Crime Victimisation in Australia

Key Results of the 2004 International Crime Victimisation Survey

Holly Johnson

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International Crime Victimisation Survey
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Foreword

The task of measuring crime in society is not straightforward. Administrative data are available to assess the number and types of crimes known to the police, accused persons appearing before court and those who are convicted, and convicted persons serving prison sentences. However, police cannot detect all offences and largely depend on victims to report crimes to them. They also do not solve all crimes that come to their attention. As a result, administrative statistics available through the records of police, courts or prisons do not capture the full extent of crime, victims or offenders in society.

In 2004 the Australian Institute of Criminology managed the Australian component of the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS). ICVS is an international project involving approximately 60 countries worldwide. It is a general but wide-ranging survey focusing on experiences with three personal crimes and six household crimes, details about the impact of these crimes and whether they were reported to the police, and perceptions of personal safety. There is no other national survey of this scope and detail undertaken in Australia. More importantly the AIC is able to modify and adapt the instrument so that it both serves its purpose of providing comparable international data while focusing on some specific policy issues that have been identified by stakeholders.

This report contains many interesting findings. Of particular note is the decline in the percentage of people who reported being a recent victim of crime in 2004 as compared to 2000. This finding is consistent with police data and follows trends that have been observed in other countries. Also of note is that few socio-demographic characteristics were predictors of experiencing crime more than once. This finding raises interesting questions about whether it is the place where a person lives, rather than their personal characteristics, that reduces or enhances their risk of being a victim of crime. To answer this question individual data on crime victimisation needs to be linked to the characteristics of local communities. The availability of such data in a timely and accessible form should be a priority if we are to further our understanding of crime victimisation.

Police, policy-makers and communities have found empirical data about crime victimisation to be of direct practical benefit. For example, victimisation surveys have been used in building crime reduction strategies at the local level through knowledge about the correlates of victimisation, about who is at risk and under what circumstances. Knowledge about the risks associated with repeat victimisation has led to a better understanding of how crime is concentrated, and how resources might best be employed to have the greatest impact on the crime problem. Our understanding of fear and its manifestations has also progressed enormously with the help of victimisation surveys. Future analyses of the 2004 ICVS will provide a more detailed examination of these and other topics.

Toni Makkai
Director
Australian Institute of Criminology

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- the support of the coordinator of the ICVS at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and
- the generous funding of the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

The author accepts full responsibility for the interpretations and analyses presented in this report.

Disclaimer

This research paper does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

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Executive summary

Crime victimisation surveys form an important complement to administrative data available through the police and other criminal justice agencies. The Australian Government provided funding to join in the fifth cycle of the International Crime Victimisation Survey (ICVS) in order to obtain up-to-date information about experiences and perceptions of crime from the perspective of citizens. The ICVS is an international project involving approximately 60 countries and coordinated through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Australia has participated in all but one of the previous four cycles. This publication presents key results of the Australian component of the 2004 survey.

The results of the 2004 ICVS suggest that, compared with the 2000 ICVS, rates of crime victimisation have declined in Australia. Fifty-two per cent of Australians had experienced at least one incident of crime during the five years prior to the 2004 survey, down from 55 per cent in 2000. Over the one-year period preceding each survey 24 per cent of the population had experienced at least one incident of crime in 2000 and this dropped to 17 per cent in 2004. This is consistent with police recorded statistics which also show recent decreases in rates of property theft and burglary (AIC 2004). In addition, results provide an up-to-date picture of the risk factors associated with personal and household crime, the level of repeat victimisation, public perceptions of crime and safety, rates at which victims report crimes to the police, and citizen engagement in crime prevention activities. A number of implications emerge from these results for policy-makers and practitioners.

Risk of personal crime

Personal crimes include assaults and threats, robbery and personal theft. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents experienced one or more incidents of personal crime over the five-year period and nine per cent during the previous year. Assaults and threats and personal theft were more frequent than robbery. The likelihood of being a victim of personal crime was higher for individuals who had the following characteristics:

- were unmarried;
- had relatively higher income;
- resided at the current postcode for less than one year;
- were unemployed; or
- had an active lifestyle outside the home in the evenings.

These factors also increased the likelihood of being an assault/threat victim. In addition to these factors, Indigenous people and those speaking only English at home had a greater likelihood of assaults and threats.

Risk of household crime

Household crimes include burglary, attempted burglary, motor vehicle theft, theft from motor vehicles, motorcycle theft and bicycle theft. A total of 39 per cent of all households experienced at least one of these crime types during the five-year period preceding the 2004 ICVS, and 11 per cent were victims of household crime during 2003. The most frequent household crimes were theft from motor vehicles, burglary and attempted burglary. The likelihood of being a victim of household crime was increased when the household:

- had a higher income; and
- resided at the current postcode for less than one year.

Repeat victimisation

Repeat victimisation is an important area of study because incidents of crime repeated against the same victims, or committed by the same offenders, contribute substantially to the overall crime rate. The ICVS found that:

- 45 per cent of all those victimised over the five-year period experienced more than one different type of crime;
- within crime types, many victims also reported multiple victimisations: 68 per cent of all victims reported one incident of crime, 19 per cent reported two incidents, and 13 per cent reported three or more separate incidents during the one-year period; and
- the crime most likely to be experienced three or more times was assault or threat: 19 per cent of victims reported experiencing three or more assaults or threats within one year.

Being male was the only socio-demographic characteristic that increased the likelihood of being a repeat victim of personal crime. None of the characteristics tested for, including income, time at postcode, language spoken at home and Indigenous status, predicted repeat household victimisation. This lends support to research that has found that the single best predictor of personal victimisation is previous victimisation (Pease 1998).

Perceptions of personal safety

The majority of Australians feel safe in their local environment: 72 per cent reported feeling safe or very safe while walking alone in their area after dark. Less than ten per cent felt it was very likely their homes would be burglarised in the coming year. However, certain segments of the population express higher levels of fear compared with others:

- women were more than twice as likely as men to say they feel a bit unsafe and four times as likely to say they feel very unsafe walking alone in the local area after dark;
- women were about four times as likely as men to say they feel very unsafe while waiting for or using public transportation; and
- feeling unsafe is also associated with being younger, speaking a language other than English at home, Indigenous status, and being the victim of a crime.

There was a decline in the percentage of Australians feeling unsafe since the last ICVS in 2000. This applied to both women and men.

Reporting to police

The percentage of crimes reported to the police ranges from 94 per cent of motor vehicle thefts to 37 per cent of assault/threats. There is also variation in reporting rates by personal and household characteristics of victims. With respect to assaults and threats, respondents with the following characteristics were more likely to report such incidents to the police:

- women;
- those aged 25 or older;
- those living in households with lower income;
- Indigenous persons; and
- incidents involving physical attacks, physical injury, or three or more offenders.

With respect to burglary, persons who reported the incident were more likely to have the following characteristics:

- higher income;
- resided at the current postcode for a year or more; and
- experienced substantial property loss.

The most common reason for failure to report both assault/threats and burglary was that the incident was not considered serious enough to involve the police. However, substantial proportions of some types of assault/threats were not reported due to a fear of retaliation on the part of the offender. For example the following groups gave this reason for not reporting assaults or threats:

- women assaulted or threatened by intimate partners (28%);
- victims who were physically injured (10%); and
- incidents involving weapons (8%).

Among those who reported to the police, a majority — 74 per cent of burglary victims and 65 per cent of victims of assaults or threats — were satisfied with the way police dealt with the matter. Those with lower levels of satisfaction included younger victims, those who speak a language other than English at home, and Indigenous persons.

Crime prevention activities

Overall, 96 per cent of households participating in the ICVS undertook at least one measure to protect themselves from crime. Households who employed a range of crime prevention strategies were more likely to have the following characteristics:

- higher income;
- longer residential stability;
- only English spoken at home; and
- had been a victim of crime in the previous five years.

Policy implications

Police and communities each have a role to play in reducing crime, and crime victimisation surveys can assist in very practical ways. For example:

1. Crime prevention

Crime prevention programs that target high-risk people or locations have been found to be more cost-effective than activities that are broadly aimed at the general population. In developing more effective crime prevention programs, police and communities have benefited from knowledge provided through victimisation surveys about the correlates of victimisation, and about who is at risk and under what circumstances (see ACT 2004).

This knowledge can help target prevention programs to those at higher risk by modifying behaviours, enacting changes to environmental design, or by identifying where social programs are needed for high-risk people. Cost is a major impediment to engagement in many prevention measures. Efforts need to be made in lower income neighbourhoods to introduce and raise the uptake of prevention activities that do not entail a financial cost.

2. Repeat victimisation

With the knowledge that victimisation is an important predictor of future victimisation, police have a critical role in preventing the recurrence of crimes by helping citizens identify and eliminate vulnerabilities that can lead to a repeat experience. By reducing repeat victimisation, a greater impact can be made on the crime problem.

3. Unreported crime

Some incidents that do not come to the attention of police involve substantial harm to victims but they decide not to involve the police for personal reasons. In one fifth of partner assaults not reported to police the victim feared retaliation by the offender. An awareness of this can help police and support services reach out to reluctant victims to prevent a repeat of the crime.

4. Fear for personal safety

Survey results tell us that perceptions of safety are linked to personal vulnerability factors associated with:

- being female, young and living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- belonging to a minority group who speaks a language other than English at home; and
- experiences of crime victimisation.

Communities can take this further by working with residents in the local area to conduct safety audits to identify sources of fear that can be addressed. This could require alterations to the built environment to improve safety, reduce fear and increase citizen interaction. Or, it may require working to identify and reduce social or physical disorder in the local environment. The threats that lie behind expressions of fear need to be targeted in order to improve the quality of life for large numbers of residents.

Where to from here?

Over the coming year, the results for Australia will be put into international context when the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime combines the results of countries that participated in the 2004 ICVS. In addition, the Australian Institute of Criminology will be analysing the results of the ICVS in greater depth, investigating such topics as fraud and other problems experienced on the internet, and experiences of crime in selected migrant communities.

1 Background to the International Crime Victimisation Survey

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Why the need for victimisation surveys?

Crime victimisation surveys have emerged over the past few decades as an important research tool to help provide a picture of crime that is independent of police statistics. They are conducted by randomly selecting a sample of the population to interview about their experiences of crime and perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. Most Western industrialised countries and many developing countries have come to rely on victimisation surveys to provide estimates of:

- rates of victimisation;
- variations in rates of victimisation among segments of the population;
- the percentage of crimes reported to police;
- reasons for not reporting;
- fear of crime and perceptions of safety;
- public perceptions of the police; and
- efforts undertaken by individuals to protect themselves from crime.

These data have many practical uses, including monitoring change in victimisation rates over time, understanding risk, understanding victims' reporting decisions, understanding and addressing fear of crime, and developing crime prevention programs based on this knowledge. Victimisation survey data provide an important complement to official statistical data produced by police and other criminal justice agencies. The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducts a crime victimisation survey, the Crime and Safety Survey, on a regular basis, most recently in 2002 (ABS 2003). The ICVS is broader in scope and each cycle can be adapted to focus on specific policy issues that have been identified by stakeholders.

The Australian component of the ICVS

The International Crime Victimisation Survey (ICVS) is an international project involving approximately 60 countries worldwide. It is coordinated through the United National Office on Drugs and Crime with national coordinators overseeing the project in each participating country. Five cycles of the ICVS have been conducted: 1989, 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 (Carcach & Makkai 2003). Australia participated in all but the 1996 cycle. Interviews are typically conducted by telephone in developed countries and face-to-face in developing countries (van Kesteren et al 2000; Alvazzi del Frate 1998). The ICVS is designed to provide an internationally comparable set of estimates, and enables participating countries to expand on questions or sample size to suit their policy needs.

As in previous cycles, the Australian component of the 2004 ICVS is managed by the Australian Institute of Criminology. Funding for the project was provided in two parts: the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department provided funding for a random national sample of 6000 respondents, and the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs funded a booster sample of 1000 migrants from Vietnam and the Middle East. The sample of 7000 is considerably larger than past samples, and typical samples in other countries, which have been in the order of 2000 (an exception was the 2000 ICVS in Australia which included an additional sample of 1000 older persons). The enhanced sample in the 2004 ICVS is designed to enable more detailed analysis than has been possible in the past and to address issues of importance to the Australian Government.

The in-scope population for the 2004 ICVS was all adults 16 years of age and older who were residents of private households in Australia. Data were collected by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Table 1 presents a profile of the 2004 ICVS sample, unweighted and after adjustments were made so that it accurately represents the age, gender and place of birth of the Australian population according to the 2001 Census of Population and Housing (see Appendix for a full explanation of sample selection and weighting procedures). The over sampling of migrants from Vietnam and the Middle East meant that these groups were over-represented in the unweighted sample. After weighting, approximately three quarters of the sample were born in Australia and one quarter were born overseas. The largest portion of overseas-born respondents had immigrated from Europe or Asia. A total of 15 per cent spoke a language other than English at home and two per cent identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Table 1: Characteristics of the ICVS sample

	Unweighted number	Per cent	Weighted number	Per cent
Total	**7001**	**100**	**7001**	**100**
Gender				
Male	3298	47	3417	49
Female	3703	53	3584	51
Age				
16-24	1079	15	1106	16
25-34	1323	19	1306	19
35-59	3131	45	3145	45
60 and over	1434	20	1435	20
Refused	34	1	9	-
Birthplace				
Australia	4767	68	5292	76
Vietnam	396	6	69	1
Other southeast Asia	250	4	281	4
Middle East	443	6	67	1
Africa	139	2	121	2
Other overseas born	987	14	1148	16
Refused	19	-	23	-
Language other than English at home	1802	26	1049	15
Indigenous	167	2	173	2

- less than 1%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

This report provides national-level data on the key issues addressed in the ICVS, including:

1. rates of victimisation;
2. perceptions of crime and safety;
3. reporting crimes to the police;
4. citizen engagement in crime prevention; and
5. policy implications of these findings.

