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## **International survey of victims of criminal activity in Prague in 2000 - National Report<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Extended summary**

This publication contains data acquired in an international survey initiated by UNICRI<sup>2</sup> of victims of criminal activity which took place in 2000 in the Czech Republic. This survey of victims of crime is carried out repeatedly, at an interval of several years. This is the third time it has been carried out in the Czech Republic but this time for the first time only in the capital city. The coordinator in the Czech Republic for performing these international surveys of victims organised by UNICRI has always been the Institute for Criminology and Social Prevention, which right from its foundation has devoted special attention to the issue of victims of crime. Inter alia it devotes a special chapter to victims of crime in the CR in the crime yearbook, which is traditionally published every year.

### **Methodology**

The survey of victims of crime was performed by means of a questionnaire administered by the telephone interviewing method (CATI). The questionnaire dealt with 13 selected types of offence committed, with two exceptions, over five years (roughly the period 1996-2000). This means that the respondents communicated their experience of crime retrospectively over the defined five-year period stated above. The questionnaire given to the respondents, which has been used since the inception of this research at the international level, was applied in a uniform manner in surveys of victims of crime in all the countries (cities) participating. Not only did the persons polled in the survey give replies about their experiences of the selected types of crime but also the questionnaire contained questions relating to crime more generally.

The respondents gave answers specifically about their experiences of the following selected criminal activities (13 criminal offences).

These are:

1. – criminal offences against **h o u s e h o l d s** (which have a negative effect on the life of the household as a whole and were directly harmful in most cases to a number of persons in them – members of the household, not only the respondent himself/herself)

- theft of cars
- theft of items from cars
- damage to cars (vandalism)
- theft of motorcycles
- theft of bicycles
- incidents in a flat or a house

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<sup>1</sup> Martinková, M. International survey of victims of crime in Prague in 2000 – National Report. Prague : ICSP, 2002. 87 pages. Summary.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) based in Turin in Italy.

- burglary
- attempted burglary

2. – criminal offences against an *i n d i v i d u a l* (criminal offences which the respondent suffered personally)

- robbery
- theft of personal property
- sexual incidents (only women were surveyed)
- assaults/threats
- corruption on the part of public officials
- fraud against a consumer

The victim of any of the criminal offences mentioned was asked about the specific circumstances of the act committed (for example, when it happened, where, how often it happened and so on). An important element of the survey was the question of notifying (or not notifying) the police of the offences, including the reasons for this decision. The victim was also asked a question relating to assistance provided to him/her after victimisation.

3. The questionnaire also contained, as indicated above, questions relating to crime more generally. All respondents (even those in the sample surveyed who had not become victims of crime) were asked questions ascertaining their fears of crime, opinions on the work of the police and their attitude to the police and questions relating to preventive measures adopted by the respondents against burglary and other types of crime.

**The persons surveyed gave replies as to whether they had met with a specific criminal activity (1) during the “last” five years (ca 1996-2000) and particularly (2) in 1999**, ie in the year which preceded the year the respondents were surveyed. (If persons surveyed had been victimised more than once during the five year period studied, they provided answers on the last incident).

In accordance with UNICRI requirements, a sample selected by a quota system of 1500 persons over the age of 16 from the capital city of the Republic were surveyed. The respondents were a representative sample in terms of gender, age, place of residence (Prague Districts 1-10) and education. A field survey in the capital city of the CR and its technical processing in accordance with UNICRI requirements was carried out by AISA.

### **Selected main results**

The international survey of victims of crime in Prague in 2000 provided many interesting findings. Some of these are given briefly in the text below:

The great majority of victims of theft of cars (96%, 170 persons) and victims of theft of motorcycles (88.2% of victims, 15 persons) *reported* the last incident of which the persons surveyed had become victims **during the five years (ca 1996 -2000) to the police**. Also approximately three quarters of the victims of theft of bicycles (72.6%, 175 persons), about two thirds of the victims of burglary (68.4%, 245 persons) and the victims of theft of items from cars (62.9%, 397 persons) did likewise. Roughly half the victims of attempted robbery reported to the police that they had become victims of a crime (48.1%, ie 89 persons), as did about half of the victims of mugging (46.3%, 31 persons) and also less than a third of victims of assaults / threats (29.1%, 59 persons) and victims of vandalism to a car (31.8%, 126 persons). Only 41.4% of victims of theft of personal property (196 persons) reported the theft to the police and only about a fifth of victims of sexual offences also went to the police (18.5%, 12 persons).

