

VICTIMIZATION AND INSECURITY IN URBAN AREAS. THE 2005 SURVEYS

The French Forum for Urban Security has commissioned the CESDIP, which has long been studying victimization and insecurity, to conduct five urban surveys on that subject in 2005. *Sophie Nevanen, Emmanuel Didier, Renée Zauberman and Philippe Robert* report here on some of the campaign's findings.

The expansion of victimization surveys rests on six contributions specific to the approach:

- it provides information on cases of victimization unknown to official services because they were neither reported to the police nor uncovered by them;
- they measure the propensity of victims to resort to different sorts of recourse (reporting);
- they are an adjunct to police statistics, which only count offences and suspects, in that they provide a description of the victims involved;
- they shed light on the relationship between victimization and feelings of insecurity;
- they point up victimisation profiles based more on the way the incident is experienced and negotiated than on legal categories;
- they open up a differential, territorially-based analysis of crime set on new grounds: victimisation.

The present paper enumerates the main findings of a survey conducted in 2005 in four northern Paris suburban cities and in the Lyons metropolitan area.

Technical Data on the Surveys

Survey sites: Aubervilliers, Aulnay-sous-Bois, Gonesse, Saint-Denis, all four being located in the northern suburbs of Paris and finally the Greater Lyons Urban Community

Samples aged 15 and over: random selection of telephone numbers (including unlisted numbers); interviewing of a single person per household and monitoring, during the survey, for three quotas: sex, age and activity.

- Aubervilliers: population 50,068; sample size 994 allocated between 2 zones
- Aulnay-sous-Bois: population 61,497; sample size 1,611 allocated between 4 zones
- Gonesse: population 19,120; sample size 1,003 in a single zone
- Saint-Denis: population 67,677; sample size 1,512 allocated between 3 zones
- Greater Lyons: population 960,138; sample size 4,770 allocated between 11 areas

Questionnaire: administered using the CATI method¹ during the first weeks of 2005, touching on:

- 9 types of victimizations: ordinary violence, violence by an intimate, sexual violence, theft without violence, burglary, car theft, theft from a vehicle, vehicle vandalism, cycle theft;
- concerns and fears;
- local environment
- sociodemographic characteristics

Reference period: 2002-2003-2004

Analyses: prevalence, incidence and reporting rates, repeated victimisation

comparing surveys and police statistics
generating typologies.

The two facets of feelings about crime

The French concept of *sentiment d'insécurité* may be clarified by distinguishing two dimensions. One may fear crime for oneself or one's dear ones (fear of crime); one may also view it as a major social problem (concern about safety). Similarly, one may view unemployment as a serious social problem or feel personally threatened by it. These two dimensions of feelings about crime – fear and concern – may overlap, but this is not always so.

At the time of this survey, in January and February 2005, crime ranked as the highest concern for about 25% of respondents living in the Paris area but for only 17% of those living in the Lyons area. In comparison, during the same period, that same answer was given by 19.4% of respondents to the IAURIF 2005 survey in the *Île-de-France* area and by 20% of respondents in the TNS-SOFRES *Figaro Magazine* poll for all of France.

For all of the cities studied, the concerned group was older (over 65), not very educated (primary or secondary school level), took clearly right-wing political positions (or refused to class themselves on a right/left scale) and lived in an environment in which they complained of vandalism, noise, gatherings of young people and circulation of drugs.

As for concrete fears, for oneself or one's intimates, the scores reached were often much higher, but varied with the context. This may be illustrated by the findings for Gonesse, discussed here, but the pattern we observed is found in all of the locations studied. These fears fall into three categories: 1) those experienced in the neighbourhood and at home, 2) fear in public transportation, for which a sort of hierarchy develops, with the RER³ as the most frequently feared place for respondents from the northern Paris suburbs, and 3) fears for children, for which scores are very high.

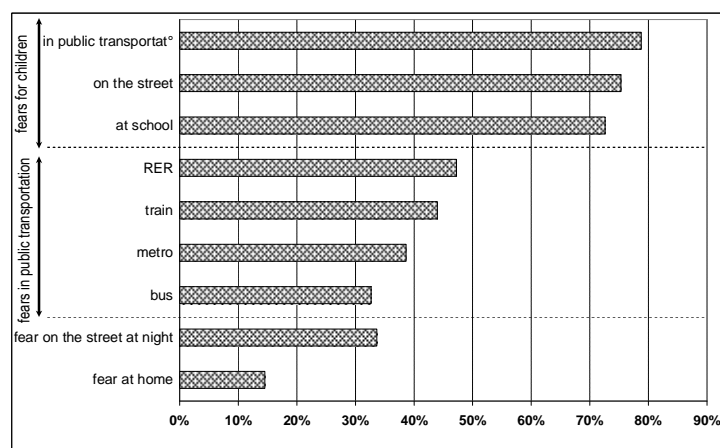


Figure 1: Fears in Gonesse

Rates for fear in public transportation are calculated for users; those for children are based on respondents living with children.