2 Rates of victimisation

2 Rates of victimisation

Victimisation surveys provide police, policy-makers and researchers with an important source of information for addressing a range of policy issues. This chapter will explore the level of victimisation in Australia as reported to the 2004 ICVS, how victimisation rates have changed since the previous cycle of the ICVS in 2000, correlates of personal and household crime, levels of repeat victimisation, and a detailed look at assaults and threats.

What is the level of victimisation?

The ICVS asked respondents about their experiences of select types of crimes in the preceding five years (back to 1999), and from this, five-year rates and one-year rates for 2003 were calculated. Three personal and six household crimes were included in a standardised questionnaire (see text box *Measuring crime victimisation*):

Personal crime

- Assaults and threats
- Robbery (theft of personal property with violence or the threat of violence)
- Personal theft (theft of personal property without violence)

Household crime

- Burglary
- Attempted burglary
- Motor vehicle theft
- Theft from motor vehicles
- Motorcycle theft
- Bicycle theft

Measuring crime victimisation

Victimisation surveys use highly structured questionnaires. To ensure that estimates of crime victimisation are accurate, it is important that question wording is easily understood, accurately represents the concept it is intended to measure (has a high degree of validity), and is understood by all respondents in the same way (has a high level of reliability). The questionnaire developed for the ICVS was carefully tested and has been used since the first cycle in 1989 (see Appendix for detailed discussion about reliability of the estimates). The following questions were used to measure experiences of crime victimisation (in the order they appear in the questionnaire):

HOUSEHOLD CRIME

Car theft

Over the past five years have you or other members of your household had any of their cars/vans/trucks stolen?

Theft from cars

Apart from this, over the past five years have you or members of your household had something stolen from your car, for example a car stereo, or something that was left in your car? This includes theft of a part of the car, such as a car mirror or wheel. (Excludes thefts from car when car was stolen, and vandalism.)

Motorcycle theft

Over the past five years have you or other members of your household had any of their mopeds / scooters / motorcycles stolen?

Bicycle theft

Over the past five years have you or other members of your household had any of their bicycles stolen?

Burglary

Over the past five years, did anyone actually get into your home without permission, and steal or try to steal something? (Excludes thefts from garages, sheds or lock-ups.)

Attempted burglary

Apart from this, over the past five years, do you have any evidence that someone tried to get into your home unsuccessfully (for example, damage to locks, doors or windows or scratches around the lock)?

PERSONAL CRIME

Robbery

Over the past five years has anyone stolen something from you by using force or threatening you, or did anybody TRY to steal something from you by using force or threatening force?

Theft of personal property

Apart from theft involving force, there are many other types of theft of personal property, such as pick-pocketing or theft of a purse, wallet, clothing, jewellery or sports equipment. Over the past five years, have you personally been the victim of any of these thefts?

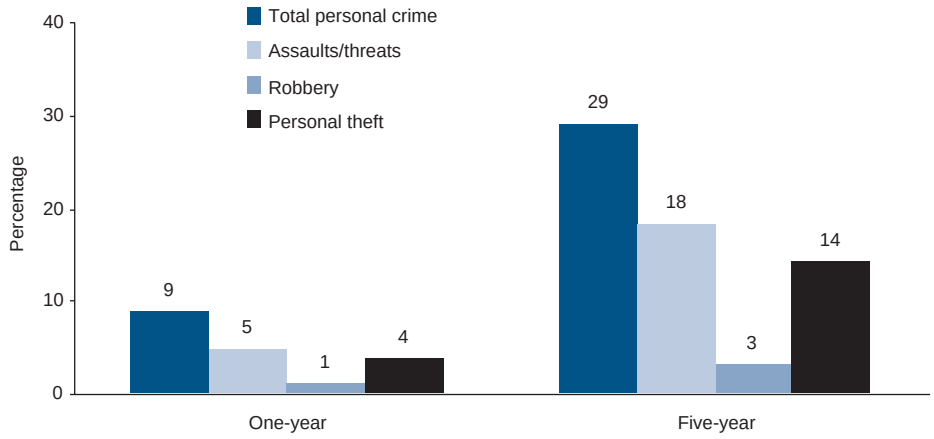
Assaults and threats

Apart from the incidents just covered, over the past five years, have you been personally attacked or threatened by someone in a way that really frightened you? Just to explain what we're including, this could have been at home or elsewhere, such as at your workplace, in the street, on public transport, in a pub, at school, or on the beach, etc. And it could have been by someone you know, a close friend, a family member or your partner.

Personal crime

Victimisation rates are calculated per 100 persons and per 100 households. These are prevalence rates which count the percentage of people or households victimised once or more. Overall, half (52%) of the sample reported at least one experience of crime over the five-year period and 17 per cent were victimised during 2003. Twenty-nine per cent had been victims of personal crimes over the five-year period and nine per cent in the previous year. Rates of personal crime were highest for assaults/threats and personal theft and lowest for robbery.

Figure 1: One-year and five-year rates of personal crime



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Household crime

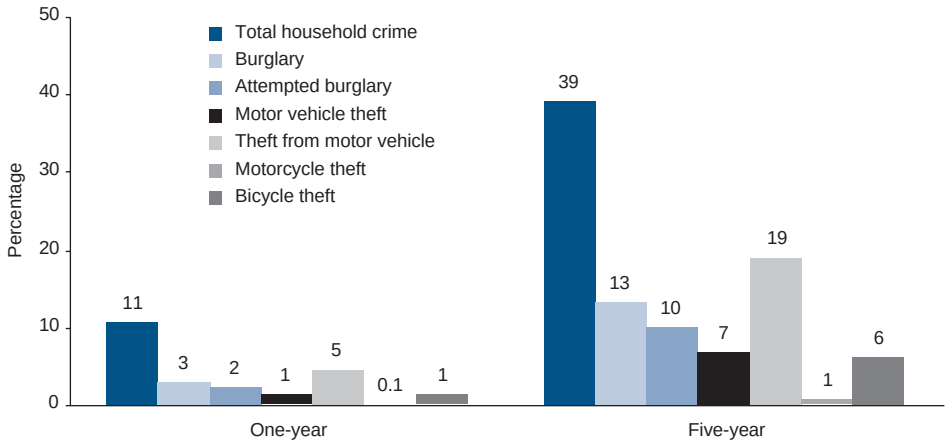
Rates were higher for household crimes than for personal crimes: 39 per cent of households reported at least one of the household crimes measured by this survey during the five-year period, and 11 per cent experienced a household crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. Theft from motor vehicles occurred most frequently, followed by burglary and attempts. Theft of motor vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles were reported by less than 10 per cent of the sample during the five-year period and less than two per cent in the past year (Figure 2). These rates are based on all households. Limiting the analysis to just those households who were owners of motor vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles, five-year rates are as follows:

- motor vehicle theft: seven per cent of motor vehicle owners;
- theft from motor vehicles: 21 per cent of motor vehicle owners;

- motorcycle theft: five per cent of motorcycle owners; and
- bicycle theft: 10 per cent of bicycle owners.

Five-year rates are not simply five times higher than one-year rates, possibly due to memory loss of incidents that are relatively minor. In addition, there may have been changes to victimisation risk at the personal or household level during the five-year period.

Figure 2: One-year and five-year rates of household crime



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Have victimisation rates changed over time?

Direct comparisons with the 2000 ICVS should be made with caution because of the methodological differences between the two surveys. For example, the approach taken in 2000 involved the 'White Pages Plus One' method of sample selection which involves selecting residential telephone numbers at random from the telephone directory and altering the last digit. Both the number selected from the directory and the altered number were then used. The 2004 survey used the Random Digit Dialling method which involves retaining the 6 digit prefix of known telephone numbers and randomly generating the last 4 digits. Both these methods are designed to increase the chance of selecting unlisted or not yet listed numbers. In addition, the maximum number of telephone calls made to make contact with a household was 6 in the 2000 survey compared to 15 in 2004. This extended call regime in 2004 was designed to enhance the representation of young people, single person households, and employed people. These differences in approach may have affected comparability in rates of victimisation between the two survey cycles, producing higher rates in the 2004 survey.

As shown in Table 2, the five-year rate of overall victimisation showed a small but statistically significant decline over the two time points, from 55 per cent of persons in 2000 to 52 per cent in 2004. However, the only crime to decline significantly was personal theft not involving burglary or violence. This is a relatively minor but high volume crime. One-year rates are more indicative of current crime conditions and the overall percentage in each sample who reported at least one victimisation in the 12-month period prior to the survey declined from 24 per cent to 17 per cent, a statistically significant drop. Crimes showing significant declines were personal theft, burglary and theft from motor vehicles.

Table 2: Comparative rates of victimisation, 2000 and 2004

	One-year rates		Five-year rates	
	2000	2004	2000	2004
Total victims	24	17*	55	52*
Assault/threats	6	5	19	18
Robbery	1	1	4	3
Personal theft	7	4*	18	14*
Burglary	4	3*	14	13
Attempted burglary	3	2	11	10
Motor vehicle theft	2	1	7	7
Theft from motor vehicle	7	5*	19	19
Motorcycle theft	0.1	0.1	1	1
Bicycle theft	2	1	7	6

* difference is significant $p < .05$

Totals for 2000 have been adjusted to include only those crimes included in the 2004 survey. Due to other adjustments made to the 2000 datafile to ensure compatibility with the 2004 survey, figures differ from those published in Carcach and Makkai 2003.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2000 and 2004 [computer files]

These patterns in victimisation mirror trends in police-recorded crime in Australia. Although the crime categories are more detailed in the ICVS compared with police statistics and therefore are not strictly comparable, police statistics also show recent declines in rates of property theft and burglary (AIC 2004). Similar to the ICVS data, within crimes recorded by police, the most frequently occurring violent crime was assault while the most common property crime was property theft (which would include personal theft, theft from vehicles and bicycle theft in the ICVS) followed by burglary.

Do levels of victimisation vary?

It is a common finding in crime victimisation research that risk of victimisation is not evenly distributed in the population; people and households with certain socio-demographic characteristics report higher rates of victimisation as compared with others. One-year rates of victimisation are used in this analysis as some personal characteristics, such as age, income and others, change over time and may not reflect the person's situation five years previously.

Personal crime

As shown in Table 3, all adults in the population do not have an equal chance of experiencing assaults or threats, robbery or personal theft. In particular, individuals with the following characteristics had significantly higher rates of personal crime:

- young people have higher rates of all types of personal crime and rates decline with age;
- marital status is a significant predictor of victimisation: single people and those living in a de facto relationship report higher rates than those who are married or widowed;
- rates of personal crime are lowest for residents of lowest income households;
- rates of personal victimisation are inversely related to residential stability as measured by time living at current postcode;
- how time is spent, both during the day and in the evening affects risk of victimisation: students, the unemployed, and those who regularly go out in the evening for recreational purposes, report higher rates of personal victimisation;
- those who speak a language other than English at home report lower rates of assault or threat and higher rates of robbery; and
- Indigenous people report higher rates of personal victimisation, although differences are not statistically significant at the .05 level due to low counts of Indigenous people interviewed for this survey.

These results are consistent with the research literature which shows that age, marital status, main activity and night time activity are correlated with higher rates of personal victimisation (ABS 2003; Mihorean et al 2001). According to one theory, routine activity theory, individuals whose lifestyle brings them into close proximity to potential offenders, and situations where guardianship over personal safety is lowered, will have higher rates of personal victimisation (Miethe et al 1987). It is not difficult, for example, to see how time spent in public places by young, single people, students or the unemployed differs as compared with married people with family responsibilities or the elderly, and how this may affect risk of personal victimisation.

Table 3: One-year rates of personal crime by personal characteristics (per cent)

	Assault/ threat	Robbery	Personal theft	Total personal crime
Total number	**326**	**57**	**261**	**605**
Gender				
Male	5	1	3	9
Female	4	1	4	9
Age				
16-24	6*	2*	7*	14*
25-34	5	1	5	10
35-59	5	-	3	8
60 and over	2	-	2	4
Marital status				
Single	7*	2*	6*	14*
Married	4	-	2	6
De facto	7	1	6	13
Divorced/separated	5	1	4	9
Widowed	–	0	–	3
Household income				
< $400 per week	3*	1	2	6*
$400 - $599	5	1	4	10
$600 - $899	6	1	4	10
$900 or more	4	1	4	9
Time at current postcode				
< 1 year	8*	2*	6*	14*
1-3 years	5	1	5	11
3-5 years	5	1	4	9
5-10 years	4	1	4	8
10 years or more	4	1	3	7
Main activity				
Working	5*	1*	4*	9*
Looking for work	15	–	3	17
Home duties	4	–	3	7
Student	4	2	8	13
Retired/pension	3	-	2	4

	Assault/ threat	Robbery	Personal theft	Total personal crime
Evenings out				
Almost everyday	8*	3*	9*	18*
At least once per week	5	1	4	8
At least once per month	4	-	3	8
Less often	3	1	2	5
Never	2	–	–	6
Language other than English at home				
Yes	3*	2*	4	9
No	5	1	4	9
Indigenous				
Yes	8	–	5	12
No	5	1	4	9

- less than 1%
– fewer than 5 cases
* series is statistically significant, X^2, $p < .05$
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Household crime

A number of household-level variables are important correlates of household crime (Table 4). For example:

- rates of theft from motor vehicles is lowest for lowest income households;
- rates of all household crimes with the exception of burglary tend to be lower for those who have lived many years at their current postcode;
- rates of bicycle theft are higher for those who speak only English at home; and
- rates of household crime do not vary significantly according to type of dwelling or Indigenous status.

