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# **A Profile of Criminal Victimization:** Results of the 1999 General Social Survey

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



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# A Profile of Criminal Victimization:

## Results of the 1999 General Social Survey

By Karen Mihorean, Sandra Besserer, Dianne Hendrick, Jodi-Anne Brzozowski,  
Catherine Trainor and Stacie Ogg

Edited by Sandra Besserer

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## SYMBOLS

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The following symbols are used in this report:

- .. figures not available
- ... figures not appropriate or not applicable
- nil or zero
- amount too small to be expressed
- † coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# HIGHLIGHTS

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In 1999, as part of its General Social Survey program, Statistics Canada conducted a survey on victimization and public perceptions of crime and the justice system. It was the third time that the General Social Survey (GSS) had examined the nature and extent of criminal victimization in Canada. The survey measured eight specific offences: three violent crimes (sexual assault, robbery, and assault), four household crimes (break and enter, motor vehicle/parts theft, theft of household property and vandalism) and theft of personal property.

The purpose of this report is to provide an in-depth analysis of the findings of the 1999 General Social Survey and make comparisons to the 1993 GSS results. The chapters that follow will examine the risks of violent and household victimization, urban/rural victimization, victims' use of justice and social services, and perceptions and fear of crime.

## The risk of violent victimization

- The risk of violent victimization in Canada remains low: 5% of the population reported being a victim in 1999.<sup>1</sup> The rate of assault was the highest of the three violent crimes (51 per 1,000 population), followed by sexual assault (21) and robbery (9).
- One of the strongest predictors of violent victimization is age. The odds of victimization for young people aged 15 to 24 were nine times higher than for those aged 55 and older. Other personal characteristics, including being male, being single/separated/divorced, or having a low household income were also significant predictors of violent victimization, but the effect of these factors was not as strong as age.
- Proximity to crime, that is how close a person is to potential offenders, is associated with the risk of violent victimization. For example, people who felt unsafe when walking alone or when using public transportation alone at night had increased risks of victimization. Also related to victimization was exposure to crime, that is one's visibility or vulnerability to particularly dangerous situations. In particular, risks were higher for people who participated in 10 or more evening activities per month or who frequently walked alone or used public transportation alone at night.

## The risk of household victimization

- In 1999, nearly one in five Canadian households reported having been a victim of a household crime.<sup>2</sup> The rate of vandalism was the highest of the four household crimes at 66 incidents per 1,000 households, followed by theft of household property (62), break and enter (48), and motor vehicle/parts theft (41).
- As with violent victimization, both exposure and proximity of the household and its members to crime are related to the risk of household victimization. Specifically, risks of victimization were higher for households with respondents whose main activity was going to school or working at a job, or when the respondent participated in 10 or more evening activities per month. Where survey respondents believed that their neighbourhood crime was higher than other areas or had increased in the last five years, their households had a higher risk of victimization.
- Higher income makes households a more attractive target for victimization. The odds of victimization were almost 50% higher for households with an income of \$60,000 or more, compared to those with incomes of less than \$15,000.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the three violent crimes measured by the GSS and excludes incidents of spousal violence.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the four household crimes: break and enter, theft of motor vehicles/parts, theft of household property and vandalism.

## Victimization in urban and rural areas

- There was a difference in victimization rates for urban and rural residents in 1999: 27% of the urban population and 18% of the rural population reported being the victim of at least one crime in the preceding 12 months. This included 10% of the urban population and 6% of the rural population who reported being victimized two or more times in that time period.
- In terms of the four personal crimes (sexual assault, robbery, assault, and theft of personal property), the greatest variation was for personal theft, where the rate for urban residents was 64% higher than for rural residents. With respect to household crimes, urban households experienced significantly higher rates of victimization for all four crime types. The greatest variation was found for break and enter, with a rate for urban households that was 63% higher than for rural households.
- Rural residents were slightly more satisfied with their overall safety from crime than their urban counterparts. Similarly, they were more likely than urban residents to indicate feeling safe when engaging in specific activities, in particular, being home alone in the evening, walking alone in their area after dark, and using public transportation alone after dark, where it was available.
- While perceptions of the police and the Canadian criminal courts were similar for both urban and rural residents, rural residents viewed the prison and parole systems more favourably, with a somewhat higher percentage of residents believing these sectors were doing a good or average job at certain aspects of performance.

## Victims' use of justice and social services

- Nearly 6 in 10 victimization incidents were not reported to police in 1999. Victims had various reasons for not reporting crimes. These included: the incident was not important enough, the police couldn't do anything and the incident was dealt with another way. Victims that did report the incident often did so out of a sense of duty.
- A number of factors appear to be associated with whether or not an incident is reported to the police. These include personal characteristics of the victim, the severity of the incident and the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator. For example, violent crime incidents involving male victims were more likely to be reported than those involving female victims. Similarly, violent incidents involving victims 45 years of age and older were more likely to be reported than those involving younger victims.
- Victims of crime utilize informal sources of support, including family, friends, neighbours, and co-workers, more often than formal support services.

## Perceptions and fear of crime

- A number of factors are related to the fear of crime. Sex was one of the strongest predictors, with women being more fearful than men. People who believed that crime in their neighbourhoods was increasing or was higher than in other areas, tended to be more fearful. People who had confidence in the criminal justice system, particularly the police, had lower levels of fear.
- One factor that is not related to fear of crime is victimization experience – people who had been victims of crime were no more fearful than those who had not been victimized.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1999, as part of its General Social Survey program, Statistics Canada conducted a survey on victimization and public perceptions of crime and the justice system. It was the third time that the General Social Survey (GSS) had examined the nature and extent of criminal victimization in Canada. Previous surveys were conducted in 1988 and 1993.

For the 1999 survey, interviews were conducted by telephone with approximately 26,000 people aged 15 and older, living in the 10 provinces. All respondents were asked for their opinions concerning the level of crime in their neighbourhoods and their fear of crime. They were also asked for their views concerning the performance of the police, the criminal courts, the prison and the parole systems.

Additionally, as in previous years, the survey measured the occurrence of 8 specific offences: sexual assault, robbery, assault, theft of personal property, break and enter, motor vehicle/parts theft, theft of household property and vandalism (Box I.1). Those respondents who had been victims of any of these 8 crimes in the 12 months preceding the interview were asked for detailed information on each incident, including when and where it occurred,

### Box I.1: Offence types

The 1999 GSS measured the incidence of victimization for eight offence types, based on the *Criminal Code* definitions for these crimes. Sexual assault, robbery, and assault are classified as violent crimes. These 3 offences combined with theft of personal property form the personal crime category. The remaining 4 offences are considered household crimes. For personal crimes, it is an individual who is victimized, while for household crimes, it is typically all the members of the household. Rates of personal offences are therefore calculated per 1,000 persons aged 15 and older, while rates of household offences are expressed per 1,000 households.

Incidents involving more than one type of offence, for example a robbery and an assault, are classified according to the most serious offence. The ranking of offences from most to least serious is: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and enter, motor vehicle/parts theft, theft of personal property, theft of household property and vandalism. Incidents are classified based on the respondent's answers to a series of questions. For example, did anyone threaten you with physical harm in any way? How were you threatened?

Crime category	Offence	Description
Personal crimes	Violent crimes	
	Sexual assault	Forced sexual activity, an attempt at forced sexual activity, or unwanted sexual touching, grabbing, kissing or fondling.
	Robbery	Theft or attempted theft in which the perpetrator had a weapon or there was violence or the threat of violence against the victim.
	Assault	An attack (victim hit, slapped, grabbed, knocked down, or beaten), a face-to-face threat of physical harm, or an incident with a weapon present.
	Theft of personal property	Theft or attempted theft of personal property such as money, credit cards, clothing, jewellery, a purse or a wallet. (Unlike robbery, the perpetrator does not confront the victim.)
Household crimes	Break and enter	Illegal entry or attempted entry into a residence or other building on the victim's property.
	Motor vehicle/parts theft	Theft or attempted theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle, moped or other vehicle or part of a motor vehicle.
	Theft of household property	Theft or attempted theft of household property such as liquor, bicycles, electronic equipment, tools or appliances.
	Vandalism	Willful damage of personal or household property.

whether the incident was reported to the police, and how they were affected by the experience.

This report provides an in-depth analysis of the findings of the 1999 General Social Survey and makes comparisons to the 1993 results. The chapters that follow examine the risks of violent and household victimization, urban/rural victimization, victims' use of justice and social services, and perceptions and fear of crime. Additional information is available in several previously released Statistics Canada reports, including: the 2000 and 2001 editions of *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, which examine the issue of spousal violence; the *Juristat* "Criminal Victimization in Canada, 1999", which contains an overview of the 1999 GSS results; and the *Juristat* "Public Attitudes toward the Criminal Justice System", which analyzes data on public perceptions of crime and the justice system.

### Survey enhancements

One of the main objectives of the GSS program is to track social changes, such as crime, over time. Repeating a survey allows for the examination of these changes. However, there is always the dilemma about whether to make improvements to questions based on knowledge gained from the previous survey, or whether to use identical questions to ensure comparability. Two major enhancements were made to the 1999 GSS: the addition of a spousal violence module and a change to the definition of assault.

The GSS definition of assault was changed in 1999 to be consistent with the *Criminal Code* definition of this crime. Included in the definition of assault are incidents involving a face-to-face threat of a victim by an accused. All other threats, for example a threat over the telephone, are excluded from the definition. Originally, the 1993 GSS definition of assault encompassed all threats, including those that were not face-to-face. For this report, the data for 1993 have been revised in order to make them comparable to the 1999 results.

For respondents who had ever been married or lived in a common-law relationship, the 1999 GSS asked a series of questions to measure the extent of sexual and physical assault by a spouse/partner or former spouse/partner. This was a major enhancement over the 1993 GSS that included only general physical and sexual assault questions and simply reminded respondents to include acts by family and non-family members. Research has shown that for sensitive issues such as spousal violence, respondents are more likely to disclose violence if they are asked a series of questions about specific things that their spouse/partner may have done to them.

This significant change in survey content affects comparability to the 1993 data. First, it is believed that the specialized questions led to an increase in reporting of sexual and physical assault incidents committed by spouses. Second, detailed information on each incident of spousal violence, including the location of the incident, presence of a weapon, and reporting to the police, is not available because the specialized questions were meant to obtain an overall picture of the abuse rather than to capture specific information on each incident. For example, victims of spousal violence were asked how many times they had been assaulted in the previous 12 months. They were also asked if they were ever injured during any of these incidents. If a victim reported two incidents and that they had been injured, it would not be possible to tell if they were injured during one or both of the incidents.

To ensure comparability of survey results for 1999 and 1993, much of the analysis in this report excludes incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses. Instead, these incidents involving spouses are included in the year 2000 and 2001 versions of the report *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*.

### Comparing victimization and police-reported crime data

The two primary sources of information on crime rates in Canada are victimization surveys such as the GSS and police-reported surveys such as the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey. These two surveys are quite different (Box 1.2). For this reason they can produce different, yet complementary results.

The UCR Survey records crimes that are reported to the police. Many factors can influence the police-reported crime rate, including the willingness of the public to report crimes to the police; reporting by police to the UCR Survey; and changes in legislation, policies or enforcement practices. When, for instance, victims do not report incidents to police, those incidents will not be reflected in official crime statistics. Similarly, incidents that are reported to police, but upon investigation are judged by police to be unfounded, are also excluded from official crime statistics.

One way to estimate the extent of unreported crime is through victimization surveys. Because the GSS asks a sample of the population about their personal crime experiences, it captures information on crimes that have been reported to the police, as well as those that have gone unreported. The number of unreported crimes can be substantial. For example, the 1999 GSS estimated that 78% of sexual assaults and 67% of household thefts were not reported to the police. As a result, victimization surveys usually produce higher rates of victimization than police-reported statistics.

Victimization surveys do have limitations, however. For one, they rely on respondents to report events accurately. As well, they address only certain crimes. They do not capture information on crimes that have no obvious victim (e.g. prostitution), where the victim is a business or school, where the victim is dead (as in homicides), or when the victim is a child (anyone younger than 15 in the case of the GSS).

**Interpreting data from the General Social Survey**

Results from the General Social Survey are estimates based on information collected from a sample of the population. Each person who responded to the 1999 GSS represents roughly 1,000 people in the Canadian population. Somewhat different results might have been obtained if the whole population had been surveyed. The difference between the estimate obtained from a sample

and the one resulting from a complete count is called the sampling error of the estimate. The sample size and sampling technique for the GSS were chosen so as to reduce this error at the provincial and national level.

One measure of the sampling error is the coefficient of variation (CV). The CV gives an indication of the uncertainty associated with an estimate. For example, if an estimate is 1,000 incidents with a CV of 4%, the true value likely lies between 960 and 1,040 (i.e. 1,000 ± 4%). In this publication, any estimate with a CV of more than 33.3% is considered too unreliable to be published and the symbol "--" is used in the data tables to indicate this. When the CV of the estimate is between 16.6% and 33.3%, the symbol "†" is used. These estimates should be used with caution.

**Box I.2: Comparison of Statistics Canada’s GSS and UCR surveys**

Survey Characteristics	General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization	Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey
Survey type and coverage	Sample (in 1999) of about 26,000 persons aged 15+ in the 10 provinces	Census of all incidents reported by all police services in Canada
Historical data	1988, 1993 and 1999	Available continuously since 1962
Source of information	Personal account of criminal victimization incidents, whether reported to police or not	Criminal incidents reported to and recorded by police
Scope of survey	8 categories of criminal offence	Over 100 categories of criminal offence
Comparability of offence categories	Sexual assault Robbery Assault Break and enter Theft of personal property Theft of household property Motor vehicle/ parts theft Vandalism	Comparable to total sexual assault in UCR. Not comparable. UCR includes robberies of businesses and financial institutions. Comparable to total assault in UCR. Comparable to break and enter of a residence in UCR. Not comparable. UCR does not distinguish between theft of personal and household property. Comparable to UCR when theft of motor vehicle parts is removed from GSS. Not comparable. UCR has a "mischief" category that includes a broader range of infractions.
Sources of error	Sampling errors (i.e. differences between estimated values for the sample and actual values for the population) Non-sampling errors (e.g. inability of respondents to remember/report events accurately, refusal by respondents to report, errors in the coding and processing of data)	Public reporting rates to police Police discretionary power, changes in policies and practice in relation to capturing all reported incidents

# CHAPTER ONE: THE RISK OF VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION

by Karen Mihorean

## Introduction

An overwhelming and growing proportion of Canadians are satisfied with their personal safety. Overall, 91% of the population reported being satisfied with their personal safety in 1999, up from 86% in 1993. However, many Canadians still worry about the risk of violent crime. According to a recent poll, one-third of Canadians believed that they would be victims of a violent crime within the next year (Ekos Research Associates 2000).

Concern about personal safety is also reflected in the finding that in 1999, 11% of Canadians were worried while walking alone in their area after dark and 46% of those who used public transportation alone after dark were worried about being the victim of crime when doing so. Furthermore, one in five Canadians indicated that they were worried while alone in their home in the evening or at night. While women are generally more concerned about their personal safety than are men, both men and women take measures to reduce their vulnerability to crime, including changing their activities or avoiding certain places, locking their car doors when alone in the car, or installing new locks or alarm systems (see Chapter 5 for more information on fear).

Historically, crime and the circumstances that surround it have been explained through examining the personal motivation for committing criminal acts. In more recent decades, there have been increased efforts to explain crime by focussing not only on the perpetrator, but also by examining the activities and lifestyles of victims or those at risk of victimization. Using the results of the 1999 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, this chapter examines the characteristics of those who are at greatest risk of violent victimization and the environment in which these incidents occur. First, the rates of violent crime for each of the identified risk factors will be presented, followed by a multivariate analysis wherein the unique effects of each risk factor will be considered while controlling for the effects of the others.

## Violent victimization remains relatively stable

The 1999 GSS asked respondents about their experiences related to four personal crimes of which three are violent offences: sexual assault, physical assault and robbery (including attempts). The survey found that an estimated 1.2 million Canadians, 15 years of age and over, reported being victimized in 2.0 million violent crimes.<sup>3</sup> Over 60% of these incidents involved physical assaults, a further one-quarter were sexual assaults and the remaining 12% of incidents were robberies or attempted robberies.

The overall rate of violent victimization in 1999 was 81 incidents per 1,000 Canadians 15 years of age and over. The rate of assault was the highest of the three violent crimes (51 per 1,000 population), followed by sexual assault (21) and robbery (9). The risk of experiencing a violent crime remained virtually unchanged between 1993 and 1999 (Figure 1.1).<sup>4</sup>

There is very little difference in the overall risk of violent victimization for women and men. In 1999, the rate of violent victimization was 76 per 1,000 women and 87 per 1,000 men.<sup>5</sup> However, sexual assaults were more likely to be perpetrated against women (rates of 33 per 1,000 women and 8 per 1,000 men), whereas men reported higher rates for assault (67 for men and 37 for women) and for robbery (12 for men and 7 for women).

Not unlike police-reported data, victimization rates tend to increase from east to west, meaning the rates in 1999 were highest in British Columbia, followed by Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba (Figure 1.2). New Brunswick and Newfoundland reported the lowest rates of violent crime.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Spousal violence is excluded from this analysis because of the different context in which spousal violence occurs and the differing risk factors that apply. See Box 1.2 for a description of the risk factors associated with spousal violence.

<sup>4</sup> Comparable figures on violent victimization from the 1988 GSS are not available.

<sup>5</sup> This excludes incidents of spousal violence.

<sup>6</sup> Provincial rates are not available from the 1993 General Social Survey due to the smaller sample size.

Figure 1.1

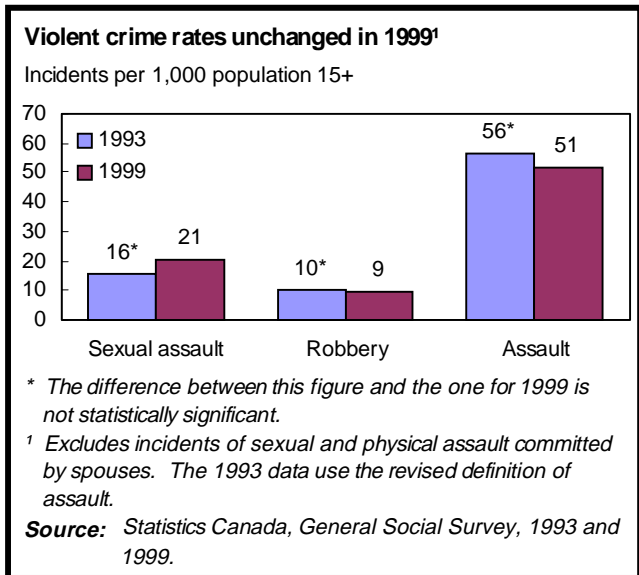
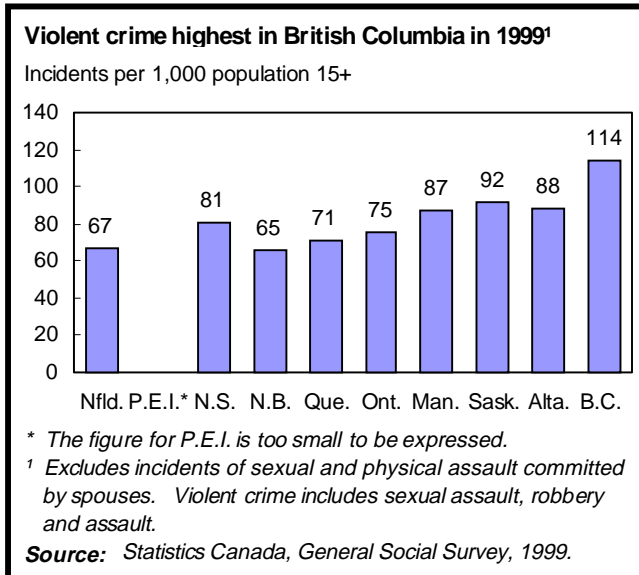


Figure 1.2



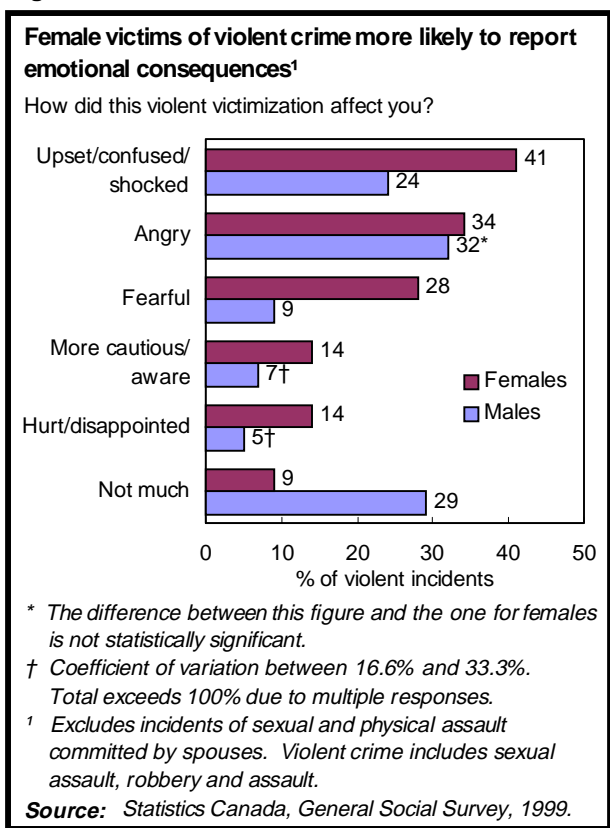
**Box 1.1: Impact of violent victimization**

In 1999, fewer than one in five victims of violent crime was injured as a result of the incident. This is not surprising, given that the majority (72%) of violent incidents did not involve a weapon and that only a small percentage of incidents involved a gun or knife (3% and 6%, respectively). These findings have not changed significantly since 1993, when the perpetrator did not have a weapon in 77% of incidents.

Besides injury, violent crime can affect victims in other ways. One-quarter of victims had their main activity disrupted for at least one day as a result of their experience. As well, the violent incident evoked various emotions, and these were different for women and men. Women and men were equally likely to indicate that the incident made them angry (34% and 32%), but women were more likely to say they were upset/confused/shocked (41% versus 24%), fearful (28% versus 9%), more cautious/aware (14% versus 7%) and hurt/disappointed (14% versus 5%) (Figure 1.3). Furthermore, men were three times as likely as women to state that the incident did not affect them much (29% versus 9%). These results were consistent for all three violent crimes.

Often, violent crimes do not affect just one person. Victims reported that in 22% of all violent incidents in 1999, at least one other person was harmed or threatened.

Figure 1.3





### Assessing the risk of violent victimization

A person's routine activities, as indicated by their lifestyle, their proximity to crime, their exposure to crime and the things they do to increase their personal safety, are common measures that have been used to examine the risk of being a victim of crime (Miethe and Meier 1990). Through the 1999 GSS there are a number of measures that can be used to assess each of these factors as they relate to violent crime. These factors are described below.

*Lifestyle* represents certain behaviours and habits that may place individuals at risk of being victimized. Previous researchers have used demographic characteristics, such as a person's sex, age, income, and marital status, as well as more direct measures, such as main activity (e.g. employed, student, keeping house) as indicators of lifestyle (Cohen and Felson 1979; Miethe, Stafford and Long 1987; Sacco, Johnson and Arnold 1993; Kennedy and Forde 1990; Collins and Cox 1987). Individuals with lifestyles that involve more time away from home are believed to have a higher risk of victimization. For example, younger people whose lifestyles generally involve fewer family responsibilities and more time for activities outside the home, would have a greater risk of victimization than would older people. Similarly, those whose main activity is working or attending school, would be exposed to more risk than those with full-time family responsibilities. Five indicators of lifestyle are included in this analysis: sex, age, income, marital status and main activity.

*Proximity* to crime represents how close a person is to potential offenders. For example, the risk of victimization is greater for someone living in a community that has a high crime rate, compared to someone living in a low crime rate community. Common measures of physical proximity to crime include place of residence (urban versus rural) and the perceived safety of the immediate neighbourhood (Miethe and Meier 1990). Four measures of proximity are included in this analysis. These include urban or rural residency, perception of the change in neighbourhood crime levels over a five-year period, and perceived safety of the respondent's neighbourhood when walking alone or when using public transportation alone at night.

*Exposure* to crime represents one's visibility or vulnerability to particularly dangerous places or situations. It has been found that those who participate in many outside evening activities increase their interaction with strangers, thereby increasing the likelihood of personal victimization (Sampson 1987). Taking public transportation alone in the evening, (Lynch 1987; Clarke, Ekblow, Hough and Mayhew 1985), and frequently walking alone after dark (Miethe and Meier 1990) are other measures

that have been used to assess exposure to crime. For the purposes of this analysis, three measures are used: number of evening activities, frequency of walking alone in one's area after dark, and frequency of waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark.

*Guardianship* represents efforts that are made to increase personal safety and reduce the risk of victimization. The analysis examines six different indicators of guardianship. These include whether a person: has taken a self-defence course, routinely carries something to defend themselves or to alert others, locks the car doors when alone, checks the backseat when returning to the car alone, plans their route with safety in mind, and stays home at night because they are afraid to go out.

#### Box 1.2: Risk of spousal violence

According to the 1999 GSS, 7% of people who were married or living in a common-law relationship experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous spouse in the previous five years. While the rates for women and men did not vary greatly (8% versus 7%), women were much more likely to experience more serious and chronic violence than were men.

Spousal violence crosses all socio-demographic boundaries, but it does not affect all women and men equally. Results from the GSS show that young women under the age of 25 reported the highest one-year rates of violence. Data also suggest that those living in a common-law relationship were four times more likely to be the victim of spousal violence compared to women and men in legal marriages. Moreover, while income, education and urban or rural residence do not play significant roles in a person's risk of spousal violence, excessive alcohol use and emotional abuse appear to be highly associated with the risk. Specifically, people whose partners drank five or more drinks on five or more occasions in a one-month period had one-year rates of violence six times higher than those whose partners never drank or drank only moderately. Similarly, those who indicated that their partner was emotionally abusive toward them had five-year rates 10 times higher than those whose partners were not emotionally abusive.

### Analytical techniques

To test the relationship between each of the lifestyle, proximity, exposure and guardianship measures and the risk of violent crime victimization, a two-way, or bivariate analysis was first conducted by examining the individual rates of violent crime for each of the measures. The consistency of these results with the theoretical predictions discussed in the previous section was then assessed. Next, because the bivariate analysis does

not take into consideration possible relationships between the various measures, a multivariate analysis was conducted in order to test for the effect of each measure on the risk of violent crime while holding constant all other effects. This analysis was done using logistic regression (see Box 1.3 for more details).

### Box 1.3: Logistic regression model

A logistic regression model was used to isolate the effect of selected lifestyle, proximity and exposure to crime, and guardianship factors on the risk of violent crime. The dependent variable was whether or not a person had experienced a violent crime, i.e. a sexual assault, a physical assault or a robbery. Each of the factors, or independent variables, was fitted into a logistic regression model to determine the unique effects of each concept, and each variable, while the effects of the others were held constant.

Before beginning the fitting of logistic models, several of the measures described in Tables 1.1 to 1.4 were collapsed into fewer categories in order to diminish the chances of empty cells in the modeling process. To the extent possible, collapsing was done so that the patterns observed from the bivariate results still existed in the collapsed form. In some cases, further collapsing was required because of collinear relationships between some variables. In addition, responses of "don't know/refused" were excluded from the analysis.

