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# ATTITUDES OF VICTIMS AND REPEAT VICTIMS TOWARD THE POLICE: RESULTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS SURVEY

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by

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***Abstract:** Repeat victims in the West report crimes more often than other victims in order to see the offender arrested and/or to stop what is happening. Repeat victims know or assume that the same offender(s) are victimising them again and again. Repeat victims contact the police with more demanding aims than other victims. The reporting patterns of repeat victims in the West resemble those of all victims in poorer countries. Like the victims in these countries, Western repeat victims are less inclined to report at all. This finding suggests that they are less certain that the police can satisfy their needs. Repeat victims in the West do not refrain from reporting because they consider their victimisation not serious enough. They are more likely than one-time victims to refrain because they feel the police could not or would not do anything to help them. In this respect, too, they resemble victims from poorer countries. Repeat victims are less often satisfied with the police response in all regions. The differences are most pronounced among victims from industrialised countries. The reduced level of satisfaction of repeat victims with overall police performance is rooted in negative personal experiences with the police.*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years a growing number of countries have started crime victim surveys to assess national or local crime problems. Such surveys ask representative samples of the general public about selected offences they might have experienced over a given time. The resulting victimisation rates constitute a better indicator of the level of crime than the numbers of crimes reported to and recorded by the police. If the research methodology used is standardised, the surveys also offer a new opportunity for the collection of crime statistics that can be used for comparative purposes. The International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) was initiated in 1987 with this aim in mind. This standardised survey has so far been carried out in 54 different countries under the supervision of an international working group chaired by the author. The data collection took place in three main rounds, in 1988, 1992 and 1996, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of victim surveys for criminology goes beyond the gathering of better data on the level and distribution of crime. They also provide information about the experiences of victims with the police and other relevant agencies. This feature of the ICVS offers unique opportunities for critical assessments of the way national governments deal with victims of crime. In this paper we will compare the expectations, experiences and judgements of victims from various parts of the world. We will explore whether the attitudes of crime victims towards the police differ across world regions. Global findings will be compared with findings concerning victims from industrialised nations, those with economies in transition (East and Central European nations) and countries with developing economies (Africa, Asia, Latin America).

Several analyses of victimisation survey data have shown that over a given period, small numbers of all victims account for large proportions of all victimisations (Mukherjee and Carcach, 1998; Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 1997; Kleemans, 1996; Farrell and Pease, 1993). Victim recidivism is very common. Many victims are re victimised by the same type of offence within the same year, frequently even within weeks or months (special victim recidivism). Analyses of the ICVS data confirm that a substantial proportion of victims in all countries are revictimised by any or the same type of crime during the course of one year. Table 1 shows the percentage of victims who were victimised again during the remaining part of the year.

**Table 1: Percentages of Victims Revictimised by any Crime or the Same Type of Crime the Same Year, Over All and per World Region:  
Results of ICVS Data 1988-1996**

	Any crime	Car theft	Theft from car	Car damage	Motor-cycle theft	Bicycle theft	Burglary	Attempt burglary	Robbery	Person theft	Sex offense	Assaults & threat	Violence against women
<b>TOTAL</b>	41.5	12.2	27.4	30.5	12.5	12.5	20.4	20.6	20.1	20.7	34.3	29.9	33.3
Western Europe	37.3	9.3	19.1	24.9	15.1	15.6	12.8	10.4	14.7	12.7	35.8	28.8	36.6
New World	45.3	14.3	21.9	21.8	5.8	15.0	20.2	19.2	28.0	21.5	41.9	33.6	44.0
Countries in transition	41.6	13.8	35.5	30.4	14.2	10.1	19.7	20.7	19.6	21.0	29.3	29.8	24.8
Asia	30.9	5.1	12.1	30.5	10.0	11.6	23.2	20.5	15.1	20.7	26.2	26.6	33.9
Africa	44.0	16.7	27.7	30.5	19.3	11.0	28.2	29.3	15.7	22.1	38.1	25.7	36.5
Latin America	53.9	12.5	34.7	51.1	0.4	13.0	32.6	34.6	37.5	37.6	43.1	36.5	42.7

Repeat victimisation is very common for all types of crimes and in all world regions. Of those victimised by a crime, 42% are revictimised by any other crime the same year. Of all victims of both violent crimes and property crimes like burglary, 20% are revictimised by the same type of crime within months.

Repeat victimisation can be the result of structural vulnerabilities of certain population groups, which existed prior to and independent of previous victimisations (for a discussion see Ellingworth et al., 1997). Repeat victimisation can also occur because the offender decides to prey upon the same individual once again. Whatever the precise causes of repeat victimisation are, its statistical prevalence has important policy implications. If victimisation flags heightened vulnerability for future victimisations, victims are a priority target group of crime prevention advice. If victims know or suspect that they are revictimised by the same offender(s), they may want the police to intervene by arresting the offender.<sup>2</sup> Repeat victims may also be in need of support because of the accumulated effects of their multiple victimisation (Winkel, 1998). Repeat victims, in short, might want more than other victims to see some real action from the police on their behalf.

