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**Session 3 – Invited paper**

**THE "CORE" QUESTIONNAIRE ACCORDING TO THE UNECE-UNODC SURVEY -  
SUMMARY REPORT\***

Submitted by HEUNI

**Introduction**

1. There were a total of 78<sup>1</sup> surveys reported in the returned UNECE-UNODC questionnaires, each describing the contents of victimisation surveys carried out in the respondent countries. The secretariat has condensed the information on a spreadsheet from which the present summary analysis has mainly been drawn. In some instances, also the original survey questionnaires have been consulted. For the present purpose, however, it would have been impossible to study all the different questionnaires in detail. In a later stage of this work, this will however need to be done, at least to a broader extent than what was presently possible. The rich material must not be wasted as we are striving to arrive to a consensus as to the basic core issues to be included, as a minimum, in the future global instrument on victimisation.

**Focusing on the "core" questionnaire**

2. This session is to focus on what we have denoted the "core" questionnaire. This is intended to stand for the victimisation issues: which crime or crime-like items are covered in the

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<sup>1</sup> by 9 December 2005.

available data that we have received from the responding countries? All other highly interesting issues will, in this session, be dealt with only in the margins. For instance, there are items on fear and other crime related issues such as costs and other consequences of victimisation, including precautions taken, or attitudes about police or punishments, or knowledge of the criminal justice system and other issues. However, reference to "core" in our present context is intended to exclude all such issues.

3. There are large and varied information contents in the national victimisation surveys reported to us. Sometimes, the national surveys are also based on reasonably or even very large samples, allowing for rather detailed analysis of individual victimisations, or victimisation to different types of crime events, if so wished. The main task is to find out about crime, and for a systemic reason, about police reporting, all else is superfluous. This is already a task difficult enough for a first attempt to deal with this issue.

4. We are also discussing only the personal victimisation surveys, despite the fact that we believe it is, in future, highly relevant to develop business or corporate victimisation survey standards in a similar fashion. Also other complementing surveys may very well become topical in future developments. For the time being, considering the size of the task, we have agreed on restricting the work to personal victimisation surveys only. However, when I say we stick to personal victimisation surveys for the time being, this is not to say that we should also restrict the analysis only to general population surveys that only look at victimisation as something that is similar across all subgroups of the population.

5. A most obvious remark in this context would refer to the need of **special modules** prepared to meet the needs of particular victim or population subcategories included in a general population survey. This idea is based on the argument that different parts of the general population (may) have group-specific victimisation experiences that are not typical to other groups. Which subgroups should and can be addressed in such a framework may remain open to debate, but possible candidates would certainly comprise women, men, immigrants/minorities, and so on. Of women as violence victims, there is already quite much survey evidence that illustrates this point. The presently available evidence (i.e. the replies to the UNECE-UNODC questionnaire) do not provide guidance regarding this particular issue, but this is nevertheless an important topic to be taken into account when considering the expected outcome of our deliberations.

### **Interests of knowledge**

6. Different victimisation surveys of different times and places reflect different interests of knowledge. Early-day victimisation surveys, for example, were trying to estimate the dark number (or the total volume) of given crimes, whereas later survey generations have attempted to assess such things as, for instance, aspects of the quality of life of the population, or its physical safety. Examples of also other crime-related interests of knowledge may be found. The interest of knowledge defined above, regarding this particular decision - to confine the initial development work to a short list of relevant crimes, plus the issue whether they have been reported to the police or not - is derived from the understanding that if we should develop a global standard for general population victimisation surveys, the objective should be as simple and concrete as possible. Confining the exercise to central victimisation rates (prevalences and incidences) plus providing a link from these to traditional police-recorded/reported crime figures represents a sufficient challenge for the first steps of the present development work. The multiplicity of other possible, more sophisticated interests of knowledge that may be served by the victimisation survey approach may be taken up later, or parallel to this exercise, as felt to be useful and feasible in individual countries. The point is that common standards also require a

consensus about the relevant interest of knowledge. Such a consensus may be easier to reach if we stick to the more archaic perspective of the early-day victimisation surveys that were primarily after the dark figure of crime.

### The core questions

7. A large number of countries report that they applied the ICVS core contents and definitions. Consequently, this chapter is structured by starting from the ICVS formulation, where applicable. Against this background, we have a brief look at alternative formulations. The basic types of crimes comprised in the ICVS are:

- 1 Car theft
- 2 Theft from car
- 3 Car vandalism
- 4 Motorcycle theft
- 5 Bicycle theft
- 6 Burglary
- 7 Attempted burglary
- 8 Robbery
- 9 Theft from person, and thereof
  - Pickpocketing
- 10 Sexual incidents or violence, and thereof
  - Sexual violence (constructed from details of most recent incident)
- 11 Assault or threat, and thereof
  - Threat (constructed from details of most recent incident)
  - Physical violence (constructed from details of most recent incident)

8. These items have also been summed to provide an indicator of “overall victimisation”. Apart from these eleven items, other crime-related issues such as corruption, consumer fraud and drug problems have been dealt with in ICVS questionnaires.