In order to carry out the logistic modeling, each of the measures involved was dummy coded after choosing a reference category. The modeling strategy consisted of several steps. First a model containing just the lifestyle indicators (sex, age, income, marital status and main activity) was fitted, so that a baseline measure of each of these factors, controlling for the others, could be determined. The second step was to add separately to the initial model, proximity, exposure and guardianship factors. The purpose of this was to determine whether, once lifestyle was controlled for, one or more of the factors in the other groups still had a significant effect on the odds of violent crime victimization and whether they mediated the effect of any of the lifestyle factors. The final step was to include, in a single model, all of the variables identified in the previous steps as having potential impact on the odds of violent crime.

## Results of the bivariate analysis

### Lifestyle

The risk of violent victimization varies with differences in lifestyle. Four of the five lifestyle indicators – age, income, marital status and main activity – had certain categories for which the rate of violent victimization was high in comparison to the national average. In particular, those between 15 and 24 years of age and, to a lesser

degree, those 25 to 34 had higher rates of violent victimization than other age groups (Table 1.1). Single people had much higher rates than people with a different marital status. Students and those looking for work were much more likely to experience violent crime than those in the other activity categories. Finally, income also appeared to play a role in violent victimization, with those having a household income of less than \$15,000 being much more likely than those in other income categories to experience a violent crime. For the fifth lifestyle indicator, sex, the difference in violent crime rates for women and men were small, with men having a slightly higher risk.

### Proximity

Proximity to crime also seems to influence a person's risk of violent victimization (Table 1.2). For example, someone who was worried while using public transportation alone after dark was more likely than someone who was not worried, to have experienced a violent crime (rates of 172 and 127 per 1,000 population, respectively).<sup>7</sup> Rates of violent victimization were also higher among those who felt unsafe while walking alone in their area after dark compared to those who felt safe (rates of 120 versus 82). Similarly, rates were higher among those who believed that crime in their neighbourhood had increased in the previous five years compared to those who believed that it had remained the same (105 versus 68). It should be noted however, that the difference in victimization rates was not as great for those who felt neighbourhood crime had decreased (98) and those who felt it had increased (105). Finally, consistent with previous research, those who lived in a rural community had lower rates of violent victimization than those who lived in an urban area (65 versus 86). However, urban/rural residency does not appear to be as strong an indicator of risk as were some of the other proximity measures.

### Exposure

Patterns of violent victimization are also related to exposure to potentially risky situations. In Table 1.3, the level of violent victimization increased with the number of evening activities outside the home, the frequency of walking alone after dark and the frequency of using public transportation alone after dark. Rates of violent crime among those who walked alone or used public transportation alone after dark on a daily basis and those who participated in more than 30 evening activities per month were much higher than the overall national rate of violent victimization.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It must be acknowledged that the level of fear could be the result, rather than the cause, of a victimization experience.

<sup>8</sup> As a person can be involved in more than one activity per evening, for example going to a restaurant and then a movie, it is possible to be involved in more than 30 evening activities per month.

### *Guardianship*

Finally, there appears to be a relationship between guardianship and the rate of violent victimization. Rates of violent crime, without exception, were higher among those who had taken precautionary measures (Table 1.4). This finding was particularly pronounced for those who had taken a self-defence course, those who routinely carried something to defend or alert others, and those who routinely stayed home at night because they were too afraid to go out alone.

### **Results of the multivariate analysis**

The analysis above provides a profile of the characteristics that are associated with violent victimization; however, it does not account for the possibility that some of the factors identified could be correlated to one another. Indeed, when each of the factors related to lifestyle, proximity and exposure to crime, and guardianship are held constant, the results vary somewhat (Table 1.5) from the results when the relationship of each factor was examined without consideration for relationships among the variables (Tables 1.1 to 1.4).

#### *Risk of violent victimization highest among those aged 15 to 24*

First, regarding lifestyle, when the effects of all factors are controlled, being young is by far the strongest predictor of violent victimization. At particular risk are those who are between the ages of 15 and 24. The odds of being victimized for people in this age group were almost nine times greater than were those for people aged 55 and older (Table 1.5 and Box 1.4). Similarly, those in other age groups were more likely than those 55 years of age and older to experience violence, but the odds of being victimized diminished with age.

#### **Box 1.4: What is an odds ratio?**

An odds ratio, a statistic generated by a logistic regression, can be used to assess whether, other things being equal, people with specific characteristics are more or less likely to be victimized than those in another group, referred to as the reference category. For example, consider the risk of victimization for those between the ages of 15 and 24 in comparison to those aged 55 or older (the reference category). An odds ratio near 1.0 implies there is no difference in victimization between the two groups; an odds ratio less than 1.0 implies those in the group being considered (i.e. those 15 to 24) are less likely to be victimized than those in the reference group (i.e. those 55+); and an odds ratio greater than 1.0 implies those in the group being considered are more likely to be victimized than those in the reference category.

While the effects were not as strong as age, being male, having a household income of less than \$15,000 and being single/separated/divorced also predicted increased odds of violent victimization. This is similar to previous research findings that have found that men have a greater risk of violent victimization than women (Cohen and Felson 1979), people with low incomes are at greater risk of violent victimization (Miethe et al 1987) and that married people are less likely than single people to be victimized because they are more likely to have children and other family obligations that limit their time for evening activities outside the home (Cohen and Felson 1979).

Although main activity, specifically being a student, remained a significant lifestyle factor when other factors in the model were controlled, the risk of violent crime was actually lower for students compared to those whose main activity was something else. Students tend to be young, single and have low incomes; however, once the effects of these lifestyle indicators are held constant, being a student no longer increases, but rather decreases the risk of violence. It may be that school activities involve environments that reduce a potential victim's visibility and accessibility, and enhance guardianship through the presence of others in public or social situations (Miethe et al 1987).

#### *Urban or rural residency not a risk factor for violent victimization*

In the case of proximity to potentially risky situations, when all factors were held constant, urban or rural residency no longer predicted the risk of violent victimization. This appears to contradict findings from other studies that have shown urban residency to pose a greater risk to personal safety than rural residency (Sacco et al 1993; Kennedy and Forde 1990). However, these studies did not include indicators of guardianship or proximity to crime as part of the analysis. Furthermore, the findings in this study are consistent with the results of another study examining the risk factors of women's multiple victimization, which included measures of guardianship and proximity and found that urban/rural residency was not a significant predictor (Rodgers and Roberts, 1995).

Unlike urban/rural residency, the other measures of proximity to crime, including fear of walking alone after dark, worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night and the perception of the trend in neighbourhood crime, continued to have a significant impact on the rate of violent victimization in the multivariate analysis. For example, the odds of being victimized for those who worried while waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark were 23% greater than

those who were not worried when doing so. Similarly, those who believed that crime in their neighbourhood had increased during the past 5 years were more likely to have experienced violent crime than those who thought crime had decreased or remained the same. For those who felt unsafe when walking alone in their

area after dark, the odds of victimization were greater than for those who felt safe when doing so. Given these results, it appears that the type of neighbourhood is probably a better measure of risk, than simply living in an urban area.

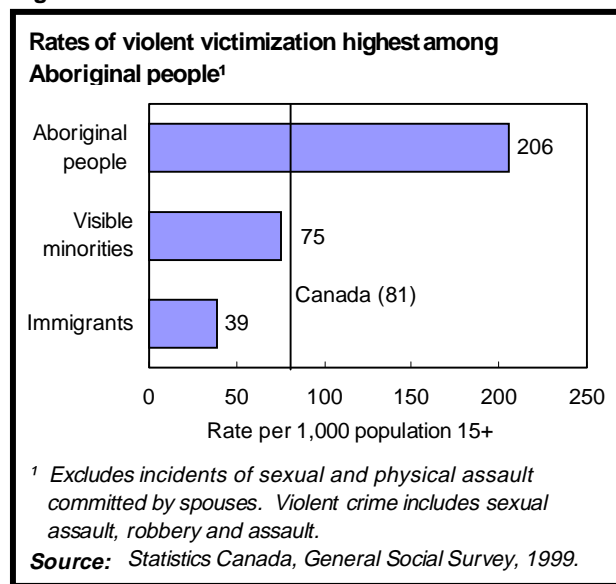
**Box 1.5: The risk of violent victimization among Aboriginal peoples, immigrants and visible minorities**

While immigrant status has always been collected through the GSS, for the first time the 1999 GSS on Victimization collected information on race and cultural background, including Aboriginal status. Thus, it is possible to determine if immigrants, visible minorities, or Aboriginal people have a different risk of victimization compared to the general population. (Ideally the following analysis examining victimization among Aboriginal peoples, immigrants and visible minorities would be conducted by comparing groups with similar socio-economic conditions. However, the sample size of the GSS is too small to support such detailed analysis.)

Overall, it was found that rates of violent victimization were highest among Aboriginal people, with rates that were two and one-half times higher than the national rate (206 incidents per 1,000 versus 81 per 1,000) (Figure 1.4).<sup>9</sup> For visible minorities, the risk of violent crime did not differ remarkably from the general population (75 per 1,000 versus 81 per 1,000). And, in the case of immigrants, the rate of violent victimization was one-half the rate of the general population (39 versus 81 per 1,000 population).

Similar to the results above, Aboriginal people are also at much greater risk of spousal violence than are non-Aboriginal people, visible minorities and immigrants.

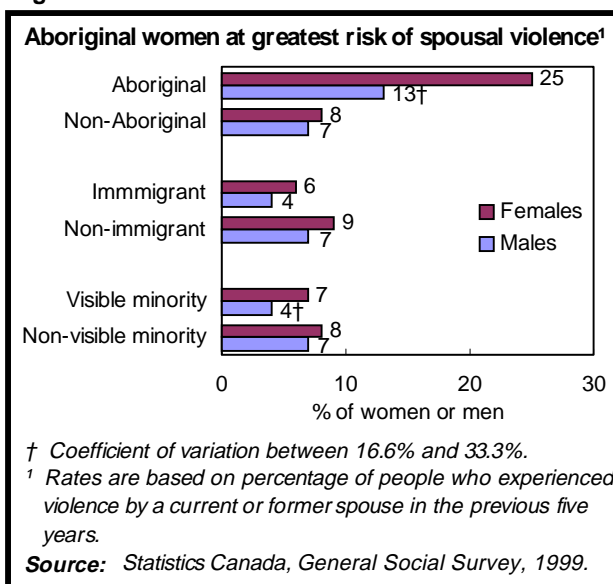
**Figure 1.4**



Approximately 20% of Aboriginal people who reported having a current or ex-spouse with whom they had had contact in the past five years, reported being assaulted by their spouse, as compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal people and 5% of both the visible minority and the immigrant populations.

Particularly vulnerable to spousal violence are Aboriginal women. They were three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to report having been assaulted by a current or ex-spouse in the five years preceding the survey (25% versus 8%) (Figure 1.5). The rates of spousal violence for Aboriginal men did not differ significantly from non-Aboriginal men. As well, spousal violence rates for male immigrant and male visible minority populations were similar to male non-immigrant and male non-visible minority populations, respectively. Findings were the same for female rates of spousal violence for immigrant/non-immigrant and visible minority/non-visible minority populations.

**Figure 1.5**



<sup>9</sup> Readers are cautioned that the results of this survey describe rates of violence committed against Aboriginal people, immigrants and visible minorities but that the identity of perpetrators is unknown. Assumptions should not be made about the cultural identity of perpetrators based on the identity of victims.

*Number of evening activities influences risk of violent victimization*

Exposure factors continue to have a significant impact on risk of violent crime when the effects of lifestyle, proximity to crime and use of protective measures are controlled. However, the impact of these variables differed somewhat from what was observed in the bivariate analysis (Table 1.3). In particular, the influence that the frequency of using public transportation alone at night had on risk of violent victimization seemed to be diminished. After holding constant all other measures, this factor had the least predictive power of all exposure measures. Participating in 10 or more evening activities per month was the highest predictive factor of the exposure measures, increasing the odds of violent crime by about 50% as compared to those who participate in fewer than 10 evening activities.

*Taking self-protective measures associated with higher rates of violent victimization*

With respect to guardianship measures or things people may do to increase their personal safety, neither routinely locking the car door when alone, nor routinely planning a route with safety in mind, had a significant impact on risk of violent crime when the other factors were held constant.

The use of four other self-protective measures was associated with a higher risk of violent victimization. Past research has suggested that this may in fact reflect the possibility that self-protective measures were undertaken as a consequence of a prior victimization experience (Mayhew 1984). Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing from the survey data whether people took these precautions before their victimization or they increased their self-protective behaviors because of their victimization. Another possible explanation may be that those who take precautionary measures to increase their safety do so because their environmental situation necessitates such behaviour, so that those in high-crime neighbourhoods may feel compelled to take safety

precautions (Miethe, Stafford and Sloane 1990). Perhaps these protective or guardianship measures should be thought of as measures of proximity to crime.

**Summary**

Even though Canadians have become more satisfied with their overall safety, many continue to worry about crime and the threat it poses to their personal safety. Results from the multivariate analysis indicate that being young is by far the strongest predictor of violent victimization.

Exposure and proximity to crime, being single/separated/divorced, being male and having a low household income were also significant predictors of violent crime but the effect of these factors was not as strong as for age. And, even though rates of violent victimization were higher among those who lived in an urban community, urban/rural residency did not have a significant impact on the risk of violent crime, once the effects of other factors were eliminated. From this analysis, it appears that the type of community, specifically its proximity to crime, is more important when predicting the risk of violent crime, than simply whether it is urban or rural.

Age, marital status, sex and income are personal characteristics that are not easily changed. Yet, they are strong predictors of violent victimization even after controlling for factors such as the use of precautionary measures, and proximity and exposure to crime, factors that are more easily altered through behavioural choices. Results suggest that there is something about being a young, single male that makes them particularly vulnerable to violent crime. That being said, it must be noted that the risk of violent victimization in Canada remains low, with 5% of the population having been victimized in 1999.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This refers to the three violent crimes measured by the GSS and excludes incidents of spousal violence.

Table 1.1  
Rate of violent victimization, by lifestyle indicators, 1999

Lifestyle indicators	Total violent crimes <sup>1</sup>	
	No. of incidents (000s)	Rate per 1,000 population 15+
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	939	76
Male	1,034	87
<b>Age (years)</b>		
15-24	918	224
25-34	474	107
35-44	305	58
45-54	208	50
55+	69†	11†
<b>Household income (\$)</b>		
0-14,999	199	140
15,000-29,999	221	77
30,000-39,999	148	63
40,000-59,999	350	85
60,000 +	518	82
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married/common-law	588	40
Single	1,144	188
Separated/divorced	184	115
Widow or widower	--	--
<b>Main activity</b>		
Working at a job	1,053	80
Looking for work	81	180
Student	591	198
Household work <sup>2</sup>	123	60
Retired	39†	10†
Other <sup>3</sup>	52†	101†

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses. Violent crime includes sexual assault, robbery and assault.

<sup>2</sup> Includes taking care of children and maternity/paternity leave.

<sup>3</sup> Includes long-term illness and volunteering.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 1.2  
Rate of violent victimization, by proximity characteristics, 1999

Measures of proximity	Total violent crimes <sup>1</sup>	
	No. of incidents (000s)	Rate per 1,000 population 15+
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Residency</b>		
Urban	1,642	86
Rural	332	65
<b>Perception of change in neighbourhood crime in last 5 years</b>		
Decreased	139	98
Same	896	68
Increased	744	105
<b>Feelings of safety when walking alone in area after dark</b>		
Safe	1,474	82
Unsafe	436	120
Don't walk alone	63†	24†
<b>Worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</b>		
Not worried	532	127
Worried	651	172
Don't use public transport	789	49

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses. Violent crime includes sexual assault, robbery and assault.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 1.3  
Rate of violent victimization, by exposure characteristics, 1999

Measures of exposure	Total violent crimes <sup>1</sup>	
	No. of incidents (000s)	Rate per 1,000 population 15+
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Number of evening activities per month</b>		
Less than 10	147	26
10 - 19	235	45
20 - 29	352	73
30 +	1,239	149
<b>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</b>		
Daily	607	134
Once a week	737	101
Once a month	186	58
Less than once a month	181	56
Never	263	45
<b>Frequency of waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</b>		
Daily	248	234
Once a week	289	177
Once a month	261	198
Less than once a month	237	112
Never	938	52

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses. Violent crime includes sexual assault, robbery and assault.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 1.4  
**Rate of violent victimization, by guardianship characteristics, 1999**

Measures of guardianship	Total violent crimes <sup>1</sup>	
	No. of incidents (000s)	Rate per 1,000 population 15+
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Taken a self-defence course</b>		
Yes	666	207
No	1,308	63
<b>Carry something for protection or to alert others</b>		
Yes	638	205
No	1,335	64
<b>Lock car doors for safety when alone</b>		
Yes	1,239	90
No	733	72
<b>Check back seat of car for intruders when returning to car alone</b>		
Yes	1,059	98
No	911	70
<b>Plan route with safety in mind</b>		
Yes	994	99
No	978	71
<b>Stay home at night because afraid to go out alone</b>		
Yes	279	117
No	1,693	79

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses. Violent crime includes sexual assault, robbery and assault.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.



Table 1.5  
**Factors related to the risk of violent victimization, multivariate analysis, 1999<sup>1</sup>**

Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>	Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>
<b>Lifestyle indicators</b>		<b>Exposure to crime</b>	
<i>Sex</i>		<i>Number of evening activities per month</i>	
Male	1.70 ***	10 or more	1.49 **
Female	reference	Less than 10	reference
<i>Age</i>		<i>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</i>	
15-24	8.74 ***	At least once per week	1.37 ***
25-34	5.51 ***	Less than once per week	reference
35-44	3.15 ***	<i>Frequency of waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</i>	
45-54	2.43 ***	At least once per week	1.23 *
55+	reference	Less than once per week	reference
<i>Household income (\$)</i>		<b>Guardianship</b>	
0-14,999	1.63 ***	<i>Taken a self-defence course</i>	
15,000+	reference	Yes	1.97 ***
<i>Marital status</i>		No	reference
Single/separated/divorced	1.89 ***	<i>Carry something for protection or to alert others</i>	
Other <sup>3</sup>	reference	Yes	2.45 ***
<i>Main activity</i>		No	reference
Student	0.79 *	<i>Check back seat of car for intruders when returning to car alone</i>	
Other <sup>4</sup>	reference	Yes	1.29 **
<b>Proximity to crime</b>		No	reference
<i>Feelings of safety when walking alone in area after dark</i>		<i>Stay home at night because afraid to go out alone</i>	
Unsafe	1.36 **	Yes	1.47 **
Safe	reference	No	reference
<i>Worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</i>			
Worried	1.23 *		
Not worried	reference		
<i>Perception of change in neighbourhood crime level in last 5 years</i>			
Increased	1.32 ***		
Decreased/Same	reference		

\* .01 < p ≤ .05

\*\* .001 < p ≤ .01

\*\*\* p ≤ .001

p is the significance level. For example, a significance level of .05 indicates that there is a 5% probability that the survey (sample) data will suggest that there is a relationship between the variables, when no relationship actually exists in the population.

<sup>1</sup> Using the technique of logistic regression, the relationship of each factor to the risk of victimization is examined, while controlling for possible effects of other risk factors in the model.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the odds of being victimized in comparison to that for the reference category, when all other factors in the model are held constant.

<sup>3</sup> Includes those who are married, living common-law, and widowed.

<sup>4</sup> Includes working, unemployed, caring for children, household work, retired, maternity/paternity leave, long-term illness and other.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE RISK OF HOUSEHOLD VICTIMIZATION

by Sandra Besserer and Dianne Hendrick

### Introduction

In addition to concerns Canadians have about violent crime, many are also concerned about becoming victims of household crime. Results from a recent public opinion poll indicate that nearly one-half of Canadians (48%) believed they would be victims of a property crime within the next year (Ekos Research Associates 2000).

The obvious impact of household crimes such as break and enter and vandalism are the financial losses associated with property thefts and damage. Insurance industry data for Canada indicate, for example, that insurance losses due to motor vehicle theft are approximately \$600 million per year.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, there is the time spent dealing with the police, dealing with insurance companies, and having property replaced or repaired. There are also the emotional consequences, including anger and fear, that victims feel as a result of these incidents.

The 1999 General Social Survey asked respondents if anyone in their household had been the victim of one of four household crimes in the previous 12 months. The four types of household crime are: break and enter and attempted break and enter, theft and attempted theft of motor vehicles/parts, theft and attempted theft of household property and vandalism (see Box I.1). The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the factors associated with the risk of household victimization. First though, trends in household crime as well as the impact of household crime will be discussed.

### Household thefts rise

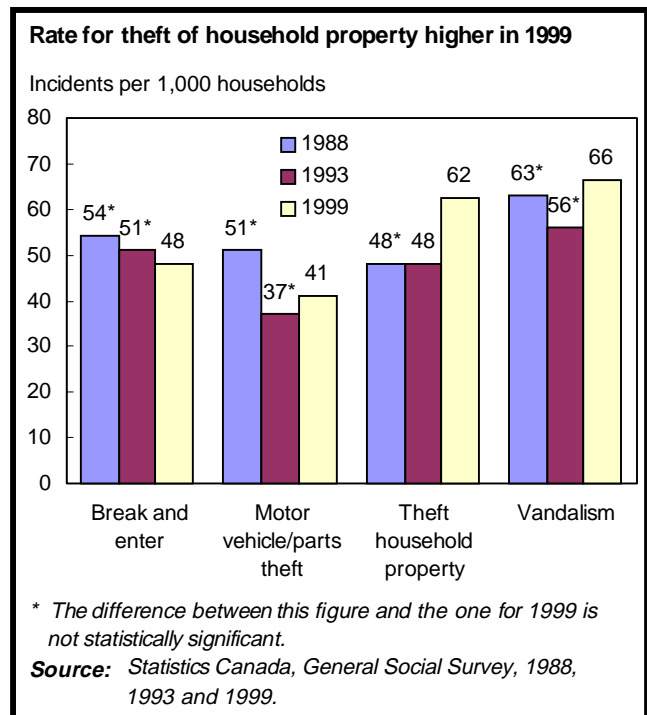
According to the GSS, there were approximately 2.7 million household crime incidents in 1999. Vandalism and theft of household property accounted for the greatest proportion of household crime incidents, at 30% and 29%, respectively. Break and enter accounted for 22% of household incidents and motor vehicle/parts theft, 19%.

The estimated 2.7 million household crime incidents for 1999 translate into a rate of 218 incidents for every 1,000 households in Canada: 66 incidents of vandalism, 62 incidents of theft of household property, 48 incidents of break and enter, and 41 incidents of motor vehicle/parts theft (Table 2.1). Overall, the rate of household

victimization increased 13% in 1999 from a rate of 193 incidents per 1,000 households in 1993. However, the 1999 rate was almost the same as the rate for 1988 (216). While the overall rate was up in 1999, only one offence changed significantly: the rate for theft of household property increased 29% from 48 incidents per 1,000 households in 1993 to 62 incidents in 1999 (Figure 2.1).

As with violent crime, the rate of household crime tends to increase as one moves westward across Canada. In 1999, Prince Edward Island (134), followed by Newfoundland (140), had the lowest rates, while rates were highest in Saskatchewan (259) and British Columbia (319) (Figure 2.2). The higher risk of household victimization in British Columbia was largely related to theft of household property and vandalism. In 1999, the rate for theft of household property in British

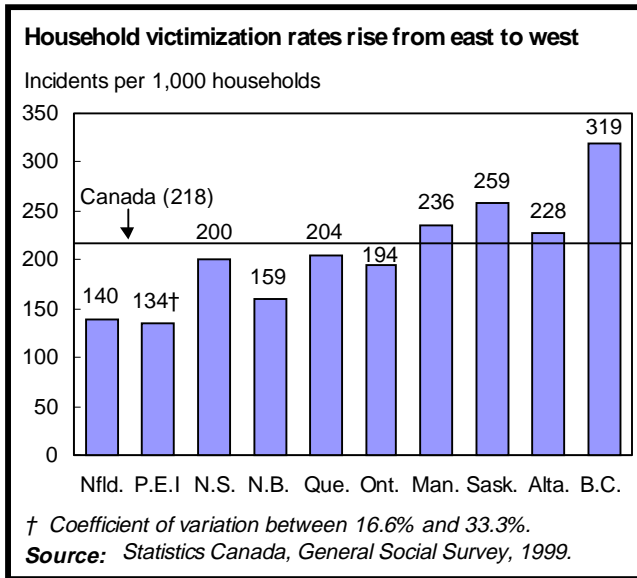
Figure 2.1



<sup>11</sup> For more information see Facts of the General Insurance Industry in Canada. Insurance Council of Canada, 2000.

Columbia was 103 incidents per 1,000 households, or 1.7 times the national rate (Table 2.1). The British Columbia rate for break and enter (71) was 1.5 times the national rate.

Figure 2.2



### Impact of household crime

#### Anger a common reaction to being victimized

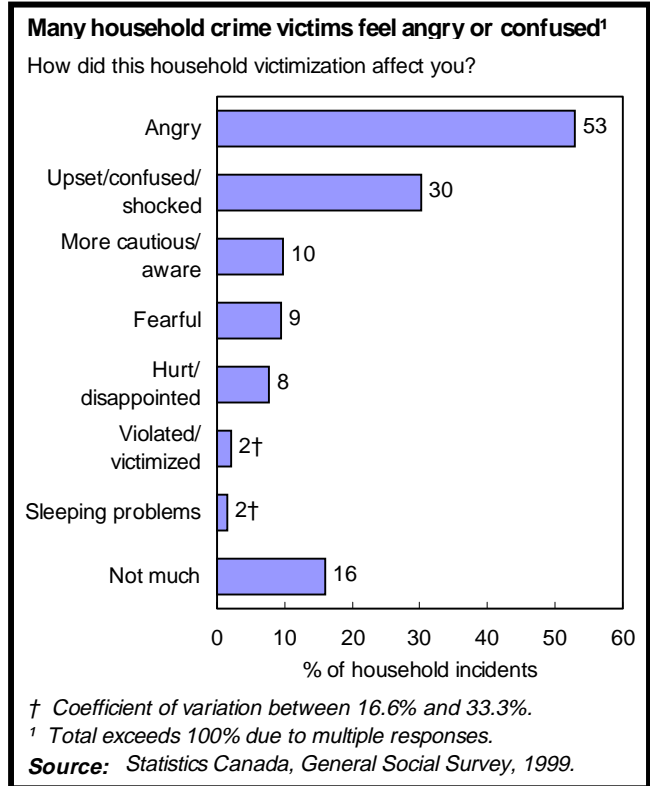
For the first time in 1999, the GSS asked victims how they were affected by their experience. Not surprisingly, more than one-half of household crime victims felt angry as a result of the incident (Figure 2.3). As well, 30% of victims reported feeling upset, shocked or confused. The incident made 10% of victims more cautious and 9% fearful. Finally, 16% of household crime victims stated that the experience did not have much of an effect on them.

Victims of break and enter seemed to suffer more negative consequences as a result of their experience. They were the ones most likely to feel upset, shocked or confused (35% of incidents); fearful (23%); and more cautious (16%) after the incident. Victims of household property thefts appeared least affected by their experience, with 20% stating that the incident did not have much of an impact on them.

