statistical report 12

New South Wales –

unreported crime

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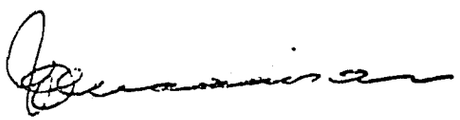
Foreword

A realistic picture of the level of crime in our community is essential if we are not to form our social defence policies in a vacuum. Our knowledge of the extent of reported crime is now fairly detailed and this new study by Professor Congalton and Mr. Najman of the "dark area", un-reported crime, helps to complete the picture.

Another significant feature of the report is that it is the first report which the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has commissioned from experts outside the Government. I hope it will be the first of many because in establishing the Bureau it was my hope that it would attract independent experts from various fields. I think this trend is most desirable in that it brings new approaches and new resources to the work produced by the Bureau and confirms the independence of the Bureau.



(J C Maddison)

Minister of Justice

Investigating Victimization

The importance of discovering the extent and nature of unreported crime cannot be denied. The recurrent cry these days seems to be that crime is on the increase, a claim which may well be true, but unless we discover the extent to which crimes are committed, whether reported or not, how are we able to make an informed comment on such a claim? If we use only court figures, a change in the number of convictions (or in the number of prosecutions) could well reflect only a change in the law or in public or legal attitudes to behaviour, and not a change in actual behaviour. Difficulties in recruitment of police could result in less arrests or even less recorded notifications of offences, with criminal behaviour continuing much the same as before.

If we are to be able to make a reliable comment on the general rate of crime from time to time we must have accurate information about the number of crimes committed. If we are concerned about the extent of the incidence of a particular crime, or group of crimes, we must find out the frequency of occurrence and not just the frequency of mention in official statistics. To obtain this information is by no means an easy matter.

The research described in this and two subsequent reports is essentially an exploratory study, designed most importantly to find out whatever information it was possible to obtain about unreported crime using a research approach based on an American model, but at the same time planned to discover the limitations and deficiencies of the method so that the experience could serve as a guide to further and continued research in this field.

The method used was aimed at discovering the victims, not the offenders, and the pursuit of this goal is in some ways as difficult as that of finding the culprits.

There are two ways of discussing data resulting from a study such as this. One can look for the figures which represent a majority, or one can look at large percentage responses to particular questions, and then proceed to discuss the implications of answers, paying little attention to the smaller percentages which represent only minority opinions. Such an approach certainly draws attention to those answers most frequently given and therefore particularly indicative of public feelings on the issues raised. There is a danger, however, that concentration on large figures may result in the overlooking of very important smaller figures - not the infinitesimal percentages derived from the responses of one or two individuals but the sizeable minority figures which reveal other aspects of public opinion or factual happenings which should not be ignored if an adequate appreciation of the item is to be gained. However, there is a tendency sometimes for the researcher to ferret out these minority responses and report them with a certain glee, adopting the role of advocate of the underdog. This second method can be as unsatisfactory as the first, as it fails to give a balanced picture.

In reporting this research we have tried to bring the two approaches together, in the hope that by so doing we will not fail to draw attention to all those aspects of the results of our study which we feel are important. Our aim is not just to record the views and experiences of the majority; nor is it just to reveal the existence of a small and perhaps strong minority. Our aim is to discover and discovery comes from exploration. Hence, throughout the account which follows you will find that we explore any lead which appears to be promising and we discuss our observations and the consequent implications as we go. The development of our analytic strategy is not a case of post facto reasoning; these words are being written while we are still exploring

the use of the AID (Automatic Interaction Detector III)* as an aid to our analysis and while we are as yet uncertain of what indicators it will yield. The full report itself should show clearly the progressive development of conclusions resulting from the initial computer runs resulting in simple percentage responses to each question, through the search for meaningful relationships revealed by juxtaposition of data, to the final use of a sophisticated computer programme, the AID, far more complex and complete in its probing operation than the intensive interaction of the two human analysts over many hours.

* For details about the Automatic Interaction Detector see the following references: J.N. Morgan and J.A. Sonquist, "Problems in the Analysis of Survey Data, and a Proposal", Journal of the American Statistical Association (June, 1963), 58: 415-434. J.A. Sonquist, Multivariate Model Building: The Validation of a Search Strategy; Ann Arbor: University of 1970. J.A. Sonquist, E. Baker, and J. Morgan, Searching for Structure (ALIAS, AID3), Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1971.

