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CRIME VICTIMISATION IN THE
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

RICHARD BREEN and DAVID B. ROTTMAN

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General Summary

Measuring Crime

Crime in Ireland is nowadays an issue of central concern. This concern springs not simply from considerations of the effects of crime on its victims and on the overall quality of life but also from the belief that the level of crime is an index of the moral and social well-being of the nation. In recent years a consensus has developed that the level of crime is at unprecedented heights. However, that consensus emerged despite the limitations of the data available concerning the level of crime.

This paper reports the findings of the 1982/83 ESRI Crime Victimization Survey, the first such comprehensive survey carried out in the Republic of Ireland. Between October 1982 and October 1983 a national sample of 8,902 individuals were asked whether they had been the victim of any one or more of six specified crimes during the preceding twelve months.

In Chapter 1 of this paper we discuss the reasons for undertaking such a survey. In particular, we note that the most commonly utilised measure of crime — the number of indictable offences reported or known — cannot be regarded as either reliable or valid for such a purpose. This is because, first, the main index of the amount of crime — the annual total of indictable offences — includes a great many trivial offences yet excludes other serious offences. Secondly, the Garda statistics, like those of any police force, are responsive not alone to the number of criminal incidents that take place but also to the readiness of the public to report such offences to the police and to the methods adopted by the police in dealing with and recording reported offences. Since these factors are likely to be susceptible to change over time, year to year comparisons of the level of crime using the indictable totals can be misleading, especially as used by the news media and politicians.

While victimisation surveys also suffer from some limitations (and these are discussed in Chapter 2) they can be seen as a useful supplementary measure of crime trends to that provided by official statistics. Furthermore, they are likely to uncover more instances of crime than are officially recorded. Thus, they are useful in establishing a base-line by which understatement in the official statistics can be judged, within the limits set by problems of comparability between survey and official definitions of crimes. Moreover, since in victimisation surveys information is gathered not only about crimes but also about

characteristics of those sampled (households or individuals), whether or not they were the victims of crime, such surveys allow us to examine how the risk of being victimised is distributed across the population and also to look at, for example, how the probability of reporting an offence to the police or the seriousness of the loss sustained varies across the population.

The present paper, then, has three central aims:

- (i) to provide an indication of the prevailing level of crime in Ireland over the survey period, which is independent of official figures (Chapter 3);
- (ii) to set Irish crime levels in comparative perspective with those of other countries, particularly England, Wales and Scotland (Chapter 4);
- (iii) to examine the question of who, within Ireland, is most at risk of specific sorts of crime (Chapter 5).

The Overall Level of Crime

In our survey as a whole there were 1,733 households which had been the victim of one or more of the six crimes dealt with and 2,998 criminal incidents. Thus, there was an overall victimisation rate of 19 per 100 households and an overall offence rate of 34 incidents per 100 households. The victimisation levels for each crime are given in Table 3.1. We estimate that 3.6 out of each 100 households were the victims of a burglary over the 12 month period covered by the survey, giving a total of 32,000 households burgled in the country as a whole and slightly over 40,000 incidents of burglary, some households having been burgled more than once. For car theft, the comparable figures are 4.5 out of each 100 car owning households victimised, or 27,000 households in total, yielding almost 34,000 cases of car theft.

The difference between the number of victims and the number of offences for all six crimes, as well as the overall ratio of 1.7 incidents per victim, points to certain households being particularly susceptible to multiple victimisation of either the same type of offence more than once or more than one type of offence.

Our figures for the number of incidents are somewhat in excess of the official Garda statistics for the nearest calendar year, 1982. These record 16,558 residential burglaries and 21,936 cases of car theft. These discrepancies arise partly because not all crimes are reported or come to the attention of the Gardai. Rates of reporting of offences to the Gardai vary among our six types of crime, with burglary and car theft, both of which are likely to involve insurance claims and substantial loss, being the most likely to be reported and vandalism and theft of an object from around the house, which are the most frequently repeated offences and probably constitute a high proportion of trivial incidents, being the least likely to be brought to the attention of the Gardai. However, even applying the reporting figures to our victimisation figures suggests that for the three crimes where such a comparison was feasible (burglary, vehicle theft, and theft

of an object from a vehicle) between a half and two-thirds of reported incidents appear in the Garda statistics.

Comparisons with Other Countries

When compared to the estimated victimisation rates in England and Wales and Scotland, Irish rates of burglary were found to be 1.7 times higher and larcenies of vehicles twice as high. Rates were expressed as per 10,000 households or 10,000 vehicle owning households, as appropriate. Irish rates for other forms of property crime — specifically, thefts from vehicles and vandalism to household property — were generally at the same level or lower than those in Great Britain.

The comparisons based on victimisation survey estimates were less favourable to Ireland than those based on police statistics. The discussion in Chapter 4 of these findings stresses the difficulties in making international comparisons, alerting the reader to the major strengths and weaknesses of the specific comparisons we made.

On balance, we conclude that the findings should be interpreted as highlighting particular factors which make burglary and vehicle theft especially prevalent in Ireland. There is less firm evidence for an overall high rate of property crime in the Republic, relative to its neighbours, though we cannot exclude that possibility. For two forms of theft at least — larceny of items kept inside vehicles and vandalism — Ireland has the lower rate of offence incidence.

Members of the Irish public are generally more likely than residents of Britain to report victimisation incidents to the police. It is likely that people in Ireland expect more from their police force than is the case in countries like England, where high crime rates have been present for a long time.

The Distribution of Victimisation Risk

The survey results indicate that crime in Ireland is overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon, heavily concentrated in Dublin. For example, the surveys showed that 73 per cent of all burglaries take place in Co. Dublin. Rural rates of victimisation are extremely low except in areas in close proximity to Dublin and to certain other major urban centres, such as Limerick.

In Chapter 5 we looked at how the risk of being a crime victim varies according to three additional characteristics of households: these were the size of the household (that is, the number of people residing in the household); the age of the household head; and the socio-economic group of the household head. We carried out this analysis in the light of a theory of predatory criminal victimisation which states that the risk of victimisation depends on three things: the attractiveness and suitability of the target; the level of guardianship of the target; and its proximity to motivated offenders. We operationalised these three con-

cepts through the variables size of the household and age of the household head (guardianship) socio-economic group of the household head (attractiveness); and geographical location of the household (proximity to likely offenders). We found that for all of our six crimes the risk of victimisation varied significantly according to each of these factors but that hypotheses derived from the theory were most strongly supported in the case of burglary. Here it was found that those households most at risk are those likely to be convergent with potential offenders (those located in Dublin); those which are most attractive (where the head of the household is self-employed or in a non-manual job); and where guardianship is least; these are primarily single person households headed by an old person, or amongst larger households, those headed by young people.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We present our conclusions and recommendations under three headings; criminal justice policy, crime statistics and research on crime.

1. Criminal Justice Policy:

The results of our analysis suggest that property crime in Ireland is clearly patterned. This offers the prospect that an improved allocation of personnel and a more imaginative choice among modes of policing in localities should be rewarded with success.

Irish crime is urban-based to a degree rarely encountered in other countries. The main challenge for the Garda authorities, therefore, is a coherent strategy for urban policing. Victimisation surveys can point to where crime control and law enforcement problems are concentrated, but the challenge is really to set priorities and direct resources accordingly. Basic questions need to be addressed: What size of area is optimal for Garda districts in various parts of cities? What mix of car patrols, foot patrols and community policy is optimal for a particular type of area? What is the most effective mix between resources that permit a rapid response to requests for assistance and those resources that might deter crime from occurring in the first place?

More generally, there appears to be a significant imbalance in the geographic distributions of Garda resources and crime. In 1980, 42 per cent of Garda strength was concentrated in the Dublin Metropolitan Area, far below the capital's share of the crime problem. Research in other countries does not offer the promise that a reallocation of Gardai to Dublin or more police patrolling generally will reduce the level of crime, but it would enhance the level of service available to citizens in need of assistance. Providing such a service to the public is the basis for the co-operation that makes detections and prosecutions possible.

Our findings also point to the potential of preventive measures that maximise guardianship, the lack of which is one of the main predictors of where property

crime occurs. The attractiveness of some targets, especially motor vehicles, can also be diminished through a policy of "target hardening". It is possible to reduce vandalism to telephone kiosks and public transport vehicles for example, or lower the rate at which motor vehicles are stolen. More resilient construction material or fabrics, steering column locks, and mortice locks and neighbourhood watches all seek to diminish the opportunity for crime.

The success to date of these efforts in other countries has been sufficient to make their implementation a viable option in criminal justice policy. It is a matter for public policy because such a response is of little merit if it merely serves to "displace" crime from one target to another. In other words, those who do receive the additional protection will benefit, whether households or social groups or neighbourhoods, to the cost of others who will experience the offences so displaced.

A victimisation survey directs our attention toward the individuals and families that suffer the costs of crime — financial, physical and psychological. For many victims, their experience was not of an isolated incident, but of several victimisations. The need for reassurance through prompt, courteous Garda response to reports of crime is paramount, as is the need to make victim support services an integral part of criminal justice policy.

2. Crime Statistics:

Victimisation surveys provide an alternative, rather than a definitive, measure of the level of crime. Discrepancies between our survey estimates and the numbers found in the Garda statistics, however, suggest a number of reforms that should be made in the methodology underlying the *Annual Report on Crime*. First, there is a need to provide offence totals for identifiable offence types, such as larcenies of motor vehicles. Tabulation of the number of offences should be made on the same basis for indictable and non-indictable offence categories. Individual Garda districts and divisions should be audited on a regular basis to ensure that the rules for recording, classifying and counting the number of offences are adhered to.

Second, the Garda Síochána should make public the rules and procedures that are used to collate the *Annual Report on Crime*. Whenever those procedures are modified the change should be noted in the Report in which it is introduced. If statutes establish new offence categories or modify existing categories, the manner in which the crime statistics incorporate those changes should be noted.

Our concern about the current state of Irish crime statistics is prompted by the use that the mass media and politicians make of the *Annual Report on Crime*. Police crime statistics are products of a data collection effort that is designed to serve the objectives of crime control and law enforcement. To do so, complexities are introduced that make it unwise to use those statistics, and particularly an index

such as the number of indictable offences "reported or known", as absolute measures of the amount of crime that is occurring. Police statistics are still less informative as a measure of the moral state of the nation.

3. Criminological Research:

The results of the 1982/83 ESRI Victimization Survey were sufficiently promising to make a replication the first research priority. Such a survey should both repeat the questions from our survey, allowing for comparison, and considerably expand the range of questions included.

A programme of victimisation surveys is essential if we are to measure changes over time in the extent and nature of crime in Ireland. Official statistics, in the absence of a complementary set of victimisation studies, would appear to be a guide only to long-term trends in the level of crimes and they cannot capture short-term fluctuations in the amount of crime. We need both sets of data.

Victimization surveys should be expanded in coverage to include crimes where institutions such as commercial firms, schools, or the general public (e.g., parks, sporting facilities) are the victim. Victimization survey data will be deficient as an index of the amount of "white collar" crime such as embezzlement, forgery and fraud unless institutional victims are included. Such surveys might help to focus attention on the extent and cost to society of such crimes.

Neither survey research nor official statistics are informative about the social organisation of crime in a society. Research on specific localities or on practitioners of highly specialised forms of crime is needed in Ireland to provide the grounding within which we can make sense of answers to the two basic questions posed at the start of this paper: how much crime is there at present in Ireland and which families and social groups are most at risk from crime victimisation? We have provided statistical answers to those questions. If we wish to probe deeper and ask what are the links between levels of crime and factors such as (a) early school leaving, long-term unemployment and drug abuse, or (b) the probability of detention, prosecution and punishment, we will need to know more about the social organisation of crime. Surveys and analyses of official crime statistics can hint at, but not definitively indicate, the nature of those linkages.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE ENTERPRISE OF COUNTING CRIME

Fear of becoming a crime victim, particularly of a burglary, a robbery, or a car theft, is today a preoccupation for most Irish city residents. Indeed, the risk of becoming a victim intrudes for nearly all of us, city and country dwellers alike, as a factor in how we plan and carry out our daily activities. This contrasts sharply with the situation 20 years ago. Then, crime was very low on the agenda of issues that were seen to merit public concern and require remedial action.

This report offers an appraisal of the magnitude of the problem of crime in Ireland today. It has three main objectives. The first is to offer an estimate derived from survey data of the amount of serious criminal offences in the Republic and which thus supplements that provided in the official crime statistics published annually by the Garda Síochána. Between October 1982 and October 1983, the residents of 9,000 Irish households were asked whether they had been the victims of six major criminal offences and, if so, whether they had reported the offence to the Gardaí. The results of that survey provide the basis for our estimated level of crime.

Our second objective is to use the survey to assess Ireland's relative international standing in terms of the level of crime. In particular, Irish crime levels are compared to those obtaining in Great Britain.

Both in making our estimate of the level of crime in this country and in the comparisons to other countries, we consider how the findings differ from those derived from estimates based on official police statistics.

The third objective is to determine which types of households and persons are most at risk of becoming a crime victim. Thus, we examine which areas, which types of households, which age groups and which socio-economic groups have the highest rates of victimisation for the six criminal offences. Both the level and the risk of crime victimisation are estimated for a one year period.

Victimisation surveys were initiated in the late 1960s to respond to long-standing reservations about the comprehensiveness of police crime statistics.¹ By surveying at random from the pool of potential crime victims — persons, families, business concerns, etc. — it was thought that the "dark figure" of unreported and unrecorded crime could be reduced to inconsequential levels, allowing the first truly comprehensive measures of the extent of lawbreaking activity (Sparks, 1981). That demand for more and better information was given particular impetus by the expectation, manifest initially in the United States, that the result would be more effective policy making in the area of criminal justice.

The first victimisation survey went into the field in Washington D.C. during

1966 soon followed by numerous other surveys in the United States and Europe, culminating in the massive National Crime Surveys conducted in the 1970s, each of which questioned residents of some 60,000 American households.

What emerged was an *alternative* way of measuring the amount of crime, not a basis for improving police crime statistics. Victimization surveys both share some of the weaknesses of official crime statistics — chiefly a bias toward “serious” incidents and differential willingness to co-operate among social groups — and have some unique strengths and weaknesses. Survey-based estimates under-represent crimes against institutions and multiple victims (Sparks, 1981, p. 28); however, they do reveal a substantial number of incidents not reported to the police, especially for property offences. These reports are not screened by impartial observers as to whether they meet the criteria of the criminal law. The victim is the policeman, judge and jury. Thus, victimization surveys are different rather than “better” measures of the amount of crime. But in their supplementary role, survey estimates can help us to interpret the official crime statistics. A succession of surveys in both the United States and in the United Kingdom have shown that apparent upsurges in the level of officially recorded major property crimes, such as burglary, during the 1970s were artificial products of changing reporting practices by the public, not more crime (USA: Jencks, 1983; UK: Hough, 1983).

¹The great “moral statistician” Quetelet (1835/42, p. 82) offers as definitive an assessment of the “dark figure” and its implications as did any of his successors:

our observations can only refer to a certain number of known and tried offences, out of the unknown sum total of crimes committed. Since this sum total of crimes committed will probably ever continue unknown, all the reasoning of which it is the basis will be more or less defective ... there is a ratio, nearly invariably the same, between known and tried offences and the unknown sum total of crimes committed. This ratio is necessary, and if it did not really exist, every thing which, until the present time, has been said on the statistical documents of crime would be false and absurd ... The ratio of which we speak necessarily varies according to the nature and seriousness of the crimes: in a well-organised society, where the police are active and justice is rightly administered, this ratio, for murders and assassinations, will be nearly equal to unity; that is to say, no individual will disappear from the society by murder or assassination, without its being known: this will not be precisely the case with poisonings. When we look to thefts and offences of smaller importance, the ratio will become very small, and a great number of offences will remain unknown, either because those against whom they are committed do not perceive them, or do not wish to prosecute the perpetrators, or because justice itself has not sufficient evidence to act upon. Thus, the greatness of this ratio, which will generally be different for different crimes and offences, will chiefly depend on the activity of justice in reaching the guilty, on the care with which the latter conceal themselves, on the repugnance which the individuals injured may have to complain, or perhaps on their not knowing that any injury has been committed against them.

The results of victimisation surveys were diverted to a number of different tasks. They permitted for the first time the delineation of personal and household characteristics that make people more or less vulnerable to crime, allowed us to separate changes over time in official statistics due to increased public reporting of crime from those due to actual increases in the number of offences, and provided a uniform basis for measuring crime levels in urban and rural areas. Here, the achievements have been impressive. Victimisation surveys have stimulated a focus on situational opportunities as contributing factors in property crime (Cohen and Felson, 1979) leading to a more adequate understanding of the distribution of crime risk. They also assist us in appreciating the emotional and financial consequences of crime for victims and thus in devising programmes to cater for the needs of victims in the aftermath of a crime.

This chapter places our victimisation survey and the estimates it contains within the context of other sources of information on the magnitude of the crime problem in Ireland. The first section considers those sources and the claims that have been made on their basis. The second section summarises what is known about recent trends in crime in Ireland. Finally, the structure of the remainder of the report is outlined.

Measuring Crime: Sources and Claims

A public perception that crime in Ireland has reached unprecedented levels — at least in this century — is evident in the newspapers and in Dáil and Seanad Parliamentary Debates from the early 1970s. That perception was probably heightened to some extent by anxieties attributable to the situation in Northern Ireland. But an accumulation of evidence in the form of crime statistics was also available, suggesting that a major transformation had indeed occurred in the risk of victimisation. Each release of Garda crime statistics was greeted with headlines on the progress of the “Crime Crisis” or the “War on Crime”, with reports from the battlefield uniformly poor. The significance of measuring the amount of crime was accepted as a matter of routine by the late 1970s. That importance was given further urgency by a spate of armed robberies, in which five Gardai and eight bystanders lost their lives (*The Irish Times*, 1 March 1981, p. 12). As a result, in the 1980s, crime statistics are a standard yardstick by which Ireland’s condition is assessed. Their use goes far beyond a simple index of the immediate danger to health and property. Crime is now taken as symptomatic of something that has gone terribly wrong with the very nature of Ireland and its people. Crime as an issue has become entangled with other national problems, like unemployment and drug abuse.

Over most of this period, the Garda Commissioner’s *Annual Report on Crime* bore the brunt of public and media interest in knowing how much crime there was and how rapidly it was increasing. The limitations of police crime statistics

for those purposes, however, led to other approaches to counting crime. The two main alternatives to date have been the public opinion poll and insurance company records. We first discuss the official, Garda, crime statistics and then rival measures. With each, we summarise the conclusions that have been drawn on their basis and some of the major problems of reliability and validity associated with their claims.

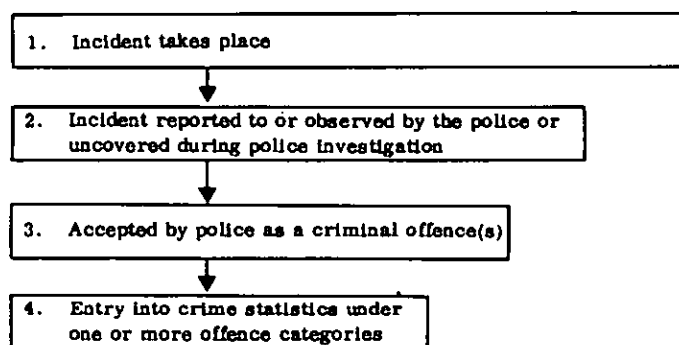
Garda Crime Statistics

Since 1947 the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána has published an annual report indicating, among other matters, the number of indictable offences "known or reported" and the number of non-indictable offences for which court proceedings were commenced. Prior to 1947, the only post-Independence crime statistics were in the form of annual totals published in the *Statistical Abstract of Ireland*, a series which began in 1927. Both series concentrate on a four-fold distinction among indictable offences: "offences against the person"; "offences against property with violence (the common trait here is that the *property* was treated with violence)"; "offences against property without violence"; and "other indictable offences". Both series make additional distinctions within these subheadings, providing totals for a number of specific criminal offences. In practice, the *Annual Report on Crime* has used between 60 and 100 specific indictable offences and between 50 and 80 non-indictable offences.

These statistical series represent the best evidence available to us on the amount and nature of crime in this country. However, like all social statistics they are subject to problems of reliability and validity that limit the extent to which we can simply equate "crime" with the incidents listed in the *Annual Report on Crime* and the extent to which we can compare one year's tabulations with the next.

To understand the sources of such potential unreliability in measuring it is necessary to follow the process by which incidents become entries into police crime statistics. That process can be represented as a flow chart.

Figure 1.1: *The statistical career of criminal incidents*



The proportion of incidents that become transferred from one stage to the next varies by type of offence, though some general principles have been consistently found in research studies. The most general principle is that incidents must be interpreted as crime or non-crime. A straightforward designation of "crime" is usually possible only for a small minority of offences. The precise circumstances, the persons involved and other factors determine whether an incident is treated as a crime. Such ambiguity is inherent in the criminal law itself. Many crimes can only take place where a particular "intention" can be established. For example, as defined in the Larceny Act of 1916, which still governs the law of theft in the Republic, larceny of someone's property requires that there be "the intention of permanently depriving the owner of it" (Ó Síocháin, 1977, p. 173)*.

For a crime to reach the stage of "discovery", it must be observable by someone who (a) regards it as a crime and (b) is prepared to pursue the matter officially. A rising level of assaultive offences may, therefore, reflect a growing intolerance of interpersonal violence in society (McClintock, 1963, pp. 100-101) rather than a rising risk of becoming the victim of such an offence. Similarly, a declining level of reported larcenies may result from public frustration over the lack of success by the police in apprehending the persons responsible for such offences.

The public's perceptions are crucial as police forces are highly dependent on the vigilance of the citizenry. Typically, a police force relies on members of the public for 85 of every 100 offences that are discovered, a dependence that is evident in both research studies and police records (Burrows, 1982, p. 13). Of those 85 reports, most are either by the victim or by someone acting on behalf of the victim. "Victims" here include organisations. Institutional policy on crime prevention (e.g., the use of security guards) and on recourse to the legal process will thus affect the rate of crime discovery.²

Research suggests that the three main factors involved in the failure to bring an offence to police notice are (a) a perception that it was not sufficiently serious or would not be regarded as serious by the police and (b) a perception that there is nothing the police could accomplish, (c) a perception that police involvement would be inappropriate (see Sparks *et al.*, 1977; Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 11; Chambers and Tombs, 1984, p. 16). Other reasons "which influence the

*We use the word "theft" in our text as a generic term covering all forms of unlawful taking of another person's property. However, the data contained in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 pertain to quite specific actions, the precise definitions of which are explained in considerable detail in footnotes to the text or to specific tables.

²Studies typically include information supplied by police informants as coming from the public. Though that allocation is questionable, the proportion of offences involved is so small — 0.2 per cent in Steer's study (1980, p. 67) — that it cannot affect the general statement.

public to report incidents with which they are involved as offences to the police depend on their view of the offender, the incident, the likelihood of police action in respect of the particular offence type, and their attitude to the police" (Carr-Hill and Stern, 1979, p. 87). The effectiveness and operational methods of a particular police force will influence the extent of reporting of crime, but this appears to primarily occur indirectly — through the public's approval of and satisfaction with the force. It follows that social groups may have different propensities to report offences to the police. These may affect comparisons across jurisdictions and over time.

The public filters the crime of which a police force is aware. In turn, a police force has procedures to screen reports from the public and from individual policemen to determine which offences to record officially. Some reports are disregarded completely, while others are lost in the process of applying procedures for classification and counting to the reported incidents.

The decision not to record is an element of police discretion. For example, policemen arriving at the scene of a dispute must decide if the intervention of the criminal law process is appropriate. Frequently, police on the scene choose not to treat an incident as a crime. How frequently apparently varies among police departments. Black (1970, pp. 735-736) found that two thirds of police interventions resulted in a "crime"; Pepinsky (1976) in another American study found this occurred in less than half of all interventions.

Once lodged as an official statistic, an offence may still disappear from the tabulation. Steer (1980, p. 59) found that "something like 10 per cent of offences initially recorded as known to the police were either 'no crime' or suspected of being 'no crime'."³ Bottomley and Coleman (1981, p. 61) found a 'no crime' rate of 11 per cent of all instances in which an official crime report had been completed. Other studies, summarised by Bottomley and Coleman (1981, pp. 64-77), confirm the practice of removing crime reports from the official statistics, and suggest both substantial variation between police forces in its extent and a consistent pattern in which such removal was rare for some offence types (burglary, fraud and robbery) and extensive for others (pedal cycle larceny, violence against the person and criminal damage to property).

If an incident is brought to the attention of the police and the appropriate forms filled in to label it a crime, there is yet another reason why it may not appear in the crime statistics. This is the result of procedures and conventions for taking a unique incident and translating it into a statistic. Such are the vagaries of that process that the Perks Committee (1967) was established to bring uni-

³Steer's research was carried out in the city of Oxford, Coleman and Bottomley do not name the "medium-sized industrial city in the North" that they studied and Mawby's research was in Sheffield. Burrow's (1982) study of three English Metropolitan forces — Greater Manchester, West Midlands and Merseyside — replicated the results from the cities previously cited.

formity to the practices in the U.K. The complexities proved sufficient to require the preparation of a 102 page book *Counting Rules for Serious Offences*, issued in 1980 by the Home Office, to impose a common set of rules and procedures.⁴

The difficulties are considerable in any instance where an incident is comprised of repeated violations of the same law or of more than one criminal law. Forgery typically involves a series of similar offences, against one or more victims. Should a distinct offence be counted for each forged cheque or for each victim, or should only one entry be made in the crime statistics where a single culprit or group of culprits is believed to be responsible? A burglary that results in a homicide poses similar problems, as would a car theft in which the car was recovered but its radio was not. Here, some ordering by seriousness is required. A homicide that occurred in the course of a burglary would take priority in classifying the incident as part of the crime statistics. That example is reasonably straightforward, with a single crime, "homicide", being counted and the burglary not treated as a separate offence. But most incidents reported by the police present similar problems with less obvious solutions. For example, a burglary in law occurs when illegal entry with "intent" is made into a building. Such an illegal entry will typically be followed by theft of property or malicious damage to property within the house or shop. Theft or malicious damage are separate, and here, lesser offences that occur simultaneously with the burglary. Some procedure is needed to select which offence category in which to place the incident.

Similar problems arise when an incident involves more than one victim. Let us say that property has been stolen from five cars parked during the lunch hour in the same car park. A police force needs guidelines as to whether these offences are treated as constituting a single crime or five crimes. Obviously, variation in how such complications are dealt with between jurisdictions or over time will distort comparisons in the level of crime.⁵

It is at the stage of categorisation that the rather obscure indictable/non-indictable distinction becomes a determining factor of how crime is officially tabulated in Ireland. Totals of "known or reported" are only made available if an offence is within the indictable category. And it is the total number of indictable offences that is entered into the scorecards maintained of criminal activity and Garda success. The Garda Commissioner faithfully begins his report by informing the Minister for Justice as to the number of indictable

⁴UK crime statistics before and after 1980 are therefore not strictly comparable, being based on different systems of enumeration.

⁵Police forces may also differ in their approach to updating information on incidents once they are entered into the crime statistics. If a homicide charge results in a conviction for "assault occasioning grievous bodily harm", some forces (like the Garda Síochána) would reclassify the incident accordingly. Others would not.

offences of which his force became aware during the preceding year.

