
TITLE:	Estonian Crime Victim Survey 2004
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SUMMARY

The Estonian Crime Victim Survey 2004 is a part of the project (The International Crime Victim Survey), which has been carried out in more than 70 countries across the world since 1989, contributing to international knowledge of crime trends (crimes against property and crimes against persons) independent of government statistics. The survey has been carried out previously in Estonia in 1993, 1995 and 2000.

The Estonian Crime Victim Survey 2004 was supported by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior. The data was gathered by the Estonian market research company ES Turu-Uuringute AS from May – July 2004 based on a representative sample (1687 respondents) of the Estonian adult population from age 16 to 74. The analysis of the data obtained from the survey was carried out with the help of SPSS for Windows by the Criminology Research Group of the Institute of Law, University of Tartu.

The goal of the questionnaire of the Estonian ICVS 2004 was to establish whether a respondent had been a victim of some type of crime, which were the circumstances and whether the incident had been reported to the police. The questionnaire also tackled the following issues: fear of crime, safety, assessment of the police, the use of home security measures, attitudes toward punishment, experience with corruption, consumer fraud and confrontation with narcotics problems.

11 types of crime were included in the questionnaire: car theft, theft from a car, car vandalism, bicycle theft, burglary and attempted burglary, theft from a summer cottage, garden house or allotment, theft from a garage or shed, robbery, theft of personal property, assault/threat, and sexual assault (women only).

The ICVS allows an overall measure of victimization which can be expressed in two ways: the prevalence rate refers to the percentage of respondents victimized at least once by at least one of the crimes covered by the survey in the year preceding the survey and the incidence rate refers to the number of incidents per 100 respondents in the year preceding the survey.

The overall crime victimization rate has gone down in recent years. 34% of the people questioned had been victims of some sort of crime at least once in 1999, whereas the figure was 32% in 2003. In terms of the number of crimes experienced per 100 respondents, 79 different offences were committed against a group of one hundred respondents in 1999, compared to 64 offences in 2003.

Yet, both methods of measuring victimization indicate that Estonia lags behind developed countries, showing higher overall victimization levels.

By urbanization the percentage of respondents falling victim at least once to some of the types of crime covered by the survey was highest in Tallinn and lowest in county centres.

Taking into account the percentage of victims among the people questioned, the most prevalent crimes in 2003 according to the survey data were thefts from cars and thefts from summer cottages, garden houses and allotments, with figures of 7.4% and 7.3% respectively. The survey indicated that the percentage of car owners victimized by thefts from cars was 12% and the prevalence of victimization to thefts from summer cottages, garden houses or allotments was 16% among the respondents who owned such property. Victimization by thefts from summer cottages, garden houses and allotments has remained unchanged from the rate reported in 1999, whereas the percentage of people victimized by thefts from cars has slightly fallen, being 9.2% back in 1999.

The percentage of victims of car thefts has dropped in recent years. 1.1% of car owners had their car stolen in 2003, which is lower than the level in 1999. The data obtained from government statistics confirm the results of victimization surveys. Further, the percentage of stolen cars that are returned to the owner has slightly grown: cars were returned to 61% of the respondents who were victims of car thefts in 2003 as opposed to 56% in 1999. In terms of victimization due to car thefts or the percentage of stolen cars that are returned, Estonia holds a middle position relative to other industrialized states.

Victimization due to completed burglaries has also dropped in recent years: the victimization rate for completed burglaries was 3.7% in 1999 and 3.1% in 2003. The data obtained from government statistics indicate the same trend. According to the victimization surveys Estonian victimization rates for both burglaries and attempts are at an average level for developed countries.

In 2003 the level of victimization had grown for three types of crimes covered by the survey in comparison with 1999. Victimization due to thefts from garages and sheds was 4.5% in 1999 and 5.0% in 2003. The victimization rate for theft of personal property had grown from 5.5% in 1999 to 6.3% in 2003. The probability of being victimized by pick pocketing has gone up steadily since the beginning of the 1990s, with figures of 2.7% in 1992 and in 1994, 3.6% in 1999 and 3.9% in 2003, respectively.

For bicycle theft, the prevalence of victimization has consistently dropped in successive years. In 2003, 4.0% of the people questioned had been victimized by bicycle theft.

The most significant improvement compared to 1999 has appeared in the levels of victimization rates for contact crimes – assaults/threats, robberies and sexual assault incidents. The data indicate that victimization due to contact crimes has fallen from 5.9% in 1999 to 3.4% in 2003. The level of victimization due to assaults and threats was nearly two times higher back in 1999 as compared to 2003, with figures of 6.4% and 3.2%, respectively.

