



Working Group on Victimization Surveys for Latin America and the Caribbean

LACSI

*Latin America and the Caribbean Crime
Victimization Survey Initiative*

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

January 2021

In terms of victimization surveys and within the current world, it makes no sense to speak of national surveys. International comparability is a necessity. Although many countries have national surveys, we do not have a regional instrument that can be applied to all countries of the region. The main pillar of a common methodology is a common questionnaire. The development of this questionnaire is a challenge but it is possible. To achieve this goal, we need to produce something that is politically relevant and with a solid methodology. It must be a joint effort among countries, multilateral organizations, academic institutions and national institutes of statistics.

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Table of contents

- Background** 4
- A regional Initiative to develop a common methodology for victimization surveys** 5
- Countries that are aligned to LACSI (updated as of January 2021)** 7
- Objectives of the LACSI** 7
- The LACSI and the 2030 Agenda**..... 8
- Questionnaire structure** 8
- Crimes included in the questionnaire** 9
- The best methodological criteria for victimization surveys**..... 11
 - 1. The sample..... 11
 - 2. Household identification..... 12
 - 3. Respondent selection 12
 - 4. Data collection method..... 13
 - 5. Questions about perception..... 14
 - 6. Crime screening questions 15
 - 7. Reference period..... 16
 - 8. Telescoping effect..... 16
 - 9. Follow-up questions 18
 - 10. Interviewers’ training 18
 - 11. The term for data dissemination..... 19
- The experience of implementing the LACSI methodology** 19
- Conclusions** 22
- References** 24
- ANNEX I** 26
- ANNEX II** 28

Background

The decade of 2000 was characterized by an outbreak in the consolidation of victimization surveys in the Latin American and the Caribbean region¹ (CoE, 2014). Even if it is true that the beginning of those regional efforts began earlier (Birbeck, 1983, 1991; Aebi & Linde, 2012), it was not until that decade when it was possible to notice an indisputable political support and a real “institutionalization”² of the victimization surveys as instruments to measure crime, as in the cases of Chile and Mexico.

In this context, the Center of Excellence in Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice (CoE)³ together with the System of Standardized Indicators in Peaceful Coexistence and Citizen Security project (SES)⁴ carried out, in the second half of 2013, a compendium that collected information about the victimization surveys developed in 17 countries and 2 cities of Latin America and the Caribbean. The purpose of the analysis was to answer to basic questions about victimization surveys in the region. Among many other conclusions, it was possible to notice that surveys carried out in the region considerably change from one country to another. It was not found a systematized questionnaire for different countries. On the contrary, those countries that implemented victimization surveys used different methodologies. This implied that it was incredibly difficult to use the results in a comparative way. It was also possible to find differences in the sample, the interview method, the crime coverage and how the questions were asked. Similarly, it was possible to find out that more than half of the surveys of the region was carried out sporadically and, in many cases, it is unknown if they will be carried out again in the future.

¹ According to the Statistics Division of the United Nations, the countries that are part of the Latin American and Caribbean region are the following. Central America: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. South America: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. Caribbean: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, Saint Eustatius, Saba, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin (French part), Saint Martin (Dutch part), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and Virgin Islands of the United States of America.

² We refer to surveys that are implemented by government institutions and carried out on a regular basis. Moreover, their data are used for the design and evaluation of public policies for crime prevention and attention.

³ <http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx>

⁴ <https://www.iadb.org/es/project/rg-t1265>

A regional Initiative to develop a common methodology for victimization surveys

Faced with this reality and under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the CoE and the SES project organized the Regional Meeting on Victimization Surveys which took place in Mexico City from 9 to 11 October 2013. This meeting was framed within the activities of the "Roadmap to improve the quality and availability of crime statistics at the national and international levels" (E/CN.3/2013/11), adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 44th session and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its 22nd session.

In this meeting took part representatives of 20 countries⁵ mainly from National Statistical Offices, from the States or governments security bodies and forces. Likewise, also took part international and regional organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the Observatory and Index of Democratic Security (OBSICA), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the National Institute of Statistics of Italy (ISTAT) and the University of Lausanne in Switzerland.

During the meeting, household victimization surveys were deepened in different aspects, providing experiential and dynamic learning to all participants. Taking as reference the questionnaire of the International Crime Victims Survey⁶ (ICVS) in its 2004-2005 version, workshops were developed to provide explanations and feedbacks favoring a space conducive to reflection.

The meeting ended with the approval and adoption of an Action Plan, which included, among other things, the creation of a Working Group to develop a questionnaire and a common methodology to optimize the implementation and subsequent comparability of victimization surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since that meeting, the Working Group has met on eight occasions:

1. March 2014, in Cali (Colombia)
2. June 2014, at the Headquarters of the Secretary of Foreign Relations in Mexico City

⁵ The countries participating were: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

⁶ Internationally known by its acronym in English: ICVS or by its acronym in Spanish ENICRIV.

3. February 2015, in Panama City
4. May 2015, at the Headquarters of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico City
5. June 2016, in Merida (Mexico)
6. September 2017, in Mexico City
7. October 2019, in Mexico City and
8. September 2020 (virtual meeting)⁷.

The next meeting will be held in the second half of 2021.

To refer to this initiative, the Working Group agreed to call it "LACSI"⁸. The Working Group is led by representatives of UNODC and the CoE that is the Technical Secretariat. The initiative also has the support of three international allies: The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The core of this initiative is formed by 13 countries in the region: Argentina, Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Peru and the Dominican Republic. The participants of each country have a multidisciplinary background, being part of either the National Statistical Office of the country they represent, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Security, the Observatory of Violence or similar.

As of January 2021, thirteen (13) countries are fully or partially aligned to LACSI, and have implemented their CVS with the support of UNODC: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica⁹, El Salvador¹⁰, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia (see map below)¹¹. Countries that are considering implementing the LACSI in the near future with the support of UNODC are: Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay.

⁷ On this occasion, a specialized technical meeting on cybercrime was held.

⁸ *Latin America and the Caribbean Crime Victimization Initiative* (LACSI) in English, *Iniciativa para la Encuesta de Victimización Delictiva en Latinoamérica y el Caribe* (VICLAC) in Spanish, *Iniciativa para a Pesquisa sobre Vitimização Criminal na América Latina e no Caribe* (VICLAC) in Portuguese and *Initiative pour les sondages de victimisation criminelle en Amérique latine et Caraïbes* (VICLAC) in French.