Methodology

The victim of a crime may report it or may not. If it is reported and if the offender is apprehended and if a conviction is secured, the crime becomes a statistic to be added to others so that at the end of twelve months a 'crime rate' for the year can be calculated. This present report is concerned both with reported crimes and with the wider implications of the number of crimes which are not recorded and which, therefore, never come to be included in the figures from which the crime rate is calculated. Victims may be reluctant to report crimes for a variety of reasons. They may be embarrassed, preferring to avoid the consequent publicity, they may be intimidated, they may feel pessimistic about the effectiveness of the machinery set in motion when a report is made, they may feel that the offence is relatively trivial, they may feel pity, love or forgiveness for the offender, or even a sense of guilt when they recall occasions when the roles were reversed and they themselves committed a crime (and perhaps, were undetected or unreported). Whatever the reason or reasons, the consequences are that although the crimes are committed they do not appear anywhere in the records.

One obvious way to discover the extent to which crimes go unreported is to go to the members of the community and ask them if they have ever been victims of a crime irrespective of whether or not it was reported. This method is not as simple as it may appear. For one thing, it cannot be assumed that all people will be truthful. The very reasons why they did not report the crime in the first place may still operate. Also, people's memories may be poor; they may have been the victims of a crime, e.g. theft, but have forgotten the incident. Others may have been victims and either were unaware of the fact (they thought they had lost something, when it actually was stolen) or did not label it

as a crime (an acquaintance 'borrowed' something and, when detected, returned it). It is also possible that some people may have imagined crimes which were not committed, while others may have used the occasion of the interview to boost the ego and claim victimization, when in fact no crime had taken place.

These possibilities cannot be denied, but some steps can be taken to minimize their influence. For example, in our study our main request was to ask people to indicate whether or not they had been victims of a crime in the last 12 months. In this way we hoped to avoid the lapses of memory which undoubtedly would have operated if we had attempted to cover the life-time of the individual. At the same time, we helped each of them to search their memories by taking considerable time to ask the questions.

The data in this report was obtained from interviews conducted in May/June, 1973, with a sample of 600 households in metropolitan Sydney, New South Wales. As a precaution and as an internal check for consistency of results, the total sample of 600 households was made up of two entirely separate and independent sub-samples. In each case the area starting points were randomly determined, maintaining an approximation of the proportion of status levels of residential areas as contained in the Congalton Scale* Interviewers were given specific instructions about which houses (or home units and flats) to visit.

An adult (a person of at least 18 years of age) in these households was given a 20 minutes screening interview to discover whether anyone in the household had been a victim of any crime within the previous 12 months. If a victim was discovered he/she was given a further 35 minutes interview, in two parts, (a) some questions probing further about unreported crime, followed by (b) a 30 minutes series of questions probing attitudes towards the police, personal and neighbourhood security, and crime. In addition, a sample of non-victims within the 600 households (i.e, adults who had reported no crime personally experienced within the previous 12 months) was given this attitude questionnaire for comparison of victims with non-victims. This sample of non-victims not only consisted of people who had not been victims in the last 12 months, but were also people from homes where no crime had been committed in that period. The composition of this non-victim sample was strictly controlled, the reason for this being that while the victim sample was self-selecting (the victims existed, there were no alternatives to bias the sample), a non-victim sample if not controlled would have consisted of those people who happened to answer the doors of our random sample of houses. It is well known that the people who happen to open doors, particularly in the daytime, tend to be predominantly wives and mothers. We wanted to avoid this bias, but we could not match the victim sample characteristics as we did not know who they were going to be. The alternative was to aim to obtain a non-victim sample that approximated the sex and age composition of the population from which the sample was being drawn. Thus we have two samples: one composed entirely of victims, the other of persons in households where there were no victims.

* See: Congalton, A.A., Status and Prestige in Australia, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969.

Sample

As we have pointed out earlier, the total sample is made up of two quite independent sub-samples. An analysis of both samples in terms of the following variables:

- religious affiliation of head of household,
- occupational status of head of household,
- area status,
- age of adult occupants,
- sex of adult occupants,
- marital status of adult occupants,
- educational level of adult occupants;

showed that both sub-samples are very similar in composition.