This is an unsatisfactory basis for counting the amount of crime and still less satisfactory a basis for tracing year to year changes in that amount. This argument can be made on two grounds. One is that within the context of official crime statistics the total indictable offences (or subtotals thereof) is an arbitrary, invalid measure. Second, that in any case the total stated in the *Annual Report on Crime* is susceptible to many influences, of which the amount of criminal activity in Ireland is but one. This multiplicity of factors which the crime statistics reflect can be thought of in terms of those that are responsible for the "dark figure" of offences that have occurred but of which the police are not aware and those technical matters that affect the comprehensiveness of the coverage found in official crime statistics. Though most acute in the case of the total of "indictable offences" these are general problems inherent in the measurement of crime.

The distinction between indictable and non-indictable (sometimes termed "summary") offences was drawn by British Parliamentary statutes in 1849 and 1851. It reflects ideas then current about the relative seriousness of various criminal offences. Simply stated, indictable offences can be (or must be) tried before a judge and jury, while non-indictable offences were viewed as sufficiently minor to be dealt with summarily by a judge acting without a jury. Though the application of the indictable/non-indictable distinction in court procedure has been revised and largely rendered obsolete in everyday practice by subsequent statute law, the mid-nineteenth century dichotomy remains in force. Homicide and treason, shoplifting and "public mischief" all qualify as indictable offences. In contrast, more recently created offences, such as those relating to drug abuse (including drug peddling) are stated as "hybrid" offences (see Ryan and Magee, 1983, p. 3) to be classified on a case by case basis by the form of prosecution chosen and are not designated as indictable or not. The Garda statistics include such new offences under the non-indictable totals. Other examples include offences under the Revenue Laws, Firearms Acts and the Juries Act, 1976. All of these are entered into the non-indictable offence statistics.⁶

⁶The indictable/non-indictable distinction has continuing relevance for the manner in which cases are prosecuted in the criminal courts. This follows from the Constitutional guarantee of a jury trial for all save "minor offences" and cases tried before special courts or military tribunals (Article 38). All indictable offences are by definition "serious" and thus allow the defendant to opt for a trial before judge and jury instead of summary disposition in the District Court. Few choose that option in practice, but the principle is absolute. In effect, Ireland has a crude hierarchy of indictable offences, one that ranges from those few (murder or treason) that must be tried before a jury, on the one hand, to others which can automatically be tried summarily in the District Court, on the other. The middle ground consists of the bulk of offences for which the type of prosecution is determined by (a) the defendant, (b) the District Justice, and for some offences, (c) the Director of Public Prosecutions. (The relevant statute law is The Criminal Justice Act, 1951 (as amended) and The Criminal Procedure Act, 1967; Ryan and Magee, 1983, Chapter I and Appendix H, provide the clearest exposition of this extraordinarily complex but vital topic.)

The category "indictable offences" is therefore doubly deficient. Its generality renders it uninterpretable and significant omissions from its ranks, such as "joy-riding" (the unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle), leave it incomplete. Some major forms of crime consist of both indictable and non-indictable offences. For example, thefts of vehicles fall either under the Larceny Act, 1916 and are therefore indictable offences or under the Road Traffic Act, 1961 and are non-indictable offences as a result. The difference is not in the magnitude of the penalty that can follow a conviction but essentially whether the vehicle is recovered. Such considerations interfere with the task of estimating the amount of crime that is occurring as they introduce extraneous factors into the system of counting.

Minor forms of theft, especially offences like "larceny from unattended vehicles" and larceny of pedal cycles form the bulk of recorded indictable offences. Such offences cannot be disregarded, but their presence in an index of crime levels poses two problems: (a) they are assigned equal weight to an armed robbery or aggravated burglary and (b) they are the offences most susceptible to problems of reliability in the reporting, counting and classifying of crime. In the 1960s, larceny-type offences accounted for two-thirds or more of all indictable offences. That proportion has fallen steadily, as burglary in particular became a more substantial presence in the crime statistics, but larcenies still accounted for 57 of every 100 indictable offences in 1983. Whether this declining share denotes a change in the relative frequency of various types of crime, in Garda recording practices, or both, we cannot say.

The Garda Síochána Code, issued to each Garda recruit while in training, has detailed instructions on the "Recording of Crime". Irish crime statistics only take on meaning in the context of those instructions and, of course, the extent to which they are followed. This will assume particular importance in Chapter 4, which compares Irish and British crime levels, as the Gardai and their British counterparts do not follow the same procedure in classifying and counting crime incidents. Artificial changes in the crime level here over time may also result if the rules for counting and classifying change. The crime rate may then expand or decline for purely technical reasons. In some years, for example, homicides in the Republic were counted on the basis of the number of victims; in other years, a homicide with multiple victims was only entered once into the crime statistics, making the *Annual Report on Crime* an unreliable measure of the frequency of homicide (Rottman, 1980, p. 119).

Quite dramatic changes in the counting and classifying rules do take place in the *Report on Crime* series. The offence of "larceny of pedal cycles" is exemplary. Over the early 1970s, there were typically about 3,000 such offences "known or reported". Suddenly, in 1976, a massive decline in that offence took place, bringing the number down to about one tenth of what had previously obtained.

In 1975, the Garda Commissioner reported that 3,063 pedal cycle larcenies were known to have occurred, of which 163 (5.3 per cent) were "detected".⁷ The 1976 report gave a total of 314 larcenies, 193 (62 per cent) of which resulted in "detections". The most likely explanation is that the decline in crime and the increase in Garda success resulted from a decision to record only those offences where the pedal cycle was recovered. Also, given the ambiguity about "intention", a prerequisite to determining that a larceny has occurred, it is possible that after 1976 pedal cycles reported as stolen were consigned to the non-indictable heading of "unauthorised taking". The important point is that we are unable to explain this sudden change in the official statistics. It can serve as a cautionary note for all forms of larceny, and, by inference, to the very idea that a total of indictable offences is a meaningful index of how the level of crime changes over time.

The total number of "known or reported" indictable offences is therefore neither a reliable nor a valid measure of changing amounts of crime. It is unreliable in that it is strongly influenced by extraneous factors, such as the public's propensity to report crime to the police, that themselves vary over time. Some indictable offences are more likely than others to suffer from an inconstant "dark figure" and inconsistent procedures for counting or classifying incidents. By merging such a diversity of offences, the total of indictable offences maximises the effects of unreliability. The number of indictable offences is invalid in that it is a measure of far more than the amount of crime and does not reflect a set of actions that constitute a consistent definition of what is a criminal act.

Yet it is that measure that serves in Ireland as the basis for determining the magnitude of the crime problem and the successes and failures of the Gardaí. It has provided the headlines over recent years: "Dáil told of 100 per cent crime rise in 10 years" (*Irish Independent*, 14 November 1980). The number of indictable offences doubled over the 1970s (from 31,000 in 1970 to 64,000 in 1979), with most of the growth concentrated in the 1974/77 period. Overall, between 1961 and 1983 the total number of indictable offences increased seven-fold, from 14,818 to 102,387.

Though indicative of a change in the extent and nature of crime in Ireland this measure is far too crude to use as a basis for any rigorous assertions. It cannot allow us to determine how much of a change has taken place in the level of crime or how Ireland's crime level stands relative to other countries. Garda crime statistics are collected to describe and meet the requirements of police work in Ireland. Their use by others — researchers, journalists and politicians — needs to reflect the questions being asked, which may differ from the exigencies facing the Garda Commissioner.

⁷A detection means that the Gardaí are satisfied that they know the identity of the person responsible for an offence. Generally, that also indicates that a court proceeding has been initiated, though in several situations (e.g., referral to the Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme) it does not.

The most sensible response is for journalists and other commentators to discard the practice of reporting the total of indictable offences and limit consideration to those categories of offences, indictable and non-indictable, that are important and can be counted in a meaningful, consistent manner. It is also advisable to complement the use of Garda statistics with other independently derived measures of crime. Such measures will have their own problems of reliability and validity. The virtue is that those problems are to some extent different from those which bedevil official crime statistics.

Surveys of Crime Victimization and the Fear of Crime

The first full survey of crime victimisation in Ireland was carried out in March, 1983, by Irish Marketing Surveys Ltd. It reported levels of offences far in excess of the amounts found in recent *Annual Reports on Crime*. Based on a national sample of 1,316 individuals, it found that 9 per cent had been victims of a theft of money or property, 8 per cent had had their home, car or other property vandalised, 5 per cent had had their home broken into (or an attempt made to do so), 3 per cent had had a car stolen, while 1 per cent had money or property taken by force and 1 per cent had been physically assaulted. This suggests a level of illegal entry that is twice or more than that shown in the *Annual Report on Crime* and a level of robbery nearly ten times that found in the official crime statistics (Breen and Rottman, 1984, p. 279). For the Dublin area, the survey measured levels of crime twice or three times as great as the national level.

Part of the reason for the discrepancy between Garda statistics and the survey results is that the respondents claimed that they had reported only about two thirds of the victimisations to the Gardaí. The reporting rates were:

Question	Reporting Rate
Had money or property stolen?	58.4%
Home, property or car vandalised?	66.0%
Home broken into or attempt at?	67.2%
Money or property taken by force?	75.0%*
Personally mugged or physically assaulted?	60.0%*

*Based on 12 and 15 victimisations, respectively.

The Irish Marketing Survey (IMS) victimisation survey offered a far bleaker picture of the magnitude of the crime problem in Ireland, especially in Dublin. It produced estimates substantially above those derivable from the Garda crime statistics and indeed suggested that there was a substantial "dark figure" of

crime yet untapped by the Gardai. IMS concluded that one in five adults nationally and one in three Dublin adults had been the victim of one of the crimes included in their survey. Writing in April, 1983, IMS foresaw a still grimmer future:

One worrying point is the fact that the reported crime level figures for Ireland are, in all cases, within 1% of the levels reported in the United States a decade ago. In the intervening 10 years, the position in the US has deteriorated gradually and reported crime levels are now approximately 40% higher than those recorded in the early 70s. The findings of the most recent report by the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána (1982) might suggest that we have cause for concern in that we may be set on the same unhappy path (1983a, p.3).

In Chapter 2 we point out the limitations to the IMS estimates of the amount of crime in Ireland. For the present, our purpose is to describe what is the most alarming research-based claim as to the level of crime and of Ireland's position relative to other countries.

Even if we could measure the risk of crime victimisation with precision, fear of crime would remain a cause for concern. News media coverage, the experiences of friends and acquaintances, and factors such as age, will lead to a perception of risk that may be imperfectly related to the objective level of risk. To the extent that such perceptions impinge on the freedom of individuals to do as they wish, fear of crime is a topic worthy of consideration.

There are two sources of survey research evidence on the extent of such fear in Ireland. One is based on a nationwide survey of 2,000 individuals carried out in the Spring of 1977 by the The Economic and Social Research Institute (reported in Whelan and Vaughan, 1982, pp. 64-71) and the other is a question included in the March, 1983 IMS opinion poll.

The 1977 perceptions of the "crime problem" are summarised in Table 1.1. A sharp urban/rural distinction is clear (rural households were in villages or "a more isolated situation"), but neither urban nor rural residents can be characterised as preoccupied with crime. One half of urban residents described burglary and assaults as "no problem" in their areas, while over two-thirds thought vandalism was "no problem". For all three offences, at least 9 or 10 rural residents thought there was either "not much of a problem" or "no problem" in their own localities.

Both urban and rural residents perceived a greater problem in relation to burglary and assault than from vandalism. Even among urban residents only about 1 in 8 saw burglary or assault as "very much a problem". Fewer than 1 in 20 felt the same about vandalism.

Table 1.1: *The perception of crime as a problem: 1977 data**

	<i>Very much a problem</i>	<i>A bit of a problem</i>	<i>Not much of a problem</i>	<i>No problem</i>	<i>Total</i>
			<i>Per cent</i>		
<i>Urban Residents</i>					
1. Burglary	12.3	20.4	19.1	48.2	100.0
2. Vandalism	4.5	8.7	18.3	68.4	100.0
3. Assault/Mugging	13.2	16.4	20.6	49.9	100.0
<i>Rural Residents</i>					
1. Burglary	2.8	7.4	11.2	78.6	100.0
2. Vandalism	0.3	3.1	9.0	87.1	100.0
3. Assault/Mugging	2.4	6.3	11.1	80.2	100.0

*From results of a nationwide random sample, reweighted to household characteristics where relevant.

Source: Whelan and Vaughan, 1982, p. 69.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the 1977 survey data. First where you live in Ireland is strongly related to how serious you evaluate the crime problem to be. Concern in rural areas was virtually non-existent. Second, the perceived risk of victimisation in 1977 was quite low, with two-thirds of even urban residents apparently unconcerned about three of the more commonly discussed forms of crime victimisation. Third, though the urban/rural differences in perceived risk are in exact accord with what the Garda statistics indicate is the "objective" risk each area experiences, our evaluations of the magnitude of the crime problem we face are not simply reflections of the distribution of victimisations. It appears that perceived likely cost, in physical injury and financial loss, affect the evaluations people offer as to how serious a problem a type of crime is to them. Vandalism, for example, is almost certainly a more common occurrence than either burglary or assault, and burglary more frequent than assault. But public concern appears to reflect possible harm as much as it does the possible experience of a form of victimisation.

The 1977 survey and a survey of the elderly in the following year did not find that the risk of crime victimisation was a particular preoccupation among the elderly. Indeed, "there was a general tendency for old people to be less concerned about these problems than the country as a whole" (Whelan and Vaughan, 1982, p. 66). There was also no difference in the extent of fear reported by elderly males and elderly females. The only observable point of variation in Irish perceptions of crime risk in the mid to late 1970s was between urban and rural residents; age and sex did not appear to be important.

The IMS question on perceptions of the crime problem in Ireland, carried out six years later, indicates a far greater degree of public disquiet over crime. In response to the question, "Is there any area around here — that is within a mile — where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?", 26 per cent of the national sample said yes and 71 per cent said no (3 per cent did not reply to the question). The national pattern contrasts sharply with that for Dubliners, 46 per cent of whom answered that there were places where they were afraid to walk alone at night. IMS notes that "the comparable figures in US and British studies are 48% and 43% respectively" (1983a, p. 4).

Perceptions of risk in 1983 were also more sharply differentiated, with the highest levels of fear occurring among the elderly (though the age effect is weak) and women, 40 per cent of whom responded that there were areas in which they were afraid to walk at night, as opposed to 13 per cent of men (IMS, 1983b, Table 10).

Differences in question format make it unwise to compare the 1977 and 1983 surveys. However, it is clear that "fear of crime" now constitutes an issue in its own right. As with the IMS estimates of the level of crime, the comparisons with other countries are the most worrying aspects of the evidence. If valid, they suggest a crime problem, both in level and in effect on people's feelings of personal safety, that approaches the level of American cities.

Estimates by Insurance Companies

The IMS estimates fell substantially below a yet more recent claim made by the Insurance Corporation of Ireland. Their estimate, which pertains only to burglary offences, received front page attention from *The Irish Times* on 2 December 1983: "More than one-fifth of all Irish households are likely to be burgled in 1984 and more than half of these burglaries will involve violence, according to the Insurance Corporation of Ireland (ICI), one of the country's largest insurance companies".⁸ That claim obviously exceeds the IMS estimate of one household in 20. It suggests, further, that burglary in Ireland is about nine times more prevalent than in England, where the British Crime Survey of 1982 found that 2.2 per cent of households were burgled in that year (Hough, 1983, p. 7). It also suggests that burglary here is substantially more serious an offence than in England, as the same survey found that only one of every 100 burglaries involved a violent confrontation between residents and burglars (Hough, 1983, p. 8).

The actual figure predicted by the Insurance Corporation of Ireland is 85,000 burglaries (an estimate *The Irish Times* printed again in a story on 1 March

⁸This has been magnified further: *Southside Express* claims the risk is one household in every three for 1984 (21 March 1984, p. 7).

1984). This is 17,000 fewer than the total number of indictable offences of all varieties that the Gardaí recorded during 1983.⁹ *The Irish Times* report applied that estimate to "the country's 420,000 households" to get the one in five claim. The Central Statistics Office has a somewhat different enumeration of households: 897,509 in 1981 (CSO, 1983b, p. 9). This of course drastically affects the rate of victimisation, which requires (a) an estimated number of offences to form the numerator and (b) an estimated number of potential victims to form the denominator.

The claim of violence in one half of all burglaries is curious. Most burglaries occur while the residents of a dwelling are away. Could the violence be self-inflicted by the burglar? Or, does, "violence" here refer to damage to the property?

In any case, the ICI claim offers another estimate of the amount of crime in the Republic that can be compared with the results of our survey. It suggests that a large-scale victimisation survey will find a very substantial degree of under-reporting of crime by the public or underrecording by the Gardaí, or both.¹⁰

Counting Crime in the Republic of Ireland: Conclusion

The politics of counting crime are distinctive in that the competition among groups seems only to fuel alarm at the magnitude of the crime problem. At least in the short term, all those concerned with reporting crime — police officials, politicians, security firms, insurance companies, and police representative associations — seem preoccupied with establishing that crime has reached unprecedented levels. Upsurges in crime are also attractive to the news media. Crime sells copies with a reliability few other news items can match, and each increase in the ante brings front page headlines. What is absent is a counterbalancing force in the form of groups which see a conservative estimate of the crime problem as conducive to their interests.

In this chapter thus far, we have reviewed the major claims that have been made as to how much crime there is at present in the Republic of Ireland. The next section of the chapter draws on the one information source that permits a consideration of *change* in that level. Selected offence categories from the Garda crime statistics are used to offer an assessment of recent trends in crime.

⁹The Garda Commissioner reported 32,600 burglaries in 1982, but this includes private dwellings, shops, warehouses, churches, etc.

¹⁰A fourth source of estimates on the amount of crime that obtains in any given year can be found in statistics maintained by victim support groups. For example, the *Annual Report 1983* of the Rape Crisis Centre indicated that they dealt with victims of 137 rapes or attempted rapes; the Garda Commissioner's Report for that year lists 57 offences of rape that were "reported or known".

Recent Crime Trends in the Republic of Ireland

This section summarises the central expectations of comparative criminology as they relate to the recent Irish economic and social experience and also examines how the available evidence fits with those expectations. It relies on earlier work (Rottman, 1980; 1984) and is included as the discussion places the crime rates observed in our survey in as firm a historical context as we can offer. All studies of crime trends in Ireland must rely on the official Garda statistics: there is no alternative source. The specific statistical series included here, however, were selected so as to minimise the problems of reliability and validity as stated earlier in this chapter.

Comparative criminology is concerned primarily with the relationship between economic and social change, on the one hand, and the level and pattern of crime, on the other. Economic and social change is typically represented by the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. The level of crime is generally taken as the rate of offences per 100,000 inhabitants to facilitate comparisons. The pattern of crime is more complex, but has been measured as (a) the relative shares of assaultive offences and property offences, (b) the ages of persons charged with criminal offences, (c) the location of offences, whether urban or rural, and (d) the sophistication and seriousness of crime, as indexed say, by the average "profit" from various offences. Some observers (Silberman, 1978, Chapter 2; Pearson, 1983) have noted that contemporary concern over crime perhaps owes more to changes in the pattern than to any real increase in the amount of criminality.

The transformation in crime that accompanies the more general transformation of a society becoming industrial and urban is well documented for Europe during the last century (Zehr, 1976; Shelley, 1981) and the third world currently (Clinard and Abbott, 1973; Shelley, 1981). From that experience, past and present, observers have abstracted the following scenario. Crime shifts from being primarily rural and assaultive (interpersonal violence) to predominantly urban and acquisitive (crimes against property, such as burglary, larceny, etc.). That shift is seen as the response by urban migrants to the problems of adjusting to city life and to the opportunities for crime in metropolitan centres. Opportunities are shaped by more than the sheer abundance of property. People respond to the type of goods that are available and their symbolic and practical importance as possessions in terms of the activities that are valued. They also respond to the level of guardianship afforded to such goods (Gould, 1971; Mansfield *et al.*, 1974; Cohen and Felson, 1979). Social change thus alters (a) the abundance of portable consumer durables, (b) the salience of such consumer goods for what people perceive as full membership in society, (c) the extent to which homes and property are left unattended, as with the rising proportion of

dual career families and (d) the perceived risk of being caught and of being punished if caught.¹¹

The key historical process usually cited is the mass migration from rural areas to urban centres and the social dislocations which these create in a setting where opportunities for crime abound. In some explanations, primacy is given to dislocation (social disorganisation or anomie theory — Durkheim, 1933; Clinard, 1942; 1978); in others, the importance of opportunities for crime is decisive (Lodhi and Tilly, 1973; Cohen and Felson, 1979). In both, an initial period of adjustment is associated with an upsurge in the level of crime, gradually yielding to a more stable level of offences typical of a particular type of society. This fits with the observation that over the last few decades a gradual reduction has taken place in the extent to which crime levels in the old industrial countries exceed those in developing countries (see especially Shelley, 1981).

In a study of Irish crime trends over the 1951-75 period, Rottman (1980) argued that (a) changing opportunities were more important than social dislocation and (b) the typical scenario, as outlined above, was of limited applicability. Prior to the mid-1960s, Ireland's post-Independence crime levels were essentially stable, with some evidence of a subsequently reversed upward trend during the Emergency years. The mid-1960s marked a sea change in Irish crime trends, with a 12 year succession of increases in the number of all major property offences. No such upward trend was present for serious assaultive offences. However, the rise in property offences was so dramatic as to shape any index of the level of crime that could be constructed. Over the 1964-75 period, Garda statistics show a 4.3-fold increase in housebreaking, a 3.2-fold increase in shop-breaking, a 7.5-fold rise in stolen motor vehicles and an 11.4-fold growth in the number of robberies. This contrasts with the 2.3-fold increase in the number of indictable assaults and a 1.8-fold increase in the average value of property stolen in burglary offences. On balance, the post-1964 trends consisted of rising numbers of incidents rather than a move toward more serious or sophisticated offences.

A clear and permanent break with the long-standing state of stable crime levels had occurred. It followed shortly after the post-1958 revitalisation of Irish society when state policies successfully induced industrial development ending the massive wave of emigration that had scarred the 1950s. That industrialisation was later, more rapid, and more geographically dispersed than the

¹¹This emphasis on societal factors that alter the structure of opportunities for committing crime over time has nurtured an interest in practical policies to inhibit crime by architectural and product design, an interest that developed independently. The Home Office in England has been perhaps the strongest proponent of such policies, urging "criminologists to take a greater interest in techniques which seek to reduce crime through manipulation of the physical rather than social environment" (Mayhew *et al.*, 1976, p. 29).

“typical” scenario permitted. Crucially, emigration had meant that Ireland never experienced the massive inflow of rural migrants into its major urban centres.

A tripartite comparison of trends in (a) Dublin, (b) the next four largest urban areas — Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford — and (c) all other areas found that the Irish experience was distinctive indeed. Though offence levels on a *per capita* basis were highest in Dublin and lowest outside of the cities, substantial upwards trends were evident in all three cases. Such a coincidence is unusual, as most modern rises in crime begin in major urban centres, only gradually filtering down to cities, towns and villages.

By the mid-1970s, property crime was at a level far removed from a mere 10 years previously. The pattern of crime had not changed to an equivalent degree, however, as best can be gauged from official crime statistics.

After 1975, it is easier to see the impact of a diversity in the skill, sophistication and profit with which crime was being undertaken.¹² This was evident in the substantial rise in the number of armed robberies in the years 1978–80. A stratified “labour market” of practitioners of such offences, and, less clearly, of offences like burglary, can be identified, ranging from the amateur to the professional.

In other respects, major forms of property and assaultive offences did not greatly increase in numbers over the 1976–80 period; indeed, some years brought reductions on the preceding year’s total. This was sharply reversed after 1981 when a very substantial growth in offence levels was recorded. For burglary, the 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 “reported or known” totals were 22,175, 25,300, 32,141, and 35,826, respectively. The comparable annual totals for robbery were 1,113, 1,342, 1,883 and 2,262.¹³ For burglary, though not for robbery, increasing numbers were accompanied by an accelerated growth in the average value of property stolen (Rottman, 1984, Chapter 4).

From the Garda statistics, it appears that there was a short-lived plateau of fairly constant offence levels in the late 1970s. Statistics for the early 1980s suggest that stability has since eroded, but it is too early to judge whether we are now in a new spiral of rapidly rising offence levels.

¹²A comparison of pre- and post-1975 crime trends can only be made imprecisely, as the categories used in the *Annual Report on Crime* are not the same in the two periods. Changes in statute law are partly responsible, but also the recording practices by the Gardaí appear to have changed for larceny type offences as was noted for pedal cycle larceny (see Rottman, 1984, Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion).

¹³The 1981 and 1982/1983 totals are not strictly comparable. After 1982, types of incidents involving armed intruders which had previously been entered under the heading of “robbery with arms” were reclassified to “aggravated burglary” offences.

If the official statistics give a valid account of Irish crime over recent years, we are faced with two quite distinct periods: 1964-75, a period of rapid economic expansion and rising property crime, and, after a brief interregnum, a post-1980 period of economic recession and rapidly increasing levels of property crime. A simple connection of economic and social conditions to crime in Ireland obviously cannot be sustained. Both prosperity and austerity have been accompanied by a growth in crime. Change in opportunity thus offers the more convincing explanation for the observed trends. Our survey data, however, covers the experience of households from October, 1981 to October, 1983, with most interviews referring to the situation in 1982. Such a single survey cannot be used to test the validity of the rise in police crime statistics, as opposed to the alternative possibilities of changes in reporting or recording practices. But the survey can test the validity of the estimated offence levels found in the Garda statistics in 1982/83, their geographic distribution and the comparative Irish standing to levels found in the United Kingdom at that time.

When so used, victimisation surveys offer an alternative rather than a definitive measure of the parameters that interest us. Insurance statistics, if available, would provide a third anchor for our estimates, adding to the confidence with which we can state conclusions and interpretations. Our task in the succeeding five chapters will be to maximise the strengths of crime victimisation data and indicate where they support or challenge conclusions based on official crime statistics alone.

Outline of Report

The five chapters that follow report and interpret the detailed findings from the 1982/83 ESRI crime victimisation survey. Chapter 2 discusses the methodology of victimisation surveys, both generally and as applied in our own survey. The chapter provides the background information on sampling procedures and variables needed to understand the data analysis we present. The main analysis of the level of crime is contained in Chapter 3 where, for the six offences included in the survey, we present our estimates of the magnitude of victimisation risk and of total incidence. Estimates are offered for the national rates and then separately for urban and rural areas and for planning regions. Consideration of the extent to which victimisations are reported to the Gardaí leads to a comparison between our estimates and the Garda crime statistics. Chapter 4 places the survey-based estimates for Ireland within a comparative context, particularly in relation to the results of similar surveys in Great Britain and the United States. A survey-based comparison substantially alters the conclusions that emerge from one based on official crime statistics. Chapter 5 returns to the Irish situation and the question of the distribution of victimisation risk. Some types of households are far more likely than others to become victims

of crime during a year. The chapter develops an explanatory perspective as to how factors such as age, household size and social class affect victimisation risk and tests that perspective using our survey data. The final chapter, Chapter 6, then offers a summary of the findings from the survey and an assessment of what they indicate about the crime problem in Ireland today.

