Repeat Victimisation in Australia

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Satyanshu Mukherjee & Carlos Carcach

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Foreword

Crime in Australia is not uniformly distributed. In practice a majority of crimes are committed by a minority of offenders, and by the same token, a small number of victims experience a disproportionate number of crimes. This report analyses, in great detail, the fact that half of property crimes are experienced by 28.7 per cent of victims while two-thirds of personal crimes are experienced by 41.3 per cent of victims.

International research has focussed on repeat victimisation as a very important criminological phenomenon, and this pioneering Australian report analyses the most recently available Australian data.

While the report is primarily statistical, it examines multiple victimisation among different demographic groups, household composition and employment status.

As with a great deal of Australian Institute of Criminology work, this report shows that the policy responses lie beyond the boundaries of law enforcement, and that crime prevention strategies must be developed as intersectoral partnerships.

Adam Graycar
Director
Australian Institute of Criminology

February 1998

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Introduction

The extent and significance of repeat victimisation have only recently been recognised. According to Skogan (cited in National Institute of Justice 1996) "Probably the most important criminological insight of the decade has been the discovery in a very systematic fashion of repeat multiple victimisation. This has tremendous implications both for criminological theory and ... practice in the field" (p. 3). It is well known that some people, households or other targets are victimised more frequently than others, thereby contributing to a large proportion of all offences experienced. This uneven distribution of offences in the general population has raised the possibility of developing crime prevention strategies around repeat victimisation. It has been argued on the basis of evidence from crime victims surveys, that if repeat victimisation could be prevented, a significant proportion of personal and household crimes could be prevented (see *for instance* Farrell 1992). The Biting Back initiative (Chenery et al. 1997) developed and set up a strategy for preventing repeat burglary and motor vehicle theft in the Huddersfield division of West Yorkshire Police, UK. As a result of this project, which was in operation from October 1994 to March 1996, there was a reduction of 30 per cent in burglary and 20 per cent in motor vehicle theft, reduced levels of repeat domestic burglary, and improved quality of service to victims. It appears that strategies based on responses to victimisation could have a significant impact on prevention of crime.

Many scholars have recognised the theoretical relevance of understanding repeat victimisation. According to Sparks (1981), the study of repeat victimisation can "illuminate more general causal processes, and thus help to show how far, and in what ways, the attributes of behaviour of the victims themselves may help to explain their victimisation" (p. 765).

The literature advances two competing though complementary explanations to repeat victimisation, known as state dependence and heterogeneity (see Lauritsen & Quinet 1995). State dependence suggests that victimisation changes the probability of further victimisation. Risk heterogeneity asserts that as a consequence of a set of characteristics, the probabilities of being victimised are not the same for all persons or households, and that these characteristics of potential crime targets mark them out as attractive. Identification of targets for preventive action is common to both approaches. The fact that victimisation can be associated with further victimisation enables the location of those targets with greater need of crime preventive assistance (see Chenery et al. 1996). Identification of potentially successful crime prevention efforts for reducing risk among repeat victims requires an understanding of the factors that account for repeat victimisation. A first step in any analysis of repeat victimisation is to determine the extent of its occurrence and its contribution to the total crime rates experienced by the community. The second natural step is to identify the

factors having an effect on repeat victimisation, and most importantly to determine in what way these factors influence the risk among repeat victims.

Repeat victimisation in Australia has been a neglected research area. Only recently has some research work started on the topic (see *for example* Guidi et al. 1997). The main source of data on repeat victimisation comes from the crime surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. National crime surveys have taken place in 1975, 1983 and 1993, with the next one to be conducted in 1998. Crime surveys have also been conducted in the States, mostly by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Other State crime victims surveys have been conducted by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (GSO) in 1991 and by the Victorian Department of Justice in 1997.

Use of these surveys for the study of victimisation in general, of repeat victimisation, and of other issues relating to crime in Australia has been limited by lack of access to unit record data. It was only in 1994 that the Australian Bureau of Statistics made available "confidentialised" unit record data for the National Crime and Safety Survey conducted in April 1993. At the time of writing, unit record data for the 1991 Queensland Crime Victims Survey (Queensland GSO 1992), also referred to as the 1991 Queensland CVS was also made available. This paper uses data from these two surveys.

The National Crime and Safety Survey Australia 1993 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994), also referred to as the 1993 NCSS, shows that over 28 per cent of the households were repeat victims of property crime (break and enter, attempted break and enter, and motor vehicle theft) in the 12 months prior to the Survey, and these households suffered over 50 per cent of all property crime victimisations. The survey also shows that over 41 per cent of victims of personal crimes (assault, sexual assault, and robbery) experienced such crimes more than once and these accounted for about two-thirds of all violent crime victimisations. These findings are similar to those noted by Pease and Laycock (1996).

Development of crime prevention programs aimed at reducing repeat victimisation depends upon knowledge of the characteristics of repeat victims and the surrounding environments. We conducted tests to determine whether the results from the national survey in 1993 were different from those from the State surveys. Testing procedures did not detect any significant differences in the distribution of repeat victimisation across surveys which enabled us to base analyses on the 1993 NCSS unit record data. This report discusses the extent and relevance of repeat victimisation in Australia, and to what extent individuals and households that suffer from repeat victimisation are similar to, or different from, single incident victims. We also look at the geographical distribution of repeat victimisation.

Three theoretical approaches to explaining crime have assumed a dominant position in recent years, particularly when crime prevention strategies are discussed. These approaches are "rational choice", "routine activity", and "opportunity and crime". Using survey data, we examine the relationship of a number of personal and household characteristics with both single and repeat victimisation.

This report continues with a discussion of the likely links between repeat victimisation and fear of crime. As the 1993 NCSS did not collect data on fear of crime, measures of fear collected by the 1991 Queensland CVS are used. Although limited to one jurisdiction, the results from this discussion are useful to identify some general patterns, which we feel may easily be extended to the whole of Australia.

The final section discusses the findings and the policy implications for crime prevention that emerge from the results. This section also discusses the limitations of current survey data to support more elaborate analyses of repeat victimisation and makes some suggestions.

2

Extent and Relevance of Repeat Victimisation

Crime surveys are one of the the best sources of data for the study of repeat victimisation. However, a word of caution is warranted. The extent and nature of crime revealed by crime surveys are still an approximation of the true level of crime. The attitude towards reporting crime varies according to offence type and respondent characteristics. Incidents of domestic violence are often underestimated by crime surveys, specially when the methodology of the survey excludes face-to-face interview.

The National Crime and Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in April 1993 found that a little over 1 in 5 victims of break and enter, about 1 in 3 victims of attempted break and enter, 1 in 12 victims of motor vehicle theft, 1 in 3 victims of robbery, and 2 in 5 victims of assault experienced more than one incident of the same offence over the period from May 1992 to April 1993. The surveys conducted by the Bureau during 1995 in five States showed similar results which suggests that repeat victimisation remained at about the same levels during the period from 1992 to 1995 (see Table 1).

In order to check the similarities between the surveys appropriate statistical tests were conducted. Tests of significance indicated that there were virtually no differences between the percentage distributions observed for the surveys conducted in 1995 and the national survey in 1993. These results are important because unit record data were available only for the national survey conducted 1993, and most of the analyses are based on this survey.[1]

Table 2 shows the numbers of victims and crime rates for household and personal offences calculated from the National Crime and Safety Survey conducted in April 1993 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994).

The table shows three types of crime rates. The first of these rates aims at measuring prevalence of victimisation (the number of victims per 100 persons or households); the second is a measure of concentration or intensity of victimisation (the number of incidents experienced per victim); and the third measures the incidence of victimisation or the crime rate (the number of incidents per 100 persons or households). The Australian Bureau of Statistics publishes figures on the first of these rates which is interpreted as the rate at which victims are selected as targets in the general population.

Crucial to this study is the measure of concentration or intensity as it indicates the degree to which repeat or multiple victimisation contributes to the crime (incidence) rate.

Table 2 shows that households which were targets of attempted break and enter experienced a slightly higher number of incidents per victim than those victimised by

1. Unit record data were also available for the Queensland Crime Victims Survey conducted by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office in 1991. Data from this survey are used in the analysis contained in the section referring to fear of crime.

Table 1: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, and State Crime and Safety Surveys 1995: Percentage of Victims According to Number of Incidents

Number of Victimisations	*NSW*	*Vic.*	*QLD*	*WA*	*SA*	*Aust.(1)*
			BREAK AND ENTER			
One	81.0	78.4	78.5	80.1	89.9	78.7
Two	13.2	10.5	17.0	19.9(2)	8.4	14.9
Three or more	5.9	11.1	4.4		1.7	6.3
			ATTEMPTED BREAK AND ENTER			
One	75.0	63.9	68.9	71.6	72.7	66.5
Two	17.0	22.6	18.0	28.4(2)	20.8	22.3
Three or more	8.0	13.6	13.2		5.5	11.2
			BREAK AND ENTER OR ATTEMPTED BREAK AND ENTER			
One	74.3	71.8	67.2	67.8	72.8	69.0
Two	14.3	14.3	19.0	32.2(2)	19.6	18.9
Three or more	11.3	13.8	13.8		7.1	12.1
			MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT			
One	87.7	89.7	86.1	87.4	93.3	92.0
Two	10.3	6.7	9.9	12.6(2)	6.7	6.6
Three or more	2.0	3.6	4.0			1.4
			ROBBERY			
One	67.4	63.1	75.5	74.0	62.6	68.4
Two	23.1	14.4	11.5	26.1(2)	21.3	20.0
Three or more	9.4	22.5	13.0		14.1	11.6
			ASSAULT			
One	53.8	55.4	57.2	68.1	51.3	56.8
Two	20.2	19.9	24.1	31.9(2)	22.4	17.8
Three or more	26.0	24.7	18.7		24.8	25.4

(1) National Crime and Safety Survey April 1993.

(2) Two or more. The Australian Bureau of Statistics did not publish figures on the number of victims reporting three or more incidents.

Adapted from: *April 1995 Crime and Safety New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory (ABS, Cat. No. 4509.1); April 1995 Crime and Safety Victoria (ABS, Cat. No. 4509.2); April 1995 Crime and Safety Queensland (ABS, Cat. No. 4509.3); April 1995 Crime and Safety South Australia (ABS, Cat. No. 4509.4); October 1995 Crime and Safety Western Australia (ABS, Cat. No. 4509.5); Crime and Safety Australia April 1993 (ABS, Cat. No. 4509.0).*

break and enter offences. Regarding personal offences, assault was twice as common as robbery; however, the average number of incidents experienced by victims of assault was only 1.2 times the average number of incidents experienced by victims of robbery. For household crimes, these results confirm previous findings that the most prevalent crimes may not necessarily be those with the higher rates of repeat victimisation (see Hough 1986).

Measurements that take concentration of victimisation into consideration show a more realistic, though less optimistic, picture of the extent of crime in the community. Incidence rates based on repeat or multiple victimisation demonstrate that crime is not uniformly distributed; households in certain neighbourhoods or persons with certain characteristics are more likely to be victims more often than those in other situations. And since these repeat/multiple victims may constitute a substantial part of total victimisation, this knowledge could be of assistance in designing appropriate crime prevention policies.

Most research on repeat or multiple victimisation to date has been conducted by

Table 2: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: Personal and Household Offences, Numbers of Victims and Crime Rates

	Numbers		Rates		
	Victims	Incidents	Prevalence (Victims per 100 Persons/ Households)	Concentration (Incidents per Victim)	Incidence (Incidents per 100 Persons/ Households)
HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES					
Break and Enter	276 974	353 440	4.4	1.3	5.7
Attempted Break and Enter	194185	280 865	3.1	1.4	4.5
Completed or Attempted B&E (1)	424 980	63 4305	6.8	1.5	10.2
Motor Vehicle Theft	109 600	119 902	1.7	1.1	1.9
All Household Offences	522 035	754 239	8.3	1.4	11.6
PERSONAL OFFENCES					
Robbery	160148	229 339	1.2	1.4	1.7
Assault	334 221	563 308	2.5	1.7	4.2
Robbery or Assault	468 203	792 647	3.5	1.7	6.0

(1) This total is not the aggregate of the two offences because the same household could have been victimised for both types of crime.