² Institute for Urban Planning and Development of the Île-de-France Paris Region, IAURIF, 2006, Troisième enquête de victimation en Île-de-France: les résultats, *Note rapide*, 411.

³ The high-speed train serving the Paris metropolitan area. In Lyons, it is the subway that elicits the most frequent fears.

¹ Computer-assisted telephone interview.

Exposure to crime risk has a much more direct effect on fear than on concern – people who have been victims, especially victims of violence, are more often afraid than others – but its impact depends on personal feelings of vulnerability. The youngest people are the most frequently afraid in public transportation, men in the prime of life (ages 30-50) for their children, while women tend more often to feel threatened when they are alone on the streets and elderly people fear the consequences of an attack more often than youths.

Measuring the perimeter of the crime affected population

The rate of prevalence measures the proportion of the population (in terms of individuals or households) affected at least once by a particular kind of victimization in the course of the years 2002, 2003 and 2004.

	Northern Paris suburb ⁴	Lyons metropolitan area
personal victimizations		
ordinary violence	7,1 to 12,1	5,8
violence by an intimate	1,0 to 1,9	1,1
sexual violence	0,5 to 1,1	1,2
non violent theft	8,4 to 14,3	9,6
household victimizations		
burglaries	8,9 to 13,6	9,3
cycle thefts	5,7 to 15,1	12,9
car thefts	13,3 to 20,5	18,7
vehicle vandalism	19,1 to 25,4	23,7
theft from a vehicle	21,3 to 29,1	21,2

Table 1: Rates of prevalence of various victimizations (%)

Personal victimizations include various sorts of violence affecting populations of widely differing sizes: there are far fewer victims of violence by intimates (with prevalence rates ranging from 1.0 to 1.9 depending on the city) and sexual violence (between 0.5 and 1.2 %) than victims of ordinary violence (up to 12.1 % of respondents in Saint-Denis). It should be emphasized that over half of the latter category are actually attempted or completed robberies in the Lyons area, and the proportion ranges from 60 to 74 % in the northern Paris suburban cities, thus placing these areas far above the averages found in surveys of the entire Île-de-France area, where violent thefts represent "only" 55-56 % of attacks⁵. Note that personal victimizations are not necessarily violent, since 8.4 to 14.3 % of respondents were victims of a theft without violence, at least one fourth of which were simply attempts.

Household victimizations reveal the importance, already pointed out in previous surveys, of high rates of prevalence for all kind of vehicle crime: for example, victims of theft from a vehicle during the reference period represented up to 29.1 % of the households surveyed in Saint-Denis. About one household out of four claims to have had something stolen from its car during the last three years, then !

Victims/Non-victims

Risks of victimization do not affect all respondents to the same extent. On all locations studied, between 40 and 50 % of respondents had not suffered any victimization during those three years. The others may be divided into different groups of victims, each of which represents a specific victimization pattern. Take the example of Greater Lyons.

groups victimization \	1 unaf- fected	2 multiple victims	3 victims of vehicle crime	4 victims of theft	sample
ordinary vio- lence	0.0	25.9	3.9	2.6	5.8
violence by an intimate	0.7	4.3	0.7	1.2	1.1
sexual violence ⁶	0.5	3.0	1.8	2.0	1.2
non violent theft	0.0	2.1	0.2	100.0	9.6
burglary	0.0	48.1	0.5	9.8	9.3
car theft	0.0	19.4	41.1	14.6	15.9
theft from a vehicle	0.0	20.4	49.7	20.7	19.0
vehicle vandali- sm	0.0	21.4	55.5	26.4	21.3
cycle theft	0.0	38.1	0.9	6.9	7.4
Proportion of group in sample	46.2	17.2	27.3	9.2	100.0

Table 2: Overall typology of victims and non-victims: Lyons Metropolitan Area: rate of prevalence (%)

Read: 25.9 % of members of group 2 (that is, 17.2 % of respondents) have been victims of violence.

Aside from the "unaffected" group, representing 46.2 % of the sample, which had not suffered any victimization during 2002, 2003 or 2004, three groups of victims may be defined:

- 1) "multiple victims" (17.2 % of the sample) accumulate all sorts of victimization: half had been burglarised, one fourth has been victim of violence, two-fifths had their bike or motorbike stolen...;
- 2) a good fourth of the sample (27.3 %) is represented by respondents who mostly suffered attacks on their vehicles;
- 3) last, a scant tenth of the sample were respondents who had all suffered thefts without violence.

Insecurity, Victimization and Territories

On each survey site, we attempted to characterize different areas within the city or the urban community according to its residents' victimisations and feelings of insecurity. We first generated what we have called a "geosocial" variable, using a sequence of multivariate analysis techniques. This variable classifies respondents by combining geographic and socio-economic variables, type of housing, and type of environment, with their opinions on their surroundings (noise, cleanliness, tranquillity...). We then crossed this geosocial variable with the above typological classification of victims.