The data then indicates that for certain criminal offences a significant number of the persons affected do not go to the police at all and the offences thus remain outside the attention of official institutions. In particular, it can therefore be concluded that for certain types of criminal activity there is a significantly high degree of latent crime.

*Reasons for reporting an offence to the police.* For insurance purposes, victims of theft of items from cars reported the incident to the police most (28.4% of the replies, 141 persons). Victims of robbery (21.3% of the responses, 74 persons), assaults /threats (29.7% of the responses, 21 persons), sexual offences (42.9% of the responses, 6 persons), and victims of mugging (25.6%, 11 persons) reported the offence to the police most often so that the offender would be caught and punished. In addition, almost as many of the victims of robbery reported this incident for insurance purposes as for this reason (21%, 73 persons), victims of mugging so that they could recover their property (23.3%, 10 persons) and victims of assault to obtain assistance (23.9% of the responses, 17 persons) and prevent it happening again (19.7% of the responses, 14 persons).

*Reasons for not reporting an offence to the police.* Among the most common reasons for not reporting an offence is the fact that the victim did not regard the incident as serious enough to report it to the police in the cases of theft of items from vehicles (39.3% of the responses, 97 persons), robbery (36.1% of the responses, 44 persons), assaults/threats (29.2% of the responses, 45 persons) and sexual offences (31% of the responses, 18 persons). Among the reasons for victims of mugging not reporting the incident to the police is most frequently the opinion that the police are unable to do anything anyway (28.3% of the responses, 11 persons). This was the second most frequently given reason for not reporting the incident to the police by victims of theft of items from vehicles (31.9%, 79 persons), burglary (21.4%, 26 persons) and assaults/threats (24.7%, 38 persons).

Approximately half of the victims of theft of cars (49.1%, 87 persons), 41.5% of the victims of sexual offences (27 persons), more than a third of the victims of mugging (38.8%, 26 persons), nearly a third of the victims of assaults/threats (31.5%, 64 persons), and roughly a quarter of the victims of burglary (24.3%, 87 persons), attempted burglary (24.3%, 45 persons) and theft of personal property (26.8%, 127 persons) and about a fifth of the victims of theft of bicycles (18.3%, 44 persons) considered the offence committed against them *as very serious for them*. The other offences were not felt by the victims to be very serious so often - theft of items from vehicles was considered as very serious by 12.7% of the victims (80 persons), theft of a motorcycle by 5.9% of the victims (1 victim) and vandalism to a car by 8.3% of the victims (33 persons).

*Satisfaction with the work of the police of victims who reported an offence to them.* Dissatisfaction with how the incident was handled by the police was felt by a third of the victims of burglary (33.5%, 82 persons) and victims of corruption (33.3%, 1 person), and by approximately half of the victims of mugging (54.8%, 17 persons), 44.8% victims of theft of items from vehicles (178 persons), 40.7% of the victims of assaults/threats (24 persons) and the majority of the victims of sexual offences (83.3%, 10 persons).

*Reasons for dissatisfaction with the work of the police of victims who reported an offence to them.* Among the most common reasons for dissatisfaction with the work of the police was the impression of respondents that the police were not interested. This reason was given most frequently by victims of sexual offences (41.6% of the responses, 5 persons) and victims of assaults/threats (35.9% of the responses, 14 persons), and also victims of burglary (28.3% of the responses, 34 persons) and theft of items from vehicles (25.5% of the responses, 67 persons). Among the other most common reasons expressed for dissatisfaction was the opinion of those surveyed that the police did not do everything within their powers. This reason was selected most frequently from the other possible reasons by victims of assaults/threats (30.8% of the responses, 12 persons), victims of mugging (28% of the

responses, 7 persons), victims of burglary (27.5% of the responses, 33 persons) but also victims of theft of items from vehicles (22.8% of the responses, 60 persons). Other types of response – reasons for dissatisfaction with the work of the police – were given less frequently. *Carrying of weapons by the person or persons committing the offence* was studied for only three offences. More than a third of the victims of mugging (38.8%, 26 persons), approximately a fifth of the victims of assaults/threats (18.2%, 37 persons) and about a tenth of the victims of sexual offences (12.3%, 8 persons) testified that the offender had been armed.