Table 4: One-year rates of household crime by household characteristics (per cent)

	Burglary	Attempt burglary	MV theft	Theft from MV	Theft bicycle	Total household crime
Total number	**188**	**167**	**82**	**319**	**96**	**745**
Household income						
< $400 per week	2	2	1	2*	1	7*
$400 - $599	3	2	1	5	2	11
$600 - $899	2	2	1	4	1	10
$900 or more	3	3	1	6	2	13
Time at current postcode						
< 1 year	3	4*	1*	5*	2*	13*
1-3 years	3	2	2	5	1	12
3-5 years	3	3	2	7	2	14
5-10 years	2	2	1	4	2	10
10 years or more	3	2	1	4	1	9
Type of dwelling						
Flat/apartment	2	2	1	5	2	10
Terraced/row house	4	3	–	5	–	11
Single house	3	2	1	4	1	11
Language other than English at home						
Yes	2	2	1	5	1*	10
No	3	2	1	5	2	11
Indigenous						
Yes	–	3	–	5	3	13
No	3	2	1	5	1	11

- less than 1%

– fewer than 5 cases

* series is statistically significant, X^2, $p < .05$

Theft of motorcycles is excluded due to low counts (n=10) but included in totals.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Does risk of victimisation vary by community type?

Recently, attention has been focused on the effect of neighbourhood composition and organisation on victimisation risk. The idea that crime is concentrated in certain geographic areas is not new. Early in the last century, criminologists established that crime occurs predominantly in areas characteristics by poverty, unemployment and single parent households. However, more recent research suggests that it is not disadvantage per se but the social organisation of disadvantaged areas that affects their vulnerability to crime (Morenoff et al 2001; Sampson et al 1997). This social organisation is referred to as 'collective efficacy' or 'community cohesion' which is characterised by mutual trust among neighbours, willingness to intervene, supervise young people and help maintain public order. In poor neighbourhoods that have low crime rates, collective efficacy has been determined to be an important factor in the ability of residents to enforce collective norms and exert social control over community members (Sampson et al 1997).

The ICVS does not question respondents in detail about the characteristics of their neighbourhoods; however a census of the population, which is conducted at five-year intervals in Australia, can be utilized together with victimisation survey data to better understand the community-level context in which crime occurs. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has developed an analytical tool which ranks geographic areas according to their relative social and economic wellbeing. The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) encompasses four indexes, each summarising a different aspect of the socio-economic conditions of an area (ABS 2001). Each index has been derived from a range of questions on the 2001 Census of Population and Housing:

1. Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (derived from variables such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, jobs in relatively unskilled occupations);
2. Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage (takes into account variables relating to income, education, occupation, wealth and living conditions) is a continuum of advantage to disadvantage;
3. Index of Economic Resources (variables relating to income, expenditure and assets of families, rent paid, mortgage payments, dwelling size, family structure); and
4. Index of Education and Occupation (including higher qualifications and employment in skilled occupations).

The indexes were derived through a process of principal components analysis which is a method used to summarise information from a variety of variables (ABS 2001). A value is provided for each Index for a wide range of geographic areas which enables researchers to link these data to other datasets by way of the geographic identifiers. The SEIFA was linked to the 2004 ICVS by way of postcodes of participating households (postcode data were missing from 165 household or 2.4% of the sample).

These Indexes are all highly correlated with one another (between 0.82 and 0.97, $p < .05$) which indicates there is significant overlap in the information contained in each one. Table 5 shows the mean values of each Index for those who indicated they or their households had been victims of any crime in the previous year compared with those who were not victimised. All Indexes have been constructed so that relatively disadvantaged areas have low Index values (high values equal lack of disadvantage) and are standardised to have a mean value of 1000. As shown, persons and households who reported being the victim of any crime in the previous 12 months tended to live in postal areas with higher mean scores compared with non-victims. This indicates lower relative disadvantage in victims' postal areas compared with the postal areas of non-victims. Differences were statistically significant for all Indexes with the exception of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage. Differences in mean scores were non-significant for individual types of personal crimes due to small numbers reporting victimisation in the one-year period.

Table 5: Mean values of SEIFA indexes for persons victimised and not victimised in the previous 12 months

	Non-victim	Victim
Relative disadvantage	1008.4	1010.3
Relative advantage/disadvantage	1008.6	1018.3*
Economic resources	1012.2	1020.3*
Education and occupation	1004.9	1016.0*

* difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Combining statistical data about personal, household and neighbourhood characteristics can help broaden our understanding of the factors associated with risk of victimisation. Through this, governments and communities can better understand the social distribution of crime. This is important information that can contribute to the development of crime reduction activities and help more accurately target community and police resources. The ways in which household-level and community-level characteristics interact to affect risk of victimisation is a topic for future study using multi-level modelling techniques.

What are the most important risk factors for victimisation?

Many of the factors that are associated with higher rates of personal or household victimisation are inter-rated. For example, young people are more likely than older people to be single, to be students or looking for work, and to be active outside the home in the evenings. Using logistic regression, the most important predictors of personal and household victimisation can be identified, while holding constant the effects of the others.

For ease of interpretation, the predictors in the regression were dichotomised and the group with higher rates of victimisation in the bi-variate analysis (Tables 3 and 4) were assigned a value of 1 while those with lower rates were assigned a value of 0 as the following shows:

Age:

1 = young people aged 16 to 24
0 = people 25 years and over

Marital status:

1 = single, divorced, separated people and those living in de facto relationships
0 = married or widowed

Income:

1 = household income less than $400 per week
0 = household income $400 per week or more

Time at current postcode:

1 = less than one year
0 = one year or longer

Main activity:

1 = unemployed
0 = employed, keeping house, student, retired, on a pension

Evening activities

1 = evenings out almost daily
0 = evenings out once a week or less

A value of 1 was also given for those who speak a language other than English at home and for Indigenous people while the reference categories were given a value of 0. Males were assigned a value of 1 and females 0.

As shown in Table 6, five factors were significant risk factors for personal victimisation in the previous year while controlling for the effects of others:

- marital status: those who were single, separated or divorced, or living in a de facto relationship had higher odds of personal crime;
- income: persons in lower income households (under $400 per week) had reduced odds of personal crime;
- residential stability: persons who were living at their current postcode less than one year had significantly higher odds of personal crime;

- main activity: unemployed persons had higher odds of personal crime; and
- night time activities: those who participated in recreational activities outside the home almost every evening had heightened odds of personal victimisation.

Both higher income and unemployment were separate risk factors for personal victimisation, in addition to marital status (other than married or widowed) and having an active lifestyle outside the home in the evenings. While young people reported higher rates of personal victimisation in the bivariate analysis, age lost its predictive power once the effects of other variables were partialed out. Speaking a language other than English at home and Indigenous status were also non-significant when the effects of other variables were controlled.

Table 6: Risk factors for personal victimisation, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Gender	0.91	0.09	0.77 - 1.08
Age	1.12	0.12	0.89 - 1.41
Marital status	1.85**	0.10	1.52 - 2.25
Income	0.66**	0.15	0.49 - 0.89
Time at postcode	1.55**	0.12	1.22 - 1.97
Unemployed	1.79**	0.23	1.15 - 2.79
Evenings out almost every day	1.96**	0.12	1.55 - 2.49
Language other than English	0.96	0.12	0.76 - 1.2
Indigenous	1.22	0.24	0.76 - 1.96
-2 log likelihood 3959.6			
Model chi square 150.6** (9 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Overall personal crime includes assault or threat, robbery (theft of property with violence) and personal theft (theft of property without violence or contact with the offender). Examining the violent offence of assault/threat separately, the model is somewhat different. Like in the model predicting all personal crime, marital status, income, residential stability, unemployment and evenings out are significant predictors (Table 7). However, for assaults or threats, being unemployed raised the odds more than threefold net of the effects of others in the model. In addition, two other variables are significant predictors of assault/threat: language spoken at home, and Indigenous status. Risk of assault or threat is highest for those who are unmarried, unemployed, not living in the lowest income households, living at the current postcode less than one year, routinely spending evenings outside the home, speaking only English at home, and Indigenous, regardless of gender or age.

Table 7: Risk factors for assault/threat, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Gender	1.12	0.11	0.89 - 1.4
Age	0.9	0.16	0.65 - 1.24
Marital status	1.61**	0.13	1.24 - 2.09
Income	0.6**	0.21	0.4 - 0.9
Time at postcode	1.67**	0.16	1.22 - 2.28
Unemployed	3.2**	0.25	1.97 - 5.19
Evenings out almost every day	1.47**	0.17	1.05 - 2.05
Language other than English	0.59**	0.19	0.4 - 0.85
Indigenous	1.54*	0.3	0.86 - 2.75
-2 log likelihood 2551.7			
Model chi square 80.11** (9 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

With respect to household crimes, household income remained significant with lower income households showing reduced odds of household crime, net of the effects of other predictors. Living at the current postcode for less than one year also predicts higher odds of household victimisation (the same result was found at the other extreme of residential stability where those living at the current postcode for 10 years or more had significantly lower odds). Language spoken at home and Indigenous status were both non-significant predictors of household crime.

Table 8: Risk factors for household victimisation, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Income	0.61**	0.12	0.49 - 0.77
Time at postcode	1.32**	0.12	1.05 - 1.67
Language other than English	0.94	0.11	0.75 - 1.16
Indigenous	1.23	0.22	0.79 - 1.9
-2 log likelihood 4713.64			
Model chi square 25.99** (4 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

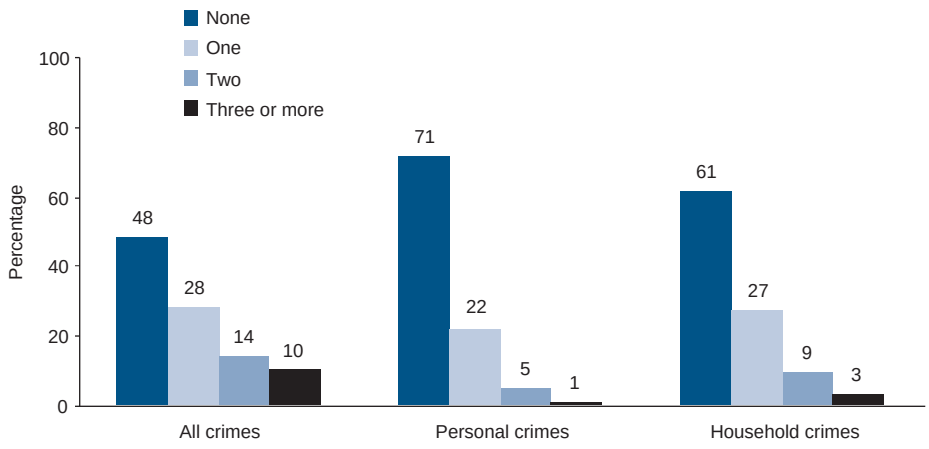
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

How frequent is repeat victimisation?

Repeat victimisation is an important area of study because incidents of crime repeated by the same offenders, or repeated against the same victims, contribute so substantially to the overall crime rate. With knowledge about the factors that lead to repeat victimisation, police can help citizens identify and eliminate vulnerabilities that can lead to a repeat experience of the same or other type of crime. A substantial proportion of victims in the ICVS reported more than one experience of crime within the reference periods. Overall, 52 per cent of the Australian sample reported experiencing at least one incident of the crime types covered by this survey within the previous five years. Twenty-eight per cent of the sample reported one crime type, 14 per cent reported two, and 10 per cent three or more (Figure 3). Multiple types of household crimes were more common than multiple personal crimes: 12 per cent of all households experienced more than one type of household crime while six per cent of all persons reported more than one personal crime.

Looking just at those persons and household who were victims of crime, almost half (45%) of crime victims experienced multiple crime types, including 32 per cent of victims of household crimes and 22 per cent of victims of personal crimes.

Figure 3: Number of different types of crime victimisations, past five years (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Within crime types, many victims also reported multiple victimisations. Those who reported being victimised were asked how often the crime had occurred within the previous year (2003). Over this one-year period, 68 per cent of all victims reported experiencing one incident of crime, 19 per cent reported two and 13 per cent experienced three or more. The crime most likely to be repeated against the same victim was assaults or threats: 19 per cent of victims experienced three or more assaults or threats within the one-year period (Table 9).

Table 9: Number of victimisations in 2003 by crime type (per cent)

	One	Two	Three or more
Total	**68**	**19**	**13**
Personal crimes	72	15	13
Assault/threat	67	14	19
Robbery	77	16	7
Personal theft	86	11	3
Household crimes	74	18	8
Burglary	84	12	4
Attempted burglary	84	11	5
Motor vehicle theft	95	–	-
Theft from motor vehicle	83	12	5
Motorcycle theft	86	–	–
Bicycle theft	85	9	6

- less than 1%
– fewer than 5 cases
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Who is at highest risk of repeat victimisation?