#### Minority of victims recover stolen property

Not all household crime incidents result in the theft of property. However in 1999, for the three theft-related crimes, 7 in 10 incidents resulted in the loss of property. Theft of household property, which includes attempted thefts, had the greatest percentage of incidents (97%)

Figure 2.3

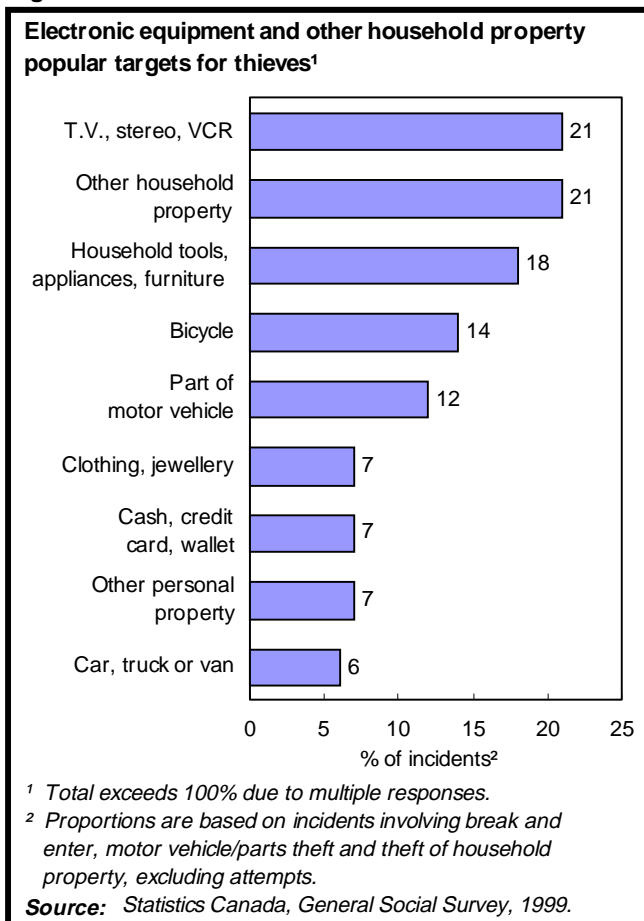


for which property was actually stolen. Property was taken in about one-half of incidents involving break and enter and theft of motor vehicles/parts. Again, both these crimes include completed and attempted thefts. The findings in 1993 were very similar to those for 1999, except that a higher percentage of motor vehicle related incidents (75%) resulted in the theft of property. In 1993, a higher proportion of motor vehicle thefts involved the theft of just parts (62% versus 45% in 1999). This may explain why a higher proportion of motor vehicle thefts was successful in 1993.

Electronic equipment, including televisions, stereos, and video recorders, is a popular item with thieves. In 1999, some type of electronic equipment was stolen in one-fifth of household incidents involving a theft (Figure 2.4). Also popular were household articles, such as tools, appliances and furniture, which were taken in 18% of incidents. Bicycles (14% of incidents) and parts of motor vehicles (12%) were also common targets. These findings are quite similar to what was found by the 1993 GSS.

Victims do not recover their stolen property very often. In both 1993 and 1999, stolen property was partially or fully recovered in just 14% of theft-related incidents. The figure in 1999 varied from 9% for thefts of household property to 27% for thefts of motor vehicles/parts.

Figure 2.4



Vandalism, of course, results in the damage or destruction of personal and/or household property, including motor vehicles. However, incidents involving theft or attempted theft can also involve property damage. In 1999, more than one-third of theft-related incidents also involved property damage – 45% of break and enter incidents, 45% of motor vehicle/parts thefts, and 18% of household property thefts. In 1993, a smaller proportion of theft-related incidents (25%) involved damage to property; damage occurred in a smaller percentage of incidents for both break and enter and motor vehicle/parts theft (29%).

#### *Most household crimes result in losses of less than \$500*

The cost of stolen/damaged property associated with household crime incidents is often less than \$500. In 1999, over 60% of incidents had costs below this amount (Figure 2.5). This proportion ranged from 53% for incidents involving theft of motor vehicles/parts to 73% for theft of household property.<sup>12</sup> Despite the seemingly small amounts, the total cost of all stolen and damaged goods was estimated by victims to be more than \$3.3

billion, or about \$270 for every household in Canada. In 1993, the distribution of costs was about the same. For example, 61% of incidents were valued at less than \$500. However, total estimated losses were lower at \$2.3 billion or \$210 per household. The reason is related to the fact that the overall cost of incidents valued at \$1,000 or more was about 45% higher in 1999.

In 1999, nearly three-quarters (74%) of victims who suffered a loss were covered by insurance. Incidents involving theft of motor vehicles/parts or vandalism were more often covered by insurance (88% and 84%, respectively) compared to incidents involving break and enter (75%) or a theft of household property (58%). Findings in 1993 were similar.

For the losses that were covered by insurance, 31% of victims attempted to obtain compensation, while 68% did not. As would be expected, requests for compensation increased as the value of the stolen or damaged property increased. When the value of stolen/damaged property was under \$200, 5% of victims sought compensation. This rose steadily to a figure of 72% for household incidents involving losses of \$1,000 or more. Lower insurance deductible amounts may explain why in 1993, a higher percentage of victims (42%) attempted to obtain compensation for their losses. Specifically, the deductible amount for the majority (52%) of homeowner policies was \$200 in 1994. By 1998, the majority (53%) of homeowner policies had a deductible amount of \$500.<sup>13</sup> This perhaps explains why in 1993 the percentage of victims making insurance claims for incidents costing under \$500 was about two times the comparable figure for 1999.

Victims who attempted to obtain compensation through their insurance companies were successful eight out of ten times in 1999. For the remaining incidents, 11% of victims were not successful, 8% had not yet resolved their cases and 1% did not know the outcome. Insurance compensation was undoubtedly one of the main reasons why out-of-pocket expenses for victims were considerably less than their total costs.<sup>14</sup> Out-of-pocket expenses were less than \$500 in 73% of household incidents and \$500 or more in 17% of incidents (Figure 2.5). In comparison, a smaller proportion of total costs (62%) were under \$500 and a higher proportion (28%) were \$500 or more.

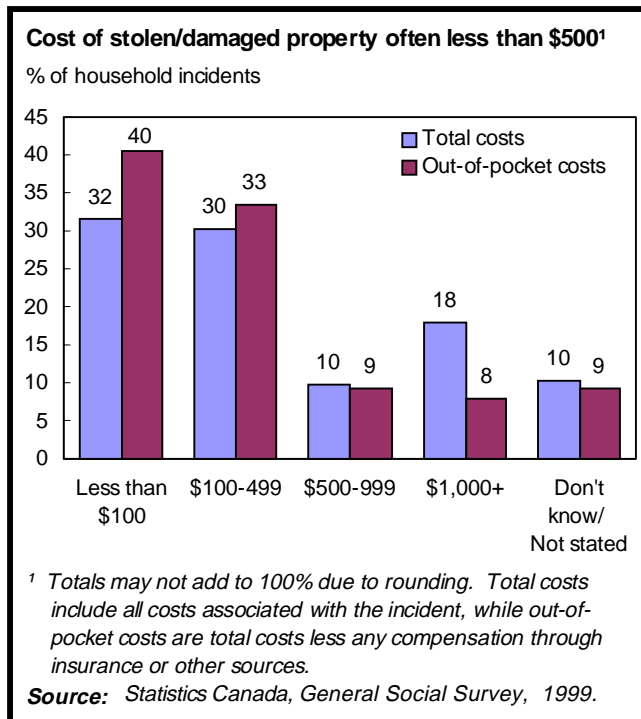
<sup>12</sup> That 53% of motor vehicle/parts thefts had a total cost below \$500 may appear low. This is a reflection of the fact that approximately one-half of the incidents were attempts rather than completed thefts. As well, 60% of theft incidents involved theft of motor vehicle parts rather than theft of the entire motor vehicle.

<sup>13</sup> This is based on information provided by the Insurance Information Centre of Canada (IICC). The IICC member companies represent approximately 64% of the industry.

<sup>14</sup> Other factors could include recovery of the stolen property and compensation through the courts.

Overall, household crime victims estimated their out-of-pocket expenses to be just over \$1 billion in 1999, or about \$90 for every household in the country. In other words, a victim's out-of-pocket costs were about one-third of their total costs. In 1993, out-of-pocket expenses were estimated to be very similar, about \$100 for every household.

Figure 2.5



### Assessing the risks of household crime

One important outcome of victimization surveys such as the GSS is the information related to the risks of victimization. The knowledge that is gained regarding what puts people and their property at risk is intended to assist in efforts to prevent victimization in the future.

One approach that has been used to explain the risks of victimization is the "structural-choice" theory of Miethe and Meier (1990). According to this theory, a person's activities and lifestyle create a "structure" that may increase their contact with potential offenders. This, in conjunction with the attractiveness and guardianship of the person or their property, is what determines the "choice" of a particular victim. Based on this model, the risks of household victimization can be examined along four dimensions: proximity and exposure of household property to crime, and attractiveness and guardianship of household property. Proximity and exposure are elements of structure, while attractiveness and guardianship are elements of choice.

### Proximity

Proximity represents how close the household and its members are to potential offenders. Living in an urban area has been linked to higher levels of crime, particularly in instances of property crimes (Fischer 1984). Miethe and Meier (1990) found that feeling unsafe in one's area was highly correlated with higher rates of burglary (break and enter). As well, findings from the 1999 GSS indicate that 70% of household crime incidents occurred in or around the victim's home (Besserer and Trainor 2000). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that households located in high crime areas would be more at risk of being victimized.

The GSS provides several measures to assess a household's proximity to high-crime areas. Many of these have been employed in previous studies. First is location of the home, specifically whether it is located in an urban or rural area. Second is the respondent's assessment of the level of crime in his or her neighbourhood. This includes how the current level of crime compares to other neighbourhoods and how the level of crime has changed over the past five years. Finally, are the respondent's feelings of safety from crime: when waiting for/using public transportation alone at night, when walking alone in their area after dark, when staying home alone at night and their overall feelings of safety.

### Exposure

Exposure represents activities and lifestyles that might place people and their property at increased risk of being victimized. Cohen and Felson (1979) believed that the dispersion of "routine activities" away from the home put both the vacant household and its inhabitants at increased risk. Thus people working outside the home and those participating in many outside activities would be more susceptible to theft and break and enter.

Measures of exposure available from the 1999 GSS include the respondent's main activity and the number of evening activities that they engage in. As well, there is information on how often the respondent walks alone or uses public transportation alone after dark, and how often they stay at home in the evening because they are afraid to go out. It must be acknowledged that these measures are not optimal, since apart from single-person households, they do not describe activities of all the members of the household. Nevertheless, they do provide an indication of exposure of the household to crime.

### Target attractiveness

The attractiveness of a potential target, including its value, visibility and accessibility, may contribute to the

selection of that particular target for victimization. Several studies have indicated that people with higher incomes have a greater risk of household victimization (Cohen and Felson 1979; Miethe, Stafford and Long 1987). Presumably, such people possess more property, including cars and electronic equipment, which is more attractive to potential thieves.

The 1999 GSS provides information on household income. It also has information on another potential indicator of target attractiveness, type of household. In comparison to apartments and town homes, a detached household may be a more attractive target because of its greater visibility and accessibility.

### *Guardianship*

Guardianship represents whether or not potential victims and their property are protected from crime. There is a social aspect to guardianship, for example, other people in the household or the neighbourhood keeping watch over a potential victim and their property. Some studies have found, for example, that people who live alone rather than with other adults have a higher risk of burglary (Miethe and Meier 1990; Miethe, Stafford and Sloane 1990). There is also a physical aspect to guardianship, for example, burglar alarms and other safety devices that protect a person and their property from crime.

One indicator available from the 1999 GSS on social guardianship is household size (number of occupants). Another possible indicator is household ownership. Perhaps people who own rather than rent their homes live in communities that are less transitory, where neighbours know one another and watch out for each other's property. In terms of physical guardianship, the GSS has information that includes whether or not the respondent had installed new locks/security bars, installed a burglar alarm/motion detector or purchased a dog, either in the previous 12 months or prior to that.

### **Analytical techniques**

The analysis of the risks of household victimization was conducted in two parts. First, a two-way analysis was conducted to test the relationship of *each* of the measures for proximity, exposure, target attractiveness and guardianship, with the risk of household victimization. Rates of victimization for all four household crimes were computed for each of the measures or "predictors". The purpose of this preliminary analysis was to determine if in fact, the chosen indicators were acting as expected and if this was consistent for each of the four household offences.

A two-way, or bivariate analysis, does not take into consideration possible interactions between one or more of the indicators. For example, there could be a relationship between household income and the number of people living in the house. Thus, following the results of the preliminary analysis, a multivariate analysis was conducted in order to test for the effect of each of the predictors, while controlling for the effects of all the other measures. The technique of logistic regression that was used to study the risk of violent victimization in Chapter 1 was also used for household victimization (see Box 2.1 for more details).

#### **Box 2.1: Logistic regression model**

A logistic regression model was used to isolate the effect of the selected indicators on the risk of household crime. The dependent variable was whether or not a household had been the victim of a household crime (break and enter, motor vehicle/parts theft, theft of household property or vandalism). The independent, or predictor, variables were the indicators for proximity, exposure, target attractiveness and guardianship.

Before beginning the analysis, several steps were taken. First, in order to reduce the possibility of small cell counts, several of the measures described in Tables 2.2 to 2.5 were collapsed into fewer categories. Second, responses of "refused/don't know" were excluded from the analysis. Finally, a reference category was chosen for each of the independent variables. The chosen category was usually the one expected to have the lowest risk of household victimization.

Initially, the four types of independent variables (for proximity, exposure, target attractiveness and guardianship) were fitted into the model in separate blocks to determine the unique effects of each concept and each variable. Using the results from the initial model, a number of modifications were made. In a series of steps, some independent variables were removed because they had no significant impact on household victimization. As well, several variables were collapsed into fewer categories because there was no difference in the odds of victimization for some of the adjacent categories. Finally, all variables that were identified as having a significant impact on the risk of household victimization were included in a single model.

### **Results of the bivariate analysis**

The risks of household victimization (based on the number of incidents per 1,000 households) are presented in Tables 2.2 to 2.5. Apart from the indicators for guardianship, the main findings are consistent with the structural-choice model.

### *Proximity*

Households that seemed to be closer to crime had higher rates of victimization. Thus, households located in urban areas experienced higher rates of household victimization than those in rural areas (Table 2.2). Rates of household victimization were also higher when, according to the respondent, the household was located in a neighbourhood where crime was higher than elsewhere or where crime had increased in the previous five years. Finally, when respondents were fearful of crime in general, or at night when waiting for/using public transportation, walking alone in their area, or staying home alone, household victimization rates tended to be higher. These findings were quite consistent for all four types of household crime.

### *Exposure*

Household victimization rates tended to be lower when the respondent and/or their property was less exposed to crime. The rate of household victimization was lower when the respondent's main activity was retired or household work, the kind of activity that would likely keep them home more often than students or those who worked (Table 2.3). Victimization rates were also lower when respondents tended to stay home in the evening. Those who participated in fewer than 10 evening activities per month had the lowest rates of household victimization. Frequency of walking alone at night also appeared to be related to the risk of victimization, with those who walked less frequently having lower risks. Again these findings were fairly similar for all four household offences, though frequency of walking did not appear to be related to the risk of motor vehicle theft.

Frequency of using public transportation at night was the one measure of exposure that showed no clear-cut relation to the risk of victimization.

### *Target attractiveness*

Household victimization rates increased as household income increased. In 1999, the overall rate of household victimization was highest for households earning \$60,000 or more (Table 2.4).<sup>15</sup> Contrary to expectations, however, the highest rates of victimization occurred in semi-detached, row houses and duplexes. Single detached homes did not appear to be more attractive targets for household victimization, despite the presumption that they would be more visible and easier to access.

### *Guardianship*

The structural-choice model suggests that the use of precautionary measures reduces the risk of victimization. However, results from the GSS indicate the

opposite: households that had employed security measures (installed new locks/security bars, installed a burglar alarm/motion detector, or purchased a dog) had a higher risk of victimization, particularly when the security measure had been employed in the last year (Table 2.5). Rates were lowest when no security measure had been used at all.

Several points are worth noting here. First, it is not possible to tell if the security measures were purchased before or after the victimization incident. Second, it is not known if the security measures were purchased for the home that was victimized, or for a previous home. Third, not all household victimization incidents occur at the home – a car can be stolen from a parking lot, for example.

It was anticipated that homes with fewer people living in them would have higher rates of household victimization because there would be fewer people to watch over the household and its property. In fact, the opposite was true. Homes with five or more persons living in them had some of the highest rates of victimization.

The household victimization rate was higher for those who rented rather than owned their homes, perhaps confirming the notion that people who own their homes live in more stable communities where neighbours know one another and provide some guardianship over each other's property.

### **Results of the multivariate analysis**

As indicated previously, the bivariate analysis of household victimization provides a good indication of which factors are associated with risk. However, the analysis is limited because it cannot control for possible relationships among the various risk factors. As it turns out, once the individual contribution of each of the risk factors is isolated through a multivariate analysis, the results are somewhat different. The findings are discussed below.

#### *Living in a high crime area increases the risk of household victimization*

Proximity to crime increases the risk of victimization. Living in an area that was considered by respondents to have higher crime than elsewhere was one of the strongest predictors of household risk: the odds of victimization were 1.8 times higher for households in this kind of neighbourhood compared to those where

<sup>15</sup> The income categories used for the 1999 GSS are comparable to what was employed for the 1993 GSS. According to the 1999 GSS, 9% of Canadian households earned under \$15,000, 14% earned \$15,000 to \$29,999, 10% earned \$30,000 to \$39,999, 17% earned \$40,000 to \$59,999 and 22% earned \$60,000 or more. For 28% of households, the figure for income was not known.

crime was lower (Table 2.6). Another fairly important factor was living in an area where the respondent felt crime had increased over the previous five years. This increased the odds of victimization by 1.7 times in comparison to neighbourhoods where the respondent felt crime had stayed the same or declined.

Feelings of safety from crime are indicative of the level of risk. In particular, the chances of being victimized were greater when someone was dissatisfied with their overall safety from crime. The probability of victimization was also higher if the respondent was worried while home alone or using public transportation alone in the evening, although the effect was not as large. The one proximity measure that turned out to be unrelated to the risk of victimization, once the effects of other factors were controlled, was fear while walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark.

Unlike the findings for violent crime, living in an urban area does increase the likelihood of household victimization. The odds of victimization were 23% higher for households located in urban areas.

#### *Participating in activities outside the home exposes households to increased risk*

Of the four measures of exposure that were tested in the multivariate model for household victimization, all but one are associated with the risk of victimization. Main activity was an important predictor, with those respondents involved in activities that would tend to keep them away from home having a greater risk. For example, when the survey respondent was a student, the odds of household victimization were more than twice as high as compared to households where the respondent was retired. For respondents who worked, the odds were 1.9 times higher.

Participation in many evening activities was also a significant risk factor. The odds of victimization for households in which the respondent participated in 30 or more evening activities were more than twice as high as for those in which the respondent engaged in fewer than 10 evening activities.

As was the case with the preliminary, bivariate analysis, frequency of using public transportation alone at night was not related to the risk of household victimization. Frequency of walking alone at night continued to be a predictive factor, albeit a minor one.

#### *High household income makes households a more attractive target*

Households that have higher household incomes have a greater risk of household victimization. The odds of

victimization for households with an income of \$60,000+ were 1.5 times that of households with an income under \$15,000.

Although the bivariate analysis indicated that the risk of household victimization varied depending on the type of household, this proved not to be the case once other predictors were held constant. The higher risks that were observed for semi-detached, row and duplex homes were related to other factors, possibly neighbourhood crime levels.

#### *Guardianship of property may be a response to victimization*

The installation of home security devices in the form of locks or alarms, or the purchase of a dog was associated with a higher risk of victimization. In explaining this finding, some researchers (Mayhew 1984) have suggested that the protective measures may have been taken as a result of victimization rather than as a precaution. Unfortunately, it is not possible to tell if the security measures were purchased before or after the victimization incident.

Having more people living in a household does not provide improved guardianship over household property. In fact, the odds of victimization increase as household size increases. The odds of victimization for households with five or more people living in them were 1.5 times higher than for households with 1 or 2 people. It has been suggested that households with more occupants may have more household property, thereby increasing the risk of victimization (Besserer and Trainor 2000).

The one measure of guardianship that was associated with a lower risk of victimization was home ownership. The odds of victimization for rented households were 33% higher than for households that were owner-occupied.

#### **Summary**

There are many factors that are related to the risk of household victimization. Of the ones that were examined here, the strongest predictors were measures of exposure to crime. The risks of victimization were higher for households with respondents who tended to be away from home more often. That is, the risks were higher when the respondent's main activity was a student or working at a job, as compared to other activities. The same was true when the respondent participated in 30 or more evening activities per month rather than fewer evening activities.

Proximity to crime also had an effect on the risk of household victimization. In particular, the risk of household victimization was higher when respondents felt that



crime in their community was higher than elsewhere and when the respondent believed that the neighbourhood crime level had risen in the previous five years.

Higher income makes households a more attractive target for would-be offenders. The odds of victimization were almost 50% higher for households with an income of \$60,000 or more, compared to those with incomes of less than \$15,000. Single-detached homes were not more attractive victimization targets. In fact, the type of house in which one lives has no impact on the risk of household victimization.

One might assume that people who take steps to protect their property from crime by installing alarms or other security devices would have a lower risk of victimization. Yet the analysis indicated that the opposite was true. It appears that these devices are being used as a preventative measure only after a victimization incident has occurred. Having a larger household does not provide increased guardianship over household property. The

odds of household victimization were highest for households with five or more people living in them.

The analyses in Chapters 1 and 2 suggest that there are many similarities in the risk factors for household and violent victimization. Proximity to crime, including worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night and the belief that neighbourhood crime had increased in the previous five years, was related to increased risk for both household and violent crime. Exposure to crime, including frequently walking alone at night or participating in evening activities also lead to an increased risk for the two crime types.

There were some dissimilarities in the risk factors for household and violent crime. In particular, students have higher risks of household victimization, but lower risks of violent victimization in comparison to those with other main activities. Also, higher household income is associated with higher risks of household victimization, but lower risks of violent victimization.

Table 2.1  
Household victimization rates, by province, 1999

	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism
	No. of incidents (000s)					Rate per 1,000 households				
<b>Canada</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>
Newfoundland	28	6†	--	9†	8†	140	30†	--	44†	41†
Prince Edward Island	7†	--	--	--	--	134†	--	--	--	--
Nova Scotia	76	19†	--	28	17†	200	50†	--	74	45†
New Brunswick	48	--	--	13†	15†	159	--	--	44†	51†
Quebec	625	153	126	164	182	204	50	41	53	59
Ontario	874	185	160	254	275	194	41	35	56	61
Manitoba	107	22†	18†	29†	37†	236	49†	40†	65†	82†
Saskatchewan	106	24†	23†	26†	33†	259	58†	56†	63†	81†
Alberta	260	48†	54	65	93	228	42†	48	57	81
British Columbia	525	117	96	169	143	319	71	58	103	87

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 2.2  
Household victimization rates, by measures of proximity to crime, 1999

Measures of proximity	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism
	No. of incidents (000s)					Rate per 1,000 households				
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Location of home</b>										
Urban	2,248	506	428	639	675	232	52	44	66	70
Rural	408	81†	74†	121	133	164	32†	30†	49	53
<b>Perception of neighbourhood crime compared to other neighbourhoods</b>										
Lower	1,211	229	228	369	384	173	33	33	53	55
About the same	916	210	169	257	280	264	61	49	74	81
Higher	431	124	86	110	111	431	124	87	110	111
<b>Perception of change in neighbourhood crime in last 5 years</b>										
Decreased	125	24†	25†	37†	38†	183	36†	37†	55†	56†
Stayed the same	1,108	208	207	345	348	169	32	32	53	53
Increased	1,181	293	217	320	350	331	82	61	90	98
<b>Feelings of safety when walking alone in area after dark</b>										
Very safe	832	161	151	262	258	202	39	37	64	63
Reasonably safe	1,100	238	210	328	324	243	53	46	72	72
Somewhat unsafe	405	103	79†	97	127	324	82	63†	77	101
Very unsafe	171	46†	32†	42†	51†	278	75†	52†	68†	83†
Don't walk alone	147	40†	28†	32†	48†	90	24†	17†	19†	29†
<b>Worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</b>										
Not at all worried	481	106	84	160	131	237	52	42	79	64
Somewhat worried	461	101	93	135	132	322	70	65	94	93
Very worried	121	28†	28†	26†	39†	314	73†	72†	68†	102†
Don't use public transport	1,592	352	297	438	505	192	42	36	53	61
<b>Worry when alone at home in the evening or at night</b>										
Not at all worried	1,833	369	349	553	562	191	38	36	58	59
Somewhat worried	723	184	131	184	223	332	85	60	84	102
Very worried	87	29†	--	21†	--	336	113†	--	79†	--
Never alone	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>General feelings about safety from crime</b>										
Very satisfied	904	164	183	281	276	172	31	35	53	52
Somewhat satisfied	1,360	324	247	369	421	240	57	43	65	74
Somewhat dissatisfied	231	57†	40†	62†	72†	440	108†	75†	119†	137†
Very dissatisfied	122	36†	28†	32†	27†	502	147†	114†	132†	110†

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 2.3  
Household victimization rates, by measures of exposure to crime, 1999

Measures of exposure	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism
	No. of incidents (000s)					Rate per 1,000 households				
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Main activity</b>										
Working at a job	1,769	373	345	511	539	271	57	53	78	83
Looking for work	57†	--	--	--	--	244†	--	--	--	--
A student	318	67†	59†	101	91	295	62†	55†	93	84
Household work <sup>1</sup>	223	56†	38†	59†	70†	218	55†	37†	58†	69†
Retired	192	55†	33†	47†	58†	83	24†	14†	20†	25†
Other <sup>2</sup>	56†	--	--	--	--	186†	--	--	--	--
<b>Evening activities (# per month)</b>										
Less than 10	323	87	57†	81	99	104	28	18†	26	32
10 - 19	485	102	89	160	134	189	40	35	62	52
20 - 29	563	133	110	150	170	240	57	47	64	72
30 +	1,268	259	243	367	399	322	66	62	93	101
<b>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</b>										
Daily	568	135	95	167	171	260	62	44	77	78
At least once a week	910	180	167	291	272	256	51	47	82	76
At least once a month	354	80†	70†	103	102	228	51†	45†	66	66
Less than once a month	328	70†	67†	85	105	208	44†	43†	54	67
Never	496	122	102	114	157	151	37	31	35	48
<b>Frequency of waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</b>										
Daily	131	36†	22†	38†	35†	253	70†	43†	73†	68†
At least once a week	226	60†	35†	71†	60†	288	76†	44†	91†	76†
At least once a month	185	35†	29†	66†	55†	301	57†	47†	107†	89†
Less than once a month	300	65†	69†	86	80†	292	63†	68†	83	78†
Never	1,814	391	346	499	577	197	43	38	54	63

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Includes taking care of children and maternity/paternity leave.