*A weapon was used* against half of the victims who stated that the offender had a weapon, in the case of half of the victims of sexual offences (50%, 4 persons) and also approximately half of the victims of assaults/threats (54.1%, 20 persons) and in the case of about two thirds of the victims of mugging (65.4%, 17 persons).

As regards *the number of offenders who made people victims* of the offences studied, in most cases victims of assaults/threats (52.3%, 106 persons) and also victims of sexual offences (89.2%, 58 persons) were victimised by one offender. In cases of mugging, victims were attacked in approximately a third of the cases by one assailant (31.3%, 21 persons), two assailants (32.8%, 22 person) and two or more assailants (28.4%, 19 persons).

A positive opinion of *the helpfulness of the institution specialising in aiding victims of criminal acts* was expressed by around 60% of the victims of robbery (58.1%, 208 persons), mugging (59.7%, 40 persons), assaults/threats (62.6%, 124 persons) and nearly three quarters of the victims of sexual offences (73.4%, 47 persons). The question was not asked for the other offences.

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As regards the persons surveyed who were victimised in Prague during 1999, the respondents' (N=1500) replies showed that 3.8% of those surveyed who owned or used a car for private purposes (43 of the 1124 surveyed who owned or used one or more cars for private purposes) had been victims of theft of a car. Of these 43 victims, 9.3%, 4 persons, had a car stolen twice in 1999.

16.5% (186 persons) of the 1124 car owners or users had been victims of theft of items from a car - 73 of them, ie more than a third (39.2 %) more than once, most often twice (51 persons) and three times (18 persons), 4 persons four times or more.

About a tenth of those surveyed who were owners or users of a car were victims of deliberate damage to a car in 1999 (10.9%, 123 persons), half of them more than once (50.4%, 62 persons), most frequently twice (43 persons) and three times (14 persons).

Of the owners of motorcycles (139 persons out of the 1500 surveyed), 1.4% (2 persons) became victims of theft of a motorcycle in 1999. These were both victims of this theft only once.

Of the owners/users of bicycles (1034 persons of those surveyed), 6%, ie 62 persons, became victims of theft of this means of transport, 14.5% of them (9 persons) more than once, most frequently twice (8 persons).

Out of the total of 1500 persons surveyed, 6.9% (103 persons) stated that they had been victims of burglary in 1999. More than a third of these (35.9%, 37 persons) had been victims more than once, most frequently twice (27 persons).

Victims of attempted robbery formed 3.5% in 1999 of the persons surveyed (53), 41.5% of them, 22 persons, more than once - most frequently twice (12 persons).

Victims of mugging comprised 0.7% of those surveyed (11 persons), most of them only once (10 persons).

7.8% of the persons surveyed (117 individuals) had become victims of theft of personal property, 18% of them (21 persons) more than once, in most cases twice (17 persons).

Victims of assaults/threats formed 3.4% of those surveyed (51 persons), nearly half of them more than once (47.1%, 24 persons), most frequently twice (11 persons), and 13 persons more than twice.

Victims of sexual offences (this was ascertained only for women) in 1999 were 1.5% of the 786 women surveyed (12 persons), about a third of these more than once.

A fifth of those surveyed (20.3%, 305 persons) stated that they had been victims of fraud against a consumer.

8.1% of the total of 1500 persons surveyed (121 individuals) had personally encountered cases of corruption (an official asking for a bribe) in 1999.

(Fraud against a consumer was reported to the police by only 4.9% of the victims (15 of the 305 persons among the 1500 respondents who had claimed to be victims of fraud against a consumer). Only 2.5% of those who had encountered corruption (3 of the 121 surveyed) reported cases of corruption to the police.)

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More than half of the 1500 respondents from Prague contacted in 1999 (55.9%) said that they did not feel completely safe when they moved about alone after dark where they lived (44.4% of the persons felt rather unsafe, and 11.5% of the persons felt very unsafe).

Half of the respondents surveyed (50.5%) stated that they felt completely safe at home alone after dark and only 1.5% of the respondents felt very unsafe at home alone in the evening.

On the question of the probability of their houses being burgled during the next 12 months approximately half of the 1500 persons surveyed in Prague stated that this eventuality was to some extent probable (51.9%); 46.2% persons thought that this eventuality was probable and 5.7% of those surveyed stated that it was highly probable.