9. Below, items 1-11 have been grouped into Household property crimes (1-7), Personal property crimes (8-9), and Person crimes (10-11)<sup>2</sup>. Some events defy such a grouping – robbery, for instance would often be both person crime and personal property crime. In this grouping, household property is, however, used to distinguish such property the respondent was carrying when victimised from property he/she just owned but was not carrying. Of course, borderline cases exist: cars, motorcycles or bicycles may also be robbed, not just stolen, and it is unclear how such events should be classified. For some countries, this may be more relevant than for others. Furthermore, it has been found sometimes to be difficult for respondents to know what has happened to the property of other members of the household. Consequently, the intimacy or privacy of household members may have a strong influence on the outcome of such questions, producing statistical variance which is not related to victimisation but to other household characteristics.

10. How the different crime items are outlined and defined has a major impact on the results. Survey economy would generally not recommend very narrow specifications since the ensuing victim rates are then likely to remain very low, and surveys would often prefer to have a larger than smaller rates of positive replies. The logic in general seems to be that surveys do not

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<sup>2</sup> This is of course just one arbitrary grouping. For example, in ICVS reports, the category “contact crime” was introduced, denoting items 8-11.

address very rare events but prefer subjects where "success" is more likely. This is also related to sampling problems related to very rare events.

### **Household property crime**

11. *Thefts of cars. ICVS: Over the past five years have you or other members of your household had any of their cars/vans/trucks stolen? Please take your time to think about it.*

12. Other surveys have very variable approaches to this issue<sup>3</sup>. In one survey, theft is collected in a general sense, including theft from homes/burglaries, theft of motor vehicles or other possessions. In this case, it is collected as a 'community/neighbourhood problem' only, not as the individual respondents' experience/s. Another survey counts cars and car parts as one item, asking about motor vehicle/parts theft - theft or attempted theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle, moped or other vehicle or part of a motor vehicle. A further survey counts all kinds of motor vehicles, not just those in the ICVS: the thefts of all motor vehicles (passenger cars, buses, minibuses, lorries, and other motor vehicles) and not only of cars. One survey makes a very simple solution, however combining theft and attempted theft: "Has anyone ever attempted to steal or stolen your car?" Some surveys apply the local criminal code directly: all definitions used are designed to correspond to definitions used by the police; all according to the [local] criminal code.

13. According to examples found in the UNECE-UNODC survey, the ICVS version is reasonably accurate. It does miss "other motor vehicles" which might be relevant in a global setting. We must, nevertheless remember that the idea of the selected set of crime or crime-related events has never been intended to be perfect and all-encompassing. In fact, the questions that may seem to cover all possible types of relevant events suffer from overly general formulations which make it likely that they are not able to grasp the target very accurately. Experience has proven that concrete and simple examples with sufficiently detailed definitions capture more of the relevant events than broad generalised item formulations. The outcome is further enhanced if the respondent is provided sufficient help to recall the reference period in question.

14. *Thefts from cars. ICVS: Theft from cars: Apart from this, over the past five years have you or have members of your household been the victim of a theft of a car radio, or something else which was left in your car, or theft of a part of the car, such as a car mirror or wheel?*

15. Other surveys come up with more complete lists of possible targets of thefts: for example, one survey includes the thefts of spare parts from all motor vehicles such as tyres, windscreen wipers, headlights, mirrors, accumulators, stop-lights, auto radio cassette tape recorders, etc. as well the cases of fuel thefts from the tanks. Another survey explains that this item is split in two, depending on what is taken. If a part or piece of the vehicle is taken it is covered under motor vehicle/parts theft. If a personal item is taken from the car, eg cell phone it would be considered personal property theft. One solution is not to define theft from car as a separate item at all but to have it covered by a general "theft" question, irrespective where the property was taken from. A further survey starts out from a most common target, complementing this with "other": radio or other part stolen out of car. Another survey (using an unusual reference period of 3 years) also uses a quite detailed list of possible theft targets, but then also combines car parts with object kept inside the car: "In the last 3 years, has anyone ever stolen

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<sup>3</sup> Below, I only mention solutions that deviate from this definition.

one or more parts of your vehicles or your family's vehicles, for example the bosses, the wheel rims, a spare tyre, petrol, a car radio antenna? Has anyone ever stolen some objects inside your vehicles or your family's vehicles, such as cases, glasses, compact disk, car radio?" This solution of course makes it impossible to compare with solutions that separate between these two.

Phenomenologically, one might see that these two belong together, but technically they may be seen as separate types of crimes. To decide which is to be recommended would require more methodological work in, for instance, a survey laboratory setting.

16. *Vandalism. ICVS: Vandalism to cars. Apart from thefts, have parts of any of the vans/vans/trucks belonging to your household been deliberately damaged (vandalised)?*

17. Other surveys, again, have variable approaches to car vandalism. In one example, the item is collected as a 'community/neighbourhood problem' only – in this case the respondent is not asked about individual experience/s. Vandalism, graffiti and damage to property are grouped together. Another survey groups vandalism on cars/on home/on bus stops in one item, a further survey asks about wilful damage of personal or household property. In another case, cars and other property are treated as one: car intentionally damaged/other property damaged. A further survey distinguishes different targets, adding the respondent's house and other family property to the list but, on the other hand, putting cars and other vehicles together: "Has your car or other vehicles or your family's vehicles ever been damaged or destroyed deliberately by acts of vandalism (scratched body, broken windows, damaged mechanical parts, ripped open tyres)?; was your house or parts of your house ever damaged or destroyed deliberately (soiling, broken windows, scratched doors)?; were your belongings or your family's belongings ever damaged or destroyed deliberately?" Also other surveys have separated between types of vandalism, one asking about two types: car vandalism and other vandalism. Another survey recognises the problem of distinguishing between vandalism and break-in, and asks about all kinds of vandalism, with or without theft. A further solution pulls all kinds of vandalism together, asking about such events that were targeted at "dwelling, car etc".

