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The Fifth National Crime Victimization Survey in Japan

Abstract

Part I. Objectives and Summary of the National Crime Victimization Survey

- Objectives of the National Crime Victimization Survey

As a prerequisite for effective public safety measures, it is necessary to accurately grasp the situation of the occurrence of crimes, which means also measuring unreported crimes (“dark figure of crime”). Accordingly, the objectives of the National Crime Victimization Survey are: (i) to estimate the type and number of unreported crimes; (ii) to obtain detailed information concerning crime victims and victimization; (iii) to collect data on crime trends by using fixed-point monitoring; (iv) to clarify the perception of public safety; and (v) to provide information on crime victimization to related organizations and citizens.

- Summary of the Fifth National Crime Victimization Survey

The sample of the Fifth National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) was chosen from 6,000 males and females aged 16 or over (3,000 persons each) by using the two-stage stratified random sampling. Between January 26 and February 28, 2019, survey staff visited subjects’ homes, conducted interviews and recorded their responses. However, a self-administered questionnaire (the questionnaire sheets were filled out by the subjects and collected by survey staff, or submitted by post or online) was used for the survey on stalking, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual incidents. The number (rate) of valid respondents was 3,709 persons (61.8%) for the interview survey and 3,500 persons (58.3%) for the survey using the self-administered questionnaire. The survey results were analyzed by classifying the types of crime victimization into three categories: household victimization, personal victimization, and fraud victimization.

- Crime victimization

People who experienced any type of overall crime victimization (defined as “household victimization” and “personal victimization (excluding child abuse)”) accounted for 23.8% of all respondents over the past five years and for 7.0% in 2018. The overall crime victimization rate over the five-year period in the fifth NCVS (2019) was lower than that of any survey ranging from the first NCVS (2000) to the fourth NCVS (2012).

- Factors affecting victimization

Logistic regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate how people's attributes are

related to whether they are victimized by crimes. Among factors adopted for the analysis on overall victimization, the type of residence, number of household members, gender, and age group were significant. The victimization rate was significantly higher for those living in an “apartment,” “four-or-more person household,” “female,” and “59 years and under,” than for those living in a “detached house,” “single-person households,” “male,” and “60 years old and above,” respectively.

- Worries about crime

Compared to the results of past surveys on worries about crime in the respondents’ residential areas, the percentage of respondents worrying about crime declined from the fourth NCVS (2012) to the fifth NCVS (2019).

- Public perception of safety in Japan

Compared to the results of past surveys on the public perception of safety in Japan, the ratio of respondents who consider Japan to be safe has been consistently rising, while the ratio of those who consider Japan to be unsafe has been consistently declining.

- Comparison between victimization rate and number of reported cases

As regards the eight types of crime victimization, the figures show that there are not many differences in the trends displayed between the victimization rates based on the results of past surveys and the number of reported cases in the corresponding period.

Part II. Crime Victimization

- Household victimization

Household victimization is roughly divided into two categories: vehicle-related victimization (theft of vehicles and car vandalism) and burglary (including attempted burglary). In the category of household victimization, the victimization rate was the highest for theft of bicycles, followed by car vandalism, in the past five years.

As regards vehicle-related victimization, the percentage of respondents who experienced car vandalism, theft of motorcycles, and theft of bicycles was higher among those living in an “apartment” and lower among those living in a “detached house.” There was no significant difference between burglary (including attempted burglary) victimization and the city size, number of household members, type of residence, or availability of security equipment.

The percentage of respondents who reported the theft of cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and theft from cars to the police was higher than other type of household victimization.

- Personal victimization

The victimization rate of theft of personal property was the highest in the category of personal victimization.

By type of victimization, the victimization rate of robbery was higher among those living in a “government-designated major city” and lower among those living in a “municipality with a population of less than 100,000 people.” The victimization rate of theft of personal property was higher for “59 years old and under,” “worker,” and “four-person household,” and lower for “60 years old and above,” “unemployed/retired,” and “two-person household.” The victimization rate of “assaults and threats” was higher for “40-59 years of age” and lower for “60 years old and above.” The victimization rate of stalking was higher among those “living in a government-designated major city,” “female,” “39 years old and under,” “single (not married),” and “apartment,” and lower among those living in a “municipality with a population of not less than 100,000 people,” “male,” “60 years old and above,” “married,” and a “detached house.” The victimization rate of domestic violence was higher for “female” and “four-person household,” and lower for “male,” “60 years old and above” and “two-person household.” The victimization rate of child abuse was higher for “female” and “39 years old and under,” and lower for “males” and “60 years old and above.” The victimization rate of sexual incidents was higher for “female,” “39 years old and under,” “single (not married),” and “living together as a couple (but not married),” and lower for “male,” “60 years old and above,” and “married.”

The locations of victimization frequently cited by the respondents for most types of crime victimization were “at your home/residence,” “near your own home/residence,” and “elsewhere in city or local area,” with the exception of victimization by sexual incidents, which took place most frequently “at work.”

For all types of personal victimization, the number of respondents who did not report their victimization to the police was larger than the number of respondents who did report it. Also, for all types of personal victimization, no significant correlation was observed between the attributes of respondents and whether they reported their victimization.

- **Victimization by fraud or by identity theft**

In the category of victimization by fraud or by identity theft, the victimization rate of “credit and debit card abuse” was the highest in the past five years, followed by consumer fraud and identity theft.