Chapter 2

VICTIMISATION SURVEYS: METHODOLOGY AND USES

In this chapter we seek to accomplish two ends. First, we shall discuss victimisation surveys at the general level. This involves consideration of the objectives of such surveys and of the problems that are involved in carrying them out and interpreting their results. Second, we shall describe the 1982/83 ESRI victimisation survey, on which the findings of this report are based, and the major variables that we shall use in the analyses in succeeding chapters.

The Methodology of Victimisation Surveys

Point Estimates and Confidence Intervals

The problems involved in constructing and interpreting a victimisation survey are identical in most respects with those attendant upon any piece of survey research, although the nature of crime victimisation does introduce some additional complications, as we shall see.

While it has already been pointed out, in Chapter 1, that the victimisation survey cannot pretend to give a definitively "true" figure of the amount of crime, nevertheless the most important use of such a survey is to provide an estimate of the rate of occurrence for a particular crime within a population or a specific sub-group of a population. The victimisation survey does this by asking people about crimes of which they may have been victims within a specified period (frequently the previous 12 months). An estimate of the rate of crime obtained in this way is known as a "point estimate"; this is to say, we use the crime rate prevailing among our sample as an estimate of the crime rate for the whole population.

In interpreting survey results, we never assume that such an estimate for the population as a whole is exactly accurate. Thus, if our sample tells us, for example, that the rate of burglary is 5 per cent, we must allow for a margin of error in extrapolating from this to the population at large. Given a properly constructed sample, however, sampling theory enables us to specify how large this margin of error is likely to be, and we can estimate the size of intervals around our estimate within which we can be confident that the true population parameter falls. The smaller the "confidence intervals", as these are called, the more accurate our estimate. The size of the confidence intervals depends upon three things — first, the certainty we wish to impose (that is, the confidence level), second, the amount of variation present in the population on the variable we are examining (measured by the population standard deviation) and, third, the size of our sample.

We need not address the question of the confidence level here (see any standard statistics textbook dealing with sampling, such as Blalock, 1979, for a full discussion) except to say that researchers frequently adopt a 95 per cent confidence level. By this we mean that, given 100 randomly drawn samples of the same size, in 95 of them the estimates we obtain would include, within the known confidence intervals, the true population parameter.¹⁴ Given desired confidence levels, then, the larger the sample size and the smaller the population standard deviation of whatever variable we are measuring, the smaller will be our confidence intervals and the more accurate our estimates. Conversely, a large population standard deviation must be offset by an increased sample size.¹⁵ When dealing with crime victimisation a particularly large sample is needed if the results are to have an acceptable degree of precision. This is a consequence of the infrequency of the characteristic — crime victimisation — whose level we wish to estimate.¹⁶

The implications of this can be shown if we examine the figures on crime in Dublin taken from the previously summarised Irish Marketing Survey

¹⁴In practice the choice of confidence level must be decided on the basis of how great a certainty we wish to attach to our parameter estimates. So, for example, if our findings have policy implications which are likely to be very costly, we may wish to adopt a more stringent confidence level such as 99 per cent or even 99.5 or 99.9 per cent.

¹⁵This is easily seen if we examine the formula for the standard error $\hat{\sigma}_p$ of an estimated proportion under the assumption of random sampling:

$$\hat{\sigma}_p = \sqrt{p(1-p)/N}$$

where p is the proportion, and N is the sample size on which the estimate of p is based. Thus, if p is constant across two samples of different sizes, the denominator in the above expression will be large in the larger sample, and thus $\hat{\sigma}_p$ will be smaller. For example, if $p = .05$ (i.e. 5 per cent rate of crime), then if $N = 500$, $\hat{\sigma}_p$ equals $.01$ (a standard error of 1 per cent), whereas if $N = 5,000$, $\hat{\sigma}_p = .003$ (a standard error of a third of one per cent).

The 95 per cent confidence interval to be placed around the estimated proportion is given by:

$$p \pm 1.96 \hat{\sigma}_p$$

So, taking our example of $p = .05$, if $N = 500$, the confidence interval is $\pm .02$, or 2 per cent. Thus, one can say that given the sample figure of 5 per cent the true population rate lies between 3 and 7 per cent. However, given a sample of 5,000, the confidence interval is $\pm .006$ or .6 of 1 per cent. In this case we can say that the true population rate lies between 4.4 and 5.6 per cent.

¹⁶At first sight this may seem puzzling, given the formula in footnote 15. This would appear to suggest that the more infrequent the characteristic (i.e. the closer p comes to zero or one) the more precise the estimate, thus obviating the need for a large sample. However, the formula given in footnote 15 for the confidence intervals is based on a normal approximation to the binomial distribution. If $p < 0.1$ (which is the case in our survey data as we shall see in Chapter 3) then this approximation is valid only if $Np > 25$. Hence if p is small, a large sample size is needed.

victimisation survey of March 1983. At the time these figures helped fuel considerable public disquiet over the level of crime, particularly given the claim that, for a range of offences, the crime rates in Dublin exceeded those found in large American cities. However, the number of respondents in the entire sample was only 1,316 and of these, only 391 were Dublin residents. Thus the confidence intervals that should be placed around these estimates are very wide, as Table 2.1 shows. The table presents the minimum confidence intervals that must be placed round the IMS estimates of victimisation rates in Dublin. For example, the confidence intervals in the table indicate that the "true" number of crimes involving the stealing of money or property in Dublin would be somewhere between 49 and 77 if we asked any set of 391 randomly selected Dubliners of their experiences: in percentages terms, the risk of victimisation is therefore somewhere between 12 and 20 per cent.¹⁷

Such wide confidence intervals pose two difficulties for interpreting the results of a victimisation survey. For the more prevalent types of crime, such as break-ins or attempted break-ins to houses, the best we can conclude from the one available sample is that something between 7 and 16 per cent of households in Dublin were so victimised during the previous year. For relatively infrequent crimes, such as mugging or assault, even if we adopt the confidence intervals appropriate to a random probability sample, there is little we can conclude. Thus we find from Table 2.1 that the true rate of car theft victimisation falls anywhere between 3 per cent (13 cases) and 7 per cent (29 cases); similarly, the risk of being the victim of an assault lies somewhere within the range of 1 and 5 per cent. We have no way of judging where the true figure lies. Only by vastly expanding the number of respondents in the survey can one make a meaningful statement about the rate of assault, other than that it is rare. The implications of an annual risk of 1 in 20 are obviously quite different from those of a risk of 1 in a 100, but we are unable to judge which is the more plausible from the IMS sample.

¹⁷In drawing these confidence intervals around the estimated victimisation rates we have, if anything, understated the likely bounds within which the actual rates would fall because the assumption underlies the computation of confidence intervals that the sample for the survey was drawn randomly from the population at risk. But the IMS survey, like most public opinion surveys, is based on a quota form of sampling, in which interviewers are given a fixed number of persons to question from each age group, sex and social class. In practice, selection of persons for inclusion within such a sample is not random — the pre-set quotas only ensure that the resulting sample corresponds to the distribution of the population by region, social class etc. (see Moser and Kalton, 1972, pp. 127-137), and we cannot strictly attach a known probability for selection to each individual included. We would suggest that the most sensible way to allow for the difficulties in attaching confidence intervals to estimates drawn from a non-probability sample is to increase the width of the intervals to a minimum of one and half those shown in Table 2.1 (see the discussion in Moser and Kalton, 1972, pp. 200-209).

Table 2.1: *IMS reported rates of criminal victimisation in Dublin and estimated minimum confidence intervals (sample = 391)*

	<i>Rates of victimisation:</i>		<i>Estimated confidence intervals</i>	
	<i>Number of cases</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Money/property stolen	63	16	±14	±4
Home/property/car vandalised	62	16	±14	±4
Home broken into/attempt made	44	11	±12	±3
Car stolen	21	5	±8	±2
Money/property taken by force	8	2	±5	±1
Physically assaulted	11	3	±7	±2

The general point we wish to make from this particular example is that any crime rates based on survey results are subject to uncertainty as to how accurately they represent the actual rate in the population as a whole. This uncertainty will be greater the smaller the sample. Any estimates must be treated as such, but those based on small samples must be interpreted with particular caution.

Limitations of Victimisation Surveys

In addition to the issue, common to all surveys, of how well we can extrapolate from estimates based on a sample to the population from which that sample was drawn, victimisation surveys present distinct problems of reliability and validity. These impose particular limitations on what we can say on the basis of victimisation survey results.

We have already pointed out that on the basis of all available evidence criminal victimisations are, even given increasing levels of crime, likely to be rare events. If we wish to use a survey to obtain accurate estimates of population victimisation rates, and if we also wish to be able to estimate rates for sub-sectors of the population (as in Chapter 3) and to look at the relationship between certain characteristics of households or individuals and their risk of being

victimised (as in Chapter 5), then a large sample is needed to ensure that we have a sufficient number of victims of crime on which to make these estimates. Whereas police statistics on crime are recorded as a matter of routine, the requirement of a large sample means that a victimisation survey will be an expensive undertaking. This consideration dictated, to a large extent, the particular form taken by the ESRI victimisation survey, as we show later in this chapter.

Typically a victimisation survey involves drawing a relatively large sample of individuals from the population and asking them whether they have been the victim of any one of a number of crimes over a certain period of time — usually the past twelve months. Further details of the incidents are then obtained from those who report having been a victim of an offence. Necessarily such an undertaking imposes restrictions on the kind of information that can be gathered. For example, the method is relevant only for crimes which have an identifiable individual or household victim, and the definitions of what constitutes an offence must be less precise or different from the often highly abstruse definitions of an offence provided by criminal law statutes. However, this lack of a direct correspondence between official and survey definitions of a crime need not cause major difficulties in drawing comparisons between survey results and police statistics for major forms of property crime, such as burglary or car theft, though it may for other offences, such as general forms of larceny. Another area which is likely to introduce only minor errors in comparisons between these two sources of figures concerns the question of the recall period covered by the survey. This period, often twelve months, will not necessarily coincide with equivalent police statistics, which cover a calendar year.

Much more serious, however, are the problems of respondent recall, given the relatively long time-period concerning which information is requested, and the willingness to report victimisations. Both problems potentially lead to an understatement of crime by victimisation surveys.

Evaluations of the victimisation survey methodology have found evidence of a tapering off effect in respondent recall of offences. Recent victimisations are more likely to be remembered and thus reported to interviewers than are more distant incidents with the probability of recall decreasing in a linear fashion with time (Sparks, 1981, p. 27; see also the discussions by the OECD, 1976; the National Academy of Sciences, 1976). The need to obtain sufficient incidents to permit accurate point estimation must be balanced against the potential for over-reaching the time frame within which full recall can be anticipated. Sparks (1981, p. 27) concluded: "it may be that, with proper interviewing techniques, sufficient information can be obtained by asking about a period as long as a year preceding the interview".

The ESRI Survey requested information on the month of victimisation when-

ever a burglary or a car theft was reported. We can thus make a partial check on the reliability of our annual estimates by examining the distribution of victimisations over the twelve months preceding the interview. Table 2.2 provides the relevant information. Given the rarity of the events being studied (9,000 interviews yielded 371 reported burglaries and 310 car thefts for which the month of occurrence was known) an even distribution over the calendar year should not be expected. However, Table 2.2 does not indicate the presence of a tapering off in survey respondents' recall. Reports of victimisation were as likely to be from the six months immediately preceding the interview as from the first half of the year about which respondents were questioned. For burglary offences, 46 per cent of incidents fell within the first six months; that was true of 53 per cent of all reported car theft victimisations.¹⁸ It is, therefore, reasonable to accept our estimates as annual levels of crime and rates of victimisation.¹⁹

In addition to the fallibility of memory, reported victimisations in surveys are potentially affected by factors similar to those which operate to make for selective reporting of crime to the police. Survey respondents are no more likely to report assaults by friends or relatives to interviewers than to the police (National Academy of Sciences, 1976, p. 142). Indeed, shame at having been victimised may inhibit the reporting of assaultive type offences generally, both to police and survey researchers (Nettler, 1984, p. 69).

Victimisation surveys are also likely to fail to capture many forms of property crime in which the loss is trivial. First, recall of such incidents would seem to be haphazard at best, and it is such offences that form the bulk of what was not reported to the police in the first instance (OECD, 1976). Generally speaking, this has been shown to have but a slight effect on offences like burglary and robbery but substantially diminishes the extent to which offences like vandalism, theft, and assaults are reported during interviews (Sparks, 1981, p. 26). Second, victimisation surveys may, because of their rarity, underrepresent those individuals prone to multiple victimisation, and, where they are included, undercount the number of victimisations through problems of recall (see Sparks, 1981, pp. 28-29; National Academy of Sciences, 1976, p. 143).

¹⁸Because the ESRI victimisation survey was carried out at 5 points in time it is possible to separate recall effects from seasonal effects. Taking burglary and car theft we find that under the null hypotheses of equal monthly probabilities of victimisation, there is a significant χ^2 value for burglary (25.0 on 11 d.f.) but not for car theft ($\chi^2 = 16.5$), indicating a seasonal trend in the former but not the latter. More importantly, however, for neither offence is there a significant recall effect (χ^2 burglary = 16.9; car theft = 10.7).

¹⁹Problems of respondent recall may also artificially inflate the estimates derived from a victimisation survey. Respondents may include incidents that in fact occurred *before* the 12 month period about which they were questioned. In the literature, this is termed "telescoping" (Chambers and Tombs, 1984, p. 3).

Table 2.2: *The distribution of burglary and car theft victimisations by month: Frequencies by calendar month and months before interview*

<i>Month</i>	<i>Burglary</i>		<i>Car theft</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
January	43	11.6	30	9.7
February	22	5.9	27	8.7
March	44	11.9	36	11.6
April	33	8.9	24	7.7
May	25	6.7	23	7.4
June	38	10.2	22	7.1
July	23	6.2	19	6.1
August	30	8.1	17	5.5
September	31	8.4	37	11.9
October	36	9.7	26	8.4
November	29	7.8	21	6.8
December	<u>17</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>9.0</u>
<i>Total</i>	371	100.0	310	100.0
<i>Months Before Survey</i>				
1	38	10.2	30	9.7
2	21	5.7	20	6.5
3	24	6.5	26	8.4
4	28	7.5	32	10.2
5	28	7.5	26	8.4
6	31	8.4	29	9.4
7	40	10.8	35	11.3
8	28	7.5	23	7.4
9	40	10.8	24	7.7
10	24	6.5	26	8.4
11	29	7.8	19	6.1
12	<u>40</u>	<u>10.8</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>6.5</u>
<i>Total</i>	371	100.0	310	100.0

In sum, for many types of crime and for crime overall, the problems of under-reporting of crime remain in a victimisation survey. Less certainly, the estimates from such a survey may be biased systematically so as to undercount crimes against the less affluent. Sparks (1981, pp. 30-36) raises the possibility that the format of a survey leads to differential reporting rates by variables connected

with social class. In particular, Sparks notes (p. 32) that the tasks required of a respondent in a victimisation survey are similar to those of the classroom: "It would not be surprising to find that these classroom-like tasks would be better performed by those with more practice (in the classroom) at them; there is increasing evidence that this is precisely what happens".

In interpreting victimisation survey results, it should also be noted that though police crime statistics are limited to incidents that occurred within a particular jurisdiction, a victimisation survey often is general, eliciting offences that may have taken place in another city or country (see Nettler, 1978, p. 93 and the National Academy of Sciences, 1976, pp. 135-139). So here victimisation surveys may artificially inflate the level of crime in a particular locality.²⁰ A similar tendency will derive from the potential for double or triple entry of a single incident under a variety of offence headings in a victimisation survey. The counting and classification procedures of most police agencies specify rules for categorising an offence like burglary, which may involve several distinct types of victimisation (e.g., breaking and entry, theft of property and vandalism). Victimisation surveys tend to separate these component offences of an incident of crime victimisation in a way that tends to overstate the actual risk of crime.

This problem can be illustrated by a simple example. If a car is stolen, and the radio also removed, this single incident could potentially be interpretable as a car theft, a theft of a radio, or both. To give a more complex example: if a house is illegally entered and vandalised, money taken from the house and the car stolen as part of one incident, this could potentially be classified as any one, or several of, a number of offences. In common police practice in both examples the incident would be recorded as one offence, that being the most serious in each case (car theft and burglary in our two examples). Such a rule is obviously desirable, as is evident when we consider that a large percentage of criminal incidents of necessity involve several types of criminal activity: a break-in, if successful, will be likely to lead to a loss of property and/or vandalism, while a car theft will frequently involve vandalism and loss of property.

If victimisation survey results are to be comparable with official statistics and with surveys for other countries, then precautions must be taken both to classify similar incidents involving various types of offence in the same way, and to avoid possible double or triple counting of single incidents involving several offences. To avoid the latter problem requires establishing a hierarchy among the offences about which one is seeking information and detailed instructions to interviewers concerning the distinguishing of genuine cases of multiple victimisation (in which the same household or individual is the victim of one or more crimes on

²⁰Though there will be a compensating effect in so far as victimisation survey offence rates will be deflated by their failure to capture information from visitors to the area.

two or more distinct occasions) from multiple crime incidents (in which one incident involves more than one type of crime). Failure to make these distinctions will inevitably lead to inflated estimates of crime rates.

Again taking the IMS survey as an example, we are led to suspect the possible double or triple counting of single incidents since apparently no screening of multiple entries was carried out; rather, respondents were shown a list of six offences (as in Table 2.1) and asked in succession if each event had happened to them. Overall the survey yields a marked discrepancy between the number of incidents of crime (353 overall, 209 in Dublin) and the total of people claiming to have been victims of at least one offence (233 and 127, respectively). These figures yield measures of 1.5 incidents per victim in the Republic as a whole and 1.65 incidents per victim in Dublin. Although in any sample it is to be expected that one will find individuals who genuinely fell victim of two or more separate incidents of crime, it seems rather implausible that, as in Dublin, a third of the sample should have experienced, on average, nearly two incidents apiece while the rest of the sample experienced none. Given this, it seems likely that the IMS figures overstate the prevailing level of crime in Ireland.

Official Statistics, Unreported Crime and Victimization Surveys

Earlier we showed that neither official police statistics nor the results of a crime victimisation survey could be regarded as yielding a definitive measure of the rate of any or all crimes. One use which researchers have sought to make of victimisation surveys, however, is as a means of ascertaining how much crime goes unrecorded by official figures. Estimates for England and Wales in 1981, for example, suggest that the rate of reporting to the police varies between 100 per cent for automobile theft to as low as 8 per cent for theft from the person (Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 9).

Victimization surveys, for reasons already dealt with, do not capture all incidents of crime, but they can be expected to uncover *more* than police records show for some categories of crime, particularly those with a clear individual or household victim. By asking respondents how many incidents of victimisation they have reported to the police, analysts of such surveys have sought to measure the "dark figure of unreported crime". Some consideration of the previous discussion, however, will show that victimisation surveys can accomplish this in only an approximate sense. That crime which victimisation surveys reveal to exist over and above that which is recorded represents a mixture of unreported *and* unrecorded crime, but does not represent the total of either. Thus, the discrepancy between official and survey estimates of crime is an approximate (because of the lack of direct correspondence in time and in offence definitions noted earlier) and minimum measure of what we might term the dark figure of unrecorded crime and not of unreported crime *per se*. Nevertheless, used in this

way the victimisation survey is important in providing a minimum estimate of how far official figures underestimate rates of crime.

On the other hand, victimisation surveys are likely to count as criminal victimisations incidents which might not be counted as crimes under official police definitions. This is because victimisation surveys cannot in general screen respondents' reports of "crimes" to ensure that they meet all the requirements of the official definition of a particular crime. Thus victimisation surveys also capture some at least of that body of incidents perceived as crimes by the public but not officially recognised as such.

The merit of a victimisation survey-based estimate is that it is derived from a set of procedures and definitions over which the researcher has control. This advantage follows from several major concerns. First, a victimisation survey can inquire about a type of criminal behaviour that the police must record under a variety of different legal headings. "Joy-riding", in Ireland, for example, is not included in the statistics on motor vehicle larceny (due to the absence of "intent to permanently deprive"), though it is so included in England and Wales (O'Reilly, 1984, p. 10). A victimisation survey need not observe the statutory niceties and can count all losses of vehicles in the estimates. Second, police procedures for classifying and counting offences have been shown to vary considerably between localities (Sutherland and Cressey, 1980), and thus the merged results from around the country are of dubious status. Similarly, police procedures can change with dramatic effects on the rate of crime over time (see the discussion of evidence on this point in Hood and Sparks, 1970, pp. 37-42).²¹ A programme of continuous monitoring of crime through victimisation surveys will not be affected by this form of unreliability.

Generally, crime victimisation surveys use more broadly based definitions of what is a "crime" than those contained in the criminal law. As Chambers and Tombs (1984, p. 3) note, this allows us to analyse the magnitude of, and reasons for, changes in (a) public reporting propensities and (b) police recording practices. But again, this reduces the extent to which we should anticipate an equivalence between the estimates we make of citizen reports of victimisations and the number of offences recorded by the police.

Our analysis in Chapter 3 of the level and distribution of crime in Ireland will cite the discrepancies between (a) survey-based estimates of victimisations, (b) survey-based estimates of offences reported to the Gardaí, and (c) the number of

²¹ Thus, any attempt to improve the consistency and comprehensiveness of official crime statistics will almost inevitably lead to a break in a country's crime statistics. This occurred, for example, in Great Britain, where pre- and post-1980 "notifiable offences recorded by the police" are not comparable "because of changes made by new counting rules which were introduced at the beginning of 1980 to improve the consistency by the police of the recording of multiple, continuous and repeated offences" (UK CSO *Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1984 Edition*, p. 74).

offences recorded by the Gardaí. In doing so, we can both shed light on the nature of the Garda crime statistics and also more adequately interpret our survey findings. The same type of reconciliation exercise can assist in Chapter 4, where we compare Irish crime statistics, both official and survey-based, with those from other countries. It is useful here to reiterate that police statistics and survey estimates are not measuring the same parameters. Nettler (1984, p. 80) offers a concise summary of why that is the case:

1. Surveys of victims count individuals who have been attacked or who have lost property. Official statistics of property crimes count "incidents", and incidents may have more than one victim.
2. Eligibility to be counted differs. Surveys of victims tally events among residents in an area. Police statistics record crimes occurring within an area to residents and non-residents.
3. Victimization surveys omit crimes against organisations (commercial crimes), but police tallies record both commercial and non-commercial crimes.
4. Victimization surveys tend to include less serious offences, but crimes "known to the police" tend to be tallies of more serious offences. For example, surveys of victims reveal more "attempts" to commit crimes than are recorded as official statistics.

With these cautionary notes, we can now turn to the 1982/83 ESRI Victimization Survey.

The 1982/83 ESRI Victimization Survey

The 1982/83 ESRI victimisation survey was carried out between October 1982 and October 1983 and involved asking questions relating to victimisation among a sample of 8,902 individuals throughout the country. Rather than initiating a survey specifically for the purpose of a victimisation study, which would have been prohibitively expensive given the need for a sample of this size, (the 1982 British Crime Survey cost Stg£250,000 to implement) a number of items were added to an already existing survey, the EEC Consumer Survey.

This survey is carried out quarterly using a sample of approximately 2,000 individuals. The sampling is carried out by the survey unit of The Economic and Social Research Institute on behalf of An Foras Talúntais (AFT) who are contracted by the EEC to administer the survey. The sampling procedure utilises RANSAM (Whelan, 1979). In each quarter roughly 1,200 rural and 800 urban respondents are interviewed (urban areas being defined as towns of 10,000 or more population). Rural respondents are interviewed by AFT interviewers, urban by ESRI interviewers. The interview schedule is quite short but basic information is collected relating to the household (the relevant questions

are reproduced in Appendix II). Of particular importance are the following items which we shall use in analyses later in the paper.

- Head of Household's (HOH) sex;
- HOH age;
- HOH occupational group;
- Size of household.

These variables are described in detail at the point at which they are introduced into the analysis. In addition, of course, detailed information on the location of the individual's household is also obtained.

Eight questions were appended to the survey for the present study. These related to six types of offence:

- Illegal entry of the dwelling place (burglary);
- Automobile theft;
- Theft from the inside of an automobile;
- Theft from the environs of the dwelling place;
- Vandalism to the dwelling place or environs;
- Theft from the person.

For each of these the respondent was asked;

- (a) had anyone resident in the household been the victim of this offence within the past 12 months;
- (b) if so, on how many occasions;
- (c) how many of these incidents had been reported to the Gardaí?

In addition, dates of the occurrence of any of the first two types of offence were recorded. Two further questions were asked relating to ownership of a burglar alarm and of a dog. All offences pertained, as appropriate, either to the dwelling place of primary residence or to incidents within the Republic of Ireland (see the Interviewer's Instructions as reproduced in Appendix II).

The crime victimisation questions were asked on five quarterly rounds of the Consumer Survey, though in the final (October 1983) round, they were asked of urban respondents only. This yielded a total of 8,902 interviews.

Following collection of the data and its coding and punching, reweighting was undertaken. This was done first to counterbalance the over-representation of urban respondents arising from the omission of the rural areas from the final round of the survey. Second, although the items on the Consumer Survey schedule relate to the household, the sample is actually one of the individuals. Thus further reweighting was needed to allow us to deal with household rather than individual rates of victimisation.

The effect of sampling individuals is to over-represent larger households; however, the reweighting corrected for this and brought the survey figures for house-

hold sizes broadly into line with the best available national figures (from the 1981 Census 5 per cent sample results) as Table 2.3 shows.²² Both the frequency distribution of household sizes and overall mean household size are similar in the survey and the Census estimates. The weighted sample can thus be regarded as an accurate sample of the population of households in the country.

The household is our unit of analysis throughout this study, and, unless otherwise indicated, all tables, estimates and analysis are based on the weighted data.²³

Conclusion

The ESRI Victimization Survey offers a first full-scale interview-based estimate of the amount and distribution of crime in Ireland. It was designed to minimise the problems of unreliability found in early crime victimisation surveys and to avoid the prohibitive costs of carrying out a separate nationwide sample of the necessary size. Remaining problems of interpolation from our results to the measurement of crime were noted in this chapter and will be reiterated as appropriate in subsequent chapters.

Table 2.3: *Percentage frequency distribution of households according to size, and mean household size, 1981 Census estimates and 1982/83 ESRI Victimization Survey*

<i>Number of People</i>	<i>1981 Census Estimates*</i>	<i>ESRI Survey</i>
	%	%
1	16.9	16.4
2	20.2	19.5
3	14.9	14.1
4	15.4	15.7
5	13.0	14.4
5	9.0	9.8
7+	10.7	10.2
N	897,509	8,902
Mean Household Size [†]	3.68	3.73

*Source: Central Statistics Office, 1983a, p. 9, Table 8.

†Source: Central Statistics Office, 1983b, p. vii.

²²The reweighting was carried out so as to preserve the overall sample size at 8,902.

²³The consequences of the particular method of sampling for the standard errors of our estimates and of the reweighting employed here are referred to in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

THE LEVEL OF CRIME VICTIMISATION IN IRELAND

In this chapter we present some results from the 1982/83 ESRI victimisation survey and draw some comparisons between them and the available Garda statistics for approximately the same period. We first provide our estimates of the national rates of offence and of the level of risk for each of the six offences for which details were sought. We then turn to a discussion of the reporting rates for these offences and use these to derive estimates of reported crime rates which can be compared with the Garda figures. Finally, we present more detailed analyses for (a) urban and rural areas, distinguishing, within the former, between cities of different sizes, and (b) planning regions.