18. *Theft of moped/motorcycle. ICVS: Theft of motorcycles. Over the past five years have you or other members of your household had any of their mopeds/scooters/motorcycles/mofa's stolen?*

19. Some other surveys apply similar structures to the ICVS question. Another solution combines attempted and completed thefts: "Has anyone ever attempted to steal or stolen your motorcycle; has anyone ever attempted to steal or stolen your motorbike?" One survey has added farm bikes. In another survey, all of these issues are pulled together under general theft: "Theft, not specified to mopeds/motorcycles", and a further way of dealing with this issue has been to include this particular crime within a more generic category of crime "Theft of motor vehicles".

20. *Theft of bicycles. ICVS: Bicycle theft. Over the past five years have you or other members of your household had any of their bicycles stolen?*

21. Also here, some surveys have used the ICVS definition, while others have been less specific, for instance including bicycles as just one possible item in theft of household property. Another solution is to combine attempts with thefts: "Has anyone ever attempted to steal or stolen your bike?" Furthermore, bicycles have been covered by a general question of theft, not specified to bicycles, or, as one survey has done, this particular crime is enclosed within a more generic category of crime "Other thefts".

22. *Burglary with entry. ICVS: Burglary/housebreaking. Over the past five years, did anyone actually get into your home/residence without permission, and steal or try to steal something? I am not including here thefts from garages, sheds or lock-ups*<sup>4</sup>.

23. This item has been dealt with in many different manners. Some surveys ask about break-in to home, garage or shed (one survey specifies that "home" was also defined to include their garage or shed). In another survey, theft is collected in a general sense, including theft from homes/burglaries, theft of motor vehicles or other possessions. Also, it has been collected as a 'community/ neighbourhood problem' only – not asking about individual respondents' experience/s. In contrast, a further survey counted together all incidents where the respondent's home has been broken into, and break-in offences relating to their car or garden were excluded. Some surveys include the specification: "Do not count burglaries in second houses. Exclude unsuccessful attempts, i.e. damages to locks, doors or windows or scratches around the lock". House burglary has also been defined as "Burglary with entry - theft of property without permission by destroying, damaging or undermining of barriers or by special mode; theft perpetrated using technical means or by usage of forged or stolen key."

24. In one survey, the issue was "Illegal entry into a residence or other building on the victim's property". Essential problems are, for instance, whether burglary or attempted burglary are taken together, as well as the question whether something needs to be stolen to qualify burglary/break-in. A distinction is sometimes made where break-in and thefts of belongings to the household are pulled together. A further issue concerns second houses or holiday cottages, they are sometimes included, sometimes not: "Has anyone ever stolen or attempted to steal something in the house where you live or an a house at your disposal or that you used for example during your holidays" This particular solution accepts all kinds of thefts, not just thefts by burglary. A further example covers "only theft and/or vandalism, from home".

25. *Attempted burglary. ICVS: Attempted burglary/housebreaking. Over the past five years, do you have any evidence that someone tried to get into your home/residence unsuccessfully. For example, damage to locks, doors or windows or scratches around the lock?*

26. As noted in passage 24, break-ins and attempts are often not dealt with separately but are covered with one question only. When the distinction has been made, the attempt has been defined in various fashions, such as just speaking of "an incident where an attempt was made to break into the respondent's home, garage or shed." An ICVS-related specification instructs interviewers as follows: "need strong evidence that someone actually tried to get in (e.g. came home and door was open), rather than "kept getting phone calls" or "thought someone was watching the place". Another solution asks about "attempted illegal entry into a residence or other building on the victim's property". Also here, one solution included thefts of belongings to the household, and one asked about "only vandalism, from home".

27. *Others.* The UNECE-UNODC responses also report some observations about other household property crimes that are sometimes addressed in victimisation surveys. This category gives the opportunity to address difficult borderline issues such as the victimisation of a private entrepreneur without a company that would make his victimisation to a business victimisation. This is an interesting and perhaps neglected issue that may deserve some thought.

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<sup>4</sup> An earlier ICVS also included break-in/burglary with theft from garage, shed, basement etc. as a separate item.

28. Related to this topic, surveys have for instance asked about "thefts of: money including foreign currency, jewellery and unique objects of art, clothing, audiovisual technics, documents and securities, agricultural output, livestock, machines and equipment". Another example asks about "Theft or attempted theft of household property such as liquor, bicycles, electronic equipment, tools or appliances". A further case refers, in part, to the problem of distinguishing between different kinds of private property, and asks about 1) Theft from summer cottage, garden house, allotment, and 2) Theft from garage, shed etc. Some surveys leave the issue open, applying open-ended questions (including non-criminal victimisations). A further solution takes account of illegal entry to the respondent's house: "Has anyone ever entered in the house where you live or in a house at your disposal unlawfully (at the seaside, in the mountains, etc.) but not for stealing, for example forcing the lock or causing damages to windows?". One survey looks at thefts done by employees, clients, outsiders, again an aspect different from the previous ones.

