

Sociology 4099: Victimology

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Overheads Class 2.3: Victimization Surveys: The Findings

* Victimization surveys have been the preferred methodological tool of victimologists since the 1970's.

* These gather information directly from victims. In the past, little was known relative to offenders

* Focus on crime:

- With direct, identifiable victims
- Direct, potentially identifiable offender
- Victimizations for which information available

Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (1981)

* Findings:

- Gender differences (assault)
- Age and risk (youth)
- Income
- Lifestyle (nights out on town)
- Fear of crime
- Only 42% of crimes reported
- Reasons: "Too minor"
"Police can't do anything"
"Inconvenient"
- Variation in sexual assaults
- Most likely to report when large financial loss

Violence Against Women Survey (1993)

* 51% of Canadian women experienced at least 1 incident of physical or sexual assault since the age of 18 (vs. 10% in the preceding year).

- * Women were at greater risk of violence by men they know (45%) than by strangers (23%). Many reported past violence from both.
- * 39% of women had been victims of sexual assault (vs. 5% in the previous year). 17% reported physical threats or assaults by men other than spouses (vs. 1% in the previous year).
- * 29% of women had been assaulted by a spouse or live-in partner (3% in prior year). More was reported in previous relationships than current ones (48% vs. 15%).
- * There was a continued risk of violence to women from ex-partners despite a divorce or separation.
- * The most common forms of violence were threats, followed by pushing, grabbing and shoving, slapping, throwing something, kicking, biting, and hitting with fists.
- * The proportion who had been beaten up, choked, sexually assaulted, or had a weapon used against them were all less than 10%.
- * A majority of respondents who have suffered violence had been victimized more than once. This was particularly evident in sexual violence.
- * Women were at risk of sexual violence in a variety of locations/situations. 46% of sexual assaults occurred in a private place, 10% at work, and were not an uncommon risk in public locations
- * Wife assault did not merely involve low level violence such as threats, pushing, grabbing and shoving.
- * The majority of abused women were assaulted repeatedly, 1/3 more than ten times.

*Men from previous relationships were reportedly more violent than others.

The VAWS also detailed the *relationship dynamics* involved:

* The percentage reporting emotional abuse was higher than those reporting physical or sexual violence (35% vs. 29%).

* Emotional abuse was used in conjunction with violence by the majority of violent men

* Obsessive and controlling behaviors were prominent in serious battering relationships, & its frequency increased dramatically as the seriousness of the battering increased

* Controlling and abusive men often found a woman=s pregnancy a threat to his exclusivity of attention and affection.

Finally, the VAWS indicated important *demographic* correlates:

* Young women 18-24 experienced rates of sexual assault twice that in the next age group (25-34), & had rates of wife assault 3 times higher.

* The rate of wife assault in new marriages (2 years or less) was almost three times the national average.

* Common-law relationships showed rates of violence 4 times higher than legal marriages.

* Single women & those with some (but not completed) postsecondary education reported the highest rates of sexual assault.

* In wife assault, both men with less than a high school education, & those who are unemployed, assaulted their partners at twice the rate of others

- * Wife assault and sexual assault were twice as high among those with low incomes
- * Witnessing violence in childhood was a very important risk factor for both abusers and potential victims
- * Alcohol abuse was strongly correlated with violence & seriousness of injury.
- * Rates of violent victimization varied from higher levels in Western Canada to lower levels in the east.
- * When all of these associated factors are weighed statistically, the most important predictors were:

verbal abuse/putdowns,
 sexual jealousy
 efforts to limit womens= autonomy/social
 contacts
 age
 the man=s education
 living in a common-law relationship
 early exposure to violence
 the man=s unemployment.

- * This VAWS picture of intimate violence contradicts lifestyle and routine activities theories of victimization.

General Social Survey 2004

- 28% of Canadians aged 15+ reported being victimized one or more times in the preceding 12 months, up slightly from 26% in 1999
- Increases in victimization rates were recorded for 3 of the 8 offence types measured: theft of personal property, theft of household property, and vandalism. There were no significant changes in rates of sexual assault, robbery, physical assault, and motor vehicle theft,

while there was a decrease in B&E.

- Household victimization offences occurred most frequently (34% of incidents), followed by violent victimization (29%) & thefts of personal property (25%).
- Residents of Western provinces generally reported higher rates of victimization than residents living east of the Manitoba/Ontario border.
- The risk of violent victimization was highest among Canadians aged 15-24. Other risk factors include being single, living in an urban area, and having a low household income (under \$15,000).
- For household victimization, rates per 1000 households were highest among renters, those living in semi-detached, row or duplex homes, and urban dwellers. Yet, higher household income made both households and individuals more attractive targets for victimization
- In total, only about 34% of criminal incidents were reported to police in 2004, down from 37% in 1999. Household victimization incidents were most likely to be reported (37%), while thefts of personal property were least likely (31%)
- In 4% of all incidents, victims believed the act was hate-motivated (same as 1999). In 2004, 65% of these were believed motivated by the victim's race or ethnicity, 26% by their sex, 14% by religion, and 12% by sexual orientation
- Canadians who self-identified as Aboriginal were 3 times more likely than members of the non-Aboriginal population to report being victims of violent victimization.
- There was a significant difference between visible minorities and non-visible minorities, while rates were lower among immigrants than non-immigrants (68 vs. 116 per 100,000 population)

- Although the proportion of violent incidents without a weapon has remained relatively stable since 1999 (69% in 2004 and 72% in 1999), violent incidents resulting in injury increased (25% vs. 18%)
- Most often, violent incidents took place in a commercial establishment or public institution (38%). Workplace violence represented 43% of these.

International Crime Victimization Survey 2004

This is the fifth round of this survey, previously conducted in 1989, 1992, 1996, and 2000. Key findings:

- 17% of Canadians aged 16 and over had been victims of at least one crime measured by the ICVS during the year preceding the survey. This rate was similar to the overall international victimization rate (16%)
- Victimization varied from one country to another, with Spain, Japan, Hungary and Portugal registering the lowest rates (between 9% and 10%). In contrast, Ireland, England & Wales and New Zealand were among the countries with the highest overall victimization rates.
- For most countries, the offences with the highest victimization rates were theft of personal property, theft from a car and theft of a bicycle. In Canada, the highest was for theft from a vehicle.
- Across all participating countries, slightly more than half the population (53%) reported an incident to the police. Austria and Belgium had the highest reporting rates (70% and 68% respectively). Mexican victims were far less likely to report incidents compared to all other countries surveyed (16%).
- Canada, along with Finland and Luxembourg, ranked relatively low, with a rate below the international average:

only 48% of Canadian victims reported the incident to the police.

- While Canadians reported a lower proportion of incidents, when they did report, they were satisfied with the police response. In cases where Canadians reported theft from a car, burglary, robbery, sexual offences or assault, two-thirds reported that they were satisfied with how the police responded.
- Canada, along with Finland and the U.S., were among countries whose population was the most satisfied with the police. 86% of Canadians believed that the police were doing a good or excellent job at controlling crime in their area.
- Canada did not really stand out from other participating countries.

The ICVS provides information on victimization, but provides the added value of placing Canada's experiences in a broader international context.

* Next: problems with victimization surveys & an alternate approach to defining victims.