⁹ Costa Rica implemented the LACSI in its victimization module in order to be included in the 2022 round of the National Household Survey (ENAH0).

¹⁰ El Salvador used as reference the LACSI methodology, but no technical assistance was provided by the UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence.

¹¹ In case of any interest in the results of the Crime Victimization Surveys whose results have been published by the competent authorities, visit the Atlas of Victimization Surveys of the UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence: <http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx/index.php/mapa/>

Countries that are aligned to LACSI (updated as of January 2021)



Objectives of the LACSI

The objective of this regional questionnaire is to provide reliable and comparable measurements of the impact of crime in different jurisdictions in Latin America and the Caribbean. The aim is to obtain regionally comparable data on experiences of victimization, perception of security, and people's perceptions of the Criminal Justice System.

The LACSI Working Group also agreed, as a primary objective of the Initiative, that countries should at least collect information for the calculation of the following indicators:

Prevalence of crime

It is the proportion of people or households which have experienced one or more crimes during the reference period.

Crime incidence

It is the number of individual criminal victimization events reported during a specific period within the reference period.

Dark figure

Criminal acts that are not reported to the police or competent authority or that are not subjected to an investigation and therefore, do not appear in any statistics.

Perception of security

Proportion of people who experience a sense of insecurity according to their subjective appreciation of security conditions in their surroundings, as well as the perceived vulnerability of being a victim of crime, framed in their life context.

The LACSI and the 2030 Agenda

The LACSI is designed to support countries in meeting the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹². Specifically, the questionnaire responds to the international community's need to report relevant information on Goals 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

By adopting the Initiative, countries can monitor progress on five (5) indicators of the 2030 Agenda¹³:

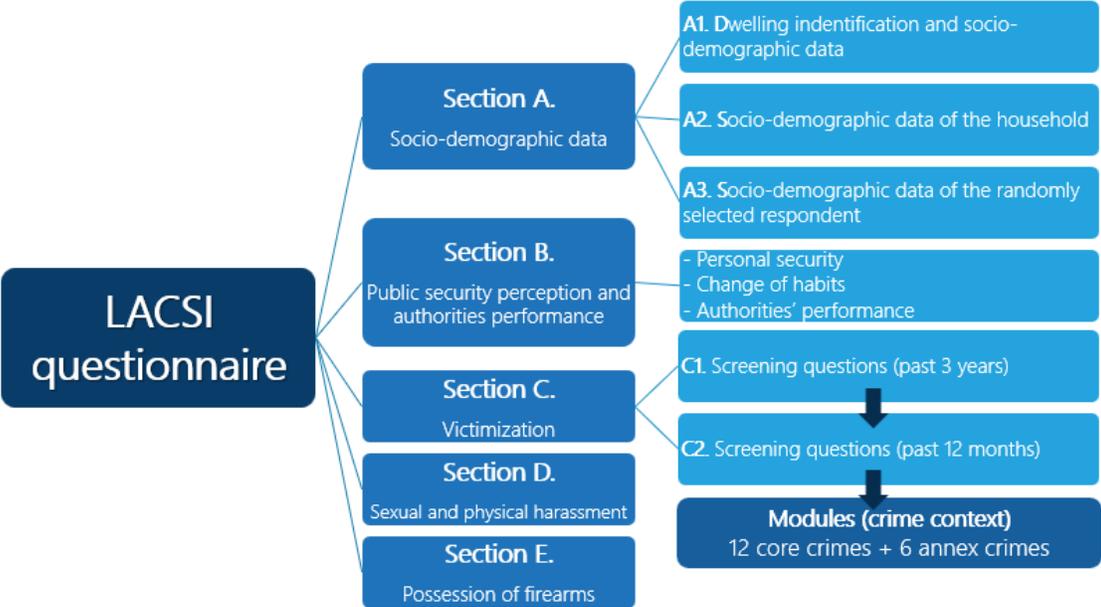
- **11.7.2:** Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months
- **16.1.3:** Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months
- **16.1.4:** Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
- **16.3.1:** Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms
- **16.5.1:** Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months.

Questionnaire structure

¹² For more information, visit: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

¹³ For more information, visit: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

The LACSI questionnaire is divided into four sections, ordered by level of sensitivity of the information collected. In line with international recommendations, the LACSI questionnaire begins by collecting socio-demographic information and then continues with the respondent's perception of public security and authority's performance. After these initial sections, the questionnaire focuses on victimization, using the crime screening technique: first in the past three years and then in the past 12 months (reference period of the Crime Victimization Survey). Crime characterization is carried out by applying specific modules at the end of the questionnaire. Optionally, it is possible to apply the Sections on Sexual and physical harassment and Firearms possession at the end of the questionnaire.



Crimes included in the questionnaire

The experience of the respondents is the heart of Crime Victimization Surveys. It is important to highlight that this type of surveys cover a wide range of crimes. Nevertheless, there is a set of offences that have always been measured and that are consequently easier to compare.

During the 1st Technical Meeting of the Working Group on Victimization Surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cali, 2014) it was agreed that there are two categories of crimes: core crimes and optional crimes. The former refers to a set of

crimes that are a priority to be measured, and the latter to those crimes whose inclusion is entirely discretionary and highly dependent on the reality and resources assigned to carry out the survey.

During the 2nd Technical Meeting (Mexico City 2014) the discussion focused on defining core and optional crimes. The participants also discussed about the possibility of measuring any assault of a sexual nature but the final agreement was to only focus on physical aggression, for the moment. In the 3rd Technical Meeting (Panama, February 2015) the list of crimes to be measured was slightly modified and was agreed that countries will have to generate information on at least 11 core crimes and 7 optional crimes. During the 6th Technical Meeting (Mexico City, 2017), it was agreed to categorize Bribery as a core crime, due to its relevance for monitoring Indicator 16.5.1 of the 2030 Agenda. It was also considered to add cybercrime to the list of optional crimes. At the 7th Technical Meeting (Mexico City, 2019), UNODC and the CoE proposed the measurement of two new optional crimes: Cybercrime and Sexual Harassment. The Cybercrime module was reviewed at the specialized Technical Meeting on Cybercrime (September 2020, virtual) and formally included in the list of optional crimes.