### **Personal property crimes**

29. ***Robbery. ICVS: Robbery. Over the past five years has anyone stolen something from you by using force or threatening you, or did anybody try to steal something from you by using force or threatening force?***

30. First of all, the ICVS formulation in this case combines attempts with successful robberies. This is accompanied by an interviewer note, advising that "pick-pocketing is to be reported under "Theft of personal property"". Another survey applies a formulation that comes quite close to the ICVS definition: "An incident where someone had stolen (or tried to steal) property from a respondent by physically attacking them or threatening them with violence." In line with this example is also the survey that asks about "Theft or attempted theft in which the perpetrator had a weapon or there was violence or the threat of violence against the victim". Another survey states that they have asked about "theft with physical assault in public areas".

31. A further solution is to use a local legal definition: "Robbery - deprivation of somebody else's movable belonging with intention to misappropriate it using for that purpose a force or a threat. There is a robbery also in case when for deprivation of the belonging the person has been led to the status of unconsciousness or of impossibility to self-defend. Robbery also is each theft at which the person who has been caught in the act had used force or threat in order to keep the possession of the stolen belonging". Another approach is where robbery is "not specifically collected, but may be covered by theft item in community/neighbourhood problems module". One survey applies a simple approach asking about "robbery or attempted robbery using force or threat". Another example chooses to specify some of the possibly lost property: "Has anyone threatened you or attacked you with or without a weapon to steal your money, jewels or personal belongings, also in a house?"

32. One survey has robbery covered by theft in general, and in one case it is specified that "robbery" also comprises "purse snatching". Purse or bag snatching was elaborated in more detail in one survey: "Bagsnatching: in the last 3 years, has anybody snatched away by force or attempted to snatch your bag or valuables (for example a watch, a bracelet, a necklace, a fur ...), without threatening nor by weapons or words?"

33. ***Theft of personal property. ICVS: Apart from theft involving force there are many other types of theft of personal property, such as pickpocketing or theft of a purse, wallet, clothing, jewellery, sports equipment. This can happen at one's work, at school, in a pub, on public transport, on the beach, or in the street. Over the past five years have you personally been the victim of any of these thefts?***

34. Some surveys are not making a clear distinction between pickpocketing, other theft and robbery. For instance, the survey may just ask about "Theft of personal property without differences (pickpocketing, etc.)". In one case, pickpocketing is "not specifically collected, but may be covered by theft item in community/neighbourhood problems module". One survey adds the point that "this could happen with or without violence". One very detailed definition explains: "Pickpocket theft - theft perpetrated by unusual agility and skills on behalf of the figure. These are the cases of bag cutting, deprivation of belongings and documents from bags or interior pocket, theft of money including theft of foreign currency from bags, travelling bags, suitcases, pockets etc." And one survey applies a detailed list of possible items stolen: "Theft or attempted theft of personal property such as money, credit cards, clothing, jewellery, a purse or a wallet. Unlike robbery, the perpetrator does not confront the victim." Here, the explanation of "no personal confrontation" is added.

35. Some surveys combine pickpocketing with non-contact personal thefts, others ask about "pickpocketing or theft of other personal property e.g. at school, work, restaurant, street". One survey uses an event description: "Has anyone attempted to steal or stolen your wallet or some other object you were wearing without being without being aware at the moment, for example he approached you in a crowded place or pushed you or embraced you?" Some surveys just ask about theft, not specified to pickpocketing, others similarly have no details about type of thefts. One solution still was that it was included in a general question where the formulation was: "Defined as theft without use of force or threat, including pickpocketing, as well as non contact theft. Basically any theft that would not be defined as robbery or theft from the car (we instructed interviewers to include theft from the house by someone working at the house here as well, for example theft by cleaning lady....)".

36. *Other property-related crimes.* These have in various surveys included corruption, consumer fraud (ICVS), and fraud, the latter being defined as "creating of a distorted picture of reality which aims to get a property benefit and which is a reason for accomplishing a disposition with property".

### **Person crime**

37. *Sexual assaults.* ICVS: **I would now like to ask you some questions about crimes of violence of which you personally may have been the victim. First, a rather personal question, People sometimes grab, touch or assault others for sexual reasons in a really offensive way. This can happen either at home, or elsewhere, for instance in a pub, the street, at school, on public transport, in cinemas, on the beach, or at one's workplace. Over the past five years has anyone done this to you? Please take your time to think about it.**

38. Person crimes have been dealt with in more variable manners than property crimes, and there also seems to have been more interests and experience in regards of these crimes. This is true of sexual assaults as well as common assaults; indeed sexual assaults have received a lot of attention because this matter has been the special concern in violence against women surveys which have emerged later than the general population victimisation surveys.