<sup>2</sup> Includes long-term illness and volunteering.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 2.4  
Household victimization rates, by measures of target attractiveness, 1999

Measures of target attractiveness	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Household income (\$)</b>										
0-14,999	196	57†	29†	61†	50†	183	53†	27†	57†	46†
15,000-29,999	373	88	61†	114	110	220	52	36†	67	65
30,000-39,999	309	62†	54†	100	92	245	50†	43†	79	73
40,000-59,999	500	102	104	148	146	247	50	51	73	72
60,000+	761	158	163	205	234	279	58	60	75	86
<b>Type of home</b>										
Single detached	1,568	348	295	448	478	218	48	41	62	66
Semi-detached, row house, or duplex	425	82	93	113	138	278	53†	60	74	90
Apartment	580	140	103	168	170	212	51	38	61	62
Other <sup>1</sup>	56†	--	--	25†	--	256†	--	--	115†	--

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Includes mobile homes and all other types of homes.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 2.5  
Household victimization rates, by measures of guardianship, 1999

Measures of guardianship	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Installed new locks or security bars</b>										
Yes, in the past year	871	257	163	233	217	466	137	87	125	116
Yes, more than one year ago	457	83	80†	124	169	209	38	37†	57	78
No	1,321	247	257	401	416	168	31	33	51	53
<b>Installed a burglar alarm or motion detector</b>										
Yes, in the past year	593	167	118	154	155	442	124	88	115	115
Yes, more than one year ago	473	95	81	136	160	212	43	36	61	72
No	1,580	324	300	468	488	190	39	36	56	59
<b>Obtained a dog</b>										
Yes, in the past year	134	42†	--	37†	39†	448	139†	--	125†	130†
Yes, more than one year ago	299	65†	60†	79†	96	289	63†	57†	76†	93
No	2,220	480	425	643	671	208	45	40	60	63
<b>Household size</b>										
1 person	575	144	100	159	172	176	44	31	49	53
2 persons	795	177	150	222	245	190	42	36	53	59
3 persons	504	119	97	136	152	269	64	52	73	81
4 persons	521	95	106	158	162	277	51	57	84	86
5+ persons	261	51†	47†	85	77†	273	54†	50†	89	80†
<b>Ownership of home</b>										
Owned	1,647	344	312	465	527	212	44	40	60	68
Rented	977	235	184	288	271	250	60	47	74	69

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 2.6  
**Factors related to the risk of household victimization, multivariate analysis, 1999<sup>1</sup>**

Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>	Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>
<b>Proximity to crime</b>		<b>Target attractiveness</b>	
<i>Location of home</i>		<i>Household income (\$)</i>	
Rural	reference	0-14,999	reference
Urban	1.23 ***	15,000-29,999	1.23 *
<i>Perception of neighbourhood crime compared to other neighbourhoods</i>		30,000-39,999	1.29 **
Lower	reference	40,000-59,999	1.18
About the same	1.33 ***	60,000+	1.45 ***
Higher	1.84 ***	<b>Guardianship</b>	
<i>Perception of change in neighbourhood crime in last 5 years</i>		<i>Installed new locks or security bars</i>	
Decreased/Stayed the same	reference	Yes, in the past year	1.92 ***
Increased	1.68 ***	Yes, more than one year ago	1.12
<i>Worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</i>		No	reference
Not worried	reference	<i>Installed a burglar alarm or motion detector</i>	
Worried	1.15 **	Yes, in the past year	1.71 ***
<i>Worry when alone at home in the evening or at night</i>		Yes, more than one year ago	1.06
Not worried	reference	No	reference
Worried	1.24 ***	<i>Obtained a dog</i>	
<i>General feelings about safety from crime</i>		Yes, in the past year	1.59 ***
Satisfied	reference	Yes, more than one year ago	0.91
Dissatisfied	1.48 ***	No	reference
<b>Exposure to crime</b>		<i>Household size</i>	
<i>Main activity</i>		1 or 2 persons	reference
Retired	reference	3 persons	1.23 ***
Household work <sup>3</sup>	1.67 ***	4 persons	1.32 ***
Looking for work	1.76 ***	5+ persons	1.45 ***
Working at a job	1.91 ***	<i>Ownership of home</i>	
A student	2.34 ***	Owned	reference
Other <sup>4</sup>	1.49 *	Rented	1.33 ***
<i>Evening activities (# per month)</i>			
Less than 10	reference		
10 - 19	1.38 ***		
20 - 29	1.59 ***		
30 +	2.14 ***		
<i>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</i>			
Less than once a week	reference		
Once a week or more	1.17 ***		

\* .01 < p ≤ .05

\*\* .001 < p ≤ .01

\*\*\* p ≤ .001

p is the significance level. For example, a significance level of .05 indicates that there is a 5% probability that the survey (sample) data will suggest that there is a relationship between the variables, when no relationship actually exists in the population.

<sup>1</sup> Using the technique of logistic regression, the relationship of each factor to the risk of victimization is examined, while controlling for possible interactions with the other risk factors in the model.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the odds of being victimized in comparison to that for the reference category, when all other factors in the model are held constant.

<sup>3</sup> Includes taking care of children and maternity/paternity leave.

<sup>4</sup> Includes long-term illness and volunteering.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

## CHAPTER THREE: VICTIMIZATION IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

by Jodi-Anne Brzozowski

### Introduction

In the last several decades, Canada has moved towards increased urbanization. Urban areas have been growing at a greater rate than rural areas since 1931 (Biggs and Bollman 1991). This has led to significant socio-economic change. Researchers have expressed concern that although population concentrations in urban areas have fostered economic expansion, they have also led to societal problems such as crime and a breakdown of social cohesion (Biggs and Bollman 1991).

The analyses in Chapters 1 and 2, in addition to other research in the area of urban/rural crime, indicate that rates of personal and household victimization are higher in urban areas than in rural areas (Mirrlees-Black 1998; Kong 1994; Norris and Johal 1992). This difference has been largely attributed to rates of personal theft and assault, which have varied significantly for urban and rural residents, while the difference in sexual assault rates has been much smaller (Kong 1994). Furthermore, it has been found that urban residents are more fearful of crime than their rural counterparts (Kong 1994; Mirrlees-Black 1998).

This chapter will assess variations in crime between urban and rural areas as reported by respondents to the 1999 General Social Survey (Box 3.1). In particular, the analysis will examine whether urban or rural dwellers are more likely to be victims of personal and household crimes and whether risk factors for violent and household victimization vary between urban and rural residents. As well, urban/rural differences in fear levels, protection measures and attitudes toward the justice system will

#### Box 3.1: How urban/rural is defined

Urban areas have minimum population concentrations of 1,000 and a population density of at least 400 per square kilometre, based on the previous census population counts. All territory outside urban areas is considered rural. Based on this definition, for the 1999 GSS, 79% of the population 15 years and older lived in an urban area and 21% in a rural area.

be examined. This analysis may assist police agencies in their enforcement efforts, and help develop and refine crime prevention programs specific to urban and rural areas.

### Rates of personal victimization

#### *Urban residents report higher rates of victimization*

According to the 1999 General Social Survey, 27% of the urban population and 18% of the rural population reported being the victim of at least one crime in the preceding 12 months.<sup>16</sup> This included 10% of the urban population and 6% of the rural population who reported being victimized two or more times in that time period.

For personal crimes, rates of victimization were higher for urban residents than for rural residents (Table 3.1). The greatest variation was for personal theft, where the rate for urban residents was 64% higher than for rural residents. Among violent incidents, assault was the most commonly reported crime for both urban and rural dwellers, followed by sexual assault. Findings presented in Chapter 1 indicate that urban/rural residency is not a significant risk factor for violent crime once other factors, such as age and sex, are taken into consideration. This implies that the differences that exist in the 1999 rates of violent victimization for urban and rural residents are a function of factors unrelated to urban/rural residency.

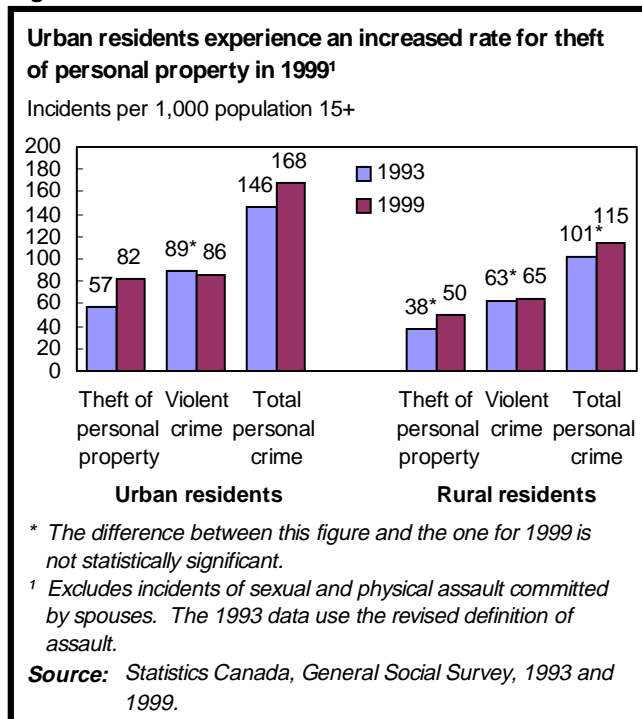
Rates of total personal victimization were similar for urban men and women, as well as for rural men and women. However urban males had a higher rate of violent crime than their female counterparts (93 versus 79 per 1,000 population), whereas rural men and women had similar rates of violent victimization (Table 3.1).

<sup>16</sup> As indicated in Chapter 1, the risk factors for spousal violence are quite different from the risk factors of violent crime generally, therefore the analysis of personal victimization excludes incidents of physical and sexual assault committed by spouses.

*Urban residents experience an increase in theft of personal property in 1999*

Between 1993 and 1999, while the personal victimization rate for rural residents remained fairly stable, urban residents experienced a 15% increase, from 146 to 168 incidents per 1,000 population (Figure 3.1). This increase was largely due to the 44% increase in the rate for theft of personal property, from 57 incidents per 1,000 in 1993 to 82 incidents per 1,000 in 1999. The rates for all violent crimes remained relatively consistent between 1993 and 1999.

**Figure 3.1**



**Risk factors for violent victimization**

The results of the multivariate analysis conducted in Chapter 1 indicate that urban/rural residence is not a significant risk factor for violent crime. Nevertheless, it is possible that the risk factors identified in that analysis do not affect urban and rural residents in the same way. To test this hypothesis, the logistic regression model used in Chapter 1 (see Table 1.5 and Box 1.3) was run separately for urban and rural residents. The results, discussed below, indicate that there are some differences in the risks of violent victimization for urban and rural dwellers.

*Effect of age greater for urban residents*

For the lifestyle indicators, age was the strongest predictor of violent victimization for both urban and rural residents when the effects of other variables are controlled (Table 3.2). However, the effect was stronger for urban residents. For example, the odds of victimization for those 15 to 24 years of age compared to those 55 years and older, were more than nine times higher for urban residents, but six times higher for rural residents. Marital status was a significant predictor of risk for both groups, but had more of an impact in the case of rural residents. Sex and household income were significant factors in the risk of violent crime for urban residents, but not for rural residents. Main activity was not a significant risk factor for urban or rural dwellers.

*Fear of walking alone associated with violent victimization of rural dwellers*

Of the three measures for proximity to crime, fear of walking alone at night was a significant predictor of violent victimization for rural residents, but not urban dwellers. The opposite was true for worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night – it was significant for urban dwellers only. Perception of change in neighbourhood crime was significant for both rural and urban dwellers, but had more of an influence on the risk for rural residents.

*Frequency of walking alone associated with violent victimization of urban dwellers*

Regarding exposure to crime, frequency of walking alone after dark was the strongest predictor of violent victimization for urban dwellers, but was not a factor in the victimization of rural dwellers. Frequency of evening activities, though a significant risk factor for both urban and rural dwellers, had a greater effect on rural residents. For rural dwellers, the odds of victimization for those participating in 10 or more activities per month were 2.2 times that of those participating in less than 10 activities per month. The comparable figure for urban dwellers was 1.4. Frequency of waiting for/using public transportation was not a significant risk factor for either urban or rural residents.

**Rates of household victimization**

*Urban households experience higher rates of victimization*

In 1999, for all four household crimes, urban households experienced significantly higher rates of victimization than their rural counterparts (Table 3.3). The greatest variation was with break and enter, where the rate for

urban households was 63% higher than that for rural households (52 versus 32 per 1,000 households). There was also a large variation in the rate of motor vehicle/parts theft, which was 47% higher for urban households than for rural households (44 versus 30 per 1,000 households).

Between 1993 and 1999, unlike with personal victimization rates, there was no difference in the trend in household victimization rates between urban and rural residents. Neither population experienced any significant changes in the rates for the four crime types. However, as indicated in Chapter 2, there was an increase in the rate for theft of household property for Canada as a whole.

### **Risk factors for household victimization**

The results of the multivariate analysis conducted in Chapter 2 indicate that, unlike violent victimization, urban/rural residence is a significant risk factor for household victimization. Also of interest, however, is whether there are differences in the risk factors for urban and rural residents. To determine this, the logistic regression model used in Chapter 2 (see Table 2.6 and Box 2.1) was run separately for both urban and rural residents. Based on the results of this analysis, it appears that there are some differences in risk factors.

#### *Living in a high crime area increases risk for both urban and rural residents*

Proximity to crime contributes to the risk of household victimization for both urban and rural dwellers. All five measures for proximity were significant predictors for urban residents, while all but general feelings of safety from crime were significant for rural residents (Table 3.4). Three of the measures – perception of change in neighbourhood crime, worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night and worry when home alone in the evening – the odds of victimization for those in the high risk category were greater for rural dwellers. For example, for rural residents, the odds of victimization for those who were worried while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night were 39% higher than those who weren't worried. The comparable figure for urban residents was 13%.

#### *Participating in evening activities increases risks more for urban dwellers*

Of the three measures for exposure to crime, participating in evening activities was the strongest predictive risk factor for urban dwellers, with the odds of victimization for those participating in 30 or more activities being 2.3 times higher than those involved in less than 10. This risk factor was not as important for rural residents,

with an odds ratio of 1.6 for those participating in 30 or more activities. Main activity was more important in predicting the risks of rural dwellers. For example, the odds of victimization for rural students were 3.4 times higher than for rural retirees, whereas for their urban counterparts the comparable figure was 2.2 times.

#### *High household income more of a factor for rural dwellers*

Having high household income seems to make rural residents more attractive targets for household victimization. For rural dwellers, the odds of victimization for households with an income of \$60,000+ were 68% higher in comparison to those earning less than \$15,000. For urban residents the comparable figure was 40%.

#### *Household size and ownership not significant risk factors for rural dwellers*

All five guardianship indicators were predictive of the risk of household victimization for urban residents. However, household size and ownership did not influence the risk of household victimization for rural dwellers.

### **Reporting incidents to the police**

#### *Urban and rural dwellers equally likely to report incidents to police*

Police were equally likely to find out about incidents committed against urban and rural residents. Approximately 38% of incidents involving urban dwellers were reported to the police as compared to 36% of incidents involving rural residents. As well, urban and rural residents had similar reasons for reporting/not reporting incidents (see Chapter 4 for details).

### **Perceptions and fear of crime<sup>17</sup>**

In addition to looking at variations in victimization in urban and rural residents, it is important to understand how they may differ in their perceptions and fear of crime.

#### *Urban dwellers more likely to believe neighbourhood crime is up*

When respondents were asked whether, in the last 5 years, crime in their neighbourhood (the area surrounding their home) had increased, decreased or remained the same, urban residents were more likely than rural residents to believe that crime in their neighbourhood had increased (30% versus 27%). These proportions were lower than those reported in

<sup>17</sup> Chapter 5 will examine in detail the GSS results pertaining to perceptions and fear of crime. This analysis focuses on urban/rural differences.



1993 when 48% of urban dwellers and 40% of rural dwellers believed that neighbourhood crime was up.

*Rural dwellers more likely to believe neighbourhood crime is lower*

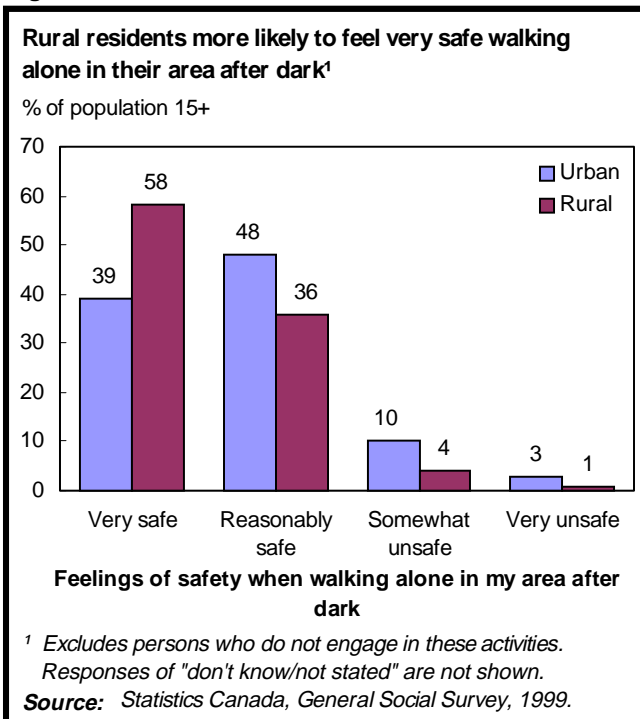
Respondents were also asked if they felt that their neighbourhood had a crime rate that was higher, the same, or lower compared to other areas in Canada. Rural residents were much more likely than urban residents to state that crime in their neighbourhood was lower (73% versus 56%). These proportions were virtually unchanged from 1993.

*Rural dwellers less fearful than urban dwellers*

The GSS asked three specific questions about perceptions of safety in various situations and one general question about overall satisfaction with personal safety. Specifically, respondents were asked how safe they felt when walking alone in their area after dark, and how worried they felt when waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark and when home alone in the evening. The findings support previous research that has shown that overall, rural residents are less fearful than urban residents.

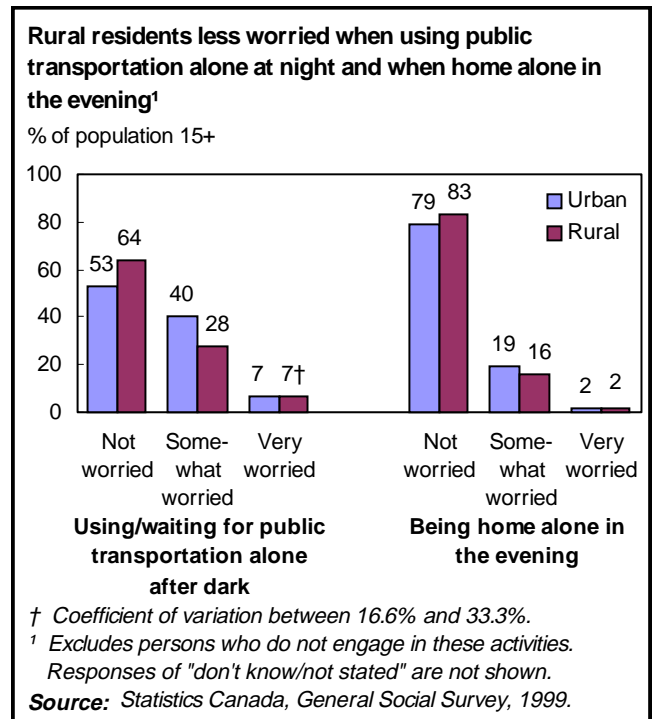
Excluding approximately 25% of urban residents and 22% of rural residents that did not walk alone in the evening, nearly 6 in 10 rural residents stated that they felt very safe doing so, as opposed to only 4 in 10 urban residents (Figure 3.2). Of those who had access to

**Figure 3.2**



and used public transportation after dark, 64% of rural residents were not at all worried about using transportation as compared to 53% of urban residents (Figure 3.3).<sup>18</sup> When asked about their level of worry when home alone in the evening, once again, rural residents felt less concerned, with 83% stating they were not worried as opposed to 79% of urban residents (Figure 3.3).<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 3.3**



Results were similar when urban and rural residents were asked about their general satisfaction with their personal safety from crime. Although both groups overwhelmingly indicated that they were satisfied with their safety, rural residents were slightly more satisfied than their urban counterparts (94% versus 91%).

**Protection and safety measures**

*Urban residents utilize more protection and safety measures*

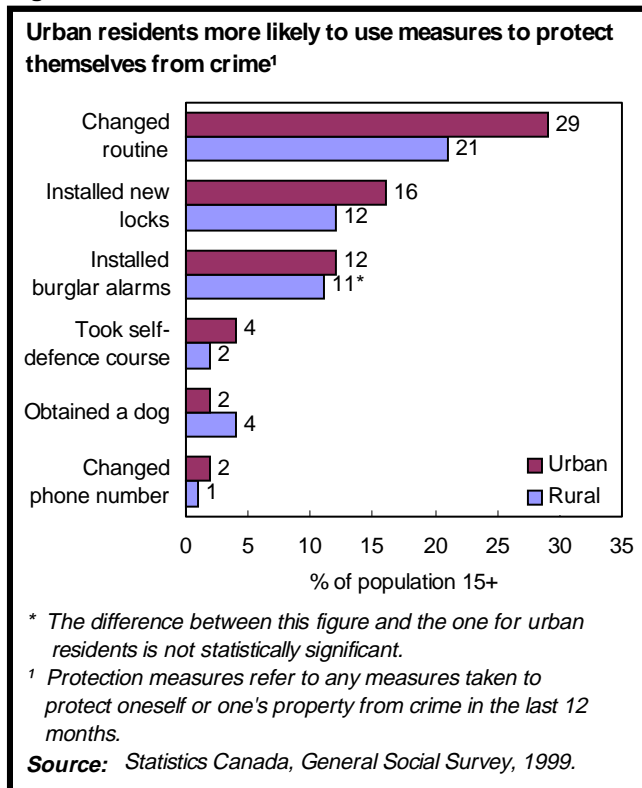
Many people make special efforts in order to protect themselves and make themselves safer from crime. The General Social Survey found that there were some variations among urban and rural residents in the approaches they took to maintain their safety and security.

<sup>18</sup> The availability of transportation services varies greatly depending on area of residence. Results from the GSS show that over 60% of rural residents and 12% of urban residents did not have access to public transportation. The analysis therefore excludes those who did not have access to or did not use transportation services.

<sup>19</sup> Excludes 1% of respondents who were never home alone in the evening.

Respondents were asked if, in the 12 months preceding the survey, they had used any of eight different measures to protect themselves or their property from crime. For two of those measures, urban residents were more likely than rural residents to have done so. Specifically, people living in urban areas were more likely to have changed their routine/avoided certain places (29% versus 21%) and installed new locks or security bars (16% versus 12%) (Figure 3.4). A small proportion of both urban and rural residents had taken a self-defence course, changed phone numbers or obtained a dog.

Figure 3.4



Respondents were also asked whether they routinely employed any of five specific measures to ensure their safety from crime. Urban dwellers were more likely to use all five precautionary measures. Nearly 60% of urban residents stated that they locked their doors for personal safety when alone in a car, as compared to 47% of rural residents. A higher proportion of urban dwellers also checked the back seat of their car for intruders (45% versus 41%), planned their route with safety in mind (43% versus 37%), carried something to defend themselves or to alert other people (14% versus 10%), and stayed home at night for fear of going out alone (11% versus 6%).

For both urban and rural residents, women were more likely than men to utilize safety measures. This is not surprising, given the fact that women tend to be more fearful of crime than men. For example, approximately 75% of urban females and 66% of rural females locked their doors when alone in a car, as compared to 43% of urban males and only 28% of rural males. Urban and rural women were also much more likely to check the back seat of their car for intruders (57% and 54%, respectively compared to figures of 33% for urban men and 28% for rural men).

**Attitudes towards the criminal justice system**

The GSS measured public attitudes towards four sectors of the criminal justice system: local police forces, the criminal courts, the prison system and the parole system.

*Rural and urban residents have similar views of the police*

When asked whether their local police force was doing a good job, an average job or a poor job on five specific measures of performance, both urban and rural residents responded quite positively. For four aspects of performance, the proportion of the population that believed the police were doing a good or average job was the same for urban and rural residents. The one exception concerned being approachable and easy to talk to with 87% of the rural population and 83% of the urban population believing the police did a good or average job (Table 3.5).

*Urban and rural residents share views on performance of the courts*

There were no significant differences between urban and rural residents in their assessments of the Canadian criminal courts. Approximately 75% of both urban and rural residents felt the courts were doing a good or average job at ensuring a fair trial for the accused. The proportions for the two populations were also similar for doing a good or average job of determining whether or not the accused was guilty (64%), helping the victim (49%), and providing justice quickly (47%).

*Rural dwellers rate the prison system slightly more favourably*

Rural residents viewed the prison system in a slightly more positive light than did urban residents. When asked whether the prison system does a good job, an average job, or a poor job of supervising and controlling prisoners, 62% of rural residents felt they were doing a

good or average job as opposed to 57% of urban residents. When asked about the prison system's ability to help prisoners become law-abiding citizens, 49% of rural residents and 46% of urban residents felt that the prison system was doing a good or average job.

*Rural dwellers somewhat more positive about parole system*

Rural residents also viewed the parole system slightly more favourably. Approximately 50% felt that the parole system was doing a good or average job at releasing offenders who are not likely to re-offend, compared to 48% for urban residents. As for doing a good or average job at supervising offenders on parole, the figures were 45% for rural dwellers and 42% for urban dwellers.

**Summary**

Canada's move towards urbanization has prompted a continued interest in studying and in monitoring trends and variations in crime between urban and rural areas. Results from this study show that residence is not the only factor that distinguishes urban from rural residents. In the context of crime and personal safety, the analysis has confirmed previous research: there are urban/rural distinctions in personal and household victimization rates, fear of crime, and use of protection and safety measures. As well, there were some slight differences in opinions concerning the performance of the prison and parole systems.

Personal and household victimization rates continue to be higher among urban populations. It follows then, that urban residents are more fearful of crime and they utilize more measures to protect themselves and to keep themselves safe from crime.