Up to date, the 12 (twelve) core crimes¹⁴ are the following:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Vehicle, truck or pick-up theft | 7. Bank fraud |
| 2. Theft of vehicle, truck or pick-up parts | 8. Fraud/swindling |
| 3. Motorcycle/scooter theft | 9. Bribery |
| 4. Domestic burglary | 10. Assault and injuries |
| 5. Robbery | 11. Threats |
| 6. Theft (larceny) | 12. Extortion |

The 6 (six) annex (or optional) crimes and the Sections on Sexual and physical harassment and Possession of firearms are as follows:

I. Theft of personal property from inside the vehicle	V. Homicide
II. Bicycle theft	VI. Kidnapping
III. Vandalism	D. Sexual and physical harassment
IV. Cybercrimes	E. Possession of firearms

It is worth mentioning that at the 7th Technical Meeting (Mexico City, 2019), it was also agreed to add to the questionnaire questions on: migration, ethnic group

¹⁴ See Annex II for crime correspondence to the ICCS.

identification, physical disability, discrimination. In addition to a more inclusive gender perspective throughout the questionnaire.

The best methodological criteria for victimization surveys

Throughout all technical meetings of the Working Group on the LACSI, a need for a methodological guide to help countries to implement their Crime Victimization Surveys has been discussed. It is clear that the success of a survey is not only related to its questionnaire, but also to a long and meticulous process that includes planning, sample design, training, fieldwork, data processing and analysis, as well as dissemination of results and its proper archiving to ensure confidentiality.

Collecting the best methodological practices to prepare a technical-methodological guide to orientate in an easy and pedagogic way those technicians responsible for implementing Crime Victimization Surveys in the region, was among the objectives achieved in the 4th Technical Meeting of the Working Group (Mexico City 2014).

Such methodological guide is not intended to be an analytical, nor a descriptive document of Crime Victimization Surveys. This is an issue that has already been extensively addressed in other published documents such as the Manual on Victimization Surveys of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010)¹⁵, the Inventory of Victimization Surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013)¹⁶, or the Final report on the study on crime victimization carried out by Van Dijk, Meyhew, van Kesteren, Aebi & Linde (2010). Rather, it is a practical tool whose ultimate purpose is to be useful and of direct application for the implementation of surveys at local level.

The fundamental topics to the discussion are the following:

1. The sample

In general, surveys have always adopted stratified random sampling method to achieve representative samples in terms of age, sex and geographical area.

¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2010). *Manual on Victimization Surveys*. United Nations. Geneva.

¹⁶ Centro de Excelencia para Información Estadística de Gobierno, Seguridad Pública, Victimización y Justicia (2013). *Inventario de Encuestas de victimización en América Latina y el Caribe*. CdE: México, D. F.

Subsequently, imputations can be made to improve representativeness, especially with small samples.

About this point, the discussions made during the Regional Meeting (Mexico City 2013) pointed out that it was not possible to have a periodic regional survey with large samples because of the high costs. Nevertheless, it was clear that if the probability is not calculated in a proper way, then the results would not be correct. It was said that sample frames should not consider general population but determine the sample according to the probability of finding a victim and if the probability of finding a victim was low, then an adequate sample would be needed to at least generate estimates of crime prevalence with an acceptable degree of quality.

2. Household identification

Questionnaires themselves do not clarify very well the difference between household and family. It is important to clearly define “what we mean by households” and “being part of a household” that is quite different from being part of a dwelling. For this reason, it is fundamental to identify the head of the family and his/her relationship with the members of the household.

Different households can coexist within a dwelling. A household is a group of people that is formed by one or more people. The members of this group are not necessarily linked by blood or kinship ties but the income generated among them is used for their subsistence. That is, they share the same expenses.

In the case of household surveys, a suitable respondent who can report how many households within the dwelling exist is firstly selected and then a household is randomly chosen.

The LACSI has a specific section designed to follow international recommendations: first of all, the number of people in the dwelling is identified. Then the number of households is identified and finally a table of random numbers helps the interviewer in randomly selecting a household (in case there is more than one household in the dwelling).

3. Respondent selection

It is important that the person of the household that provides the answer is determined in a standardized way. It has been recommended that the respondent is

at least 18 years of age, and chosen according to his/her birthday: it will be chosen the member of the household whose birthday is the one immediately after the date of the interview.

Regarding age, doubts arise when including underage people in Crime Victimization Surveys as they will be excluded from the spectrum of certain crimes such as car theft, bank card fraud or bribery, and estimates may be affected by these false negatives (i.e. that they were not victims not because they did not experience it as individuals, but because their status as underage people limits their exposure to certain types of crime or everyday activities).

The LACSI recommends making a list of all the selected household members (if there are more than one) and then choosing the respondent according to the criterion of the immediate birthday after the date of the interview, only considering residents who are 18 or older.

4. Data collection method

Even though it is true that it has been internationally recommended to use telephone interviews through CATI technique (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview), it is not always possible to use it in some regions of the world.

In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, it has been observed that telephone extortions would not allow using this type of method to carry out interviews. The CoE (2014) found that all the countries of the region conduct in most cases face-to-face interviews, using the PAPI technique (Paper and Pencil Assisted Personal Interview). The use of electronic devices in the Region is increasing: countries such as Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia are already using the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) technique. Even so, the interview is still face-to-face in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

One of the great questions regarding the interview method is whether the telephone interviews and the face-to-face interviews yield different results, as suggested by the Home Office British study carried out by Walby & Allen (2004), or whether there are no significant differences as pointed out by Mayhew & van Dijk (2012), Catalano (2007) o Scherpenzeel (2001).

In any case, the evidence suggests that one of the factors for the generation of good surveys is its quality control. For example, like the sample selection, the respondent

selection as well as the training and supervision of interviewers (Mayhew & van Dijk, 2012).

