimisations and how people process them,
- thirdly, they guard against naively equating reported data with the 'reality of crime',
- fourthly, they make international comparisons possible—in a far better way than PKS, which reflects a national criminal justice system,
- fifthly and finally, they make it possible—for certain fields, at least—to assess and quantify the selection processes that occur with regard to PKS, particularly in relation to reports made to the police, and to evaluate them regarding their significance for the picture given by crime statistics. The findings from victim surveys on reporting behaviour and on the evaluation of the seriousness of offences provide clues towards explaining any divergences.

Viewing the results from the two data sources together improves the knowledge base because empirical findings exist on the question as to whether changes in the cases known to the police are due to changes in incidents that are detected and evaluated or rather due to changes in reporting behaviour. However, this gain in knowledge is only possible if regular, consistent, representative victim studies are conducted and necessary and appropriate measures taken to optimise comparability.

### **3. Analysis of victimisation surveys**

# Statistical analyses

Michael Hanslmaier and Dirk Baier

Quantitative data from victim surveys has certain properties that prevent scholars from applying ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models because certain statistical assumptions are violated. These assumptions concern the scaling and distribution of the dependent variables of interest: prevalences of victimisation experiences are binary variables that preclude OLS regression. A commonly used approach for the analysis of binary variables is the logistic regression model. Incidences of victimisation experiences, i.e. the frequency of victimisation in a certain period of time, can be treated as continuous variables but often pose the problem of a skewed distribution: most of the people have had no or only few victimisation experiences and only few people have been victimised multiple times. Models for count data deal with this kind of distribution. A third complication is a hierarchical structure of the data (e.g. respondents nested in neighbourhoods) that is typically found in large-scale victimisation surveys. The hierarchical structure of the data leads to a violation of the assumption of statistical independence as two observations from the same context tend to be more similar than observations from two different contexts.

The present article aims to discuss these common problems and outlines statistical models for dealing with them. The statistical models are described using data from a large-scale victim survey of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from Lower Saxony (N= 9,512). This makes it possible to give a practical illustration of the challenges that come with applying these methods and interpreting their results. Three types of models are presented:

*Logistic regression* allows multivariate analyses of binary variables. This model predicts the probability of a victimisation experience conditional on the independent variables. A logistic link function is used that transforms the relationship between the independent variables and the probability into a non-linear form. This transformation, which has important advantages, also comes at a certain price: the interpretation of the results is less straightforward.

ward compared to OLS models. Indicators of the relationship such as logits and odds ratios should only be interpreted with respect to the direction and significance of the relationship. More comprehensible regarding the interpretation of the size of an effect are measures based on predicted probabilities (i.e. what the difference in the probability of a victimisation experience is between men and women). However, due to the non-linearity of the link function, the effect of changes in an independent variable on the probability of an event depends on the values of all other independent variables. The article also discusses ways to overcome this problem, e.g. using average marginal effects (see Best & Wolf 2010; Long 1997).

*Models for count data* are used for the analysis of incidences of victimisation experiences. Poisson and negative binomial regression use a distribution function that is adequate for the skewed and discrete distribution of the data. The interpretation of these models is also less straightforward than OLS coefficients and similar to the logit model: so-called incidence rate ratios and predicted probabilities can be computed. In some cases, however, the frequency of zeros is high and neither the Poisson nor the negative binomial distributions are adequate. This happens for example when the majority of the respondents have not been victimised by a certain offence. In this case one can use zero-inflated versions of the Poisson or the negative binomial model. These zero-inflated models assume that there are two latent groups (victims and non-victims) and they estimate two separate models simultaneously. The first model estimates the impact of the independent variables on the probability of belonging to the group of non-victims. The second model is a model for count data that estimates the effect of the predictors on the frequency of victimisation (see Long & Freese 2003; Windzio 2013).

*Multilevel models* are used for the analysis of hierarchical data. This means that the observations are somehow clustered, for example respondents in one neighbourhood or students of the same class. This clustering may lead to the fact that respondents from the same context are more similar than respondents from different contexts because they are subject to the same environmental factors. This clustering violates the assumption of statistical independence and can lead to biased inference statistics. However, multilevel analysis can be used not only to control for the nuisance induced by the hierarchical data structure, it furthermore makes it possible to reveal the impact of contexts on individual behaviour. Multilevel models can explicitly

test the effect of macro level variables on individual outcomes and on the relationship between individual variables. For example it can be tested whether neighbourhood disadvantage increases individual level victimisation and whether the strength of the association between sex and victimisation risk varies with the level of neighbourhood disadvantage (see Snijders & Bosker 2012; Windzio 2008).