As regards how to secure the houses and flats of respondents in Prague (ie their protection against thieves), the respondents who were willing to answer the question (N=1388) had most often secured their houses or flats with special door locks (64%). In addition, they had protected their houses or flats by an agreement with their neighbours to keep an eye on the house or flat (53.7%), less frequently they had a dog to guard it (24.9%), and special bars on the windows or doors (14.8%). In even fewer cases those surveyed protected their house or flat by means of an alarm (10.6%), a high fence (5.8%), a security service or janitor (1.1%) and an official neighbourhood watch scheme (6.2% persons)

Nearly a fifth of the 1500 persons surveyed replied that someone in their family or they themselves owned a gun (18.1%, 271 persons). One of the commonest reasons for having a gun given by these gun owners (the respondents had the choice of a number of answers) was that they kept the gun for reasons of protection against or prevention of crime (41.3%, 112 persons) and for sports purposes (36.2%, 98 persons).

Among the opinions of respondents on the circumstances which could lead to reducing criminality among young people, nearly half of those living in Prague said that they considered exercising stricter discipline over children by parents and bringing children up in the family to have greater respect for laws in force as tools for reducing crime (49.1% of those surveyed). In addition, though in much smaller number, respondents proposed improving use of spare time by young people (24.1% of those surveyed), and better education / stricter discipline at school (21.3% of the respondents). A significant number of those surveyed proposed increased / stricter sentences for crimes committed (19.7%) and increase in the level of employment / reduction of poverty (16.7%). Other types of reply were given less frequently.

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In comparison of **the overall level of victimisation** of the population of Prague by crime (which amounted to 34.1%) with certain other capital cities of European countries, in 1999

Prague occupied a high position in terms of the level of this overall victimisation<sup>3</sup> among the 16 capital cities of a number of countries of the former Soviet Union and Central Europe,<sup>4</sup> and among those cities in which the population was most affected by crime Prague was placed immediately behind Tallinn (41.2%) in second place. (The average overall level of victimisation of the population by crime in the 16 capital cities studied amounted to 26.9%.)

Relatively important contributory factors in Prague's position as one of the leading cities in the level of victimisation of the population were on the one hand thefts of certain types of means of transport serving users' personal needs (cars (2.6%), bicycles (4.0%)) and also victimisation by crime in some way connected with these means of transport (specifically theft of items from cars (11.8%) and damage to cars (vandalism) (7.1%)), and on the other hand a high level of victimisation of the population of Prague by burglary (6.7%) and attempted burglary (3.8%).

It was also evident that a contributory factor in the high level of damage suffered by residents of Prague as a result of crime was the fact that those living in the capital city were also affected by certain types of crime on more than one occasion (as shown clearly above, most frequently twice, even though the frequency of residents of Prague becoming a victim three times or more was not inconsiderable).

On the other hand it should be pointed out that in the levels of victimisation of the population by certain crimes in 1999 Prague was placed more or less below the average victimisation for the 16 large cities given below for robbery (0.5%), sexual incidents (1.2%), assaults/threats (2.5%), theft of motorcycles (0.1%) and also even for thefts (what are termed petty thefts) (7.7%). In the case of mugging in the year stated, Prague, together with Zagreb, showed the lowest level of victimisation of the population by this criminal offence of the 16 capital cities studied.

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The data given above, then, reflect the level of harm caused to the inhabitants of Prague by crime as could be seen from the responses of victims of crime themselves. From the data indicating reporting by victims of the crimes studied to the police it can therefore be concluded that the discrepancies between recorded crime and what is termed hidden (latent) crime, ie crime not reported officially, may be considerable.

This is supported, for example by the following data acquired in the international survey in Prague: Sexual offences were not reported by 81.5% of the victims, bribery by 97.5% of the victims, assaults/threats were not reported to the police by 69.4% of the victims, what are termed petty thefts by 58.4% of the victims, mugging by 53.7% of the victims, theft of items from cars by 34.6% of the victims, burglary by 29.6% of the victims, vandalism to cars by 67.7% of the victims and so on.

It is therefore necessary to take this fact into account when forming conclusions on the extent of crime that actually exists in Czech society from officially recorded cases of crime.

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<sup>3</sup> Crime was represented by 11 types of the 13 types of criminal activity given in the text (corruption and fraud against a consumer were not included).

<sup>4</sup> Comparisons were made of the following 16 cities: Baku, Bucharest, Budapest, Kiev, Ljubljana, Minsk, Moscow, Prague, Riga, Sofia, Tallinn, Tbilisi, Tirana, Vilnius, W, Zagreb.