39. Sexual assaults have been defined also in other ways. Sometimes, simple formulations without elaborate explanations are provided: "sexual assault, rape, attempted rape (1 item)", or "sexual assault combined to rape". On the other hand, one survey speaks of "An incident of a sexual nature involving physical contact, including rape, attempted rape, indecent assault, and assault with the intent to sexually assault. Sexual harassment (that did not lead to sexual assault)

was excluded.” This example illustrates some of the definitional dilemmas encountered with this item. The distinction between assault and harassment is important, and so is the question of the intentions of the assailant. Whether physical contact is essential or not is a further issue to be cleared. Another way of defining this crime is: “Sexual assault' is an act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will, through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, or the attempt to carry out these acts.” Also this formulation makes no difference between attempts and completed acts.

40. A further example applies a complicated definition, referring to “Any sexual activity the respondent was forced into (or where someone attempted to force them into the activity) against their will since the age of 15, excluding unwanted sexual touching and instances where respondents have sexual activity with their partner because otherwise their partner will sulk or not speak to them.” Another survey applies a rather concrete, yet ambiguous definition: “Includes rape, attempted rape, aggravated sexual assault (assault with a weapon), penetration by objects, forced sexual activity that did not end in penetration.” One survey pays particular attention to the perpetrator’s motive, “including the cases of debauchery. Debauchery is a criminal act intended to arise the state of excitement or sexual satisfaction without copulation.”

41. In one instance, the distinction between low-level and high-level assault is made: “Low level sexual assaults. Touched against your will in any sexual way. Includes anything from unwanted touching or grabbing, to kissing or fondling. Includes high and low levels of sexual assault. Forced into any sexual activity by threatening you, holding you down or hurting in some way and touched against will in any sexual way, such as unwanted touching, grabbing, kissing or fondling.” A different approach makes several distinctions as to the circumstances: the screening question for violence uses descriptions such as “In public areas: being followed, exhibitionism, sexual advances and assault; At work: sexual harassment; Domestic: forced sexual acts.” One more approach: “In your life has anyone tried without success to oblige you to a sexual intercourse or to a sexual activity against your will threatening and seizing you with strength? In your life has anyone ever tried to touch, caress, kiss or molest you against your will, for example at the cinema, on a bus, at work, at school, or at home, etc.?”

42. In some surveys, sexual assault is included in violence in general, not specified to sexual assault. This may be followed up after the screener, asking follow-up questions about details of the incident, which makes it possible to construct an estimate for sexual assaults. In one survey this is uncertain, as the reply states that sexual assault is maybe counted as assault. In one survey, also also this issue is dealt with as a ‘community/neighbourhood problem’ only and did not ask about individual respondents’ experience/s.

43. **Rape. ICVS: rape is included in the above; follow-up details are used to decide which kind of crime it was.** This is also done in some other surveys: “no separate questions for sexual assaults or rape but additional questions on kind of incident”.

44. Often, the distinction sexual assault/attempted rape/rape is not made. For instance: “At work or in public areas, attempted rape and rape”; “sexual assault, rape, attempted rape (1 item)”; “sexual assault combined to rape”. A further survey explains that their question includes the cases of rape. Similarly, another survey has rape “implicitly included in sexual assaults”, or being “within sexual assault”. It also happens that the survey only asks about violence, without making a specification of sexual assault.

45. Some surveys do however have separate questions on rape. One defines that “Rape is a criminal sexual intercourse with a female without her consent or even in case of giving consent

if the female is under 18 years of age or in case the female is a descending relative". Another survey gives the definition: "Forced or attempted to force you into any unwanted sexual activity, by threatening you, holding you down or hurting you in some way." There is also an application of the low-level/high-level sexual assault distinction: "High level sexual assault - as above force or attempt to force into any sexual activity by threatening you, holding you down or hurting you in some way." Similarly, one survey asks: "In your life has anyone forced or obliged you to a sexual intercourse threatening you, seizing you with strength, holding you fast or making resistance impossible." One survey specifies: "For domestic violence, the fact to have intercourse with force."

46. *Assaults with force. ICVS: Apart from the incidents just covered, have you over the past five years been personally attacked or threatened by someone in a way that really frightened you, either at home or elsewhere, such as in a pub, in the street, at school, on public transport, on the beach, or at your workplace?*  
**AND, a further question: Take your time to consider. An incident of this sort might also have involved your partner, family member or a close friend. So apart from incidents just covered, have you in the past five years been personally attacked or threatened by someone you know in a way that really frightened you?**

47. The ICVS formulation is, as can be seen, quite complicated. It also has a long history, the second part of the question having been developed in response to criticism that pointed out that the ICVS found much less violence against women by partners and other intimates than surveys focusing on women's victimisation only. An alternative that comes relatively close to this one is the following: "Have you ever suffered an attack or an assault so that it really threatened you, both at home or somewhere else, for example in a public place, in the road, at school, on a public means of transport, at the stadium, at work, excluding thieves or sexual troubles".

48. Other variants approaching this issue are common, recalling that violence is one of the most popular items of victimisation survey history. Some of the examples are short and simple: "In the last 12 months did anyone, including people you know, use physical force or violence against you?", or "Assault: any incident, other than a robbery where the respondent was threatened with force or violence or physically attacked". Along similar lines are also the following examples: "Attack can be anything from being hit, slapped, pushed or grabbed, to being shot or beaten", and "Physical attacks - any use of force such as being hit, slapped, kicked, or grabbed to being beaten, knifed or shot." Sometimes, the question just asks about violence, specified whether it was with or without damage of body, but the kind of assault (such as sexual or other) is not specified.