The LACSI recommends data collection through CAPI technique (Computer Assisted Personal Interview). This technique has several advantages, such as:

- it reduces the cost of the personnel after the survey (typists and data capturers);
- it reduces the imputation error in the survey, since it applies the validation and consistency guidelines automatically, giving the interviewer the opportunity to correct the information without having to return to the dwelling the following days, or even losing the information because he/she cannot contact the selected respondent again;
- it reduces the cost of printed materials (even though electronic devices are expensive in immediate terms, they can be used for subsequent surveys of any subject);
- it prevents loss of information through frequent back up;
- it enables use of longer, more complex questionnaires;
- it guarantees the confidentiality of the information provided by the respondent by automatically encrypting the answers at the end of the interview.

5. Questions about perception

A fundamental part of Crime Victimization Surveys is the security perception and the other is the opinion that people have about the performance of the authorities responsible for ensuring their safety.

The level of confidence in institutions changes according to different factors. It has been pointed out that due to the difference between the regions of each country, an area can understand the function of an institution, trust it and have a good perception about its functioning given that it is the institution which interact most with the citizens in that specific area. But the opposite can also occur, being those institutions, which most interact the ones that are worst qualified.

It is suggested to explore the perception that the citizens have about the performance of the institutions responsible for public security, so as the authorities that are part of the system of justice administration. The latter should be analyzed only through the people who have reported and followed the process. It is necessary to be able to understand if the citizens already know the institutions that are evaluating as this gives more weight to the response.

The LACSI offers a list of questions focused on measuring the respondent perception about the safety in geographic areas and around their dwelling, measuring the change in habits for fear of becoming a victim, protective measures taken for the household to protect against crime and its cost, as well as the identification and perception of public security authorities (confidence, efficiency).

6. Crime screening questions

Questionnaires of Crime Victimization Surveys must be able to identify those respondents that have been victims of those type of crimes investigated by the survey. This is done through the use of crime screening carried out through the questions that investigate whether the respondent has been victim of a crime or not, that is victim of any crime during the reference period of the survey. In other words, crime screening ensures that only the ones that have been victims of a crime can respond to questions related to them. In the Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010, p. 61) it is highlighted that:

“Most victim surveys address the experience of victimization in two steps, starting by using screeners that describe the incidents to establish which respondents have been victims. The second step is limited to those who have been victims and includes all questions aimed at capturing details of the incident. In general, follow-up questions are asked for each type of crime covered by the survey. Thus, respondents who were victims of more than one type of crime will be asked follow-up questions as many times as the number of crimes they were victims of. Some surveys group all screeners for each type of crime covered by the survey in one section, asking relevant questions in sequence, and going back to details of the incidents only upon completion of the entire series. Other surveys prefer go through all questions related to one particular type of crime at once, thus asking relevant follow-up questions immediately after the screener”.

Perhaps one of the drawbacks of the surveys with screening questions immediately followed by in-depth questions about each particular incident is that the respondent could respond to the first or two sections quite well, but knowing that each section could take a long time, the respondent could not be willing to continue. On the other hand, in the surveys where the crime is screened, and then it follows the follow-up questions of the crime, it is ensured that the respondent concentrates on a particular crime and forces the respondent to provide the details of each particular incident.

It should be noted that the LACSI is aligned with the definitions of the International Classification of Crimes for Statistical Purposes¹⁷ (ICCS), which is an international tool that standardizes concepts of crime, focusing on the description of behavior rather than on penal definitions.

7. Reference period

The United Nations Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) points out that every Crime Victimization Survey must define a time frame within which to collect the data about the crimes suffered from the population considered in the survey.

For example, the ICVS uses multiple time frames and this allows the respondent to be put over time and go through the past experiences that have been left out of the reference period. The ICVS uses “five years” and “one year” for all types of crimes. For a “one year” reference period it must be defined whether the 12 months prior to the survey (previous 12 months) are used or if the past calendar year is used. Regarding the calendar year, it should be considered that this reference period must be the closest to the date of the interview to reduce memory errors.

When the reference period is the natural prior year, the interviews must be done at the beginning of the following year, ideally in January or at the latest before March. The reference periods that covers the last twelve months prior to the interview allow a higher flexibility in a way that the field work can be done at any time of the year and be extended for any period of time.

The LACSI recommends the previous calendar year as the suitable reference period only when it is planned to collect the information in the first quarter of the year. In case it is not possible, it is recommended to use the past 12 months, without considering the month of the interview. It is important to note that the reference period must be fixed. That is, even if the survey lasts more than 1 month, the period should be the same.

8. Telescoping effect

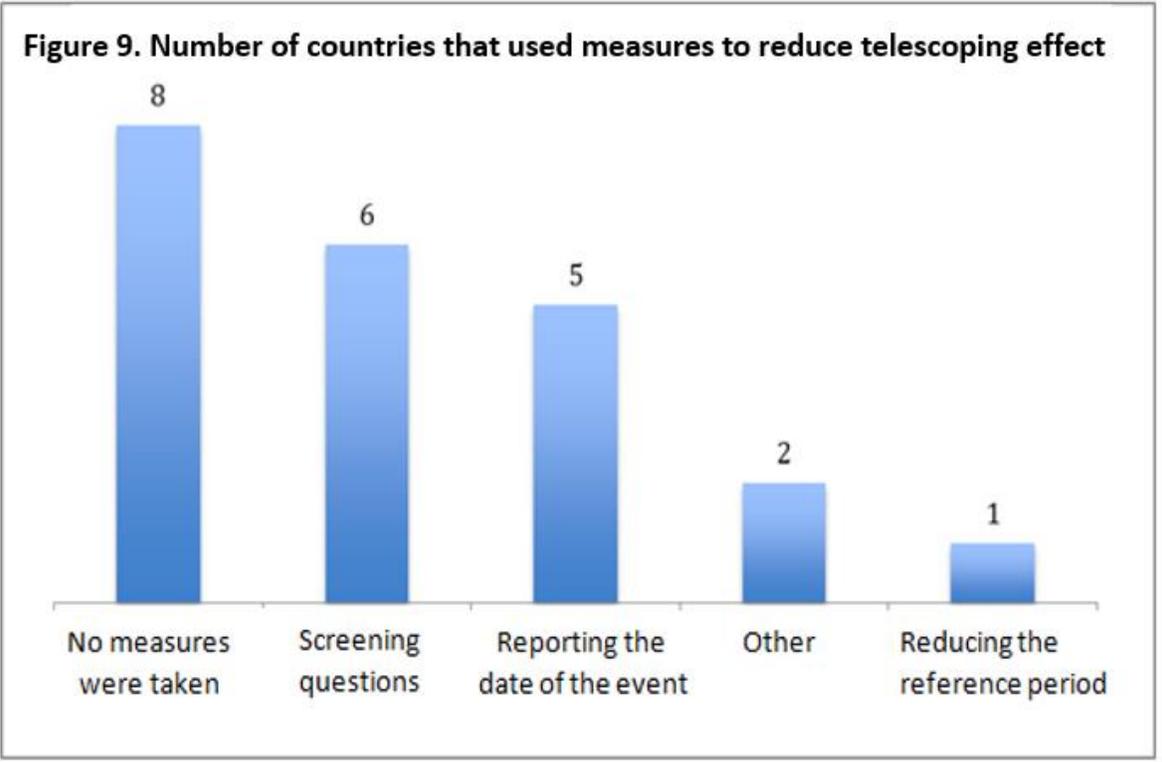
The United Nations Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) defines the telescoping effect as a “phenomenon by which respondents tend to change their recollection of the time when incidents occurred”. In the same sense, the Encyclopedia of Survey