Table 3: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: Number of Incidents, Offence Type

	Victims			*Incidents*		
Number of Incidents	Number	%	Cumulative Percentage	Number	%	Cumulative Percentage
HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES						
One	372 260	71.3	71.3	372 260	49.4	49.4
Two	95 425	18.3	89.6	190 850	25.3	74.8
Three	36 257	6.9	96.6	108 771	14.4	89.2
Four	10 224	2.0	98.5	40 896	5.4	94.6
Five	5 323	1.0	99.6	26 615	3.5	98.2
Six	2 086	0.4	100.0	12 516	1.7	99.8
Seven or more	190	0.0	100.0	1330	0.2	100.0
Total	521 765	100.0		753 238	100.0	
PERSONAL OFFENCES						
One	274 40	58.7	58.7	274 740	34.7	34.7
Two	85 751	18.3	77.0	171 502	21.6	56.3
Three	94 380	20.2	97.2	283140	35.7	92.0
Four	7164	1.5	98.7	28 656	3.6	95.6
Five	2 398	0.5	99.2	11990	1.5	97.1
Six or more	3 770	0.8	100.0	22 620	2.9	100.0
Total	468 203	100.0		792 648	100.0	

British and North American criminologists. In Australia, only recently has some research work started on the topic (see Guidi et al. 1997; Morgan 1997). The driving force behind all these studies is the belief that "if repeat victimisation can be prevented, a large proportion of all crime might be prevented" (Farrell 1992, p. 85). For this assertion to be sustainable, repeat victimisation must account for a sufficiently large proportion of all the incidents occurring during a period. Therefore, a first step in any analysis of repeat victimisation is to determine the extent of its occurrence and its contribution to the crime incidents experienced by the community.

This analysis focusses on aggregate household and personal crimes. Household crimes include incidents of break and enter, attempted break and enter, and motor vehicle theft. Personal crimes include incidents of robbery and assault.

Table 3 shows the number of victims of household and personal offences according to the number of incidents experienced during the period from May 1992 to April 1993. The table also shows the percentages and cumulative percentages of victims and incidents for each offence.

These figures suggest that crime is not evenly distributed among victims, a fact that has been observed in overseas studies (see for instance Gottfredson 1984; Eck & Weisburd 1995), and that is supported by official crime statistics both in Australia and overseas. In the case of household offences, 28.7 per cent of the households experienced two or more incidents of property crimes each and accounted for 50.6 per cent of all the incidents (see Figure 1); households which experienced three or more incidents during the year equalled only 10.3 per cent of all victim households but accounted for 25 per cent of all the incidents (see Figure 2). For personal offences, 41.3 per cent of the victims experienced 65.3 per cent of incidents. When these figures are referred to the general population, 2.4 per cent of households experienced half of all household offences; whereas 65 per cent of incidents of violence were experienced by 1.4 per cent of all the persons aged 15 years and over.

This somewhat skewed distribution of incidents is demonstrated in Figure 1, a Lorenz-type curve for victimisation of household offences. The graph indicates the inequality in the distribution of property victimisation among Australian households already victimised; a fact that has also been noticed in Britain (see Hope 1995).

Figure 1: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: Distribution of Incidents of Property Crime Relative to Number of Victims

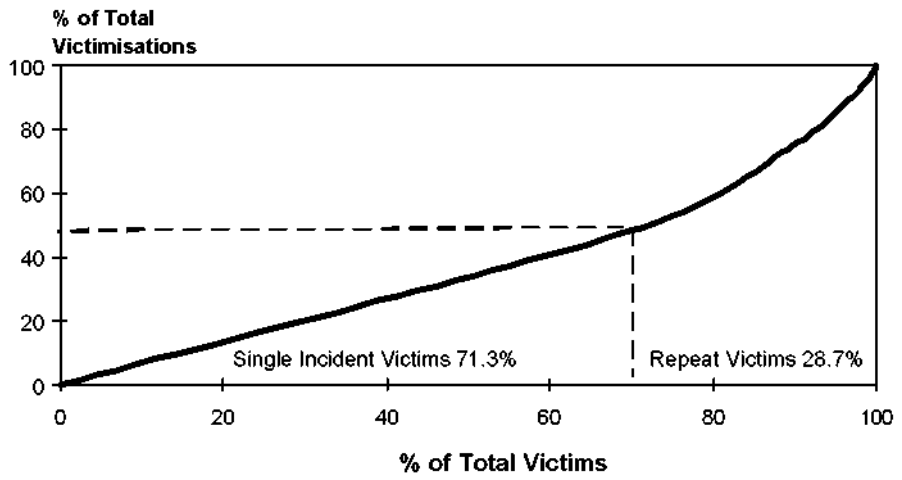


Figure 2: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: Distribution of Incidents of Personal Crime Relative to Number of Victims

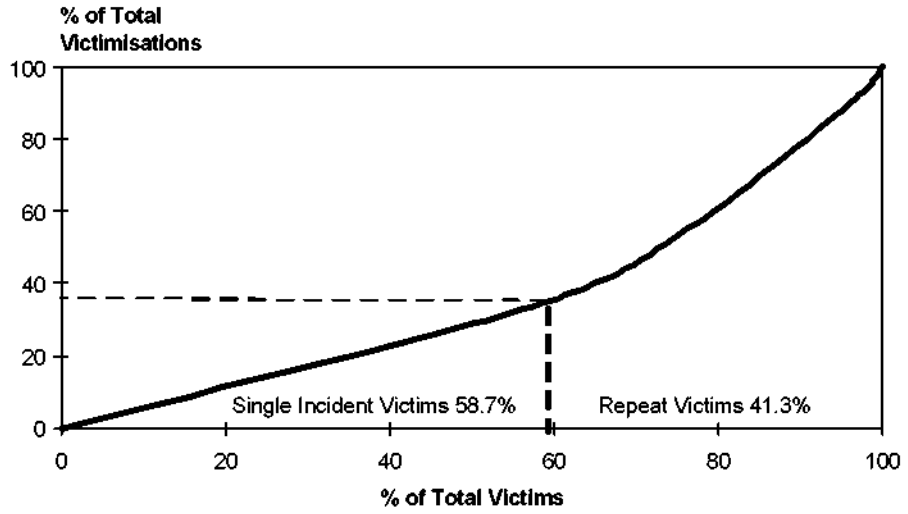


Figure 2 shows the curve for victimisation of violent offences, and it also suggests an unequal distribution of victimisation among victims of this type of crime.

One of the main objectives of this research is to assess if the subject of repeat victimisation is an issue of significance in Australia, and whether it warrants special attention by criminal justice agencies. The results indicate that the prevalence rate of repeat victimisation is low, as only a small percentage of the total population (2.4 and 1.4 per cent of households and persons aged 15 years and over respectively) experience more than one incident of the same offence during a given year. However, this small part of the households or population account for more than half the incidents of crime occurring during the year. This raises the possibility of reducing household and violent crime by focussing on repeat victimisation, analogous to the idea of preventing crime based on the identification of crime hot spots (Sherman 1995).

Repeat victimisation is not a random phenomenon (see Sparks 1981). The data confirm this as they are not consistent with the distributions that would be expected if victimisations were a Poisson process characterised by independence and a constant victimisation rate across the population.[2] The Poisson model tends to predict fewer repeat victims, and more one-time victims than observed. However, it gives good predictions of the number of victimisation-free persons and households. Theory advances two competing explanations for the lack of randomness in victimisation: state dependence and risk

2. The simple Poisson model is based upon the assumptions that the probability of being victimised is the same for all persons (households), and that the probability of being victimised does not depend on the number of previous victimisations. Under this model, persons (households) who experience a high number of victimisations are merely unlucky. For example, persons who have experienced 10 victimisations in one year are considered as likely to be victimised in the next year as those who did not experience any victimisations. Using the Poisson model, the probability of experiencing X victimisations during a specified time period, where X represents the random variable and x represents the values it can assume, is given by Prob(X=x) = *l*." exp(-l)/x!. The *X* is the Poisson parameter and represents the rate at which a person (household) is victimised over a time period. The mean and variance of the Poisson distribution are both equal toX.

heterogeneity (see Chenery et al. 1996). State dependence suggests that victimisation changes the probability of further victimisation. Risk heterogeneity suggests that features of the target itself are responsible for victimisation experiences.[3] Some households and persons are more at risk of victimisation than others. Repeat victims are part of the group disproportionately exposed to the largest risk.

3. Risk heterogeneity causes the variance of the observed data to be larger than predicted by the Poisson model, a phenomenon known as overdispersion.

3

The Geography of Repeat Victimisation

Since some States and regions tend to display higher prevalence of crime than others (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994), it is of interest to know whether repeat victimisation manifests similar tendencies. Because of the restrictions posed by the survey data, analysis is limited to the States and Territories and metropolitan/non-metropolitan regions of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Tables 4a and 4b show the number and percentage of repeat and single incident victims by State and part of the State, together with their confidence intervals,[4] for household and personal offences.

The data in Tables 4a and 4b enable comparisons to be made between jurisdictions, and between regions within jurisdictions. In order to assist these comparisons, the tables include confidence intervals. Two rates would be statistically equal (for a selected significance level) if their confidence intervals overlap. With no overlapping between the confidence intervals, the conclusion would be that the observed difference in the rates is not due to sampling. Figures 3 and 4 show the percentage of repeat and single incident victims and their confidence limits, according to the State or part of State of enumeration.

For example, in the case of household offences, Table 4a shows rates of repeat victimisation of 2.1 and 1.7 per cent for New South Wales and Victoria respectively; 99 per cent confidence intervals for this rate are 1.7-2.5 for New South Wales, and 1.3-2.1 for Victoria. As these intervals overlap, it is concluded that the two States had similar rates of repeat victimisation. The confidence interval for the rate of repeat victimisation in Queensland covered values between 2.7 and 3.7 which does not overlap the confidence intervals for the rates in New South Wales and Victoria. Therefore it is concluded that Queensland presented higher rates of repeat household victimisation than these two States.

Household Offences

The Crime and Safety Survey 1993 revealed that in terms of levels of victimisation (both repeat and single incident victimisation) for household offences, States could be classed in two distinct groups: those with low levels (New South Wales, Victoria and and Tasmania); and those with relatively high levels (South Australia, Western Australia and the two Territories). Queensland displayed high levels of repeat household victimisation and low levels of single incident victimisation (see Figure 3a). Regions within each State, that is metropolitan and non-metropolitan, did not differ on their levels of repeat household victimisation; however, metropolitan areas of New South Wales and Queensland showed higher levels of single incident victimisation compared to non-metropolitan areas (see Figure 3b).

4. Confidence intervals are appropriate tools to compare States or regions within States regarding the percentage of repeat and single incident victims. In order to protect against the problems with multiple comparison procedures, the rather low significance level of 1 per cent was chosen.

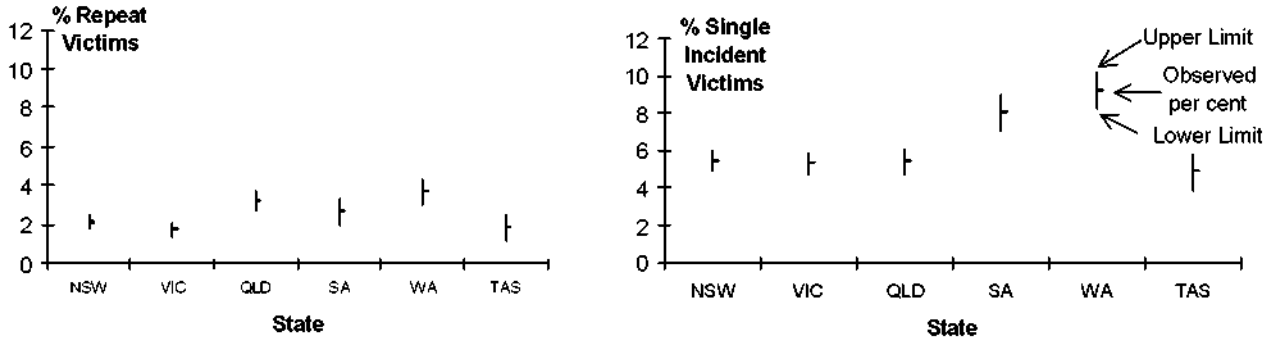
Table 4a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES,* Repeat and Single-Incident Victims, Numbers and Percentage of Total Population, State and Part of State

	Repeat Victims				*Single-Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
State	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
			STATE TOTALS					
New South Wales	44 421	2.1	1.7	2.5	114 732	5.4	4.9	6.0
Victoria	27 073	1.7	1.3	2.1	83 690	5.3	4.7	5.9
Queensland	34 688	3.2	2.7	3.7	58 685	5.4	4.7	6.0
South Australia	13 386	2.7	2.0	3.3	40 410	8.0	7.1	9.0
Western Australia	22 324	3.7	3.0	4.3	56 120	9.2	8.2	10.2
Tasmania	3 086	1.8	1.2	2.5	8 224	4.8	3.9	5.8
NT/ACT	4 796	3.2	2.5	3.9	10 399	7.0	6.0	7.9
			METROPOLITAN AREAS					
New South Wales	29 999	2.3	1.8	2.8	83 021	6.3	5.5	7.1
Victoria	19 423	1.7	1.3	2.2	62 868	5.8	4.8	6.4
Queensland	15 275	3.0	2.2	3.8	40 059	7.9	6.7	9.0
			REST OF THE STATE					
New South Wales	14 422	1.8	1.2	2.4	31 711	4.0	3.3	4.7
Victoria	7 650	1.6	0.9	2.3	20 822	4.4	3.5	5.3
Queensland	19 413	3.3	2.6	4.1	18 626	3.2	2.4	4.0