Overall Levels of Victimisation and Incidence

Table 3.1 presents estimates for the overall levels of crime measured in two ways. First we show the victimisation rate, which is simply the number of households which had been the victim of each type of offence per 100 households in the sample. Second we show the mean number of incidents per victim of each crime. The latter figure when multiplied by the former, yields an estimate of the number of crimes committed. The fact that the mean number of incidents per victim exceeds one indicates the presence of multiple victimisation and suggests that certain households are more than usually susceptible to the risk of, say, being burgled or having their house and garden vandalised. The ratio of the victimisation rate to the incident rate is particularly high for vandalism (1.8) suggesting the concentration of much of the reported vandalism on a subset of

Table 3.1: *Rates of victimisation and of incidence for six offences*

	<i>Victimisation rate per 100 households</i>	<i>Mean number of incidents per victim</i>
Illegal entry (Burglary)	3.6 (0.6)	1.25
Theft of property around dwelling place	4.8 (0.6)	1.42
Vandalism of house, property	3.9 (0.6)	1.82
Theft from person	5.3 (0.6)	1.21
Theft of car	4.5 (0.7)	1.25
Theft of object from inside car	6.1 (0.9)	1.30

95 per cent confidence intervals in parentheses

those households which report having been the victim of this particular offence.

In Table 3.1 we also show the confidence intervals around our estimates. These are quite small, due to the large sample size, and show that we can be confident that the true population rate of victimisation falls within half to one percentage point above or below our estimate.²⁴ The figures for the rates of victimisation and of incidents per victim may be used to estimate numbers of victims and incidents in the population as a whole. These estimates are shown in Table 3.2, together with the 95 per cent confidence intervals. The base we used to derive these figures is the most recent estimate of the number of households in the population (Central Statistics Office, 1983b) or, where appropriate, the number of motor vehicle owning households (by applying a weight derived through responses to the ESRI 1982/83 survey).

The rates shown in Table 3.1 simply indicate the percentage of households that have experienced each type of offence within the 12 months preceding the interview. We can see that the chance of becoming a victim occupies a narrow range, with a low of 3.6 per cent for burglary (illegal entry) to 6.1 per cent for theft of an object kept inside an unattended motor vehicle. Vandalism to the residence or its immediate environs, reported by 3.9 per cent of households, was the second least common offence, followed by car theft, of which 4.5 per cent of motor vehicle owning households fell victim, and theft of an item kept outside the residence, experienced by 4.8 per cent of households. In 5.3 per cent of all households, one or more residents had had an item stolen from their person.

²⁴The formulae for standard errors and confidence intervals given in Chapter 2 presume that the samples from which the estimates of proportions (p) are derived are random. In the present instance this is not the case, and hence the formulae must be weighted to allow for departure from randomness. The fact that the sample is stratified will tend to decrease the standard errors, while the clustering and reweighting of the sample will tend to increase them. However, point estimates (e.g., of p) will nevertheless be unbiased. In the British Crime Survey (Hough and Mayhew 1983, p. 43) the particular sample design and reweighting used increased the standard errors of estimates by a factor of roughly 1.5 (over what they would have been had sampling been purely random). In Moser and Kalton's (1972, pp. 200-209) review of studies dealing with estimates of standard errors from complex sample designs the actual standard errors for several such designs appear to fall in the range 1.0 to 1.4 times what they would have been assuming random sampling. In our case, then, we have weighted our standard errors by a factor of 1.5: thus

$$\sigma_p = 1.5 \sqrt{p(1-p)/N}$$

The estimates of victimisation for car theft and theft of objects from a car are weighted to allow for differences in car ownership rates. In other words, these are rates of victimisation for households with one or more cars, trucks etc., rather than for the entire population of households (a proportion of which will not have any automobile and thus cannot be at risk). Unless otherwise stated estimates of victimisation for these two offences will be based on this weighted denominator. This also had the effect of increasing the standard error of an estimate and thus broadening the confidence intervals placed about it.

Table 3.2: *Estimated numbers of households victimised and offences committed (based on CSO estimates of household numbers, 1981)*

	<i>Numbers victimised</i>	<i>Confidence intervals</i>	<i>Numbers of incidents</i>	<i>Confidence intervals</i>
Illegal entry	32,328	±5,213	40,410	±5,800
Theft of property around dwelling place	43,104	±5,990	61,064	±7,050
Vandalism	35,022	±5,418	63,758	±7,188
Theft from person	47,594	±6,281	57,472	±6,863
Car Theft	27,034	±4,743	33,792	±5,262
Theft from inside car	36,646	±5,486	47,640	±6,183
Total households:	898,000			
Total car owning households:	600,762			

Estimate of households: CSO *Census of the Population 1981, Bulletin No. 40.*

Estimate of car owning households: CSO household totals weighted by ownership estimate derived from ESRI 1982/1983 Crime Victimization Survey.

Two factors need to be kept in mind when using these rates. First, they represent estimates, with the percentage cited our best estimate, but one that lies within a confidence interval. Thus, Table 3.1 indicates that the rate of burglary victimisation is somewhere between 3.0 per cent and 4.2 per cent of households.

A second factor is that the risk of victimisation is not evenly distributed. Table 3.1 makes it clear that, particularly for vandalism and theft of property from around the home, some households are especially prone to becoming victims. Our estimates show that the average number of incidents per victim household ranges from 1.21 for theft from the person, 1.25 for burglary and car theft, and 1.3 for theft from inside a motor vehicle. Households that were victimised by theft from around their dwelling experienced on average 1.42 incidents, while, as previously cited, many if not most victims of vandalism experienced two incidents in the 12 month period.

The identification of subgroups of the population prone to multiple victimisation was one of the objectives advanced in favour of victimisation surveys (National Academy of Sciences, (NAS) 1976, p. 143). Official crime statistics rarely provide information with which to investigate that phenomenon. And indeed, surveys confirm that the risk of victimisation is such that there are more multiple victims than would be predicted by chance (Sparks, 1981, p. 18).²⁵ The

²⁵If the risk of being the victim of a particular crime for the *n*th time was independent of the number of victimisations already suffered, then the distribution of the number of victimisations for that crime (0, 1, 2, 3 times etc.) would follow a Poisson distribution. In fact in this survey, as in others where this issue has been investigated (see Nelson 1980, pp. 870-871) the Poisson does not fit, and multiple victimisation is more common than the Poisson model allows for.

existence of such multiple victimisation is important both in understanding the impact of crime and the causal risk factors that explain victimisation. Repeated and frequent victimisation is likely to have familial, individual, or commercial consequences quite distinct from the experience of a single, isolated incident. Similarly, "there are good reasons, *a priori*, for believing that the explanation of multiple victimisation is very different from the explanation of what may be called one-time victimisation — just as there are differences between the person who commits the odd crime on this or that isolated occasion and the persistent or 'career' criminal" (NAS, 1976, p. 143). Though the topic merits a separate paper, which we hope to provide later, the distinction between victimisation rates (percentage of potential victims experiencing crime) and multiple victimisation will be maintained in many of the analyses in this and subsequent chapters.

When addressing the question of whether there is much or little crime in Ireland the figures presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 may be interpreted in various ways. For example, they show that a burglary occurs on average every 13 minutes, and a car theft every 11 minutes. On the other hand, they also show that, on average, every house in the country is likely to be illegally entered once in 28 years, and each household is likely to suffer the theft of a car once in 22 years.²⁶ In other words, statistics such as those presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 may be used to show the existence of either a high or a low risk of crime, depending on where the emphasis is placed.

The numbers of offences that we present here are uniformly higher than the rates reported in the Garda Commissioner's *Annual Report on Crime* for 1982. In some cases our rates of victimisation are lower than those reported in the IMS poll (for example, the rates of burglary and vandalism) while in other cases (car theft) they are higher, although the items included on the IMS and ESRI surveys are not in all cases comparable. Perhaps the clearest way to decide whether the levels of victimisation risk and of crime incidence are high or low is to adopt a comparative perspective, and this we do in the following chapter, where we show that Irish rates for certain crimes (burglary and vehicle theft) are high when evaluated in this way.

In the remainder of this chapter we deal with three things: first we consider the relationship between our figures and official Garda crime statistics; second, we look more closely at the question of multiple victimisation; and, finally, we examine regional variations in the risk of victimisation.

Rates of Reporting and Comparison with Garda Statistics

One reason why our estimates of crime exceed those based on official Garda

²⁶Though, of course, this is not a stationary process and in reality the risks will undoubtedly alter over a period of 22 years.

statistics may be because of under-reporting of crime by victims to the Gardaí, and we have earlier discussed (in Chapter 2) why we should not expect the police to be notified of all crime that occurs.

In Table 3.3 we present rates of reporting to the Gardaí for our six crimes and, on this basis, the estimated total of crime reported, while Table 3.4 shows the percentage of victims who reported none of their victimisations to the Gardaí. These tables reveal a similar picture. They show that those crimes where insurance claims are likely to be involved and which also may entail substantial loss to the victims — namely burglary and car theft — have by far the highest rates of reporting to the Gardaí. Only in the case of burglary did the questionnaire ask whether or not losses had been sustained by the victim and, not surprisingly, burglaries that involved a loss were more likely to be reported (92.4 per cent reported) than those involving no loss (79.1 per cent). In all, burglary resulted in a loss of property in 275 of the 391 incidents for which information is available — 70 per cent of all burglaries (data were missing in four incidents).

Lower rates of reporting to the Gardaí were associated with offences for which there could be little hope of restitution of stolen property — that is, theft from the person and theft from inside a car. Finally, the lowest reporting rates were found for vandalism and the theft of property from around the house. As we shall see, these tend to be the most frequently repeated crimes and probably comprise a high proportion of relatively petty offences.

Three of the criminal offences included in the victimisation survey have reasonably straightforward connections to categories used by the Garda Síochána in collating crime statistics: illegal entry into dwellings, thefts of cars,

Table 3.3: *Reporting rates and estimated number of incidents reported to Gardaí, six offences*

	<i>Percentage of incidents reported</i>	<i>Estimated number of incidents reported in population</i>	<i>Confidence intervals</i>
Illegal entry (burglary)	88.20	35,642	±5,465
Theft of property around dwelling place	46.84	28,602	±4,919
Vandalism	46.12	29,405	±4,982
Theft from person	64.19	34,966	±5,564
Car theft	91.89	31,051	±5,057
Theft from inside car	64.33	30,647	±5,034

and thefts of property from inside cars. The estimates derived from the survey for the number of such incidents *reported* were shown in Table 3.3. Those estimated numbers exceed substantially the numbers actually entered into the Garda statistics. Our estimated number of recorded illegal entry to dwellings was 35,642; this compares with 16,558 burglaries in dwelling houses recorded by the Gardaí in 1982. Similarly, the estimated number of reported car thefts was 31,051 and the number of relevant offences totalled to 21,936. And on the basis of our survey we estimate that 30,647 thefts of items from inside cars were reported to the Gardaí in 1982, contrasting with the 20,523 such incidents noted in Garda statistics. To summarise, the Garda statistics record 46.5 per cent of our estimated reported burglaries, 70.6 per cent of our estimated reported car thefts, and 67.0 per cent of our estimated reported thefts from inside vehicles.

Table 3.4: *Number and percentage of victims who made no reports to Gardaí*

	Victims	Number and percentage of non-reported incidents	
		No.	%
Illegal entry	324	42	13.0
Theft of property	423	190	44.9
Vandalism	344	153	44.5
Theft from person	472	148	31.4
Car theft	267	16	6.0
Theft from inside car	362	114	31.5

Of course, our estimates are subject to sampling error, the magnitude of which is as stated by the confidence intervals in Table 3.3. Our estimates also include interviews carried out in 1983, a year in which higher levels of crime may have obtained than in 1982. Also, our figures relate to the victim's perceptions of (a) whether a crime had taken place and (b) what type of crime. The Gardaí may not have accepted those perceptions as accurate.

A greater impediment to adequate survey/police statistics comparisons is that the recorded crime numbers cited above exclude relevant incidents that have been classified under other offence headings. Our survey questions and our instructions to the interviewers sought to minimise the potential for such non-comparability. However, it is doubtlessly the case that incidents reported both to our interviewers and to the Gardaí are in the Garda crime statistics but under offence headings not used in the preceding comparisons. The most likely such omissions are: for illegal entry, larceny from the dwelling (where the theft is believed to have been carried out by a person or persons with legitimate access to

the dwelling); for car theft, "unauthorised interference with mechanism of a motor powered vehicle"; and, for larceny from unattended vehicle, larceny of car accessories.

These discrepancies between survey-based estimates of reporting to the police and police statistics can be further explored in Chapter 4, when the Irish findings are compared to those for England and Wales and Scotland. At this stage, we note that, as the discussion in Chapter 2 anticipated, a victimisation survey adds another measuring instrument which can be applied to criminal activity. It does not definitively tell us how much crime is present. However, it does raise questions about official crime statistics, that if addressed, may lead to their more informed use.

Multiple Victimisation

In total, 1,733 households out of the 8,902 in the sample had been the victim of one or more of the six kinds of offence dealt with, and the survey recorded a total of 2,998 criminal incidents. This gives an overall victimisation rate of 19 per 100 households and an overall offence rate of 34 incidents per 100 households per annum. The ratio of offences to victims is therefore 1.7, which is strongly suggestive of certain households being particularly susceptible to multiple victimisation.²⁷

Such multiple victimisation can arise through one or both of two ways: either particular households can experience more than one victimisation of the same type of incident or/and they can be the victim of more than one type of crime.

Table 3.5 shows the percentage of all victims experiencing different numbers of victimisations for each particular offence. Thus, for example, we see that of victims of burglary, over four-fifths had been burgled once, about one-eighth had been burgled twice and less than one in twenty victims had experienced three or more burglaries. Indeed, the pattern for burglaries is common also to theft from the person, car theft and theft of an item from inside a car. In all

²⁷It may appear that this ratio of offences per victim invalidates our comments on the probable double or triple counting of offences in the IMS poll where we suggested that a ratio of incidents to victims of 1.5 (1.65 in Dublin) constituted evidence of the existence of such multiple counting. However, since the IMS poll did not ask how many times an individual was the victim of each particular offence the measure of multiple victimisation used in Chapter 2 was:

No. of different types of victimisation/No. of victims (A)

whereas our measure in the current chapter is

No. of victimisations (of same or different type of crime)/No. of victims. (B)

Applying measure (A) to our data yields a figure of 1.26, which is substantially below that reported in the IMS findings.

Table 3.5: *Percentage distribution of victims of crime according to number of incidents experienced*

	1	2	3	4+	N
1. Illegal entry	82.7	13.0	2.5	1.9	324
2. Theft of property, etc.	74.5	15.9	5.3	4.3	423
3. Vandalism	64.0	16.7	7.7	11.6	344
4. Theft from person	83.7	12.5	3.2	0.6	472
5. Car Theft	82.5	13.8	1.9	1.9	267
6. Theft from inside car	80.9	13.9	2.8	3.4	362

these cases, the number of households experiencing more than two incidents is small, though it is also clear that a substantial proportion of victims are victimised more than once.

The common pattern among these four crimes does not hold for the theft of property from around the dwelling place or vandalism to the dwelling place. Here multiple victimisations are much more common. We have already seen that these are the crimes with the lowest reporting rates and, therefore, may consist of a high proportion of what the householder considers petty offences. In addition, the object of these crimes — the area surrounding the house or dwelling — is both static, in a way that, for example, a car or the individual who is the victim of theft from the person, are not — and easily accessible to potential criminals (in a way that the interior of the house will probably not be). Such a combination of characteristics of the crime itself and of the object of the offence, is likely to be conducive to the high levels of multiple victimisation displayed by these two offences.

Table 3.6 shows the percentage of households experiencing a number of different types of incident. Thus, 15 per cent of households had been the victim of only one type of offence, 3.4 per cent the victim of any two kinds of offence and so on. The mean number of different offences experienced per household is thus 1.27, a

Table 3.6: *Percentage distribution of households according to number of different types of offence for which victimised*

	<i>Number of different offences</i>							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	N
%	80.5	15.3	3.4	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	8,902

figure directly comparable with, though substantially less than, the IMS multiple victimisation figure of 1.5 discussed in Chapter 2. It is clear from the present discussion that of the two types of multiple victimisation — greater than one experience of a particular crime and experience of more than one type of crime — the former is rather more common and is a more important factor in giving rise to the overall ratio of 1.7 offences per victim.

Urban/Rural and Regional Variations in Victimisation Risk

We should not expect that the risks of being a victim of crime will be the same throughout the country. It is well known, for example, that urban environments are characterised by higher rates of crime than rural areas, and particular parts of the country are, according to the *Annual Report on Crime* almost free of recorded crime (notably Donegal, Mayo and some other western counties in the most recent report) while other areas (most especially Dublin) have very high recorded crime rates.

If we adopt a simple rural/urban distinction to analyse geographical variations in victimisation risk, then we see that crime in Ireland is overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon. In Table 3.7 we see rates of victimisation per 100 households for our six offence categories. Our definition of urban is, as noted earlier, all towns having a population of 10,000 or more. We also show, in Table 3.7, the victimisation rates for three urban environments; these are Dublin (made up of Dublin County plus Bray); the other four large cities, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford; and the remaining towns with 10,000 population or more.

The rural/urban distinction is very clear. For all crimes, urban victimisation rates far exceed those of the rural areas; for all offences the urban rates are at least three times as great as the rural, with the exception of theft of property from around the dwelling. In addition, the rural rate is much lower than for any of the three types of urban area shown in Table 3.7.

Within the urban areas an approximately uniform picture exists for all types of offence, in that victimisation levels are highest in Dublin, with the levels for all other urban areas (the four large cities and the other towns) being approximately equal (in most cases the differences in rates between the two are not statistically significant). The exception to this pattern is vandalism, which appears to be very prevalent in the mid-range cities.

In other words, there are two poles of victimisation risk for all types of crime; a very high level of risk found in Dublin and a very low level found in rural areas, with the other towns and cities experiencing a risk roughly midway between these two extremes.

The mean number of incidents per victim is shown in Table 3.8. For burglary, theft of property from around the dwelling and theft from the person there is no

Table 3.7: *Victimisation rates according to urban/rural distinction*

	<i>Victimisation rates per 100 households</i>				
	<i>Rural areas</i>	<i>Urban areas</i>		<i>Urban areas</i>	
			<i>Dublin</i>	<i>Cork, Limerick Galway and Waterford</i>	<i>Other towns >10,000 pop.</i>
Illegal entry	1.0 ± 0.42	6.9 ± 1.19	8.3 ± 1.55	3.5 ± 1.95	3.6 ± 2.61
Theft of property around dwelling	2.7 ± 0.66	7.4 ± 1.22	7.4 ± 1.46	7.2 ± 2.75	7.7 ± 3.72
Vandalism of house, property	1.9 ± 0.56	6.4 ± 1.14	6.3 ± 1.35	8.1 ± 2.90	3.4 ± 2.55
Theft from person	1.7 ± 0.54	9.8 ± 1.38	12.0 ± 1.82	5.2 ± 2.36	4.1 ± 2.75
Theft of car	1.4 ± 0.59	8.1 ± 1.62	10.4 ± 2.04	3.3 ± 2.33	3.6 ± 4.22
Theft of object from inside car	3.1 ± 0.87	10.0 ± 1.74	10.7 ± 2.09	8.1 ± 3.54	8.9 ± 6.45

Table 3.8: Mean number of offences per victim according to urban/rural division

	Rural	Urban	Urban areas		
			(a) Dublin	(b) Cork, etc.	(c) Other towns > 10,000
Illegal Entry	1.20	1.27	1.27	1.41	1.19
Theft of property around dwelling	1.43	1.48	1.31	1.73	2.00
Vandalism	1.58	1.90	1.82	2.07	2.64
Theft from person	1.17	1.22	1.23	1.18	1.11
Car theft	1.06	1.28	1.27	1.38	1.17
Theft from inside car	1.12	1.39	1.35	1.38	2.13

difference in this measure between urban and rural areas. On the other hand, victims of vandalism and the two offences connected with automobiles are somewhat more likely to have been victimised more than once in urban than rural areas. However, the very high mean levels of multiple victimisation for these offences in the urban areas outside Dublin must be interpreted cautiously, given the small number of offences recorded here.

If we turn to Table 3.9, which shows the victimisation rates for each planning region of the country, a very clear pattern emerges. If we include the urban areas in our analysis (as in the top part of Table 3.9) we see that for all offences, the greatest level of victimisation occurs in the East, followed by the Southwest and Midwest. These figures clearly reflect the influence of Dublin, Cork and Limerick on the risk figures. Removing the urban areas gives us the victimisation rates for the rural areas of each planning region shown in the lower part of Table 3.9.²⁸ Here we see that the levels of risk are generally low in the West, Northeast and Northwest (where the majority of our estimates do not differ significantly from zero) somewhat higher in the Midlands, Southeast and Southwest and highest of all in the East and Midwest. The high risk of victimisation in the East may plausibly be accounted for by the influence of Dublin: proximity to Dublin appears to increase the risk of victimisation (though not to anything approaching the level of risk within Dublin). The same may account for the

²⁸It must be remembered, however, that we have, strictly speaking, removed urban dwelling victims of crime rather than urban crime *per se* from our analysis. In other words, some victimisation of rural dwellers may have taken place in urban areas (and vice versa) in those offences which do not relate specifically to the dwelling place.

Table 3.9: *Victimisation rates per 100 households for six offences according to planning region*

Including urban areas:	<i>Type of offence</i>					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
East	7.0	6.7	5.8	10.2	8.9	9.5
Southeast	1.4	3.2	2.7	2.5	1.6	3.9
Southwest	2.3	4.0	3.5	3.3	1.6	4.6
Midwest	2.0	5.9	4.7	3.4	2.9	5.6
West	0.3*	2.3	0.6*	0.6*	1.0*	2.6
Northwest	1.6	2.5	1.4	0.9*	0.9*	0.9*
Midlands	1.2	2.6	1.1	1.5	1.5	3.3
Northeast	0.5*	3.4	3.2	1.5	1.4*	4.1
Excluding urban areas:						
East	1.8	3.8	3.6	2.9	3.4	5.1
Southeast	1.2	2.5	2.8	1.9	1.4	2.3
Southwest	1.2	2.5	0.8	1.5	0.7*	3.2
Midwest	1.2	4.1	3.3	3.1	2.2	4.4
West	0.4*	1.3	0.7*	0.6*	0.9*	2.1
Northwest	0.3*	2.4	1.3	0.4*	1.0*	0.8*
Midlands	1.2	2.5	1.1	1.5	1.5	3.3
Northeast	0.3*	1.4*	0.9*	1.0*	0.9*	3.3

*Not significantly different from zero, $p \leq 0.5$, one-tailed test.

Key: 1 = illegal entry 2 = theft from around dwelling place
 3 = vandalism 4 = theft from person
 5 = car theft 6 = theft from car

relatively high rate of victimisation in the Midwest: here proximity to Limerick may be the cause. However, this does not hold equally for proximity to Cork. In the Southwest region the removal of the urban victimisation figures leads to a much greater decline in risk than does the removal of the urban figures for the Midwest. The rural victimisation rate for the Midwest is significantly higher than for the Southwest in the case of vandalism, theft from the person and car theft. One plausible explanation for this difference relates to the size of the two planning regions. If we assume that Cork, in the Southwest, and Limerick in the Midwest, contain the bulk of what, in Chapter 5, we shall term "motivated offenders" — that is, potential perpetrators of offences — then it follows that, in the smaller Midwest region, the probability of an individual member of a household coming into contact with such a motivated offender is greater than in the

large Southwest region. This may arise either through the victim moving into contact with the offender (as in crimes such as car theft) or through the offender moving into contact with a stationary victimisation target (as in vandalism of property).

The Distribution of Victimization: Evidence from Survey Estimates and Garda Statistics

Finally, it is possible to compare the distribution of survey-estimated incidents with those contained in the Garda statistics. We find that 72.7 per cent of burglaries (illegal entries) identified through our survey were in Co. Dublin; 65.1 per cent of burglaries recorded by the Gardaí occurred within the Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA) (nearly all of Co. Dublin plus small portions of counties Wicklow and Kildare).

We can make similar comparisons for two other offences: motor vehicle theft and theft from inside an unattended vehicle. However, such comparisons are less meaningful, as the Dublin/Non-Dublin distinction is based on where the victim lives, not on where the incident took place. So we may be including victimisations that occurred during a visit to Dublin by a resident of, say, Co. Kerry. And indeed, the survey-derived estimates suggest less of a concentration of crime in Dublin than do Garda statistics. The figures for car theft are close: our survey suggests that 74.5 per cent of such offences had Dublin residents as victims, while 79 per cent of car thefts were recorded within the DMA. There is a far more considerable discrepancy in the case of larceny of items from vehicles. Only 57.3 per cent of victims in the survey were Dublin residents, though 76.8 per cent of all such offences occurred in Dublin, according to the Garda statistics.

Thus, there is some evidence that Garda statistics may, to a limited extent, understate the concentration of burglary offences in the Dublin area. For other offences, the findings highlight the need for caution in interpreting the results of victimisation surveys, especially in distinguishing the location of the reported incident and the residence of the victim for non-household specific offences.

Summary

In this chapter we have presented our estimates of the victimisation rate for the six offences included in our interview schedule, and also our estimates of the annual number of these offences. We also looked at the degree to which these crimes were reported to the Gardaí, and saw that those offences most likely to be reported were those involving loss of property, and those least likely to be reported were the frequently repetitive, probably largely petty, offences such as larceny and vandalism. However, in comparing our rates of crime with official Garda figures in those cases where such a comparison could be drawn, we found that, even allowing for the rates of reporting by victims, the Garda figures fell

substantially below our own.

The survey also provided evidence that a substantial number of families are victims of a particular type of offence several times in the course of a year. There appear to be families who bear a risk of victimisation that is substantially greater than other's. Indeed, a third of families that had experienced an act of vandalism to the home were likely to have had a second such experience. The extent of multiple victimisation was also high for the theft of property from the immediate environs of the home. But even for offences like burglary and car theft, the presence of multiple victimisations is an important contributory factor to the overall rate of offences that we identified.

In examining geographical variations in victimisation risk it was found that all types of offence were much more common in urban than rural areas, and, indeed, that certain regions — particularly the West — were virtually free of crime. It was also shown, however, that in addition to urban dwellers having a higher than average risk of victimisation, rural dwellers in proximity to Dublin, in particular, and also Limerick, appear to suffer a higher risk than other rural dwellers. A similar pattern was found for the distribution of multiple victimisations.

The examination of such statistics as we have looked at in this chapter cannot, of course, tell us whether crime in Ireland is high or low, since this is a relative matter requiring comparative material. What we have done, however, in addition to presenting our basic estimates of the incidence of crime, is to point to some simple factors — notably geographical variations in this incidence — which demonstrate that the risk of victimisation is not uniformly distributed within the population. In the following chapters we develop both these themes. In Chapter 4 we look at Irish victimisation levels in an international, comparative perspective, to determine whether or not the levels prevailing here can be viewed as high or low. In Chapter 5 we turn to a more detailed examination of specific factors which influence the distribution of victimisation risk within the population.