Table 3.1  
Personal victimization rates by urban/rural residency and sex, 1999<sup>1</sup>

	Total personal crimes	Theft personal property	Violent				Total personal crimes	Theft personal property	Violent			
			Total violent	Sexual assault	Robbery	Assault			Total violent	Sexual assault	Robbery	Assault
No. of incidents (000s)							Rate per 1,000 population 15+					
<b>Total Canada</b>	<b>3,804</b>	<b>1,831</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>1,246</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>51</b>
Males	1,879	845	1,034	92	147	794	157	71	87	8	12	67
Females	1,925	985	939	407	81†	452	156	80	76	33	7†	37
<b>Total Urban</b>	<b>3,215</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>1,642</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>1,034</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>54</b>
Males	1,577	713	863	82†	123	658	169	77	93	9†	13	71
Females	1,639	860	779	325	79†	375	167	88	79	33	8†	38
<b>Total Rural</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>93</b>	--	<b>213</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>18</b>	--	<b>41</b>
Males	303	132	171	--	--	136	115	50	65	--	--	52
Females	286	125	161	82†	--	77†	115	50	65	33†	--	31†

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 3.2  
**Factors related to the risk of violent victimization, urban and rural victims, multivariate analysis, 1999<sup>1</sup>**

Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>		Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>	
	Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural
<b>Lifestyle indicators</b>			<b>Exposure to crime</b>		
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Number of evening activities per month</i>		
Male	1.77 ***	1.38	10 or more	1.38 *	2.16 *
Female	reference	reference	Less than 10	reference	reference
<i>Age</i>			<i>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</i>		
15-24	9.35 ***	5.96 ***	At least once per week	1.48 ***	1.07
25-34	6.19 ***	3.12 **	Less than once per week	reference	reference
35-44	3.51 ***	1.94	<i>Frequency of waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</i>		
45-54	2.43 ***	2.34 **	At least once per week	1.17	1.88
55+	reference	reference	Less than once per week	reference	reference
<i>Household income (\$)</i>			<b>Guardianship</b>		
0-14,999	1.72 ***	1.09	<i>Taken a self-defence course</i>		
15,000+	reference	reference	Yes	1.84 ***	2.99 ***
<i>Marital status</i>			No	reference	reference
Single/separated/divorced	1.84 ***	2.27 ***	<i>Carry something for protection or to alert others</i>		
Other <sup>3</sup>	reference	reference	Yes	2.60 ***	1.81 **
<i>Main activity</i>			No	reference	reference
Student	0.81	0.76	<i>Check back seat of car for intruders when returning to car alone</i>		
Other <sup>4</sup>	reference	reference	Yes	1.28 **	1.25
<b>Proximity to crime</b>			No	reference	reference
<i>Feelings of safety when walking alone in area after dark</i>			<i>Stay home at night because afraid to go out alone</i>		
Unsafe	1.24	2.61 **	Yes	1.51 **	1.14
Safe	reference	reference	No	reference	reference
<i>Worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</i>			<i>Perception of change in neighbourhood crime level in last 5 years</i>		
Worried	1.26 *	1.17	Increased	1.23 *	1.91 **
Not worried	reference	reference	Decreased/Same	reference	reference

\* .01 < p ≤ .05

\*\* .001 < p ≤ .01

\*\*\* p ≤ .001

*p* is the significance level. For example, a significance level of .05 indicates that there is a 5% probability that the survey (sample) data will suggest that there is a relationship between the variables, when no relationship actually exists in the population.

<sup>1</sup> Using the technique of logistic regression, the relationship of each factor to the risk of victimization is examined, while controlling for possible effects of other risk factors in the model.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the odds of being victimized in comparison to that for the reference category, when all other factors in the model are held constant.

<sup>3</sup> Includes those who are married, living common-law, and widowed.

<sup>4</sup> Includes working, unemployed, caring for children, household work, retired, maternity/paternity leave, long-term illness and other.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 3.3  
Household victimization rates, by urban/rural residency, 1999

	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism	Total household crimes	Break and enter	Motor vehicle/ parts theft	Theft household property	Vandalism
	No. of incidents (000s)					Rate per 1,000 households				
Total	2,656	587	501	760	808	218	48	41	62	66
Urban	2,248	506	428	639	675	232	52	44	66	70
Rural	408	81†	74†	121	133	164	32†	30†	49	53

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.  
 Figures may not add to total due to rounding.  
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 3.4

Factors related to the risk of household victimization, urban and rural victims, multivariate analysis, 1999<sup>1</sup>

Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>		Factor	Odds ratio <sup>2</sup>	
	Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural
<b>Proximity to crime</b>			<b>Target attractiveness</b>		
<i>Perception of neighbourhood crime compared to other neighbourhoods</i>			<i>Household income (\$)</i>		
Lower	reference	reference	0-14,999	reference	reference
About the same	1.32 ***	1.40 **	15,000-29,999	1.24 *	1.22
Higher	1.89 ***	1.48	30,000-39,999	1.19	1.85 **
<i>Perception of change in neighbourhood crime in last 5 years</i>			40,000-59,999	1.12	1.53
Decreased/Stayed the same	reference	reference	60,000+	1.40 **	1.68 **
Increased	1.66 ***	1.83 ***	<b>Guardianship</b>		
<i>Worry while waiting for/using public transportation alone at night</i>			<i>Installed new locks or security bars</i>		
Not worried	reference	reference	Yes, in the past year	1.87 ***	2.22 ***
Worried	1.13 **	1.39 *	Yes, more than one year ago	1.11	1.14
<i>Worry when alone at home in the evening or at night</i>			No	reference	reference
Not worried	reference	reference	<i>Installed a burglar alarm or motion detector</i>		
Worried	1.23 ***	1.31 *	Yes, in the past year	1.76 ***	1.48 **
<i>General feelings about safety from crime</i>			Yes, more than one year ago	1.12	0.79
Satisfied	reference	reference	No	reference	reference
Dissatisfied	1.52 ***	1.21	<i>Obtained a dog</i>		
<b>Exposure to crime</b>			<i>Household size</i>		
<i>Main activity</i>			<i>Household size</i>		
Retired	reference	reference	1 or 2 persons	reference	reference
Household work <sup>3</sup>	1.63 ***	1.81 **	3 persons	1.25 ***	1.12
Looking for work	1.64 **	2.40 *	4 persons	1.38 ***	1.11
Working at a job	1.91 ***	1.87 **	5+ persons	1.56 ***	1.10
A student	2.19 ***	3.44 ***	<i>Ownership of home</i>		
Other <sup>4</sup>	1.42 *	1.78	Owned	reference	reference
<i>Evening activities (# per month)</i>			Rented	1.38 ***	1.11
Less than 10	reference	reference	<i>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</i>		
10 - 19	1.46 ***	1.12	<i>Less than once a week</i>		
20 - 29	1.71 ***	1.18	reference		
30 +	2.32 ***	1.58 **	<i>Once a week or more</i>		
<i>Frequency of walking alone in area after dark</i>			1.18 **		
<i>Less than once a week</i>			1.16		

\* .01 &lt; p ≤ .05

\*\* .001 &lt; p ≤ .01

\*\*\* p ≤ .001

p is the significance level. For example, a significance level of .05 indicates that there is a 5% probability that the survey (sample) data will suggest that there is a relationship between the variables, when no relationship actually exists in the population.

<sup>1</sup> Using the technique of logistic regression, the relationship of each factor to the risk of victimization is examined, while controlling for possible interactions with the other risk factors in the model.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the odds of being victimized in comparison to that for the reference category, when all other factors in the model are held constant.

<sup>3</sup> Includes taking care of children and maternity/paternity leave.

<sup>4</sup> Includes long-term illness and volunteering.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 3.5  
Perceptions of the justice system among the urban/rural population, 1999

	Total	Good	Average	Poor	Don't know/ Not stated	Total	Good	Average	Poor	Don't know/ Not stated
	% Urban population					% Rural population				
<b>What kind of job are your local police doing at ...</b>										
Being approachable?	100	65	18	5	13	100	71	16	4	9
Ensuring the safety of citizens?	100	62	27	5	7	100	66	24	5	5
Enforcing the laws?	100	60	29	5	5	100	61	29	6	4
Supplying information on reducing crime?	100	53	26	10	11	100	57	23	9	11
Responding promptly to calls?	100	49	20	7	24	100	50	22	9	19
<b>What kind of job are criminal courts doing at ...</b>										
Ensuring a fair trial for the accused?	100	40	35	11	14	100	42	35	11	12
Determining the guilt of the accused?	100	21	43	19	17	100	21	43	21	15
Helping the victim?	100	15	33	35	17	100	17	33	35	16
Providing justice quickly?	100	13	35	41	12	100	13	33	43	10
<b>What kind of job is the prison system doing at ...</b>										
Supervising/controlling prisoners?	100	26	31	21	22	100	29	33	19	20
Helping prisoners become law-abiding?	100	14	32	28	26	100	16	33	27	24
<b>What kind of job is the parole system doing at ...</b>										
Releasing offenders who are not likely to re-offend?	100	15	33	32	19	100	16	34	33	17
Supervising offenders on parole?	100	13	29	33	25	100	13	32	32	23

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

## CHAPTER FOUR: VICTIMS' USE OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

by Catherine Trainor

### Introduction

Victimization surveys and police statistics often give different pictures of crime. Police statistics measure crimes that are reported to and substantiated by the police, while victimization surveys such as the General Social Survey are intended to provide detailed information on victim and incident characteristics, for incidents that either were or were not reported to the police. Thus, many differences exist between the two sources of information (see Box 1.2). The process by which an incident gets recorded as a "crime" by police can be viewed as a series of steps that begins with a victim identifying the incident as a "crime", followed by an investigation and a determination by the police as to whether the incident is a "founded" crime. At any stage in the process, a decision can be made such that the incident is never recorded in official police statistics.<sup>20</sup>

One advantage of victimization surveys like the GSS is their ability to capture the "dark figure" of crime, that is the crimes that are not reported to police. Victims do not necessarily report all crimes to the police. The decision is a complex one and the victim may consider a variety of factors, for example, is the incident serious enough to report; will reporting be required by an insurance company; how much time will it take; is it worth the additional stress that might be involved. Using the results of the 1999 GSS on Victimization, this chapter will look at the issue of reporting to police in more detail. Included will be an examination of the prevalence of reporting, the reasons for reporting or not reporting, and the factors, such as age and sex of the victim, and type of crime, which may be associated with the decision to report. The chapter will also examine victims' use of other justice and social services. Information on spousal violence is treated separately in the analysis because information on the use of services is not available for each incident.

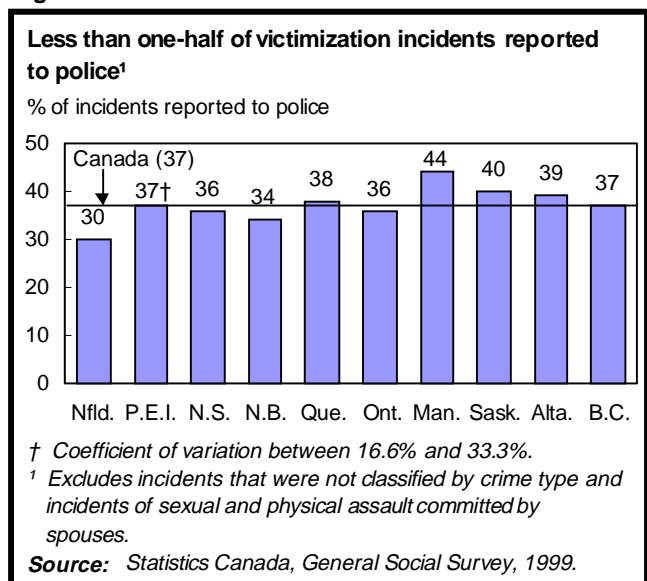
### Reporting to police

#### *Many crimes not reported to police*

The number of crimes that go unreported is significant. According to the 1999 GSS, for the 8 crime categories measured by the survey, there were a total of 6.5 million criminal victimizations. Almost 60% of these incidents were not reported to the police, while 37% were reported (Table 4.1).<sup>21</sup> In most provinces, the percentage of incidents reported to the police was close to the average of 37%. The figures ranged from 30% in Newfoundland to 44% in Manitoba (Figure 4.1).

Some types of offences are reported less often than others. In 1999, sexual assault had the highest percentage of incidents that were not reported to police (78%), while break and enter (35%) and motor vehicle/parts theft (37%) had the lowest percentage of unreported incidents.

Figure 4.1



<sup>20</sup> In 1999, approximately 5% of incidents reported to the police were deemed unfounded.

<sup>21</sup> For 3% of incidents it is not known if they were reported.



Non-violent crimes, which include theft of personal property, break and enter, motor vehicle/parts theft, theft of household property and vandalism, were reported more often than the violent crimes of sexual assault, assault and robbery (40% and 31% of incidents, respectively). Part of the reason is likely the need to report crimes involving insurance claims to the police. Among violent crime types, robbery was the most often reported to police (46% of incidents).

*Police find out about majority of incidents from the victim*

Police are most likely to find out about victimization incidents from the victims themselves. In 1999, of the incidents that police learned about, the victim was responsible for bringing it to their attention in nearly three-quarters (72%) of the incidents (Table 4.2). The police were notified about the incident in some other way for 28% of reported incidents. This included detection by the police, and reports by a friend, neighbour, family member or witness to the incident.

Of the incidents that were reported, victims were more likely to have reported the non-violent crimes (76% of reported incidents) than the violent crimes (59% of reported incidents). Regarding specific crime types, victims were more likely to have reported motor vehicle/parts thefts (79% of reported incidents) and theft of household property (78% of reported incidents). Assault and robbery had the lowest percentage of incidents that were reported by the victim (59% and 61% of reported incidents).

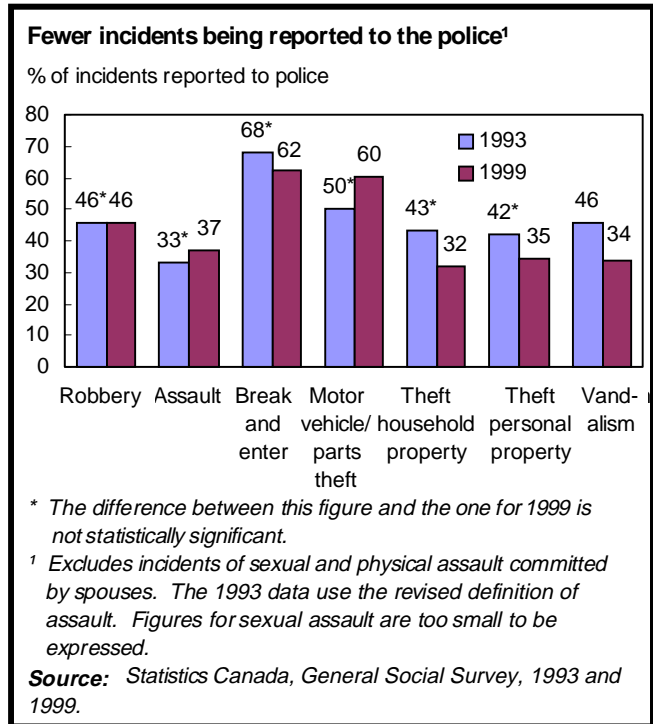
*Reporting to police is decreasing*

Fewer incidents are being reported to the police now than in the past. Based on the 8 offences studied by the GSS, reporting to the police fell from 42% of incidents in 1993 to 37% in 1999. Between 1993 and 1999, reporting of non-violent incidents fell from 49% to 40%. Reporting for break and enter, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism appeared to be down, while reporting of motor vehicle/parts theft appeared to be up (Figure 4.2). However, only the decrease in reporting of vandalism was statistically significant. Overall, there was no change in reporting of violent incidents. There were no significant changes in reporting for robbery or assault. (The estimate for sexual assault was not reliable enough to publish.)

One possible reason for the decline in reporting of non-violent victimizations may be an increase in insurance deductible amounts. Insurance industry data indicate that in 1994, the deductible amount for the majority

(52%) of homeowner policies was \$200. By 1998, the majority (53%) of homeowner policies had a deductible amount of \$500.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, as indicated in Chapter 2, the value of stolen/damaged property has changed very little.

**Figure 4.2**



*Reporting to police by the victim is decreasing*

Fewer crimes are being reported to the police by the victim. As indicated earlier, based on the 8 offences studied by the GSS, 37% of incidents were reported to police in 1999 and of those, 72% were reported by the victim. The proportion of incidents being reporting by the victim was down from a figure of 77% of reported incidents in 1993. While reporting by the victim for non-violent crimes stayed fairly consistent at about 76% of reported incidents, there was a sharp decline in victim reporting for violent crimes. Between 1993 and 1999, victim reporting of violent incidents fell from 74% to 59%, including declines for robbery and assault. This is despite the fact that overall reporting of violent crimes remained unchanged. Perhaps the victim relied more on family members or friends to report the incident or the police detected a greater proportion of incidents.

<sup>22</sup> This information was provided by the Insurance Information Centre of Canada (IICC). The IICC member companies represent approximately 64% of the industry.

**Box 4.1: Reporting of spousal violence to police**

According to the 1999 GSS, of the women who were victims of spousal violence in the previous five years, 37% reported at least one incident to the police. The comparable figure for male victims of spousal violence was less than half of that (15%). In cases of wife assault, the police were more likely to find out about the incident from the woman herself (78% of incidents reported to the police) while police were equally likely to find out about cases of husband assault from the man himself or from someone else (50%).

The majority of women (93%) and men (79%) who reported an incident to the police said they did so to stop the violence or to receive protection from the abuser. Women and men were also likely to notify the police because they felt it was their duty (55% and 58%, respectively). In addition, women were likely to report the incident to the police so the abuser would be arrested and punished (48% of abused women versus 34% of abused men). This is likely due to the relatively more severe violence experienced by women. (Pottie Bunge and Locke 2000).

**Reasons behind the decision to report**

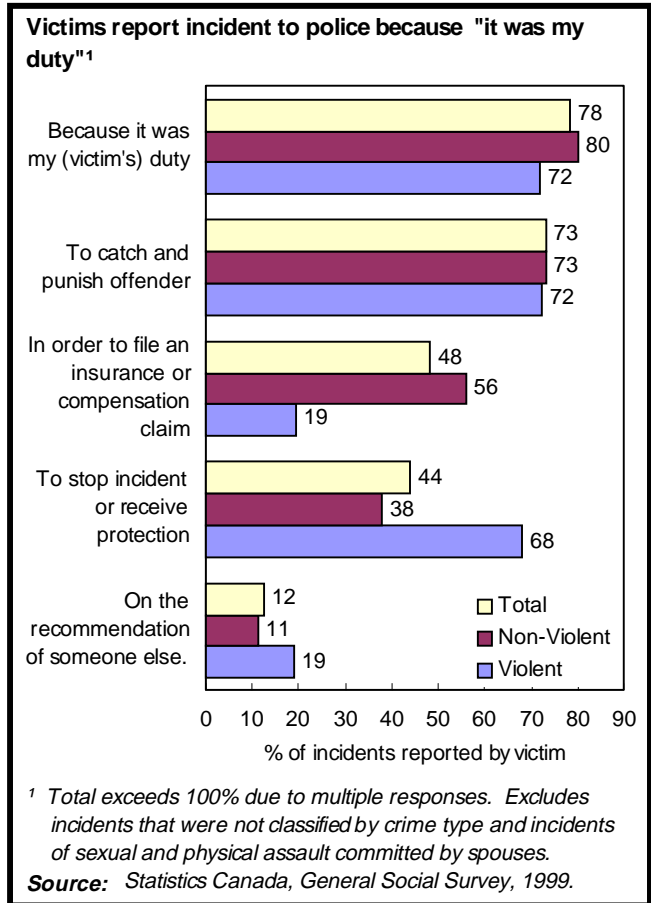
*Victims report incidents "because it was my duty"*

When victims do decide to report incidents to police, their reasons vary. Out of five possible choices, the most popular, mentioned in 8 out of 10 incidents in 1999, was "because it was my duty" (Figure 4.3). Next were "to catch and punish offender" at 73% and "in order to file an insurance or compensation claim" at 48%.<sup>23</sup> The results were fairly consistent for all but one of the eight crimes. The exception was robbery, where victims were equally likely to mention "because it was my duty" and "to catch and punish offender" as their reason for reporting the incident (82%).

There were some variations in the reasons for reporting to the police between violent and non-violent victimizations. Violent crimes were equally likely to be reported by the victim to police "because it was my duty" and "to catch and punish offender" (72% of victim-reported incidents). As well, many were reported in order "to stop the incident or receive protection" (68%). Non-violent crimes, due to the nature of the victimization, were often reported to the police "in order to file an insurance or compensation claim" (56%).

Reasons for reporting violent crimes appear to differ for men and women. Women were more likely than men to report violent incidents in order "to stop the incident or receive protection" (79% versus 58%) and "to catch and punish offender" (77% versus 69%).

**Figure 4.3**



Young victims appear to have different reasons for reporting than older victims. In particular, victims aged 15 to 24 years were more likely than older victims to report to the police in order "to catch and punish offender" (77% compared to 70% for older victims) and "to stop the incident or receive protection" (73% versus 66%).

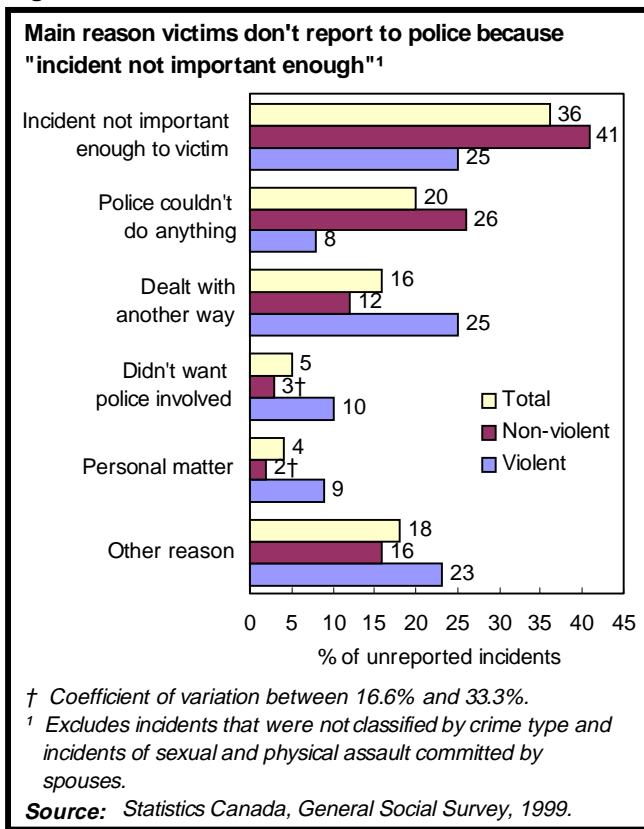
*"Incident not important enough" a common reason for not reporting*

People have various reasons for not reporting crimes to police. Of the eight possible reasons respondents were given, the most common one was "incident not important enough", which was mentioned in 59% of the unreported incidents in 1999. "Police couldn't do anything" was the next most common, at 50%. "Fear of publicity or news coverage" was a minor factor in deciding not to report an incident (3% of all unreported incidents), except in the case of sexual assault (14%).

<sup>23</sup> The proportions exceed 100% because respondents were allowed to choose more than one reason.

Respondents were allowed to choose as many reasons as they wished, but when asked what was the main reason, the findings were similar. Cited most often was “incident not important enough” (36% of unreported incidents), followed by “police couldn’t do anything” at 20% and “dealt with another way” at 16% (Figure 4.4). The majority (87%) of incidents that went unreported because they were “not important enough” were less serious in nature – the victim was not injured, did not have to take time off or spend time in bed, there was no weapon present and the value of any stolen or damaged property was under \$1,000 (Besserer and Trainor 2000).

Figure 4.4

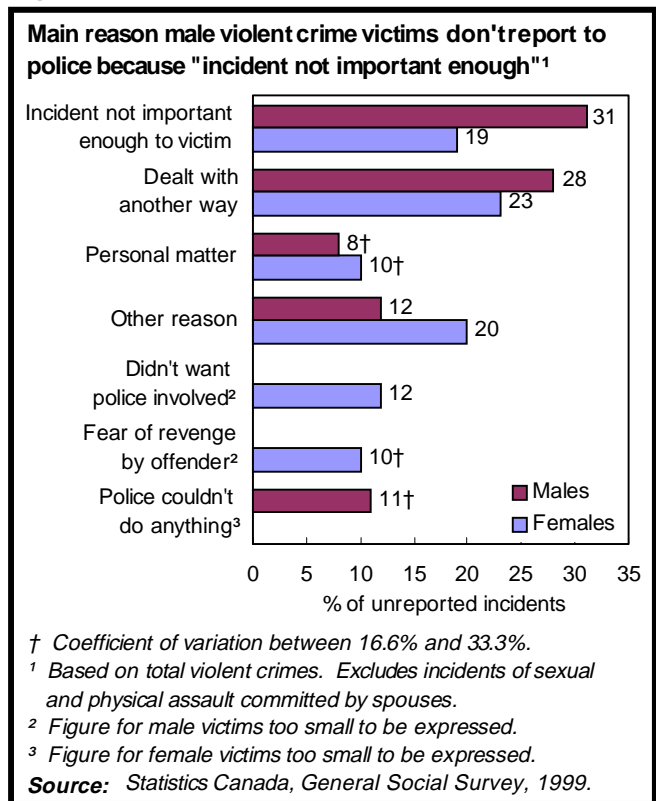


The main reason for not reporting differed for violent and non-violent crimes. Victims of violent crimes were most likely to say “dealt with another way” and “incident not important enough”, each mentioned in 25% of unreported incidents. “Incident not important enough” was the most frequently cited reason in the case of non-violent crimes, mentioned in 41% of unreported incidents, a much higher figure than for violent offences. “Police couldn’t do anything”, at 26%, was also a common reason given for non-violent offences.

*Reasons for not reporting violent crimes differ for men and women*

Men and women have different reasons for not reporting crime incidents to the police. The most common reasons that male and female violent crime victims did not report were “incident not important enough” and “dealt with another way” (Figure 4.5). However, the frequency with which these reasons were mentioned was different for the two sexes, particularly for “incident not important enough”, mentioned by 31% of male victims and 19% of female victims.

Figure 4.5



**Factors associated with reporting to the police**

Although victims cited various explanations for reporting or not reporting their victimization to police, findings from the 1999 GSS indicate that a number of factors are related to the decision to contact the police. In addition to the type of crime, the severity of the crime, the victim-offender relationship, the location of the incident, and various socio-demographic characteristics of the victim all seem to be related to the decision to contact police.

### *Sex and age of the victim*

Whether police learn about violent victimizations varies with the sex and the age of the victim. Violent incidents involving male victims were more likely to be reported to the police than those incidents involving female victims (34% versus 27%) (Table 4.3). This is not surprising given the higher number of female sexual assault victims and the low reporting rate for this crime. Violent incidents involving young victims were reported less frequently than those involving older victims. Less than one-quarter (23%) of violent incidents involving victims aged 15 to 24 were reported to the police, compared to about 35% of incidents for victims aged 25 to 44 and 41% for those aged 45 years and older.

Violent crimes committed against separated/divorced and single people are less likely to be reported to the police than incidents involving victims with another marital status. Approximately one in four violent incidents experienced by separated/divorced and single people was reported to the police, compared to about 40% of incidents for individuals who were married or living in a common-law relationship.

For non-violent crimes, particularly the four household crimes, it is not appropriate to look at reporting of the incident in relation to the characteristics of the victim. The victim who reported the incident to the GSS was just one of the members in the household that was victimized.

### *Severity of the crime*

The seriousness of a crime is linked to whether or not a victim reports it to the police. For violent crimes, severity can be measured by physical injury to the victim, the presence of a weapon, disruption of the victim's everyday activities, or the victim having to spend time in bed as a result of the experience. For non-violent crimes, severity can be measured in terms of the total economic cost of the incident and disruption of the victim's everyday activities.

According to the 1999 GSS, in more than 4 in 10 violent incidents that resulted in a physical injury to the victim, the police were contacted, compared to less than one-third of incidents which did not result in a physical injury (Table 4.4). Violent crimes involving injuries were more likely to be reported to the police when the victim was a woman (45% versus 39%).

The presence of a weapon had an even greater influence on reporting to police. Violent incidents involving weapons were twice as likely to be brought to the attention of the police as incidents not involving weapons (50% versus 25%). Once again reporting appeared

higher for female victims as compared to male victims (55% versus 47%).

Difficulty in performing everyday activities because of the violent victimization is linked to police reporting. In 43% of violent incidents where the victim had difficulty in carrying out his or her main activity, the crime came to the attention of the police, compared to 28% of incidents when the victim experienced no difficulties. In contrast to the previously discussed measures of severity, men, not women, were more likely to report violent crimes when they were unable to perform their main activity as a result of their victimization (53% versus 37% of incidents).