¹⁷ United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime, 2015.
http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx/articulos/doc/delito_internacional.pdf

Research Methods¹⁸, defines the telescoping effect as “Telescoping describes a phenomenon that threatens the validity of self-reported dates, durations, and frequencies of events. Respondents often are asked in surveys to retrospectively report when something occurred, how long something lasted, or how often something happened within a certain time period.”

The fundamental question about the telescoping effect is the need to understand that the collection of retrospective data, such as those reported in victimization surveys, are characterized by many memory errors which affect the accuracy of the data. Telescoping effect is a very important issue in victimization surveys because it can radically increase the estimated levels of victimization, raising them above the level we think is the real estimate. Therefore, it is extremely important to work to reduce telescoping, in order to prevent surveys from producing distorted results.

In the Inventory of Victimization Surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013), it can be observed a graphic that specifies that only 8 out of 17 counties use telescoping measures to reduce the telescoping effect:



¹⁸ Ziniel, S. (2008). “Telescoping” in P. Lavrakas (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

The LACSI addresses this phenomenon by investigating on its crime screening section by those that occurred in the previous 3 years, and then investigate only on those happened in the previous 12 months in the characterization of the crime.

9. Follow-up questions

The follow-up questions of the crimes of which the respondent was a victim is the heart of the survey, since through them it is possible to identify the characteristics of the incident, that is the *modus operandi* (where, how, with what, etc.), the characteristics of the offender/s, as well as cross-referencing the information on the characteristics of the victim. And the most important thing is that through this section it is possible to identify the hidden figure of crime: those crimes that are suffered but that are not reported to the police or that are reported but the process of investigation has not been started and therefore do not appear in administrative records.

In the last years, an important discussion about how many incidents should be characterized in a survey has been generated. Most counties investigate on the last incident suffered for each crime. Some investigations have showed that asking only for the last crime suffered could overestimate the dark figure, since if the respondent has been victim of a crime more than once and his/her first experience of reporting to the authorities has been unsatisfactory, it is very likely that in the following experiences he/she will not want to report.

It is for this reason that the number of incidents that the LACSI promotes is at least the last 3 (three), since this would yield a much more precise hidden figure together with other characteristics of crime.

10. Interviewers' training

Interviewers' training is fundamental for a Crime Victimization Survey. Interviewers must be well-qualified people, focused on the respondent and well aware of the techniques to carry on interviews. In addition, good training produces skilled and motivated interviewers, thus maximizing the possibility of a reliable data collection.

According to the United Nations Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) training planning should be considered as a very serious matter and should be carried out in several phases or stages. Theoretical knowledge, that is the introduction to the subject, must be imparted according to a correct schedule defining the teaching

modules and the objectives of each of them. A correct preparation of the materials for the interviewer should also be done, including tools for the verification of learning (questionnaires, tests) at the end of the training. Once the training is completed, the interviewer must know the questionnaire well and understand the importance of his/her role as an interviewer.

11. The term for data dissemination

The timeliness of the products is a crucial measure for the success of most victimization surveys. This is particularly relevant for those surveys specifically required for the formulation or evaluation of policies. It is worth remembering that timeliness should be specified according to the information required of the survey and to the purpose for which the data is needed. For example, if the need for information is urgent, a survey that produces a very precise measure of the points of interest may be meaningless if it is produced in three years. In some cases, it may be desirable to produce a smaller or less detailed dataset in a shorter time in order to meet the user requirements. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to invest the time needed to obtain detailed, high-quality data. Striking the right balance between product quality and depth, timeliness required for the data to be relevant and useful to users and the resources required is a tension that survey administrators need to be aware of when establishing the parameters for the survey process (UNODC, 2010).

The experience of implementing the LACSI methodology

After the 4th Technical Meeting (Mexico City 2014), the LACSI saw its first opportunity to be implemented at national level in 2015. The Republic of Panama undertook the task of conducting a victimization survey within the framework of a cooperation project on security issues, in which the efforts to improve public policies included conducting this exercise. The Center of Excellence provided technical support in all the stages of the survey process through a financing agreement and, thanks to this experience, the LACSI had its first implementation in the Latin American context, being able to identify areas of opportunity in the questionnaire, as well as proving that the methodology proposed is very feasible to measure the phenomenon of criminal victimization and security perception.

The 5th Technical Meeting of the Working Group (Mérida, 2016) was carried out within the framework of this experience and gave as a result the 2.0 version of the questionnaire. Similarly, this experience in Panama resulted in the creation of an interviewer manual for the Panamanian context, which has served as a basis in the elaboration of subsequent manuals for those countries that adopted this initiative as well. The results of this survey were published by the National Integrated System of Criminal Statistics (SIEC) and the Panama National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) on 24 March 2017¹⁹; the second round of the ENVI is expected to take place in the near future.