Chapter 4

IRISH CRIME LEVELS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

The estimated levels of victimisation during 1982/83 which we have presented in Chapter 3 are abstract in that there is no absolute yardstick that can tell us whether they are high or low. If a similar survey had been conducted in, say, 1972; we could adopt that as a baseline with which to compare the results of our survey. Such a baseline is regrettably not available. Instead, we can place Ireland's victimisation levels in comparative international perspective.

This is a more complicated enterprise than that of estimating the level of crime obtaining in any one jurisdiction. A jurisdiction is here defined as a geographical unit that has its own criminal law, courts and police force. The section that follows provides a summary of the problems encountered when comparing crime levels across two or more jurisdictions. With that background, we then proceed to offer comparisons of our survey estimates first with the component jurisdictions of Great Britain and then with jurisdictions further afield, such as the United States, Canada and Holland. We conclude with our evaluation of Ireland's relative standing, in terms both of the level of crime and of the public's response to crime.

Methodological Issues in Comparative Criminology

International comparisons of estimated crime levels, whether based on official statistics or on victimisation surveys, add a further dimension to the problems of reliability and validity always present in measuring crime. Vigderhous (1978, p. 230) offers a general approach to the methodology of international criminological research:

The problem of validity can be examined by evaluating the possible discrepancy which might exist between the operational and nominal definitions of various types of criminal offences. The nominal definition of a given crime is provided by the criminal law and the operational definition is provided by the official reported crime statistics. In an attempt to compare criminal statistics for given criminal acts, the following two fundamental methodological considerations should be taken into account:

- (a) the identification of a possible discrepancy which exists between the nominal and the operational definition of given criminal acts within cultures or societies;
- (b) the identification of a possible discrepancy which exists between various nominal definitions when compared across cultures or societies.

The problems raised by the first discrepancy have already been discussed in relation to the Irish data. When two or more police jurisdictions are involved, the possible discrepancies reach a far greater order of magnitude. We need to consider the equivalence of nominal definitions of crimes *and* the various cultural differences that may affect the way in which such definitions are applied by police and citizens.

Survey-based estimates allow the researcher to take steps that can minimise, though not remove, the discrepancy between nominal and operational definitions. Further, to the extent that (a) respondents in two jurisdictions have similar notions of what constitutes a type of criminal offence and (b) the surveys in those jurisdictions use similar question formats and interviewer instructions for their administration, researchers are able to maximise the comparability of their estimates.

It is also possible that we may encounter two jurisdictions with different nominal definitions of crime, as embodied in the criminal law, and yet have similar citizen perceptions as to what operationally should be regarded as a crime. That possibility, however, will be of interest later, when we reconcile the results of comparisons based on victimisation surveys with official statistics.

The comparability of any two surveys will depend most directly on the extent to which the question wording is such as to elicit the same meaning in the populations surveyed. Even identical wording will not, however, guarantee comparability of meaning, as populations may differ in the operational definitions on which they base their answers. For example, the population of a jurisdiction long accustomed to crime as a prominent issue may have a different idea about what is sufficiently serious to merit consideration as a crime than the residents of a jurisdiction which has only recently become crime conscious. A greater acceptance of, and familiarity with, crime risk may lead to more selective reporting of victimisations.

Ideally, therefore, international comparisons of crime survey findings would be based on responses to questions about both the perception of what is a crime and the experience of crime victimisations. The absence of the former of those two components in the comparisons we will be making in this chapter renders our conclusions tentative.

There are two more commonplace differences between surveys that merit consideration as well. First, the length and purpose of a questionnaire will affect the comprehensiveness of the answers given. A long questionnaire devoted entirely to the topic of crime may be more successful at focusing the attention of respondents than a section of a general survey containing a few questions on victimisation. A long, specially fielded questionnaire will look for details of possible incidents. That may assist the recall of victimisations that would otherwise be forgotten in responding to a direct question.

The length and purpose of a questionnaire produce a second effect on the results. More intensive questioning provides sufficient information to screen victim reports and eliminate or reclassify incidents that are incorrectly stated by respondents. Thus, the more detail that is requested, the more control the researcher may have over what is counted as a crime.

A further methodological issue affecting comparisons is the choice of the appropriate unit by which to estimate victimisation rates. Crime statistics, like other statistics used in international comparisons, require us to standardise for differences in population size and composition. Thus, official crime statistics are typically expressed as rates per 100,000 population in comparative studies (see, for example, Verkko, 1953; Archer and Gartner, 1976; Krohn, 1978; Interpol's biannual International Crime Statistics reports; Messner, 1982). This fails to adjust for differences between countries in age structure and in family size. The problem here, however, is more tractable than that encountered in, for example, studies of income inequality (see Kuznets, 1979, pp. 257-282). The problem is really conceptual. We wish to standardise by "targets" and for most offences this can be accomplished by establishing national rates *per capita* adults (removing children, who are likely to be supervised, from the pool of potential victims) or per 100,000 households, as appropriate.²⁹

Such a choice, however, has consequences for our comparisons. The implications are evident in the differences between British and Irish population structures. Table 4.1 uses the 1981 official statistics for burglary offences to calculate rates per 100,000 population, per 100,000 population 16 and older, and per 100,000 households. The choice of denominator is important. In the Republic, we have an average household size of 3.68 (CSO, 1983b, p. vii). The British Crime Survey (BCS) used estimates that imply average household sizes of 2.74 in England and Wales and 2.82 in Scotland. Similarly, the percentage of the population aged 16 and over in 1981 would be 67.8 per cent, 77.8 per cent and 76.8 per cent, respectively (*Sources*: as in Table 4.1).

Generally, the ratio of persons to households declines with economic development. Young people leave their parental home at an earlier age and the elderly become more likely to remain in their own household as a country becomes more affluent. Such a change can occur rapidly. The number of households in the Republic increased from 726,000 in 1971 to 898,000 in 1981. (*Bulletin No. 40, Census of Population, 1981*, p. 7) That represents a 24 per cent increase, compared to the 16 per cent rise in total population size.

²⁹There is a conceptual issue that such an adjustment does not resolve: if the number of potential offenders is the relevant factor to be standardised, then we should consistently use *per capita* population rates. In this report, we argue for a model of victimisation risk that gives primacy to opportunities. Thus, rates of burglary and similar offences are compared per 100,000 households at risk.

Table 4.1: *Burglary offences recorded by police in England and Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, 1982*

	<i>England and Wales</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Republic of Ireland</i>
Number Recorded by Police	810,600	106,271	32,620
Rate per 10,000 persons	167.1	211.1	94.7
Rate per 10,000 persons 16+	214.7	274.7	139.7
Rate per 10,000 households	457.8	595.0	363.3

Source: Crime: England and Wales, *Social Trends* 14, p. 165; Scotland, *Statistical Bulletin No. 2*, 1983, Scottish Home and Health Department, p. 3; Ireland, *Annual Report on Crime 1982*, p. 13. Population: England and Wales and Scotland, *Census 1981 National Report Part 1*, Tables A, 12 and 24; Ireland, *Census of Population 1981*, Bulletin No. 40, Tables 1 and 2.

Table 4.1 demonstrates the importance of selecting a conceptually appropriate base by which to compute comparative crime rates. If we adopt the total population as the appropriate base, we find a crime rate in England and Wales that is 176 per cent above the rate in the Irish Republic. The use of households as the base yields an English/Welsh rate that is just 126 per cent of that in Ireland. In our approach, which focuses on opportunities rather than on potential offenders, the latter comparison is the more illuminating.³⁰

The official crime statistics thus suggest that burglary is most prevalent in Scotland, followed by England and Wales, and with a substantially lower prevalence in Ireland. We supplement that comparison by one based on victimisation surveys in the next section and then return in a further section to the official crime statistics in order to reconcile the results from the two forms of estimation.

Survey Estimated Victimization Levels in "These Islands"

This section compares victimisation rates in the Republic of Ireland with those prevailing in England and Wales and in Scotland. Rates are always expressed as incidents per 10,000 households, for burglary, car theft and larceny from vehicles. For the latter two offences, rates are stated in all cases for vehicle-owning households.

The 1982 British Crime Survey, which questioned residents of some 16,000

³⁰Population and household numbers for England and Wales and for Scotland are from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1981 National Report: Great Britain, Part 1* (Tables A, 12, and 24). Irish data are taken from *Bulletin No. 40, Census of Population of Ireland*, December 1983.

households, offers the most promising basis for a comparative analysis. The similarities in the criminal law and criminal justice systems and the closeness in the timing of the Irish and British surveys maximise the potential for such a comparison. Also, the British Crime Survey results offer two "national" level comparisons to the Irish levels, as survey estimates are available separately for England and Wales and for Scotland.

In this section we offer such comparisons as are possible between the British Crime Survey results and our own findings. That exercise is continued in the next section, which brings in the evidence from the total number of "offences recorded" in the relevant official statistics categories. This will allow us to re-examine the official crime statistics for Ireland, England and Wales, and Scotland (as stated in Table 4.1), by considering differences in (a) the rate of victim reporting and (b) police recording of victim complaints. Those differences hinder international comparisons of crime levels.

A focus on comparisons within these islands is particularly apt. It allows us to begin with an assumption that both the nominal definitions and their operational application share many common features and that such discrepancies as do exist can be identified to an extent rarely possible in international comparisons. Specifically, the estimates for four offences can be compared with substantial confidence: burglary, car theft, theft from a motor vehicle and vandalism to the household.

The main threats to the validity of these comparisons are:

1. British estimates pertain to 1981, while our survey data relate primarily to 1982.
2. The more extensive British Crime Survey (BCS) elicited more detail from respondents about reported victimisation incidents. By so focusing the respondent's memory on the incident, the BCS would tend to yield a more conservative estimate of victimisations, as the chances of "telescoping" events from outside the relevant timespan as part of the survey would be lessened. The relative absence of detail also precluded us from checking respondent reports for plausibility; in the BCS, about 5 per cent of reported incidents were not accepted as genuine and thus excluded from the estimates (Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 41).
3. Repeated victimisations of a similar nature — series offences — were counted up to a maximum of eight incidents in a 12-month period in the ESRI survey and a maximum of five in the BCS (Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 40).
4. The more extensive screening procedure of the BCS interview format may have been more successful at eliciting the more minor forms of victimisation.

The first three points would tend to inflate Irish estimates artificially, relative to those for England and Wales or for Scotland; the fourth point suggests a more comprehensive coverage in the BCS than in our survey. On balance, the artificial component of observed differences between the BCS and ESRI estimates appears to be small. The only substantial discrepancy for which we can make no provision is the year of reference: 1981 for the BCS and 1982 for the ESRI survey.

Other discrepancies in question content have been dealt with by adjusting the BCS estimates to correspond to those produced by our survey, either from information contained in the published BCS reports or from unpublished material provided to us by the Home Office Research and Planning Unit. The minor differences that remain are specified separately in Appendix 1.

Table 4.2 presents the estimated level of victimisation risk in the three jurisdictions. The estimates contained in Table 4.2 are all of incidence levels; that is, multiple victimisations for each type of offence are included in order to

Table 4.2: *Incidence of victimisation per 10,000 households comparison of British Crime Survey and ESRI survey estimates**

	<i>England and Wales 1981</i>	<i>Scotland 1981</i>	<i>Republic of Ireland 1982/83</i>
Burglary	260	257	450
Vehicle Theft	232	280	562
Theft from Vehicle	1,040	1,512	793
Vandalism to Dwellings	595	783	710

*The ESRI Survey excluded "attempted" burglaries. Estimates for England and Wales and for Scotland are adjusted to also exclude "attempts". All estimated incidences for motor vehicle-related offences are calculated in terms of 10,000 vehicle-owning households. The adjustment to BCS incidence estimates to remove attempts are based on the sources cited below and may differ from other published BCS results derived from alternative definitions and sample weightings.

Source: England and Wales: Burglary: Hough, 1983, Table 1; Vehicle theft and theft from vehicle, Hough and Mayhew 1983, Table 1, Footnote 6; Vandalism, unpublished BCS results provided by Home Office Research and Planning Unit (all home vandalism less vandalism to vehicle or from burglary).
Scotland: Burglary, Chambers and Tombs, 1984, Table 2.1 (adjusted to remove "attempts" as shown on page 24); Vehicle offences, Table 2.1, Footnote 3. Vandalism, unpublished BCS results provided by Home Office Research and Planning Unit (all home vandalism less vandalism to vehicle or from burglary).

obtain a rate of incidents per 10,000 households "at risk". So in all cases the number of households victimised per 10,000 households would be smaller. For example, the risk of being a victim of one or more burglaries in the Republic would be estimated, from Table 3.1, at about 360 per 10,000 households. It should be noted that though the rates shown are all estimates, around which a confidence interval adheres, the sample sizes, the main factor determining their breadth, are the same for England and Ireland, while the Scottish sample was about half as great. However, the Scottish estimates should not be regarded as being one half as certain as the others. Rather, since the square root of the sample size is used to compute confidence intervals (see the formula in Chapter 2), a parameter estimate in the Scottish sample will have a confidence interval roughly 30 per cent larger than the same estimate in either of the other samples. (In the formula, a sample of 10,000 would yield a denominator of 100 and a sample of 5,000 a denominator of 71.)

In the event, the comparisons reported in Table 4.2 make it clear that details will not affect our evaluation of British and Irish victimisation levels. The 1982/83 ESRI survey produced an estimated 450 burglaries per 10,000 households. The 1981 estimates, from the British Crime Survey, are 260 and 257 for England and Wales and Scotland, respectively. Vehicle theft victimisation levels were even more differentiated. An incidence of 562 per 10,000 vehicle-owning households is shown for Ireland, more than twice the level found in England and Wales (232 per 10,000 vehicle-owning households) and exactly twice that in Scotland. Vandalism to the dwelling is slightly more common in Ireland than in England and Wales (710 vs. 595 per 10,000 households) but is still more frequent in Scotland, where the rate of victimisation is 783 per 10,000 households. Theft of items from vehicles, however, was a more frequent occurrence in Britain than in Ireland, with the highest rate in Scotland (1,512) followed by England and Wales (1,040), and then Ireland (793).

This last comparison is the only one based on substantially different question wording. The BCS question on thefts from vehicles included items attached to the vehicle's exterior, while the ESRI survey referred only to items taken from within the vehicle. Thus wing mirrors, roof racks and similar objects were possible targets in the British but not the Irish estimates. Thus, it is likely that an adjusted rate of victimisation for that offence, if available, would yield similar levels in England and Ireland but still leave significantly higher levels in Scotland than in Ireland.

Survey-based estimates of the incidence of property crime place Ireland at a substantial disadvantage relative to both England and Wales and Scotland in terms of burglary and vehicle theft. That disadvantage, however, is not necessarily generalisable to all forms of property crime. Our estimates suggest that thefts from vehicles are less frequent in Ireland than in either British

jurisdiction and that vandalism to dwellings is more common in Scotland than in Ireland.

It is here that the abbreviated format of the ESRI survey renders a firm evaluation difficult. We can state with certainty that Irish victim-reported levels of burglary and vehicle theft in 1982 exceeded by a considerable margin those found in the British Crime Survey for 1981. But other forms of property crime were either more prevalent or about as prevalent in Great Britain as in Ireland. It is not possible, therefore, to give a definite evaluation as to the relative magnitude of property crime across the jurisdictions. It could be that a more wide ranging set of questions would have produced an overall tendency for Irish levels of incidence to be lower than the levels of property crime experienced elsewhere in "these islands". Despite this caveat, however, it remains the case that burglary and vehicle theft, two major types of property crime, are more prevalent in the Republic. In the chapter's concluding section we consider why those two offences may manifest a distinctively high level at present.

Reconciling Survey and Police Estimates of Comparative Victimization

These victimisation survey-based comparisons sharply conflict with the evidence from police crime statistics. Table 4.1, for example, found an ordering for the offence of burglary in which Scottish crime levels far exceeded those in England and those in England stood considerably higher still than those in Ireland. This contrasts with the absence of a major difference between England and Scotland in survey-recorded victimisation, and an estimated level of victimisation in Ireland that is half again as large as that in Britain.

Much of this divergence in the evidence is artificial, due to differences in (a) the nature of crime, (b) public reporting of crime and (c) police recording of crime in the three countries. The term artificial is used because these factors affect the comparability of the categories across the countries.

The nature of crime may affect the comparisons in that victimisation surveys refer to residential dwellings or privately owned property, while official statistics typically combine these with commercial establishments and their property. To the extent that the pattern of crime in a country makes commercial "targets" more at risk than private ones, victimisation survey results cannot be simply contrasted with the police "offences known". And if two countries differ in the proportion of crime with commercial/institutional victims, victimisation surveys and official statistics may produce different results.

Similarly, if one country's citizens are more likely than those of another to report offences to the police, the official statistics of those two countries will not be strictly comparable. That potential bias can be adjusted through the results of the victimisation survey itself. The third factor, differential police recording practices, is less readily gauged. Two main considerations will be the procedures

followed in classifying and counting incidents and the extent to which victim complaints are dismissed as trivial or inaccurate and thus not entered into the official tabulation.

It is possible largely to remove the confounding effects of the first two of the three factors cited above: differences in crime patterns and differences in reporting to the police. Table 4.3 presents incidence levels per 10,000 households for the three offences, with the official statistics adjusted so as to be as similar as possible in terms of the type of incident they enumerate.³¹ Burglary is here limited to residential dwellings and appears to be most frequent in Scotland, followed closely by England and Wales and Ireland. The differences are not substantial, particularly given that the Irish statistics are for 1982 and the British statistics for 1981. There is a clearer ranking for vehicle theft, with the Irish rate of 365 per 10,000 vehicle-owning households exceeding the rate of 330 in Scotland and the rate of 266 in England. Thefts from vehicles were somewhat more frequent in Ireland than in England (Scottish figures could not be derived

Table 4.3: *Offences recorded by police per 10,000 households: international comparisons*

	<i>England and Wales 1981</i>	<i>Scotland 1981</i>	<i>Republic of Ireland 1982</i>
Burglary*	197 (158)	214	184
Vehicle Theft	266	330	365
Theft from Vehicle	319	**	342

*Limited to burglaries of dwelling places. The figure in parentheses for England and Wales excludes attempted burglary, a category that is included in both the Scottish and Irish rates.

**It is not possible to derive a separate figure for thefts from vehicles in Scottish crime statistics.

Sources: Republic of Ireland, offence levels and household denominators as shown in Chapter 3. England and Wales, Hough and Mayhew, 1983, Appendix C. Scotland, Chambers and Tombs, 1984, Appendix 2. In all cases, numbers for Great Britain are abstracted in the form most comparable to the Garda Commissioner's *Report on Crime*. The actual numbers abstracted are Burglary: England and Wales, 279,754 (349,692 if "attempts" are included) and Scotland, 38,272 (estimated by Chambers and Tombs 1984, Appendix 2, as 40 per cent of all burglaries, to exclude non-residential victims), Vehicle Theft: England and Wales, 315,961 and Scotland 32,529. Theft from Vehicles: England and Wales, 379,640. Household numbers in Great Britain are contained in the appendices cited above. The weighting to obtain the number of vehicle owning households was derived from the information in Hough and Mayhew, Table 1 and Chambers and Tombs, Table 2.1.

for this offence) but the difference is slight: 342 vs. 319 per 10,000 vehicle-owning households. Vehicle related estimate rates refer to both private and commercial

³¹The specific categories included in the victim surveys and in the official statistics for each country are as follows:

Republic of Ireland:

(1) *Survey*

- a. Burglary: "breaking in or gaining entry without permission" to primary residence, excluding attempts.
- b. Vehicle Theft: "steal (or use without permission) a car, truck, or motorbike that belongs to you or to someone in the household".
- c. Theft from Vehicle: "steal anything from inside a car or truck that belongs to you or to someone in this household".

(2) *Official Statistics* (unpublished statistics provided on request by the Garda Síochána)

- a. Burglary: Burglary in a dwellinghouse.
- b. Vehicle Theft: Larceny of motor cars; larceny of motor cycles, scooters, etc.; larceny of lorries; larceny of other motor powered vehicles; unauthorised taking of motor powered vehicles.
- c. Theft from Vehicle: Larceny from unattended vehicles.

England and Wales (Hough and Mayhew, 1983, Appendix C):

(1) *Survey*

- a. Burglary: Burglary in a dwelling (nothing taken); burglary in a dwelling (something taken); attempted burglary excluded, as shown in Hough, 1983.
- b. Vehicle Theft: Theft of car/van; theft of motorbike, motorscooter, or moped.
- c. Theft from Vehicle: Theft from car/van; theft from motorbike, motorscooter, or moped.

(2) *Official Statistics*

- a. Burglary: burglary in a dwelling; aggravated burglary in a dwelling. (includes "attempts").
- b. Vehicle Theft: Theft and unauthorised taking of motor vehicle (includes some — about 5 per cent of total — "attempts").
- c. Theft from Vehicle: Theft from vehicle (assumed to include about 5 per cent which are "attempts").

Scotland (Chambers and Tombs, 1984, Appendix 2):

(1) *Survey*

Same as England and Wales for all offences.

(2) *Official Statistics*

- a. Burglary: theft by housebreaking; housebreaking with intent to steal; attempted housebreaking with intent to enter and steal (housebreaking in Scotland includes burglaries of commercial and institutional premises, which is estimated to account for 60 per cent of all burglary offences).
- b. Vehicle Theft: theft of a motor vehicle and contents including taking and driving away ("attempts" are estimated to account for 5 per cent of the total offences and 6 per cent are estimated to be thefts of commercial vehicles).
- c. Thefts from Vehicles: Cannot be abstracted as a separate offence category from the crime statistics.

vehicles, so differences in the practice of crime may still create victimisation survey and police estimate discrepancies.

The divergent comparisons produced by victim surveys and official statistics certainly reflect, in part, public reporting practices and police recording behaviour that differ across jurisdictions. However, for the three offences being compared, the observed propensity to report offences simply makes the divergence all the more striking. Table 4.4 provides the survey-based estimates of the percentage of victimisations reported to the police. With the exception of vehicle thefts, Irish victims are substantially more likely than their British counterparts to report a victimisation. In Ireland 88 per cent of burglaries and 64 per cent of thefts from vehicles were reported to the Gardaí by victims; this contrasts with 80 per cent and 30 per cent for the same offences in England and Wales and 73 per cent and 43 per cent in Scotland. Thus, it cannot be claimed that Irish official statistics for burglary are artificially lowered, relative to UK statistics, by virtue of low propensities to report crime. Reporting rates for vehicle thefts do not vary across jurisdictions, perhaps due to a common requirement that such incidents be reported for insurance compensation and the sheer value of the property misappropriated.

Similarly, differences in willingness to report offences to the police cannot explain why survey-based estimates for thefts from vehicles produce a different conclusion than do analyses using police statistics. Police statistics indicate that

Table 4.4: *Reporting rates to the police in Ireland and Great Britain**

	<i>England and Wales 1981</i>	<i>Scotland 1981</i>	<i>Republic of Ireland 1982/83</i>
	<i>Per cent</i>		
Burglary (excluding "attempts")	80	73	88
Vehicle Theft	95	94	92
Theft from Vehicle	30	43	64

*These percentages are derived from relatively small subsets of the national samples (households experiencing a victimisation) and the confidence intervals are therefore substantially greater than those which obtained for estimated numbers of victimisations.

Source: England and Wales: Burglary, Hough, 1983, Table 2; vehicle offences, Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 11. Scotland: Burglary, Chambers and Tombs, p. 15; vehicle offences, Chambers and Tombs, Table 3.1.

on a *per capita* vehicle-owner basis larceny from vehicles is slightly more common here than in England and Wales; survey estimates suggest the reverse, with Irish levels below both British countries. If anything, the estimate that Irish victims are twice as likely as their English counterparts to report such a victimisation suggests that the distortion, if any, should lead us to suspect that Garda statistics are more comprehensive. Here, however, we have the additional complication that the Irish estimate is biased towards the more serious variety of such offences (only those from *within* the vehicle), a factor that itself should lead to a more substantial reporting rate.

That the survey comparisons found Irish victims far more likely than their British counterparts to report offences to the police is in itself of interest. It was noted in Chapter 1 that "offence seriousness" is a major factor in the decision whether to report a victimisation. However, it is plausible to argue that the difference is perceptual rather than real. The Irish public appears to set a lower threshold for the point beyond which an incident merits official attention. It also may have expectations of what their police force can and should do that are higher than those held by the English and Scottish publics.

Mayhew and Smith (1984, p. 11) argue that the *per capita* police presence will affect the public reporting of crime. The greater police manpower, the greater will be the facility with which a jurisdiction's population can report offences. This would presumably become a decisive influence in determining whether offences involving slight damages or losses were reported. The 1981 police establishments in England and Wales, Scotland and the Republic stood at, respectively, 247, 260, and 289 per 100,000 inhabitants (Rottman 1984, Chapter 5). Security requirements and the imbalance between Dublin's share of offence levels and police deployment (65 per cent of all residential burglaries and 38 per cent of Garda Strength were in Dublin; Chapter 3 of this report and Rottman, 1984, Chapter 5), however, limit the scope for that difference to be a contributory factor to the high Irish reporting levels.

The Irish public's willingness to report offences is one of the few reassuring findings to emerge in this chapter, but it does not apparently lead to a more comprehensive set of official crime statistics relative to England or Scotland. This leaves police recording practices as the most likely source of divergence in what official statistics and victimisation surveys tell us about relative crime levels in these islands.

What is known about the procedures of the three police forces being considered here suggests that official statistics in Scotland tend to overstate the level of crime relative to England and Ireland. Garda statistics, in contrast, are collated in a manner that tends to understate the level of offences, relative to England and Scotland.

Both the Garda Síochána and the English Home Office adhere to a "main

offence" basis in classifying offences. Only the most serious offence within a particular incident is entered into the statistics; secondary and subsidiary offences are not enumerated. Scottish crime statistics record secondary/subsidiary component offences to an incident. Hence the comparative overstatement inherent in Scottish official crime statistics (about 10 per cent; Chambers and Tombs, 1984, p. 51). Irish and English statistics are also based on more extensive and more centralised procedures for counting and classifying offences.

The Irish official statistics are based on an updating procedure that shifts the "main offence" category in line with court proceedings. This will tend to understate the seriousness of crime in Ireland, relative to other countries, rather than the number of offences. This would occur, if say, an incident initially treated as a burglary resulted in court proceedings under the heading of receiving stolen property.

We are left with a substantial difference between Ireland's relative position when measured by official statistics and by victimisation surveys. In our view, this is attributable to differences in the process by which nominal definitions of offences are operationally defined. Through the efforts of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure (Steer, 1980) and the Home Office Research and Planning Unit (Smith, 1983), the BCS publications, and other research studies cited in Chapter 1, we are able to describe what Vigderhous (1978, p. 230) terms "the discrepancy that exists between the nominal and operational definition of criminal acts" within the English and Scottish criminal justice systems. Such a discrepancy is inevitable in all criminal justice systems, but we are unable to describe it for Ireland. The comparisons we have undertaken, demonstrate that the manner in which reports of incidents are processed in Ireland by the Gardaí is more selective than in the English or Scottish police. Therefore, survey-based estimates provide a more satisfactory base for comparison across jurisdictions at present, as we can allow for more of the extraneous influences that are present.