In this secondary analysis of ICVS data, we want to explore whether repeat victims hold different expectations about what the police can or should do for them and whether they evaluate actual police responses differently. Our hypothesis is that repeat victims in all countries have special needs. Since the phenomenon of repeat victimisation is insufficiently recognised by the police, these special needs of repeat victims are largely neglected. For this reason, a large proportion of repeat victims will be dissatisfied with the police response. We will carry out, in sum, an explorative study of attitudes towards the police among repeat victims, using the international data of the ICVS of 1996. In order to put these international findings in the right perspective, we will first look at differences in victim attitudes across world regions generally.

The ICVS asked follow-up questions about victims' experiences with the police concerning five types of crimes: theft from cars, burglaries, robberies, sexual incidents and threats/assaults. Attention will firstly be given to the experiences of victims of these five types of crimes combined. Next we will look at victims of household burglary and violence against women in particular. Household burglary is the most common form of serious crime targeted at ordinary citizens. It is also one of the types of property crime with the largest proportion of repeat victims. Victims of violence are defined as assaults and/or

sexual assaults (rapes, attempted rapes or cases of sexual harassment). Many of these crimes are committed by spouses or ex-spouses and flow from an abusive relationship. Repeat victimisation is very common among this group of victims.

We will look respectively at the rate of reporting to the police, the reasons for reporting, the reasons for not reporting, the satisfaction with the police response and the reasons for dissatisfaction. We will also look at experiences of crime victims with victim support agencies and their needs as regards specialised help. In addition, findings will be presented on fear of crime among crime victims, and on their assessment of the social cohesiveness of the neighbourhoods and of the effectiveness of the police in controlling crime in the community.

## **EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMS AND REPEAT VICTIMS OF FIVE TYPES OF CRIME**

### **Reporting to the Police**

For most crime victims the police are the single most important agency representing the criminal justice system. In the ICVS several questions deal with the interactions of the victims with the police. Victims of crime were asked whether they or anybody else had reported the incident to the police. Those who had, were asked why they reported. Those who did not were asked why not. More than one reason could be given.

Data are presented on the most frequently mentioned reasons. Table 2 shows the results for one-time and repeat victims over all and per world region.

We will first discuss the regional differences. The results show that victims in the most developed nations are more likely to report to the police. Victims in transitional nations and developing nations are less inclined to report. Among victims of the more affluent industrialised countries, the most common reasons to report are the belief that crimes should be reported, and compliance with insurance requirements. Victims in the poorer regions mention recovery of property as a dominant concern. They also more often express the wish to see the offender caught and sentenced. In these regions more victims also hope to stop what is happening to them and to get help from the police.

**Table 2: Percentages of Offences Reported to the Police and Reasons for Reporting and Non-Reporting of One-Time Victims and Repeat Victims, Over All and per World Region**

	Over All		Developed		In Transition		Developing	
	once	repeat	once	repeat	once	repeat	once	repeat
no respondents	5.437	3.419	1.574	745	2.322	1.386	1.541	1.287
report to police (%)	42.0	37.7	54.9	49.4	40.4	37.9	30.9	30.9
<b>Reasons for reporting</b>								
recover property	43.0	39.7	30.5	21.2	48.9	41.4	55.0	54.6
insurance reasons	23.5	20.7	32.1	24.4	17.7	16.1	19.0	22.9
should be reported	32.2	31.8	38.1	36.1	31.5	32.7	22.2	26.8
want offender caught/punished	37.6	41.6	24.9	29.9	44.7	48.1	47.4	44.3
to stop it	24.1	30.5	19.0	26.5	27.0	30.3	28.2	34.5
to get help	12.4	14.3	9.1	12.1	12.8	14.2	18.0	16.4
<b>Reasons for not reporting</b>								
not serious enough	33.3	24.8	50.4	36.4	31.5	25.7	23.7	18.9
solved it myself	11.1	15.6	12.7	14.2	10.1	15.4	11.4	16.4
inappropriate for police	11.9	14.6	10.2	11.9	12.3	13.7	12.5	16.6
police could do nothing	25.6	22.5	11.7	13.2	29.3	24.8	30.4	24.4
police won't do anything	20.5	27.8	8.3	10.3	19.5	27.8	30.5	35.4
fear/dislike of police	6.3	8.0	2.7	2.4	5.2	5.8	10.3	12.6
did not dare	4.9	6.9	2.7	6.4	5.9	5.6	5.3	8.3

Source: ICVS 1996/1997

In our view, the differences can largely be accounted for by the relative prevalence of insurance against criminal losses in the more affluent countries. In the Western countries 70% or more of house-

holds are covered by insurance. In most developing countries, only between 10% and 20% of the people are insured against household burglary. For financial redress victims in more affluent countries rely on insurance rather than on the police. Since reporting to the police is a requirement for insurance payments, victims in these countries are more likely to report. In the poorer quarters of the world the stakes for reporting victims are higher. For them, successful criminal investigations and the recovery of the stolen property is the only available avenue for redress. In this situation victims who doubt the efficacy of criminal investigations will more readily refrain from reporting.