A comparison with the census data (see Census of Population and Housing, 30 June, 1966, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra), shows that the proportion of males in the houses in our sample is slightly over-represented:

Metropolitan Sydney

	In our 600 houses	1966 Census
	%	%
Males	50.8	48.8
Females	49.2	51.2
	100.0	100.0

Our first age group (18-19 years) has no corresponding census grouping, but when we compare the composition of the people aged 20 years and above, we find that although there is not an exact correspondence for each age level, the proportions are similar, except that our total is slightly under-represented in the 60 years and over age group. Table I shows the characteristics of the total sample of the 619 people who were interviewed.

Table I – Characteristics of total sample (Victims and Non-Victims) (N=619)

Sex	Percentage
Males	44.9
Females	55.1

Marital status	Percentage
Married	69.8
Widowed	10.3
Divorced	1.9
Separated	0.8
Never married	16.6
Not answered	0.5

Head of Household

Religion	Percentage
Protestant	56.7
Roman Catholic	25.7
Jew	2.7
Other	3.3
None	10.3
Not answered	1.3

Self employed?	Percentage
Yes	28.3
No	60.7
Not answered	4.0
Not applicable	6.9

Age	Percentage
18 - 19	4.0
20 - 29	21.2
30 - 39	19.7
40 - 49	21.0
50 - 59	15.0
60 - 69	10.2
70 - 79	6.1
80+	2.3

Education	Percentage
No formal education	0.6
Primary school	19.7
Secondary school	60.7
Tertiary	17.9
Not answered	1.0

Occupational status	Percentage
"A" Grade (Highest)	10.2
"B" Grade	20.5
"C" Grade	39.6
"D" Grade (Lowest)	19.7

Residential status	Percentage
"A" Grade (Highest)	10.3
"B" Grade	19.9
"C" Grade	49.6
"D" Grade (Lowest)	20.2

Income of Family	Percentage
$0 - $2,999	11.0
$3,000 - $5,999	18.1
$6,000 - $9,999	17.8
$10,000 and over	20.9
Refused to answer	32.3

How much Crime?

Only those crimes which have an individual victim are considered, not because crimes against the government or crimes against corporations and organisations are regarded as unimportant but because the nature of the investigation was such that we had to exclude them deliberately. The list of crimes used is almost identical with the one compiled by the National Opinion Research Council (NORC) of the University of Chicago.*

The basic question was: "Thinking back over the last 12 months - that is, from April 1972 until April 1973 - have any of the following things happened to you personally or to any member of your household during that time?" If the answer was "No" to any particular crime, the person was asked "Has it ever happened to you?" The interviewer went through the list of crimes reading the description exactly as indicated in the interview schedule. These questions comprised the screening interview, which enabled the interviewer to determine whether or not there were any victims (i.e. victims of crime within the last 12 months) in the household, as a further interview had to be conducted with each victim. If the person being interviewed had been a victim, he/she was given the second ("victim") interview followed by the "attitude" interview. If there was a victim in the household but it was not the person being interviewed, an appointment was made to interview the victim at a mutually convenient time, when the "victim" interview and the "attitude" interview were completed.

In houses where there were no victims, a person was selected according to predetermined criteria to be interviewed with the "attitude" schedule. Thus, only in a minority of households was the person who answered the door given either the victim interview or the attitude interview.

The screening interviews therefore revealed the number of victimizations. The NORC study used a detailed procedure to evaluate the likelihood of each listed crime having really happened. As a result, they reduced their original list by approximately one third. We did not include this internal check in our study, but we have assumed that a similar proportion of the crimes that were listed in our investigation should be deducted, to err on the conservative side, and to make the figures comparable. Accordingly, Table II shows a reduction of each of the victimization figures by 38.25 per cent (the percentage figure of the NORC reduction) and compares the resultant pattern with that of the NORC American study. The figures indicate that the incidence of victimization within households is very similar in the two countries.

* For the NORC study see Phillip H. Ennis, Criminal Victimization in the United States: A Report of a National Survey. (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, May, 1967. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.) (A Report of a Research Study Submitted to The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice.)