Many of the characteristics which leave individuals and households vulnerable to victimisation are also associated with repeat victimisation. However, some researchers have argued that the single best predictor of victimisation is previous victimisation (Pease 1998), and that the probability of further victimisation increases with each subsequent victimisation (Ellingworth et al 1995). This may be due to enduring vulnerabilities of the crime target (eg. prevention activities are not undertaken; continued proximity to a violent partner), or that the success of the crime provides encouragement to the offender to repeat it. Clear-up rates for many crimes are low (on top of low reporting rates by victims for some types of crimes); therefore successful completion of a crime actually boosts the chances of a repetition (Pease 1998). Repetitions potentially involve the same rewards as the first victimisation but less effort and lower risk (Farrell et al 1995).

The ICVS data show some support for the contention that repeat victims are very similar in traits to those victimised once. Table 10 contains the results of logistic regression analysis predicting repeat personal victimisation in 2003. The dependent variable is dichotomous: experienced one personal victimisation during the year (0); experienced more than one (1). The model is a poor fit to the data with a non significant chi square and only one variable predicting repeat victimisation. Males are more likely than females to be victimised more than once during the one-year period, holding other factors constant. All other predictors were non significant indicating that together they do little to explain repeat victimisation. These results indicate that victims of one personal crime are not differentiated in any way but gender from repeat crime victims.

Table 10: Risk factors for repeat personal victimisation, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Gender	1.54**	0.19	1.05 - 2.24
Age	1.31	0.24	0.81 - 2.11
Marital status	1.0	0.22	0.64 - 1.55
Income	1.39	0.32	0.74 - 2.61
Time at postcode	1.48	0.24	0.92 - 2.39
Unemployed	1.20	0.44	0.51 - 2.82
Evenings out almost everyday	0.83	0.25	0.5 - 1.35
Language other than English	0.7	0.28	0.4 - 1.2
Indigenous	0.43	0.67	0.12 - 1.57
-2 log likelihood 669.4			
Model chi square 14.67 (9 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05
Analysis is limited to victims, n = 544
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Similar results were produced by a logistic regression model predicting repeat household victimisation (Table 11). Although income and time at current postcode were significant predictors of household victimisation overall (see Table 8), none of these variables differentiated households victimised once during the year from those victimised repeatedly.

Table 11: Risk factors for repeat household victimisation, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Income	1.19	0.25	0.73 - 1.96
Time at postcode	0.96	0.26	0.58 - 1.59
Language other than English	0.71	0.26	0.43 - 1.18
Indigenous	0.69	0.52	0.25 - 1.91
-2 log likelihood 848.53			
Model chi square 2.91 (4 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05
Analysis is limited to victims, n = 724

Personal crime: why is it important?

Personal victimisation can have far-reaching effects on victims and those around them. Violent crimes in particular can raise fear for individual victims and their communities, and can have a greater psychological impact as compared to crimes involving the loss of property and no contact between victims and offenders. Very often, assaults occur between people known to each other which can increase the emotional harm to victims.

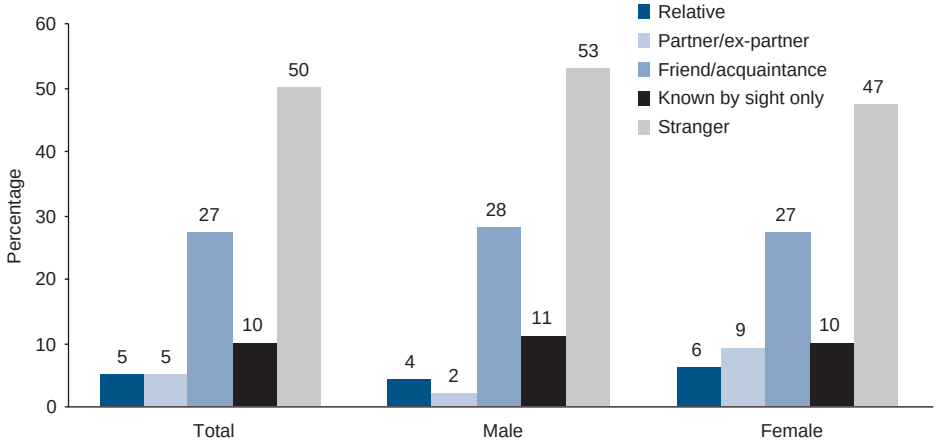
How do assaults occur?

Assaults and threats were studied in greater detail on the ICVS relative to other crimes, in recognition of the potential seriousness and consequences of this crime and the fact that it is the most common personal crime. Results show that half of all assault/threats involved strangers and half involved offenders known to the victim (Figure 4). Approximately one quarter of assault offenders were friends or acquaintances (including neighbours, colleagues, close friends and others), one in ten offenders were known by sight only, five per cent were partners or ex-partners and five per cent were other relatives.

Assaults and threats occur in different contexts according to the gender of victims. Women are more likely than men to be assaulted within the context of intimate relationships (9% compared with 2%), while men are more likely to report assaults by strangers (53% compared with 47%). However, it is well known that traditional crime victimisation surveys covering a wide range of crime types, like the ICVS, tend to under-estimate the level of partner violence as the methodology or question wording is not designed specifically to measure sensitive experiences that victims may be reluctant to discuss (Johnson 1996). Many countries have developed a specialised approach to interviewing on sensitive topics and the results of these surveys should be consulted for a more indepth and accurate assessment of partner violence and other

forms of violence against women (ABS 1996; Johnson 1996; Tjaden & Thoennes 2000; Heiskanen & Piispa 1998; Lundgren et al 2001). The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS), also being coordinated through the United Nations, is an example of a specialised survey and approach with aims similar to the ICVS: to provide internationally comparable estimates of sexual and physical violence against women in countries around the world (see Mouzos & Makkai 2004 for results for Australia). The IVAWS estimates that 12 per cent of Australian women aged 18 to 69 were victims of assault or threat by a partner in the five years prior to the survey. This is many times higher than the estimate produced by the ICVS where less than two per cent of women reported assaults or threats by partners over the five-year period.

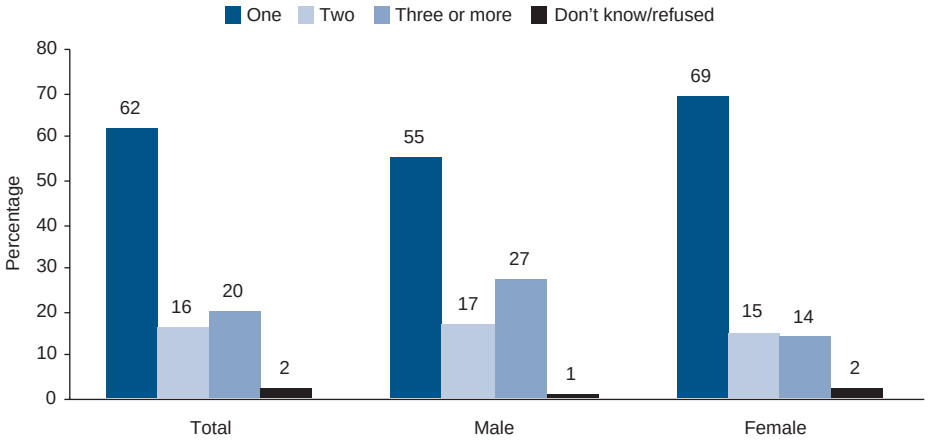
Figure 4: Relationship of victim to offender in assault/threat incidents



Differences between male and female victims are statistically significant for strangers and partners only ($p < 0.5$).
Stranger includes person not known and person not seen at the time of the offence.
Friend/acquaintance includes neighbour, colleague, close friend and other known person.
Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple offenders.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Assaults and threats involving multiple offenders can be particularly fear-inducing and traumatic for victims. One fifth of assault/threats reported to the ICVS involved three or more offenders and 16 per cent involved two offenders (Figure 5). Male victims were about twice as likely as females to be confronted by three or more offenders (27% compared with 14%).

Figure 5: Number of offenders in assault/threat incidents



Difference between male and female victims is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

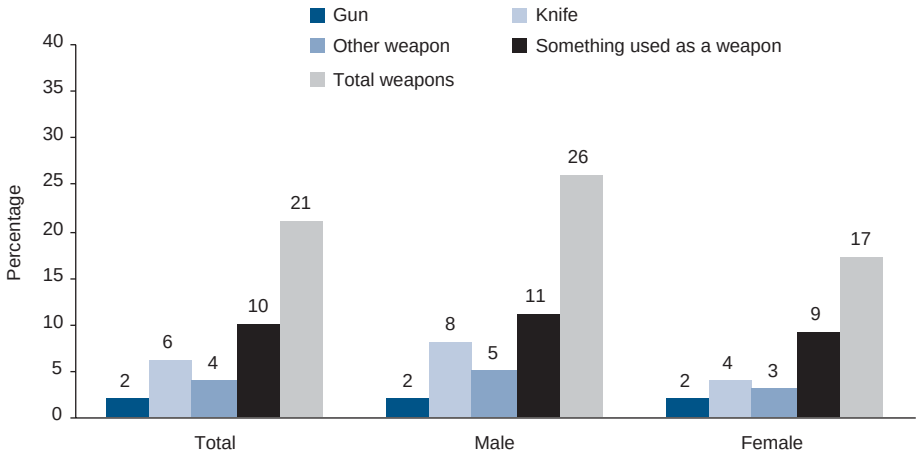
How serious are they?

The definition of assault in this survey includes both physical attacks and threats that the victim found frightening (see Box *Measuring crime victimisation* in Chapter 2). Sixty-one per cent were described as physical attacks and 36 per cent as threats (2% did not reply to this question). The attacks reported to this survey involved somewhat different contexts and dynamics as compared to threats. For example;

- multiple offenders of three or more attacked their victims in 50 per cent of cases while single offenders attacked in just 34 per cent of cases and threatened their victims in 66 per cent;
- strangers were somewhat more likely than offenders known to the victim to use threats only (65% compared with 60%);
- a higher proportion of partners attacked their victims (66% compared with 35% of other perpetrators); and
- a higher proportion of male assault victims reported being attacked (42% compared with 32% of females) while female victims were more likely to report threats (68% compared with 58%).

Weapons were used by offenders in 21 per cent of assaults, including 28 per cent of attacks and 18 per cent of threats. These were most often objects used as weapons; just two per cent of assaults involved guns and six per cent involved knives (Figure 6). Male assault victims were more likely than females to report being confronted with a weapon (26% of males compared with 17% of females).

Figure 6: Weapons used in assault/threat incidents



Differences between male and female victims are statistically significant at $p < .05$.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Overall, 53 per cent of attack victims were injured and 24 per cent received medical attention for their injuries. Higher proportions of men who were attacked suffered physical injuries (60% compared with 45% of women) and received medical attention (29% compared with 18% of women). However, there were no statistically significant differences in rates of injury or medical attention by relationship to offenders.

Differences in the nature of assaults reported by men and women may be a reflection of gender differences in perceptions of what constitutes an assault or threat worthy of reporting to a crime victimisation survey. Female respondents may be more willing than males to consider a threat as something that 'really frightened' them, as per the question wording used to capture assaults and threats (see Box *Measuring crime victimisation*). Some men may be unwilling to report an attack or threat to a survey about crime unless it contains at least one element of seriousness, such as an attack, multiple offenders, a weapon, or physical injury.

Conclusion

The key findings in this chapter show that nine per cent of respondents were victims of personal crimes and 11 per cent of households were victims of household crimes in 2003. There were significant declines in rates of most crime types in 2003 compared with those reported to the previous cycle of the ICVS in 1999. Risk of personal victimisation is associated with having moved postcodes recently, and with routine activities that regularly place people outside the home and reduce guardianship over personal safety. Additionally, assaults and threats are predicted by speaking only English at home and Indigenous status. Household victimisation is predicted by relatively higher income and having moved postcodes recently. Those who had experienced personal or household crime in the previous year tended to live in areas with lower disadvantage relative to non-victims. Almost half of all victims had experienced more than one crime type over the five-year period; one third experienced multiple incidents of the same crime type within one year. Only one variable — gender — differentiated repeat victims of personal crime from one-time victims and none of the variables tested predicted repeat household victimisation. This lends support to Pease (1998) and others who contend that the single best predictor of victimisation is previous victimisation.

3 Perceptions of crime and safety

3 Perceptions of crime and safety

Why does fear of crime matter?

Concerns about crime are generally more widespread than recent direct experiences of victimisation. While awareness and concern about crime can be positive and lead to behaviours that reduce the risk of victimisation, for some more vulnerable members of society, such as women and the elderly, fear of crime can result in serious curtailment of everyday activities, lost opportunity, and a reduction in the quality of life (Johnson 1996). If fear becomes extreme and residents retreat from public spaces, the result may be a gradual decline in the character of communities, which in turn can lead to increased disorder and crime (Skogan 1990).

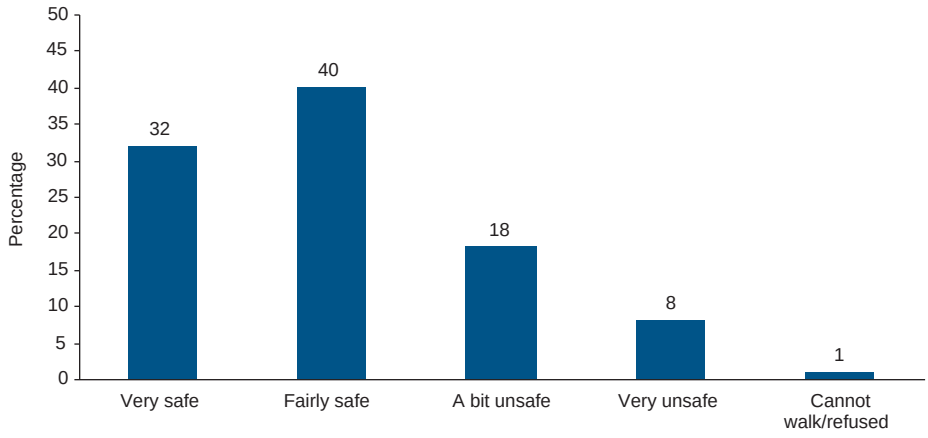
How worried are people about their safety?