As Table 3 shows, the experiences of one-time and repeat victims differ in many respects. The differences are the clearest among victims from industrialised countries. As we have seen, victims in this region tend to report to the police for insurance reasons. Repeat victims in the West report less often for insurance reasons. They are more often than other victims inclined to report in order to see the offender arrested and/or to stop what is happening. These findings suggest that repeat victims do, as we supposed, know or assume that the same offender(s) are victimising them again and again. Repeat victims contact the police with more demanding aims than other victims.

The reporting patterns of repeat victims in the West resemble those of all victims in poorer countries. Like the victims in these countries Western repeat victims are less inclined to report at all. This finding suggests that they are less certain that the police can satisfy their needs. Repeat victims in the West do not refrain from reporting because they consider their victimisation not serious enough. They are more likely than one-time victims to refrain because they feel the police could not or would not do anything to help them. In this respect too they resemble victims from poorer countries.

For repeat victims, then, the stakes seem to be as high as for victims in poorer countries: the police should prevent a reoccurrence of the crime by arresting the offender. Since this is often beyond the police's capacity, repeat victims are less likely to be satisfied with the police response. In the next paragraph, we will test these assumptions by looking at victim satisfaction with the police response and at the reasons for dissatisfaction.

### **Victim Satisfaction with Police Response**

Victims in the more affluent countries are more often satisfied with the police response. The high level of satisfaction may not only

**Table 3: Percentages of One-Time and Repeat Victims of Theft from Cars, Burglary, Robbery, Sexual Offenses and Threats/Assaults Who are Satisfied with the Police, and the Reasons for Dissatisfaction Over All and for Three World Regions**

	Over All		Developed		In Transition		Developing	
	once	repeat	once	repeat	once	repeat	once	repeat
<b>Satisfied</b>	54.4	44.3	75.0	63.5	41.3	36.0	41.6	36.6
<b>Reasons not satisfied</b>								
did not do enough	47.5	44.5	55.8	51.7	38.9	38.7	58.2	48.1
were not interested	36.6	34.5	42.8	32.6	35.8	36.6	33.4	32.8
did not find offender	32.0	35.2	18.9	26.3	38.3	39.9	29.6	33.8
didn't recover goods	37.0	29.6	22.1	11.8	42.4	37.1	37.7	29.2
gave no information	17.5	15.5	27.4	14.8	12.5	14.8	20.0	16.6
incorrect/impolite	10.6	14.2	10.9	14.0	7.2	12.6	17.0	16.2
slow to arrive	9.9	11.5	11.4	13.1	9.9	8.3	8.8	14.5

reflect better services. It might also be caused by more modest expectations of reporting victims, notably of victims who report for insurance reasons. Such victims are more likely to complain about their insurance payments than about the police. In less affluent countries, police forces get the full brunt of victims' frustrations about financial losses. It is noteworthy that more victims in the developing world mention that the police treated them incorrectly or impolitely.

The results in Table 3 show that repeat victims are less often satisfied with the police response in all regions. The differences are most pronounced among the victims from the industrialised countries. Three in four of the one-time victims are satisfied, and only two in three of the repeat victims.



The reasons for dissatisfaction must be interpreted with caution because of the rather low numbers. In line with the reasons for reporting given by repeat victims in the West, a major source of discontentment of these victims is that the police did not find the offender. Repeat victims are also more likely to feel badly treated by the police. These results once again confirm that the expectations as well as the experiences of reporting repeat victims in Western countries resemble those of reporting victims in less affluent countries.

### **Victim Assistance**

Victims of more serious types of crime who had reported to the police were asked whether they had received support from a specialised victim support agency.

**Table 4: Percentage of Reporting Victims Who Received or Would Have Appreciated Receiving Help from a Specialised Agency**

	<b>Over All</b>		<b>Developed</b>		<b>In Transition</b>		<b>Developing</b>	
	once	repeat	once	repeat	once	repeat	once	repeat
specialised agency	4.1	4.7	7.7	12.3	4.1	3.7	2.5	3.3
agency useful	67.7	66.5	37.0	43.8	78.2	74.7	71.7	67.6

More victims in the West receive specialised help than elsewhere. In very few countries in the other regions special services are provided by special agencies. In Central and Eastern Europe and in the developing countries, many more victims would have appreciated such help. Although no mention was made of financial support, some victims might have understood it as such. This could help to explain why support is most often needed in countries where few victims are covered by insurance.