Table II – The extent of multiple victimization

All households with:	Sydney			U.S.A
	Original figures	Victimization reduced 38.25%	Percentage	Percentage
No victimizations	340	442	73.7	72.0
1 victimization	148	90	15.0	19.0
2 victimizations	68	41	6.8	6.0
3 victimizations	21	13	2.2	2.0
4 or more victimizations	23	14	2.3	1.0
	600	600	100.0	100.0

Rates of Crime

The incidence of specific victimization is shown in the first column of Table III. The second column gives the estimated rate of crime per 100,000 of the total population. This column has been reduced (in accordance with the cautious approach already discussed with regard to the total number of victimization reported) by 38.25 per cent. By way of explanation, the heading "Sex offences other than rape" relates to the fact that no cases of rape were discovered among the people interviewed.*

* NOTE: In a parallel survey which we conducted in Sydney a month before the present study, with a similar sample (N=594) of the general public in the metropolitan area, the interviewers discovered four instances of rape victimization. Our sample was restricted to adults 18 years of age and over, of whom 287 were females. Four cases among 287 is equal to 1393 per 100,000 altered to 860 per 100,000 if we reduce the rate by 32.25 per cent for the reasons discussed above. As the Census figures show that 33 per cent of the females in the Sydney metropolitan area are 19 years of age or under, the rate should be further reduced by one third, giving a final corrected rate of 568 per 100,000.

Table III – Numbers of victimizations; Corrected rates per 100,000

Crime	Number of Victimizations	Corrected rate per 100,000
Burglary	63	1904.12
Car theft	26	785.86
Robbery	7	211.57
Larceny	98	2962.21
Mischief, arson	34	1027.66
Counterfeiting, forgery	1	30.22
Fraud	40	1209.01
Sex offences other than rape	28	846.30
Assault	34	1027.66
Threat	34	1027.66
Auto offences	40	1209.01
Family offences	8	241.80
Consumer fraud	33	997.43
Soliciting bribe	3	90.67

Table IV shows the comparison of our estimated crime rates, derived as discussed, with the crime rates reported by the New South Wales Department of Police both for 1972 and 1971. In some cases there are no official figures supplied by the Department of Police, due to difficulties of compiling the statistics precisely under the headings which we supplied. (The same difficulties were encountered by NORC in the American study).

Table IV – Estimated rates of crime
Rates per 100,000 population Metropolitan Sydney

	Our Study[1]	N.S.W. Police Department[2]	
Crime	1972/1973	1972	1971
Burglary	1904.1	906.4	879.3
Car theft	785.9	427.3	444.5
Robbery	211.6	49.6	48.5
Larceny	2962.2	1649.2	1789.7
Mischief, arson	1027.7	131.4	109.6
Counterfeiting, forgery	30.2		
Fraud	1209.0	189.9	246.3
Sex offences other than rape	846.3	95.9	84.9
Assault	1027.7	78.0	65.2
Threat	1027.7		
Auto offences	1209.0		
Family offences	241.8		
Consumer fraud	997.4		
Soliciting bribe	90.7		

*1 See Table III.
*2 As supplied by the N.S.W. Department of Police to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

All those crimes for which there are comparable figures show a considerably higher rate in our study that that reported by the police. Some of the discrepancies could be due to lack of identical classification by the victims and by the police. For example, given the still very prevalent guilt feelings and taboos associated with sexually deviant behaviour in Australian society, it is possible that people were quick to respond to our question about acts which might be labelled as sex offences, including in their replies even behaviour which was seen by the respondent as sexually oriented but quite innocuous or neutral on the part of the "offender". We admit that this explanation may be no more than plausible, but we feel that we should be on our guard against a too ready inclination to seize upon seemingly spectacular findings. These precautions notwithstanding, the indications are that in each of the areas of crime listed in Table IV there is much more crime happening than is revealed by the police figures.

For the purposes of comparison of the incidence of crime as reported by the people we interviewed and the official figures, we can calculate the differences between the two rates and show how many times bigger is the estimated incidence of crime than the reported incidence.