During 2016, the political context of several countries in the region and the tireless effort of the CoE to implement Crime Victimization Surveys, promoted a broader implementation of the LACSI methodology in the Region: in Argentina, Guatemala and Peru. In the case of Argentina, the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of the Republic of Argentina (INDEC) and the Ministry of Security of the Nation (MSN), made the adaptation of the questionnaire autonomously, carrying out its survey in the first semester of 2017, publishing their results in February 2018²⁰. In the case of Guatemala, because of the great efforts of the Ministry of Interior (MINGOB) and the National Institute of Statistics (INE), as well as the technical support of the Center of Excellence, in November 2016 it was carried out the pilot test of the National Survey on Perception of Public Safety and Victimization (ENPEVI 2018), the national survey was carried out at the end of 2017. Nevertheless, the results of the survey have not been published by the competent authorities. In the case of Peru, the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) also carried out autonomously the adaptation of the LACSI questionnaire for the execution of its pilot test 2016 and the national survey in the second semester of 2017; the results were published in the second half of 2018. During 2020, the Inter-Institutional Technical Commission on Statistics on Citizen Security and Coexistence (COMESCO) of Costa Rica together with the Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), aligned the Victimization Module of the National Household Survey (ENAHO) of Costa Rica to the LACSI in order to be included in the 2022 round. UNODC, through its Centre of Excellence, provided technical assistance in the process.

The Initiative is nourished and improved by the experiences of the countries collecting information more efficiently every time, always promoting best practices and international methodologies. The Panama experience resulted in the creation of new supporting materials and the 2.0 version of the questionnaire that could be

¹⁹ http://www.siec.gob.pa/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=16&Itemid=239

²⁰ https://www.indec.gob.ar/nivel4_default.asp?id_tema_1=4&id_tema_2=27&id_tema_3=137

tested in the field during the pilot test and national survey of the ENPEVI of Guatemala.

The Guatemala experience has not been the exception: during the 6th Technical Meeting of the Task Force (Mexico City, 2017), the acquired knowledge derived from the implementation of the LACSI in this country was discussed, as well as proposed changes to the questionnaire that led to an improved version of the instrument, the 3.0 version.

Thanks to a specific information need in the Caribbean, the CoE started providing technical assistance to several countries in this sub-region in 2018. This is the case of Jamaica, which decided to adopt the LACSI in its fifth edition of the Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey (JNCVS). The change work was carried out at the end of 2019 and results are expected to be published in the first half of 2021. In 2019, another Caribbean country decided to join the Initiative: Saint Lucia. The adaptation of the questionnaire was carried out in June 2019, the collection of information at the end of 2019. The results of the first St. Lucia National Crime Victimization Survey were published in July 2020²¹. In January 2020, St. Kitts and Nevis requested CoE assistance for the adoption of the LACSI for its St. Kitts and Nevis Security Perception Survey (SKNSPS). Fieldwork is expected to start in 2021.

During the 7th Technical Meeting of the Working Group (Mexico City, 2019), the experiences of Jamaica and Saint Lucia in adopting the LACSI were presented. The Section of Possession of firearms, which has been implemented for the first time in these two countries, was discussed. The Cybercrime and Sexual Harassment Modules, which have been developed by the CoE in 2019 to respond to the information needs of Caribbean countries, were also presented.

The gender focus that the Initiative seeks to introduce in its questionnaire from 2019 was also discussed, to comply with the indications of the updated Roadmap for the improvement of crime statistics at national and international level (E/CN.3/2019/19), which points out the importance of incorporating a gender perspective in crime statistics.

As a follow-up to the interest shown by countries in the region on the issue of cybercrime, the first specialized technical meeting of the LACSI Working Group on this topic was held in September 2020. This specialized meeting was organized to understand the global, regional and national conceptual and normative landscape of cybercrime with the objective of defining which behaviors are minimally recommended to measure, and thus contribute improvements to the cybercrime module. Representatives from National Statistical and Criminal Justice System Offices

²¹ For more information, visit: <https://www.stats.gov.jc/crime-victimization-survey/>

from 5 countries (Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia), from 3 United Nations agencies (ECLAC, UNDP and UNODC), from 2 regional organizations (IDB, OAS), as well as 2 international experts (Cybercrime Research Institute and Univeristat Abat Oliba CEU) took part in the meeting. During the meeting, the final version of the Module was agreed upon, which includes 6 specific behaviors (cyberbullying, email and social media hacking, identity theft/impersonation, malware and ransomware)²². Being able to consolidate a quality tool that measures cybercrime in a comparable way is crucial, considering the urgent need for countries to ensure digital security in this era of enormous expansion in the use of information and communication technologies. In addition to the acceleration in the number of internet users in the region that has driven the COVID-19 pandemic. Colombia expressed interest in piloting the Cybercrime Module and will implement it in its Citizen Security and Coexistence Survey (ECSC) in 2021.

Conclusions

The project of instituting a periodic victimization survey in Latin America and the Caribbean would allow having a set of effective indicators to establish the evolution of crime in the region and compare its levels in different countries.

One of the challenges at regional level is the lack of resources for the implementation of a Crime Victimization Survey, as well as the political barriers that are linked to the uncertainty of the countries of having real data about the violence and crime that happen in their territory. For this reason, it is necessary to make an analysis about the situations that do not allow the implementation of a Crime Victimization Survey in each country, considering possible resources sustainability solutions to find less costly alternatives. On the other hand, raising the awareness of authorities and stakeholders about the usefulness of investing in a Crime Victimization Survey is also necessary since it provides essential data to create more effective crime prevention public policies. It is also important to raise the awareness on the fact that a Crime Victimization Survey complements administrative records. It is also important to explain that the victimization rate will be higher of the one of administrative records because of the nature of the source of information. This is because Crime Victimization Surveys capture both the victims who reported the crime and those who did not for different reasons.

²² For more information on the approval process of the LACSI's cybercrime module, visit: <https://bit.ly/3iB2C5z>

In addition, with the advent of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and according to its Goal 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”, countries should ideally align their national agendas on producing data that help in reporting their progress in meeting the goals.

The LACSI provides this solid methodology to those countries that want to have an independent questionnaire and thus be able to continue to advance the understanding of the criminal phenomenon and crime victimization, maintaining an internationally high standard, aligned with the ICCS, SDGs and promoting the production of quality data that are comparable at regional and international level. The aim is to support countries in generating evidence-based public policies.