The article discusses these three statistical approaches in a clear and concise way and gives practical real-world examples. The text can be a starting point for scholars who have victimisation (or also self-reported crime) data at hand and want to familiarise themselves with these approaches for data analysis. Also suggestions for further reading are given for each method. The text additionally addresses readers of victimisation studies who want to gain insights into the principles of the statistical approaches that are commonly used for the analysis of victimisation data.

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# Design for victimisation surveys and analytical principles of causality

Heinz Leitgöb and Daniel Seddig

The article covers two distinct but interrelated methodological topics: ‘research designs’ and basic ‘principles of causality’. The most important research designs discussed and applied in criminological and victimological research are the cross-sectional, trend, panel and retrospective designs.

The cross-sectional design is characterised by a sampling procedure and data collection at a single time point. The purpose of a cross-sectional design is directed towards a descriptive analysis of central victimological variables, e.g. prevalences and incidences, for a predetermined period of time, e.g. 12 months, preceding the time of data collection.

The trend design generates data repeatedly collected from independent samples. Data obtained from such a design can be used to observe trends of criminological or victimological variables on an aggregate level (e.g. for crime monitoring).

The panel design uses a unique sample and measures the same variables with the same survey instruments at different points in time. Consequently, panel data allow the observation of intra- and interindividual differences and development across time. However, panel studies may face problems with attrition and panel effects that can only be compensated by extensive methodological as well as organisational and administrative efforts. Still, the panel design has considerable conceptual and analytical advantages over the cross-sectional and trend designs, in particular with regard to causal inference.

The retrospective design can (to a certain degree) avoid problems of the panel design by measuring variables at a single point in time, but referring to events and experiences in the past. The main deficit can be seen in the low validity associated with the retrospective assessment of the variables of interest.

The issue of causality is central to criminological and victimological research. Evidence-based policy and intervention programmes can only be effective when essential results go beyond a mere description and include explanations of the phenomena of interest. So far, a consistently agreed-upon concept of causality is lacking for social sciences. However, following Goldthorpe (2010), we draw upon three basic principles to recognise causal relationships: 1. robust dependence between the variables of interest, 2. consequential manipulation and 3. the generative process.

As a fundamental requirement for causal interpretations, the emergence of a causal antecedent must precede the resulting effect. Consequentially, research designs and data that are concerned with causal aspects of criminological and victimological issues must take the requirement of a ‘time lag’ structure into account. Thus, only the panel design, at least on the individual level, can appropriately be applied to research topics intended to supply support for causal interpretations.

Besides the availability of panel data, substantive theoretical assumptions about the causal mechanisms are indispensable and should be part of all causal interpretations based on survey data. Further, the application of statistical procedures should match the analysed theoretical issues in terms of complexity and reach well beyond simple descriptive and bivariate analysis. In the case that one of these three prerequisites—theory, panel data, appropriate statistical analysis—is not satisfied, causal interpretations should be met with great caution.

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## **4. Limits of victimisation surveys**

# Limits of victimisation surveys

Helmut Kury

For decades now, victim surveys have been an important and very fruitful part of international empirical research in criminology, especial in Western industrial countries, including Germany. After the Second World War when empirical social scientists generally began to use opinion polls to ask people, especially in the USA, about different topics such as politics, commercial and increasingly also scientific questions, it became possible to ask citizens also about experiences with crime, especially experienced victimisations, but also committed offences. This new technique was seen as a new chance to collect data about topics and backgrounds of criminal behaviour to which researchers had had no access before. The technique especially revealed much more accurate information about the dark figure of crime, a topic that had been discussed since the introduction of crime statistics but on a more 'theoretical' level since there was no empirical information. But victim surveys also provided more and more important information beside that about victimisations, e.g. about attitudes to crime, such as punitiveness, fear of crime and the reasons why victims report a victimisation to the police or not.