Like all international comparisons of crime levels, those attempted here encountered difficulties. Yet even allowing for the difficulties noted above, the results are unequivocal that in 1982 both burglary and car theft are more common in Ireland than in Great Britain during 1981. In contrast, the less serious property offences of vandalism and of theft from vehicles are apparently either at about the same or a lower level of risk in Ireland than in Britain.

We are unable to extend those statements to other types of offences. It remains possible that burglary and car theft are offences that are particularly prevalent in Ireland and that other forms of crime, such as assaultive offences and white collar crime (which is poorly measured by surveys *and* official statistics) are at low levels in Ireland, relative to Great Britain. Certainly the level of homicide, the most reliable of crime indices, is significantly lower in the Republic than in

either England and Wales or in Scotland.³² It has been argued (Rottman, 1980, p. 118) that wherever interpersonal violence is commonplace, a proportion of all assaultive incidents will result in a death, and thus in a homicide statistic. There is rarely a firm distinction in motivation or intention between assaults that end in a fatality and those which do not (Zimring, 1972, p. 111). Thus, a low rate of homicide, relative to other countries, is strong evidence of a low relative rate of assaultive crimes.

Comparisons with North America and Holland

The most extensive programmes of annual national victimisation surveys were undertaken in the United States and in The Netherlands over the 1970s.

In making comparisons to those surveys, however, we are on far less firm ground than in the preceding section. The question format used in the American National Crime Survey makes the American results for two offences reasonably comparable to our survey: burglary and vehicle theft (see the questionnaire as reproduced in Hindelang *et al.*, 1978). Further, results are made available on a *per capita* household basis. The published results, unfortunately, do not provide the necessary details for making such exact comparisons and approximations only can be offered here. The approximate nature of the comparisons is greater still in regard to the Dutch surveys. There, the questions are broadly similar but results are only available on a *per capita* adult basis. This renders comparisons difficult, as it does not make allowance for national differences in demographic structure and car ownership rates. Also, various types of vehicles are the subject of separate questions — mopeds and cars — making a straightforward comparison to the Irish results difficult.

Within these restrictions, it is still possible to draw some conclusions about the victimisation survey-derived crime levels in the three countries. Burglary is substantially more frequent in the United States than in Ireland. Over the 1970s, the level ranged from 841 to 931 per 10,000 households in the USA, (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1982) with the 1980 figure standing at 842, compared to a 1982/83 Irish level of 450 (the American estimates include "attempts"). Canadian victimisation rates for illegal entry are roughly

³²O'Reilly (1983, p. 22) provides comparative criminal homicide rates per 100,000 population as follows: Republic of Ireland, 0.8; England and Wales, 1.2; New Zealand, 1.9; United States, 9.1. Homicide statistics are reputed to be the most reliable indicator available for comparing crime levels internationally (Messner, 1978, p. 5 cites the relevant assertions). O'Reilly notes that the Irish homicide statistics are distinctive in that the numbers in that category are depleted whenever court proceedings (if initiated) result in charges not under the homicide rubric. Other countries essentially record the number of fatalities or fatal incidents, irrespective of subsequent decisions which may lead to prosecution on other charges. This does not alter the relative ordering of countries as provided by O'Reilly.

comparable to those found in Irish urban areas (see Table 3.7). The 1981 estimates for seven major Canadian urban centres is 632 completed illegal entries per 10,000 households (Solicitor Genral Canada, 1984, p. 7). Burglary levels in The Netherlands, however, appear to be substantially lower than in Ireland (Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984, p. 372): 2.2 per cent of adults had been victims of a burglary ("completed") in 1982.

Ireland's advantage relative to the United States is not apparent for vehicle thefts. The estimated level of victimisation in the United States has stood in recent years at a level of about 175 per 10,000 households (not adjusted for vehicle ownership rates, which would be significantly higher than in Ireland). Car theft in The Netherlands is extremely rare, experienced by fewer than one half of one per cent of all car-owning adults in most years (van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1979, p. 12), with a rate in 1982 of 0.3 per cent (Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984, p. 372). Thefts of mopeds were far more common over that period, with annual estimates over the 1970s of between 5 to 10 per cent of all moped owners becoming victims. It is not possible to combine those categories to obtain a rate of victimisation comparable to that estimated for Ireland covering all motor vehicles.

The high levels of motor vehicle thefts in Ireland relative to the United States, Great Britain and The Netherlands is both a cause for concern and a finding that makes sense in terms of an opportunity-based theory of crime victimisation. The theoretical argument is that levels of motor vehicle theft are determined by the abundance of vehicles in a society. Mansfield *et al.*, (1974) suggest that there is a dual labour market of potential offenders, ranging from an ideal-type of full-time professional criminals to part-time, amateur (mostly juvenile) offenders. The relative motivation to commit an offence varies for each type according to "variations in the supply of stealable goods as well as the demand for goods to be stolen", Mansfield *et al.*, (1974, p. 464). In terms of motor vehicles, this suggests that as the *per capita* car-ownership rate first begins to rise from scarcity, there will be a rapid and sustained increase in thefts of vehicles, with a demand for vehicles that is supplied by "professional" car thieves. As ownership moves towards the commonplace, the level of theft peaks and then declines, as demand dwindles. But this decline is ultimately reversed as a second strong upward trend emerges in response to demand by juveniles who are excluded from the regular market for vehicles. Ireland would appear to be a marked example of a society in the midst of this second wave of opportunity-determined vehicle thefts (see also Rottman, 1980, pp. 75-77).

Mayhew *et al* (1976, p. 15) add an additional "opportunity" dimension which may be a factor in Ireland's relatively high level of vehicle offences: "the incidence of car theft is related not only to the number of cars on the road, or to the changing demand for them by different types of car theft, but also to the

degree to which they are secured". Their report provides evidence that policies aimed at imposing such security have an impact at the national level in the risk level to which vehicle owners are exposed.

Motor vehicles offer the most plausible type of property for which we can develop an "opportunity" based explanation of offences. However, both availability and accessibility can be generalised to consumer goods of all varieties, an argument extended in the next chapter and whose consequences will be treated in the concluding chapter to this report.

Ireland's relative standing for reporting offences to the police is similar to its standing in levels of offence victimisations. Irish victims were far more likely than their American counterparts to report a burglary or car theft, with about one half of all burglaries and 70 per cent of all car thefts so reported in the United States surveys (Bureau of Justice Statistics (US), 1982, p. 5). Reporting rates in The Netherlands seem, however, consistently to exceed those found in our survey (Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984, p. 374).

Conclusion

The yardstick of victimisation levels in other countries does not provide a reassuring measure of how high Ireland's level stands. Only burglary in the United States and thefts from vehicles in Scotland emerged as having clearly higher levels than those obtaining in the Republic. These comparisons are of course partial, excluding some of the offences about which the ESRI survey collected victimisation data (due to problems of comparability) and omitting the many forms of crime about which our survey did not inquire. Still, even allowing for the vagaries of different questionnaires and different interviewing formats, the level of victimisation in Ireland stands considerably higher than has previously been assumed (see O'Reilly, 1983).

The conclusions based on victimisation survey results contrast sharply with those based on official statistics. This partially reflects the fact that we have been able to make comparisons that standardise the offence levels to allow for differences in population and in property at risk. But it also would appear to suggest that the Garda statistics are collated in such a way as to provide a different type of crime measure than the British or American or Dutch official crime statistics. In other words, the metric being used is not strictly comparable, even to UK statistics.

Our survey relates to a single period in time — October 1981 to October 1983. We do not know whether the relatively high levels of victimisation we have found are a recent phenomenon, or whether such high levels have been present for some time. On balance, it appears that the former is likely to be the case, but that is an issue that cannot be satisfactorily resolved, as the only available evidence is that of trends in the official statistics on offences known to the Gardaí.

In those countries with long traditions of victimisation surveys, annual victimisation survey estimates have been found to rise far less rapidly than do annual series of police statistics. Over the 1970s, those countries generally recorded (1) levels of victimisation survey-measured crime that either declined or remained essentially stable and (2) substantially rising levels of offences known to the police. What seems to fluctuate is the willingness of the public to report victimisations to the police and police practices in recording the victimisations of which they become aware. It is clear that in the United States and in England, the most important factor in the 1970s was a greater willingness by the public to report offences. That change explains the discrepant findings of official statistics and victimisation surveys in those countries. In our interpretation, the Irish public in 1982/83 manifested a lower willingness to tolerate criminal behaviour and higher expectations of its police force than their British and American counterparts.

Finally, it should be reiterated that the ESRI 1982/83 Crime Victimisation Survey was an enterprise carried out with a different level of resources than the other surveys used in this chapter. By asking fewer descriptive questions about each incident and by using fewer "filter" questions to screen the claims of the respondents to our survey, it is possible that we have overcounted the number of victimisations in the Republic of Ireland. Had we been able to seek the details obtained in the British Crime Survey and the National Crime Surveys, some incidents would have been identified as falling outside the relevant time period or as not adequately meeting the definition of a criminal act. This effect, though unlikely to be substantial, may none the less have been present, and thus have led us to offer a slightly overly pessimistic view of Ireland's international standing.

Chapter 5

VICTIMOLOGICAL RISK ANALYSIS

In Chapter 3 we examined some geographical variations in the rates of crime victimisation and in the occurrence of criminal incidents. The risk of a household becoming a victim of, say, a burglary will vary depending on its location in the country. Thus, Dublin households will have a particularly high risk of victimisation (see Table 3.7) while those in the western planning region (see Table 3.9) will have a very low risk indeed. In the present chapter we look at how the risk of being a victim of crime is influenced by factors other than geographical location and the extent to which such factors are, wholly or in part, conditioned by geographical location.

In other words, the focus of this chapter is not the overall level of crime victimisation but rather the way in which the risk of being a victim of crime is distributed. This form of analysis — “a victimological risk analysis” (van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1979) — has its chief policy value in allowing the identification of those most at risk of crime and so giving an indication of where crime prevention resources (by the individual, the locality, or the State) should be directed.

Although victimisation surveys were initiated as a means of obtaining more accurate measures of crime rates (see Chapters 1 and 2 and Sparks 1981, p. 7) they perhaps have their greatest utility in allowing us to address the question of what sorts of people or households are most likely to be crime victims and are therefore most at risk. Thus, for example, the recent British Crime Survey found that individuals particularly at risk of assault “were males; were under 30 years old; were single, widowed or divorced; spent several evenings a week out; drank heavily; assaulted others...” (Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 21).

A Theory of Predatory Criminal Victimization

Within criminology and the sociology of crime a theoretical perspective underpins research to determine who is most at risk of crime. This perspective can be termed “an opportunity model of predatory victimization” (Cohen, Kluegel and Land 1981) and is well summarised by Cohen and Felson (1979, p. 588), who argue that “most criminal acts require convergence in space and time of likely offenders, suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians against crime”.

In other words, this theoretical perspective is based on the premise that social structural characteristics will determine, in large part, whether a particular criminal act is more or less likely when its execution is viewed as a rational choice. Thus, for example, households most at risk of burglary would be those which are accessible to likely offenders, which present suitable targets, and

where capable guardians are absent.

A test of this theory requires that these three theoretical concepts can be operationalised by identifying them with measurable characteristics of potential victims. Thus, for example, those households most likely to be "convergent in time and space" with motivated offenders will be those located in urban rather than rural areas. Similarly, those households with an absence of capable guardians are those where, for example, the occupants are frequently absent (e.g., out at work all day) or where the house is not overlooked by potentially watchful neighbours. Finally, those households which are most suitable will be those which are attractive targets for criminals; that is, which are readily accessible, visible and which appear, or are believed, to contain items of value that are portable (see Cohen and Felson 1979, pp. 595-596).

On this basis then it is possible to derive certain hypotheses about who will be most likely to be a victim of crime. For example, we can anticipate that single person households or man/wife households, in which both partners are out at work, should, all else being equal, display least guardianship, while urban households will be most likely to be in convergence with potential offenders, and households of the more affluent middle classes will appear attractive and thus more suitable to such offenders. So single person, middle class, urban households should, according to that theory, be most prone to burglary. Of course these are not the only factors which can be taken to reflect one or more of the three concepts of the theory: for example, flat dwellers should be less likely to be burgled than house dwellers, since flats are less attractive through being less accessible.

In this chapter we use three variables measuring characteristics of households to operationalise these three theoretical concepts. These variables are:

1. The geographical location of the household (Dublin/non-Dublin urban/rural);
2. The size of the household; that is the number of people living in the household categorised into four groups: single person households; two person households; households with three to five persons, and households with six or more persons;
3. Socio-economic group of the household head (self-employed non-farm/farmer/non-manual white collar employee/manual blue collar employee).

We have already, by implication, shown why we believe location, size and socio-economic group should influence the distribution of burglary risk: location because it captures the theoretical concept of "convergence with likely offenders"; size because it relates to guardianship; and socio-economic group because it relates to the attractiveness of the target. We shall also examine the

relationship between the victimisation risk and the age of the household head for two reasons. First, because it relates to guardianship: households where the only guardian is an elderly person will, we expect, be more likely to be victimised than households where guardians are young since elderly people are likely to be less capable guardians. Second, because there is a common perception that the elderly are very likely to be the victims of crimes such as burglary. One of our aims is to test the accuracy of this belief.

Since our measures of victimisation and of household size, socio-economic group of the household head, geographical location, and the age of the household head all relate to the household it follows that hypotheses derived from the theory of predatory criminal victimisation can be expected to hold only for those crimes perpetrated against the household itself. In our case, these are burglary, theft of property from around the house and vandalism. We should expect our hypotheses to fit much less well, if at all, in the case of theft from the person, car theft or theft of an object from inside a car.

One way of examining the effects of age, socio-economic group, household size and geographical location on victimisation risk, would be to examine the percentage victimised in each age category; in each size category; and so on. Indeed, this was done in the case of geographical location in Chapter 3, where we saw that for all crimes the risk of victimisation varied significantly between rural and urban areas. Equivalent figures showing the bi-variate relationship between the percentage victimised and the other three variables concerned, namely age, household size and socio-economic group of the household head, are given in Tables 5.1 to 5.3.

Some clear patterns emerge from these figures. Thus, members of households headed by old (over 65 years) people are, perhaps contrary to conventional beliefs, least likely to be the victims of any of our six offences. For burglary, car theft and theft from the person victims are most likely to be found in households headed by young (less than 30 years) people, while thefts from around the house are most common in households headed by middle-aged (30-65 years) adults. In the case of vandalism and theft of an object from a car there is effectively no difference in the level of risk suffered by the under 30 and the 30-65 year old group.

In the case of socio-economic group, a very clear pattern is apparent with the level of victimisation being highest for households headed by the non-agricultural self-employed, next highest for other white collar workers, somewhat lower for manual workers and very much lower for farmers. Finally, in the case of household size the patterns are less clearcut. In the case of burglary the distribution of risk is as we anticipated in so far as single person households have a much higher level of risk than all others. On the other hand, for all the other offences listed in Table 5.3 the relationship between victimisation risk and

Table 5.1: *Percentage victimisation risk according to age group of head of household for six offences*

	<i>Age group of head of household</i>		
	<i>Under 30 years</i>	<i>30-65 years</i>	<i>Over 65 years</i>
Burglary	6.3	3.2	3.7
Theft from Around Dwelling	4.9	5.8	1.4
Vandalism	4.4	4.2	2.7
Theft from Person	7.3	5.8	2.9
Vehicle Theft	5.8	4.7	2.5
Theft from Vehicle	6.4	6.5	3.7
Number of Respondents	850	6,106	1,851

Table 5.2: *Percentage victimisation risk according to socio-economic group of head of household for six offences*

	<i>Socio-economic group of household head</i>			
	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>Non-farm self-employed</i>	<i>White collar (non-manual)</i>	<i>Blue collar Manual</i>
Burglary	0.5	6.2	6.1	2.9
Theft from around dwelling	2.4	6.4	6.1	4.7
Vandalism	0.7	5.4	5.1	4.2
Theft from Person	0.9	5.8	9.3	4.8
Vehicle theft	0.8	6.1	5.9	5.1
Theft from Vehicle	1.9	8.0	8.1	6.6
Number of Respondents	1,582	953	2,259	3,866

household size is positive: that is, the bigger the household the greater the risk. For a crime such as theft from the person this is a simple consequence of size: households with more people contain more potential targets of personal theft. If we divide the percentage risk of theft by the numbers in the household then it appears that the risk to the individual actually declines in larger households compared with smaller. Again we should expect this given that larger house-

Table 5.3: *Percentage victimisation risk according to size of household for six offences*

	<i>Size of household (persons)</i>			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3-5</i>	<i>6 or more</i>
Burglary	5.9	3.4	3.0	3.6
Theft from around dwelling	2.0	2.1	5.4	8.2
Vandalism	2.9	3.2	4.2	4.5
Theft from Person	3.2	5.0	5.7	6.6
Vehicle theft	2.9	3.1	4.6	5.3
Theft from Vehicle	0.8	6.8	6.6	5.8
Number of Respondents	1,459	1,734	3,930	1,775

holds are more likely to contain a higher percentage of young children — who would not be as likely to be victimised — than are smaller households.

In the case of vehicle-related offences it is not surprising that small households should have a lower (markedly lower in the case of theft of an item from a car) risk of victimisation since the lack of guardianship implied by a small household relates only to the household itself and thus to household-related crimes. Although the figures presented in Tables 5.1 to 5.3 dealing with vehicle-related crimes all allow for the probability of car ownership associated with each grouping of the independent variable they do not take account of multiple ownership. Therefore, in so far as the number of cars or other vehicles owned by a household increases with the household size the exposure to the risk of victimisation will increase. On this basis then, the pattern of risk levels evident in Table 5.3 is as we should expect.

Perhaps the most puzzling finding of Table 5.3 is that the risk of the two household-related crimes of vandalism and theft of property from around the house increases with increasing household size. This would appear to go directly against our hypothesis that larger households have more guardianship. It may arise, however, because of the relationship between the size of the household and the type of dwelling. For example, smaller households will be more likely to be found in flats and small dwellings without gardens or other areas controlled by the household, while the large households will be found to a greater extent in houses and to a high degree on local authority or private housing estates, which will have gardens and, in general, property which may be stolen or on which acts of vandalism may be perpetrated. In other words then, smaller households will be unlikely to be the victims of these two offences because they are less likely to

possess those features which constitute the target for them.

It seems quite clear that, in so far as size, socio-economic group and geographical location operationalise our three theoretical concepts of guardianship, target suitability and proximity, the hypotheses stated earlier are most strongly supported in the case of burglary. Thus, the most attractive targets (non-agricultural, self-employed and white collar workers); those in closest proximity to motivated offenders (urban dwellers, particularly those in Dublin and those rural dwellers close to Dublin); and those where guardianship is likely to be absent (small households particularly those with only one member) have the highest risk of being the victim of burglary.

In many respects, however, the examination of bi-variate relationships alone is not an adequate test of the theory of predatory criminal victimisation in so far as the effects of our independent variables are almost certainly confounded. In other words, household location, socio-economic group of the household head and possibly also household size are themselves related. For example, our finding that households headed by farmers have a very low risk of being a victim of most crimes may be due either to the fact that farmers are, for some reason, particularly unlikely to be victims or to the fact that farmers live in rural areas where, as we have seen, crime is comparatively rare. If we reconsider our figures relating to age it is plausible that in the case of burglary the high level of risk among young people may not be related to their age *per se*, but may arise because very many households headed by a young person are single person households. Finally, it may well be the case that relationships between age, socio-economic group and size, on the one hand, and victimisation on the other, hold only in urban areas and that given the low level of crime in rural areas the risk there is distributed in a more approximately random manner.

Testing a Victimisation Model

To test the theory of predatory criminal victimisation properly then, requires a multivariate rather than a bivariate analysis. Such a multivariate analysis was applied to the victimisation risk of two crimes — burglary and theft from around the house. These two offences were chosen because they are household-specific in the sense that the level of risk will be responsive to characteristics of the household rather than of individuals in it and it is household characteristics that our independent variables measure.

Given our theory and our operationalisation of its central concepts — proximity, guardianship and target suitability — what sort of model should we expect to fit the data? First, we presume that the effects on the victimisation risk of guardianship and target suitability (that is, of the size of the household and the socio-economic group of the household head) will vary depending on the location of the household and specifically their effects will be stronger in urban areas

rather than rural. Secondly, we presume that the attractiveness factor (socio-economic group) will have relatively constant effects regardless of the size of household. That is to say, given any constant level of guardianship the risk of victimisation for these two offences will be greatest for households of the non-agricultural self-employed, next highest for other white collar workers and lowest for working class and farm households. Thirdly, we expect guardianship (as operationalised by household size) to have different effects in the case of burglary and theft from around the house. In the case of burglary we expect increasing size to diminish the risk of victimisation. However, the position is more complicated in regard to theft from around the house. Here household size indexes not only guardianship but also target attractiveness in the sense that, as noted earlier, larger households have the greatest likelihood of having property from which objects may be stolen. Thus household size indexes two concepts, each operating in a different direction: increased guardianship lessening the risk of victimisation, increased attractiveness leading to a greater risk. The overall effect of household size on risk will be the net outcome of these effects. We believe that the attractiveness factor will be the stronger and that, therefore, increasing household size will lead to an increase in the risk of theft of an object from around the house. Fourthly, we also include age as a variable and we expect its effects to depend on the level of guardianship. Specifically we anticipate that in single person households the elderly will be at greatest risk of burglary (thus reversing the pattern shown in Table 5.1) since they will tend to be perceived as "softer targets" than young people. However, at larger household sizes older people should be less likely to be victimised. This is because we believe that household size will reflect levels of guardianship in households headed by middle-aged or old people (since it will probably be due to the presence of other family members, particularly children) whereas this will not be the case in households headed by young people. Larger households here will be more likely to arise through the sharing of accommodation by probably unrelated young people who will all be of much the same age and will all be working. Thus, increasing size here will not of itself lead to increasing guardianship.

In the case of theft from around the dwelling we hypothesise that the relationship between risk and the age of the household head is due to the association between the latter and household size. Larger households will, as discussed earlier, be more likely to occupy houses with areas around them from which items may be stolen. Larger households in turn are more likely to be headed by the middle-aged. Thus, the highest level of risk is found among this group (Table 5.1). By controlling for size we expect this effect of age to disappear. However, we also anticipate that, as with burglary, the effects of age will vary according to size. Thus, although all single person households will be unlikely to be victimised those of older people will be more likely targets than those of younger. But as

household size increases this effect will diminish and possibly even reverse.

We attempted to test these hypotheses by using log-linear models which allow us to assess the effects on the risk of victimisation of particular variables (for example, age of the household head) while simultaneously taking into account the effects of others (socio-economic group and size of household). The parameter estimates yielded by this process tell us how much the log-odds (that is the logarithm of the odds) of being a victim vary according to differences in age, socio-economic group and so on.

These analyses were undertaken separately for the Dublin, other urban and rural samples, thus permitting us to allow for such geographical differences as might be present in the effects of our independent variables.³³

In this case the odds are simply the ratio of the number of households victimised to the number not victimised: in other words, the odds tell us the number of households victimised per household not victimised. We have a measure of the odds for each combination of age, household size and socio-economic group. Thus, since we have three age categories, four size categories and four socio-economic groups (three in the urban areas where farmers are excluded) we have 48 sets of odds in all for each of our geographical sub-samples. The aim of our log-linear modelling is to assess the effects of our independent variables on these odds in much the same way that we would use multiple regression to assess the effects of variables on a continuous dependent variable. In this case our dependent variable is not the odds themselves but the logarithm of the odds, thus making the model additive (in logs) and linear.

Risks of Burglary Victimisation

The parameter estimates of the burglary model are shown in Table 5.4. All these effects are measured as deviations from an omitted category whose value is given by the intercept. The interpretation of these coefficients is therefore identical to the interpretation of dummy variable coefficients in normal regression except that here the effects are logarithmic. In this case the intercept value gives the log-odds (i.e. the logarithm of the odds) of being victimised among single person households headed by a non-agricultural self-employed person aged less than 30. Thus, in Dublin the odds are $\exp. (-1.924) = .14$; or in other words, for every 100 such households not victimised there are 14 which are victimised. The probability (as distinct from the odds) of burglary victimisation

³³In statistical terms the model fitted to each subsample was

$$\log F_{ijl} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_2 X_3$$

where F_{ijl} is the expected odds of victimisation in each cell, X_1 is the socio-economic group of the household head, X_2 the size of the household and X_3 the age of the household head.

Table 5.4: *Estimated logarithmic Coefficients expressing the log-odds of being a burglary victim (* indicates non-significant coefficient)*

	Dublin	Non-Dublin Urban	Rural
Intercept (non-Agricultural Self-Employed/Size = 1/ aged less than 30)	-1.942	-8.858*	-2.378
Socio-Economic Group:			
(2) Farmer	—	—	-1.573
(3) White Collar	-0.274*	-1.229	-0.388*
(4) Manual Worker	-0.748	-1.055	-1.317
Age of Head of Household:			
(2) 30-65	0.463*	6.242*	-0.988*
(3) > 65	0.860	7.002*	-0.782*
Size of Household:			
(2) 2	0.068*	6.944*	-0.376*
(3) 3-5	0.296*	6.871*	-0.741*
(4) > 5	0.839*	7.969*	-6.605*
Size × Age Interactions:			
Age (2) × Size (2)	-0.490*	-6.685*	-0.736*
Age (3) × Size (2)	-1.352	-8.589*	-0.422*
Age (2) × Size (3)	-1.237	-6.903*	-0.037*
Age (3) × Size (3)	-0.916*	-6.897*	0.109*
Age (2) × Size (4)	-1.360*	-7.651*	6.311*
Age (3) × Size (4)	-7.885*	-14.84*	0.739*
L ²	14.3	25.4	30.21
d.f.	22	22	33

is thus 14 divided by 114 = .12 or one household in eight.³⁴ Finally coefficients for the farmer socio-economic group were estimated only in the rural sample.

In Table 5.4 non-statistically significant coefficients are marked with an asterisk. It is clear therefore that outside Dublin only the effects associated with

³⁴A probability or rate may be derived from an odds as follows:

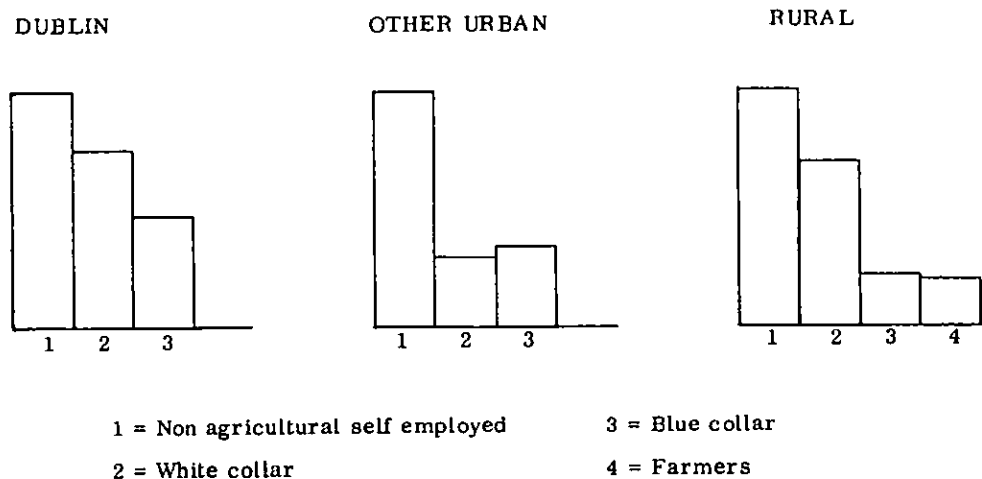
$$\text{probability} = \frac{\text{odds}}{1 + \text{odds}}$$

socio-economic group are significant; that is, the risk of victimisation outside Dublin depends only upon target attractiveness. Guardianship, as indicated by the size of the household and age have no bearing on the likelihood of being burgled. Although the models fit the data in each area, there is clear evidence of overfitting (i.e., the inclusion of too many parameters) in the non-Dublin urban sample, where the standard errors of the effects are particularly large.

