

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project "EU Survey to assess the level and impact of crimes against business - Stage 2: Piloting the survey module" aims at carrying out a pilot survey on the victimisation of businesses across twenty selected European countries.

The main objectives of this project are:

- Implementing a business victimisation pilot survey in unexplored countries of the EU
- Developing a common methodology
- Collecting comparable data
- Analysing data in order to produce comparable results
- Reporting the results in order to produce policy implications

The pilot survey method implements a phased multi-mode approach, first of all by conducting a representative interviewer-facilitated telephone survey (PHASE I) and secondly by redirecting these enterprises to fill in the rest of the questionnaire in a dedicated CAWI interface (PHASE II).

The statistical unit was the local unit or the branch of the enterprises, and the entire universe of the survey was defined as companies having at least one employee, with market or for-profit activities and with available telephone numbers in the sampling frames used.

The pilot survey was implemented in 20 selected Member States of the European Union and each country sample had a minimum of 500 interviews and a maximum of 2,000 interviews, depending on the number of active enterprises in the given country. The survey was conducted on the field between 23rd of May and 3rd of September 2012.

The questionnaire was composed of a preliminary general part on the characteristics of the firms, a screener part aimed at investigating which businesses were actually victimised and which ones were not, and a main questionnaire including more detailed questions for the businesses that were actually victimised.

This first draft of the questionnaire was discussed with the Steering Group of the European Commission first, and then redrafted according to the reviews made by the member of a Technical and Scientific Committee (T&S Committee) formed by a panel of experts in the field of victimisation surveys and crime and criminal justice statistics. The experts provided support in finalising the questionnaire content and tested the formulation and comprehension of the questions before the questionnaire was translated in twenty-two languages.

The initial samples in Phase I were stratified samples of businesses, using disproportional allocation, to ensure over-representation of the larger enterprise segments. Criteria for stratification were the economic activity sector of the enterprise and the company size in terms of persons employed.

As a result of non-response and disproportional random sampling procedures, the distribution of the achieved sample according to key variables was biased. In order to reach unbiased estimations, weights needed to be applied.

For the CAWI subsamples data file, 19 weights were computed that reproduced the composition of the screener sample segments affected by crime in general and specific crimes in particular (one weight for each of the 18 types of crime).

19,039 businesses completed Phase I – CATI interview. 7,839 businesses were victimised in the last twelve months, whereas 11,200 were not. Of the 7,839 victimised ones, 2,815 completed also the Phase II – CAWI questionnaire.

According to a general overview of the victimisation of European businesses, more than three out of every ten European businesses interviewed (36.4%) suffered at least one crime in the last twelve months. In particular, the range varies from a minimum value registered in Hungary (25.7%) to a maximum one recorded in Belgium (56.6%). No clear geographic patterns of the prevalence rate come out from observing the spatial distribution of the countries. Countries with similar prevalence rates are very different in terms of economic, social, cultural and demographic constitution.

A deeper analysis of each specific type of crime involved the calculation of prevalence, incidence, concentration and multi-victimisation rates for each country and economic sector.

Almost twelve out of every one hundred European businesses suffered at least one theft by a person unknown in the last twelve months. This type of crime presented the highest prevalence rate all over Europe followed by burglary (10.6%). The lowest prevalence rates were registered for protection money (0.4%), extortion (0.6%), bribery and corruption (1.0%) and usury (1.0%). These values may also suggest that more specific surveys should be conducted to further analyse these types of crime.

Considering individual types of crime and the economic sector of the victimised businesses, some interesting patterns were identified, which showed that some sectors are more likely to be vulnerable to specific types of offences. Indeed, a significant number of businesses that have suffered thefts by customers belong to the wholesale and retail sector (68.4%), whereas the manufacturing sector has the highest number of businesses victimised by employee theft (15.6%), counterfeiting or piracy (16.4%) and extortion (25.2%). Theft from vehicles (30.4%) and bribery or corruption (26.9%) seem to mostly affect the construction sector, whereas vandalism (25.7%) and theft by employees (22.1%) are mostly committed against accommodation and food service providers. Not surprisingly, theft from vehicles (14.1%) and theft of vehicles (11.2%) are more likely to be committed against businesses in the transport and warehousing sector, including acts of bribery or corruption (16.6%). Finally, fraud by employees (5.2%) largely affects financial and insurance service providers.

As for the perception of safety of European businesses, 75.2% of the businesses interviewed said that the crime risk for their firms remained the same in the last twelve months. 18.9% claimed that crime risk has increased, whereas only 3.8% affirmed that it has decreased. On average, only 7.1% of the businesses interviewed claimed that the area in which they are located has a very high or high risk of crime. In addition, the areas surrounding the premises of the victimised businesses interviewed were rarely considered to be affected by the presence of social or physical disorder in the particular neighbourhoods.

Regarding crime prevention measures, the majority of the victimised businesses (59.9%) claimed they have a general insurance that also includes crime events. Nevertheless, on average, only 3.4% of the European businesses reported to have a specific insurance against crime, whereas 26.3% have no insurance at all against crime. Regarding the security measures adopted by European businesses, 80.7% of the businesses adopted firewall antivirus software use for online protection, whereas 64.3% adopted alarm systems against physical crime. Currently, around 40% of the businesses use closed-circuit TV (CCTV) system and computers requiring staff codes. Almost one third of the businesses apply restrictions on the use of the internet and 36.2% use contingency plans to recover/destroy data or goods after theft. Electronic article surveillance tags (7.9%), gatekeepers (8.3%) and security patrols during the business opening hours (8.0%) are the least used anti-crime measures.

The final section of the analysis discusses the reporting rate, the conviction rate for each type of crime and the trust in law enforcement agencies demonstrated by European businesses. The most reported types of crime by the European businesses are burglary and theft of vehicles, which are reported to law enforcement agencies in 75.7% and 74.3% of all cases respectively. On average, 60.4% of thefts from vehicles are reported in Europe, whereas the less reported crimes are theft by employees (2.7%), being offered stolen and/or counterfeited goods (3.1%) and fraud by employees (4.8%).

At the European level, 54.4% of the incidents of counterfeiting or piracy that were reported resulted in a conviction. Bribery and corruption (0.0%), theft by customers (3.1%) and vandalism (5.4%) are the types of crime that are least likely to end in a conviction. The most reported types of crime, burglary and theft of vehicles, resulted in a conviction in 7.6% and 15.9% of the cases.

18.0% of the businesses that had reported the last incident suffered were not satisfied at all with the way the matter was handled by the law enforcement agencies, whereas 15.4% were not very satisfied. The majority of the businesses were quite satisfied (28.7%), whereas only 14.3% were very satisfied. Generally speaking, businesses are most satisfied with the law enforcement agency work in the UK, Austria, Belgium and France.

On average, 66.5% of the businesses stated that their dissatisfaction was due to the fact that the agencies were not able to capture the offender(s) or to recover the property stolen, and 41.7% claimed the agencies were not interested in helping the businesses. 22.5% of the businesses complained about the fact that the agencies did not keep them informed about the development of the investigations and, according to 16.4%, they did not assure sufficient protection against further victimisation.

On average, 66.5% of the businesses claimed they did not report the last crime incident to an insurance company, whereas 28.8% claimed they did.