Three dimensions of perceptions of personal safety and risk of victimisation were assessed in the ICVS:

1. feelings of safety walking alone in the local area after dark;
2. feelings of safety waiting for or using public transportation after dark; and
3. the perceived likelihood of experiencing a burglary in the next twelve months.

Overall, the majority of Australians feel relatively safe in their local environment. A majority, 72 per cent, reported feeling fairly safe or very safe while walking alone in their local area after dark (Figure 7). This is an improvement over the 2000 ICVS when 64 per cent of Australians reported feeling safe while walking alone in their local area after dark (40 per cent felt fairly safe and 24 per cent felt very safe).

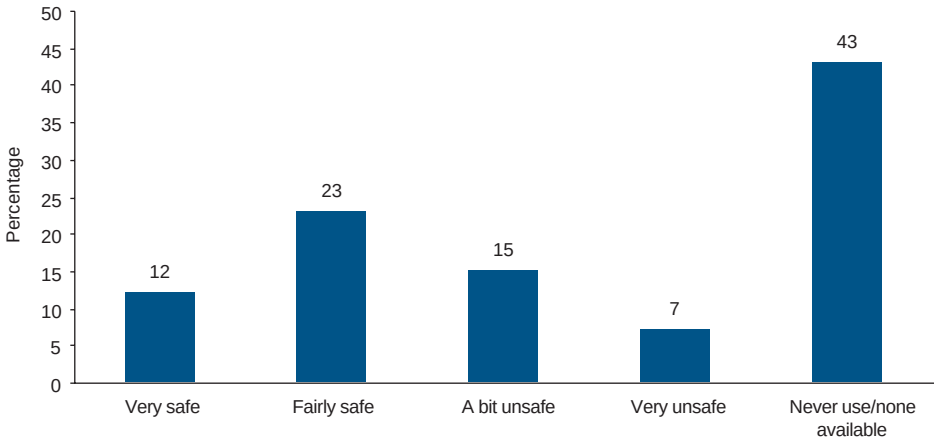
Figure 7: Feelings of safety walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

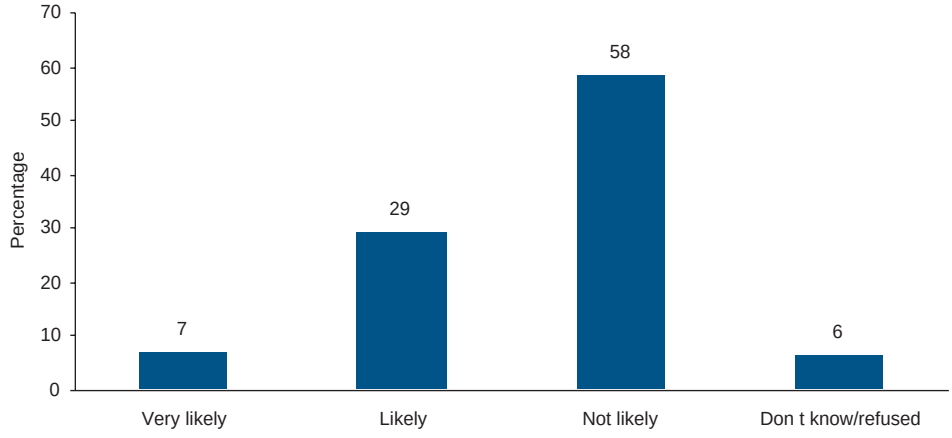
Although more than four in ten Australians (43%) do not use public transportation or do not have it available in their communities, the remainder were more likely to feel safe while using public transport (35%) than unsafe (22%) (Figure 8). Fifty eight per cent of respondents felt it was unlikely their homes would be broken into in the coming year while 29 per cent said it was likely and just seven per cent felt it was very likely (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Feelings of safety using public transportation after dark



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Figure 9: Perceived likelihood of burglary over the next 12 months



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Are some people more fearful than others?

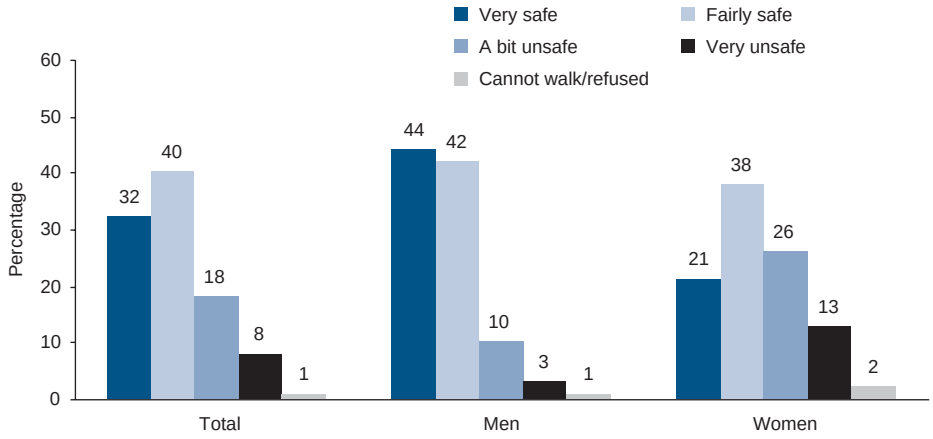
There are some important differences in perceptions of safety amongst various groups in the population. For example, women were more than twice as likely as men to say they feel a bit unsafe and four times as likely to say they feel very unsafe walking alone in the local area after dark (Figure 10) and about four times as likely as men to say they feel very unsafe while waiting for or using public transportation (Figure 11). However, improvements to feelings of safety over the 2000 ICVS were reported by both women and men. In 2004, 21 per cent of women felt very safe walking alone in their local area after dark, up from 13 per cent in 2000. The figures for men were 44 per cent in 2004 and 35 per cent four years previously.

The youngest age group and people 60 years of age and over were more likely than those 25 to 59 years of age to say they feel a bit or very unsafe (Figure 12). Other significant correlates of fear were:

- income: 35 per cent of those with weekly household incomes under $400 said they felt a bit or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark compared with 20 per cent of those earning $900 or more;
- language other than English at home: those who speak a language other than English at home are more likely than other Australians to say they feel a bit or very unsafe walking alone after dark (31% compared with 26%);
- marital status: people who are separated/divorced or widowed were more likely to say they feel very unsafe walking alone (18% compared with 7%); and
- victimisation: feeling unsafe (very or a bit) was more often expressed by those who said they had at least one experience of crime over the previous five years (30% compared with 22% of non victims).

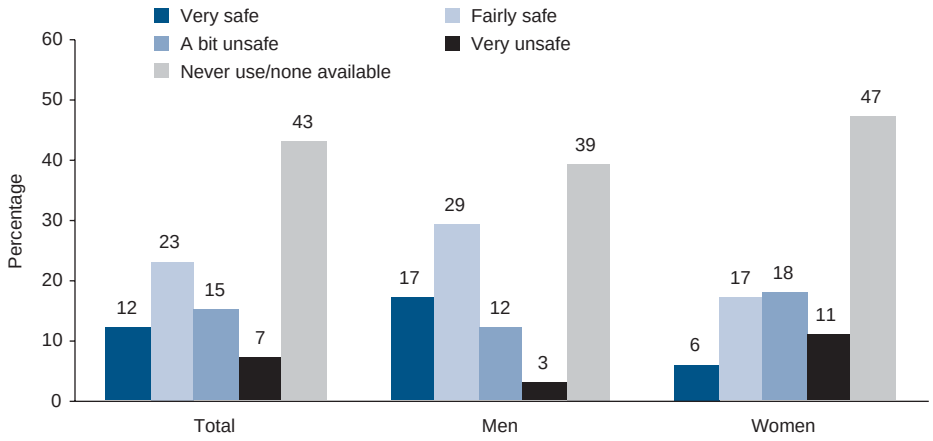
Feelings of safety are also associated with public perceptions of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Those who described the police as doing a 'very poor job' controlling crime in the local area were twice as likely as those who perceive the police to be doing a 'very good job' to say they feel unsafe while walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark (43% compared with 21%). Perceptions that the police are doing a 'very poor job' are also associated with a perceived vulnerability to burglary: 20 per cent in this group said it was very likely they would be the victim of a break-in in the next 12 months compared with eight per cent of those who rated the police as doing a 'very good job'.

Figure 10: Feelings of safety walking alone in the local area after dark by gender



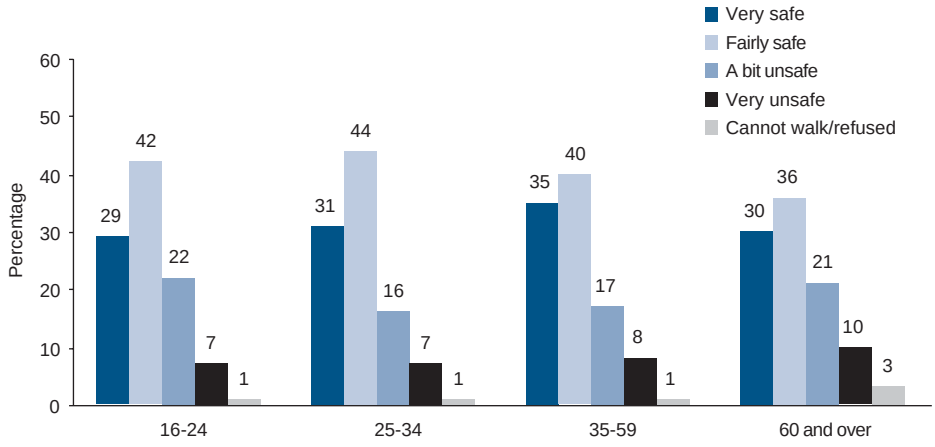
Difference between men and women is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Figure 11: Feelings of safety using public transportation after dark by gender



Difference between men and women is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Figure 12: Feelings of safety walking alone in the local area after dark by age group



Differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

These results are consistent with previous research which shows that concerns about personal safety are associated with perceived vulnerability (Mihorean et al 2001; Ferraro 1995; Salisbury & Upson 2004). Women experience a gender-specific concern about sexual violence and they, like the elderly, are concerned about their ability to fight off an attacker and to recover from physical injuries resulting from an attack. Researchers have found that women's concerns about their personal safety in almost any situation are tied to concerns about sexual violence (Warr 1985; Stanko 1990). Fear expressed by younger people reflects their higher risk of personal victimisation. People living in low income households or neighbourhoods may be reacting to the higher levels of crime around them when they report feeling unsafe walking in the local area. Table 12 shows mean SIEFA indexes for those who expressed the highest levels of fear, who said they feel 'very unsafe' walking alone in the local area after dark compared to others who felt safer. Results suggest that areas where people feel very unsafe are relatively disadvantaged on socio-economic measures, economic resources of families, and the educational and occupational structure of the community compared with areas where people feel safer. The contribution of neighbourhood to fear of crime, over and above personal and household characteristics, is an important area for further study.

Table 12: Mean values of SEIFA indexes for persons who feel very unsafe walking alone compared with others

	Very unsafe	Others
Relative disadvantage	979.9*	1011.4
Relative advantage/disadvantage	986.9*	1012.5
Economic resources	996.6*	1015.2
Education and occupation	981.6*	1009.3

* difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

What are the predictors of fear?

A multiple regression model was used to determine which factors predict fear for personal safety, net of the effect of others. First, a scale was constructed by combining responses to all three dimensions: perceptions of personal safety walking alone at night, perceptions of personal safety while using public transportation, and perceived likelihood of burglary. The scale sums responses to the three questions. There were four possible responses to the questions about feelings of safety walking alone, four possible responses to the questions regarding feelings of safety using public transportation, and three possible responses to the question measuring perceived likelihood of burglary. Those who stated they never walk alone at night, never use public transportation or do not have it available to them, or refused a response were assigned a response of 0 (10 respondents, 0.2% of the sample, met all these conditions and were coded as 0 on the scale). Response categories were ordered from 0 (low fear) to 11 (high fear). The mean was 4.7.

Age was a continuous (not grouped) variable in this model, while gender, time at postcode, income, speaks a language other than English at home, Indigenous status, and having been a victim in the past five years, were all dichotomous as explained in the logistic regression models. The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis shows that fear is predicted by (Table 13):

- gender: women score higher than men on the fear scale while controlling for all other variables in the model;
- age: there is a significant inverse relationship between fear and age meaning that older people scored lower on the fear scale and younger people score higher;
- language at home: a positive relationship is shown between fear and language indicating that those who speak a language other than English at home report higher levels of fear;

- Indigenous status: Indigenous people report higher levels of fear; and
- victimisation: those who were victims of any crime in the previous five years scored higher levels of fear.