Among the next steps of the Working Group to promote the use of this regional standardized questionnaire in Latin America and the Caribbean there are:

- Continue to strengthen the new Modules on Cybercrime and Sexual and physical harassment developed by the CoE. Note that the sexual harassment module will not be equivalent to measuring gender-based violence, but rather to measuring sexual victimization in both men and women in the different settings in which they live (home, work, educational institution, street, public transport, etc.). It is suggested that an *ad hoc* survey be conducted to measure the phenomenon of gender-based violence due to substantial differences in methodology and conceptual categorization.
- Promote the adoption of the Module on Possession of Firearms in the region with the objective of promoting greater collection of information on firearms possession for the design of evidence-based public policy.
- Support the dissemination and implementation of the *SDG16 Survey Initiative*²³, a module focused on measuring SDG 16 of the 2030 Agenda generated by UNODC, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This Initiative will be piloted in several countries around the world in the second half of 2021.

²³ For more information, visit: <https://unstats.un.org/iswghs/task-forces/documents/Concept-note-for-joint-SDG16-module-december-2019.pdf>

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ANNEX I

The antecedent: The International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS)

Twenty-five years have passed since the first pass of the International Crime Victims Survey of 1989. During the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe held in Barcelona in 1987, Jan van Dijk decided to expose his intention of creating a standardized questionnaire to measure the victimization suffered by households and individuals at international level (Van Dijk, Shapland & Leger, 1987).

Taking advantage of the boost of this conference, a Working Group of European criminologists was created. It was coordinated by Jan van Dijk in the Netherlands and made up also by Pat Mayhew in the United Kingdom and Martin Killias in Switzerland (van Dijk, Mayhew & Killias, 1989). In this way, the Working Group accepted the challenge of issuing invitations to countries, designating a company responsible for conducting telephone interviews and not least of all, developing a questionnaire whose main objective was to "obtain internationally comparable information on victimization experiences, perception of fear of crime and the attitude towards the criminal justice system" (Aebi & Linde, 2010, p. 218).

In that first edition of 1989, 14 industrialized countries participated²⁴. In order to encourage participation, it was thought on how to reduce costs. Obviously, this

²⁴ The countries and their promoters were: Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology), Belgium (Ministry of Justice), Canada (Department of Justice, Research and Development), England and Wales (Home Office), Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeskriminalamt and the Max Planck Institute), Finland (National Institute for Research on Legal Policy), France (Ministry of Justice), Northern Ireland (Ministry of Interior), Norway (Ministry of Justice), Scotland (Scottish Department of Health and

substantially determined the size of the sample and the length of the interviews. Samples averaged between 1,500 and 2,000 households per country, although there were countries such as Germany where the sample was more than 5,200 households. It would be useful to point out that samples of this size produce high sample errors and reduce the possibility of making a detailed analysis about the issues in which a small proportion of the sample could yield significant data. This is certainly relevant since talking about sample error means talking about the accuracy of the calculation. The higher the error, the more inaccurate the data will be and the larger the interval in which it can be found the parameter with certain percentage of confidence. For this reason, a correct estimation of the sample is fundamental. We are speaking about national samples that can provide data at provincial level. If the objective is to do comparative analysis between cities, then relatively small samples would be appropriate. Last but not least, it should be noted that the interviews were carried out by telephone with the CATI technique and lasted on average between 10 and 15 minutes depending from the number of victimization experiences of the respondent.

Starting from 1991, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) joined the project with the intention of achieving greater geographic coverage. Some developing countries joined in and, considering that in many of them the telephone network did not reach all households, it was necessary to adopt a specific methodology to carry out the face-to-face interviews. In this way, the second edition of ICVS was carried out in 1992 in a total of 33 countries. In 22 of them, (60%) face-to-face interview was used.

According to Aebi and Linde (2010, p. 219), "...in 1996 the third round was conducted in 48 countries of which 36 used face-to-face interviews. The fourth round was carried out in 2000 and also 48 countries participated, of which 30 conducted face-to-face interviews. In 2004-2005 the fifth round was held with the participation of 30 countries and the inclusion of 33 capitals or major cities". By grouping all the ICVS rounds over a 25-years period, the survey has been conducted on more than 140 occasions in 78 different countries (with national surveys in 37). In addition, it has brought together more than 320,000 respondents and the questionnaire has been translated in more than 30 languages (Mayhew & van Dijk, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the strength of the ICVS is that the same questionnaire and the same methodology have been used over these years. It is true that the questionnaire has incorporated variations (regarding the inclusion of criminal typologies and questions regarding the perception of security or performance of institutions), but these

Interior), Spain (Ministry of Justice), Switzerland (federal Office of Justice) and United States of America (United States Department of Justice). (Van Dijk, Mayhew & Killias, 1989).

variations have been minimal and have not hindered the carrying out of longitudinal studies (García España, et al., 2010).

ANNEX II

Glossary of offences included in the LACSI and reference to the ICCS

Crime	Question in LACSI questionnaire ¹	ICCS corresponding code
Vehicle, truck or pick-up theft	Has anyone tried to steal the vehicle, truck or pick-up from you or any other member of your household? [...] Was the vehicle/truck/pick-up actually stolen?	05021
Theft of vehicle, truck or pick-up parts	Have you or any other member of your household had any part of the vehicle/truck/pick-up stolen, any part that is essential for its operation, including motor, headlights, tires or windows?	050213
Motorcycle/scooter theft	Have you or any other member of your household had the motorcycle/scooter stolen?	05021
Domestic burglary	Did you notice if someone tried to get into your home/residence without permission but failed in the attempt? For example, by noticing that locks, doors or windows were damaged [...] Did someone manage to enter your home without your consent and stole something or attempted to steal something from you?	05012
Robbery	Has anyone tried to steal something from you by using violence or threatening to use it [...] Did they actually steal something from you by using violence or threatening to use it?	04011
Theft (Larceny)	Apart from robberies involving violence, there are many other types of theft aimed at obtaining something yours illegally without the use of force, violence or threats; for example, the theft of a wallet, a watch, jewelry, mobile phone, etc. [...] have you personally been a victim of any of these types of theft?	0502
Bank fraud	Has anyone obtained money or other benefits from you using your bank account, checks or credit or debit card, through fraud or dishonesty?	07011