In the Dublin sample the effects of size and age in addition to socio-economic group are significant; in other words, our model fits in Dublin but overfits elsewhere, thus supporting our first hypothesis that the effects of our independent variables should be stronger in Dublin than elsewhere.

The pattern of coefficients of socio-economic group is much as predicted, so supporting our second hypothesis. In both Dublin and the rural areas the non-agricultural self-employed and white collar workers are most at risk, with manual workers having a lesser risk, and in rural areas, farmers having the lowest risk of all. On the other hand, in the non-Dublin urban areas white collar workers have a very low level of risk and indeed their likelihood of risk is no greater than for manual workers (i.e., the two coefficients are not significantly different). This relationship is shown diagrammatically in Figure 5.1 which illustrates the relative risks of being burgled for each socio-economic group

Figure 5.1: *Relative estimated odds of being burgled for each Socio-Economic Group within each area.*³⁵

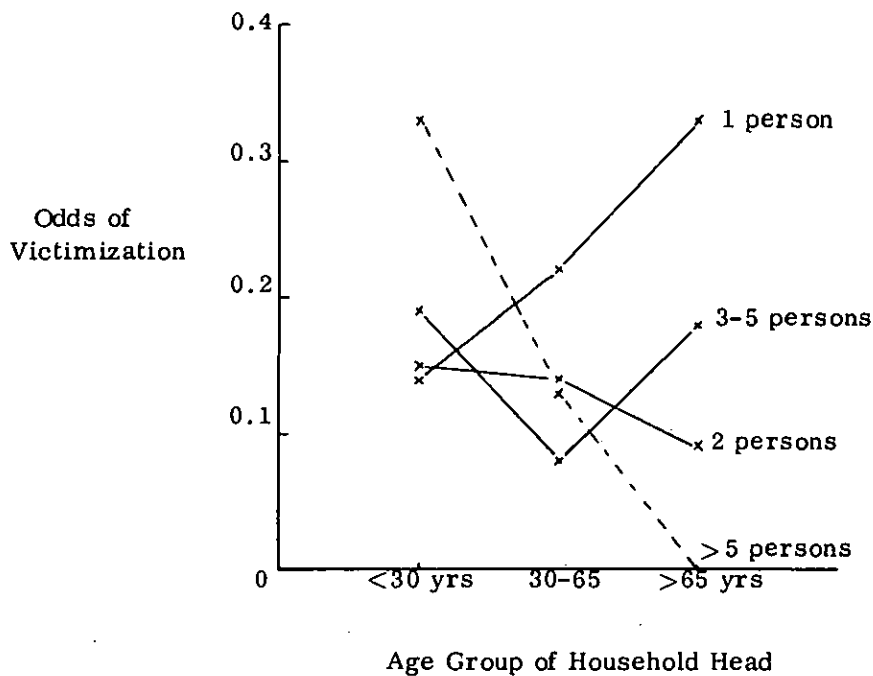


³⁵Since the metrics for each of the three histograms are different, Figure 5.1 cannot be used to make comparisons between socio-economic groups in different areas.

within each area, controlling for household size and age of the household head. Thus, in Dublin, white collar workers are about three-quarters as likely to be burgled as are the self-employed, and blue collar workers are just under half as likely. In the other urban areas there is, as noted, little difference between white and blue collar workers: they are roughly one-third as likely to be victimised as are the non-agricultural self-employed. Finally in the rural areas, blue collar workers and farmers, are around a quarter as likely, and white collar workers two thirds as likely, to be burgled as are the self-employed.

The relationship of age and size to risk is significant only in Dublin and is complicated by the interaction terms involving them. The effects of these two variables on burglary risk are shown diagrammatically in Figure 5.2. Each line on that graph corresponds to a particular size of household and each point shows the risk for a particular age group. In this case, the risk is shown in multiplicative

Figure 5.2: *Estimated odds of being burgled for each age/size group (Dublin only)*



rather than logarithmic form, i.e., it measures the odds rather than the log-odds of victimisation. So, for single person households the risk increases with increasing age of the household head, while for the largest households the youngest age group has the highest risk and the oldest the lowest; that is, the linear relationship between age and risk for the largest and smallest households are exactly the reverse of each other. This reversal occurs because among households headed by young people those with five or less persons all have a much lower risk of victimisation than those containing six persons or more and in fact increasing size among this age group leads to increasing risk. The opposite holds for households headed by old people: increasing size leads to decreasing risk. For households headed by middle-aged people the same is true, though here the crucial distinction appears to lie between single person households who are at a higher risk and all other sized households where the risk is somewhat less. Overall however, size of household has much less effect on the victimisation risk among middle-aged headed households than it has among those headed by old or young people.

The decline in risk associated with larger households among those headed by old people and the reverse pattern among those headed by young people is again as anticipated indicating that size of household is related to guardianship for households headed by old (and probably middle-aged) people but not for households headed by the young.

Risks of Theft from around the House

The parameter estimates for a modified version of this model are given in Table 5.5. The modification involves the dropping of all the Age \times Size interaction terms, since in no case were these significant and in all cases the associated standard errors were very large. The result is a model of additive (in logarithms) effects.

Overall, the attractiveness factor, as indexed by the socio-economic group of the household head, plays no part in determining the distribution of risk in the case of this particular offence. This indicates that those households attractive to burglars (i.e., those of the middle class and the self-employed) are not especially attractive to potential perpetrators of thefts of objects from around the house. The exception to this is that, in rural areas, manual workers have a lower risk of victimisation than all other socio-economic groups including farmers (though clearly farmers will own a much greater area of property from which objects may be stolen than will other types of household).

The major influences on victimisation risk for this offence are household size and age of the household head. In all three areas, increasing household size is linked to increasing risk (though this is not statistically significant in the non-Dublin urban areas), as hypothesised. While there is no effect of age on

Table 5.5: *Estimated logarithmic coefficients expressing log-odds of being victim of theft around the house (* indicates non-significant coefficient)*

	Dublin	Non-Dublin Urban	Rural
Intercept (non-Agricultural Self-Employed/Size = 1/ aged less than 30)	-3.111	-2.358	-5.077
Socio-Economic Group:			
(2) Farmer	—	—	-0.494*
(3) White Collar	0.039*	-0.060*	0.062*
(4) Manual Worker	-0.138*	-0.285*	-0.615*
Age of Head of Household:			
(2) 30-65	0.012*	0.236*	0.337*
(3) > 65	-0.895	-1.411	0.378*
Size of Household:			
(2) 2	0.022*	-0.4668*	0.656*
(3) 3-5	0.733	0.060*	1.802
(4) > 5	1.310	0.425*	2.021
L ²	35.24	25.97	28.20
d.f.	28	28	39

victimisation risk in the rural areas, elsewhere households headed by older people appear to enjoy a considerably lower risk than those headed by young or middle-aged people. Given that we have controlled for the effects of household size, this can perhaps best be accounted for in terms of the increased guardianship associated with the greater likelihood of older people being at home and thus available to act as guardians of their property.

The Context of the Distribution of Victimization

Our findings on the distribution of victimisation risk, geographically and by type of household, are in broad accord with what has emerged from North American, British and Dutch studies. There is a consistent pattern in which urban dwellers, small households and the young bear the brunt of crime victimisation. Ireland represents a rather pronounced instance of that pattern. For example, the risk of burglary for inner city English households is five times greater than that of rural residents (Hough, 1983, p. 7). This contrasts with the

10 to 1 ratio obtaining in Ireland (using the "inner city" as defined by Bannon *et al.*, 1981). Indeed, the overriding importance of place of residence in Ireland is such as to reduce the power of factors such as age and household size to distinguish among types of households in their exposure to the risk of victimisation. Only socio-economic group is a useful predictor of which non-Dublin households bear the highest risk. In Holland, though risk is related to the size of the place of residence, with households in the three major cities evidencing 3.5 times the risk of the rural households (van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1979, p. 27), age is the more important factor in determining the overall risk of becoming a crime victim.

Our analysis in the latter part of this chapter, however, demonstrates that factors such as place of residence and social class bear the most interpretable relationship to risk when they are combined. It follows that the antecedents to becoming a crime victim are complex. If we are to understand why the elderly have, contrary to popular belief, a low risk of victimisation we need to consider the ways in which their household situation is reflected in their suitability and vulnerability as "targets". (See also Breen and Rottman, 1983, for a re-analysis of some American findings on the distribution of victimisation risk).

This leads to the issue of the apparent inverse relationship between fear of crime and actual victimisation experiences. Surveys, including the one conducted in Ireland cited in Chapter 1, consistently find that the elderly manifest the highest levels of fear and concern over crime. In part, this inconsistency reflects a lifestyle and set of economic circumstances that is associated with low victimisation risk. It may also, in part, reflect self-imposed restrictions and precautions that stem from fear itself. To the extent that this is the case, the low risk as experienced by the elderly is not entirely beneficial. Low victimisation may be associated with crippling levels of fear of crime. It does appear, however, that the elderly have a lower risk of "street crime" than other age groups even when the extent of exposure to risk is taken into consideration (Hough and Mayhew, 1983, p. 25).

On balance, we cannot truly distinguish rational from irrational fear of crime. Fear of crime can be divided into various components; (1) the actual level of victimisation experienced by a particular type of person or household, (2) the implications or cost of becoming a victim (the elderly are more likely to suffer physical injury from an assaultive crime; the poor are less likely to have insurance coverage — see Hough and Mayhew, 1983, pp. 25-26) and (3) the portrayal of risk as found in the media and in folklore. Though a study such as this can state what type of person or household is most at risk, it cannot make a judgement as to where the consequences of a victimisation will be materially or psychologically most damaging.

If our results have a demystifying role, it is perhaps in highlighting the

extreme differences in risk associated with geographical location. Urban residents would, for the most part, appear to have a quite rational basis for concern, though the burden of the risk of crime is by no means evenly distributed throughout the urban community. Fear of crime in most of the country, however, would appear to be excessive, as crime is concentrated to an extraordinary degree — by international standards — in the major urban centres.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shown that in addition to geographical location, the type of household one lives in is predictive of the likelihood of becoming a crime victim. Risk was shown to be systematically related to the age of the household head, household size and socio-economic group. Where one lives, whether urban or rural, remains however, the predominant factor in explaining the distribution of risk.

The chapter sought to connect these findings by presenting an analysis that explained victimisation risk by a theory of "predatory criminal victimisation". In the case of the two offences we examined in detail — burglary and theft of an object from around the house — we found that propositions derived from this theory were by and large supported in our analysis.

However, it must be borne in mind that the measures available to us — age of the household head, size of the household and so on — cannot be supposed to reflect all the aspects of our theoretical concepts of guardianship, accessibility and target attractiveness. That is, a factor such as the level of guardianship is not measured exhaustively by the age of the household head and the size of the household. Other factors will also be important and some of these may be quite particularistic. On the other hand, the present analysis does enable us to identify which groups — defined in terms of our four variables — are most at risk. So, in the case of burglary we found that socio-economic group, age of the household head and size of the household, were more likely to influence the risk of burglary in Dublin than elsewhere, although a national trend was apparent with regard to socio-economic group. Here we found that the self-employed had the greatest likelihood of being burgled, while farmers and blue collar (manual) workers, had the least. These results suggest that target attractiveness is an important variable in determining who gets burgled. The effects of guardianship (household size) and the age of the household head were only relevant in Dublin. Among households headed by young (less than 30 years of age) people, increasing size was linked to increasing risk, whereas for the middle-aged and old, the reverse was the case.

Turning to thefts around the house, attractiveness was not a relevant consideration. Rather, in all urban areas, age was important, with the old enjoying a lower risk than the young or middle-aged. In Dublin and the rural

areas, increased household size was associated with increased risk, suggesting that the greater attractiveness (for this offence) linked to greater size is of more importance than the associated increased guardianship.

More generally, investigations into the distribution of crime risk promise to be of benefit to policy makers in determining how best to respond to the problem of crime. This is an issue to which we now turn in our final chapter.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Crime and Crime Statistics

Crime in Ireland is nowadays an issue of central concern. This concern springs not simply from consideration of the effects of crime on its victims and on the overall quality of life but also from the belief that the level of crime is an index of the moral and social well-being of the nation. In recent years a consensus has developed among virtually all interested parties — politicians, Gardaí and the media, for example — that the level of crime has reached unprecedented heights. There has been less agreement on why this has occurred and still less on what can be done to remedy the situation.

However, this consensus has emerged despite the limitations of the data available concerning the level of crime: its extent, distribution and nature. In Chapter 1 of this paper we discussed the reasons why the most commonly used measure of the crime level — the number of indictable offences “reported or known” — is neither reliable nor valid for such a purpose. This is because, first, the total includes a great many trivial offences yet excludes other serious offences. Second, the Garda statistics, like those of any police force, are responsive not alone to the number of criminal incidents that take place but also to the readiness of the public to report such offences to the police and to the methods adopted by the police in dealing with and recording reported offences. Since these factors are prone to change over time, comparisons of the level of crime using the number of indictable offences can be misleading, particularly in year to year comparisons.

Unofficial data relating to crime have come from insurance company estimates which have been widely publicised and which unfailingly claim levels of incidence for burglary that are far in excess of what the Garda statistics would indicate are possible. A further source has been the Irish Marketing Survey's 1983 victimisation survey. Although this also uncovered levels of crime far higher than the Garda statistics would suggest, we argue that there are two reasons to treat these results with caution. The sample size on which they are based is very small, which means that wide confidence intervals must be placed around the IMS estimates, and the survey apparently failed to screen out double or triple counting of single incidents (see Chapter 2).

Given the deficiencies in the evidence concerning the level of crime in Ireland, one of the three central aims of the present paper has been to provide an independent indication of how much crime there is. The second aim has been to set Irish crime levels in comparative perspective, and particularly to set Irish crime levels alongside those of England and Wales and Scotland; and the third

has been to examine the question of who is most at risk of crime; in other words, who are the most likely victims of a crime such as burglary.

Our findings regarding these three questions — which were reported in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this paper, respectively, are based on data from the 1982/83 ESRI Crime Victimization Survey in which 8,902 individuals were asked whether or not they or members of their household had been the victim of any one or more of six specified crimes during the preceding 12 months.

While victimisation surveys suffer from some inherent limitations — for example, they deal only with crimes that have a specific victim — and although they should be viewed as an alternative rather than a better measure of crime levels than police statistics, they are likely to uncover more instances of crime than are officially recorded. Thus, they are useful in gauging the extent to which official figures underestimate rates of crime (within the limits set by problems of comparability between survey and official “nominal” definitions of crimes). However, since in victimisation surveys information is gathered not only about crimes but also about characteristics of those sampled (households or individuals) whether or not they were the victims of crime, such surveys allow us to examine how the risk of being victimised is distributed across the population and also to look at, for example, how the probability of reporting an offence to the police or the seriousness of the loss sustained varies across the population.

The ESRI Victimization Survey had some specific limitations largely related to the budgetary constraints within which the survey was carried out. First, we only asked about six crimes of which three were household related — burglary, vandalism and theft of an object from around the house — and two were vehicle related — vehicle theft and theft of an object from inside a vehicle. We included no items relating to people’s perceptions of the crime problem (“fear of crime”) nor were we able to go as deeply as we might have wished into questions such as the extent of loss, financial or emotional, sustained by victims of those crimes. Furthermore since this was the first large-scale Irish crime victimisation survey, we have no earlier survey to use as a baseline to determine how much greater than previously are the current levels of crime.

On the other hand, given the size of the sample and the detailed instructions issued to interviewers, we can be reasonably confident that results obtained from the survey constitute, for our six offences, reliable estimates of both the level of criminal incidence and the distribution of victimisation risk.

Summary of Findings

The Overall Level of Crime:

In our survey as a whole there was 1,733 households which had been the victim of one or more of the six crimes dealt with and 2,998 criminal incidents. Thus, there was an overall victimisation rate of 19 per 100 households and an

overall offence rate of 34 incidents per 100 households. The victimisation levels for each crime are as shown in Table 3.1: these range from 3.6 victims per 100 households for burglary to 6.1 for theft of an object from inside a car. Applying these estimates, together with our estimates of the number of incidents, to the population of all households we estimate that the annual number of burglaries lies between 35,000 and 46,000 and that between 27,000 and 37,000 households are burgled annually. Theft from the person was the most commonly reported offence (between 42,000 and 52,000 households were estimated to have been affected), but the frequency of multiple victimisation for vandalism made that the most prevalent offence in terms of number of incidents (between 56,000 and 70,000). All these estimates should be taken as referring to the year 1982.

For all six crimes the number of offences exceeds the number of victims. The overall ratio is 1.7 incidents per victim, which points to certain households being particularly susceptible to multiple victimisation of either the same type of offence more than once or more than one type of offence.

Rates of reporting of offences to the Gardai vary among our six types of crime, with burglary and car theft, both of which are likely to involve insurance claims and substantial loss, being the most likely to be reported and vandalism and theft of an object from around the house, which are the most frequently repeated offences and probably are comprised of a high proportion of trivial incidents, being the least likely to be brought to the attention of the Gardai. However, even applying the reporting figures to our victimisation figures suggests that for the three crimes where such a comparison was feasible (burglary, vehicle theft and theft of an object from a vehicle) only between a half and two-thirds of reported incidents appear in the Garda statistics.

Here, some of the shortfall is due to the fact that surveys require that we take at face value respondents' reports, whereas the Gardai impose more stringent evidential criteria, and would, on that basis, doubtlessly have excluded some of the incidents contained in our estimates. The two sets of estimates for each offence are thus not based on the same "operational definition". There remains, however, a substantial shortfall that merits further investigation, if only to make public the precise procedures by which Garda crime statistics are compiled and published.

Comparisons with Other Countries:

When compared to the estimated victimisation rates in England and Wales and Scotland, Irish rates of burglary were found to be 1.7 times higher and larcenies of vehicles twice as high. Rates were expressed as per 10,000 households or 10,000 vehicle-owning households, as appropriate. Irish rates for other forms of property crime — specifically, thefts from vehicles and vandalism to household property — were generally at the same level or lower than those in Great

Britain. In particular, thefts from vehicles were about half as common in the Republic as in Scotland and stood at a level roughly three-quarters of that obtaining in England and Wales.

The comparisons based on victimisation survey estimates were less favourable to Ireland than those based on police statistics. Police statistics indicate that burglary, whether measured *per capita* population, *per capita* adults or per 10,000 households is far more prevalent in Britain than in Ireland. Victimisation surveys lead to the opposite conclusion. The discussion in Chapter 4 of these findings stressed the difficulties in making international comparisons, alerting the reader to the major strengths and weaknesses of the specific comparisons we made.

On balance, we conclude that the findings should be interpreted as highlighting particular factors which make burglary and vehicle theft especially prevalent in Ireland. There is less firm evidence for an overall high rate of property crime in the Republic, relative to its neighbours, though we cannot exclude that possibility. For two forms of crime at least — larceny of items from inside vehicles and vandalism — Ireland has the lower rate of offence incidence.

Members of the Irish public are generally more likely than their British counterparts to report victimisation incidents to the police. In our interpretation, it would appear that the Irish public sets a lower threshold as the point where an incident becomes a "crime" than in other jurisdictions. It is also likely that people here expect more from their police force than is the case in countries like England, where high crime rates have been present for a long time.

The Distribution of Victimization Risk:

The survey results indicate that crime in Ireland is overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon heavily concentrated in Dublin. Thus, for example, the survey showed that 73 per cent of all burglaries take place in Co. Dublin. Rural rates of victimisation are generally low except in those areas in proximity to Dublin and to certain other major centres such as Limerick.

In Chapter 5 we looked at how the risk of being a crime victim varied according to three additional characteristics of households: these were the size of the household (that is, the number of people residing in the household); the age of the household head; and the socio-economic group of the household head. We carried out this analysis in the light of a theory of predatory criminal victimisation which states that the risk of victimisation depends on three things: the attractiveness and suitability of the target; the level of guardianship of the target; and its proximity to motivated offenders. We operationalised these three concepts through the variables size of the household and age of the household head (guardianship); socio-economic group of the household head (attractiveness); and geographical location of the household (proximity to likely offenders).

We found that for all of our six crimes the risk of victimisation varied significantly according to each of these factors but that hypotheses derived from the theory were most strongly supported in the case of burglary. Here it was found that those households most at risk are those likely to be convergent with potential offenders (those located in Dublin); those which are most attractive (where the head of the household is self-employed or in a non-manual job); and where guardianship is least; these are primarily single person households headed by an old person or, among larger households, those headed by young people.

Implications of the Findings

Despite the limitations of a single time-point and a relatively restricted range of criminal offences, the results of our survey do raise some basic substantive issues about crime in Ireland and even about how it has been affected by social change. The most striking findings in this respect relate to the geographical distribution of crime. However, the relative incidence of various forms of property crime, the rate of reporting of victimisation to the Gardaí, and the types of households most likely to become victims also have relevance for understanding the nature of crime in the Irish Republic.

The analysis of crime trends in the Republic based on official statistics identified a clear structural change in the mid-1960s, with stable levels before, and large successive increases after that break. Though the incidence of offences per 10,000 population was highest in the cities throughout the period of rising crime levels, the upward trend appeared to be universal. The number of property offences was rising in Dublin, other urban centres and in small urban and non-urbanised areas (Rottman, 1980, Chapter 4). At the very least, therefore, the urban share in the nation's crime problem should have remained constant or slightly decreased in recent years.

This expectation is challenged by the findings of our survey. To a marked degree, certainly compared to other advanced capitalist societies, crime is concentrated in the major metropolitan centre. And outside of the urban areas, burglary and similar offences are apparently at a barely perceptible level. Thus, whatever trends underlie the 1982/83 incidence as estimated by our survey, Ireland manifests a distribution of crime in which the urban/rural distinction is paramount.

In part, this may reflect a tendency, clear for burglary, in which Garda statistics are collated on a somewhat different basis in urban and non-urban districts. The smaller workload in less urbanised areas may in itself lead to a broader definition of what constitutes an incident that merits investigation. More resources can be devoted to each reported victimisation, and thus increase the likelihood that a report will be filed as a result. Also, the standard by which incidents are evaluated in terms of seriousness may be based on a different metric

in urban than in rural areas. But though such influences might lead to official crime statistics from rural areas being the more inclusive, the very low rural victimisation rates found in our survey suggests that it is unlikely that those areas experienced upward crime trends in recent years.

Differences in what is defined as "rural" offer a more plausible explanation for the divergence between official statistics and victimisation survey-based estimates of crime's geographic distribution. Non-urban areas in studies using official statistics (Rottman, 1980; 1984) were necessarily defined so as to treat all but the five largest urban centres as rural, distinguishing between (a) Dublin, (b) the next four largest cities and (c) the rest of the country. Chapter 3 of this report, however, indicated that such a three-fold distinction is unsound. The victimisation levels found in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford are the same as those found in smaller towns and cities. Thus, on survey evidence a different three-fold distinction should be made: Dublin, other centres of more than 10,000 population and the rest of the country. It is reasonable to hypothesise, though the relevant time series evidence is lacking, that upward trends have been present in all densely populated areas. The results of our survey make it unlikely that similar trends have taken place in other parts of the country, specifically, in localities of less than 10,000 population. To this extent, our findings modify the conclusions, summarised in Chapter 1, on the pervasiveness of the change during the mid-1960s. It appears that such change might have been more widespread than in other countries, but still did not overspill into rural areas of Ireland.

The distribution of crime as identified in the early 1980s by our survey and the post-1964 trends recorded by the Garda crime statistics can be reconciled by a theory that emphasises the structure of criminal opportunities in a society. In this approach, a rise in crime is a consequence of shifting opportunities, primarily in the abundance and symbolic value of property, and the distribution of crime a consequence of the situation in various areas regarding the risk factors identified in Chapter 5. Social change in urban Ireland has apparently heightened the strength of those risk factors; this has not occurred in villages and the countryside.

Thus, though the results of the survey can be interpreted with the same theoretical perspective as was previously applied to the official statistics, the emphasis is different. Economic and social change can be seen to both (a) alter the level and pattern of crime in a society and (b) distribute the amount of risk unevenly among social groups. It can be suggested that in Ireland both processes have been more pronounced than is typical. The rise in crime was more rapid and concentrated than in most European countries and the degree of differentiation in risk levels is greater than in, say, England and Wales or The Netherlands.

Previous analyses (Rottman 1978; 1980; 1984) using Garda statistics to mark

the change in the extent and nature of crime were based on specific major offence categories, such as burglary, which appeared to offer reliable indices of changes in specific types of crime. The results of our victimisation survey suggest that the process of counting and classifying incidents in Ireland is more complex than had been assumed. Though reporting rates by victims are quite high in Ireland, the recording rate (in which public reports are sifted and translated into official statistics) appears to be lower than in Great Britain. In other words, the discrepancy between survey estimated offence levels and official enumerations of "offences known" are more substantial here. This raises a number of important questions:

1. Have victim reporting rates been stable over recent years?
2. Have Garda recording practices been consistent over recent years?
3. Have victim reporting rates and Garda recording practices been similar across regions and across urban and rural areas? And if they differ, have they differed in a consistent manner over recent years?

One survey cannot provide answers to these questions. However, they are the crucial questions in assessing conclusions drawn on the basis of trends in the official statistics. As Quetelet so clearly stated 150 years ago (see footnote 1 in Chapter 1), it is not the "dark figure" of crime *per se* that is of concern, rather, it is the stability of the ratio between counted and uncounted crime that is a necessary condition for reliability and validity in our measures.

We stress that our concern is prompted by the use that the mass media and politicians make of the *Annual Report on Crime*, and not by the actions of the Garda authorities who compile it. Police crime statistics are products of a data collection effort that is designed to serve the objectives of crime control and law enforcement. To do so, complexities are introduced that make it unwise to use those statistics (and particularly an index such as the number of indictable offences "reported or known") as absolute measures of the amount of crime that is occurring. Police statistics are still less informative as a measure of the moral state of the nation.