Table 4b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Repeat and Single Incident Victims, Numbers and Percentage of Total Population, State and Part of State

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
State	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
			STATE TOTALS					
New South Wales	71 916	1.6	1.4	1.8	90 709	2.0	1.8	2.2
Victoria	39 076	1.1	0.9	1.3	66 612	1.9	1.7	2.2
Queensland	38 449	1.7	1.4	2.0	50 360	2.2	1.9	2.5
South Australia	16 960	1.5	1.2	1.8	23 614	2.1	1.8	2.4
Western Australia	15 929	1.3	1.0	1.6	26 844	2.1	1.8	2.5
Tasmania	4 060	1.2	0.8	1.5	8 416	2.4	2.0	2.9
NT/ACT	7 074	2.3	1.7	2.8	8185	2.6	2.1	3.1
			METROPOLITAN AREAS					
New South Wales	42 068	1.5	1.2	1.7	68 947	2.4	2.1	2.7
Victoria	27 134	1.1	0.9	1.3	52 448	2.5	1.8	2.4
Queensland	20 346	1.9	1.5	2.3	24 285	2.3	1.8	2.7
			REST OF THE STATE					
New South Wales	29 848	1.8	1.4	2.2	21762	1.3	1.0	1.7
Victoria	11 942	1.2	0.8	1.7	14164	1.5	1.0	2.0
Queensland	18 103	1.5	1.1	1.9	26 075	2.2	1.7	2.6

Figure 3a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Households and 99% Confidence Limits, State of Enumeration



It was not possible to obtain separate estimates for the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory as the unit record file provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics assigns the same code to all households and persons sampled from the Territories. Therefore, results for the combined Territory ACT/NT must be interpreted with caution[5] and they are not included in Figures 3 and 4. According to Crime and Safety Australia April 1993, the Northern Territory had the highest burglary rates among all the states apart from Western Australia (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994, p. 3), a result that could influence the relatively high percentage of repeat victims for the combined Territories (ACT/NT).

Personal Offences

The percentage of repeat victims of personal crime was similar in all the States; the only exception being the combined ACT/NT where the percentage of repeat victims was larger. On the other hand, there were no differences between States in their percentages of single incident victims (see Figure 4a).

5. The geographic, demographic and cultural differences between the ACT and the Northern Territory will impact their levels of crime. National crime statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997) show the Northern Territory as having the highest rates of domestic burglary, assault and sexual assault in Australia. On the other hand, the ACT had the lowest burglary rate in the country and its rates of assault and sexual assault below the national average.

Figure 3b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Households and 99% Confidence Limits, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, Part of State of Enumeration

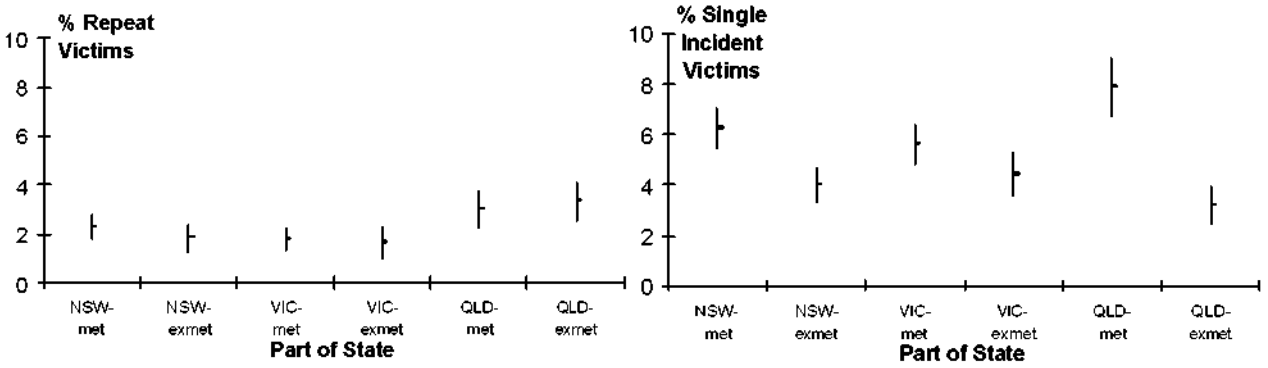


Figure 4a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Households and 99% Confidence Limits, State of Enumeration

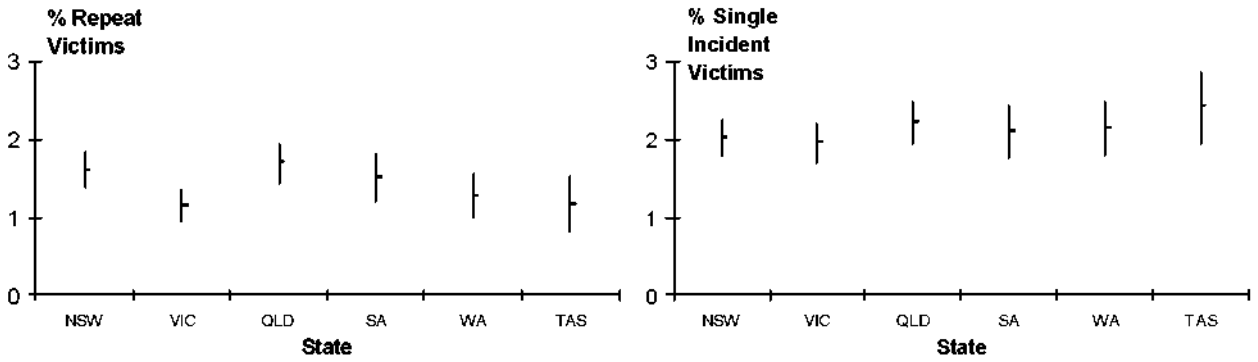
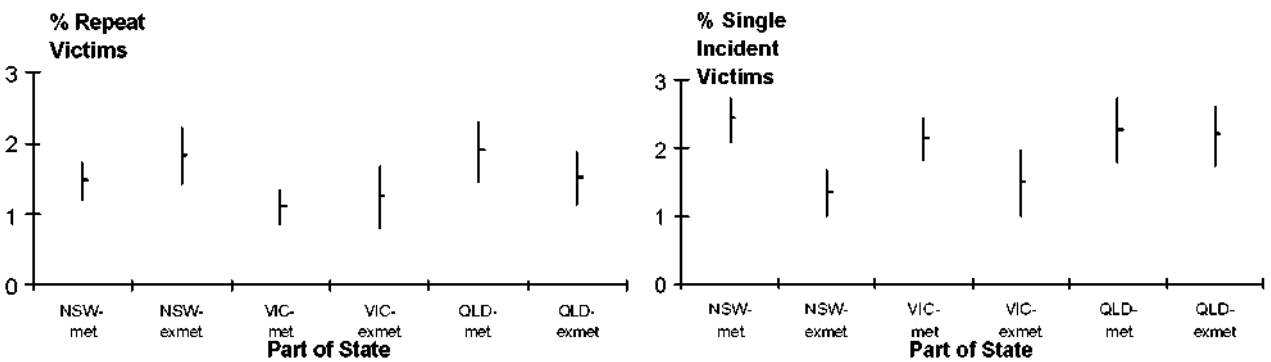


Figure 4b shows that there were no differences between metropolitan and other areas with respect to the percentage of repeat victims, but for single incident victims substantial differences were observed between the metropolitan and other areas of New South Wales.

The data reveal some interesting patterns. Barring rare exceptions, States which display a low overall victimisation rate, compared to the Australian rate, also show a low repeat victimisation rate and vice versa. The Crime and Safety Survey 1993 revealed that Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the two Territories had a higher household victimisation rate than that for Australia as a whole, and that these jurisdictions also had a higher repeat household victimisation rate. A similar pattern is obtained for personal crimes as well. In this case, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the two Territories show higher than the national victimisation rate and these States also display relatively high repeat victimisation rates. It would appear that the level of repeat victimisation may enable us to explain, at least in part, variations in the crime rate of different jurisdictions.

Metropolitan and regional areas did not differ significantly in terms of levels of repeat victimisation for household and personal crimes. For single incident victims there were a few exceptions. In Queensland, metropolitan areas showed a significantly higher rate for household crimes than their non-metropolitan counterparts. For personal crime, metro-New South Wales had a significantly higher rate than other areas of the State.

Figure 4b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons and 99% Confidence Limits, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, Part of State of Enumeration



4

Correlates of Repeat Victimisation

Ever since the large-scale surveys of criminal victimisation began, a vast array of data has emerged on the characteristics and types of victimisation. Research literature suggests that repeat victimisation may be explained by such factors as precipitation, facilitation, vulnerability, opportunity, attractiveness and impunity (see Sparks 1981). For example, Ziegenhagen (1976) found that in the United States repeat victims of violence tend to be of a lower socioeconomic status than single incident victims; that males are more likely to be repeat victims than females; that repeat assaults are more likely to take place inside a neighbour's home or other building; and that repeat robberies are more likely to occur outside, near the home. Hindelang et al. (1978) found that in the United States repeat victims are more likely than single incident victims to be victimised by a person known to them; that members of households reporting household offences or where another person has been a victim of personal crime are more likely to be victims of a personal crime. Authors such as Trickett et al. (1991) suggest that repeat victimisation is more intense in high crime areas, and that this is due to social differences between areas, rather than to differences in individual characteristics.

Since repeat victimisation is the result of particular individuals in the population being exposed to disproportionate risk, it can be explained by most of the factors already advanced for the explanation of general victimisation. The factors suggested by the "lifestyle" approach (Hindelang et al. 1978), the "routine-activities" approach (Cohen & Felson 1979) and the Opportunity Model (Cohen et al. 1981) can be used to determine as to what extent repeat victims are different from single incident victims. These analyses are limited by the fact that the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey did not collect information on neighbourhood characteristics; this affected the ability to unveil possible area and other ecological effects on repeat victimisation.

Household Offences

Guardianship

Routine activity and crime pattern theories suggest that presence of a person in a place or home prevents crime, and absence makes crime more likely (Felson 1994). Official statistics on burglary from various jurisdictions in Australia clearly show that a majority of residential burglaries occur in the daytime when houses are empty because both parents work and kids go to school, or when they are on holidays. Carcach (1994) examined burglary rates across different measures of guardianship and discovered that households where at least one person stayed at home during the day were less likely to be burglarised than other households. For this study it is of interest to determine whether the level of guardianship was associated with repeat victimisation for household offences.

Two indirect measures of guardianship are used in this study. The first measure,

aimed at capturing the notion of guardianship during the day, was defined in terms of the number of household members who were not in the labour force nor students. The second measure referred to guardianship during the night and was defined in terms of the number of household members who visit entertainment places after 6 pm. Selection of these two indirect measures of guardianship was dictated by the contents of the survey.

Table 5 shows that the effect of daytime guardianship on the risk of household crime was similar for both single incident and repeat victims. In fact, in both groups, the prevalence rate for households with no guardianship during the day was about 1.7 times the rate for the others.

The absence of night-time guardianship posed a greater risk for repeat victims than for single incident victims. The prevalence rate among repeat victims whose dwellings were unoccupied during the night was over twice that of the other repeat victims. On the other hand, among single incident victims, the rate ratio was 1.7. Thus guardianship appears an important factor in an offender's choice of a target. Wright and Decker (1994) found that the familiarity of the place and knowledge of valuables within the home, among others, influenced the offender's decision to select an address more than once.

Household Composition

Household composition is often used as an indicator of family stability, and in the case of sole parent households it can be used as a measure of vulnerability. Family disruption is one factor with a potential to explain victimisation risk (Smith & Jarjoura 1989).

Table 5 shows prevalence rates for repeat and single incident victims according to household type. In general, households composed of a married couple with or without children tend to be at lower risk of repeat victimisation than other types of households (see Figure 5a). Households composed of sole parents with children of any age are at highest risk for repeat victimisation as well as single incident victimisation (see Figure 5b).

Geographical Mobility

Households in rented accommodation consistently report higher victimisation rates than other households; a fact that has been associated with risk heterogeneity (Chenery et al. 1996) and facilitation of household crime (Sparks 1981). In general, most rented dwellings do not have security devices installed, and the households living in this type of accommodation will not invest in security due to restrictions in their tenancy agreements or/and to the fact that they do not own the property. Many members of such households who are in the stage of transience may not have enough possessions they consider worth insuring or protecting. In addition, households in rented accommodation may tend to reside relatively short periods within specific areas which limits their access to local relational networks.

The figures in Table 5 indicate that repeat victimisation for households in rented accommodation occurred at a rate twice that of other households. On the other hand, the rate ratio for single incident victims was only 1.2.