Table V – Estimated rates of crimes compared (Sydney)

Crime	(a) Our sample: Rate per 100,000 (1972/1973)	(b) Official: Rate per 100,000 (1972)	$\frac{(b)}{(a)}$ How many times (a) is larger than (b)
Burglary	1904.1	906.4	x 2.10
Car theft	785.9	427.3	x 1.84
Robbery	211.6	49.6	x 4.27
Larceny	2962.2	1649.2	x 1.80
Mischief, arson	1027.7	131.4	x 7.82
Fraud	1209.0	189.9	x 6.37
Sex offences other than rape	846.3	95.9	x 8.82
Assault	1027.7	78.0	x 13.18

It would appear from the figures given in Table V that for all the crimes listed the incidence is somewhat in excess of the official statistics, a finding that should not surprise us although the variation of the size of the discrepancies may be unexpected. Although no one expects every crime which occurs to be reported, according to these findings there are over twice as many burglaries and almost twice as many cases of larceny as are officially recorded. Apparently, however, people are more inclined to report simple cases of theft (larceny) than they are to report stealing accompanied by physical threat (robbery by force or threat of force), as there were over four times as many instances of robbery as the official figures indicate.

Fraud, such as being given a bad cheque or being swindled out of money or property in any way, was apparently even more under-reported than was forceful robbery, as our survey revealed that more than six times as many instances of this occurred as were listed in the official records. Of course, it is hard to know how much of that is a reflection on an unwise decision on the part of the victim rather than exclusively deception by the other party.

Similarly, there was nearly eight times the amount of malicious mischief or arson (such as malicious attempts, successful or otherwise, to destroy or burn property, or things like ripping down a fence or breaking off a car aerial).

We have already commented on the fact that no cases of rape were revealed in our survey, but under the heading of "other sex offences" ("Was anyone in the household a victim of any other sex offences, such as peeping, indecent exposure, being molested, or abused sexually in any other way?") there certainly were many incidents, to the extent that when the rate of offence is calculated we find that its apparent occurrence is nine times the official record. It has already been argued that there are many little happenings which may be interpreted as sexual misbehaviour but which scarcely warrant reporting as being criminal, and that these incidents may have unduly inflated our figures.

The Australian reputation for settling arguments by physical means is perhaps reflected in the large discrepancy between the official police figures for this category of behaviour and the incidence revealed by our survey, for even with the reduced rate resulting from the conservative estimation of occasions when anyone in the households visited was involved in a fist fight or attacked physically in any way, there are thirteen times as many recorded instances as reported instances. Again the problem with this kind of data is our uncertainty about the seriousness of the 'assault', and the extent to which such an accusation could be sustained at law.

A basis for further comparison is to be found in the statistics for four major crimes from three large American cities of a size comparable to Sydney.

Table VI – Crime rates (1971) for three American Cities and Sydney (1972/73) (Rate per 100,000)

	Official Estimates		Figures based on 1971 U.C.R*		
Crime	1972 Police figures Sydney (2,842,000)	1972/'73 Our sample Sydney (2,842,000)	Boston-Lowell-Lawrence (3,402,000)	San Francisco-Oakland (3,101,000)	Washington D.C. (2,907,000)
Burglary	1256	1904	1253	2248	1335
Car theft	427	786	1120	936	698
Robbery	50	212	186	403	510
Assault	78	1028	121	236	237

* Crime in Our Cities - A comparative Report. Statistical Report 6. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Department of the Attorney General and of Justice, New South Wales, 1972.

The information given in Table VI shows how difficult comparisons can be; do we compare Sydney's crime rates with that of Washington, D.C., a city almost the same size but of a vastly different social composition, or with that of Boston-Lowell-Lawrence, a city slightly larger but with a more comparable social composition? The smaller of the two cities, Washington, D.C. has a reported robbery rate which is very much larger than Boston's, but its car theft rate is almost half that of Boston's, although the burglary rate is much the same for both cities. The pattern for San Francisco-Oakland is not consistently somewhere between the two, so we have to conclude that each city has its own particular pattern and that it is a matter of individual choice whether we choose one rather than another with which to compare Sydney's crime rate. We have compromised by taking an average of the three, with the result that the comparative rates are as follows:

	Rates per 100,000	
Crime	Our sample	Average of 3 cities
Burglary	1904	1612
Car theft	786	918
Robbery	212	369
Assault	1028	198

We must assume that the American "known to the police" figures represent something less than the total victimization in the three cities, but using the figures given we observe that Sydney has less robberies, about 85 per cent as many car thefts, about the same burglaries, but many times more cases of assault - approximately five times as many. We feel that it is necessary to caution that this category covered a very wide range, from assault by a stranger to assault among family members. The above result seems to be in such marked contrast to the ratio of official rates in the two countries that one is led to question whether the local sample has included less important incidents in answers to the question on assault than has the American's. On the other hand, as with the incidence of sex offences other than rape, we must be on our guard against "explaining away the figures".