When victims had to spend time in bed as a result of a violent victimization experience, 41% of incidents came to the attention of the police, compared to 31% of incidents where the victim spent no time in bed.

For non-violent crimes, severity is measured by the total economic cost of the incident and the disruption of the victim's main activity. Reporting rates for non-violent offences increase with the severity of the incident. In 1999, when the value of the stolen/damaged property was between \$1 and \$100, 15% of incidents were reported (Table 4.5). This climbed steadily to a figure of 42% of incidents when the value was between \$200 and \$499 and 82% for incidents valued at \$1,000 or more. This pattern is consistent with the need, for insurance purposes, to report non-violent (property) crimes to police. Reporting of non-violent offences was also higher when the victim's main activity was disrupted by the incident (58% of incidents reported compared to 35% when there was no disruption).

### *Victim-offender relationship*

Research has suggested that when victims know the suspect, they are less likely to involve the police. The 1999 GSS confirms these findings. Violent crime incidents involving a suspect who was a stranger to the victim were more likely to have come to the attention of the police (33%) than were crimes committed by someone known to the victim (25%) (Table 4.4). This pattern was similar for both male and female victims. Results did not vary greatly within the category of "known" perpetrators: violent victimizations were equally likely to be reported to police if the offender was a relative (27%) or a friend, neighbour or acquaintance (25%).

### *Location*

Reporting to police varies depending on where an incident takes place. In 1999, police were notified in 38% of violent incidents that occurred in a public place

and 35% that occurred in or around a private residence (Table 4.4). In comparison, less than one-quarter of violent incidents that took place in a commercial establishment were brought to the attention of the police. Reporting rates for male and female victims were virtually the same for incidents that occurred in public places. However, for both incidents in or around a home and incidents at commercial establishments, the figures for men appeared to be higher than those for women.

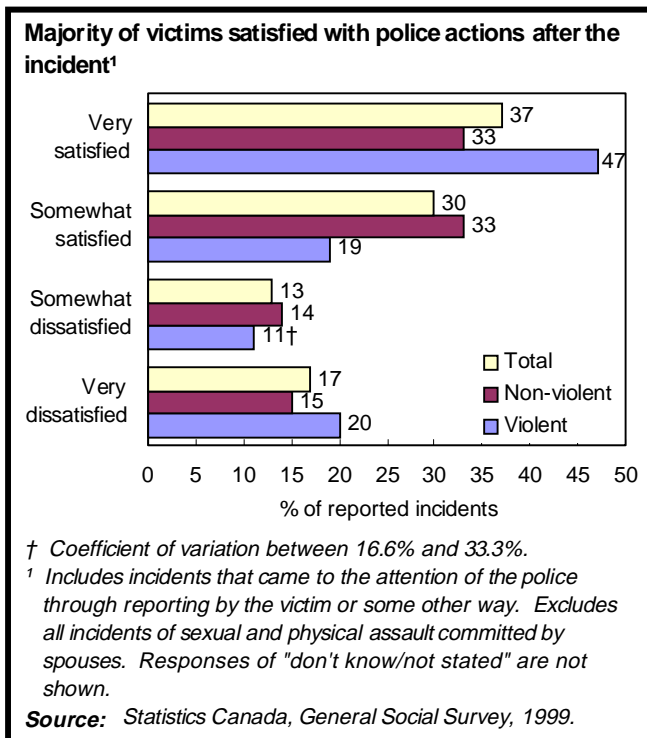
Not unlike the finding for violent crimes, non-violent crimes that took place in a commercial establishment/public institution were reported to police less often. Specifically, police were notified in almost one-half of non-violent incidents that occurred in a public place or in or around a home (Table 4.5). By comparison, 22% of non-violent incidents that took place in a commercial establishment were brought to the attention of police.

### Response of the police

*Victims satisfied with police response in majority of incidents*

Victims are usually satisfied with the actions taken by police following the incident. In fact in 1999, the majority of victims were satisfied with the actions taken by the police, including 37% who were very satisfied and 30% who were somewhat satisfied with police actions (Figure 4.6). (These percentages are based on the number of reported incidents.)

**Figure 4.6**

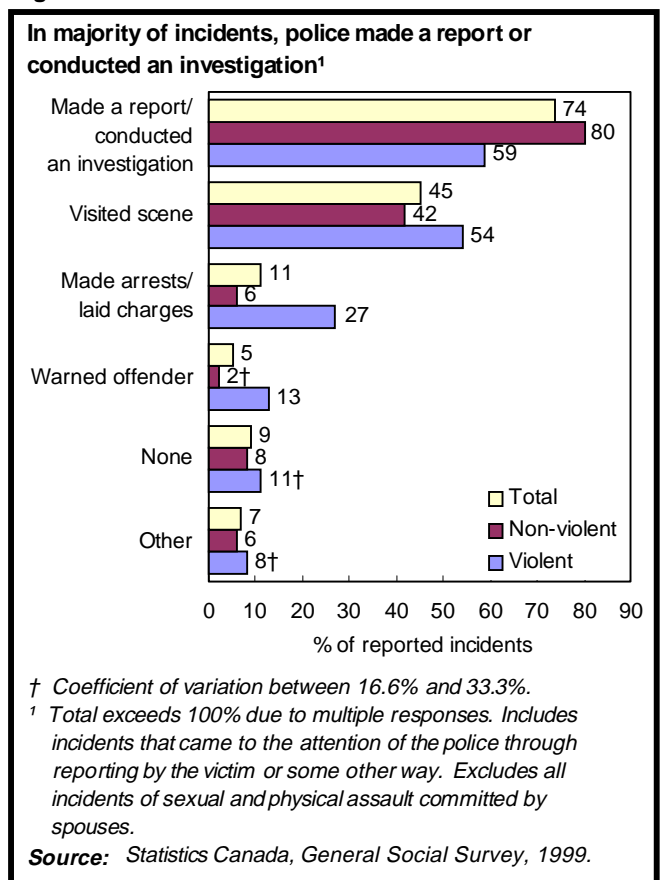


Levels of satisfaction with the police response differed, according to the type of victimization and the sex and age of the victim. While victims of both violent and non-violent crimes expressed the same level of overall satisfaction (66% of reported incidents), violent crime victims were more likely to report being very satisfied than were non-violent victims (47% versus 33% of reported incidents). Male victims of violent crime were more satisfied with the response of the police than were female victims (70% versus 61%). In addition, male victims of violent incidents were 1.5 times more likely than female victims to report being very satisfied with police actions (54% versus 36% of reported incidents). In terms of age differences, victims of violent crime aged 45 and over had the highest levels of satisfaction with police response to their victimization experience (76%), compared to a low of 61% of reported incidents for those aged 35 to 44.

*Police usually make a report/conduct an investigation*

According to the victim, police took a number of actions once an incident came to their attention. In particular, they made a report/conducted an investigation (74% of reported incidents), and visited the scene (45%) (Figure 4.7). In 11% of reported incidents, victims were

**Figure 4.7**



aware that an arrest had been made or that charges had been laid. Victims of violent crime were more likely to state that the police had visited the scene, made arrests/laid charges, or warned the offender, while non-violent crime victims were more likely to indicate that the police had made a report/conducted an investigation. Overall, there were only 9% of reported incidents in which, according to the victim, police took no action.

For violent crimes, the likelihood that police made a report/conducted an investigation was essentially equal in cases involving men and women (58% and 61% of reported incidents, respectively). The same was true for visiting the scene of a violent incident (54% for men and 52% for women). However, according to the victim, an arrest was made or charges were laid in 34% of violent incidents involving male victims and in 16% involving female victims. This may be the result of the nature of the incident, including the type of victimization and the relationship of the suspect.

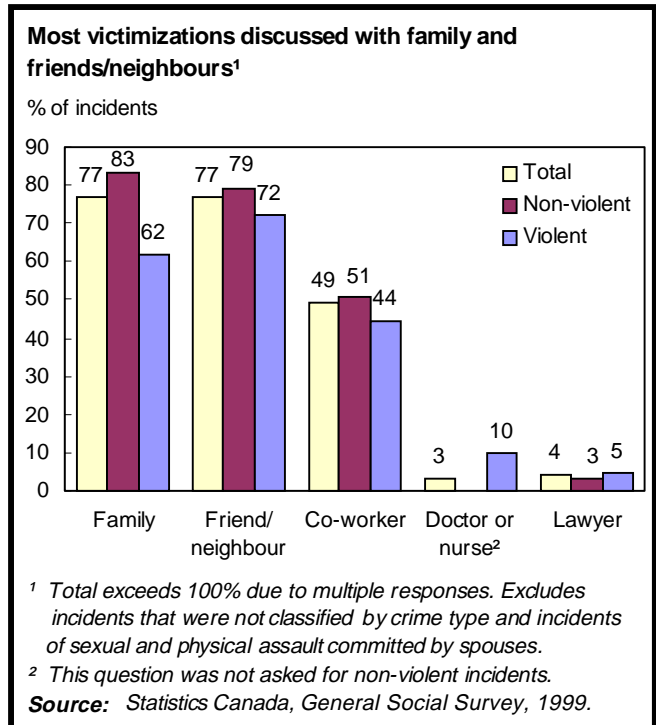
*Majority of victims believe there was nothing more police should have done*

The majority of victims believed that there was nothing more that the police should have done to help them. In two-thirds of victimizations (65% of reported incidents), victims thought that no other action should have been taken by the police. In about 7% of incidents apiece, victims felt police should have charged or arrested someone, been more supportive/sympathetic and responded more quickly. Three times as many violent crime victims as non-violent victims felt the police should have charged or arrested someone (15% versus 5% of reported incidents). Male victims of violent crime were more likely than female victims to feel that there was nothing more the police could have done (72% versus 51% of reported incidents). Females, on the other hand, appeared more likely to believe that police should have laid a charge or made an arrest (21% versus 12%).

**Use of victim services and informal sources of help**

People often rely on sources other than the police for assistance following a victimization experience. The 1999 GSS asked victims of crime about informal sources of support, such as family and friends, as well as more formal sources such as police or court-based victims' services, crisis centres, counsellors, and community centres. The vast majority of victims discussed the incident with family (77% of incidents), friends and neighbours (77%) and to a lesser degree, co-workers (49%) (Figure 4.8). Non-violent incidents were discussed more often with family than anyone else (83%), while violent crime incidents were most likely to be discussed with a friend or a neighbour (72%). Discussions with doctors and nurses were noted in 10% of violent crimes.

**Figure 4.8**



**Box 4.2: Use of support services by victims of spousal violence**

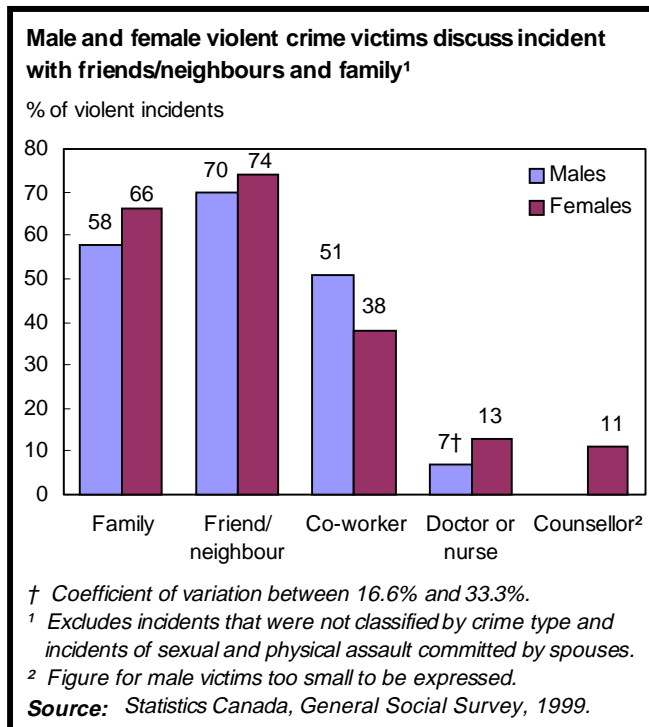
Various types of social services are available to women and men who are abused by their partners, including counsellors, crisis lines, community centres, women's centres, men's centres, and support groups. According to the 1999 GSS, 48% of women and 17% of men who were abused by a partner in the previous five years used a social service. Overall, women were more likely than men to report using all types of social services.

The most frequently used social service for both women and men was a counsellor or psychologist (28%), followed by a crisis centre or crisis line (10%) and community centre or family centre (10%). Transition homes were used by 11% of female victims of violence while men's centres or support groups were used by 2% of male victims.

Many male victims (80%) and female victims (48%) of spousal violence did not use a social service. Forty-nine percent of male victims and 44% of female victims reported they did not use a social service because they did not want or need help. A further 26% of male victims and 17% of female victims reported the incident was too minor to require social services. Furthermore, equal proportions of women and men (6%) who did not use a social service stated they did not know of any social services available. (Pottie Bunge and Locke 2000).

Female violent crime victims were more likely than male victims to have discussed their experience with friends and neighbours (74% versus 70%), family (66% versus 58%) and a doctor or a nurse (13% versus 7%) (Figure 4.9). Male victims were more likely to have discussed the incident with a co-worker (51% versus 38%). While 11% of incidents involving women were discussed with a counsellor and 8% with other formal services, the number of incidents involving male victims was too low to produce reliable estimates.

Figure 4.9



Victims aged 35 to 44 appeared more likely than other age groups to discuss violent victimizations with family members (70%), co-workers (58%) and a doctor or a nurse (18%) (Figure 4.10). Young people aged 15 to 24 were the least likely to have discussed their experience with family members, but most likely to have talked with friends and neighbours (79%).

The 1999 GSS examined the use of police- and court-based victim services. Police-based services were defined as Victim Assistance Units, operating within a police office, that provide help to victims at the police stage of the justice process. Court-based services were defined as services to assist victims as their cases proceed through the justice system. Services include providing general information about the justice system,

**Box 4.3: Are victims interested in mediation?**

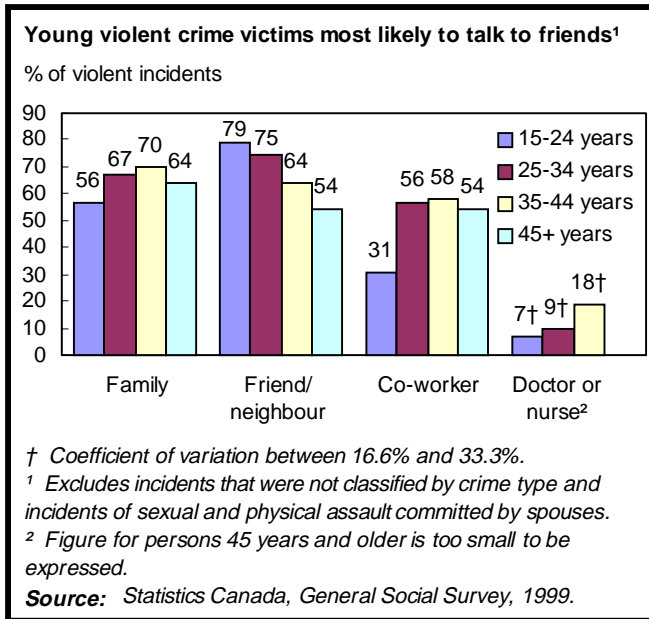
With the increased availability of options like police discretion, alternative measures (e.g. performing community service, making restitution to the victim) and various restorative approaches to intervention (e.g. family group conferencing, sentencing circles), there are a number of ways to deal with a criminal offence outside the traditional police-court process. Victim-offender mediation is a non-traditional approach to criminal justice, which aims to address the needs of both offenders and victims. Generally, it involves a formal meeting where the victim and the offender meet face-to-face, with a trained mediator in attendance, to discuss an appropriate method of repairing the harm caused by the criminal behaviour.

The 1999 GSS asked victims of crime about their interest in participating in a victim-offender mediation program. Results indicate that opinions are divided. For instance, 51% of victims were very or somewhat interested in dealing with their criminal incident in this manner, while 46% of victims were not at all interested. There was very little difference between the interest of female victims and male victims. Specifically, 47% of female victims and 44% of male victims were very or somewhat interested in participating in victim-offender mediation. Victims aged 45 to 64 years were the most likely to be very or somewhat interested (50%) compared with 41% of those aged 15 to 24, 47% for those aged 25 to 44 and 47% of those aged 65 years or older.

In general, victims of more serious crimes are less likely to be interested in participating in victim-offender mediation programs. For example, in 1999, over one-half of the victims of sexual assault (61%), assault (60%), and robbery (50%) indicated that they were not at all interested in a victim-offender mediation program. These proportions were much higher than those reported for victims of break and enter (38%), theft of household property (39%), and vandalism (40%) (Tufts 2000).

making referrals, assisting with court, helping prepare victim impact statements, offering emotional support and providing information to help victims recover financial losses resulting from the crime. It appears that the use of such services is almost non-existent. Overall, 96% of victims had no contact with or use of these services, ranging from a high of 99% for theft of household property incidents to a low of 85% of sexual assault incidents. Contact with or use of these services had occurred in only 2% of violent crime incidents. One explanation for these findings may be that victims were not aware that the services were available.

**Figure 4.10**



**Summary**

Victims of crime do not always report incidents to the police. In 1999, there were a total of 6.5 million criminal victimizations; 59% of these incidents were not reported to the police, while 37% were reported. Victims that did decide to report the incident had a variety of reasons, but the most popular was a sense of duty. When incidents went unreported, the main reason was that the incident was not important enough, the police couldn't do anything, or the incident was dealt with in another way.

There are several factors associated with whether a crime will be reported to the police, including the type of crime, certain personal characteristics of the victim, the severity of the crime, the relationship of the victim to the accused, and the location of the incident. Non-violent crimes were reported more often than violent crimes. Violent crime victims who were male, victims who were 45 years of age or older or those who were married or living in a common law relationship were also more likely to report. Violent incidents in which there was a physical injury to the victim, a weapon was present, the victim's everyday activities were disrupted, or the victim spent time in bed as a result of the experience, had higher rates of reporting to police. Violent crimes precipitated by strangers were more likely to come to the attention of the police than were crimes committed by someone known to the victim. Reporting of non-violent crimes increased as the total cost of the incident rose and reporting was higher when the victim's main activity was disrupted. Incidents that occurred in a commercial place/public institution were less likely to be reported than those occurring in public places or at a private home.

In the majority of victimizations reported to police, victims were satisfied with the actions that the police took and thought that there was nothing more that the police could have done.

Victims of crime utilize informal sources of support more often than formal support services. The vast majority of victimizations were discussed with family, friends/ neighbours, and co-workers.



Table 4.1  
Victimization incidents reported to the police, 1999<sup>1</sup>

	Total no. of incidents	Incidents reported to the police		Incidents not reported to the police		Don't know/ Not stated	
	(000s)	(000s)	%	(000s)	%	(000s)	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,460</b>	<b>2,417</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3,828</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total personal</b>	<b>3,804</b>	<b>1,236</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2,411</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>4</b>
Theft personal property	1,831	633	35	1,149	63	--	--
Total violent	1,974	603	31	1,262	64	109	6
Sexual assault	499	--	--	391	78	70†	14†
Robbery	228	105	46	116	51	--	--
Assault	1,246	460	37	754	61	--	--
<b>Total non-violent<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>4,486</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2,566</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total household</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>1,181</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1,417</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>57†</b>	<b>2†</b>
Break and enter	587	365	62	206	35	--	--
Motor vehicle/parts theft	501	303	60	187	37	--	--
Theft household property	760	240	32	506	67	--	--
Vandalism	808	273	34	518	64	--	--

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses.

<sup>2</sup> Includes theft of personal property and the four household offences.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 4.2  
Victimization incidents reported to the police, by method of reporting, 1999<sup>1</sup>

	Total reported incidents <sup>2</sup>	Reported by victim		Reported some other way	
	(000s)	(000s)	%	(000s)	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,417</b>	<b>1,732</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Total personal</b>	<b>1,236</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>33</b>
Theft personal property	633	473	75	159	25
Total violent	603	354	59	248	41
Sexual assault	--	--	--	--	--
Robbery	105	64	61	--	--
Assault	460	271	59	189	41
<b>Total non-violent<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>1,378</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Total household</b>	<b>1,181</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>23</b>
Break and enter	365	276	76	89	24
Motor vehicle/parts theft	303	240	79	63†	21†
Theft household property	240	187	78	52†	22†
Vandalism	273	202	74	70	26

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses.

<sup>2</sup> Total includes responses of "don't know/not stated" which are not shown.

<sup>3</sup> Includes theft of personal property and the four household offences.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 4.3  
**Violent victimization incidents, by reporting to police and socio-demographic characteristics of victim, 1999<sup>1</sup>**

Victim characteristics	Total violent incidents	Violent incidents reported to police	
	(000s)	(000s)	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Sex</b>			
Females	939	252	27
Males	1,034	351	34
<b>Age (years)</b>			
15-24	918	213	23
25-34	474	167	35
35-44	305	109	36
45 +	277	115	41
<b>Marital status</b>			
Married	408	164	40
Common law	180	70	39
Single	1,144	299	26
Separated/divorced	184	47†	25†
Widow or widower	--	--	--

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 4.4  
Violent victimization incidents, by reporting to police, and incident characteristics, 1999<sup>1</sup>

	Violent incidents			Violent incidents reported to the police					
	Total Victims	Females	Males	Total Victims	Females	Males	Total Victims	Females	Males
	(000s)			(000s)			%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>1,034</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Severity of incident</b>									
<i>Victim was physically injured</i>									
Yes	364	155	208	152	70	82	42	45	39
No	1,553	745	808	451	182	269	29	24	33
<i>Weapon was present</i>									
Yes	455	164	291	229	91	138	50	55	47
No	1,415	724	692	355	153	202	25	21	29
<i>Victim had difficulty carrying out main activity for a day or more<sup>2</sup></i>									
Yes	463	295	168	197	108	88	43	37	53
No	1,365	567	798	381	128	252	28	23	32
<i>Victim had to spend time in bed</i>									
Yes	135	94	41†	55†	--	--	41†	--	--
No	1,778	805	974	548	216	331	31	27	34
<b>Relationship of accused to victim<sup>3</sup></b>									
Known persons <sup>4</sup>	860	543	317	217	118	99	25	22	31
Stranger	572	210	362	190	55†	135	33	26†	37
<b>Location of victimization</b>									
In or around a private residence	561	389	172	197	126	71	35	32	41
Commercial place/Public institution	844	354	489	200	66	134	24	19	27
Street/Other public place	521	164	357	201	60	140	38	37	39

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes all incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes victims whose main activity was retired, long-term illness or maternity/paternity leave.

<sup>3</sup> Based on incidents with a single accused.

<sup>4</sup> This category includes family, friends and acquaintances.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 4.5  
**Non-violent victimization incidents, by reporting to police and incident characteristics, 1999**

Incident characteristics	Total non-violent <sup>1</sup> incidents	Non-violent incidents reported to police	
	(000s)	(000s)	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,486</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Severity of incident</b>			
<i>Total economic cost</i>			
Nothing	446	178	40
Less than \$100	1,209	182	15
\$100-\$199	544	141	26
\$200-\$499	799	332	42
\$500-\$999	421	255	61
\$1000+	674	553	82
<i>Victim had difficulty carrying out main activity for a day or more<sup>2</sup></i>			
Yes	935	540	58
No	3,252	1,141	35
<b>Location of victimization</b>			
In or around a private residence	2,514	1,142	45
Commercial place/Public institution	1,012	222	22
Street/Other public place	935	448	48

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Includes theft of personal property and the four household offences.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes victims whose main activity was retired, long-term illness or maternity/paternity leave.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PERCEPTIONS AND FEAR OF CRIME

by Stacie Ogg

### Introduction

Crimes have implications not only for those who are directly involved, but also for others who have only second-hand knowledge of these incidents. While surveys such as the 1999 General Social Survey suggest that violent crime is a relatively rare occurrence, the fear of becoming a victim of such a crime is much more pervasive. Citizens react to crime in a variety of ways including distrusting others, avoiding particular places, and changing their daily activities (Miethe 1995). Some awareness and concern about crime is positive; however in some cases, fear of crime may cause people to place serious restrictions on their behaviour (Miethe 1995; Gordon and Riger 1989). Under extreme circumstances, the overall effect may be a reduction in the quality of life and a slow, but steady decline in the character of local communities (Skogan 1990).

Using results from the 1999 GSS, this chapter will examine Canadians' perceptions and fear of crime. In particular, attention is focused on four main areas: perceptions of neighbourhood crime, the nature and pervasiveness of fear of crime, factors that can affect fear of crime, and the use of precautionary measures.

### Perceptions of crime

*Majority of Canadians believe crime levels are stable*

The public has heard that police-reported crime rates have been falling for the last eight years. Yet many have also heard stories of relatively rare but very serious events on the nightly news and some may even have been victims of a crime themselves. These direct and indirect experiences with crime help shape a person's perceptions of their environment. In 1999, the majority of Canadians (54%) believed that crime in their neighbourhood had stayed the same during the previous five years, up considerably from the figure of 43% in 1993. At the same time, the proportion of people who believed that crime had increased dropped from 46% in 1993 to 29% in 1999 (Table 5.1).

Women were slightly more likely than men to believe that crime had increased over the previous five years

(31% compared to 27% of men) (Table 5.2). In contrast, opinions on crime trends did not appear to vary with age.

*Westerners most likely to believe crime is up*

As indicated in Chapters 1 and 2, the four western provinces had higher rates of victimization in 1999 compared to eastern provinces. These four provinces also had higher percentages of the population who felt that crime had increased in the past five years. Over 37% of British Columbians and 34% of Manitobans thought crime was up (Table 5.3). In Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, where rates of victimization were among the lowest, so were the percentages of the population that thought crime was up, with figures of 18% and 21%, respectively.

Similarly, among census metropolitan areas<sup>24</sup>, western cities had higher percentages of the population who felt that crime had increased in the previous five years. Approximately 38% of those living in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Regina felt that crime was up (Table 5.4). In contrast, in eastern cities such as St. John's, Newfoundland, 26% of the population felt that crime was up, while for Saint John, New Brunswick, the figure was 18%. Halifax was an exception among eastern cities, with 36% of people feeling that crime had increased. However, compared to other eastern cities, Halifax had among the highest rates for both personal and household victimization.<sup>25</sup>

*People believe their own neighbourhoods are safer*

Canadians have remained firm in their belief that crime in their neighbourhood is lower than crime in other Canadian communities. In 1999, 60% of the population believed that crime in their neighbourhood was lower than other areas in Canada and a further 28% believed that crime was about the same (Table 5.1). These figures are virtually the same as those for the 1993 GSS.

<sup>24</sup> A census metropolitan area (CMA) refers to a large urban core (over 100,000 population) together with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration.

<sup>25</sup> See Besserer and Trainor, "Criminal Victimization in Canada, 1999" for more information.

Although women were more likely to believe that crime in their neighbourhood had increased over the previous five years, they were no more likely than men to believe that crime in their neighbourhood was higher than elsewhere in Canada (figures of 7% and 8%, respectively) (Table 5.2). Similarly, there was virtually no difference among the four age groups. However, those 15 to 24 years of age were most likely and those 65+ years of age least likely to believe that crime in their neighbourhoods was lower compared to other areas in Canada (64% and 55%, respectively).