In the economically developed countries a somewhat higher percentage of repeat victims who report to the police receive specialised help than one-time victims. We will come back to this finding in the sections on burglary victims and victims of violence against women. The need for such help is somewhat higher among repeat victims in these countries as well. Elsewhere very few one-time or repeat victims

receive help. The majority of victims in these regions would have welcomed such help, regardless of being one-time or repeat victims. There is a large gap between the demand and supply of specialised help everywhere. This gap is the largest in the less affluent parts of the world.

Repeat victims in the West are, as we have seen, more often dissatisfied with the police than are other victims. They are only marginally more inclined to be in need of specialised help. These results suggest that repeat victims do not see specialised help by other agencies as a viable substitute for police services.

### **General Attitudes**

All respondents were asked to give a general judgement on the performance of the police in their area. They were also asked whether the last time they went out they had stayed away from certain streets or areas. In order to measure the social cohesiveness in the neighbourhood respondents were also asked whether people in their community mostly helped each other or mostly went their own way. Table 4 gives results of citizens who have not been victimised by any of the five types of crime in the past year, who have once been victimised, and who have been victimised more often (repeat victims), over all and per world region.

The results show that citizens in the most developed countries are generally more satisfied with the performance of their local police, less fearful of street crime and more often perceive their neighbours as helpful. The comparison between the opinions of non-victims, one-time victims and repeat victims shows a strikingly consistent pattern. Victims are less satisfied with the police, and are more fearful and less trustful of their neighbours than non-victims. These tendencies are more pronounced among repeat victims than among one-time victims. In many respects, the attitudes of repeat victims in the West resemble those of non-victims in developing nations.

We have seen that repeat victims are less inclined to report subsequent incidents to the police, and that repeat victims who report are less often satisfied with the police response. These findings suggest that the reduced level of satisfaction of repeat victims with overall police performance is rooted in negative personal experiences with the police. It is also plausible that repeat victimisation experiences generate an increased fear of (street) crime. Considering what is now known about repeat victimisation, victims have sound reasons to be

**Table 5: Percentage of Non-Victims, One-Time and Repeat Victims of Five Types of Crime Who Think Police Do a Good Job in Controlling Crime in their Area, Who Avoid Dangerous Places After Dark, and Who Think Neighbourhood Residents Mostly Help One Another**

	Over All			Developed			In Transition			Developing		
	none	once	repeat	none	once	repeat	none	once	repeat	none	once	repeat
number of respondents	49,600	5,437	3,419	17,572	1,574	745	21,336	2,322	1,386	10,711	1,541	1,287
police do a good job	56.0	41.9	34.4	76.1	67.6	57.4	42.6	29.7	27.9	43.8	31.1	26.7
fear of street crime	36.3	47.7	55.3	24.3	33.8	44.8	42.8	50.6	51.9	44.4	58.6	65.2
mostly help one another	41.6	34.3	29.8	61.3	54.3	42.5	34.5	29.8	26.1	49.5	38.0	32.6

more concerned about future victimisations than others. Repeat victims seem to be aware of their vulnerable position.

The relationship between victimisations and perceptions of social cohesiveness does not necessarily imply that victimisation experiences erode social trust. The causal relationship might work the other way: neighbourhoods that are less socially integrated are known to suffer from higher levels of crime. In many situations social disintegration and crime will mutually reinforce each other. The relationship does at any rate underscore that victims, and repeat victims in particular, feel socially isolated more often than non-victims.

The combined results on repeat victimisation confirm that repeat victims have special expectations concerning the police such as arresting the offender and/or offering concrete protection, which the police often fail to meet. Although repeat victims in Western countries more often receive specialised help, this does not act as an adequate remedy for insufficient police services. This conclusion implies that repeat victims will suffer more than other victims from secondary victimisation. In the economically most developed countries, victim satisfaction is generally at a higher level. In these countries the special problems of repeat victims are therefore especially pronounced. In Western countries the police are better at satisfying victims, because many victims rely on their insurance for financial redress and do not expect much more than correct treatment and information. Police forces in the West are less successful at satisfying the demands of repeat victims.

In the next section we will look at the results concerning victims of burglary and violence specifically.