Table 13: OLS regression analysis predicting fear for safety

	Standardised coefficient	SE	95% CI
Gender	-0.197**	0.047	-0.912 - -0.726
Age	-0.134**	0.001	-0.019 - -0.013
Time at postcode	0.006	0.08	-0.115 - 0.2
Income	0.011	0.08	-0.077 - 0.22
Language other than English	0.034**	0.07	0.067 - 0.33
Indigenous	0.02*	0.15	-0.032 - 0.566
Victim of crime	0.168**	0.049	0.6 - 0.791
Adjusted R^2 .095			
Regression F-test 105.68** (7 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Conclusion

Although overall a majority of Australians feel safe or very safe walking alone in their local area after dark, lower levels of safety are reported by some more vulnerable groups. Recent experience of victimisation is an important predictor of fear. However, other indicators of vulnerability are important over and above the effects of direct experience with crime. Second hand information about crime from others, information acquired through media reports, or social or physical disorder in the local environment may also raise concerns about personal safety. Analysis of community-level data suggests that the structure of communities in terms of relative disadvantage may play a role in increasing levels of fear for personal safety.

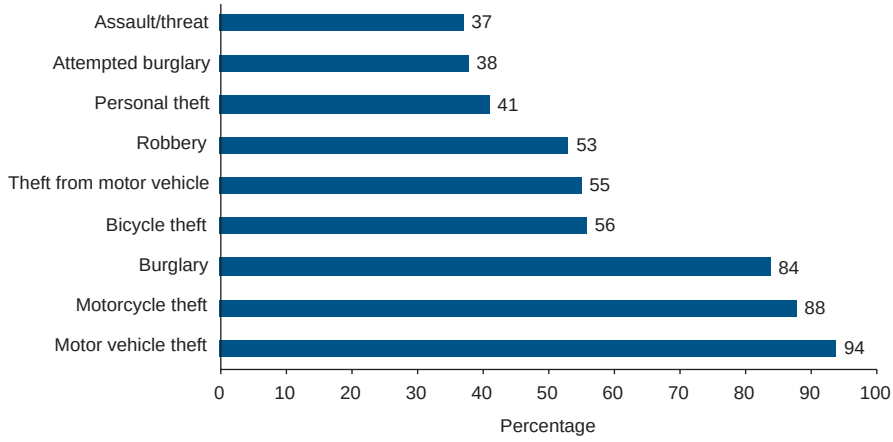
4 Reporting to police

4 Reporting to police

Are all crimes reported to police?

One of the main objectives of crime victimisation surveys initially was to estimate the 'dark figure' of crime, the proportion that are not reported to police, and to explore the reasons why some crimes are not reported. Victims have various motives for reporting crimes to the police, including catching and punishing the offender, retrieving stolen property, making insurance claims, and receiving police protection (Mihorean et al 2001). The crimes most likely to be reported in the 2004 ICVS were those involving substantial property loss that was likely to be insured, such as theft of motor vehicles and motorcycles (Figure 13). Burglary, which involves invasion into one's home and property loss or damage, and has the potential to increase fear, was reported at a rate of 84 per cent. Robbery, which involves both property loss and violence, was the personal crime most likely to be reported, at just over one half of all incidents. Personal theft (without violence) was less likely to be reported than robbery, at a rate slightly higher than assaults or threats. Fewer victims of attempted burglary reported the incident to the police as compared with completed burglaries.

Figure 13: Percentage of crimes reported to the police



In the case of multiple victimisations, this represents the most recent incident.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Are some people more likely to report than others?

Along with the variation in reporting rates by crime type are variations in reporting by personal and household characteristics of victims (Table 14). The ICVS explores reporting decisions of victims of assault/threat and burglary in some detail. With respect to assaults and threats, the following were correlated with reporting to police:

- age: victims 25 years of age and older were more likely to report to police than victims under 25 (39% compared with 29%);
- marital status: those who were separated or divorced were more likely than others to report assaults to police;
- income: those living in lower income households (weekly income of less than $400) were more likely to report to police than were those from higher income households (48% compared with 36%);
- main activity: unemployed people had the highest reporting rate (54%) and students had the lowest (24%);
- Indigenous status: Indigenous people were more likely than non-Indigenous people to report assaults to the police (50% and 36%);
- presence of a weapon: 61 per cent of those confronted with a weapon reported the incident to police compared with 30 per cent of other assaults;
- physical attack: 48 per cent of those who suffered an attack reported to police compared with 30 per cent of those who were only threatened;
- physical injury: 54 per cent of those who were injured reported the assault to police compared with 33 per cent of uninjured victims; and
- number of offenders: assaults involving three or more offenders were reported at a rate of 48 per cent compared with one third of assaults involving one or two offenders.

There were no statistically significant differences in reporting of assaults according to the gender of the victim, time at postcode, evening activities, the offender's relationship to the victim, language spoken at home, or the number of assaults experienced in the past year.

Table 14: Percentage of assault/threat reported to police by characteristics of victims

	Per cent reported to police
Age	
16-24	29*
25 and over	39
Marital status	
Single	32*
Married	39
De facto	34
Divorced/separated	49
Widowed	–
Household income	
< $400 per week	48*
$400 or more	36
Main activity	
Working	38*
Looking for work	54
Home duties	36
Student	24
Retired/pension	43
Indigenous	
Yes	50*
No	36
Weapon	
Yes	61*
No	30
Type of incident	
Threat	30*
Attack	48
Physical injury	
Yes	54*
No	33
Number of offenders	
One	35*
Two	33
Three or more	48

– fewer than 5 cases

* series is statistically significant, X^2, $p < .05$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

With respect to burglary, the following factors were associated with victims' decisions to report to the police:

- income: in the case of burglary lower income households were *less likely* to report to police (78% of those in the lowest income households compared with 85% of those in higher income households);
- residential stability: 75 per cent of those who lived at their current postcode for less than a year reported burglary to the police compared with 85 per cent who lived in their current postcode for a year or longer;
- property loss: burglaries in which property was stolen were reported to police at a higher rate than those with no property loss (88% compared with 67%); and
- value of property stolen: 75 per cent of burglaries involving loss of property valued at less than $1000 were reported to police compared with 95 per cent of those with property loss of $1000 or more (Table 15).

There were no statistically significant differences in reporting of burglaries according to language spoken at home, Indigenous status, or the number of break-ins experienced in the past year.

Table 15: Percentage of burglaries reported to police by household characteristics

	Reported to police
Household income	
< $400 per week	78*
$400 or more	85
Time at postcode	
< 1 year	75*
1 year or more	85
Property loss	
Yes	88*
No	67
Value of property loss	
< $1000	75*
$1000 or more	95

* series is statistically significant, X^2, $p < .05$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

What are the predictors of reporting?

A number of significant predictors of reporting assaults or threats to police have been identified through logistic regression analysis (Table 16). Even though differences in rates of reporting for male and female victims were not statistically significant in the bi-variate analysis, gender (female) became a significant predictor once the effects of other variables were controlled. All things being equal, women were more likely to report assaults to police than were men. In addition:

- age remains significant with older people more likely to report;
- those from lower income household have higher reporting rates;
- Indigenous assault victims have twice the odds of reporting once the effects of seriousness and other personal characteristics were controlled; and
- indicators of seriousness such as being attacked, suffering physical injury, and being confronted by three or more offenders all independently raised the odds of reporting assault to the police.

The presence of a weapon was not a significant predictor after controlling for the effects of others in the model. Marital status, time at postcode, main activity, evenings out and language spoken at home were also non significant.

Table 16: Factors predicting reporting assault/threat to police, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Gender	0.77**	0.13	0.59 - 0.99
Age	0.52**	0.18	0.37 - 0.74
Marital status	0.8	0.15	0.6 - 1.08
Income	1.51*	0.23	0.96 - 2.39
Time at postcode	1.18	1.9	0.82 - 1.7
Unemployed	1.69	0.34	0.86 - 3.29
Evenings out	1.01	0.19	0.7 - 1.46
Language other than English	0.77	0.21	0.51 - 1.17
Indigenous	2.08**	0.34	1.07 - 4.05
Weapon	1.0	0.4	0.99 - 1.0
Attacked	1.76**	0.17	1.27 - 2.44
Injury	1.84**	0.2	1.25 - 2.7
Three or more offenders	1.85**	0.16	1.35 - 2.52
-2 log likelihood 1464.3			
Model chi square 101.2** (13 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Reporting burglary to the police was predicted by household income (those with higher incomes have higher reporting rates) and residential stability (rates higher for those living at the same postcode for one year or longer). If property was stolen during the break-in the odds of reporting to police were raised almost fourfold, net of the effects of other variables in the model (Table 17).

Table 17: Factors predicting reporting burglary to police, logistic regression

	Adjusted odds ratios	SE	95% CI
Income	0.52**	0.24	0.32 - 0.83
Time at postcode	0.53**	0.25	0.32 - 0.87
Language other than English	1.32	0.28	0.76 - 2.29
Indigenous	0.55	0.51	0.2 - 1.51
Property stolen	3.93**	0.21	2.62 - 5.88
-2 log likelihood 730.89			
Model chi square 54.7** (5 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

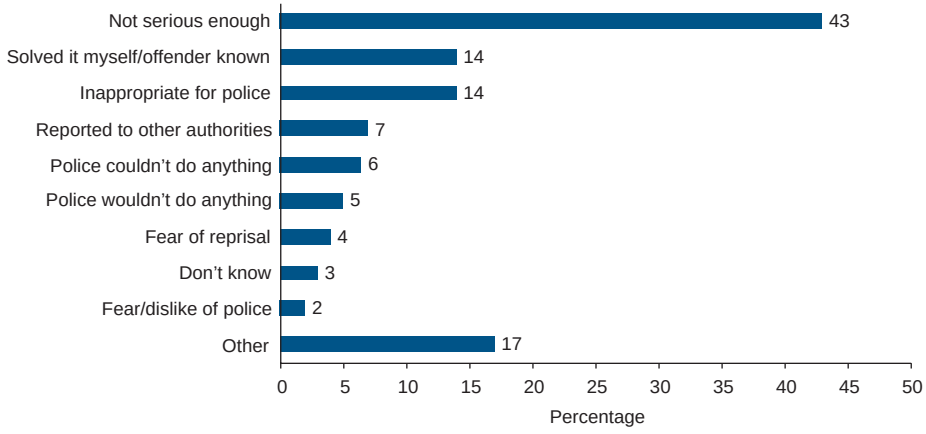
Why aren't some crimes reported to police?

Among the 62 per cent of assault incidents that were not reported to the police, the most common reasons for not reporting was that the incident was not serious enough to warrant police intervention (43%) (Figure 14). Smaller percentages solved it themselves or did not report because the offender was known to them (14%), or felt it was not a matter for the police (14%). Less than one in ten reported it to other authorities, or felt the police would not or could not do anything to help them. Four per cent of victims feared reprisals from the perpetrator if they contacted police, and two per cent expressed a fear or dislike of the police. One in six victims gave reasons not captured by the survey.

Although there were no statistically significant differences in the proportion of assaults reported to police by male and female victims, there were differences in the reasons given for not reporting. For example:

- male victims were more likely not to report because the incident was not serious enough (51% compared with 35% of females);
- a higher proportion of female victims said they reported it to another authority (11% compared with 3% of males); and
- women more often felt there was nothing the police could do about it (8% compared with 5% of males).

Figure 14: Reasons for not reporting assault/threat to the police



Multiple responses permitted.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

The severity of the incident also determined the reason for not reporting to police:

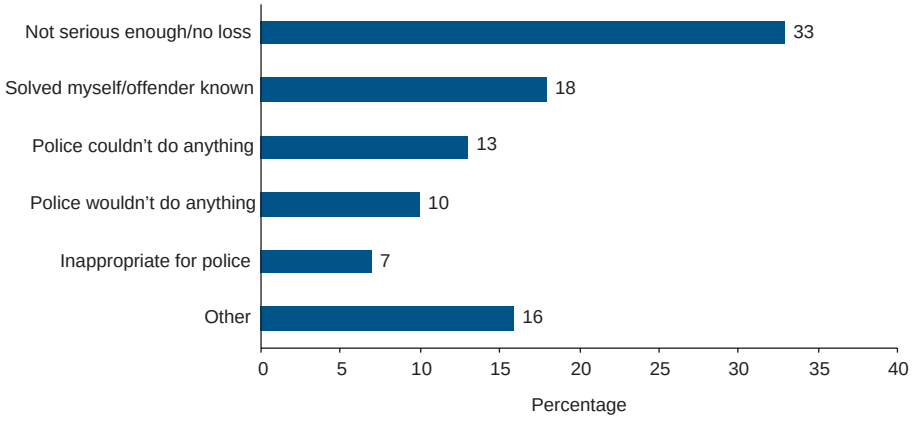
- threats were more often not reported than attacks because the incident was considered to be not serious enough (46% compared with 35%);
- threats were more often considered not to be an appropriate matter for the police (15% compared with 10%);
- although small percentages, attacks were more likely than threats not to be reported because of a fear of reprisals on the part of the offender (6% compared with 3%);
- incidents involving weapons were more likely to not be reported because of a fear of reprisals (8% compared with 3%);
- victims who were injured were more likely than those not injured to cite fear of reprisals as a reason for not reporting (10% compared with 3%);
- incidents without weapons were considered not serious enough to report more often than incidents involving weapons (46% compared with 26%); and
- victims who suffered no physical injury were more often not reported because it was considered not serious enough (47% compared with 22% of those who were injured).

The offender's relationship to the victim also influenced reasons for not reporting to police:

- stranger assaults or threats were more likely than others to be considered not serious enough to report (53% compared with 33%), or not reported because the police couldn't do anything about it (9% compared with 4%);
- partner assaults were less likely than others to be considered not serious enough to report (19% compared with 45% of others);
- male victims of partner assault were more likely than females to say they solved the problem themselves (62% compared with 41% of females and 12% of non-partner incidents); and
- 28 per cent of female victims of partner violence feared reprisals from the offender if they involved the police; there were no male partner violence victims and three per cent of all other assault victims who gave this response.