Although the dark figure of crime will ultimately remain an unknown quantity, victim surveys have rendered it visible to some extent, and have revealed its varying magnitude: the dark figure is much larger for fraud and less severe violent and sexual offences than it is for property offences for example. Knowledge of 'hidden' victims such as the elderly (an increasingly important topic in modern societies with a growing proportion of seniors), prison inmates, and migrants or refugees, has improved considerably thanks to victim surveys. So victim surveys have shown that the consequences of crimes for victims can vary considerably and are surprisingly minor in many cases. Now criminologists had the chance to 'measure' the amount of non-registered offences. Especially victim surveys have without doubt brought enormous progress to criminology, and their results have meanwhile proven indispensable for research. So victim surveys have helped to draw a much clearer picture of the social reality and the background of crimes and to

enhance knowledge of their causes and consequences. Longitudinal analyses on the development of crime, independent of the biases in the reporting and recording of crime, and cross-national comparisons of crime would be impossible without data from victim surveys. Also, they have contributed to the introduction of the victim into criminological theories and crime policy. Nowadays rational crime and victim policies rest to a large extent on survey findings. Soon experiences with crime surveys, which concentrated on measuring the amount of crime, and victim surveys, which were focused on the victims of criminal behaviour and their experiences, especially the negative effects of (severe) victimisations, started to show 'problems' beside the very important information these surveys delivered. This chapter gives an overview of the restrictions of victim surveys beside their very positive and informative effects.

The complexity of research about crime and victimisation automatically produces many methodological problems with validly measuring such a difficult topic. In Germany to this day there lacks a regular crime victimisation survey like those done regularly in the USA, Great Britain and other countries. The British crime and victimisation survey for example, conducted regularly to a high methodological standard, presents a lot of important information for criminology as well as for crime politics and prevention measures. In Germany there are only various individual surveys with different specific questions and different methodologies and samples. So the results of these surveys usually cannot be compared without severe restrictions. Crime and victimisation surveys cannot replace official police crime statistics but they can provide important information about the limits and the interpretation of official crime statistics. Official crime statistics are severely influenced especially by the reporting behaviour of the population, which is itself influenced by the specific crime and by characteristics of the victim. So sexual abuse for example, which happens mostly within family structures, is very often not reported to the police or cannot be reported by the victims, for example in cases of child abuse.

Problems with victim surveys include, for example, the definition of a 'victim': who is a victim of a crime and who makes the definition? Criminology generally defines victims as persons who are victimised by a legally criminalised action. But it might be that in surveys a person defines him or herself as a victim of a crime but the action was not criminal behaviour. In the early

days of victimology there was a discussion as to whether victims of other events than criminal behaviour, such as natural catastrophes, e.g. floods, tsunamis or earthquakes, should be included. So surveys are confronted with the problem of defining who is seen as a 'victim' and should be asked about their experience of this event.

Another very important problem with victim surveys is that victims can forget the event of victimisation, especially if it was not very severe or was long ago. If the victimisation was long ago and very severe, for example sexual abuse in childhood, there can also be a suppression of the events. Many victims do not want to remember the very severe experiences they had, for example sexual victimisations in families or inside groups; they may feel ashamed and can be retraumatised by a survey asking about such events. This might be the case with sexual events and traumatisation of children and juveniles in the church by priests, as has increasingly been found in different countries in recent years, not only in the USA and Canada but also in Germany. It might also be the case that the victim does not see the event as important enough to report in surveys, especially in cases of minor crimes or crimes inside intimate groups such as families. Another important topic is that the victim may not know that she or he has been victimised. This can occur for example in cases of financial crimes, such as fraud.

A very important topic against this background is the criticism that victim surveys document street crime, in particular, but not very severe criminal acts, especially financial criminal behaviour such as corruption. Some criminal behaviour does not have individual victims but the state is disadvantaged, such as in cases of not paying taxes. Tax evasion is a very common crime in all countries and the financial disadvantage for the states is immense. It is also very difficult by means of victim surveys to detect crimes like drug misuse. Neither the dealer nor the user is keen to report this criminal behaviour; both 'gain' from the crime. These groups of crimes, like 'victimless' criminal behaviour, cannot be determined accurately by victim surveys.

Other crucial topics in victim surveys are the selection of the sample surveyed, the instrument (questionnaire) and the method of collecting the data. Very often surveys ask 'ordinary' people on the streets or at home or they send a standardised questionnaire to a more or less randomly selected group

of citizens. The randomised selection can be severely disrupted by the reduced willingness of parts of the sample to cooperate and answer the questions. Nowadays very often only half or fewer of the sample selected answer the questions, so there can be an enormous bias, which influences the validity of the results. Specific groups are often not included in surveys, such as elderly people living in special homes for seniors, prisoners, foreigners/refugees and people who work or are not at home. The method of collecting the data can have a strong influence on the results. The rate of cooperation is usually higher using personal interviews, but this is a very expensive and time-consuming method and there can be an influence caused by the interviewer (male or female for example). Using a mailed questionnaire usually has the effect that a lower percentage of people cooperate. Research additionally shows that the questionnaire itself, for example the formulation of the questions or the order of the items, can have a strong influence on the answers given by the sample. Especially to reduce costs, nowadays more and more telephone and internet surveys are conducted. This entails new methodological problems, such as a low rate of cooperation and a strict selection of the sample, especially in the case of internet surveys.