Length of residence at the current address when considered at the aggregate area level is a measure of residential instability which has emerged as an important correlate of victimisation (in aggregate studies of property crime). When defined at the level of the individual household as in this study, this variable can still be considered as a measure of geographical mobility which in turn may be associated with degree of vulnerability derived from the amount and intensity of relational networks in the area. Table 5 shows that (whole) households with short terms of residence had a repeat victimisation rate 1.6 times that for long-term residents. On the other hand, their single incident rate was only 1.2 times the rate for long-term residents (see Figure 5c). These results suggest that among households with relatively short periods of stay at the current address, repeat victimisation contributes more to their total crime rates than it does among households with longer periods of residence.

Table 5: ***AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993:HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES: Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims, Selected Risk Factors***

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
Guardianship								
At least one household member is not in the labour force and not a student								
Yes	49 439	1.7	1.4	2.0	120 673	4.2	3.8	4.6
No	100 336	2.9	2.6	3.3	251588	7.4	6.9	7.8
Home often unoccupied after 6:00 pm								
Yes	11638	5.0	3.3	6.8	22 967	10.0	7.7	12.3
No	138137	2.3	2.1	2.5	349 293	5.8	5.5	6.1
Household Type								
Single person	37 454	2.9	2.4	3.5	79 878	6.3	5.5	7.0
Married couple								
Only	20 065	1.4	1.0	1.8	61246	4.3	3.7	4.9
and children 15 years and over only	10 635	1.5	1.0	2.0	39 238	5.5	4.5	6.5
and children under 15 only	22 865	1.8	1.4	2.2	78 546	6.1	5.4	6.9
and children of any age	10 047	2.8	1.8	3.9	20 929	5.9	4.5	7.3
Sole parent								
and children 15 years and over only	7189	2.9	1.7	4.2	13 907	5.7	3.9	7.4
and children under 15 only	11209	5.3	3.5	7.1	20 772	9.8	7.5	12.2
and children of any age	3 057	5.4	2.0	8.8	6 670	11.8	6.8	16.8
All other households	27 254	3.8	3.0	4.7	51074	7.2	6.1	8.3
Geographical Mobility								
Rented Accommodation								
Yes	62 826	3.9	3.3	4.4	111449	6.9	6.2	7.6
No	86 949	1.9	1.6	2.1	260 812	5.6	5.3	5.9
All Household Members at Current Address for Less than 3 Years								
Yes	66 056	3.2	2.7	3.6	142 083	6.8	6.2	7.5
No	83 719	2.0	1.8	2.2	230 177	5.5	5.1	5.8
All Households	149 775	2.4	2.2	2.6	372 261	5.9	5.6	6.2

Figure 5a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES,* Repeat Victims, Percentage of the Total Number of Households and 99% Confidence Limits, Household Composition

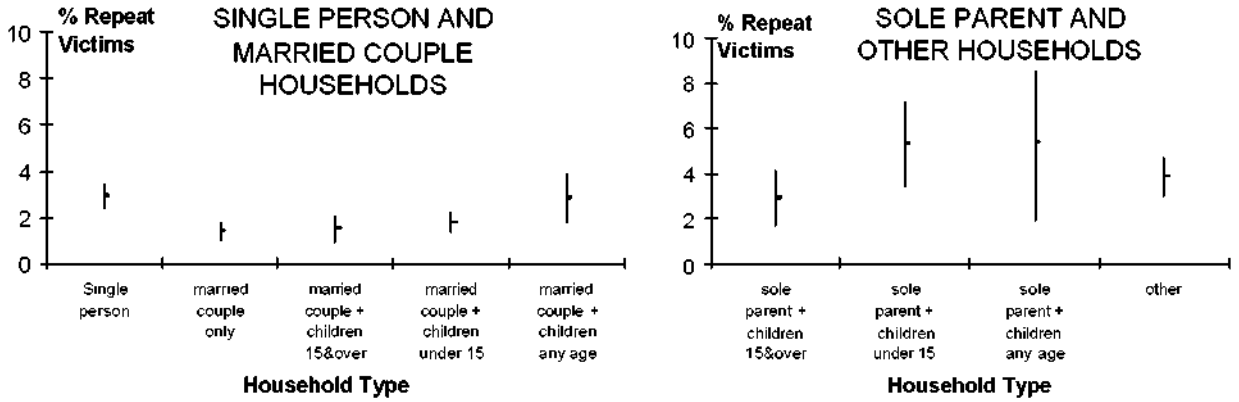


Figure 5b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES,* Single Incident Victims, Percentage of the Total Number of Households and 99% Confidence Limits, Household Composition

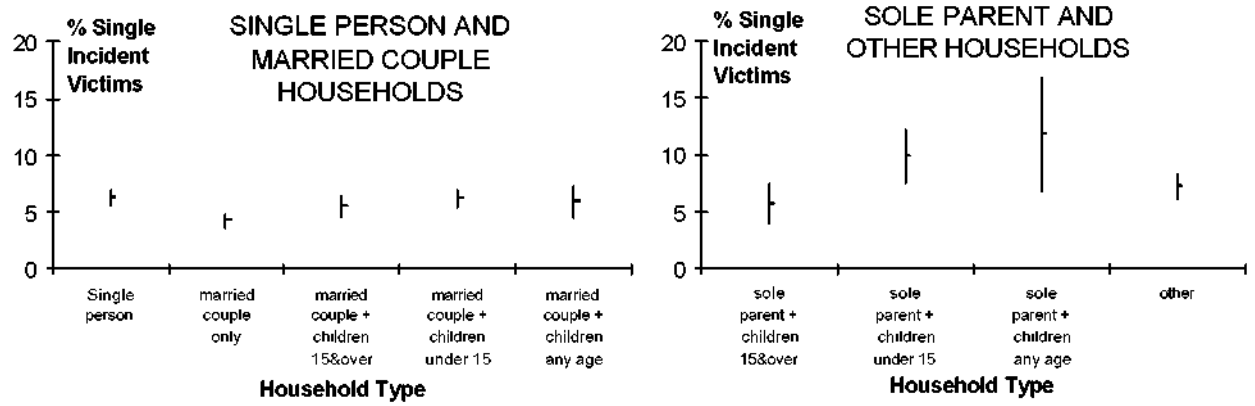


Figure 5c: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Households and 99% Confidence Limits, Home Ownership and Length of Stay at Current Address

Personal Offences

Lifestyle and Routine Activities

Crime surveys consistently find young males, never married and separated persons as the group with the highest victimisation rates. Demographic differences in the likelihood of victimisation can be attributed to the lifestyle of victims. Furthermore, variations in lifestyles are related to differential exposures to risk (Meier & Miethe 1993).

Gender and Age

Regarding the gender of the victim of personal offences, Table 6 shows that males are both more likely to be single incident and repeat victims than females (see Figures 6a and 6b). The figures in the Table also confirm the belief that young people of both sexes have the highest likelihood of single incident and repeat victimisation; and that this likelihood decreases with age. However, victimisation rates of males and females show no significant differences for those aged over 34 years; a result that holds for both single incident and repeat victimisation.

Marital Status

People in different groups defined according to marital status tend to show differential victimisation patterns. Married and widowed people have consistently been found to have the lowest risk of violent victimisation; whereas the largest risk has been observed for those in the "never married" group. Behavioural patterns associated with marital status are dependent upon the values and norms prevailing in specific societies as well as the number and ages of children, if any. Social expectations may be different for males and females; or for people in different age groups. For offences against the person, analysis of victimisation risk according to

Table 6: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims and 99% Confidence Limits, Gender and Age

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
Females								
15 to 24	28 471	2.2	1.7	2.7	42 443	3.3	2.7	3.8
25 to 34	17 436	1.3	0.9	1.6	28 469	2.1	1.6	2.5
35 to 49	17 412	0.9	0.7	1.2	28 314	1.5	1.2	1.8
50 and Over	5 941	0.3	0.1	0.4	13 467	0.6	0.4	0.8
Total	69 260	1.0	0.9	1.2	112693	1.7	1.5	1.8
Males								
15 to 24	56 587	4.2	3.6	4.9	67 354	5.1	4.6	5.5
25 to 34	32 044	2.4	1.9	2.8	41252	3.0	2.5	3.5
35 to 49	27192	1.4	1.1	1.8	36 579	1.9	1.6	2.3
50 and Over	8 380	0.4	0.3	0.6	16 862	0.9	0.6	1.1
Total	124 203	1.9	1.7	2.1	162 047	2.5	2.3	2.6
Persons								
15 to 24	85 058	3.2	2.8	3.6	109 797	2.4	3.9	4.4
25 to 34	49 480	1.8	1.5	2.1	69 721	5.6	2.2	2.9
35 to 49	44 604	1.2	1.0	1.4	64 893	6.0	1.5	2.0
50 and Over	14 321	0.3	0.2	0.5	30 329	8.8	0.6	0.9
Total	193 463	1.5	1.4	1.6	274 740	2.1	2.0	2.2

Figure 6a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Repeat Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons, Gender and Age

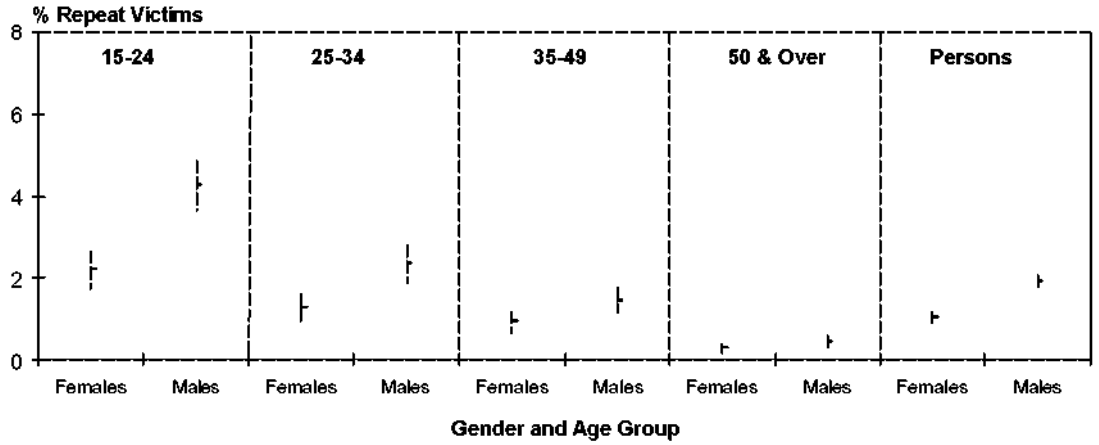
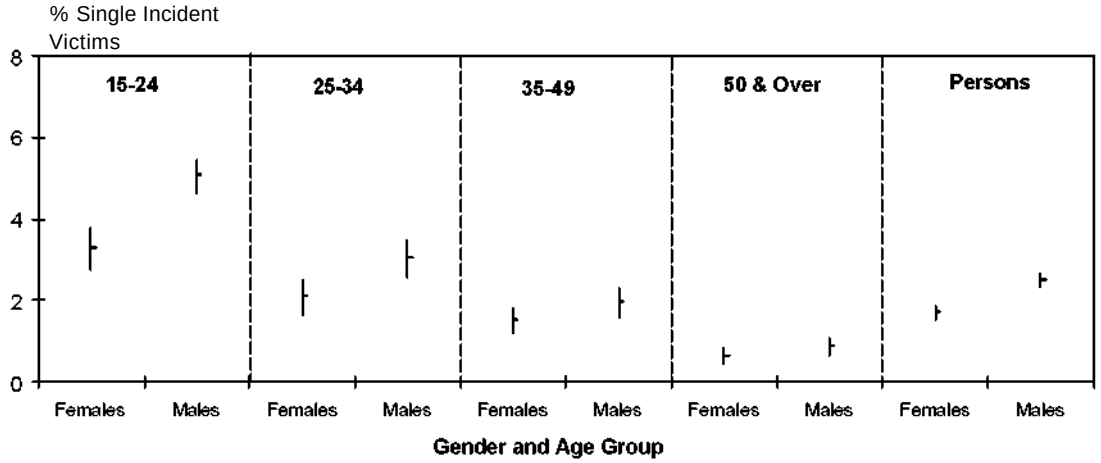


Figure 6b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Single Incident Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons, Gender and Age



marital status must control for gender and age.

Tables 7a, 7b and 7c show repeat and single incident victimisation rates according to marital status, gender and age of victims. Marital status categories not shown and empty cells in certain parts of the tables correspond to cases where the victimisation rates were not statistically different from zero.

Figure 7a indicates that being widowed was associated with lowest risk of repeat as well as single incident victimisation. Figure 7a also indicates that single and separated persons tend to face a higher victimisation risk than other persons, a result that holds for repeat and single incidents.