*Newfoundlanders most likely to believe their neighbourhoods are safer*

More than anyone else, the people of Newfoundland (88% of the population) thought crime in their neighbourhood was lower than elsewhere in Canada (Table 5.3). People in British Columbia (11%), followed by Ontario (8%), were most likely to think that crime in their neighbourhood was higher.

Not surprisingly, among major cities, the people in St. John's, Newfoundland (87%) were most likely to think that crime in their neighbourhood was lower compared to other communities (Table 5.4). Those living in Thunder Bay (40%), Vancouver (47%) and Montréal (48%) were least likely to indicate that crime in their neighbourhood was lower.

### Fear of crime

The term "fear" is commonly used to describe an emotional response to an immediate threat. Researchers, however, do not generally have access to respondents in fear provoking situations. For this reason, in victimization surveys such as the GSS, fear is understood as a perception or an attitude rather than as an emotional response to imminent danger. Respondents to the 1999 GSS were asked about anticipated fear or worry concerning three situations in which they might find themselves. Specifically, the GSS asked respondents how safe they felt when walking alone in their area after dark; waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark; and being home alone at night. Additionally, respondents were asked how satisfied they were overall with their personal safety from crime.

*Canadians feel safer*

In 1999, the majority of those who used public transportation alone at night indicated that they were not at all worried when waiting for or using it.<sup>26</sup> The figure for 1999 (54%) was up slightly from 51% in 1993 (Table 5.5). However, the fear of crime does not appear to affect the use of public transportation at night. Among those who were worried about using public transportation

alone at night, more than three-quarters indicated that they would not use it more often even if they felt safer from crime.

In 1999, 3 out of 4 Canadians walked alone in their neighbourhood at night. Most (88%) felt very or reasonably safe, up slightly from a figure of 84% in 1993. In particular, more people reported feeling very safe in 1999 compared to 1993 (43% versus 39%). Fear of crime does appear to affect the frequency of walking alone at night: approximately 4 in 10 people who felt unsafe reported that they would walk alone more often if they felt safer.

Being home alone at night can be a frightening experience for some people. However in 1999, 80% of Canadians indicated that they were not at all worried when home alone at night. The remaining 20% of the population indicated that they were worried in this situation, an improvement from 1993 when 24% of the population were somewhat or very worried when home alone at night.

Overall, 91% of Canadians reported being very or somewhat satisfied with their personal safety in 1999, up 5 percentage points from 1993. This included a greater proportion of people who were very satisfied with their safety in 1999 compared to 1993 (44% versus 40%).

### Factors related to fear

In general, research has identified three types of factors that are associated with the fear of crime. The first encompasses characteristics of individuals, such as sex and age, which are often interpreted as measures of vulnerability, either physical or social (Sacco 1995; Fattah and Sacco 1989; Skogan and Maxfield 1981). The second includes personal experiences with crime and perceptions of the levels of crime within one's neighbourhood (Skogan and Maxfield 1981). The third category involves perceptions of the criminal justice system. Research has shown, for example, that individuals who believe the police are dealing effectively with crime also feel safer when alone in their neighbourhood at night (Box, Hale and Andrews 1988; Baker et al 1983; Baumer 1985).

Similar to the approach taken in Chapters 1 and 2, the analysis that follows will first look at each of the factors related to fear separately. Building on the results of this analysis, a multivariate analysis, using a multiple

<sup>26</sup> Three-quarters of Canadians did not use public transportation at night, including almost 25% of the population that did not have access to public transportation.

regression technique, will be used to study the effects of each of the factors, while controlling for the effects of the other factors.

*Vulnerability*

**WOMEN CONTINUE TO FEAR CRIME MORE THAN MEN**  
 The strongest effects related to fear of crime are associated with sex. Women are more likely to express anxiety about crime than are men (Gordon and Riger 1989; Sacco 1995; Box et al 1988; Skogan and Maxfield 1981). There is evidence to suggest that the higher level of fear among women results from a variety of factors including the gender-specific concern about sexual violence, a lower sense of physical strength in comparison to the typical male offender, and traditional gender-role socialization which encourages women to think of themselves as passive and dependent (Gordon and Riger 1989; Sacco 1990; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Stanko 1990).

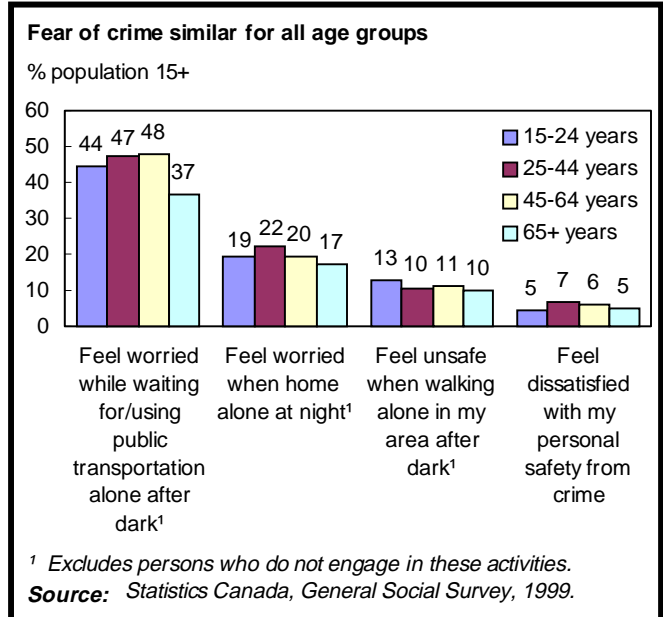
The 1999 GSS reveals that nearly two-thirds (65%) of women felt worried while waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark, more than double the figure of 29% for men (Table 5.6). While walking alone after dark, almost one in five women (18%) felt unsafe compared to 6% of men. Finally, when home alone in the evening, 29% of women and 12% of men reported being worried. These differences are quite large, considering that women and men had similar rates of violent victimization in 1999 and had fairly similar levels of satisfaction with their general level of personal safety (88% versus 93%).

**FEAR LEVELS SIMILAR AT ALL AGES**

Some research suggests that fear of crime increases with age, but the effect is most pronounced when people are asked about hypothetical situations rather than about realities in their everyday lives (Sacco 1995). For the 1999 GSS, levels of fear were quite consistent across all age groups when based solely on the perceptions of those people who actually engaged in the various activities. For example, of the people 65 years of age and older who walked alone in their area after dark, the percentage who felt somewhat or very unsafe was similar to that for people in other age categories (Figure 5.1).

Overall, those 65 and older were least satisfied with their personal safety from crime, with 87% stating that they felt somewhat or very satisfied. The youngest age group, with a figure of 93%, was the most satisfied, despite having the highest rates of violent victimization in 1999 (see Chapter 1).

**Figure 5.1**



**WOMEN MORE FEARFUL THAN MEN AT ALL AGES BUT DIFFERENCE NARROWS WITH AGE**

On its own, a person's age does not appear to influence their fear of crime. However, this is no longer true once the effect of sex is also taken into consideration. Women continue to be more fearful than men at all age levels. However, the difference is more pronounced at younger ages. For example, women 15 to 24 years of age were four times more likely than their male counterparts to report being worried while home alone in the evening (Table 5.6). In contrast, women 65+ years of age in the same situation were only 1.6 times more likely than their male counterparts to report being worried. It appears that men become more fearful with age, while women become less fearful.

**FEAR OF CRIME GREATER WHEN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS LOW**

Research has indicated that those with low income report higher levels of fear. There is evidence to suggest that the higher level of fear among these groups results from the fact that they have less access to certain resources, for example, having alarm systems or owning a car, which might make them feel safer. Also, as described in Chapter 1, lower income is associated with a higher risk of violent victimization.

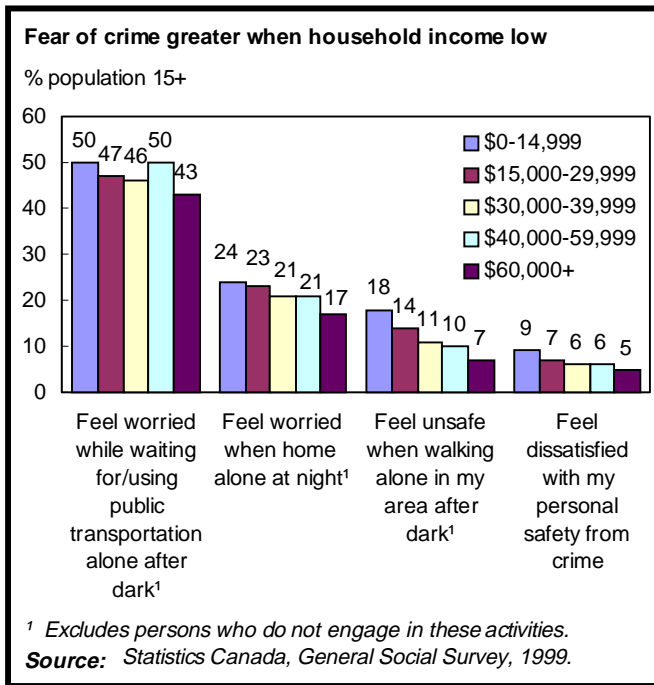
In 1999, those with a household income of less than \$15,000 were consistently more likely than those earning \$60,000 or more to indicate that they were

fearful. For example, those in the lowest income category were more than twice as likely as those in the highest category to indicate that they felt fearful while walking alone in their area at night (18% versus 7%) (Figure 5.2). Comparable results were found for each of the other measures of fear.

Those earning less than \$15,000 reported the lowest level of overall safety, with 88% stating that they felt somewhat or very satisfied. Those earning \$60,000 or more, with a figure of 95%, were the most satisfied, consistent with the fact that, in 1999, a smaller proportion of those earning \$60,000 or more were victims of a violent crime compared to those earning less than \$15,000.

Other personal characteristics such as marital status, level of education and main activity did not seem to have an impact on fear.

**Figure 5.2**



*Threat of crime*

Fear of crime is influenced by personal experiences and by perceptions of the environment which threaten danger. People who have been victimized or who live in areas that they perceive to have high crime rates may feel that they are at a greater risk. Consequently, they may be more likely to express anxieties about their safety (Fattah and Sacco 1989; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Skogan 1990).

**THOSE VICTIMIZED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS REPORT HIGHER LEVELS OF FEAR**

Those who were victimized in the 12 months prior to the survey reported the highest levels of fear, followed by lifetime victims and non-victims.<sup>27</sup> This is particularly evident for worry while home alone. In 1999, approximately 26% of those who were the victims of a crime in the last 12 months were somewhat or very worried while home alone, compared to 21% of lifetime victims and 16% of non-victims (Table 5.7). Findings for the other two situations were similar. Recent victims were also least satisfied with their overall safety from crime (88%, compared to 92% for lifetime victims and 95% for non-victims).

For those victimized in the previous 12 months, victims of violent crime appeared to be somewhat more fearful than were victims of non-violent crime. For example, when walking alone, people who had been violent crime victims were more likely to feel unsafe (18%) than were victims of a non-violent crime (13%). Those who were victims of sexual assault were, by far, the most likely to express feelings of fear, followed by victims of robbery and break and enter. For other types of crimes, the expressed level of fear was close to the national average.

**VICTIMS OF MULTIPLE VICTIMIZATIONS REPORT HIGHER LEVELS OF FEAR**

The expressed level of fear steadily increased as the number of victimizations increased. For example, among those who were not victimized in the previous year, 10% reported feeling unsafe when walking alone in their area after dark, compared to 12% for those victimized once, 17% for those victimized twice and 20% for those victimized three or more times (Figure 5.3). Canadians who were the victims of multiple incidents were also less satisfied with their overall personal safety from crime. Specifically, 82% of those who were victimized three or more times reported being somewhat or very satisfied with their personal safety from crime, compared to 87% for those who were victimized twice, 90% for those who were victimized once and 91% for those who were not victimized.

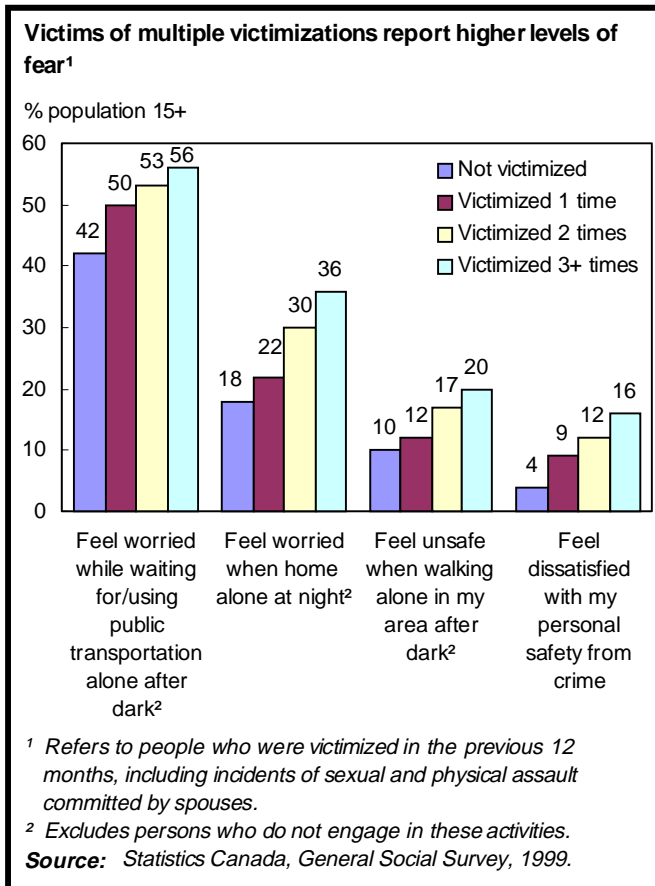
**RESIDENTS OF EASTERN CITIES REPORT LOWER LEVELS OF FEAR**

It is not only direct experience with crime that promotes concerns about personal safety. Individuals may also come to be fearful of criminal victimization because they

<sup>27</sup> Lifetime victim refers to those who were victimized at some point in their lives, but not in the 12 months prior to the survey. This represents approximately 29% of the population aged 15 and over. Non-victim refers to those who had never been victimized. This represents about 40% of the population 15 years and older.



**Figure 5.3**



perceive their environment to be threatening. In fact, much of what Canadians learn about crime comes from more vicarious sources such as the news media, personal observations and conversations with friends and co-workers.

As indicated in the previous chapter, urban residents reported higher levels of fear compared to rural Canadians. Additionally, those living in western cities such as Vancouver (81%), Victoria (86%) and Winnipeg (85%) reported the lowest levels of overall safety from crime (Table 5.8). Those living in Thunder Bay (87%) also reported low levels of personal safety. By contrast, those living in eastern cities, such as St. John's, Newfoundland (95%) and Saint John, New Brunswick (96%), were the most satisfied, as were those living in Sherbooke (95%) and Sudbury (94%). For the remaining municipalities, the expressed level of satisfaction was close to the national average.

**THOSE BELIEVING THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS LESS SAFE REPORT HIGHER LEVELS OF FEAR**

Research has indicated that fear of crime is heightened when individuals perceive crime rates to be increasing, the number of neighbourhood problems to be increasing and neighbourhood conditions to be worsening (Skogan 1990). From the 1999 GSS, it is clear that those who viewed the crime situation in their neighbourhood to be worsening were more likely to be concerned about their personal safety. For example, of those who believed that local crime had increased, nearly one-fifth (18%) felt unsafe walking alone in their area after dark, compared to less than 10% of those who believed crime had stayed the same or decreased (Table 5.9). As well, those who believed local crime to be higher were more fearful than those who thought it was the same or lower.

*Perceptions of the criminal justice system*

Most research on fear of crime has emphasized personal vulnerability and the threat of crime as the major influencing factors. However differences in fear of crime may also be related to the way in which individuals perceive the criminal justice system. Studies in the United States have revealed that programs designed to increase the quantity and improve the quality of contacts between citizens and police are generally successful in reducing citizens' fears (Moore and Trojanowicz 1988). These results suggest that the police could play an important role in reducing the public's fear of crime.

**THOSE WITH NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REPORT HIGHER LEVELS OF FEAR**

The 1999 GSS examined public attitudes toward four sectors of the justice system: the police, the criminal courts, the prison and parole systems. Respondents were asked whether these four sectors were doing a good, an average or a poor job on particular aspects of their performance (see Tables 5.10-5.12). Regardless of the measure of performance, those who viewed the police as doing a poor job reported being less satisfied with their personal safety from crime compared to those who viewed the police as doing a good job. The largest difference was found in the ratings on ensuring the safety of citizens. Among those who believed the police were doing a good job in ensuring safety, 94% reported being satisfied with their personal safety, compared to 88% for those who believed they did an average job and 74% for those who believed they did a poor job. Comparable results were evident for the questions asking about walking, using public transportation and while staying home alone at night (Table 5.10).

**Box 5.1: Multiple regression model**

A multiple regression model was used to isolate the effect of various factors on the fear of crime.

First, responses of “don’t know/refused” for any of the variables in the model were excluded from the analysis. Next, a quantitative variable for fear was derived using the four fear-related questions. The method used was to develop a Likert-type scale, combining all the responses given for the four questions. Response categories were ordered from low (no worry) to high (very worried) and values were assigned to each category. For example, for the question on fear of using public transportation the values were not worried (1), somewhat worried (2) and very worried (3). The values for the four fear questions were then summed to create a scale ranging from 1 to 14. Thus, if a respondent replied that they were somewhat worried while using public transportation (2), very fearful while walking alone at night (4), not at all worried while home alone (1), and somewhat satisfied with their personal safety from crime (2), the total fear score would be (2+4+1+2), or 9 out of 14. The resulting fear variable was used as the dependent variable in the regression equation.

To control for potential bias that would result from excluding any respondent who didn’t engage in one or more of the activities, respondents who didn’t engage in an activity because they didn’t feel safe were recoded as “very

worried”. Those who reported that they didn’t engage in an activity for a reason unrelated to fear were recoded as ‘0’, don’t engage in the activity. Those who didn’t use public transportation because none was available were recoded as “0”.

The fear scale was evaluated to assess how the items related to one another, what was the best combination, and which ones contributed little useful information to the scale and could be dropped (McIver and Carmines, 1981: 24). The alpha for the scale was 0.56, indicating that the four questions were basically measuring a similar concept. Thus, a person with a high fear value on one question would tend to have a high fear value on other questions. (The value of alpha varies from 0 to 1, with a value of 1 indicating a perfect scale.)

Factors for vulnerability, threat of crime, and attitudes toward the criminal justice system were tested in a multiple regression model to see how well they predicted levels of fear, after controlling for the effects of all other variables in the model. Each of the independent variables that was included is listed in Table 5.13. As with the scale for fear, a scale variable was created for the five questions asking about confidence in the police as well as for the four questions asking about confidence in the criminal courts. The alpha for the police confidence scale was 0.85 and that for the criminal court confidence scale was 0.76.

Similar to the findings related to public attitudes toward the police, those who believed the criminal courts, the prison or the parole systems were doing a poor job were, for the most part, more fearful than those who felt these sectors of the justice system were doing a good or average job (Tables 5.11 and 5.12).

**Multiple regression results**

The previous discussion about the factors related to fear of crime examined each factor in isolation, without taking into consideration possible relationships among the factors. However, relationships do exist. For example, victims of crime tend to have more negative attitudes toward the criminal justice system than do non-victims and they show higher levels of fear (Tufts 2000). As a result, it is difficult to tell how each factor contributes to the fear of crime. In order to identify which factors contribute to fear of crime and to what degree, a multiple regression technique was employed. Each of the factors (independent variables) listed in Table 5.13 were tested to see how well they predicted levels of fear (see Box 5.1 for more details).

*Sex has the greatest effect on fear of crime*

The multiple regression results indicate that all the measures of vulnerability except age had a significant effect on fear of crime. In particular, consistent with

previous research, sex had the strongest impact (Beta=0.40), with women being more fearful than men (Box 5.2 and Table 5.13). Income and education were both associated with fear, although the effects were

**Box 5.2: What is Beta?**

Betas are standardized regression co-efficients that are produced when the technique of multiple regression is used to study the relationship between a dependent variable (such as fear) and several independent variables (such as age and sex). Betas can be used to judge the relative importance of each of the independent variables in predicting the value of the dependent variable. The value of Beta varies from -1 to +1. Values close to -1 or +1 indicate that there is a strong relationship between the independent and dependent variable, while values close to 0 indicate a weak relationship. As well, a positive sign indicates that as the value of the independent variable increases, so does the value of the dependent variable, while a negative value indicates that as the value of the independent variable increases, the value of the dependent variable decreases. For example, in the analysis on fear, the Beta for income was -0.07. This indicates that as income increases the value of fear (on the 14-point fear scale), decreases. The relationship of fear and income is significant ( $p \leq .001$ ), but weak (Beta approaching 0).

small (Beta approaching 0). As level of household income or level of education increased, people tended to become slightly less fearful. Although age did not have an effect on its own, there was a significant interaction effect between sex and age: women became less fearful with age.

#### *Perceptions of local crime contribute to fear*

Of the “threat of crime” factors included in the model, perceptions of neighbourhood crime had the strongest effect on fear. Those who believed that crime in their community was higher than elsewhere were more fearful as were those who believed neighbourhood crime had increased in the previous five years. As well, living in

an urban area increased fear levels. Surprisingly, after controlling for the effects of the other independent variables in the model, having been a victim of either a violent or non-violent crime in the previous year had no significant impact on a person’s fear. This was not the case, however, with regards to multiple victimization – fear of crime increased as the number of victimizations increased.

#### *Having confidence in the police associated with lower fear levels*

Confidence in the police was strongly associated with fear of crime. People who were more confident in the job being done by their local police were less fearful. Other studies have obtained similar findings (Box 5.3).

### **Box 5.3: Community-Based Programs**

There is growing evidence that the police have an important role to play in controlling fear of crime. Research in the United States has found that the presence of the police on the streets is associated with feelings of safety (Balkin and Houlden 1983) and that residents who have high confidence in the police are generally less fearful than those with low confidence (Baker et al 1983; Box et al 1988). Research has also shown that police can have the greatest impact on fear of crime when individuals perceive their risks of victimization to be high (Baumer 1985).

Research that has evaluated the effectiveness of policing programs has also shown that the police may be a crucial ally. For example, programs designed to enhance the quantity and the quality of contact between the police and citizens have been successful in reducing fear of crime (Moore and Trojanowicz 1988; Bennett 1991). More specifically, increased foot patrols, police-community centres and ‘store front’ police offices contributed to a reduction in fear of crime. Research has also shown that collaborative efforts between citizens and police at reducing fear, crime and disorder in and around public housing facilities resulted in improvements in the quality of life, including lower levels of fear for residents living in small public housing sites (McGarrell et al 1999).

Some of the programs that have been set up in Canada to reduce crime and improve public safety include:

- (1) Block Parents Program of Canada. This program provides a network of police-screened, easily recognizable safe homes for members of the community.
- (2) Neighbourhood Watch Program. This program helps communities set up programs where neighbours watch other neighbours’ property during times when burglaries are likely to occur.
- (3) Community police centres provide citizens with a primary point of contact with police (Ottawa and Vancouver).
- (4) Victim services unit assists victims of crime to cope with victimization.
- (5) Residential break and enter program attempts to address the concerns of break-in victims. For example, the program aims to reduce the victim’s level of fear and anxiety through group support and education and provides crime prevention strategies for individual households and communities (London).

- (6) Community oriented response unit is a program where officers work to increase interaction between the public and the police in an effort to form a partnership with them to improve community life. For example, the unit helps to identify problems in designated areas and enhance public safety and security (London).
- (7) Coordinated response teams identify problems in the community and collaborate with several municipal departments to find solutions (Calgary).
- (8) Strategies targeting street prostitution and related neighbourhood debris (Calgary).
- (9) Crime prevention through an environmental design program, in which officers work with businesses, municipal departments, and provincial boards to promote safe and secure building and landscape design (Calgary and Vancouver).
- (10) London Police Citizen Academy attempts to better inform citizens of the function of the police department and the criminal justice system (London).
- (11) The Atlantic Justice Community Project is a way of responding to a crime that involves the community in attempting to repair the harm done by the offence. For example, restorative processes such as the community-based victim offender mediation program in St. John’s Newfoundland and the RCMP initiated community justice forums being promoted in every Atlantic province. Elements of community justice may include a focus on repairing the harm caused by the crime through involvement of the victim, the offender, and the community.

#### **Sources:**

*The Atlantic Community Justice Project.* <<http://www.isn.net/acph/acjp.htm>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).  
*Block Parents Program of Canada.* <<http://blockparent.ca>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).  
*Calgary Police Service (Calgary, Alta.).* <<http://www.gov.calgary.ab.ca/police/>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).  
*Halifax Regional Police (Halifax, N.S.).* <<http://www.police.halifax.ns.ca/index2.html>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).  
*London Police Service (London, Ont.).* <<http://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/organization/index.cfm>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).  
*Ottawa Police Service (Ottawa, Ont.).* <<http://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/organization/index.cfm>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).  
*Vancouver Police Department (Vancouver, B.C.).* <<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/police/>> (Accessed on April 9, 2001).

Having confidence in other sectors of the justice system was not as important in reducing fear. In fact, only confidence in the criminal courts and confidence in the prison system to supervise prisoners had significant effects and these effects were small.

Overall, the multiple regression model explained about 26% of the variation in the fear of crime.

### **Precautionary behaviour**

There are a number of ways in which Canadians manage the risks associated with crime. Respondents to the 1999 GSS were asked about eight measures that they had *ever* taken to protect themselves or their property from crime (Table 5.14). They were also asked about measures that they routinely take to make themselves feel safer from crime (Table 5.15). The use of these measures was fairly widespread.

For the measures that had been employed at least once, people were most likely to have changed their routine/avoided certain places (36% of the population) and installed new locks (33%), and least likely to have engaged in more stringent measures, such as changed their place of residence (4%) or obtained a gun (1%). As for the measures that were employed routinely, people were most likely to lock their car doors when alone (57%) and check the back seat for intruders when returning alone to a car (44%), and least likely to stay home at night because they were afraid to go out (10%).

#### *Women more likely than men to engage in precautionary measures*

One characteristic that is closely associated with fear of crime – sex – is also closely associated with taking protective measures. A greater proportion of women had employed most of the precautionary measures. For example, 40% of women, compared to 31% of men, reported that they had changed their activities to protect themselves from crime (Table 5.14).

Women were much more likely to indicate that they routinely take precautionary measures. This is particularly evident for staying at home at night, where women were nearly nine times more likely than men to adopt this behaviour (Table 5.15). However, differences were also evident for the other precautionary measures, including locking car doors for safety when alone (73% of women compared to 40% of men), checking the back seat for intruders when returning to the car alone (57% versus 32%) and planning a route with safety in mind (52% and 31%).

#### *Older people least likely to take precautionary measures*

There is no evidence to suggest that the elderly are more likely to engage in precautionary behaviour. For four of the items (changing routine activities, taking a self-defense course, obtaining a dog, and changing their phone number) it is members of the oldest age group who were least likely to report engaging in the behaviour. This is interesting given that respondents were asked if they had “ever” taken this measure. Older Canadians might be expected to report precautionary measures more often, simply because the period of time during which they could have done so is greater.

For many of the routine precautionary measures (lock car doors for safety, check back seat for intruders and plan route with safety in mind), people 65 and older were no more likely than their younger counterparts to employ the measures. There was one exception: a greater percentage of older people choose to stay home at night because they are afraid to go out alone.