## **EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMS AND REPEAT VICTIMS OF BURGLARY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

### **Victims of Burglary and Violence against Women**

In this part of the chapter, we will compare the reporting patterns and attitudes of victims of burglary with those of victims of violence against women. This comparison will increase our understanding of the expectations and experiences of these two groups of victims vis-à-vis police. These two types of victims are chosen because much of the recent literature on repeat victimisation deals with either household burglary (Anderson et al., 1995) or violence against women (Lloyd et al., 1994). The prevalence of repeat victimisation cannot easily be

overestimated. According to international data, 24% of burglary victims and 41% of violence against women victims are repeat victims within the course of one year.

In the case of burglary, repeat victimisation is thought to be partially caused by offenders revisiting targets that they have successfully victimised before. Violence against women is often committed by spouses/partners or ex-spouses /partners. In these cases, the offences are governed by the offender's problems with or emotions towards a specific individual. Repeat victimisation is not an exception but the rule. In some cases the use of violence is deeply engrained in the lifestyle of both offender and victim (Genn, 1988). In our data set, 37% of the one-time victims of violence against women knew the offender by name, as did 52% of the repeat victims. Of the repeat victims from developed countries, 63% knew the offender by name.

Our hypothesis is that repeat victims of burglary and violence against women often report to the police in order to receive protection against the criminal activities of an individual offender. In the case of repeated burglaries, the victim will suspect having been visited by the same offender. In the case of violence against women by partners or ex-partners, victims know the offender. If they report the incident to the police they will typically expect protection and help. We expect police forces to have difficulty satisfying the demands of these two groups of repeat victims.

In Tables 6 through 9, no differentiation will be made among world regions because the numbers of victims per region are too small for systematic presentation. At some points regional data will be cited by way of illustration.

## **Reporting**

### *Burglaries and Violence against Women*

The frequency with which victims report offences to the police is strongly related to the type of crime involved. Table 6 shows the rates of reporting of burglaries and violence against women, respectively. A further differentiation is made between one-time and repeat victims.

Table 6 shows that victims of burglary are twice as likely to report to the police than victims of violence against women. The majority of burglaries, but little more than a quarter of offenses of violence against women, are reported to the police. Table 6A in the appendix gives reporting rates per world region. The reporting rate for burglary is 20 percentage points higher in the West than in developing coun-

tries. The difference between the reporting rates of violence against women of the three regions is no more than 10 percentage points.

**Table 6: Percentages of Burglaries and Violence against Women Reporting to the Police, and Reasons for Reporting and Non-Reporting**

	<b>Burglary</b>		<b>Violence against Women</b>	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
<b>N</b>	1,435	481	435	286
<b>Report to police</b>				
yes	61.8	54.7	28.3	26.8
<b>Reasons for reporting</b>				
recover property	53.1	56.5	4.0	0.0
insurance reasons	20.9	17.3	4.7	4.4
should be reported	33.2	24.2	26.0	37.0
want offender caught/punished	42.8	48.5	54.2	43.6
to stop it	23.9	29.3	45.2	57.5
to get help	14.1	16.8	19.2	29.6
<b>Reasons for not reporting</b>				
not serious enough	25.3	21.2	15.6	11.2
solved it myself	11.2	14.1	22.4	18.1
inapprop. for police	8.4	7.8	15.6	26.9
police could do nothing	27.7	26.2	19.8	20.7
police won't do anything	20.8	30.2	14.6	12.9
fear/dislike of police	5.8	2.9	13.8	18.2

Victims of burglary quite often seek the assistance of the police in recovering property. As we have discussed above, this is most notably the case in developing countries and countries in transition. Many victims want the offender to be caught and punished. Many victims also refer to the moral obligation to report, especially in the western countries. A large number of victims of burglary in the western countries said they reported for insurance reasons. In the other countries, victims report not to back up insurance claims but in the hope that their property will be reclaimed from the offender by the police. They report to the police to recover their property and/or see the offender arrested and sentenced. In all regions, then, financial

considerations play an important role in the expectations of victims of burglary vis-à-vis the police.

If victims of violence against women report to the police, they most often want the offender to be caught and punished and/or to stop what is happening. One in five also mentions the wish to receive help. The reasons for reporting are significantly different from those of burglary victims. The special expectations and concerns of victims of violence against women go some way towards explaining the relatively low reporting rate. Victims may doubt the capacity of the police to offer protection against the known offenders or even the commitment of the force to respond to such requests properly. Others may hesitate to ask the police to intervene in what they see as problems in their private life.

Burglary victims whose victimisations were not reported to the police were asked about their reasons for non-reporting. As said before, more than one reason could be given. The main reasons for non-reporting of burglaries are that the incident was not considered serious enough or that the police could do nothing. Their reasons seem to be mainly economic. Victims of violence against women more often mention that they solved the problem themselves and/or found the incident inappropriate for the police. They also more often mention refraining from reporting because of fear or dislike of the police. Non-reporting of violence against women seems governed by uncertainties about the role of the police in these cases.