However, some differences were observed when victimisation risks for males and females were plotted separately. People currently married suffered a low victimisation risk but married males were more likely than their female counterparts to be victims of repeat victimisation. On the other hand, married women had a higher rate of single incident victimisation than married males. Men currently in a de facto relationship were substantially more likely to be both repeat and single incident victims than women. Both men and women, in a separated status, were in higher risk of victimisation than people in other marital status groups (see Figure 7c).

The introduction of age in the gender-marital status relationship reveals some interesting patterns. It now appears an established fact that of the people in the young age group 15-24, who are over-

Table 7a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES*
Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims, Marital Status, Gender and Age

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
Persons	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
Married	51953	0.8	0.7	0.9	94 941	1.5	1.3	1.6
De facto	10 549	2.2	1.4	3.0	10 773	2.3	1.5	3.1
Separated	12 073	3.6	2.4	4.8	12 342	3.7	2.5	4.9
Divorced	12 032	2.2	1.4	2.9	8 481	1.5	0.9	2.1
Widowed	1976	0.3	0.1	0.5	4 007	0.5	0.2	0.9
Single	104 877	3.0	2.7	3.3	144 199	4.1	3.7	4.4

Table 7b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Females, Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims, Marital Status and Age

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
Age and Marital Status			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
				15-24 YEARS				
Married	**	**	**	**	1 572	1.1	0.1	2.1
De facto	**	**	**	**	1 606	2.3	0.3	4.3
Single	27125	2.5	2.0	3.1	38 623	3.6	3.0	4.2
				25-34 YEARS				
Married	5 281	0.6	0.3	0.9	14137	1.6	1.1	2.1
De facto	**	**	**	**	1619	1.7	0.2	3.2
Separated	4 213	6.7	3.1	10.4	2126	3.4	0.9	5.9
Divorced	2152	4.6	1.1	8.1	**	**	**	**
Single	4 807	1.6	0.8	2.5	9 995	3.4	2.1	4.6
				35-49 YEARS				
Married	8 729	0.6	0.4	0.9	18 734	1.3	1.0	1.7
De facto	2171	4.0	1.0	7.0	**	**	**	**
Separated	1788	2.2	0.4	4.1	3 318	4.1	1.6	6.7
Divorced	3 066	1.9	0.7	3.2	2159	1.4	0.3	2.4
Single	1658	1.3	0.2	2.5	3 593	2.9	1.2	4.6
				50 YEARS AND OVER				
Married	2 743	2.1	0.7	3.6	7 279	5.6	3.2	8.0
Separated	**	**	**	**	1429	3.0	0.2	5.8
Divorced	**	**	**	**	1734	1.3	0.2	2.4
Widowed	**	**	**	**	2 404	0.4	0.1	0.7
				ALL FEMALES				
Married	17 228	0.7	0.5	0.9	41722	1.6	1.3	1.9
De facto	3 883	1.7	0.7	2.6	3 470	1.5	0.6	2.4
Separated	6 584	3.3	1.8	4.7	7 516	3.7	2.2	5.3
Divorced	5 953	1.8	0.9	2.6	4 486	1.3	0.6	2.0
Widowed	**	**	**	**	2 670	0.4	0.1	0.8
Single	33 969	2.2	1.7	2.6	52 831	3.4	2.8	3.9

** No cases were reported under these categories.

Table 7c: AUSTRALIA, NCSS1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Males,
Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims, Marital Status and Age

Age and Marital Status	*Repeat Victims*				*Single Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
	Number	%	Lower	Upper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
				15-24 YEARS				
Married	1 175	1.8	0.1	3.6	2 865	4.5	1.4	7.6
De facto	1 829	3.7	0.7	6.8	1 289	2.6	0.1	5.1
Single	53 583	4.4	3.7	5.1	62 788	5.2	4.7	5.6
				25-34 YEARS				
Married	10 900	1.5	1.0	2.0	13 839	1.9	1.3	2.5
De facto	3 991	3.7	1.6	5.8	4 181	3.9	1.8	6.0
Separated	1 828	5.7	1.1	10.3	1 980	6.2	1.4	10.9
Divorced	1 476	5.8	0.6	10.9	**	**	**	**
Single	13 848	3.0	2.0	3.9	20 700	4.4	3.4	5.5
				35-49 YEARS				
Married	16 817	1.1	0.8	1.5	24 543	1.7	1.3	2.0
De facto	**	**	**	**	1 833	2.8	0.5	5.0
Separated	2 669	5.1	1.6	8.6	**	**	**	**
Divorced	3 775	3.7	1.6	5.9	2 063	2.0	0.5	3.6
Single	2 901	1.6	0.5	2.6	6 504	3.5	1.9	5.1
				50 YEARS AND OVER				
Married	5 833	0.4	0.2	0.5	11 972	0.8	0.5	1.0
Separated	**	**	**	**	1 501	3.3	0.3	6.3
Divorced	**	**	**	**	1 380	1.5	0.1	3.0
Single	**	**	**	**	1 376	1.3	0.1	2.5
				ALL MALES				
Married	34 725	0.9	0.7	1.1	53 219	1.4	1.2	1.6
De facto	6 666	2.7	1.5	4.0	7 303	3.0	1.7	4.3
Separated	5 489	4.2	2.2	6.2	4 826	3.7	1.8	5.6
Divorced	6 079	2.8	1.5	4.1	3 995	1.8	0.8	2.9
Widowed	**	**	**	**	1 337	0.9	0.0	1.8
Single	70 908	3.6	3.1	4.1	91 368	4.6	4.1	5.1

No cases were reported under these categories.

Figure 7a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons and 99% Confidence Limits, Marital Status

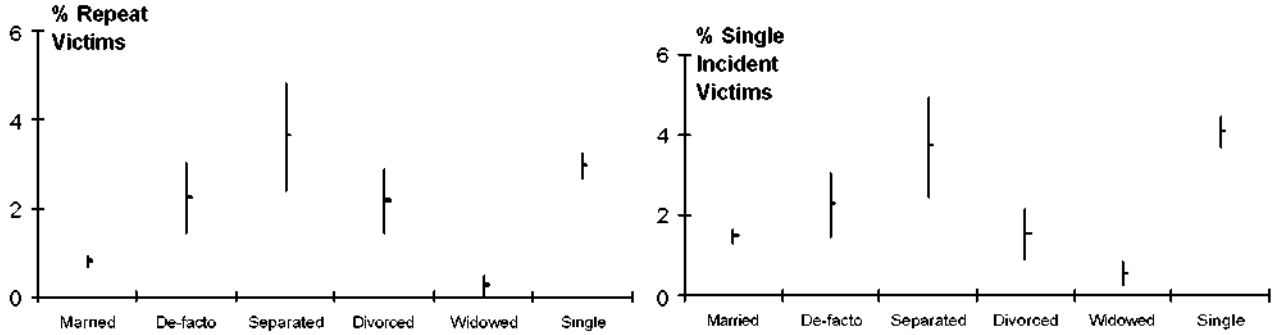
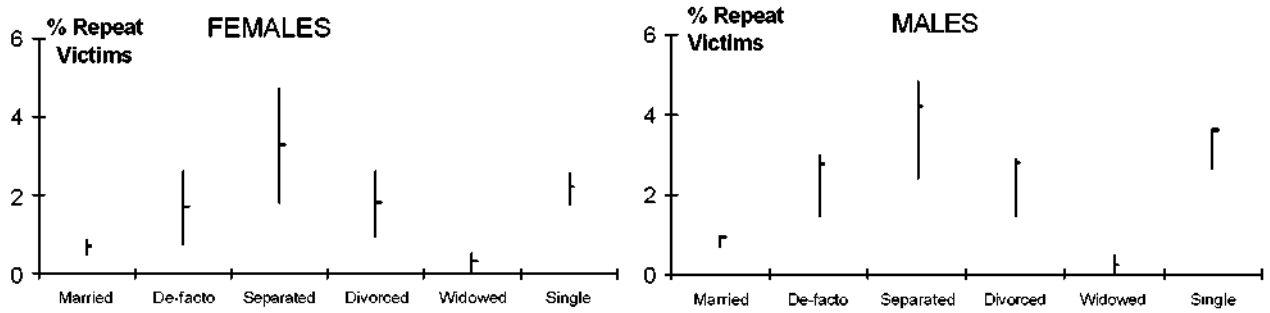


Figure 7b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Repeat Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons and 99% Confidence Limits, Marital Status and Gender



represented in offender and victim populations, a higher proportion is more likely to be single than be married/separated/ divorced. Thus, young single males and females suffered repeat and single victimisation at a rate higher than those in other marital status groups. It must be noted, however, that single males aged 15-24 were at higher risk of victimisation than their female counterparts. In addition, no differences between repeat and single incident victimisation rates were detected according to marital status for persons in this age group.

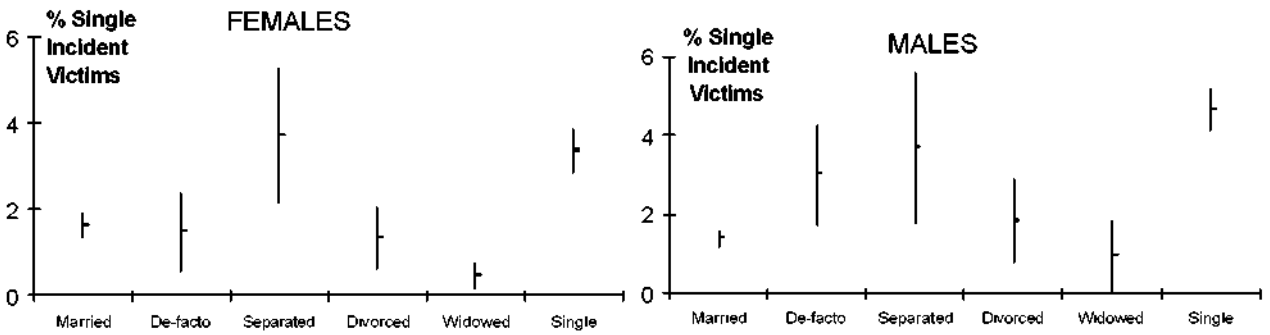
One significant fact emerging from the data is that separated women in the age group 25-34 had the highest repeat victimisation rate compared to any other age, gender, marital status, or repeat/once-only victimisation group. The rate of 6.7 per cent was 11 times that of married women in this age group and four times that of single women. Separated men in this age group had the highest single incident victimisation rate, although this was not much higher than the repeat victimisation rate of separated and divorced men. Compared to the younger age groups, the risk of repeat/single incident victimisation for males and females in the 35-49 age group was relatively evenly distributed.

Married females aged 50 years and over were two and a half times as likely to be single incident victims as repeat victims. Among single incident victims in this age group, the rate for married persons exceeded that for all other marital groups. Victimisation rates, repeat as well as single incident, of married women in this age group were significantly higher than their male counterparts. Married men, 50-years-old and over, were least likely to be victims of violent crime than those separated, divorced or single.

The previous results indicate that in general:

- repeat victims and single incident victims are not significantly different in terms of marital status, except for the fact that

Figure 7c: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Single Incident Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons and 99% Confidence Limits, Marital Status and Gender



those in a separated status were much more likely to be both repeat and single incident victims than those in other marital groups;

- the main demographic factors relating to both types of victimisation seem to be the gender and age of the person;
- young people in general and males 15-24 in particular, were more likely to suffer victimisation than other demographic groups;
- women, 25-34 years-old, and currently separated from their spouses were more likely to be victims, particularly repeat victims, of violent crime than any other group.

Most crime victims surveys show that single-parent families with dependent children suffer high risk of victimisation. Since nine out of ten single parent families have a woman as a sole parent this finding conforms with other research findings. Men aged 25-34 years-old and in a separated marital status also suffer high victimisation. Are they assaulted or robbed and what other individual characteristics and lifestyle factors increase the risk of such attacks? A last intriguing finding concerns women 50-years-old and over and currently married. This group has a very high single-incident victimisation rate (refer to Table 7b).

It must be noted however, that female victimisation rates could be seriously underestimated as the 1993 NCSS did not ask any specific questions about domestic violence. The sexual assault questions were asked of females aged 18 years and over only, and the survey collected very limited data on the victim-offender relationship.

Labour Force Status

Labour force status is another variable that has been related to victimisation risk. The National Crime and Safety Survey found unemployed persons to have an overall victimisation rate for personal crimes twice that of their employed counterparts; and over three times the rate for people not in the labour force (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994, p. 7). The official definition of persons not in the labour force refers to those who are not working and not looking for a job, which includes persons in categories such as pensioners and retired, home duties and may include full-time students.

Assessment of the impact of labour force status on victimisation risk requires redefinition of categories in order to account for likely variations relating to age. Of particular interest to our analysis was the identification of persons in full-time study, so they were excluded from the "not in the labour force" category.