#### *Precautionary measures used more often by the well-educated*

Those with a university degree were more likely than those with less education to take precautionary measures. This was particularly evident for installing new locks or security bars. Approximately 42% of those with a university degree had installed new locks or security bars compared to 23% of those with less than a high school education.

People with a university degree were also more likely to routinely take precautionary measures. In particular, 48% of those with a university degree check the back seat of the car for intruders, compared to 39% for those with less than a high school degree. Staying home at night was once again an exception, with a higher percentage of those having less education opting to stay home.

#### *Those with high household income more likely to take precautionary measures*

Taking some precautionary measures, for example installing a burglar alarm or new locks, depends on the resources that are available to household members. It is not surprising then that those earning \$60,000 or more were much more likely than those earning less than \$15,000 to have employed these measures.

For the routine measures, there was very little difference among income groups apart from the fact that those earning less than \$15,000 were more likely than those earning \$60,000 or more to stay at home at night because they were afraid to go out alone. This is in keeping with the fact that those earning less than \$15,000 had the highest rates of violent victimization and expressed the highest levels of fear.

*Victims of multiple crimes more likely to employ precautionary measures*

Victims of crime tend to use precautionary measures more than non-victims and the use of these measures increases with the incidence of victimization. For example, among those who were not victimized in the previous year, 30% reported that they changed their routine activities compared to 44% of those who were victimized once, 56% of those who were victimized twice, and 66% of those who were victimized three or more times.

Those who had been victimized more often also employed routine precautionary measures more often. The largest differences were observed for carrying something for protection and staying home at night because of fear.

*Those believing their neighbourhoods safe less likely to use precautionary measures*

Those who viewed the crime trend in their neighbourhood to be upward were more likely than those who viewed it to be flat or downward to engage in precautionary measures. This is particularly evident for changing routine activities or avoiding certain places. Approximately 47% of those who perceived neighbourhood crime to be increasing changed their activities or avoided certain places compared to 30% of those who thought it had remained the same and 34% of those who thought that it had decreased. Results were similar

for those who believed crime in their neighbourhood was higher in comparison to those who thought it was the same or lower than other places in Canada.

Those who viewed the crime situation in their neighbourhood to be worsening were also more likely to routinely engage in precautionary measures. The largest difference involved carrying something for defence and staying home at night because of fear.

### Summary

Canadians reported feeling safer from crime in 1999, yet fear of crime remains an important issue, particularly for certain segments of the population. A number of factors are related to the fear of crime. Results from a multivariate analysis revealed that sex was the strongest predictor of fear of crime, with women being more fearful than men. The characteristics of the area in which a person lives were also associated with fear. In particular, those living in an area they considered to have higher crime and those living in an area where they believed crime was increasing were more fearful than those who did not share these views. Also, urban dwellers were more fearful than rural residents. Confidence in the criminal justice system, and in particular the police, also had an impact on fear. People who felt the police were doing a good job were less fearful. In contrast, being the victim of a crime, whether it was violent or non-violent, was not a significant predictor of fear after controlling for the effects of other factors.

One of the most basic responses to crime or fear of crime is to employ precautionary measures. In general, Canadians were more willing to engage in less stringent behaviours such as changing their routine/avoiding certain places and less willing to change their place of residence or obtain a gun to make themselves feel safer from crime. Moreover, characteristics that were closely associated with fear of crime were also associated with the incidence of engaging in precautionary measures.

Table 5.1  
Perceptions of crime for population aged 15+, 1993 and 1999

	1993	1999	1993	1999
	Population 15+ (000s)		% population 15+	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,644</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>During the last 5 years, has crime in your neighbourhood ...</b>				
Increased	9,888	7,113	46	29
Stayed the same	9,297	13,202	43	54
Decreased	799	1,414	4	6
Don't know/Not stated	1,660	2,531	8	10
<b>Compared to other areas in Canada is crime in your neighbourhood ...</b>				
Higher	2,166	1,820	10	8
About the same	6,179	6,727	29	28
Lower	12,370	14,440	57	60
Don't know/Not stated	929	1,273	4	5

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1993 and 1999.

Table 5.2  
Perceptions of crime for population aged 15+, by sex and age, 1999

	Total		Males	Females	15-24 yrs	25-44 yrs	45-64 yrs	65+ yrs
	(000s)	%	% population aged 15+					
<b>During the last 5 years, has crime in your neighbourhood ...</b>								
Increased	7,113	29	27	31	29	28	31	29
Stayed the same	13,202	54	56	53	52	54	55	57
Decreased	1,414	6	7	5	7	5	6	5
Don't know/Not stated	2,531	10	10	11	11	13	7	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Compared to other areas in Canada is crime in your neighbourhood ...</b>								
Higher	1,820	8	8	7	6	8	7	8
About the same	6,727	28	28	27	26	28	28	27
Lower	14,440	60	59	60	64	59	60	55
Don't know/Not stated	1,273	5	5	5	3	4	5	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.3  
Perceptions of crime for population aged 15+, by province, 1999

	Total	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	
	(000s)	%	% population aged 15+									
<b>During the last 5 years, has crime in your neighbourhood ...</b>												
Increased	7,113	29	21	18	29	25	25	29	34	33	30	37
Stayed the same	13,202	54	68	73	59	62	59	53	51	56	52	48
Decreased	1,414	6	7	4†	6	7	8	6	5	3†	5	4
Don't know/Not stated	2,531	10	5	5†	7	6	9	12	9	9	13	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Compared to other areas in Canada is crime in your neighbourhood ...</b>												
Higher	1,820	8	2†	--	5	4	6	8	7	6	6	11
About the same	6,727	28	9	12	21	24	32	27	27	23	26	30
Lower	14,440	60	88	86	73	69	56	58	60	67	63	55
Don't know/Not stated	1,273	5	1†	--	2†	3†	5	7	5	4	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.4  
Perceptions of crime for population aged 15+, by census metropolitan area, 1999

CMA <sup>1</sup>	During the last 5 years, has crime in your neighbourhood ... <sup>2</sup>			Compared to other areas in Canada is crime in your neighbourhood ... <sup>2</sup>		
	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Higher	About the same	Lower
	% population aged 15+					
St. John's	26	59	8†	--	9	87
Halifax	36	48	6†	9	31	58
Saint John	18†	66	8†	--	23	69
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	30†	50	--	--	26†	63
Québec	21	59	8†	5†	32	58
Sherbrooke	27†	58	--	--	36	56
Trois-Rivières	25†	62	--	--	34	57
Montréal	25	56	8	9	36	48
Ottawa-Hull	27	53	8	6†	26	60
Oshawa	38	47	--	--	38	52
Toronto	30	50	6	11	28	53
Hamilton	36	47	6†	10	28	57
St. Catharines-Niagara	29	63	--	--	22	66
Kitchener	32	50	--	7†	32	53
London	22	56	6†	6†	31	55
Windsor	19	67	--	--	31	60
Sudbury	28†	54	--	--	25†	64
Thunder Bay	27†	53	--	--	34	40
Winnipeg	38	48	4†	10	33	50
Regina	38	48	--	11†	34	51
Saskatoon	37	51	--	7†	32	57
Calgary	31	47	7	6	32	57
Edmonton	30	54	4†	9	27	60
Vancouver	38	46	5	16	33	47
Victoria	31	50	--	--	32	61

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

<sup>1</sup> A CMA (census metropolitan area) refers to a large urban core (over 100,000 population) together with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration.

<sup>2</sup> Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.5  
Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, 1993 and 1999

	1993	1999	1993	1999
	Population 15+ (000s)		% population 15+	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,644</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>1</sup></b>				
Not at all worried	2,919	3,306	51	54
Somewhat worried	2,074	2,390	36	39
Very worried	688	438	12	7
Don't know/Not stated	40†	42†	1†	1†
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,720</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?<sup>1</sup></b>				
Very safe	6,094	7,964	39	43
Reasonably safe	7,079	8,322	45	45
Somewhat unsafe	1,585	1,627	10	9
Very unsafe	538	412	3	2
Don't know/Not stated	331	63	2	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,627</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>2</sup></b>				
Not at all worried	16,271	19,104	75	80
Somewhat worried	4,390	4,374	20	18
Very worried	941	496	4	2
Don't know/Not stated	42†	44†	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,644</b>	<b>24,018</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>				
Very satisfied	8,739	10,678	40	44
Somewhat satisfied	9,864	11,292	46	47
Somewhat dissatisfied	1,513	995	7	4
Very dissatisfied	825	449	4	2
Don't know/Not stated	703	847	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,644</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

<sup>2</sup> For 1999 only, this excludes the estimated 1% of the population that is never home alone.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1993 and 1999.



Table 5.6  
Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by sex and age, 1999

	Males (age in years)						Females (age in years)					
	Total	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Total	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+		
	(000s)	%	% population 15+				(000s)	%	% population 15+			
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>1</sup></b>												
Not at all worried	2,292	70	74	69	67	68	1,013	35	35	33	34	51
Worried	950	29	26	31	32	27	1,878	65	65	66	64	48
Don't know/Not stated	22†	1†					20†	1†				
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,264</b>	<b>100</b>					<b>2,911</b>	<b>100</b>				
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?<sup>1</sup></b>												
Safe	9,870	94	93	95	93	92	6,416	82	79	82	82	83
Unsafe	614	6	6	5	6	8	1,424	18	21	18	18	15
Don't know/Not stated	39†	1†					24†	1†				
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,523</b>	<b>100</b>					<b>7,865</b>	<b>100</b>				
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>2</sup></b>												
Not at all worried	10,464	88	92	88	88	86	8,639	71	69	68	73	79
Worried	1,381	12	8	12	12	13	3,489	29	31	32	27	21
Don't know/Not stated	18†	--					26†	--				
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,863</b>	<b>100</b>					<b>12,154</b>	<b>100</b>				
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>												
Satisfied	11,085	93	95	94	93	88	10,884	88	92	88	88	86
Dissatisfied	464	4	3	4	4	4	980	8	6	9	8	6
Don't know/Not stated	392	3					456	4				
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,941</b>	<b>100</b>					<b>12,320</b>	<b>100</b>				

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes people that are never home alone.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.7  
**Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by type of victimization, 1999**

	Total		Type of Victimization				
			Not Victimized <sup>3</sup>	Victimized more than 12 months before	Victimized in the previous 12 months		
					Total <sup>4</sup>	Violent	Non-violent
	(000s)	%	% population aged 15+				
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>1</sup></b>							
Not at all worried	3,306	54	61	53	48	50	47
Worried	2,829	46	38	47	52	50	53
Don't know/Not stated	42†	1†					
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>100</b>					
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?<sup>2</sup></b>							
Safe	16,286	89	90	90	85	82	87
Unsafe	2,039	11	9	10	14	18	13
Don't know/Not stated	63	--					
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>100</b>					
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>2</sup></b>							
Not at all worried	19,104	80	84	79	74	71	74
Worried	4,870	20	16	21	26	29	26
Don't know/Not stated	44†	--					
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,018</b>	<b>100</b>					
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>							
Satisfied	21,969	91	95	92	88	85	89
Dissatisfied	1,444	6	3	6	11	14	10
Don't know/Not stated	847	3					
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>					

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes people that are never home alone.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to people who were not victimized during their lifetime.

<sup>4</sup> Includes victims of crimes that were not classified by type.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.8  
**Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by census metropolitan area, 1999**

CMA <sup>1</sup>	Total		In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?	
	000s	%	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
			% population aged 15+	
St. John's	142	100	95	--
Halifax	286	100	92	7†
Saint John	102	100	96	--
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	130	100	91	--
Québec	584	100	91	6†
Sherbrooke	116	100	95	--
Trois-Rivières	125	100	92	--
Montréal	2,721	100	90	8
Ottawa-Hull	841	100	91	5†
Oshawa	208	100	92	--
Toronto	3,721	100	89	6
Hamilton	547	100	93	5†
St. Catharines-Niagara	306	100	89	--
Kitchener	324	100	91	--
London	345	100	92	--
Windsor	253	100	91	--
Sudbury	121	100	94	--
Thunder Bay	121	100	87	--
Winnipeg	533	100	85	10
Regina	154	100	90	8†
Saskatoon	176	100	91	--
Calgary	744	100	93	5†
Edmonton	738	100	91	6†
Vancouver	1,656	100	81	11
Victoria	264	100	86	8†

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> A CMA (census metropolitan area) refers to a large urban core (over 100,000 population) together with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.9  
**Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by perceptions of neighbourhood crime, 1999**

	Total		During the last 5 years, has crime in your neighbourhood ... <sup>3</sup>			Compared to other areas in Canada is crime in your neighbourhood ... <sup>3</sup>		
			Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Higher	About the same	Lower
	(000s)	%	% population 15+					
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>1</sup></b>								
Not at all worried	3,306	54	40	59	60	41	49	59
Worried	2,829	46	59	40	39	59	51	41
Don't know/Not stated	42†	1†						
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>100</b>						
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?<sup>1</sup></b>								
Safe	16,286	89	81	92	91	69	85	93
Unsafe	2,039	11	18	8	9	30	15	7
Don't know/Not stated	63	--						
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>100</b>						
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>2</sup></b>								
Not at all worried	19,104	80	70	84	84	65	76	83
Worried	4,870	20	30	16	16	35	24	17
Don't know/Not stated	44†	--						
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,018</b>	<b>100</b>						
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>								
Satisfied	21,969	91	86	93	94	77	89	94
Dissatisfied	1,444	6	11	4	4	19	8	4
Don't know/Not stated	847	3						
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>						

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes people that are never home alone.

<sup>3</sup> Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.10  
**Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by perceptions of police, 1999**

	Total		Job being done by local police at .3														
			Enforcing the laws			Responding promptly to calls			Being approachable			Supplying information on reducing crime			Ensuring the safety of citizens		
			Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor
(000s)	%	% population 15+															
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?1</b>																	
Not at all worried	3,306	54	58	49	43	56	50	43	55	49	49	56	51	48	59	46	38
Worried	2,829	46	42	50	57	43	50	57	44	50	50	44	49	52	41	53	61
Don't know/Not stated	42†	1†															
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>100</b>															
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?1</b>																	
Safe	16,286	89	91	87	78	90	87	82	90	86	81	90	88	84	91	86	74
Unsafe	2,039	11	9	13	21	10	13	17	10	14	19	10	12	16	8	14	25
Don't know/Not stated	63	--															
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>100</b>															
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?2</b>																	
Not at all worried	19,104	80	83	75	66	82	76	69	81	76	70	81	78	72	83	74	63
Worried	4,870	20	17	25	34	18	24	31	19	24	30	19	22	27	16	26	37
Don't know/Not stated	44†	--															
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,018</b>	<b>100</b>															
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>																	
Satisfied	21,969	91	93	90	75	93	89	82	92	89	79	93	90	83	94	88	74
Dissatisfied	1,444	6	4	8	20	4	8	15	5	8	17	4	7	14	3	9	21
Don't know/Not stated	847	3															
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>															

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

1 Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

2 This excludes people that are never home alone.

3 Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.11  
**Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by perceptions of the criminal courts, 1999**

	Total	Job being done by the criminal courts at ... <sup>3</sup>												
		Providing justice quickly			Helping the victim			Determining guilt of the accused			Ensuring a fair trial for the accused			
		Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	
(000s)	%	% population 15+												
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>1</sup></b>														
Not at all worried	3,306	54	60	53	49	59	54	48	61	51	46	58	49	48
Worried	2,829	46	40	47	50	40	46	51	38	49	53	42	51	51
Don't know/Not stated	42†	1†												
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>100</b>												
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?<sup>2</sup></b>														
Safe	16,286	89	89	90	88	89	89	88	90	89	86	91	88	85
Unsafe	2,039	11	11	10	12	11	11	12	9	11	14	9	12	15
Don't know/Not stated	63	--												
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>100</b>												
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>2</sup></b>														
Not at all worried	19,104	80	83	80	77	82	80	77	83	81	73	82	78	73
Worried	4,870	20	17	20	22	18	20	23	16	19	27	18	21	26
Don't know/Not stated	44†	--												
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,018</b>	<b>100</b>												
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>														
Satisfied	21,969	91	94	94	88	94	94	88	94	93	85	94	92	82
Dissatisfied	1,444	6	3	4	9	3	4	9	3	5	11	4	6	14
Don't know/Not stated	847	3												
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>												

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes people that are never home alone.

<sup>3</sup> Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.12  
**Feelings of safety from crime for population aged 15+, by perceptions of the prison and parole systems, 1999**

	Total	Job being done by the prison system at .. <sup>3</sup>						Job being done by the parole system at .. <sup>3</sup>						
		Supervising/controlling prisoners			Helping prisoners become law-abiding			Releasing offenders who are not likely to re-offend			Supervising offenders on parole			
		Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor	
(000s)	%	% population 15+												
<b>While waiting for/using public transportation alone after dark, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>1</sup></b>														
Not at all worried	3,306	54	58	51	48	57	53	50	59	53	49	58	53	48
Worried	2,829	46	42	49	51	43	47	49	41	47	51	42	47	52
Don't know/Not stated	42†	1†												
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>100</b>												
<b>How safe do you feel from crime when walking alone in your area after dark?<sup>2</sup></b>														
Safe	16,286	89	90	89	86	89	89	88	91	89	87	90	89	87
Unsafe	2,039	11	10	11	14	11	11	12	9	11	13	10	11	13
Don't know/Not stated	63	--												
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>100</b>												
<b>While alone in your home in the evening or at night, how do you feel about your safety from crime?<sup>2</sup></b>														
Not at all worried	19,104	80	82	79	76	80	80	78	84	80	76	84	81	76
Worried	4,870	20	18	20	24	20	20	22	16	20	24	16	19	24
Don't know/Not stated	44†	--												
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,018</b>	<b>100</b>												
<b>In general, how do you feel about your safety from crime?</b>														
Satisfied	21,969	91	94	93	86	94	93	88	95	93	88	95	93	88
Dissatisfied	1,444	6	4	6	10	3	5	10	4	5	9	3	5	9
Don't know/Not stated	847	3												
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>												

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Figures may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Based on responses for people who engage in these activities.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes people that are never home alone.

<sup>3</sup> Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.13  
**Factors related to the fear of crime, multivariate analysis, 1999<sup>1</sup>**

Factors	Beta <sup>2</sup>
<b>Vulnerability</b>	
Sex (male)	0.40***
Age (15-24)	-0.02
Interaction between sex and age (male all ages)	-0.11***
Income (less than \$15,000)	-0.07***
Education (less than high school)	-0.04***
<b>Threat of crime</b>	
Non-violent victimization (no)	0.01
Violent victimization (no)	0.03
Multiple victimizations (no)	0.08***
Urban/rural residence (rural)	0.16***
Compared to other areas in Canada, crime in my area is... (lower)	0.19***
Over the past five years, crime in my area has... (decreased)	0.09***
<b>Attitudes toward the justice system</b>	
Confidence in the police (poor)	-0.11***
Confidence in the courts (poor)	-0.05***
Confidence in prison system to supervise prisoners (poor)	-0.06***
Confidence in prison system to help prisoners become law-abiding (poor)	0.02
Confidence in parole system to release offenders not likely to re-commit (poor)	-0.02
Confidence in parole system to supervise offenders on parole (poor)	0.00

\* .01 < p ≤ .05

\*\* .001 < p ≤ .01

\*\*\* p ≤ .001

*p* is the significance level. For example, a significance level of .05 indicates that there is a 5% probability that the survey (sample) data will suggest that there is a relationship between the variables, when no relationship actually exists in the population.

<sup>1</sup> Using the technique of multiple regression, the relationship of each factor to the fear of crime is examined, while controlling for possible interactions with the other risk factors in the model.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable when all other factors in the model are held constant. The value in brackets for each of the independent variables indicates the beginning or reference point. For example for income, the analysis examines the relationship between income and fear as income increases, from less than \$15,000 to \$60,000+.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.



Table 5.14  
Measures ever taken to protect myself or property from crime for population aged 15+, 1999

Population characteristics	Total		Changed activities or avoided certain places	Installed new locks or security bars	Installed burglar alarms or motion detectors	Took a self-defence course	Obtained a dog	Changed my phone number	Changed residence or moved	Obtained a gun
	(000s)	%								
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sex</b>										
Females	12,320	100	40	34	30	13	13	7	5	1
Males	11,940	100	31	31	31	13	10	4	2	2
<b>Age (years)</b>										
15-24	4,103	100	38	20	20	23	10	5	3	1†
25-44	9,683	100	41	36	31	15	13	7	5	1
45-64	6,916	100	34	36	37	10	13	6	3	2
65 +	3,558	100	21	31	29	4	8	2	2	1
<b>Education</b>										
Less than high school	5,755	100	29	23	23	11	12	5	3	1
High school diploma	3,425	100	32	33	30	11	13	6	3	1
Some post secondary/college diploma	9,323	100	40	35	34	16	13	6	4	1
University degree	4,363	100	43	42	37	16	10	6	4	1†
<b>Household income (\$)</b>										
0-14,999	1,421	100	36	26	16	10	9	8	8	--
15,000-29,999	2,874	100	34	31	24	11	10	6	5	2†
30,000-39,999	2,370	100	35	30	28	12	11	7	4	1†
40,000-59,999	4,136	100	38	35	32	13	13	6	3	2
60,000 +	6,349	100	40	39	41	16	13	5	3	1
<b>Victimization in the previous 12 months<sup>1</sup></b>										
Not victimized	17,969	100	30	29	29	11	11	4	2	1
Victimized 1 time	3,901	100	44	39	34	17	13	7	5	1
Victimized 2 times	1,197	100	56	47	39	23	15	11	8	1†
Victimized 3+ times	1,193	100	66	49	39	28	23	16	14	4†
<b>In the past 5 years crime in my neighbourhood has ...</b>										
Decreased	1,414	100	34	32	28	14	13	5	4	1†
Remained the same	13,202	100	30	30	30	12	10	5	3	1
Increased	7,113	100	47	40	36	16	15	7	5	2
<b>Crime in my neighbourhood compared to other areas is ...</b>										
Lower	14,440	100	33	30	30	13	11	5	3	1
About the same	6,727	100	40	37	31	14	12	6	4	1
Higher	1,820	100	50	46	36	17	14	9	7	3†

† Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

-- amount too small to be expressed.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Includes incidents of sexual and physical assault committed by spouses.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

Table 5.15  
Measures routinely taken to make myself safer from crime for population aged 15+, 1999

Population characteristics	Total		Lock car doors for safety when alone	Check back seat for intruders when returning to car alone	Plan route with safety in mind	Carry something to defend self or alert others	Stay home at night because afraid to out alone
	(000s)	%	% population 15+ who have employed measure				
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Sex</b>							
Females	12,320	100	73	57	52	18	17
Males	11,940	100	40	32	31	8	2
<b>Age (years)</b>							
15-24	4,103	100	54	38	40	16	8
25-44	9,683	100	54	46	43	15	8
45-64	6,916	100	60	47	43	11	10
65 +	3,558	100	59	40	38	8	16
<b>Education</b>							
Less than high school	5,755	100	54	39	42	10	15
High school diploma	3,425	100	58	47	42	12	10
Some post secondary/college diploma	9,323	100	58	48	43	15	8
University degree	4,363	100	61	48	41	14	7
<b>Household income (\$)</b>							
0-14,999	1,421	100	56	43	47	13	21
15,000-29,999	2,874	100	57	44	45	13	14
30,000-39,999	2,370	100	58	47	43	13	11
40,000-59,999	4,136	100	57	48	42	14	8
60,000 +	6,349	100	58	46	40	13	5
<b>Victimization in the previous 12 months<sup>1</sup></b>							
Not victimized	17,969	100	55	43	40	11	9
Victimized 1 time	3,901	100	59	47	44	15	10
Victimized 2 times	1,197	100	60	49	47	22	12
Victimized 3+ times	1,193	100	64	56	51	28	15
<b>In the past 5 years crime in my neighbourhood has ...</b>							
Decreased	1,414	100	50	42	40	11	8
Remained the same	13,202	100	54	42	39	11	8
Increased	7,113	100	64	51	49	17	14
<b>Crime in my neighbourhood compared to other areas is ...</b>							
Lower	14,440	100	55	44	41	12	8
About the same	6,727	100	61	47	42	14	11
Higher	1,820	100	63	50	50	19	20

<sup>1</sup> Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%.

Responses of "don't know/not stated" are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> Includes incidents of spousal sexual and physical assault.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

## METHODOLOGY

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The GSS is an annual survey that monitors changes in Canadian society and provides information on specific policy issues of current or emerging interest. Each year, the GSS focuses on one of a variety of regular topics (including time use, social support, the family, technology and victimization). In 1999, Statistics Canada conducted the victimization cycle of the GSS for a third time. Previous cycles were conducted in 1988 and in 1993. The objectives of the survey are to provide estimates of the incidence of eight offence types, to examine factors related to the risk of victimization, victims' willingness to report crimes to the police, reasons for not reporting, and to measure public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system.

The 1988 and 1993 cycles of the GSS interviewed approximately 10,000 Canadians aged 15 years and older residing in households in the ten provinces. For the 1999 survey, the sample was increased more than two-fold, in order to allow for more reliable estimates and more detailed analysis of small populations and crimes that occur less frequently.

### DATA COLLECTION

Interviews were conducted over the period from February 1999 to December 1999 inclusive. A standard questionnaire was used to gather the information. Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) was used. With this process, the survey questionnaire is programmed into a network computer allowing the interviewers to view the survey questions and capture the responses on their workstation computer. A typical interview lasted 30 minutes.

### SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Each province was divided into a few (from 1 to 3) broad geographic areas known as strata, and telephone numbers within each stratum had the same chance of being selected. Households in the 10 provinces were selected using random digit dialing (RDD) sampling techniques. Once a household was contacted, an individual 15 years of age or older was randomly selected from those living in the household. Households were excluded from the survey when they had no telephone. Also excluded were individuals living in institutions. In all, approximately 2% of the population was excluded. This figure is not large enough to significantly change the estimates.

### RESPONSE RATES

In 1999, as with previous cycles of the General Social Survey on Victimization, the response rate was quite high – 81%. Approximately 26,000 people, 15 years of age or older, living in the 10 provinces were interviewed. Types of non-response included respondents who refused to participate, could not be reached, or could not speak English or French. The respondents in the sample were weighted so that their responses represent the approximately 24,260,000 non-institutionalized persons aged 15 years or older in the Canadian population. Using the 1999 GSS sample design and sample size, an estimate of a given proportion of the total population, expressed as a percentage, is expected to be within 0.8 percentage points of the true proportion 19 times out of 20.

### DATA LIMITATIONS

It is important to note that the GSS data are estimates. They are based on information collected from a sample of the population and are therefore subject to sampling error. This report uses the coefficient of variation (CV) as a measure of the sampling error. Any estimate that has a high CV (over 33.3%) has not been published because the estimate is considered too unreliable. When the CV of the estimate is between 16.6% and 33.3%, the symbol "†" is used. These estimates should be used with caution.

Estimates based on smaller sample sizes will have larger sampling errors. The sampling error for estimates of the same measure (e.g. fear of crime) will likely be smaller in 1999 than in 1993 because of the larger sample size in 1999. Provincial estimates will usually have larger sampling errors than estimates for Canada as a whole.

A second kind of error that occurs in both census and sample surveys is called non-sampling error. This includes errors due to coverage (e.g. the GSS had to exclude households without telephones even though the target population was all households), processing (e.g. errors introduced while capturing and processing the survey results) and non-response (the chosen respondent does not answer some or all of the questions). These errors are difficult to quantify. However, considerable effort was made to minimize non-sampling error for the GSS.

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