The prevalence of victimization due to robberies has also started to go down in recent years. 1.8% of the respondents questioned had fallen victim to robbery in 2003 as opposed to 2.9% in 1999. In terms of victimization rate due to robbery Estonia ranks among the worst countries in comparison with the group of industrialized states.

Moreover, the survey data indicate that some socio-demographic groups are at higher risk of victimization than others. Non-Estonians show higher victimization rates in both crimes against the person as well as crimes against property. Also, people living in towns are more at risk of falling victim to some kind of crime compared to people in rural areas. The income level of the respondent can also be regarded as a differentiating factor: among people with lower income levels the victimization risk is higher compared to well-to-do people.

Feelings about street safety have significantly risen during recent years. To measure the fear of crime, respondents were asked how safe they felt walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. If back in 2000 59% of the respondents felt safe alone in their neighbourhood, this was the case with 68% of respondents in 2004. Next, the percentage of respondents assessing the risk of burglary as probable during the year after the survey has fallen from 44% in 2000 to 30% in 2004.

There has been a consistent rise in the use of preventive measures to avoid burglaries since 1993. The rise has been most sharp in the use of burglar alarms. If in the 1990s such a preventive measure was used relatively seldom outside Tallinn, then in recent years households equipped with burglar alarms have also been more common in other towns and in the countryside. In 2004 a special lock as a preventive measure to avoid burglary was most frequently used, followed by dogs, with figures of 40% and 27% respectively.

According to victimization surveys, about one third of the victimization incidents are reported to the police. No significant changes have appeared in the overall frequency of reporting offences to the police from 1993 to 2004.

The highest reporting rate was in 2004 in the case of car thefts (56% of the incidents) and burglaries (51% of the incidents). Notification to police featured least frequently with attempted burglaries (22% of the incidents) and thefts from summer cottages, garden houses and allotments (25% of incidents). When comparing the reporting frequencies over recent years, there has been a significant fall in the case of car thefts (from 86% in 2000 to 56% in 2004) and in the case of burglaries (from 62% in 2000 to 51% in 2004). Estonia lags behind other industrialized states, where almost all car thefts and burglaries are reported to the police according to survey responses.

During the period from 1993 to 2004 the share of the respondents victimized who claimed their reason for not reporting the incident to the police to be 'the police won't do anything about it' has gone down. At the same time one can detect from the data obtained that the percentage of the respondents victimized who mentioned that 'the police could do nothing because of lack of proof' has slightly risen.

In respect to the satisfaction with the police on reporting, victimized respondents declared the highest satisfaction with the assistance received from the police in the case of burglaries and sexual assaults. In contrast, burglaries and robberies were the crimes for which victims felt least assisted.

47 % of the respondents considered the way the police handle crime in their residential area to be good or fairly good.

Assessment of the professional level of the Estonian police has consistently improved year after year. In 2004, 62% of the respondents questioned assessed police professional level to be up to requirements as compared to 51% in 2000, 29% in 1995 and 17% in 1993.

Respondents were asked what type of sentence they would prefer for a recidivist burglar aged 21 who was found guilty of burglary a second time after having stolen a TV set. In 2004, the largest group of respondents opted for community service for the benefit of society or victim as the most appropriate punishment, followed by imprisonment, suspended sentence and fine.

As for the follow up question on the length of the imprisonment, the supporters of imprisonment indicated a year long sentence to be the most appropriate in the given context, both in 2000 and in 2004.

The questions concerning people's experiences with the problem of drugs were for the first time included in the questionnaire of the survey. More than 60% of the people questioned had never been confronted with the problem of drugs in their residential area, whereas 10% had had frequent confrontations, 12% had to face the problem sometimes, and 12%, seldom. There appeared to be a big difference between age groups and regions in confronting the problem of narcotics. The situation was worst in Tallinn and in Ida-Virumaa as well as in the younger age categories. 21% of the respondents participating in the study gave an affirmative answer to the question "Do you know anyone among your acquaintances who has used or uses narcotics?"

The questions concerning corruption were asked to address requests for paying bribes to state or local government officials over the last year. 3.3% of the respondents had been affected by requests for paying bribes according to the 2004 survey – the lowest rate of Estonian victimization surveys.

Police officers were most frequently mentioned in connection with requests for bribes according to the 2000 survey data, whereas in the 2004 survey, the share of respondents having the same experience has significantly fallen, with figures of 2.2% and 1.1%, respectively. Yet, it must be emphasized that the victimization survey does not allow a direct comparison with regard to the existence of corruption in different institutions, as the number of officials and the frequency of people's contact with institutions vary widely. For example, people have more frequent contacts with police officials.