Among the 15 per cent of burglary victims who did not report the incident to the police, the most prominent reason was because it was not considered serious enough, there was no loss, or they considered it to be 'kid's stuff' (33%). Eighteen per cent did not involve the police because they solved it themselves or the perpetrator was known to them, and 13 per cent felt the police could not do anything about it or there was a lack of proof (Figure 15). Ten per cent did not report because they felt the police would not do anything about it, and seven per cent felt it was not appropriate for the police. Sixteen per cent gave other reasons not included in these categories.

Figure 15: Reasons for not reporting burglary to the police



Multiple responses permitted.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

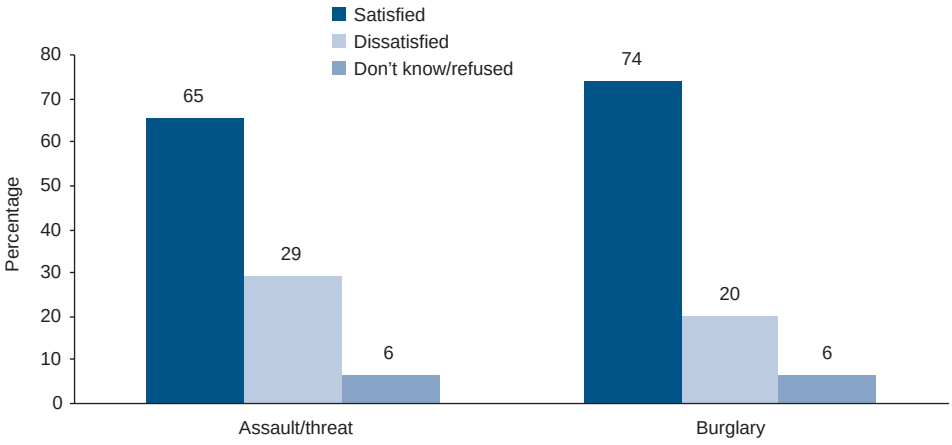
Reasons for not reporting break-ins to police were associated with the following:

- incidents with no property loss were more often than others not to be reported because it was not serious enough to involve the police (52% compared with 22%); and
- victims with property loss were more likely to say they solved the incident themselves (22% compared with 11%).

How satisfied were victims with the response of police?

Victims who reported burglary to police reported a high level of satisfaction with the police response. Three quarters of burglary victims who sought police assistance were satisfied with the way the police dealt with the matter (Figure 16). However, a lower percentage of assault victims were satisfied with the police (65%); almost three in ten were dissatisfied.

Figure 16: Satisfaction with police response to assault/threat and burglary



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Who were most dissatisfied with the police response?

Certain characteristics of victims and incidents were linked to greater dissatisfaction with the response of police to assaults and threats, including:

- victims who suffered physical injuries (36% were dissatisfied compared with 26% of victims who were not injured);

- those confronted by weapons (25% were satisfied compared with 31% of incidents without weapons);
- victims age 24 and under (38% were dissatisfied compared with 27% of older victims); and
- those who speak a language other than English at home (40% were dissatisfied compared with 28% of English-only speaking victims).

With respect to the police response to burglaries, some victims were more dissatisfied than others:

- lowest income households (24% compared with 19% of higher income households);
- those who speak a language other than English at home (30% compared with 18% of others); and
- Indigenous people (47% were dissatisfied compared with 20% of non-Indigenous people).

Conclusion

Reporting rates ranged from just over one third of assault/threats to 94 per cent of motor vehicle thefts. Major determinants of reporting assault to police are the seriousness of the event, including being attacked, injured and confronted by multiple offenders, but also personal characteristics of victims such as gender, age, income and Indigenous status. Reporting of burglaries is also determined by the seriousness of the incident in terms of property stolen, and by household characteristics such as income and stability of residency. Although most people who reported assaults and burglaries to the police were satisfied with how police handled the matter, levels of satisfaction were not uniform among victims. For example, younger victims, those who were injured in assaults, lower income households, Indigenous people and those who speak a language other than English at home expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction with the response of police.

The major reason for not reporting assault or burglary to police was that they were not considered serious enough to warrant police involvement. Substantial numbers of victims solved the problem themselves. However, some serious assaults involving injury to the victim, weapons or intimate partners did not report because they feared retaliation by the offender. These vulnerable victims are of particular concern and may require support or strategies by police and other agencies in order to receive help in preventing a repeat victimisation.

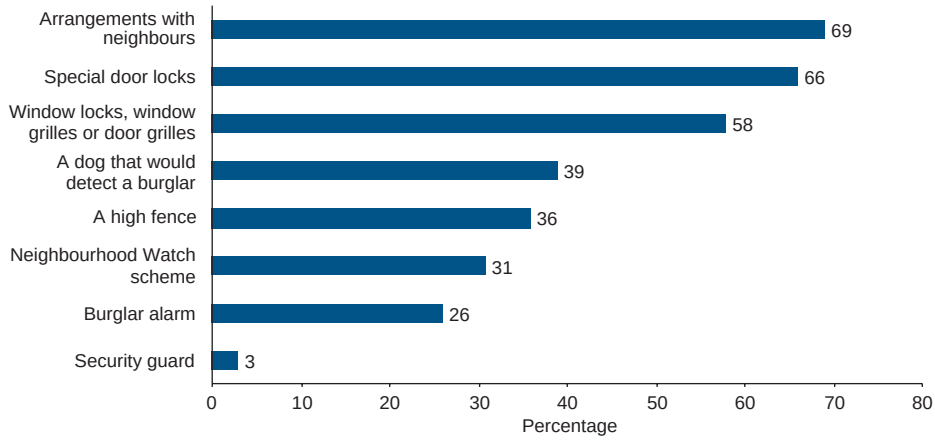
5 Citizen engagement in crime prevention

5 Citizen engagement in crime prevention

How do households protect themselves from crime?

The ICVS questioned respondents about their involvement in primarily target hardening activities to reduce their risk of crime victimisation. Results show that Australians protect their households from crime using a variety of crime prevention measures. Overall, just four per cent of households participating in the ICVS did not undertake any of the crime prevention activities listed in Figure 17. Most common were friendly arrangements with neighbours to watch one another's homes while away (69%), and special locks on doors (66%). Six in ten also had installed window locks, window grilles or door grilles. Four in ten had a dog that would detect a burglar and 36 per cent had a high fence. About one third participated in a formal Neighbourhood Watch scheme, and one quarter had a burglar alarm. Just three per cent lived in a building or complex with a security guard.

Figure 17: Crime prevention activities (per cent of households)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Are some groups more likely to undertake crime prevention activities?

One of the most important factors that determine which households engage in these crime prevention activities is household income. The percentage of households with burglar alarms, special door or window locks, a dog that would deter a burglar, or a high fence increased significantly as household income increased. It stands to reason that many of these prevention measures require a financial investment and therefore lower income households would be less able to afford them. The only crime prevention activity to be

reported more often by low income households was friendly arrangements with neighbours to watch over one another's homes. Other correlates of engaging in crime prevention activities are:

- longevity of residence at the same postcode: those living at the same postcode for one year or more have higher rates of dog ownership (40% compared with 31%), participation in formal Neighbourhood Watch schemes (32% compared with 24%), and friendly arrangements with neighbours (71% compared with 56%);
- those who speak a language other than English at home are more likely to have burglar alarms (34% compared with 25%), less likely to have a dog (27% compared with 41%), and less likely to have informal arrangements with neighbours (62% compared with 71%); and
- Indigenous people were less likely to report having special door locks (49% compared with 59%), and more likely to have a dog (45% compared with 39%).

Households that had not been victimised over the previous five years had slightly (but significantly) higher participation in formal Neighbourhood Watch schemes and informal arrangements with neighbours to watch over one another's homes. This suggests that activities that increase interaction among neighbours may have the effect of improving informal social control leading to a reduction in crime and victimisation.

Those who had been victims of any crime in the previous five-year period, and especially victims of burglary and attempted burglary, were more likely than non-victims to engage in target hardening activities. The finding that households that had been victimised have a higher level of engagement in crime prevention activities may appear counter-intuitive. Prevention measures are undertaken to reduce the risk of crime and yet households reporting greater uptake with prevention activities were those with higher rates of victimisation. However, it is not clear from these surveys responses whether the prevention measures preceded or were introduced as a consequence of the crime incident. It is possible that victimisation is the catalyst for actions taken to secure one's home and property; alternatively, those living in high crime areas may fall victim to crime despite their efforts to secure their homes.

In addition to household income, which is important in terms of being able to afford to engage in target hardening approaches to crime prevention, characteristics of the surrounding area may also play a role. Table 18 shows mean SIEFA indexes for those who engaged in four or more prevention activities compared with those who engaged in less than four. Results show that households who engage in four or more crime prevention activities lived in postal areas with higher mean scores on the Index of Economic Resources.

The other Indexes showed a non significant relationship with the number of crime prevention activities. Higher scores represent a higher proportion of families in the area with relatively high economic resources. Future analyses should evaluate the contribution of neighbourhood resources toward the uptake of crime prevention, over and above household characteristics.

Table 18: Mean values of SEIFA indexes by number of crime prevention activities

	4 or more	Less than 4
Relative disadvantage	1009.6	1005.3
Relative advantage/disadvantage	1012.9	1006.4
Economic resources	1017.1*	1007.1
Education and occupation	1008.6	1006.0

* difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Predictors of crime prevention activities

Multiple regression analysis was used to identify the most important factors predicting crime prevention activity. A scale was constructed by counting the number of crime prevention activities undertaken by each household in the sample. Those who stated they did not undertake any of these activities, or said they did not know whether the household undertook any crime prevention efforts, were assigned a value of 0 (5% of the sample). Response categories were ordered from a low of 0 (0 activities) to high of 8 (all 8 activities). The mean number of crime prevention activities engaged in by Australian households was 3.3.

OLS regression analysis shows that when the effects of the predictor variables are controlled, income remains a significant predictor of number of crime prevention activities (lower income leads to fewer prevention activities), as does residential stability (less than one year at the current postcode predicts fewer prevention activities), and not speaking a language other than English at home (predicts fewer crime prevention activities). Having been a victim of at least one household crime in the previous five years predicts a rise the number of crime prevention activities undertaken (Table 19).

Table 19: OLS regression analysis predicting crime prevention activities

	Standardised coefficient	SE	95% CI
Income	-0.67**	0.05	-0.4 - -0.19
Time at postcode	-0.048**	0.07	0.4 - 0.14
Language other than English	-0.03**	0.06	-0.256 - -0.034
Indigenous	-0.008	0.12	-0.32 - 0.16
Victim of household crime	0.03**	0.04	-0.03 - 0.19
Adjusted R^2 .009			
Regression F-test 12.87*** (5 df)			

* p < .1; ** p < .05

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]

Conclusion

The vast majority of households have adapted at least one crime prevention measure addressed on this survey. Having been a victim of a household crime is one predictor of number of prevention activities undertaken, along with other factors such as income, residential stability and language spoken at home. The cost of some target hardening measures is a major inhibitor for low income households. The one activity to be reported more often by low income households was friendly arrangements with neighbours to watch over one another's homes. Households that had not been victimised during the five year period had slightly higher rates of participation in formal Neighbourhood Watch schemes and informal arrangements to watch over neighbours' homes. These and other activities that increase interaction among residents have the potential to improve levels of informal social control in communities that may lead to a reduction in crime and victimisation. This suggests a need for strategies to combat crime to consider community or social development in addition to traditional target hardening approaches.

6 Policy implications

6 Policy implications

How can we use empirical data on crime victimisation?

Since the first victimisation surveys were undertaken in the 1970s, they have continued to be developed and methodologies enhanced. This extensive research tradition has enriched our understanding of the nature and extent of crime in our communities. Victimisation surveys yield unique data of the levels of crime experienced by various segments of the population, the percentage not reported to police, reasons victims have for not engaging with the police, as well as public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. The addition of community-level data from censuses is an added dimension which, with further exploration, has the potential to expand our understanding of the correlates and distribution of crime.

Police and communities have a role to play in reducing crime and crime victimisation surveys can assist in very practical ways. For example:

1. Crime prevention

Crime prevention programs that target high-risk people or locations have been found to be more cost-effective than activities that are broadly aimed at the general population. In developing more effective crime prevention programs, police and communities have benefited from knowledge provided through victimisation surveys about the correlates of victimisation, and about who is at risk and under what circumstances (see ACT 2004). We know through the ICVS that crime is not evenly distributed among the population and that:

- risk of personal crime is associated with routine activities that regularly place people outside the home where guardianship over personal safety is reduced;
- personal crime is also predicted by shorter residency at current postcode;
- in addition, assaults and threats are predicted by Indigenous status and by living in English-only households; and
- household crimes are predicted by higher income and shorter residency at current postcode.

This knowledge can help target prevention programs to those at higher risk, by modifying behaviours, enacting changes to environmental design, or by identifying where social programs are needed for high-risk individuals or households. Almost all households in Australia undertake at least one target hardening measure to try to protect themselves from crime but the cost of many of these is an impediment for some. These analyses have shown that those with low income are able to utilise fewer crime prevention strategies compared with more affluent households. Minority groups who speak a language other than English at home are also less likely than other households to use these methods to

protect themselves from crime. Efforts at the local community level to improve the introduction and uptake of prevention activities that do not entail a significant financial cost will potentially have important returns as a crime reduction strategy. However, these data also indicate that improving social cohesion and the ability of local communities to exert social control over their members may be an important strategy for crime reduction in addition to traditional target hardening measures.

