



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Canada



Statistics Canada
www.statcan.gc.ca



The General Social Survey on Victimization at Statistics Canada

Colin Babyak

Statistics Canada

May 23, 2012



Summary of the Presentation

- Overview of the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS)
- Strengths of the GSS (Victimization)
- Limitations of the GSS
- Some GSS results
- Comparisons with police-reported statistics
- Current challenges for the GSS
- Conclusion



Overview of the General Social Survey (GSS)

- Annual telephone survey of ~25000 respondents aged 15 and over
- Designed to inform policy
- Cyclical content (victimization every 5 years)
- Most recent victimization cycle – 2009
- Estimates at national, provincial, metropolitan area levels



Overview of the GSS – Victimization Cycle

- Content includes:
 - Household and personal victimization
 - Incident characteristics
 - Spousal violence
 - Perceptions of the justice system
 - Perception of crime and safety
 - Demographic variables
 - Emerging issues in justice



Strengths of the GSS – Victimization Cycle

- Victimization rates
 - Overall and by crime type
- Perception of safety
 - How safe do you feel from crime walking alone in your area after dark?
- Confidence in the justice system
 - Do you think your local police force does a good job, an average job or a poor job of enforcing the laws?



Strengths of the GSS - Victimization Cycle

- Analysis is performed to look at:
 - Nature and extent of criminal victimization
 - Rates of reporting to police
 - Risk factors related to victimization
 - Demographics, habits
 - Reasons for not reporting to police
 - Impact of crime on victims

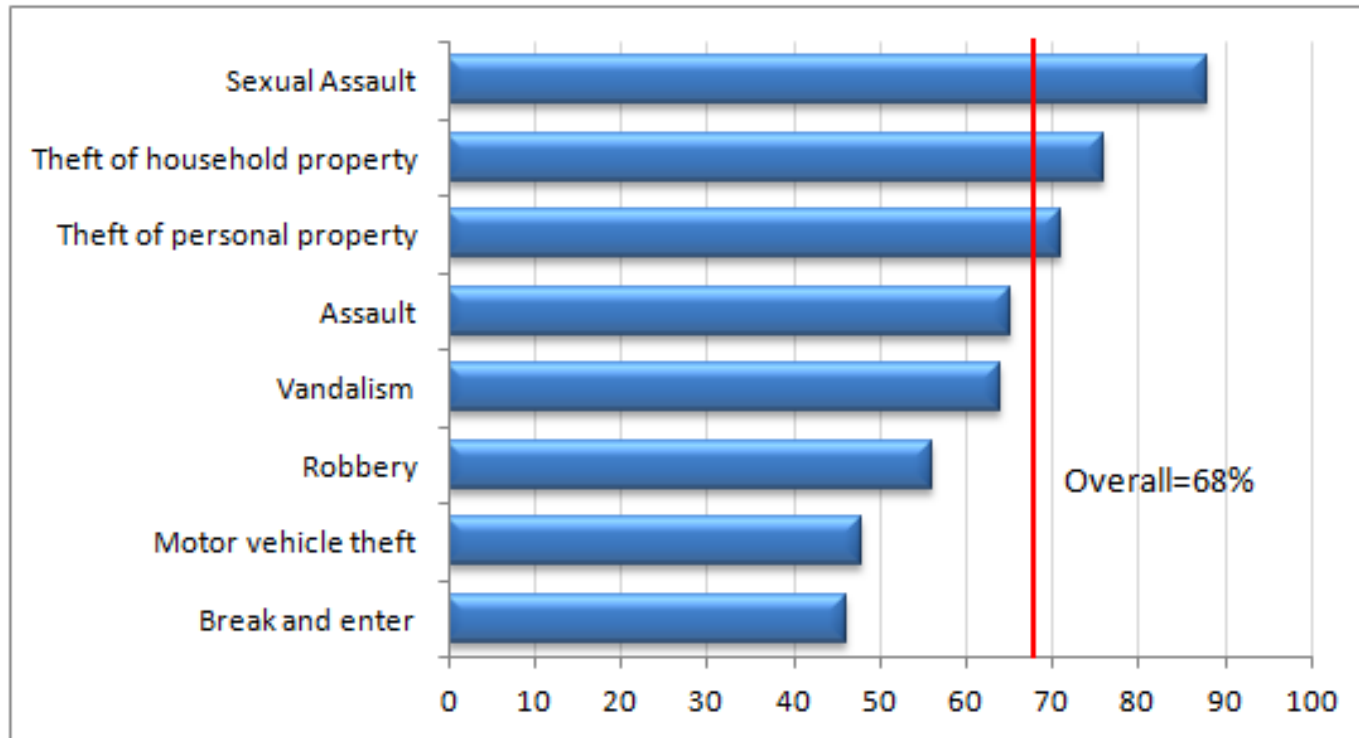


Limitations of the GSS (Victimization)

- Collection every 5 years
- Crime is a relatively rare event – analysis can be limited
- Coefficients of Variation (CVs) can be high for certain populations
- Limited to 8 offence types
- Target population \neq Canadian population

Some Results...