Table 8 shows the repeat and single incident violent victimisation rates according to labour force status. The risk of repeat victimisation among unemployed persons and students is similar and higher than that for those working or not in the labour force. Unemployed persons were three times as likely to be victims of repeat violent crime as working people (see Figure 8a). Rates of repeat victimisation were lower than single incident victimisation rates for those working and students; and were the same for persons not in the labour force.

A likely explanation as to why the unemployed and students seem to be more affected by repeat victimisation than other persons can be advanced by examining the age structure of victims according to gender within these two groups.

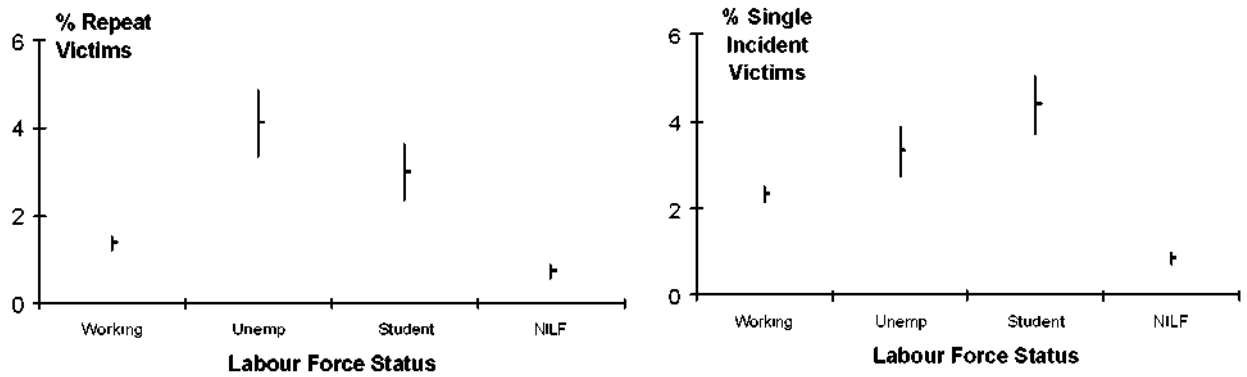
Among the unemployed, the risk of victimisation decreases with older age, for both males and females. Unemployed young people, both males and females, under the age of 25 are more likely to be repeat as well as single incident victims of violent crimes than those in any other age group. Young age appears to be a key factor that increases an unemployed person's chances of becoming a victim of violent crime (see Figure 8b).

All the respondents to the survey identified in the student category had ages between 15 and 24 years. Students aged 15-19 years were more likely than those aged 20-24 years to be both repeat and single incident victims. Juvenile males (15-19) and females aged 20-24 were slightly more likely to be repeat victims than single incident victims. However, juvenile females and male students aged 20-24 were slightly more likely to be single incident victims than repeat victims (see Figure 8c).

Table 8: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims, Labour Force Status

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
			99% Confidence Limits				99% Confidence Limits	
Labour Force Status	Number	%	Lower	UUpper	Number	%	Lower	Upper
Working	99 176	1.4	1.2	1.5	168 819	2.3	2.2	2.5
Unemployed	36 095	4.1	3.3	4.9	29129	3.3	2.7	3.9
Student	28 416	3.0	2.4	3.6	41613	4.4	3.7	5.0
Not in the Labour Force	29 776	0.7	0.6	0.9	35180	0.8	0.7	1.0

Figure 8a: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons and 99% Confidence Limits, Labour Force Status



Activities Outside the Home

Routine activity patterns that involve greater levels of non-household activity increase potential victims' visibility and accessibility as crime targets (Meier & Miethe 1993).

People going outside more frequently, either for leisure or for work-related activities, will accordingly have a higher risk of victimisation.

The Crime and Safety Survey asked two questions that can be used to represent this concept of activities outside the home. One question asked how often the person had gone out for entertainment after 6 pm during the last 12 months. The other asked how often the person had travelled on public transport after 6 pm during the 12 months prior to the survey. If the answer to any of these questions was more than once a week, the person was considered as having a high frequency of activity outside the home.

The figures in Table 9 show that persons frequently travelling on public transport after 6 pm were more likely to be victimised than others. It is interesting to note that among these persons, there was no significant difference between their rates of repeat and single incident victimisations (see Figure 9). A similar pattern was obtained for people using public transport at lower frequencies, although their overall victimisation rate was much lower than that for people using public transport frequently. These results confirm that people who have to rely on public transport for their mobility at night run a greater risk of repeat violent victimisation than those who do not.

Going out for entertainment at night was associated with greater risk of victimisation. The victimisation patterns for people going out frequently were quite similar to those using public transport frequently. The important point here appears to be outdoor activity. This type of information could be very useful if crime and safety surveys can collect data on the time and place of the incident.

Figure 8b: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Sex and Age Composition of Unemployed Repeat and Unemployed Single Incident Victims

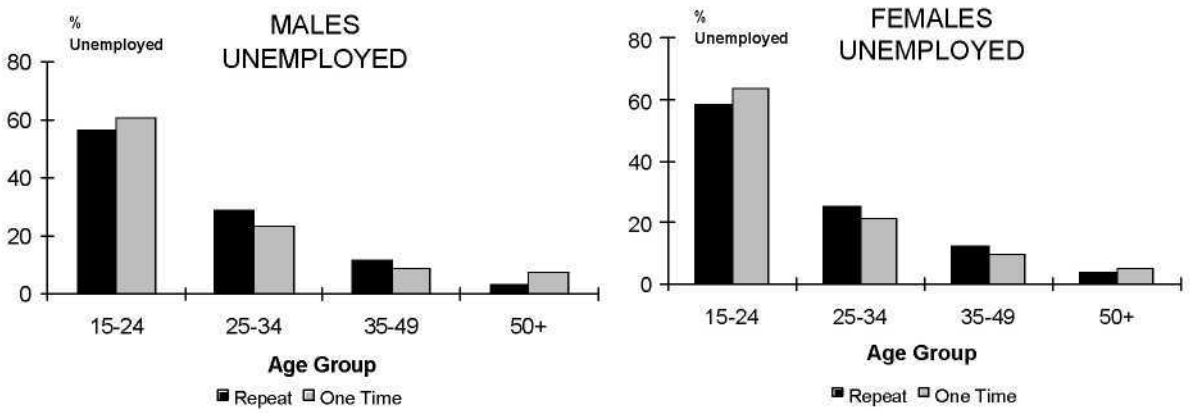


Figure 8c: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Sex and Age Composition of Student Repeat and Student Single Incident Victims

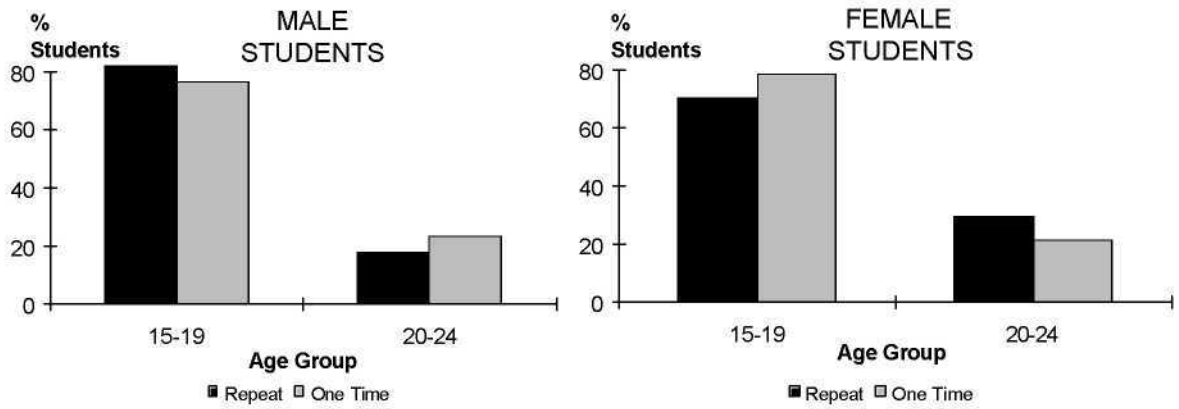
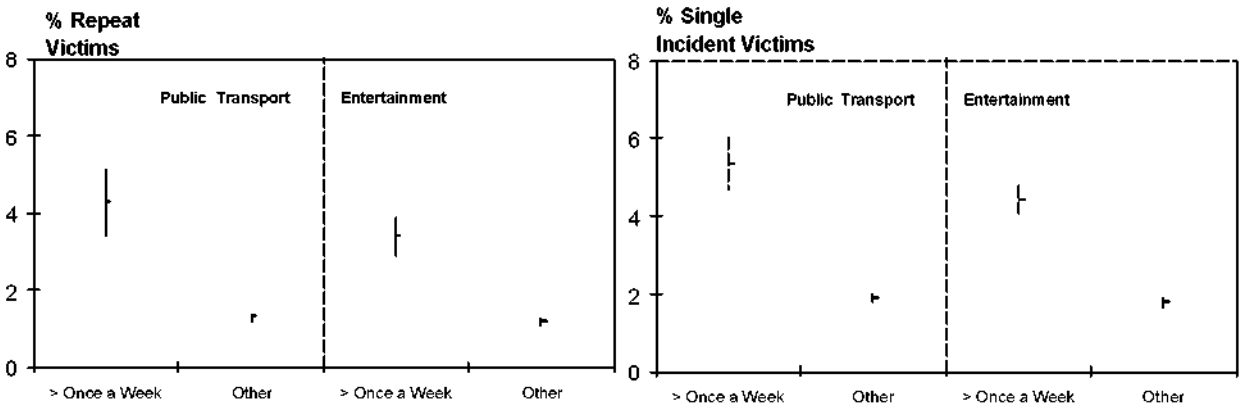


Table 9: AUSTRALIA, NCSS 1993: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victimisation Rates for Repeat Victims and Single Incident Victims, Acitivities Outside the Home After 6 pm

	Repeat Victims				*Single Incident Victims*			
Type and Frequency of			**99% Confidence Limits**				**99% Confidence Limits**	
Activity	**Number**	**%**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Number**	**%**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Travelling on Public Transport After 6 pm								
More than once a week	33 055	4.3	3.4	5.1	41341	5.3	4.7	6.0
Once a* week *or less	160 408	1.3	1.2	1.4	233 400	1.9	1.8	2.0
Going Out for Entertainment After 6 pm								
More than once a week	63155	3.4	2.9	3.9	81620	4.4	4.0	4.8
Once a week or less	130 308	1.2	1.1	1.3	193 120	1.7	1.6	1.9

Figure 9: NCSS 1993, *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Victims as a Percentage of the Total Number of Persons and 99% Confidence Limits, Activities Outside the Home After 6 pm



5 Repeat Victimisation and Fear of Crime

Crime affects the whole community and creates a level of fear, which in turn may have a negative impact on the quality of life. Fear of crime has been approached from at least three perspectives, namely, the community concern perspective, the perceived disorder perspective, and the indirect victimisation perspective (see Taylor & Hale 1986). According to the community concern perspective, fear of crime flows from people's perceptions of local problems derived from objective characteristics such as crime, physical conditions and socioeconomic status. The perceived disorder perspective explains fear in terms of the effect that lower social class and high incidence of physical and social incivility have on heightening the perception of local problems. The indirect victimisation perspective sustains that more vulnerable people are more likely to be victimised or to see crime, and that they will pass on information about their experiences through their local social networks. Consequently, those with more local ties and who have been a victim of crime are more fearful.

The relationship between previous victimisation and fear of crime is nevertheless of a complex nature and the results reported in the literature are ambiguous. According to Lewis and Salem (1986) and Hale (1996) the "victimisation" perspective to fear of crime remains unsubstantiated, which may be due to both victimisation and fear being explained by the same factors (that is gender, age, and so on). Given this, the inclusion of previous victimisation as an additional variable for explaining the fear of crime would not, because of the correlation between victimisation and other factors, make a significant contribution to explanatory power. Consequently, in studying the fear of crime, attempts to control for previous victimisation would, most likely, lead to the conclusion that the fear-victimisation relationship was weak.

Borooah and Carcach (1997) examined the relationship between victimisation and the fear of crime in Queensland, using a multivariate modelling strategy. They found that the size of the correlation coefficients for the relationship between previous victimisation and fear of crime was consistent with the weakness of the previous-victimisation/fear relationship noted in Hale (1996), though their results indicated that the relationship was weaker for personal than for household crime. Their main results are summarised as follows.

Personal Offences

- Previous victimisation experiences tend to generate more fear among females than among males;
- once people had experienced victimisation, the fear of crime among young persons increases more rapidly than it does for older persons;
- previous victimisation experiences have a more marked effect on the fear of crime among those renting government accommodation and people who perceive their areas as having relatively high crime;
- being a resident of an area with good physical and social environment and high

level of neighbourhood cohesion results in a reduced impact of previous victimisation on fear of crime.