### *Repeat Victims*

The results concerning repeat victims are interesting for several reasons. Although repeat victims are faced with serious problems, they are slightly less willing to report. The most interesting differences are found between the reasons for reporting. Repeat victims of burglary mention more than other burglary victims that they want the police to arrest the offender, to stop what was happening and to provide help. These victims, in short, report in the hope that the police will offer protection against the offender. The wish to see the police stop the offender and offer help is even more central for repeat victims of violence against women. The latter category of repeat victims is somewhat less interested in seeing the offender arrested than are one-time victims. As we have seen, many of these victims have intimate relations with the offender or have had such relations in the past, and may therefore be reluctant to initiate criminal proceedings.

The inability of the police to do anything is more often mentioned by repeat victims of burglary than by one-time victims (30% of repeat victims, 21% of one-time victims). These victims may have had disappointing experiences with the police on the previous occasion. Repeat victims of violence against women do not feel this way at all: only 13% mention this reason. Repeat victims of violence against women more often mention that the incident was inappropriate for the police (27%). This finding confirms that a sizeable minority of victims of domestic violence do not want to involve the police. A remarkable 18% of these repeat victims mention fear or dislike of the police as the reason for not reporting. The latter reason is the most common among victims in developing countries, especially some Latin American countries.

These results confirm our hypothesis that repeat victims of burglary — and, even more so, repeat victims of violence against women — demand more protection and help from the police than do one-time victims of these types of crimes.

## VICTIM SATISFACTION

In this section we will discuss the satisfaction of repeat victims of burglary and violence against women with the police response.

Victims of violence against women are more satisfied than victims of burglaries. This result must be interpreted in relation to a much lower reporting rate. The few victims of violence against women who report to the police are somewhat more likely to be satisfied by the services delivered than victims of burglary. This result suggests that at least some police forces succeed in satisfying the special needs of these female victims. Perhaps the most striking finding of our analysis is that repeat victims of both types of crime are significantly less often satisfied with the police response than one-time victims.

The reasons for dissatisfaction are based on fairly low numbers and must be interpreted with caution. This is in particular the case with regard to the results on the satisfaction of victims of violence against women: very few of these cases are reported. The results show few remarkable differences. Noteworthy is the relatively high percentage of victims of violence against women who complain about the police being impolite or incorrect. This complaint is most common (over 30%) among victims from the developing world. The complaint of many repeat victims of violence that the offender was not found is somewhat unexpected. This reason is mentioned almost exclusively



by victims from the developing countries, where more of these cases involved strangers.

**Table 7: Percentages of One-Time and Repeat Victims of Burglaries and Violence against Women Who Are Satisfied with the Police Response, and Reasons for Dissatisfaction**

	Burglary		Violence against Women	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
<b>Satisfied with report</b>				
yes	43.5	29.8	56.8	41.9
<b>Reasons not satisfied</b>				
did not do enough	43.8	36.7	50.2	58.4
were not interested	30.0	36.4	39.7	34.1
did not find offender	39.2	37.5	19.7	36.3
did not recover goods	46.8	36.8	3.6	0.0
gave no information	16.1	13.3	21.5	10.6
incorrect/impolite	9.8	9.1	22.1	28.7
slow to arrive	11.7	17.9	7.2	6.9

The results clearly indicate that repeat victims of both types of crimes are often disappointed in the capacity or willingness of the police to offer the services they want, in particular protection against the offender.

### Victim Assistance

In the 1996 ICVS, victims of more serious crimes who had reported to the police were specifically asked whether they had received support from a specialised agency. As said, in most countries few victims received such help. The figures are variable across offence type. Table 8 shows that victims of violence against women are more likely to receive help than victims of burglary.

In Table 8A in the appendix, the regional rates are given for the countries with developed economies. In the developed countries 6.6% of burglary victims and 15% of repeat burglary victims received help. Elsewhere in the world these percentages were below 3%. Of the victims of violence against women in developed countries, 6.6% had received help, as did 29.4% of the repeat victims in this crime category.

In the developing countries some 6.5% of victims and repeat victims received help. The relatively high prevalence of actual help for repeat victims in developed countries reflects the existence of special provisions for female victims, such as shelter homes for battered women and rape crisis centres.

**Table 8: Percentages of Victims of Burglary and Violence against Women Who Have Received Victim Assistance or Who Would Have Appreciated Such Help**

	Burglary		Violence against Women	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
<b>N</b>	1,435	481	435	286
<b>Specialised agency</b> yes	3.3	4.0	5.1	8.8
<b>Agency useful</b> yes	57.0	64.4	72.8	72.8

The majority of the victims of burglary and violence against women who did not receive help would have appreciated it. Victims in the countries in transition and the developing countries express an interest in such services more than other victims. Repeat victims are somewhat more interested but the differences are small. Repeat victims differ more from other victims in their attitudes towards the services of the police than in their need for specialised help.