Fraud/swindling	Has someone deceived you in selling goods or delivering a service obtaining money or other benefits from you? This could have happened in person, or by phone or the Internet.	07019
Bribery	Could you tell me if [...] you have had a direct contact with any personnel of the government institutions listed in this card, for example, to carry out an administrative procedure, request a service or information? Excluding the official rate, have you been compelled to give a gift or pay extra money to the staff of any of these institutions you had contact with, either directly or indirectly?	07031
Assault and injuries	Apart from the incidents already mentioned, have you been physically assaulted, either at home or elsewhere [...] Physical assault includes hitting, slapping, pushing, tripping, knocking, being shot, stabbed, hit by a thrown object, poisoning and/or other applications of force with the potential to cause bodily injury.	02011
Threats	Apart from the physical assault incidents that we have already mentioned [...] have you been threatened by someone in a way that you believed the threat could actually be carried out? This could have happened either at home or elsewhere. Do not include situations that involved physical assault, because this was already covered by the previous question.	02012
Extortion	Besides all the aforementioned facts [...] has anyone demanded you in a violent or intimidating way to do or to stop doing something against your will to obtain money or another economic benefit? Include only those demands to pay money or doing something against your will made in a violent or intimidating way.	02051
Sexual harassment	People may sometimes be approached in a way that puts them in an uncomfortable situation, either by someone they know or by a stranger. [...] have you personally experienced any of the following behaviors directed against you? (1) UNWANTED SEXUAL GESTURES, WHISTLING AND LEERING OR ANYONE GOT INAPPROPRIATELY CLOSE TO YOU (2) UNWANTED SEXUAL COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OR BODY (3) Somebody followed you and made you feel uncomfortable with sexual intentions (4) UNWANTED SEXUAL PROPOSITION or pressure for a date (5) Receiving UNWANTED GIFTS of a sexual nature such as toys, accessories or underwear (6) Unwanted MESSAGES, E-MAILS, CALLS OF A SEXUAL NATURE that offended you (7) Embarrassing and SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MESSAGES about you and/or PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF YOU POSTED ONLINE OR SENT TO ANYONE WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT (8) Somebody INDECENTLY EXPOSED THEMSELVES TO YOU	030122
Physical harassment	Apart from the behaviors already mentioned about sexual harassment, people sometimes may be harassed, physically or otherwise. In the past 3 years, have you experienced any of the following behaviors directed against you?	0208

	<p>Please exclude incidents already discussed. As previously, these behaviors could be either by a stranger or someone you knew for example from your workplace, or someone from your family, or even your current or former partner²⁵.</p> <p>(1) Received non-sexual threatening or offensive MESSAGES, E-MAILS OR CALLS (2) Somebody personally made OFFENSIVE, THREATENING OR HUMILIATING COMMENTS to you, such as insulting you or calling you names (3) Somebody made OFFENSIVE OR THREATENING GESTURES to demean, insult or humiliate you (4) Somebody posted OFFENSIVE, demeaning OR EMBARRASSING COMMENTS, PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF YOU ONLINE (5) Somebody FOLLOWED YOU AGAINST YOUR WILL, EITHER PHYSICALLY OR ONLINE in a way that made you feel uncomfortable</p>	
Theft of personal property from inside the vehicle	Has anyone stolen any item of your property from inside the vehicle, truck or pick-up?	050222
Bicycle theft	Has anyone stolen from you or any other member of your household your bicycle?	040121
Vandalism	Has anyone deliberately damaged any part of any building belonging to your household, or any vehicle, machine or other equipment belonging to your household?	05041
Cybercrimes	<p>Have you personally experienced any of the following situations, meaning that were directed against you?</p> <p>(1) Cyberbullying: Someone sent or posted online some text, image or video that was intended to embarrass or offend you personally, to hurt your feelings or cause some other emotional distress. Exclude threatening or aggressive messages where you were the only recipient. (2) Email hacking: Someone gained access to your online email account(s) without your permission and resulted in your contacts (e.g. friends/family) receiving an email from you that you didn't send. (3) Social media hacking: Someone gained access to your online social account(s) without your permission such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, blogs, etc. and resulted in any messages or posts being made from your social media account(s) that you did not send. (4) Identity theft/impersonation: Someone stole your digital identity and impersonated you on the Internet without your consent. Exclude incidents that occurred through your email or social media/network listed above but include incidents that occurred with identification numbers, social security numbers, identity documents, electronic signatures, usernames, passwords etc. (5) Malware: Your device was infected with malicious code such as a computer virus, trojan horse, worm, spyware,</p>	<p>Cyberbullying (0208) with the cybercrime related act (Cy) tag</p> <p>Email and social media hacking (02111) with the cybercrime related act (Cy) tag</p> <p>Identity theft/impersonation (07019) with the cybercrime related act (Cy) tag</p> <p>Malware (09032)</p> <p>Ransomware (02059) with the cybercrime related act (Cy) tag</p>

²⁵ If further clarification of the concept of "partner" is required, it may be added: "By partner we mean a boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife or civil partner".

	<p>etc. that caused an undesired action in the device. For example: it deleted information, files or unwanted programs were downloaded, it ran a program without authorization, etc. Exclude malware that blocked access to your data and a payment (ransom) was asked to restore access (ransomware).</p> <p>(6) Ransomware: Your device was infected with malicious code (malware) that blocked access to your data and a payment was asked to restore access.</p>	
Homicide	<p>Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about the members of your household who are no longer with you. We are aware that these questions are difficult to answer and that may bring deep memories of people close to you. Please, take into consideration that all the information you will give us is entirely confidential and will help to design preventive measures against violence and crime in the future. Could you tell me if [...] has any of your household members died?</p>	0101
Kidnapping	<p>Have you or any other member of your household been retained against your/his/her will or illegally, with the aim of demanding money or any other form of financial gain for your/his/her freeing?</p>	02022
Possession of firearms	<p>Do you - or any other household member - have a gun, hunting rifle or any other type of firearm?²⁶</p>	Partially 09011 ²⁷

²⁶ The Module on Possession of Firearms includes 10 questions focused not only on measuring self-reported firearms possession, but also on estimating the presence of firearms in a territory through the Network Scale Up Method (NSUM) technique.

²⁷ The Module does not ask the respondent directly about possession of prohibited or unregistered firearms as the probability of recording a non-response rate is high, due to the sensitivity of assisting in collecting information on possession of Illicit firearms.