Percent of victimization incidents not reported to police, by type of victimization, 2009



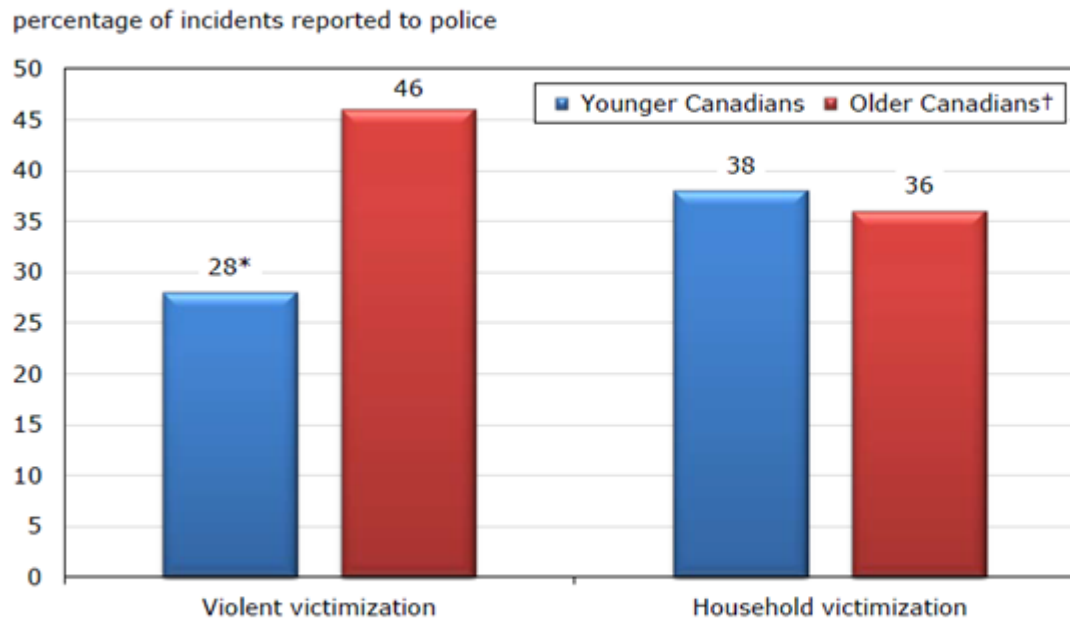
Note: Responses of "Don't know" and "Not stated" are included in the totals.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009



Some Results...

Self-reported victimizations reported to police, by younger and older Canadians and type of offence, 2009



† reference category

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.



Some Results...

Self-reported violent victimization, by type of offence, 1999, 2004 and 2009

Year	Sexual assault		Robbery		Physical assault	
	number (thousands)	rate ¹	number (thousands)	rate ¹	number (thousands)	rate ¹
1999	502	21	228	9*	1,961	81
2004	546	21	274	11	1,931	75
2009 [†]	677	24	368	13	2,222	80

† reference category

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

1. Rates are calculated per 1,000 population age 15 years and older.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999, 2004, 2009.



Comparing Victimization Statistics with Police-reported Statistics

Differences exist in:

- Survey design and survey population
- Survey content
- Mode of collection
- Initiation date and survey frequency
- Reference period
- Volume and nature of offences
- Sources of error
- Units of count and rate calculation

Comparing Victimization Statistics with Police-reported Statistics

Survey Design / Population

UCR:

- Mandatory administrative survey of police services
- Virtually full coverage of all police services in Canada

GSS:

- Voluntary sample survey of ~ 25,000 people (15 years and up)
- RDD sampling of landline telephones

Comparing Victimization Statistics with Police-reported Statistics

Volume and Nature of Offences

UCR:

- Over 200 crime categories
- Nearly 2.5 million criminal incidents in 2009
- Includes drug offences, commercial crime, etc.
- Only includes those reported to the police

GSS:

- Eight main offences
- About 6.4 million victimizations in 2009
- Includes cyber-bullying and discrimination
- Both reported and non-reported to police



Current Challenges for the GSS

- Declining response rates
- Random digit dialing (RDD) limitations
- Multi-mode collection issues
- Comparisons with police data
- Trends over time



Current Challenges for the GSS

- Declining response rates - ???
- RDD issues
- Multi-mode issues
- Comparisons with police data
- Trends over time



Current Challenges for the GSS

- Declining response rates - ???
- RDD issues – **New household frame**
- Multi-mode issues
- Comparisons with police data
- Trends over time



Current Challenges for the GSS

- Declining response rates - ???
- RDD issues – New household frame
- Multi-mode issues – **Measuring mode effect**
- Comparisons with police data
- Trends over time

Current Challenges for the GSS

- Declining response rates - ???
- RDD issues – New household frame
- Multi-mode issues – Measuring mode effect
- Comparisons with police data – **inevitable**
- Trends over time

Current Challenges for the GSS

- Declining response rates - ???
- RDD issues – New household frame
- Multi-mode issues – Measuring mode effect
- Comparisons with police data – inevitable
- Trends over time – **increase frequency?**
Mode effect?



Conclusion

- Victimization surveys are our only way to analyze unreported crime
- Wealth of contextual data available
- Sample size is not large, crime is a rare event
- Be careful comparing to police-reported data
- Many changes are planned to enhance survey and address challenges



For More Information

Colin Babyak

Statistics Canada

colin.babyak@statcan.gc.ca

Jodi-Anne Brzozowski

Statistics Canada

jodi-anne.brzozowski@statcan.gc.ca