In the absence of a second "reading" of victimisation levels, we can only draw tentative conclusions. First, it does appear that residential burglary and vehicle thefts are sufficiently diffuse that high levels, by international standards, are present in all Irish urban centres. The highest incidence levels are clearly in Dublin, but there is no basis for further differentiating among cities by population size. Second, there is a high rate of notification to the police by crime-victims. British and American studies suggest that it is that rate, rather than the level of offences, that increased over the 1970s in those countries. In Ireland, however, it appears that the rate of reporting by the public is less important as a factor in determining the size of "known offences". This makes it less likely,

though not impossible, that recent trends in official statistics are artifacts of changing reporting rates. The high rate of reporting also suggests a substantial degree of public co-operation with the Gardaí. Third, the bulk of property crime is to be found in the less serious offence categories. Burglary and car theft were the least common of the six offences about which we inquired. Fourth, the findings in Chapter 4 suggest that official statistics on both offence levels and detection rates in Ireland should not be regarded as directly comparable to statistics in other countries. This follows from the "updating" procedures used in compiling the Garda statistics and the fact that the adherence to the indictable/non-indictable distinction renders the totals for many important offences (such as vehicle theft) not very meaningful. In terms of the detection rate, given that the denominators used in the Irish statistics are not strictly comparable to those used, say, in Scotland, international comparisons are of limited reliability.

These findings raise practical as well as substantive issues. In the next section, we will outline what modifications in the way Garda crime statistics are compiled and what research needs are indicated by our findings. Before doing so, we turn to the most basic substantive issue: to what extent is concern over crime in Ireland commensurate with the magnitude of the crime problem?

It is clear that the level of burglary and vehicle theft in Dublin has reached high levels by European standards. Outside of Dublin, the magnitude of the problem is far less substantial and for much of the country's population, the risk of crime is virtually non-existent. Ireland's national crime rate is therefore primarily a result of the situation in Dublin. This is little comfort to Dublin residents, or indeed to visitors to the capital, but presents a different type of problem than would a uniformly high level of crime incidence. Even within Dublin, crime would appear to be highly concentrated among a few types of households. Multiple victimisation within the 12 month period is common, almost typical: a victim of one incident was highly likely to report a further instance of the same offence or of another one of the six offences. So the burden of risk is most unevenly distributed, with some households having a very high risk and others a low level of risk.

The risk of becoming a crime victim is thus not evenly shared by all sections of the population. Some households and individuals are more at risk than most, especially in experiencing multiple victimisations. Knowledge about the distribution of risk should assist the Garda Síochána in developing a crime control strategy and householders in making sensible decisions about protecting themselves. We will turn to some of the possible measures in the final section of this chapter.

The final implication we note from our survey findings is that we can identify two types of victims of crime. The first consists of those individuals or families

who have had their home burgled, car stolen, or suffered from some other form of crime. The resulting loss of property, personal trauma and possible physical harm requires more than our sympathy. Protection against such misfortunes, and mitigation of their consequences where they cannot be prevented, is a responsibility of Government.

There is a second type of crime victim, which consists both of persons who have and those who have not directly experienced a crime incident. This group includes all of those who feel obligated to restrict their movements to avoid becoming a victim or a repeat victim and all those who feel insecure even when in their own homes. Most of us are today victims of crime in this second sense. To an extent, the results of our survey indicate that some of that fear is excessive. The risk of crime victimisation in most of Ireland remains very low indeed, and even within Dublin, it is concentrated among particular neighbourhoods and age groups. We do not, however, know the extent to which areas and sections of the population with low rates of victimisation achieve that by limiting their exposure to potential crime. As Lea and Young (1984, p. 37) observe, "... to lecture vulnerable groups that they have a low risk rate when their justified fear of crime forces them to take elaborate precautions against it is both illogical and patronising". Our concern here is to urge that a sense of proportion be retained, that fear of crime not drive us as individuals into such isolation from our neighbours that we will end up even more vulnerable to crime and less likely to receive assistance should we become victims.

Recommendations

Our findings lead to a series of recommendations in three main areas: crime policy, criminal justice statistics and criminological research.

1. Crime Policy:

There appears to be a significant imbalance in the geographic distributions of Garda resources and crime. In 1980, 42 per cent of Garda strength was concentrated in the Dublin Metropolitan Area (corresponding to most of Co. Dublin, with adjacent urban sections of Counties Kildare and Wicklow). Though this represents a significant expansion of the Garda presence from levels in the 1950s and 1960s (Rottman, 1984, Chapter 4), Dublin's share of Garda resources is still far below the capital's share of the crime problem. Research in other countries does not offer the promise that reallocation of Gardaí to Dublin or more police patrolling generally will reduce the level of crime (see, for example, Loftin and McDowell, 1982; Heal, 1982; Pyle, 1983, pp. 190-191) but it would enhance the level of service available to citizens in need of assistance. Providing such a service to the public is the basis for the co-operation that makes detections and prosecutions possible (see the discussion in Rottman, 1984, Chapter 7).

The results of our victimological analysis suggests that property crime in the urban centres is clearly patterned. This offers the prospect that an improved allocation of personnel and a more imaginative choice among modes of policing in localities might meet with success. It also suggests that there is scope for preventive measures that maximise one of the main predictors of where property crime occurs: guardianship. Investment in enhanced guardianship, however, is likely to be more sensible in some targets than in others. The attractiveness of some targets, especially motor vehicles, might also be susceptible to policy. "Target hardening" has become fashionable as a response to specific crime problems: vandalism of telephone kiosks and public transport vehicles, the ease with which many motor vehicles can be stolen, and the vulnerability of houses left unattended during weekdays. More resilient construction material or fabrics, steering column locks, and mortice locks and neighbourhood watches all seek to diminish the opportunity for crime.

The success to date of these efforts in other countries has been sufficient to make their implementation a viable option in criminal justice policy. It is a matter for public policy because such a response is of little merit if it merely serves to "displace" crime from one target to another. The apparent success of the West German programme which required that *all* motor cars be fitted with anti-theft devices is attributed to the universality of the diminished opportunity (Mayhew *et al.*, 1976, pp. 15-20). More sporadically implemented attempts at "target hardening" may merely increase the inequality in victimisation risk as measured in Chapter 5. In other words, those who do receive the additional protection will benefit, whether households or social groups or neighbourhoods, to the cost of others who will experience the offences so displaced.

"Target hardening" as a policy also ignores the dimension of symbolic value that affects the attractiveness of various forms of property. Motor vehicles, for example, have a symbolic importance to young people in contemporary society that is continuously reinforced by media presentations. Owning a car is not merely a utilitarian good, but a statement about lifestyle and status, an indication of the worthiness of the person who has use of it. The costs of owning and operating a motor vehicle in Ireland are considerably in excess of those in other European countries. There is only a limited market in low cost secondhand vehicles and insurance premiums and taxation are set at comparatively high levels.

One possible response to the apparent demand for stolen vehicles, whether for permanent or short-term misappropriation, is to widen the accessibility to legitimate markets for used vehicles and to insurance premiums for young people. Some of the attraction of "joy-riding" might be blunted by programmes of driver education in the schools and such programmes are regular features of American second-level education. Such policies will not eliminate but might

diminish the demand for access to vehicles that is now expressed through illegal markets.

The Garda Síochána needs as its first priority a new and comprehensive strategy for urban policing. Victimisation surveys can point to where various problems for crime control and law enforcement are concentrated, but the problem is really one of setting priorities and directing resources accordingly. Basic questions need to be addressed: What size of area is optimal for Garda districts in various parts of cities? What mix of car patrols, foot patrols and community police is optimal for a particular type of area? What is the most effective mix between resources that permit a rapid response to requests for assistance and those resources that might deter crime from occurring in the first place? When these questions are answered it will be possible to devise the appropriate training programme — for recruits and for serving Gardaí — and to allocate personnel among jurisdictions. It will also be possible to specify what tasks are the responsibility primarily of detective and special investigation units and which are allocated to either regular Gardaí or community Gardaí.

A victimisation survey directs our attention toward the individuals and families that suffer the costs of crime — financial, physical and psychological. For many victims, their experience was not of an isolated incident, but of several victimisations. The need for reassurance through prompt, courteous Garda response to reports of crime is paramount. Even where there is little prospect of a “detection” it is the role of the police to provide manifest evidence of concern by recording the incident and offering crime prevention advice. Ireland has been slow to emulate the victim support schemes in other European countries. The sheer numbers of Irish victims pose a major challenge to any programme established at this late stage.

Finally, as the Garda Síochána experiment with new modes of policing, such as neighbourhood watches, community policing, or the “Rural Policing Scheme”, victimisation surveys offer one basis for evaluation. They provide an alternative measure of the level of crime in the experimental area and permit “before and after” measures of public concern over crime and satisfaction with Garda services.

2. Crime Statistics:

We noted in Chapters 1 and 2 that victimisation surveys provide an alternative, rather than a definitive, measure of the level of crime. The discrepancies between our survey estimates and the numbers included in the Garda statistics, however, suggest a number of reforms that should be made in the methodology underlying the *Annual Report on Crime*. First, there is a need for a revised system for classifying and counting offences. This should be based on identifiable offence types, such as thefts of motor vehicles, and should provide

the same type of information on all the relevant specific component offence categories. Tabulation of the number of offences should be made on the same basis for indictable and non-indictable offence categories. The statistics provided by individual Garda districts and divisions should be audited on a regular basis to ensure that the rules for recording, classifying and counting the number of offences are consistent with the national guidelines.

The Garda Síochána should make public the rules and procedures that are used to collate the *Annual Report on Crime*. Whenever those procedures are modified the change should be noted in the Report in which it is introduced. If statutes establish new offence categories or modify existing categories, the manner in which the crime statistics incorporate those changes should be noted.

Since 1947, the Garda Síochána has provided the only comprehensive set of statistics on court proceedings for this country. Using several formats over that period, the results of cases either commenced or concluded in the criminal courts have been indicated as a part of the main tables in the *Annual Report on Crime*. This valuable service, however, has tended to obscure the distinction between two statistical series: (a) offences known or reported and (b) the flow of cases through the criminal courts to an eventual outcome. The practice of reallocation of incidents in accordance with court proceedings renders the Garda statistics a mixture of both. It would be preferable to maintain a distinct tally by the offence category initially used and a separate set of tallies based on the offence category for which proceedings were entered. This would facilitate international comparisons. It would also avoid the possibility that the differential rates of detection for various types of offences render some offences more likely to be reclassified than others. Generally speaking, the possibility of reclassification is present only after a detection has been made.

3. Criminological Research:

The results of the 1982/83 ESRI Victimisation Survey were sufficiently promising to make a replication the first research priority. Such a survey should both repeat the questions from our survey, allowing for comparison, and considerably expand the range of questions included. This would include: (a) other types of victimisation, (b) details of the incident itself, such as the amount of loss, the time of day, etc. (c) the composition of the household, by age, employment status, etc., and (d) descriptive information on the block or neighbourhood in which the household was located. If possible, the survey should be collected to facilitate the merging of its results by area, allowing analyses by type of neighbourhood (using Census data) and comparisons with the Garda statistics (by station or district). Comparability to the ongoing British, American and Continental European victimisation survey programmes is also obviously desirable.

A programme of victimisation surveys also offers a more satisfactory basis for measuring changes over time in the extent and nature of crime in Ireland. As time-series, officially recorded crime statistics tend to "(1) either exaggerate the amount of changes in victimisations or, (2) tend to misrepresent the direction of change in victimisation" (Eck and Riccio, 1979, p. 292). The analysis of American data suggests that unreliability may have been a more substantial factor in year-to-year changes in official crime statistics than any real change in the level of crime. Official statistics, in the absence of a complementary set of victimisation studies, would appear to be a guide only to long-term trends in the level of crimes and they cannot capture short-term fluctuations in the amount of crime. We need both sets of data. The costs of victimisation surveys alone makes it impossible for them to replace official statistics as our main basis for measuring the amount of crime.

Victimisation surveys are typically, but not necessarily, limited to either adults or to private households. They thus provide no information on crimes of which the victims were institutions, such as commercial firms, schools, or the general public (parks, sporting facilities, etc.). The methodology of victimisation surveys can be extended to cover such categories of victims, either as part of a general survey or through a separate survey or series of surveys. Victimisation survey data will be deficient as an index of the amount of "white collar" crime such as embezzlement, forgery and fraud unless institutional victims are included. Such surveys might help to focus attention on the extent and cost to society of such crimes.

Victimisation surveys, like the official crime statistics or insurance company records, are informative primarily about the geographic and social distribution of crime. They also provide indicators of the nature of crime through questions about the extent of loss suffered and mode of execution of the offence. But such aggregate studies cannot provide much insight into the organisation of crime and the variety of forms it takes within a particular society. Nor can surveys and official statistics adequately link crime to the social and cultural milieu in which it takes place. This is the task of a different research tradition, one that focuses on localities, groups or practitioners of highly specialised types of crime.

Such research is needed in Ireland to provide the grounding within which we can make sense of answers to the two basic questions posed at the start of this paper: how much crime is there at present in Ireland and which families and social groups are most at risk from crime victimisation? We have provided quantitative answers to those questions. If we wish to probe deeper, and ask what the links are between levels of crime and (a) factors such as early school leaving, long-term unemployment and drug abuse, or (b) factors such as the probability of detection, prosecution and punishment, we will need to know more about the social organisation of crime. Surveys and analyses of official crime statistics can hint at, but not definitively indicate, the nature of those linkages.

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Appendix I

British Crime Survey and ESRI Victimisation Survey Estimates: Points on Comparability

In addition to the differences cited in the text of Chapter 4, the following differences between the BCS and ESRI Survey should be noted:

1. Data collection in the BCS was carried out in March 1982, with respondents asked to provide information on all victimisations experienced since 1 January 1981. The result is a single 14-month recall period; estimates for 1981 were made by excluding reports from January and February, 1982. The ESRI Survey was carried out in five quarterly EEC Consumer Surveys, each inquiring about victimisations experienced in the preceding 12 months. Thus, respondents were faced with a variety of recall periods. This does not appear to have had an effect on the ability of respondents to recall incidents from throughout the 12 months about which they were asked, at least for burglary and vehicle theft (see Chapter 2, footnote 17). Our procedure for data collection does, however, lead us to merge victimisations experienced as early as October, 1981 with those from September 1983. So our estimates reflect, in part, the *change* in risk over time; this effect is not present in the BCS estimates.
2. The BCS household-specific questions included all a respondent family's residences; the ESRI Survey refers only to incidents affecting the family's primary place of residence.
3. The BCS questions on vehicle offences specifically mentioned motor scooters; the ESRI Survey only specified "car, truck or motorbike", though interviewers were instructed to include "other forms of motorised vehicles".
4. Both surveys were carried out in such a manner that any adult member of the household (16 or over in the BCS; 18 or over in the ESRI Survey) could serve as the interviewee. The EEC Consumer Survey field procedures make it somewhat more likely that either the head of household or the spouse of the head of the household was the interviewee than would be the case for the BCS. To the extent this difference is present, the BCS estimates should be regarded as underestimated relative to those for Ireland on the assumption that the household head or spouse would be more knowledgeable about victimisations than would younger household members.

Appendix II

- 1. Interviewers' Manual*
- 2. Questionnaire and Relevant Consumer Survey Questions*

*1. Interviewers' Manual: Crime Section, July 1983**General Instructions*

It is possible that a single incident of crime victimisation may involve several distinct types of criminal act that are included in this survey. To make the results of the survey meaningful, it is essential that each incident only be recorded under one of the questions on victimisation. A few simple rules can help in deciding what to do when a respondent reports an incident that involved several types of victimisation. In general an incident should be recorded only once, i.e., in the most serious category that applies. The order of seriousness to be used is: (1) illegal entry to a house or flat, (2) theft of a motorised vehicle, (3) theft of property from within a motor vehicle and (4) any act of vandalism or damage to a motor vehicle or other form of property. This ordering of seriousness corresponds exactly to the order of the questions; so, once an incident has been recorded in reply to a question, it should not be recorded again in reply to a subsequent question. For example, let us say a house is entered illegally, money taken, and while leaving the burglars damage some hedges in the garden and steal the family car, which, when recovered, is missing the car radio. The entire incident would result only in an entry in Question 1. A theft of a car would only be entered in Question 2 if the theft had occurred independently of the illegal house entry, i.e., at a different time. Similarly, if a car is stolen and while missing is vandalised or property is taken from inside the car, the entire incident would be recorded in Question 2.

The definition of a household used in these crime questions is the same as in the rest of the survey — that is, it excludes people such as boarders, servants and visitors. So, if the respondent runs a guesthouse, for example, and one of her guests had his car stolen while he was staying there, this incident should *not* be reported.

Please read the first four lines of introduction to this section to the respondent. It is important to be clear that we are interested only in those crimes that have occurred in the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland. So if, for example, someone reports a car stolen while they were in the North of Ireland or on holidays in England or the Continent, such incidents should be excluded. Also, the questions refer to the last 12 months. Please take 1st of July 1982 as the starting date of the period about which you are enquiring.

Question 1

This question refers to the house or flat in which the interview is taking place. We do *not* want to know about break-ins that occurred at a previous place of residence or at another residence (such as a holiday home). If the respondent's residence is also a business premises, (such as a flat over a pub or shop) that area

used for business is *not* regarded as part of the house, so if someone illegally enters the pub but does not enter the attached dwelling area, this incident should *not* be recorded. In some cases the business area of the house is not distinguishable from the dwelling area (e.g. a guest house); in this case it all counts as the household.

This question covers all incidents where someone not invited or entitled to be there got into the house or flat. This means, for example, that nothing need have been stolen — a break-in can occur without theft or larceny or vandalism. Also, it need not necessarily have been a forced entry. If someone gained entry through an unlocked door or an unsecured window, it should be recorded.

Note, however, that a theft or act of vandalism by someone *invited* into the house or flat (even if the person proves to have been a confidence trickster) is not relevant to the question.

Should a respondent report more than four incidents of illegal entry during the 12 months, only record the details of the first four. But please note the total number which took place in part (b) of the question.

Question 2

Part (a) of this question serves as a filter, identifying those households in which a person had the use of a car, truck, motorbike or other form of motorised vehicle during the last 12 months. The answer would be "YES" if *anyone* living in the household had had the use of such a vehicle at any time during the last 12 months. The remainder of Question 2 and all of Question 3 would be asked if a "YES" response is given; if the answer 2(a) is "NO", please skip to Question 4.

This question refers to any form of motorised vehicle that belongs to the respondent or someone living in the respondent's household. It does not make any difference whether or not the vehicle was subsequently recovered. It can have been stolen from anywhere in the 26 counties. A car borrowed without permission (e.g., by a member of the family) as distinct from stolen is to be omitted.

A company car available to a household resident for personal use or a rented car should be included; a delivery van or a lorry being used by an employee only for work should be excluded.

Question 3

Question 3 refers only to thefts of the *contents* of a car, truck, van or caravan; this includes boot compartments. If something was stolen from the locked carrier of a motorcycle or motorbike, the loss should be reported here. Theft of an item attached to the *exterior* of a vehicle would not be considered relevant to this interview (including a trailer or an item attached to a roof-rack). Note carefully that property taken from a car or truck *reported as stolen* in Question 2 would *not* be included in this question.

Question 4

This question refers to theft from *outside the house but within the area attached to and controlled by the residents of the house or flat*. For a house the relevant area can be gardens, driveways, and farmland that is owned, leased or rented by the head of the household. In the case of a flat, the relevant area includes entrance halls, car-parks, and that land which belongs to the block of flats or the building within which the flat is located.

“Kept Outside” means items that were outside of the house or flat at the time they were stolen. For example, if a tennis racket were left outside in the garden and it was stolen, then the loss of the racket should be recorded even though it is not typically kept outside of the house.

Question 5

This question refers to acts of vandalism or deliberate damage to the outside of the house or flat or to property which belongs to a member of the respondent's household (e.g., farm machinery, crops, sports equipment and lawn furniture). It is *limited to the area attached to and controlled by the residents of the house or flat*. A car parked in a driveway would be included if it were the driveway of the respondent's house or flat *and* if the car belonged to a member of the respondent's household. Vandalism to a business premises owned by a household member but not attached to the residence would *not* be included.

So for a house, the relevant area can be gardens, driveways and farmland that is owned, leased or rented by the head of the household. In the case of a flat, the relevant area includes entrance halls, car-parks, and that land which belongs to the block of flats or the building within which the flat is located. A car parked immediately outside a house but on a *public road* would *not* be included in answering this question.

Question 6

Incidents included in answering this question should be limited to ones in which valuables were taken from the person of the respondent or someone who lives in the respondent's household. “From the person” would include items in the immediate vicinity of the person, e.g., wallet in the pocket of a coat hanging nearby; handbag from the floor of a pub, etc.

Question 7

(a) This refers only to an operating alarm. If a house or flat has no alarm but does have an imitation alarm or a sign warning that the house is protected by an alarm, the answer to Question 7(a) is NO.

Questions 7(a) and 8(a)

These questions refer only to the household of the respondent. The alarm or dog must be from the flat or house in which the respondent lives.

APPENDIX

2. Questionnaire (Crime Survey and Relevant Consumer Survey Questions)

ESRI

CONFIDENTIAL

JULY '83

E.E.C. CONSUMER SURVEY
 SURVEYS UNIT,
 THE AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE,
 19 SANDYMOUNT AVENUE,
 DUBLIN 4,
 TEL: 684791

AREA CODE	1	2	3
RESPONDENT CODE			5
CARD CODE	9		6
SIZE OF DISTRICT			7

RECORDER'S NAME

DATE

1. WHO IS THE RESPONDENT?

(a) IS IT THE HOH? Yes (1), No (2)
 YOU MUST ASK:

8

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(b) SEX OF THE HOH? Male (1), Female (2)

9

--

IF NOT THE HOH ASK (c) AND (d):

(c) IS IT..... (1) Spouse, (3) Other relation,
 (2) Child, (4) No relation

10

--

(d) SEX OF RESPONDENT? Male (1), Female (2)

11

--

I'd now like to ask you a few general questions about people in the household.
 Could you tell me the

18. AGE OF THE HOH ON LAST BIRTHDAY?

(1) Under 18, (4) 40-49, (7) 66-67,
 (2) 18-29, (5) 50-59, (8) Over 67,
 (3) 30-39, (6) 60-65, (9) Don't know or not available

30

--

19. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE "ATTACHED" TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

include the Respondent in this number,
exclude servants, sub-tenants, boarders and "issue" who
 reside permanently elsewhere.

31	32

20. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF HOH?

Is the HOH

- (1) Full-time employed, (4) Living on pension or investment income,
 (2) Part-time employed, (5) In full-time training or education,
 (3) Unemployed presently, (6) Other (housewife, etc)

33

21. OCCUPATION OF HOH?

State precisely the main occupation of HOH. If retired, state previous occupation. If studying or training, state future occupation. For unemployed widows (who are HOH) state occupation of dead spouse.

OCCUPATION

How determine which of the categories below most appropriately contains the occupation. Tick off the number in front of the category and code.

- (1) Self-employed (other than farming), (4) Other non-manual workers,
 (2) Farming (self-employed), (5) Skilled manual workers,
 (3) Professional and/or managerial, (6) Other manual workers,
 (9) Don't know or not applicable

34

22. LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF HOH?

WHAT TYPE OF SCHOOL OR COLLEGE DID HOH LAST ATTEND?

- Determine Level completed by HOH

- (1) Primary Level, (5) Other Second Level, - nursing, agricultural college, commercial college, etc.
 (2) Group Cert.,
 (3) Intermediate Cert., (6) Third Level, - university, colleges of technology, art college, teacher training college, domestic science, etc.
 (4) Leaving Cert.,
 (9) Don't know

35

APPENDIX

A1

ESRI CRIME QUESTIONS - CONSUMER SURVEY JULY 1983

REPEAT



AREA	1	2	3
RESPONDENT	4	5	
CARD	6	8	

READ:

Finally, I'd like to ask you a few questions about law and order. Many people are very concerned about the level of crime at the moment and we would like to find out what is happening at a national level. Please only tell us about crimes that occurred in Ireland.

1(a) Over the last 12 months, has anyone illegally entered this house or flat — that is, by breaking in or gaining entry without your permission? 7
 Yes (1), No (2), d/k (9)

If YES ask (b) and (c): 8

(b) How many times did this happen in the last 12 months? d/k = 9

(c) Could you tell me when each of these incidents happened, if anything was stolen and if the incident was reported to the Gardai?

Break-in	Month	Year	Anything Stolen?	Was it Reported?
	Jan = 01	82/83	Yes (1)	Yes (1)
	Dec = 12	D/K (13)	No (2) D/K (9)	No (2) D/K (9)

No. 1	9 10	11 12	13	14
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

No. 2	15 16	17 18	19	20
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

No. 3	21 22	23 24	25	26
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

No. 4	27 28	29 30	31	32
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A2

2. (a) Did you or anyone in this household own or have use of a car, truck or motorbike in the last 12 months? (tick)

Yes No → Go to Q. 4

- (b) Over the last 12 months, did anyone steal (or use without your permission) a car, truck, or motorbike belonging to you or to someone in the household?

Yes (1), No (2), d/k (9)

 33

If YES, ask (a) and (d):

- (c) How many times did this happen? d/k (9)

 34

- (d) For each case of theft could you tell me when it happened and if it was reported to the Gardaí?

CASE	MONTH		d/k (13)	YEAR		d/k (9)	WAS IT REPORTED		
	01, 02, ... 12			82/83,			Yes (1)	No (2)	d/k (9)
1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	36	8	<input type="text"/>	38	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	41	8	<input type="text"/>	43	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	44
3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	46	8	<input type="text"/>	48	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	49
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	51	8	<input type="text"/>	53	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	54

3. (a) Over the last 12 months, did anyone steal anything from inside a car or truck that belongs to you or to someone in this household?

Yes (1), No (2), d/k (9)

 55

If YES, ask (b) and (c):

- (b) How many times did this happen? d/k (9)

 56

- (c) How many of these incidents were reported to the Gardaí? d/k (9)

 57

4. (a) Was any item that is kept outside — like a bicycle, garden furniture, tools, farm machinery or equipment etc., — stolen over the last 12 months? (Exclude motorised vehicles, which should be entered in Question 2.)

Yes (1), No (2), d/k (9)

 58

If YES, ask (b) and (c):

- (b) How many times did this happen? d/k (9)

 59

- (c) How many of these incidents were reported to the Gardaí? d/k (9)

 60

A3

5. (a) Over the last 12 months was the outside of your house or flat damaged or vandalised or has any property attached to the house, such as the garden or any outbuilding or a car parked outside the house, been damaged or vandalised?

Yes (1), No (2), d/k (9)

61

If YES, ask (b) and (c):

(b) How many times did this happen in the last 12 months? d/k (9)

62

(c) How many of these incidents were reported to the Gardai? d/k (9)

63

6. (a) Can you tell me if there were any other occasions in the past 12 months when a valuable item was stolen from someone who lives in your household — in the street, a shop, on holidays in Ireland, etc., (handbag snatched, hold-up, pocket picked, etc.)

Yes (1), No (2), d/k (9)

64

If YES, ask (b) and (c):

(b) How many times did this happen? d/k (9)

65

(c) How many incidents were reported to the Gardai? d/k (9)

66

7. (a) Does this house (or flat) have a burglar alarm?

Yes (1), No (2), Non-response (8), d/k (9)

67

If YES, ask (b):

(b) How long have you had the burglar alarm?
(Specify number of months 01 ... 12; for longer than 12 months code 13.) d/k (14)

68 69

8. (a) Finally, have you a dog in the household?

Yes (1), No (2), Non-response (8), d/k (9)

70

If YES, ask (b):

(b) How long have you had a dog?
(Specify number of months 01 ... 12; for longer than 12 months code 13.) d/k (14)

71 72

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