Unreported Crime

In answer to the preliminary questions leading to the attitude study, we discovered that among the 279 victims interviewed, 126 reported that there had been at least one incident in the household over the past 12 months which was serious enough to warrant being called a crime but which had not been reported.

Each person was asked to indicate which of several reasons he/she considered was relevant to the decision not to report the incident. In the case of persons who had been victims of more than one unreported incident they were asked to answer in relation to the most recent one. The reasons have been rearranged in Table VII in order of frequency of mention and it can be seen that the most frequent reason given was that "the police couldn't do anything about the matter", a feeling expressed by over two thirds, but they were not asked to explain why they felt that the police could not do anything. Such an answer obviously reflects a judgment made by the person concerned, and may be related to the second most frequently mentioned reason for not reporting an incident, which was that "the police wouldn't want to be bothered about such things", an explanation also given by approximately two thirds of those questioned. These two reasons together accounted for more than all the other reasons together and we are left with two possible interpretations. One, that indeed the matter was one which was not the concern of the police; the other, that there was a degree of uncertainty about the way the police would react if the incident had been reported. If there is any lack of confidence in the reaction of the police to the notification of an incident, it should be reflected in the answers to questions which occur later in the interview. Meanwhile let us look at the other explanations given for non-notification of incidents.

The personal interpretation of the seriousness of an incident, or the willingness to call it a crime, is reflected in the third most frequently given explanation: "Thought it was a private, not a criminal matter", given by one third of the people concerned. That we were actually talking about incidents to which the label of "crime" was probably applicable is seen from the wording of the initial question, which ran like this:

> "Was there anything that happened within the last 12 months - between April 1972 and April 1973, to you or to anyone in the household that might have been a criminal matter but about which you decided not to involve the authorities? For example, maybe the son of a friend took your car for an evening without permission, but you let it pass because the car was returned unharmed."

With the example given, it is quite possible that although technically it would have been a crime, the victim could

understandably refuse to regard it as such, and give the explanation that he considered it a "private" matter, not "criminal". It is also possible that the same explanation could apply to incidents explained by either of the two reasons discussed above, relating to the police.

One reason for a reluctance to report incidents was the uncertainty that the offenders would be caught. In one quarter of the cases, this was the reason given. Such pessimism would be understandable in the case of damages sustained to one's car while absent shopping, with no clue as to whom the offender was, but we suspect that matters such as burglary sometimes go unreported because of the belief that the rate of apprehension is very low.

On the other hand, there are people in the community who actually do not want the offenders to be caught (10 per cent of the people concerned gave this explanation). There could be a variety of reasons for this preference, one being that you prefer to remain friends with the culprit rather than be responsible for taking legal action against him. Such an explanation can also be related to the reason given by five per cent of those questioned: "Afraid of reprisal".

The remaining reasons all reflect personal matters relating to the victim. Eight per cent said that they did not want to be involved in the loss of time (from work, or having to go to the court), while others either were too confused or upset to notify anyone, or did not know whom to notify or that they were obliged to notify anyone.

Table VII – Reasons given for not reporting incident

	Multiple reasons %	Main reason %
1. Police couldn't do anything about the matter	67.4	34.1
2. Police wouldn't want to be bothered about such things	61.9	23.8
3. Thought it was a private, not a criminal matter	37.3	21.4
4. Not sure the offenders would be caught	30.1	7.9
5. Did not want to take the time, might mean time spent in court or lost from work	7.9	4.7
6. Did not want harm or punishment to come to the offender	9.5	3.2
7. Afraid of reprisal	5.5	3.1
8. Too confused or upset to notify them	4.8	1.6
9. Didn't know how to notify them or know that they should be notified	5.5	0.2
10. Fear of insurance cancellation	1.0	-
		100.0

As multiple reasons were given by way of explanation for not notifying anyone of victimization, each person was asked to indicate which of the reasons given was the main one. The resultant order is practically the same, with the first four discussed above still filling the first four places. We compared our results of the analysis of these answers relating to unreported crime with those obtained by P.R. Wilson and J.W. Brown,* who used the same list of reasons (derived from the same source), and found that with one exception (because they had no cases of people being afraid of reprisal) the order was exactly the same.