49. Sometimes, the focus is on serious events: "Attempting to strangle, to kill; assault with a knife". One example makes an elaborate definition, explaining what is included and what is excluded: "Incidents of physical assault against the respondent since the age of 15, including any use of force from a slap to a beating. Includes incidents where a respondent is assaulted in their line of work (e.g. assaulted while working as a Security Guard). Excludes incidents which occurred during the course of play on a sporting field, attempted physical assault and face-to-face threats of physical assault, and incidents of sexual assault that involved physical assault, as these would have been counted in sexual assault." A further survey tries to be specific in another manner: "The survey includes the cases of doing physical injury. Causing physical injury is harm of person's health done against the law by breaking the anatomic integrity or physiological functions of the organism or infliction of pain or suffering."

50. Some surveys do not specify very much. Thus one example asks about assault or threat as one single item. Along the same lines another survey asks about “assault with force combined to assault without force”.

51. *Assaults without force (Threats)*. **ICVS: included in the previous items, and details of the most recent incident define which kind of violence is in question.** The ICVS is therefore assessing threats only in an imperfect manner. This mode is followed in some other surveys as well. This item is thus often dealt with in a relatively inaccurate way. This has often caused confusion, as the basic result would in this solution be a rate of threats and assaults without a clear distinction between the two. However, it has been found repeatedly that measures of threats and measures of physical violence are not distributed identically across the population, indicating that it is essential to measure each of these separately.

52. Threats, in addition, may be confused with attempted violence. This is the case for instance with the wording “In the last 12 months did anyone, including people you know, try or threaten to use physical force or violence against you”. Similarly, one survey “publishes combined figures with assaults with force – see above.” Another survey explains these issues quite thoroughly: “Includes any incidents of attempted physical assault, or face-to-face threats of physical assault against the respondent since the age of 15. This excludes incidents which occurred during the course of play on a sporting field. A threat is defined as any verbal and/or physical intent or suggestion of intent to inflict physical violence, which the respondent believed was likely to be carried out. Threats must be made face-to-face. This includes incidents where a respondent is physically threatened in their line of work (e.g, physically threatened while working as a Security Guard). Excludes any act of violence that was actually carried out, and incidents of sexual assault, threatened sexual assault or physical assault previously reported, which involved threatened or attempted physical assault. Excludes incidents which occurred during the course of play on a sporting field.”

53. Some surveys are, however, making this specification: “Threaten to hit or attack you, or threaten you with a weapon.” Or: “Face-to-face threats include being threatened with physical harm.” Or: Threats of violence. One survey introduces a new dimension to threats, speaking of: “Different kinds of threats at work, threats on children”.

54. One survey is taking into account that threats may be received also other than face-to-face; this is a consideration that relates to what circumstances are thought to be relevant: is the focus on public places and other face-to-face situations, or is it on the subjective experience and the psychological impact on the victim. In the latter case, threats by telephone, e-mail, SMS-message, postcard or letter, and also indirect threats performed in some sophisticated fashion, and even using intermediaries, should be included, while the first alternative would be more straightforward about the issue and have less difficulty in excluding anything not occurring in face-to-face settings. The survey question cited is as follows: “Have you been threatened both directly with or without a weapon, and indirectly by telephone or mail or by intermediary in a way that scared you?” These observations open the door also to other kinds of threats, i.e. threats of something else than violence – serious threats of many other unpleasant things would then become interesting. The idea of getting scared is an interesting addition of the subjective victim experience, applied also in the ICVS.

55. *Psychological violence*. The considerations on threats (of violence) already opened the door to psychological violence. Some surveys are indeed also attempting to measure this dimension of violence. One reply to the UNECE-UNODC survey explains: “While the survey does not collect data about psychological violence, a question about emotional abuse is included

in the module on threatened physical assault. The question measures how much power and/or control the respondent's current partner tries to exert over certain aspects of their everyday life, as well as measuring the level or amount of emotional abuse that may be present. The emotional abuse can be evoked by the partner manipulating, isolating or intimidating the respondent. It includes persistent behaviour that seeks to control the respondent's behaviour and contact with others. All respondents who are currently in a married or de facto relationship are asked this question, regardless of whether they have reported any violence."

56. A related approach is reported in another reply: "Emotional abuse by a current or previous spouse or common-law partner (not included in counts of crime incidents, but used as context for spousal violence). Statements are read that may describe the respondents partner." This idea of not counting such circumstances as violence is also expressed in another reply: "Only covered in additional self completion section on domestic violence and sexual assault." Similarly, one reply explained: "We used the term controlling behavior and did not define it as violence". One example gives another way of formulating the issue: "Power and control ranges from jealousy, limit contact with others, know whereabouts all the time, call names, no access to family income." A further solution deals with the same issue but also opening into other areas perhaps related to bullying in other than intimate relationships: "Control on relationships, criticism on physical appearance, on ideas, insults. At work, destruction of work done or of work tools."