Household Offences

- Among households that own their homes, previous victimisation has a greater effect on the fear of crime among young people than it does among older people;
- among owner-occupier households, the fear of crime of those in areas with high levels of incivility is more affected by previous victimisation than the fear of crime of households in better quality environments;
- the fear of crime of single person households where the member works or is in full-time study is more sensitive to previous victimisation than among multi-person households;
- previous victimisation experiences have a more marked effect on the fear of crime among households renting government accommodation and householders who perceive their areas as having relatively high crime.

The relationship between violent victimisation and fear of personal crime is mediated by factors such as age and labour force status, which we have found to be associated with the risk of both repeat and single incident victimisation. Therefore, an analysis of the likely impact that repeat victimisation may have on the fear of crime is worth performing.

Unfortunately, the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey did not seek any data related to the fear of crime. The findings reported here relate to the findings from the 1991 Queensland Crime Victims Survey (Queensland Government Statistician's Office 1992) which is the only relatively recent survey that has asked questions on fear of crime and for which unit record data are available. Although the analysis refers to the Queensland experience, its results should not be dismissed as they enable exploration of relationships between repeat victimisation and fear of crime that may hold for the rest of Australia, especially when considering the fact that no significant differences exist between the results from the surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics over the last three years (Chapter 1 of this report).

There are methodological differences between the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey dealt with for most of this study, and the 1991 Queensland Crime Survey, hereafter referred to as the CVS. While the former collected data by means of self-completed questionnaires, the latter used face-to-face interviewing by trained interviewers. In addition, the surveys differ in the wording of questions relating to the offences. De Mel and Carcach (1995) discussed the likely effect that this and other methodological differences might have on the comparability of survey estimates. In order to control for differences in the wording of questions, the definitions of the offences in the Queensland survey were adapted to conform as closely as possible to the definitions implicit in the questions asked by the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey.

Warr (1987) demonstrated that the amount of fear experienced by a person is a function of both the perceived seriousness of an offence and the likelihood of being a victim from that offence. This view is incorporated in the analysis of the relationship between repeat victimisation and fear of crime.

Fear of personal crime was measured from the answers to the question relating to personal safety when walking alone after dark. Answers to this question were arranged on an ordinal scale with the following categories: very safe, fairly safe, not very safe and not at all safe. Persons who felt very safe or fairly safe were regarded as being unafraid of personal crime. A dichotomous variable was then defined as taking on the value of one if the person was afraid; otherwise it took on the value of zero. This measure has been used in other studies of fear of crime (Taylor & Hale 1986; Carcach et al. 1995).

Fear of household crime was estimated from the answers to the question on feelings of safety when staying alone at home during the night. A dichotomous variable was then defined as taking on the value of one if the person was afraid; otherwise it took on the value of zero.

The perceived risk of victimisation of each particular offence was approximated from the answers to questions on how likely

Table 10: AUSTRALIA, Queensland Crime Victims Survey 1991, Household Offences, Number and Percentage of Victims, Fear of Crime by Whether a Repeat Victim or Not, and Perceived Risk of Burglary

	High Perceived Risk of Burglary				*Low Perceived Risk of Burglary*			
Unsafe when Staying Alone in their own Home at Night	Repeat Victim		Single Incident Victim		Repeat Victim		Single Incident Victim	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	2151	26.8	5 515	20.5	331	3.8	1564	6.2
No	5 863	73.2	21362	79.5	8 448	96.2	23 794	93.8
Total	8 015	100.0	26 877	100.0	8 780	100.0	25 358	100.0

the person thought that crimes of assault, robbery and burglary would happen in the 12 months following the survey. Answers of very likely or fairly likely were taken as indicative of high perceived risk.

Repeat Victimisation and Fear of Household Offences

According to the Queensland CVS, there were an estimated 66 029 victims of household offences (that is break and enter or attempted break and enter) of which 16 795 or 25.4 per cent reported to have experienced more than one incident of the same offence during the survey period.

Table 10 shows the distribution of the fear of crime among victims of burglary by whether they were repeat victims during the 12 months prior to the survey and their perceived risk of burglary in the 12 months following the survey.

These figures suggest that among victims of burglary, those households whose heads consider themselves at high risk of being victimised in the near future and who have been victims of burglary in the recent past, tend to experience more fear of household crime than households victimised on a single occasion (see Figure 10).

Table 10 also shows that among victims of burglary with perceptions of low risk of future victimisation, there are no major differences in the levels of fear experienced by repeat and single incident victims, with victims in both groups experiencing relatively low levels of fear (see Figure 10). However, single incident victims tend to admit more fear than repeat victims.

These results suggest that repeat victimisation may have an effect on the fear of household crime; perhaps a weak one which in a sense is consistent with the findings in Borooah and Carcach (1997).

Figure 10: AUSTRALIA, 1991 Queensland Crime Victims Survey, Fear of Crime among Victims of Household Offences by whether Repeat Victims or Not, and Perceived Risk of Burglary

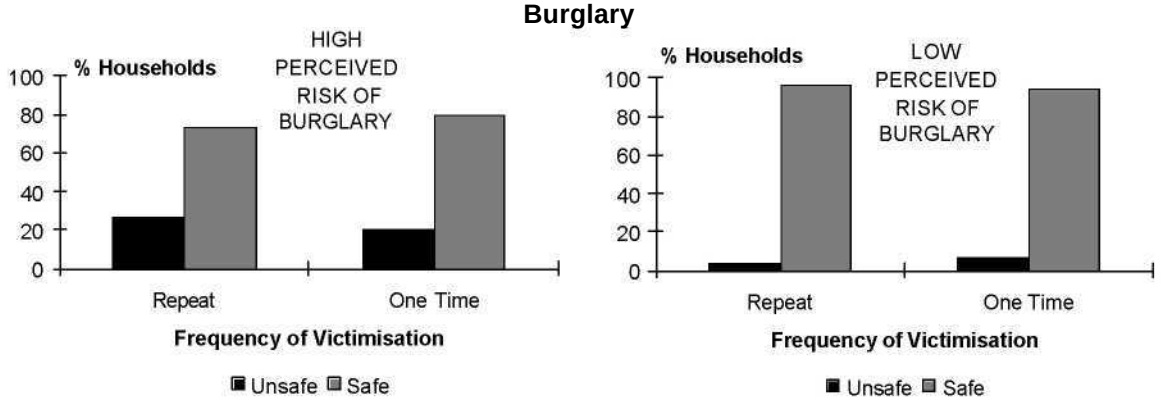


Table 11: AUSTRALIA, Queensland Crime Victims Survey 1991: *PERSONAL OFFENCES,* Number and Percentage of Victims, Fear of Crime by Whether a Repeat Victim or Not, and Perceived Risk of Violent Victimisation

	High Perceived Risk of Violence				*Low Perceived Risk of Violence*			
Unsafe when Walking Alone After Dark	Repeat Victim		Single Incident Victim		Repeat Victim		Single Incident Victim	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	10 488	40.0	20 978	53.3	8 760	19.8	17 460	24.5
No	15 716	60.0	18 408	46.7	35 593	80.2	53 771	75.5
Total	26 204	100.0	39 387	100.0	44 354	100.0	71 231	100.0

Repeat Victimisation and Fear of Crime for Personal Offences

The Queensland CVS found 181 176 victims of violence (that is robbery or assault) of which 70 558, or 38.9 per cent, reported to have experienced more than one incident of the same offence during the survey period.

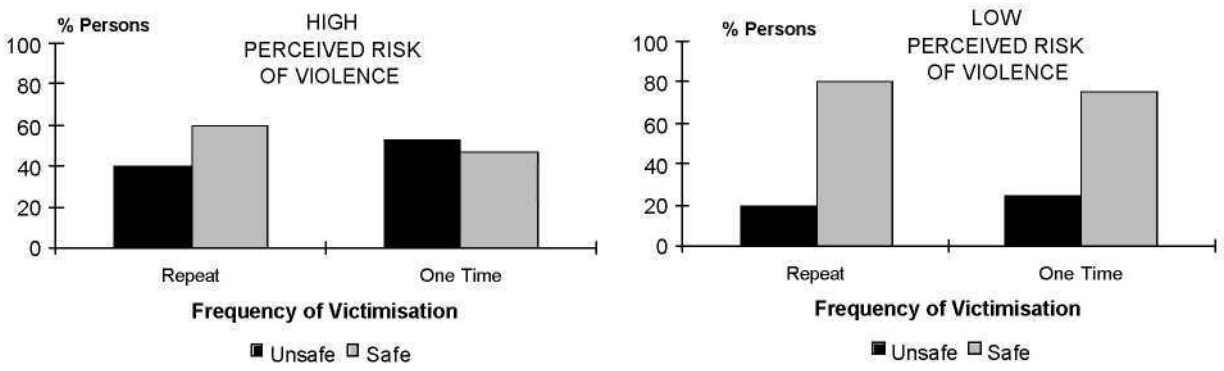
Table 11 shows the distribution of the fear of crime among victims of violence by whether they were repeat victims and their perceived risk of robbery or assault.

The figures in Table 11 suggest that among victims of violence, those who consider themselves at high risk of being victimised in the near future and who have been victims of repeat violence in the near past, tend to feel safer than their once-only victimised counterparts when walking alone in their suburb or area after dark (see Figure 11). These findings tend to reflect the patterns of personal victimisation displayed by official crime statistics. For example, a large proportion of violent victimisation occurs inside home and offenders are usually known to the victims. It is possible to speculate, other factors remaining constant, that the more frequent such victimisations, the less safe the victims would feel inside the home, and consequently, he/she will feel safer when walking alone in his/her area.

The figures in Table 11 also show that among victims of violence who perceive themselves at low risk of future victimisation, there are no major differences in the levels of fear experienced by repeat and single incident victims, with victims in both groups experiencing relatively low levels of fear (see Figure 11).

That repeat victims seeing themselves as being at high risk of future violent victimisation tend to experience lower levels of fear of crime than once-only victims in the same group is an interesting and quite intriguing result. It is clear that persons in

Figure 11: AUSTRALIA, 1991 Queensland Crime Victims Survey, Fear of Crime among Victims of Violent Offences by Whether Repeat Victims or not, and Perceived Risk of Violent Victimisation



this group might be exposed to crime on a continuous basis, which in turn might be due to them being residents of high crime areas or being themselves involved in crime. This is an issue requiring further research; however, it suggests that there might be a link between repeat victimisation and fear of crime for violent offences.

6

Discussion

Victimisation patterns show short-term stability

The fact that there were no significant differences between the distribution of the number of victimisations for the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey and those recorded for the State crime surveys conducted during 1995 can be taken as evidence of no major short-term changes in the general structure of victimisation in Australia. Most importantly, this result shows that the results from the national survey conducted in 1993 are still relevant, and can be confidently used to explore and explain trends and patterns in crime victimisation.

Small numbers of all the victims account for a large proportion of all victimisations

The findings show that in Australia, a relatively small number of all the victims of household and personal offences account for a large proportion of all the victimisation incidents, a result relevant from a public policy perspective, as it suggests that criminal incidents concentrate according to certain household and personal characteristics. Accordingly, if these criminogenic characteristics are verified and appropriate preventive strategies are designed and implemented, at least a proportion of the total incidence of victimisations can be reduced.

Repeat victimisation is more prevalent among specific groups in the general population

We have seen that repeat victimisation in Australia is not a random phenomenon, and that it is most likely due to differential exposures to risk among specific groups in the general population, especially young males.

Repeat victimisation explains inter-jurisdictional differences in crime rates

The results from the analyses indicate that repeat victimisation, together with other factors suggested in the literature, has the potential to explain inter-jurisdictional differences in crime rates, especially for household offences. They also indicate that apart from the effect of labour force status for personal offences, repeat victimisation is explainable in terms of the same factors having an effect on the risk of single incident victimisation. Repeat victimisation rates for those with a job are significantly lower than the rates of single incident victimisation.

Repeat victimisation seems to be associated with fear of crime

Finally, the findings suggest that there may be a link between repeat victimisation and fear of crime. Although this relationship seems to be weak, it is an issue which merits further research.

Limitations of Australian crime survey data to support research on repeat victimisation

This report is constrained by the lack of measurements on relevant items for which the National Crime and Safety Survey does not collect data, and/or which the Australian Bureau of Statistics does not include in the unit record file. Of special relevance to the study of repeat victimisation is the absence of sufficiently disaggregated geographical information, which, if available, would be useful in performing more detailed analyses on the relationship between crime and place, and most importantly on the incidence and concentration of victimisation in small geographic areas.

Geographic variation in crime rates

The disaggregated geographic information enables us to identify areas with different levels of victimisation. This is important for developing crime prevention strategies. Certainly, the results presented in this research enable individual victims and individual households to take precautions. But the police or other agencies cannot develop crime prevention strategies for individuals or households. This is where information for small geographic areas become important. Violent and property crimes require different prevention strategies.