### Victim Attitudes

We compared attitudes concerning local police, social cohesiveness in the neighbourhood, fear of street crime and fear of burglary among respondents who had not been victimised in the last five years, those who had been victimised in the last year, and those who had been victimised more than once in the last year.

The results show that citizens who are victimised by either a burglary or violence against women quickly lose confidence in the crime-controlling capacity of their local police. Victims of these types of crime are also more likely to live in a loosely integrated neighbourhood. Victims of burglary are keenly aware of their increased risks

**Table 9: Responses of Non-Victims, One-Time Victims, and Repeat Victims of Burglary and Violence against Women Who Think Police are Doing a Good Job in Controlling Crime in Their Area, Who Avoid Dangerous Places after Dark, and Who Think People in the Neighbourhood Mostly Help One Another**

	Burglary			Violence against women (women only)		
	none	once	repeat	none	once	repeat
<b>N</b>	51,799	1,435	481	28,294	435	286
Police good job	55.5	38.6	28.9	54.5	41.0	32.7
Neighbors mostly help each other	38.9	33.5	32.2	41.5	29.1	34.9
Fear of street crime	37.0	54.0	56.1	47.8	67.6	72.3
Fear of burglary	36.7	61.6	68.1	—	—	—

(van Dijk et al., 1990) and repeat victims even more so. In line with this, victims are also more likely to use precautionary devices such as burglar alarms than non-victims (6.8% of non-victims, 12.4% of one-time victims and 13.1% of repeat victims possess an alarm). Victims of violence against women are also more fearful of street crime, in spite of the fact that in many cases their victimisations occur in private places.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Globally, less than 40% of more serious offences are reported to the police. Two in three victims of burglaries report their victimisation to the police. Less than one in three female victims of violence do so. Reporting is particularly low in most developing countries.

The reasons for reporting vary across types of crimes and countries. In the industrialised countries, many victims report crimes to fulfil a condition for claiming insurance money. In countries where fewer people have insurance, victims report in the hope that the police will find the offender and recover their property.

Less than half of the reporting victims are satisfied with the police response. In the transitional and developing countries the satisfac-

tion rate is below 40%. For police forces in these nations, victims are hard to satisfy if the investigation is unsuccessful. Victims of property crimes are therefore more likely to be dissatisfied with the police response in less affluent countries. Their main reason for dissatisfaction is that the police fail to recover their property. In all regions many victims of contact crimes are also dissatisfied with the services delivered. If dissatisfied, they are more likely to say the police treated them impolitely or incorrectly. Such complaints are the most common among female victims of violence.

According to the survey, few victims who report to the police receive specialised help. Half of reporting victims, however, would welcome it. In the developing countries, the rate of victim support and shelter homes is markedly higher but still insufficient to satisfy existing demand. There are clearly unmet needs for specialised help among victims of crime everywhere, especially female victims of violence.

These findings show that 12 years after their adoption by the United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly, the standards for the treatment of crime victims of the U.N. Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power have not had much impact on actual police practices. The international campaign for victims' rights and services is still in its infancy. Hopefully the recently published United Nations Handbook on Justice for Crime Victims will stimulate the implementation of these standards (United Nations, 1999).

Low reporting rates are an impediment to effective crime control. The chances of arresting the offenders and getting a conviction are largely dependent on the information supplied by the victim. If many victims are, as is clearly the case in most developing nations, doubtful whether reporting to the police will do any good, the effectiveness of the police is severely undermined. For more effective criminal investigations the cooperation of victims is essential. Evaluation of the victim policies of Dutch police and prosecutors show that victims who have been treated better by the police have a more positive attitude towards the police in particular and the criminal justice system more generally. More importantly, they are also more inclined to feel an obligation to respect the law and are therefore less likely to commit crimes themselves (Wemmers, 1995). By treating victims better, the criminal justice system contributes to the enhancement of respect for the law and thereby to the prevention of crime. Since almost all citizens are victimised at least once during their lifetime, the impact of

adequate victim policies on the respect for the law and its institutions cannot be overstated.

In developing countries and the countries in transition, the consequences of criminal victimisation are often very severe since financial support is not available. Donor countries and international organisations should consider setting up relief funds for the victims of criminal violence across the world.

The phenomenon of repeat victimisation is in itself a forceful argument for targeting crime prevention effort at victims. In several countries, police forces provide crime prevention advice to reporting victims with fairly good results (Winkel, 1987; van den Boogaard, 1992). Our results suggest that the police should do better than that. The results indicate that repeat victims, even more than other victims, feel neglected by the police. Repeat victims of both property and violent offences are often in urgent need of protection against the criminal activities of known offenders. If they report, they are especially likely to be dissatisfied with the services delivered. In many cases the police apparently fail to offer the protection needed. Many repeat victims have no confidence in the usefulness of the police and refrain from reporting.