57. Threats: Other. *Threatened physical assault*. In this context, one survey looks at a further aspect of partner violence: "Question also included which asks whether the respondent's current partner has ever threatened or physically assaulted anyone else outside the household during the relationship (includes threatening or assaulting a work colleague, someone at a party or pub, or road rage but does not include those in the household). To be used as a potential lifestyle/risk indicator." This is clearly something beyond the individual victimisation experience.

58. Other: *Stalking*. Women's victimisation surveys also contribute by paying attention to stalking: "Stalking includes when someone loitered or hung around a respondent's home or work place, followed or watched the respondent, interfered with or damaged property, telephoned, sent electronic mail or contacted the respondent with the intent to harm or frighten them, gave them material that they found offensive or disturbing or left it where they could find it. This includes partners. To be regarded as stalking, more than one of the listed actions must occur, or one of the actions must occur on more than one occasion, and the perpetrator must have the intent to harm or frighten the respondent. 'Contacted electronically' includes contacting the respondent with the intent to harm or frighten them by SMS messages, emails, or placing information about them on a website."

59. Other: *Harassment*. This issue may be dealt with in "threats" and/or sexual assaults. One reply is stating that there is a significant difference: "Harassment includes questions about obscene phone calls, indecent exposure, inappropriate comments about the respondent's body or sex life that made them feel uncomfortable, and unwanted sexual touching such as grabbing, kissing or fondling."

60. Other: *Sexual abuse*. This issue is dealt with by asking about "incidents of sexual abuse committed by an adult before the respondent reached the age of 15. 'Sexual abuse' is any act by an adult (male or female), involving a child in sexual activity beyond their understanding, or contrary to currently accepted community standards. Excludes emotional abuse".

61. Other: *Physical abuse*. Similarly, the following reply explains what is the point: "Incidents of physical abuse committed by an adult before the respondent reached the age of 15.

'Physical abuse' is any non-accidental physical injury inflicted upon a child by an adult (male or female) including the respondent's parents. Excludes emotional abuse and discipline that accidentally resulted in an injury." Similar to sexual abuse above (52), this item would describe the respondent's life history, not his/her current victimisations.

62. *Other: Other.* Hate crimes. These have been addressed in the most recent ICVS. This topic requires more elaboration. The same (2005) ICVS also comprised a question of being confronted with visible drug-related problems.

### **The Screener logic: which events to ask in multiple victimisation cases**

63. The typical structure of questionnaires has been to use screeners for each type of offence, and then make additional questions about the details of the offence. This is reasonably unproblematic if the respondent recalls only one event for the reference period. However, it is quite normal to find multiple victims, and it is quite consequential what is done with these. As long as the measurement is only about the prevalence of victimisation to a given type of offence, there should not be a problem. But it is typically also about incidences: it is quite relevant to find out more than only prevalences, provided that the number of observations is reasonable large.

64. It is true that the prevalence is more robust as a statistical phenomenon than incidence, as the latter also requires the respondent to recall, how many times during the reference period similar events occurred. But since multiple victimisation is common, and the distribution (non-random accumulation) of the number of victimisations is a relevant characteristic of victimisation at large, it is of a certain value to find out about the incidence as well. The next problem here concerns the issue how many of the recalled events should be described in detail; or should only details about the most recent one – or the most serious one – be asked. Both solutions exist in available surveys. Alternatively, details may be asked about the three, or even five most recent events of each given type of offence. Obviously, for reasons of parsimony, there must be quite strict limits as to how far one can go in this matter. Different surveys apply different solutions to this dilemma.

### **Police report: a separate important issue**

65. The issue of reporting crimes to the police is solved in different ways. The ICVS asks simply, when looking for details of the most recent incident of a given kind: "Did you or anyone else report that last incident to the police?" Other surveys choose a more or less similar general approach. A rarely addressed issue – even if probably often recognised to be quite relevant – is the problem of whether the police also recorded the event in question. A normal survey respondent is probably often unable to answer this; however when recalling that a basic interest in this issue has to do with the idea of comparing victimisation survey results with police-recorded crime figures, it would be essential to learn which of the events captured by the survey are also taken up in figures of police-recorded crimes. Perhaps a bit confusingly with regard to this problem, one survey asks whether the respondent or someone else reported the incident to the police or another legal authority. In one case, the respondent is asked whether he/she went to the police, and whether he/she filed a complaint or whether somebody else did this. An alternative way to address this issue is as follows: "Did the police come to know about the matter?" The logic of another survey is described as follows: "Did you call the police to report something that happened to you which you thought was a crime?"

66. One survey has attempted to get closer to police recorded crimes by asking whether the event was reported to the police by the victim-respondent or by somebody else, including the

option that the police found out about it otherwise. One survey asks: "Did the police find out about this incident in any way?", continuing to ask: "How did they learn about it?" Furthermore, there is another solution where the respondent is after the initial police reporting question asked whether the police filled out a crime report form. Any of these would likely not work in all jurisdictions; it is also true that the respondent would often find it impossible to answer such a question. Nevertheless, this issue is important, and it would be desirable to find a reasonably comparable way of dealing with it.