2. Repeat victimisation

Knowledge about the risks associated with repeat victimisation has led to a better understanding of how crime is concentrated. One of the most important predictors of victimisation is prior victimisation. With this knowledge, police have a critical role in preventing the recurrence of crimes by helping citizens identify and eliminate vulnerabilities that can lead to a repeat experience of the same or other type of crime (see Holder, Payne & Makkai 2004). By targeting those at risk of repeat victimisation, a greater impact can be made on the crime problem.

3. Unreported crime

Crime victimisation surveys have also helped expose the magnitude and the nature of experiences of crime that never come to police attention. Sometimes these are incidents that involve very little property loss or inconvenience to victims and victims make an assessment that nothing is to be gained by involving the police. But in a substantial proportion of other cases, the loss or damage to property or the harm to victims is considerable and victims make the decision not to involve the police for personal reasons. In more than one quarter of partner assaults on women that were not reported to police victims feared retaliation by the offender. Victimisation surveys help remind us that crimes like partner violence occur regularly (see Mouzos & Makkai 2004) and have serious consequences for victims and their families, even though they may not come to public attention and are seriously undercounted in official statistics. This information is critical for understanding why some victims, even of serious crimes, do not seek help from police. Data from surveys such as the ICVS can be used to estimate the number of victims and their children who require support outside the criminal justice system, with facilities such as shelters and other counselling services.

4. Fear for personal safety

Fear reduction is often seen as equal in importance to crime reduction. The ICVS helps identify groups in the population with the highest fear levels in a variety of situations. Results tell us that perceptions of safety are linked to personal vulnerability factors associated with:

- being female, young and living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- belonging to a minority group who speaks a language other than English at home, or being of Indigenous status; and
- experiences of crime victimisation.

Communities can take this further by working with residents in the local area to conduct safety audits to identify sources of fear that can be addressed. This could require alterations to the built environment to improve safety, reduce fear and increase citizen interaction. Or, it may require working to identify and reduce social or physical disorder in the local environment. The threats that lie behind expressions of fear need to be targeted in order to improve the quality of life for large numbers of residents.

Where to from here?

This analysis forms part of a larger project in which approximately 60 countries are participating. One of the principal objectives of the ICVS is to make comparisons of the issues addressed in this survey at the international level. Over the coming year, the UNODC will be combining the results of countries that participated in the 2004 ICVS and the results for Australia will be put into international context. In addition, the Australian Institute of Criminology will be analysing the results of the ICVS in greater depth, investigating such topics as fraud and other problems experienced on the internet, and experiences of crime in selected migrant communities.

Appendix: Methodology

Appendix: Methodology

Interviewing for the ICVS was contracted to the Social Research Centre, located in Melbourne, Australia. Interviewing took place between August and November 2004 and proceeded in two phases: the main community sample of 6000 respondents and the migrant sample of 1000 respondents. Methods of respondent selection and interviewing procedures differed somewhat for the two sample groups.

Community sample

Respondent selection for the main community sample was conducted through Random Digit Dialling (RDD). For this procedure, the 6 digit prefix was retained and the 4 digit suffix was deleted. A randomly generated new 4 digit suffix was appended to the retained prefix. This method increases the chance of selection of silent and newly listed numbers. It is important not to undercount this group in crime victimisation surveys as these people are disproportionately likely to be single or divorced, are relatively transient, and are more highly victimised.

Approach letters introducing the survey were mailed to all households where telephone numbers could be matched to an address through the White Pages, which made up about 35 per cent of the randomly generated numbers. The approach letter was designed to introduce the survey, encourage participation, describe the manner in which respondents would be selected from all persons in the household, and help establish the legitimacy of the survey. Approach letters have been shown to be an effective strategy for encouraging participation. Other efforts made to raise response rates were:

- an extended call regime of up to 15 calls to establish contact with the household (20% of interviews were achieved at the ninth call attempt or later);
- conversions of 'soft' refusals (15% of interviews were from refusal conversions);
- unlimited calls to complete an interview where contact had been established;
- appointments taken to conduct interviews;
- interviewing in seven languages in addition to English (Vietnamese, Arabic, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, Mandarin, Greek, Italian); and
- 1-800 numbers, operated by both the AIC and Social Research Centre, set up to answer queries about the survey.

A response rate of 53 per cent was achieved for the main community sample. Households that could be matched to a complete mailing address and who were sent approach letters achieved a response rate of 58 per cent compared with a 41 per cent response rate for the unmatched portion of the sample.

An extended call cycle helped to improve the representation of hard-to-reach populations, such as young people, single person households, employed persons, apartment dwellers and those living in large cities. In addition, a disproportionate chance of selection method was used to ensure an adequate age/gender distribution in the sample. As young people, especially young males, tend to be unavailable for surveys more often than older people and females, in households with males aged under 30 the chance of selection for this group increased by a factor of 2. The chance of selection for males aged 30 and over was 1.5, while females aged 30 and over had no increased chance of selection. As a result of this selection procedure, an age/gender profile comparable to the ABS benchmarks was achieved (Table A.1). The sample also matched well on ABS benchmarks for Indigenous background, speaking a language other than English at home, and doing paid work.

Table A.1: Age/gender profile of community sample and ABS benchmarks

	ABS	ICVS achieved
Gender		
Male	49	46
Female	51	54
Age group		
16-29	25	24
30-44	29	30
45-64	30	31
65 plus	16	16
Total	100	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of the Population and Housing, data on special request

Migrant sample

A total of 400 Vietnamese migrants and 601 from the Middle East were interviewed. The RDD method of selection was not cost-effective for the migrant sample because of the relatively small number of Vietnamese and Middle East people living in Australia, even in areas with high concentrations. A surname-based approach was therefore used which involves random selection across Australia of known Vietnamese or Middle Eastern surnames from the White Pages of the telephone book. Respondents 'self-selected' into the survey through the following question.

We are particularly interested in speaking with people who were born overseas. Were you or your parents born in any of the following regions?

1. *Vietnam*
2. *Middle East*
3. *None of these*

If required, the definition of 'Middle East' was given as including: Bahrain, Gaza Strip and West Bank, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (consistent with the ABS classification). However, if someone from North Africa self-identified as Middle Eastern, they were included.

This surname-based approach to sample selection has limitations associated with not being able to include silent numbers. However, it has the advantage of being able to match telephone numbers with addresses and to send approach letters to all selected households. Approach letters were sent in bilingual format, containing English and either Vietnamese, Arabic or Turkish.

The surname-based approach was very good at identifying Vietnamese households, but less efficient at identifying Middle Eastern households where about half of Arabic sounding surnames were actually Pakistani, Indian or another nationality. Vietnamese respondents also had high levels of willingness to participate and had a 75 per cent response rate. By contrast, Middle Eastern migrants were more likely to be suspicious about being contacted, having had very little experience with surveys in their home countries. The response rate for the Middle East sample was 36 per cent.

Similar to the community sample, the disproportionate chance of selection method was used for the migrant sample. However, as shown in Tables A.2 and A.3, the age/gender distribution of the migrant samples was less comparable to ABS benchmarks than was the main community sample.

Table A.2: Age/gender profile of Vietnamese sample and ABS benchmarks

	ABS	ICVS achieved
Gender		
Male	48	50
Female	52	50
Age group		
15-24	13	11
25-34	27	25
35-54	46	52
55 plus	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of the Population and Housing, data on special request

Table A.3: Age/gender profile of Middle East sample and ABS benchmarks

	ABS	ICVS achieved
Gender		
Male	53	52
Female	47	48
Age group		
15-24	11	8
25-34	23	21
35-54	46	45
55 plus	20	26
Total	100	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, International Crime Victimisation Survey, 2004 [computer file]; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of the Population and Housing, data on special request

Survey weights

Two types of weights were applied to the datafiles in order to adjust for non-response: person weights and household weights. Adjustments were made according to ABS benchmarks.

Person weights for the main community sample were adjusted for:

- person chance of selection;
- household chance of selection;
- if selected respondent born in Vietnam or the Middle East, weight to age, gender and geographic location of persons born in Vietnam or the Middle East;
- if other household member born in Vietnam or the Middle East, weight to age, gender and location of persons with at least one other household member born in Vietnam or the Middle East; and
- for the remainder, weight to age, gender and location of non-Vietnamese and non-Middle East born.

Household weights were adjusted for:

- if anyone in the household was born in Vietnam or the Middle East, weight to number of persons in the household and geographic location; and
- for the remainder, weight to number of persons in the household of non-Vietnamese and non-Middle East born and geographic location.

The general community and migrant portions of the sample were combined for analysis and appropriate weights applied to 'weight down' the migrant portion.

Adjustments to the Australian questionnaire

In addition to an expanded sample in the 2004 survey, the Australian Government took the opportunity to include additional questions of current policy interest. The focus of these additions were:

- fraud and cyber crime;
- licensing and safe storage of firearms (to supplement existing questions concerning firearm ownership);
- experience with racially motivated assault/threats and fear of racially motivated violence;
- demographic questions, including place of birth, parents' place of birth, year arrived in Australia to live, language other than English spoken at home, religion, Indigenous status; and
- feelings of safety while using or waiting for public transportation.

The UNODC made the decision to drop the section of the questionnaire dealing with vandalism to motor vehicles. In addition, the following items were dropped in the Australian component:

- corruption by government or public officials;
- consumer fraud (replaced by fraud and cyber crime); and
- sexual assault.

While the omission of sexual assault may appear to jeopardise the comparability of estimates with previous cycles of the ICVS, and with other countries, almost all women who reported a sexual assault in the 2000 survey also reported an assault so the total rate of violent victimisation likely will be affected by no more than one percentage point. It was felt that more reliable estimates of sexual assault are available from the International Violence Against Women Survey (completed by the AIC in 2003) and results from the upcoming Personal Safety Survey (underway in 2005 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Reliability of the estimates

Reliability of the estimates produced by sample surveys can be affected by bias in the sample and non-sampling error.

Sampling bias

Sampling bias can occur when certain segments in the population are over- or under-represented in the sample. A number of groups were omitted from the ICVS sampling frame including residents of institutions, shelters or group homes, homeless people, households without telephones, and households with mobile phones only and no landlines. The results will be affected to the extent that the omitted groups differ from those who were interviewed on the indicators addressed in this survey, such as victimisation rates and perceptions of safety. For example, victimisation rates may be higher for the homeless population and higher for mobile phone users who tend to be relatively young. Rates of victimisation produced by the 2004 ICVS may therefore be lower than if these groups had been included.

Non-response may also affect the accuracy of the estimates. Forty-seven per cent of eligible households were unwilling or unable to participate in the survey. The estimates will be biased to the extent that those who refuse to participate differ from those who did participate. Insufficient data are available about households who refuse to participate to calculate how their non-response may affect the results. However, research suggests that

non-respondents are generally more like those interviewed late in the call cycle, or interviewed as a result of a refusal conversion. In the ICVS, those interviewed late in the call cycle reported higher rates of victimisation, and those interviewed as a result of a refusal conversion had slightly 'harsher' attitudes toward sentencing.

A small percentage of households contacted could not participate due to health reasons (0.3% of calls), the majority of whom were elderly people who typically have lower than average rates of victimisation. Although an effort was made to be inclusive by interviewing in seven languages in addition to English, results may be affected by the exclusion of a small number of respondents who could not participate because they could not communicate in any of the languages offered (0.1% of calls initiated). In addition, recent immigrants and minority groups who speak a language other than English at home may be reluctant to report experiences of violence to survey interviewers, especially incidents involving known offenders.

The precision of the estimates is also affected by the sample size. The sample was increased from approximately 2000 in previous years to 7000 in 2004. A larger sample size will result in smaller relative standard errors and therefore more precise estimates. However, where estimates are disaggregated by age, gender or other socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, standard errors increase and reliability declines.

Non-sampling error

Non-sampling error is more difficult to quantify and can include:

- failure to report incidents of victimisation for reasons of embarrassment, forgetting, the presence of others during the interview, or misunderstanding of the question;
- telescoping, that is, bringing forward events in time and reporting them as having occurred inside the reference period when they actually occurred prior to the reference period;
- interviewer error when coding responses; and
- high levels of non-response to survey questions.

Non-response to individual items was very low — under one per cent for all but a few questions. Efforts were made to reduce the level of non-sampling error in the survey through ongoing training and monitoring of interviewers.

Validity of the estimates

Validity of the estimates is not affected by sample size but by whether survey questions measure the concepts they are intended to measure. The ICVS questionnaire has been tested and used extensively since the first cycle in 1989 and is considered to produce valid estimates of crime victimisation and perceptions of crime and safety, within the limits imposed by non-sampling error. Additions to the Australian questionnaire were done with careful consideration of the validity of the measures that would result. For example, the new module on fraud and cyber crime was carefully pilot tested. The new demographic questions conform to the Census of Population and Housing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Questions concerning racially-motivated violence were adapted from the British Crime Survey where they have been used for many cycles. The new question about perceptions of safety while using public transportation was adapted from Statistics Canada's General Social Survey on Victimization.

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Crime victimisation surveys have emerged over the past few decades as an important research tool to help provide a picture of crime that is independent of police statistics. The International Crime Victimisation Survey (ICVS) is an international project involving approximately 60 countries worldwide, which interviews people about their experiences and perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. In 2004 the Australian Institute of Criminology managed the Australian component of the ICVS, and this report presents findings from that survey. Over the coming year, the AIC will be analysing the results of the ICVS in greater depth, investigating such topics as fraud and other problems experienced on the internet, and experiences of crime in selected migrant communities.

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