It is possible to speculate that some areas may encounter more repeat victimisation for personal crimes than household crimes. In this context, Pease and Laycock's (1996) findings are illustrative. They suggest that "Concentrating on recent victims of crime can help to identify crime-prone places and thus lead to more efficient deployment of resources". Their suggestion is based on the premise that

> ***an individual's past crime victimisation is a good predictor of his or her subsequent victimisation. The greater the number of prior victimisations, the higher the likelihood the victims will experience future crime. Especially within the most crime-prone areas, a substantial percentage of victimisations involves repeat victims. In large measure, areas differ in crime rate by virtue of rates of repeat victimisation within them. If victimisation recurs, it tends to do so soon after the prior occurrence*** **(p. 2).**

Areas or places differ not only in terms of characteristics of people who live there and the type of housing, but also in terms of facilities such as retail outlets, banks, pubs, restaurants, fast food outlets, entertainment centres, parking lots, public transport, schools, and so on. Appropriate definition of the at-risk population is vital for an accurate measurement of the levels of crime in geographic areas. Household offences do not represent a major problem as the basis of crime rates is the number of dwellings. The difficulty appears when trying to measure victimisation rates for personal offences as a number of incidents occur in locations other than the victim's usual area of residence. For instance, data from the 1991 Queensland Crime Victims Survey show that only 42 per cent of all the most recent victimisations for personal offences occurred in the Statistical Local Area of residence of the victim. Therefore, with no information on the exact location of the incident and on respondents visiting patterns to places known to have high risk of victimisation, it is impossible to estimate the "true" population at risk in specific geographic areas at any time. The National Crime and Safety Survey does not collect data on the exact geographic location of incidents and less on respondents' visiting patterns to areas with high concentration of places of entertainment. As a consequence, crime survey data cannot be used to estimate victimisation rates according to place of occurrence of offences.

It is well known that crime incidents are not uniformly distributed across geographic areas. It is illustrative to consider the following facts. In 1995-96 the crime rate for the State of Victoria was 8914 per 100 000 population; the crime rate for the metropolitan police district "A" (which includes Melbourne among others) was 47 000; and the crime rate for the area covered by postcode 3000 (which forms a part of police district "A" and includes the central business district of Melbourne) was 1 408 484 per 100 000 population or 14

crimes reported per person in the area. A number of these crimes may have been committed against businesses rather than against persons or households.

The above in itself is not a new insight. Since the 1920s, beginning with the Chicago area project (Shaw & McKay 1929), and the Baltimore study (Lander 1954), continuing to recent years, scholars have demonstrated that the incidence of crime varies from area to area (Felson 1994; Brantingham & Brantingham 1975, 1977, 1981; Clarke 1980; Roncek 1981; Sherman 1992), and have discussed and debated methods to deal with the problem. The place of occurrence of crime and the intensity with which it occurs have attracted attention and led scholars to develop the concept of "crime hot spots" which law enforcers use in day-to-day policing. There is emerging a body of literature that describes the success of specific measures applied to crime hot spots (Sherman & Weisburd 1995; Koper 1995; Weisburd & Green 1995).

What is also new is that recent research reveals that within high crime areas some targets (places and persons) attract offenders more often than others; in other words certain targets are selected repeatedly within a time period while others are not.

Fear of crime

Fear of crime is another important area of research for which the National Crime and Safety Survey does not collect information. The analysis of relationship of fear of crime with repeat victimisation was based on data from the 1991 Queensland Crime Victims Survey.

The issue of domestic violence

A major deficiency of the National Crime and Safety Survey lies in not giving sufficient information on the important issue of domestic violence. It is universally recognised that survey reportability rates for rape and sexual assault by intimates and other family members are very low. This is a serious limitation, the implications of which may be reflected in the low victimisation rates of women in general.

The time between victimisations

The National Crime and Safety Survey also collects very limited information on the details of the most recent victimisation incident. Regarding repeat victimisation, in addition to the number of times the person/household is victimised, it would be useful to have data on when each of these incidents happened. It is recognised that there are serious methodological problems when trying to collect this type of data in surveys using self-completed questionnaires. Nevertheless, data on at least the time elapsed between the most recent and the second most recent incident, and between the second most recent and the third most recent incident would prove useful.[6]

6. The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducts a large number of surveys on social issues both nationally and in the States, but often surveys on the same topic do not use exactly the same wording for questions. The crime and safety surveys in Australia are infrequent and the three national surveys conducted so far are not strictly comparable; the fourth one planned in 1998 will again be different in some ways. If other surveys using common topics use the exactly same questions, they can be of some use; for example, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey 1994 (NATSIS). The National Crime and Safety Survey does not enable us to estimate victimisation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and households. NATSIS did include two questions on victimisation, but the wordings of both were different form those used in the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey. In addition, there are differences in the offence definitions used in both surveys (seeCarcach & Mukherjee 1996). While NATSIS asked only about completed break and enter, the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey asked separate questions for both completed and attempted break and enter. Regarding personal offences, the NATSIS question referred to composite incidents made up of two offences with differential degrees of seriousness: attack and verbal threats. On the other hand, the 1993 National Crime and Safety Survey did not include verbal threats.

Extending the scope of crime surveys

Finally, it should be recognised that crime victim surveys do not include all crimes. Australian Crime and Safety Surveys have not included some high volume crimes such as stealing or theft, fraud, malicious damage to property/vandalism, and drug offences. According to police statistics, together these four crimes constitute about 60 per cent of all crimes recorded each year. It is likely that geographic areas that encounter high levels of repeat victimisation for household crimes of break and enter and motor vehicle theft, may also display high level of theft and vandalism. In order to realise the full potential of information on repeat victimisation in developing crime prevention strategies it will be of significant value to expand the scope of Australian Crime and Safety Surveys to include the above crimes.

7

Policy Implications

While further research and data would be able to clarify many issues, this report presents findings that have direct practical policy implications. That crime concentrates around certain targets, be it individuals, households, or facilities, is also supported by official crime statistics and successful crime prevention strategies overseas.

Police services in a number of Australian jurisdictions have, in recent years, enhanced their technological capabilities to deal with crime. With the help of new technology, police can map precisely the location, intensity, and the incidence of specific types of crime. They can, therefore, reliably assess the concentration of crime. It is possible that high crime concentration would involve a substantial amount of repeat victimisations. A further careful analysis of "high concentration" can provide important clues for strategies to reduce crime. A good example of such efforts is the Kirkholt Housing Estate burglary reduction program in the United Kingdom. The main program strategy in this case was to prevent burglaries on previously victimised dwellings (Forrester et al. 1988, 1990; Pease 1992). The project used a number of activities, including target hardening, "cocoon" Neighbourhood Watch, and changed billing practice to replace coin-operated gas meters which had been highly vulnerable to theft. These efforts not only resulted in reduction of burglaries but also developed a sense of security among the residents and a positive and helpful relationship with neighbours. The project also demonstrated how the ownership of the program can be transferred to the community and how victim support groups can be helpful in crime prevention. This is but one example of a successful crime prevention strategy.

This analysis and review of literature shows that the Australian crime scene is in many respects similar to that in the United Kingdom and the United States, and the political and government approaches to crime control, particularly since the mid-1980s, are also not so different. It is therefore suggested that Australia engage in a different type of experimentation of crime prevention. Rather than initiating, implementing and evaluating projects similar to those already tried in other countries, we should experiment in implementing the results of these projects. Thus, if target hardening appeared to produce desirable results in other countries, experiment with that type of target-hardening in areas of Australia that display high concentration of residential burglary. Hundreds of such projects exist and careful selection of those dealing with "crime hot spots" around the world could be the basis for trial in Australia. It should be noted, however, that a large majority of such projects aim at reducing property crimes, although some successful violence prevention strategies have emerged in recent years.

The crime and safety surveys in Australia and victim surveys overseas clearly demonstrate that a high proportion of households remain inadequately secured

and a large number of individual victims of personal crime lack knowledge of personal safety. Various survey results and official crime statistics indicate a need for systematic victim education programs designed to protect against crime and violence. Again, numerous modules exist to suit specific potential victim types. Nevertheless, households can be victims of crime even after adopting adequate security measures, and persons can still be the victims of violence despite taking all sorts of precautionary measures.

Crime victimisation results from complex social processes underlying the convergence in time and space of offenders and potential targets, as well as the presence/absence of barriers to crime. Appeal and proximity are known to be among the factors that determine an offender's decision as to whether to choose a particular target as his/her victim. In addition, some areas are known to create more opportunities for crime than others. "Target hardening" in the form of enhanced security measures at home, is only one of the many factors with a potential to reduce household victimisation.

Currently, crime prevention strategies tend to be based on information relating to victims and incidents. This is because systematic information on offenders engaging in a large majority of offences is not available, and in many instances cannot be available as the offenders are unknown. There is evidence that repeat offences are often committed by the same offenders. The reason for such activity is that offenders feel less apprehensive in situations and locations that are familiar to them. Information on offender characteristics, therefore, can also enhance the effectiveness of a crime prevention strategy.

8

Where to from here?

A major research project in 1972 revealed that a small minority of offenders are responsible for a large proportion of all offences recorded by the police in a society (Wolfgang, Figlio & Sellin 1972). Since then, large-scale studies in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, as well as a second cohort study in the United States, have revealed similar results. The results of such research became a cornerstone for the United States criminal justice policy in much of the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s. The mainstay of this policy is to get tough on offenders. Numerous and far-reaching changes in policing organisation and practices, in arrest and bail laws, and sentencing laws were introduced during this period, the "three strikes legislation" being the latest manifestation of this policy. Although no such research has so far been conducted in Australia, a number of jurisdictions have implemented many of the measures initiated in the United States, including the "three strikes laws". During this time the level of crime has continued to increase in most parts of the industrialised world, including Australia.

A number of research studies and analysis of survey data in the 1990s show that a small number of individuals and households experience a large number of criminal victimisations. This report has demonstrated some of the characteristics of such individuals and households but the limitations of the Crime and Safety Survey 1993 data preclude further detailed analysis. However, overseas research clearly shows that crime prevention strategies which target repeat victimisation produce reductions in repeat victimisation.

In the Australian context, the National Crime and Safety Survey 1993 revealed that 8.3 per cent of all households (over six million) were victims of burglary, attempted burglary or motor vehicle theft and 2.4 per cent of all households (or 28.6 per cent of once victimised households) were victimised more than once during the year. Although 2.4 per cent may not seem high, it is significant. Based on the NCSS 1993, if, as a crime prevention measure, we wish to target randomly selected 1000 unvictimised households, we may on an average prevent 83 household crimes; but if we select 1000 previously victimised households, we may be able to prevent 286 household crimes.

The above-mentioned research and official crime statistics arrive at one very interesting, and at the same time perplexing, finding. And that is that a large number of offenders and victims of crimes portray similar characteristics. For instance, both are predominantly young males, unemployed, part of a single parent family, live in rented housing, and so on. The addition of details of the location of crime, along with offender and victim characteristics, could also provide valuable clues for designing potentially effective crime prevention strategies. Individuals and households can be educated and advised to protect themselves against future victimisations from crime but it is not possible for a government at any level to tailor crime prevention strategies for each individual and each household, which of

course, is hardly necessary. Research in the United Kingdom and the United States has shown that although certain individual and household characteristics are prone to repeat victimisations, characteristics of places where individuals live and households are located are equally important issues.

Many crime prevention programs failed to prevent and/or reduce crime because they are based on inadequate information. Traditionally, crimes such as homicide, assaults, rape, robbery, burglary, motor vehicle thefts, stealing, and so on, are all termed as "street crimes". It appears that many of the crime prevention strategies designed by the police, and other government agencies, are focussed on preventing crimes on the street or open areas. If only 15 per cent of the major violent and property crimes occur on the street, footpath, or open space, increasing police patrols on the street, installing close circuit television, and equipping the police with move-on and search and seizure and finger printing powers appear to ignore an overwhelmingly large proportion of crimes. The fact is that in Australia about two-thirds of all homicides, sexual assaults, and break enter and stealing offences occur in private residential premises; two out of five assaults (numbering over 40 000 in a year) occur inside our homes; and 20 per cent of thefts of motor vehicles and other property are from our homes. In view of these data it would appear that current crime prevention strategies need to be refocussed around the home.

The design, implementation, and evaluation of crime prevention strategies are expensive, and often the strategies cannot have universal application. Perhaps computer technology that can replace this expensive and uncertain experimentation can assist. Police forces in the industrialised world, including several States in Australia, have begun using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to assist police operations. The GIS enables mapping of crime locations with significant clarity and accuracy. Police commanders can use this information to allocate police resources instantly and without waiting for detailed quarterly or annual reports. The GIS can be highly useful in identifying "crime hot spots" which may be matched with the findings from the Crime and Safety Surveys. Drawing from the successful crime prevention strategies implemented in various parts of the world and data from the above sources could form a sound basis for designing effective crime prevention strategies for Australia.

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