### **Isolated single incidents or permanent/long-standing circumstances**

67. Surveys on women's victimisation in particular have paid attention to the observation that the usual survey approach tends to define crime problems as single short-term events and neglect the characteristic of continuity that is often found in violent relationships of female victims of male violence. A cross-section population survey is probably not the best way to capture long-term or permanent circumstances of victimisation. These are actually not confined to violent partner relationships but may also be important in school, army or workplace bullying, as well as in other serious victimisation situations that are not adequately described by measures constructing crime problems in terms of sudden, singular incidents.

68. Whether a simple standard survey should be able to grasp such complex circumstances remains open to constructive debate. It is quite likely that such, like other complex issues, remain beyond the reach of simple instruments. The issue must nevertheless be kept in mind both when interpreting the findings and when further improving the instruments. It need not be overly difficult to design improved measures for such circumstances. What may be a more fundamental problem is that criminal codes themselves tend to define crimes in a similar fashion, and if the surveys are to be about "crimes", then they would often need to address the issue in a fashion that does not pay attention at the permanence of a painful relationship or of distressing life circumstances where criminal behaviours of another person or corporate body are playing a central role.

### **Which crimes or crime-related events: western bias?**

69. Considering what crimes can readily be captured by a personal population survey, they need to be of a kind that individual respondents are able to report about in an interview or a mail survey. As a first step of such considerations, we have now been looking at what crimes are being covered in the victimisation surveys captured by the UNECE-UNODC survey; a related question concerns the issue whose crimes they represent: for different parts of the population, quite different crime-related events may be important. Since general population victimisation surveys were mostly developed in western countries, they have often been criticised of a western bias, looking at the world through a western lens. For a serious analysis of this criticism, a separate study would need to be launched in this context.

70. Before this, it may suffice to point out a couple of obvious cases in point. For instance, property crimes, as defined for example in the ICVS and a large number of other surveys, over-emphasises types of property common in western affluent societies. Or, the assault and sexual harassment and assault questions presented in many surveys seem to take it for granted that the respondent shares the researcher's view of what kinds of events these occurrences contain. A further problem is caused by the idea of "household" property, as this may not correspond to understandings of property ownership in all cultures. A vehicle can be household property or personal property, depending on how ownership is constructed. Also, the vehicles named in typical questionnaires do not contain many types of vehicles that are not common in western societies, such as boats, or horses, camels or other animals used for similar purposes.

71. Some of such culturally determined biases may be corrected by avoiding the use of words such as crime, violence, or theft etc. Then, instead of these objectively constructed event descriptions are used. While this approach would seem to be generally preferred in the victimisation surveys we have studied, it does, however, suffer from other disadvantages, as it requires that the respondent defines by him/herself whether the victimisation event he/she is considering is also something the researcher is after. Another kind of bias occurs where for instance the property items in the questionnaire are not very representative of normal property in a given culture; thus, some critics maintain that rural types of property items overall are not there (farm equipment, cattle...), causing a probable underestimation of problems related to such property. Also, in some cultures land ownership may be related to a serious and widespread crime problem, while others have little experience of such crime. Similarly, there is reason to ask whether female oppression or child abuse in cultures where the women and children are property of the family can be assessed adequately by a survey instrument that is basically assuming personal freedom for everyone.

### **Some conclusions**

72. The interests of knowledge issue is central. Different victimisation surveys of different times and places reflect different interests of knowledge. The interest of knowledge of confining the initial development work to a short list of relevant crimes, plus the issue whether they have been reported to the police or not, is derived from the understanding that if we should develop a global standard for general population victimisation surveys, the objective should be as simple and concrete as possible. Confining the exercise to central victimisation rates (prevalences and incidences) plus providing a link from these to traditional police-recorded/reported crime figures represents a sufficient challenge for the first steps of the present development work. The point is that common standards also require a consensus about the relevant interest of knowledge. Such a consensus may be easier to reach if we stick to the more archaic perspective of the early-day victimisation surveys that were primarily after the dark figure of crime.

73. The representativity and the cultural bias in the selection of crimes and crime-like items was discussed briefly above. Considering that we are looking for a global standard, maybe one conclusion will have to be that regional standards are more likely to be possible, as full homogenisation of societies all over the world has not taken place.

74. The developed country, first world bias in the ICVS for example is quite clear, for all its merits, and does illustrate the point. Global differences in western type affluence also have a strong effect on the opportunities for property crimes, but simultaneously on the seriousness of the consequences of a given property crime.

75. A relevant question is also, whether the list of crimes or crime-related events is representing the most important criminal behaviours that harm human well-being to a sufficiently broad extent so that they can be assessed in a general population survey. There are some or even many nasty things that just are not very suitable for a simple survey approach. Several such items are mentioned in the detailed discussion of the different crimes encompassed in the victimisation surveys reported in the UNECE-UNODC survey, and there are certainly many more. In a simple survey, the target must not be set on a too high, sophisticated, or all-encompassing level. A reasonably short format and sufficiently common issues should suffice. The main task is to find out about crime, and for a systemic reason, about police reporting, all

else is superfluous. This is already a task difficult enough for a first attempt to deal with this issue.

76. The idea of constructing special modules that would better correspond to the group-specific victimisation experiences of vulnerable or otherwise particular segments of the population should be considered. The most obvious case in point is violence against women, but also others could be defined. In this way, basic data about some such segments could significantly enrich the overall results of standard victimisation surveys.

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