By type of victimization, the victimization rate of “credit and debit card abuse” was higher for “40-59 years of age,” “worker,” and lower for “60 years old and above” and “unemployed/retired.” The victimization rate of bank transfer fraud was higher among those living in a “government-designated major city,” and lower among those living in a “municipality with a population of not less than 100,000.” The victimization rate of attempted bank transfer fraud was higher for “60 years old and above” and “unemployed/retired,” and lower for “39 years old and under,” “worker” and “student.” The victimization rate of internet auction fraud was higher for

“39 years old and under” and “worker,” and lower for “60 years old and above,” “keeping home (homemaker)” and “unemployed/retired.” For victimization by identity theft or consumer fraud, no significant correlation was observed between the attributes of respondents and whether they were victimized.

For all types of “victimization by fraud or by identity theft,” the number of respondents who did not report their victimization to the police was larger than the number of respondents who did report it. This tendency was noticeable particularly for crimes other than bank transfer fraud. Also, for all types of “victimization by fraud or by identity theft,” no significant correlation was observed between the attributes of respondents and whether they reported their victimization.

Part III. Reasons for reporting or not reporting crime victimization to the police

- **Reasons for reporting crime victimization to the police**

Among victims of vehicle-related crimes, the major reasons for reporting to the police were “to recover property,” “to prevent further crimes,” and “duty to let police know about crime.” The major reasons for reporting their victimization by burglary (including attempted burglary) were “to prevent further crimes,” “duty to let police know about crime,” and “to punish offender (catch or find offender).”

Among victims of robbery and “theft of personal property,” the major reasons for reporting to the police were “to recover property,” “to prevent further crimes” and “duty to let police know about crime.” Among victims of “assaults and threats,” the major reasons for reporting to the police were “to prevent further crimes” and “needed help after incident.” Among victims of fraud, the major reasons for reporting to the police were “to prevent further crimes” and “duty to let police know about crime.” Among stalking victims, the major reasons for reporting to the police were “to prevent further crimes” and “needed help after incident.” Among domestic violence victims, the major reasons for reporting to the police were “needed help after incident” and “advice from a family member, friend, or acquaintance.” Among victims of sexual incidents, the major reasons for reporting to the police were “to prevent further crimes” and “advice from a family member, friend, or acquaintance.”

- **Reasons for not reporting crime victimization to the police**

Among victims of most types of crimes, the major reason for not reporting to the police was “minor or unsuccessful crime, small or no loss.” However, the most frequently cited reason for not reporting “abuse of credit or debit card” to the police was “notified the card company (and the card company handled the problem).” As reasons for not reporting to the police, most of domestic violence victims “took care of it myself (knew the offender)” and “I did not know what to do (I did not know how to report it to the police),” and most child abuse victims answered “I did

not know what to do,” “I thought nobody would do anything about it,” and “I did not want people to know that I was victimized (too embarrassed).”

Part IV. Public Perception of Safety and Opinions about Punishment

The survey on people’s worries about crime in their residential areas focused on the fear of walking alone after dark in the category of personal victimization and the fear of being burglarized in the category of household victimization. According to the results of logistic regression analysis, the proportion of respondents who felt fear about walking alone after dark was higher among “four-or-more person household,” “female,” “59 years old and under,” “married,” “living together as a couple (but not married),” “married but living apart,” “other,” and those with experience of household or personal victimization, than among “single-person household,” “male,” “60 years old and above,” “single (not married),” and those without experience of household or personal victimization, respectively. According to the results of the analysis, the proportion of respondents who felt fear of being burglarized was higher among those living in a “detached house,” those who were “59 years old and under,” “keeping home (homemaker),” “unemployed,” “retired,” “married,” “living together as a couple (but not married),” and those with experience of household or personal victimization, than among those living in an “apartment,” those who were “60 years old and above,” “student,” “single (not married),” and those without experience of household or personal victimization, respectively.

The analysis also showed the following results. The proportion of respondents who considered Japan to be unsafe was higher among those who were “female,” “40 years old and above,” “worker,” “married,” “living together as a couple (but not married),” and those with experience of household or personal victimization, than among “male,” “39 years old and under,” “student,” “married but living apart,” “other,” and those without experience of household or personal victimization, respectively. Focusing on the correlation between worries about crime victimization in their residential areas and the public perception of safety in Japan, those who have higher levels of fear of crime victimization in their residential areas tended to consider Japan to be unsafe.

The survey asked the respondents for their opinions about punishment for a specific type of crime. Among the respondents who have relatively lower levels of fear of crimes, the proportion of those who selected “fine” or “don’t know” as a suitable sentence for the above-mentioned specific type of crime was higher, whereas, among the respondents who have relatively higher levels of fear of crimes, the proportion of those who selected “prison” or “prison (suspended sentence)” was higher and the proportion of those who selected “don’t know” was lower. Among the respondents who considered Japan to be safe, the proportion of those who selected “fine” as a

suitable sentence for the crime was relatively higher than the proportion of those who selected “prison.” Among the respondents who had experience of being victimized by crimes, the proportion of those who selected “prison” and “any other sentence” was higher and the proportion of those who selected “don’t know” was lower.

KAWAHARA Takako

Director

Research Department

Research and Training Institute

Ministry of Justice