Research on the methodology of victim surveys should be increased, in particular on new survey modes such as cost-efficient web-based surveys. Rational and ultimately more cost-efficient crime policies are hard to achieve without profound knowledge of the background, causes and effects of offending. Crime prevention has a lot to do with information about offenders and victims. Thus, the question cannot be whether Germany can afford victim surveys on a regular basis, but whether Germany can afford to dispense with this instrument. Criminology today cannot be seen without the important and fruitful knowledge from victim surveys, despite all the problems of methodology that exist.

## **5. Summary and practical implications**

## Summary and implications for practice

Nathalie Leitgöb-Guzy, Christoph Birkel and Robert Mischkowitz

The present articles have illustrated the immense importance of a methodological approach in conducting and analysing victim surveys and the great number of method-related effects that need to be taken into account when interpreting their results.

The following cannot and is not intended to be a summary of the central conclusions drawn in the individual articles. Instead, the present concluding chapter is aimed at providing an overall reflection on the findings as well as the current state of research on methods and methodology in the context of victim surveys and discussing them with regard to their practical importance.

It would come as no surprise if some readers—after having thoroughly studied this volume of the anthology—concluded that, due to the numerous methodological influences, victim surveys (or surveys as such) can hardly produce any valid and reliable results without methodological artifacts.<sup>8</sup> To a certain degree (at least when it comes to individual questions), this impression is accurate, unfortunately. At the same time, however, it must be kept in mind that surveys are singular and unique sources of information with the purpose of generating data on social aspects in a systematic way and on the basis of (at least broadly representative) population samples; without them, there would usually be no information at all available on the said aspects.

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<sup>8</sup> *Reliability* and *validity* are essential quality criteria of any measurement. *Reliability* refers to the consistency and stability of a measuring instrument. In this context, it is required that the results of the measurement can be reproduced when repeating the measurement. This means that, at different points in time where the measurement takes place, one and the same respondent would provide identical answers (if the attribute in question has not changed) or that different respondents with the same characteristics would provide similar answers. *Validity* is the extent to which the measuring instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure. The validity of a measurement refers to how well the answer to a question corresponds to the true value (Schnell et al. 2005; Groves et al. 2004). *Measurement artifacts* are seemingly substantive results that are generated by the effects of methods used for data collection and/or analysis.

In the field of criminology, victim surveys, which are often designed to cover a broader subject area, probably represent one of the most prominent types of surveys. In this context, it is especially the first volume of the present anthology that highlights the vital findings from victim surveys with regard to crime rates (including an assessment of relationships between reported rates and the dark figure), the sense of security, consequences of victimisation and trust in the police.

For this reason, one could very well summarise that, despite the various ‘methodological sensitivities’, surveys—and their findings—are a unique and thus indispensable data source. As already indicated, perceiving victim surveys and their findings as the result of a multi-stage process—in the course of which the selection of certain methods always has certain effects on the findings—seems helpful from a methodological point of view (Groves et al. 2004). In this context, both the persons working with victim surveys and their users must know whether and how the methods used for a specific survey influence the results that are of interest. Only on this basis can, for instance, the persons working with victim surveys detect (methodological) problems and select the ‘optimal’ methodological design for the research question that is of interest. Certainly, this selection can only be made by weighing up different method-related effects and taking into account the question to be asked (as well as the available funds and time, of course). In this context, it will probably never be possible to fully eliminate method-related effects. A good knowledge of existing effects is essential, however, in order to be able to assess in the next stage whether and in what form findings that are of interest can be interpreted content-wise.

After having read this volume, readers should thus be aware of the following central methodological problems and influences in the context of victim surveys: 1. the central role of the sample selection (design and sample size) and the related choice of selection principles, 2. potential distortions caused by non-response, 3. influences through the choice of survey mode (due not only to effects on the measurement itself but also correlations with the quality of the sample), 4. influences from the questionnaire design, especially the way questions and answers are phrased as well as the order of questions, 5. the importance of the form of analysis that is used (in particular when bi- or multivariate procedures are used), 6. the importance of the survey design



when conclusions are drawn. Armed with this knowledge, readers are well equipped to deal with victim surveys in a competent manner.

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