We further compared the two sets of results with those obtained from the NORC study in the U.S.A., by using their technique of grouping the reasons under four main headings. The result is that although our distribution differs in emphasis from the American results, Wilson and Brown's figures are almost the same as ours, indicating that we have a different situation in Australia from that in America. For whatever reasons, there is a stronger feeling in Australia that the police would not be effective, if victimization were to be reported to them. However, it should be pointed out that in both countries this explanation heads the list and that the order of the other three sets of reasons given is the same. Thus, in both countries the reasons given for not reporting crime are essentially the same; only the emphasis is slightly different.

* Crime and the Community, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1973.

Table VIII – Most important reason for not notifying the Police

		Sydney*	Brisbane**	U.S.A.***
		%	%	%
Police would not be effective	(1,2,4)++	66.0	63.0	55.0
Not a police matter	(3,6)	25.0	27.0	34.0
Personal refusal	(5,8,9)	6.0	9.0	0.0
Fear of punishment	(7,10)	3.0	1.0	2.0
		100.0	100.0	100.0

* Our figures.
** Wilson and Brown (1973:86)
*** NORC study (1967:45)

++ (See previous table (Table VII) for specific reasons comprising these groupings).

Looking a little further for the explanations which lie behind the decision not to inform the police of incidents which might otherwise be considered reportable, we discovered that although there were some expected differences between the reasons given by males and females, in general they gave the same type of response. Men were more likely to say that they did not want to take the time away from work while women did not want to harm the offender(s). More women than men mentioned fear of reprisal, which is perhaps understandable if some of the incidents were domestic ones.

The other two major differences between the responses are that men were more inclined to say that the reason for not reporting the incident was that it was considered to be a private matter while women were more emphatic that, in their opinion, the police couldn't do anything about it.

How serious are various offences?

The matter of knowing how seriously different people regard various deviant acts of behaviour is one which has to be taken into account in any research based on people's own notions of what constitutes an offence. It is possible that people who are interested in studying the phenomenon of crime take a much more serious view of deviant behaviour than do members of the public in general.

At the end of the interview we asked each person (both victims and non-victims alike) to tell us how seriously he/she regarded several items which represented behaviour described as illegal or injust. He/she was asked to indicate the seriousness of each act by a number, number 1 representing the least serious end of the scale and number 11 the most serious. We took an average of the numbers given for each act and the results are shown in Table IX and in Figure I.

Table IX – How serious are various offences?

(Expressed as mean scores, based on 1 = least degree of seriousness, 11 = most serious. Listed in the same order as they were asked).

		Mean score
A.	A person takes an automobile which is recovered undamaged	6.12
B.	A person without a weapon threatens to harm a victim unless the victim gives him money. The offender takes the victim's money ($5) and leaves without harming the victim	7.74
C.	A gambling house owner pays the police and political officials not to interfere with his club	8.31
D.	A person inflicts injury on another person who dies from the injury	10.49
E.	Without breaking into or entering a building and with no one else present, a person takes property worth $5	5.71
F.	A person legally separated from his family fails to send child support payments	7.54
G.	A person inflicts an injury on another person who is treated by a physician and his injuries require him to be hospitalized	8.94
H.	Without breaking into or entering a building and with no one else present, a person takes property worth $1000	8.35
I.	A person forces a female to submit to sexual intercourse. No other physical injury is inflicted	9.99
J.	A hotel manager refuses to rent a person a room because he is a Negro	7.63
K.	A policeman roughs up a suspect in the police station	8.63

It can be seen that all except one are regarded as being of more than average seriousness, with murder or manslaughter being given the maximum score of 11 by almost everyone. The four items among the eleven which involve physical violence of some kind are all regarded as being more serious than the others. Stealing a car, however, is not viewed as being a very serious matter - in fact, only slightly more serious than stealing something worth $5.

In the second of these three reports we shall see to what extent there are differences between the views of victims and non-victims regarding the seriousness of these various acts, as part of an extensive examination of the question: "Who are the victims?"

END

7 decisions