The bad services delivered to repeat victims are wasted opportunities for successful crime prevention and detection. For the citizens involved, these negative experiences have an alienating effect. Since they tend to be more fearful of crime and often live in less socially integrated neighbourhoods, repeat victims are in danger of losing their trust in institutions and the community generally, as well as their respect of the law.

In some countries, most notably the U.K., efforts are made by police forces to improve their responses to repeat victims of violence against women and burglary (Farrell and Pease, 1993). In 1997, the police of Norfolk were awarded the European Crime Prevention Award in the Hague for a programme offering special protection to victims of violence against women (e.g., linking up the women at risk to the local police station through personal electronic alarm equipment). Internationally acclaimed is the scheme to reduce repeat vehicle theft and burglary victimisation in Huddersfield (Chenery et al., 1997). Among the most innovative elements are the loan of monitored alarms, trackers and covert cameras to repeat victims. The provision of such equipment has been found to be effective and seems desirable for repeat victims of burglary everywhere in the industrialised world.

The results of the secondary analysis of ICVS data underline the urgency of initiatives to offer practical protection to repeat victims in

all countries. Repeat victims, like all other victims, must be given crime prevention advice. They must also be referred with priority to specialised support agencies, because some repeat victims may be less capable of coping with traumatic stress (Winkel, 1998). The first priority of the police response to repeat victimisation must be effective protection by the uniformed police and/or the criminal investigation departments. Repeat victimisation should be tackled by an integrated package of preventative, supportive and investigative elements. There exists a clear need for integrated repeat victimisation prevention strategies.



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APPENDIX

**Table 6A: Percentages of Burglaries and Violence against Women Reported to the Police per World Region**

<b>Developed</b>	<b>Burglary</b>		<b>Violence against women</b>	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
N victims	305	52	108	69
Report to police yes	78.7	72.2	36.4	31.6
<b>Eastern Central Europe</b>	<b>Burglary</b>		<b>Violence against women</b>	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
N victims	631	171	176	77
Report to the police yes	62.7	54.0	26.8	33.7
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Burglary</b>		<b>Violence against women</b>	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
N victims	499	258	151	140
Report to police yes	50.3	37.2	24.2	28.9

**Table 8A: Percentages of Victims of Burglary and Violence against Women Who Have Received Victim Assistance or Who Would Have Appreciated Such Help in the Developed Countries**

	<b>Burglary</b>		<b>Violence against women</b>	
	once	repeat	once	repeat
<b>N victims</b>	305	52	208	69
<b>Specialised agency yes</b>	6.6	15.0	6.6	29.4
<b>Agency useful yes</b>	34.4	39.4	48.6	55.1

## NOTES

1. As said, the ICVS was carried out once or more in 54 countries to date. In total, more than 133,821 citizens aged 15 and older were interviewed within the framework of the ICVS. Details of the ICVS can be found in van Dijk et al., (1990); Alvazzi del Frate et al., (1993); and Mayhew and van Dijk, (1997).

Samples sizes varied between 1,000 in developing countries and 2,000 in most other countries. In developing countries and most countries in transition, face-to-face interviews were carried out. In most developing nations and some nations in transition, the survey was carried out among the inhabitants of the largest city (city surveys). Elsewhere, well-spread samples were drawn from the national population. For a discussion on the methodological aspects we refer to the publications just mentioned (see also Block, 1993; Lynch, 1993; and Stangeland, 1995).

The key figures presented here are based on the results of the surveys carried out in 1996 in the course of the third sweep of the survey. These data refer to the experiences of about 60,000 citizens. As said, the data were aggregated into rates for three global regions. The region of the industrialised nations consists of the New World (U.S., Canada) and Western Europe (11 countries). The second region is Central and Eastern Europe (20 countries). The region of developing nations consists of Asia (China, India, Indonesia and Philippines), Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Paraguay) and Africa (Egypt, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

For this secondary analysis we have not reweighted the national data in order to make them proportional to population size.

Respondents were asked to report on victimisations that happened to them or their households over the past five years. In a follow-up question, those who mentioned victimisations were asked whether a victimisation took place in the last year. Follow-up questions on reporting to the police and related issues refer to the last victimisation by a specific type of crime. In this paper the analysis is (with some exceptions) limited to victimisations that took place the preceding year.

2. Repeat victims of violence usually know whether the same offender was the perpetrator. There is some evidence from the British Crime Survey 1992 that many repeat victims of burglary and other property crimes assume their revictimisation to be the work of the same offender(s) (Chenery et al., 1996).