Let us take Aulnay-sous-Bois, for instance, to illustrate the geosocial variable.

A first group of respondents emerges (25.3 % of the sample), 7 out of 10 of whom live in the *Eastern* part of Aulnay, outside the ZUS, in a high-rise neighborhood. These respondents complain that their neighbourhood is ridden by vandalism, noise, drugs, filth, and youth groups and mostly belong to low-income households (under 2,400 € a month); an unusually high number belong to the working class.

The second group (47.2 %) includes residents of *South* and *Central* Aulnay, also outside the ZUS⁷, living in a individual housing area. They are satisfied with their neighbourhood, and find it clean and problem-free. An above-average number of these respondents are over 60, retired or executives, with a

⁶This group includes a very few attacks by an intimate or sexual violence, which, although possibly serious, are so far below the average frequency for the sample as a whole that they do not make any statistically significant difference.

⁷"Zone Urbaine Sensible", are government-delimited zones, which are targets of high priority urban policies meant to alleviate particularly difficult living conditions of destitute populations.

⁴Exact figures for each city are shown in the detailed reports. See "for further information" at the end of this paper.

⁵FOUQUET A., LOTODÉ H., NEVANEN S., ROBERT Ph., ZAUBERMAN R., 2006, *Victimisation et insécurité en Île-de-France. Analyse de l'enquête LAURIF 2003*, Guyancourt, CESDIP, Collection "Études et Données Pénales", 104, tabl. 27, 46.

higher education, and a comfortable income (over 3,800 € a month).

Last, a third group (27.5 %) includes residents of the *Northern* area of Aulnay, including the ZUS. An above-average number of respondents in this group are young (with an over-representation of the under-30 group), high school or college students. They too complain about problems of vandalism, noise, drugs, youth gangs, and filth. Blue collars, unemployed and economically inactive people are overrepresented. They live in the households of over 3 people with the lowest income.

When this typology is crossed with variables on insecurity, the outcome is clear: concern is highest in the *Eastern* group, fear is highest in this and the *Northern* group, the two areas in which respondents view life in their neighborhood as difficult.

geosocial variable	1. East	2. South and Center	3. North	sample
Insecurity and victimization				
concern	28.8	22.5	26.0	25.0
fear at home	15.0	10.8	17.2	13.6
fear in street at night	39.3	30.5	37.5	34.6
fear in buses	36.1	28.2	35.4	32.3
fear in trains	43.2	34.2	43.1	39.0
fear in the RER	48.9	43.1	47.0	45.7
fear in the subway	44.3	34.8	42.3	39.4
fear in the tramway	30.6	25.3	28.4	27.7
fear for children, school	78.9	59.3	78.7	70.5
fear for children, transport	80.3	65.6	78.2	73.3
fear for children, recreation	55.1	40.0	61.9	50.6
fear for children, street	87.3	72.3	82.3	79.3
fear for children elsewhere	76.9	63.4	80.4	72.1
ordinary violence	10.1	9.2	8.1	9.1
non violent theft	8.4	7.9	9.5	8.4
burglaries	9.1	12.5	5.2	9.6
car thefts (risk)	24.5	15.8	20.5	19.2
theft from vehicle (risk)	32.0	19.5	23.6	23.8
vehicle vandalism(risk)	24.3	22.5	22.1	22.9
% of sample	25.3	47.2	27.5	100.0

Table 3: Concern, fears, victimizations and geosocial types, Aulnay-sous-Bois (%)

As for victimizations, respondents from the *Eastern* area were more exposed than any others to ordinary violence or to having been victim of vehicle crime during the period covered.

Respondents in the *South* and *Central* areas, in turn, experienced over-average exposure to burglary. This is not at all surprising for a group of households with comfortable incomes living in a single housing area: burglary is predominantly a risk affecting the well-to-do or relatively well-to-do.

Last, respondents in the *Northern* area have an above-average number of thefts without violence and car thefts.

So victimizations are not most frequent in the group corresponding to the ZUS (the North) area, but rather, in the group in the neighbouring area (East) where scores for concern are also highest, and scores for fear are comparable to those found in the ZUS.

Recourse

How did respondents react following victimisation? More specifically, did they claim to have reported to the police what had happened to them? And if so, what form did that take? First of all, the example of Aubervilliers, in the figure below, shows that reporting to the authorities does not necessarily imply for-

mally lodging a complaint. Also, victims of property offences, especially those that really did cause some damage, turn to the police or the *gendarmierie* more often than victims of violence. Victims of sexual violence are afraid of going through their suffering again if they call in the authorities, and someone who is the object of family violence often hesitates to ask a third party to intervene in an intimate relationship. Even in most ordinary violence, each individual offence, taken separately, seems too minor to require recourse to the police. Serious violence (with TIW⁸>8 days) practically automatically prompts reporting, but this represents a tiny portion of overall violence, each instance of which may cause irritation or concern, but does not justify, in the eyes of the victims, recourse to institutions which are, moreover, very poorly equipped to handle this low-intensity offending.

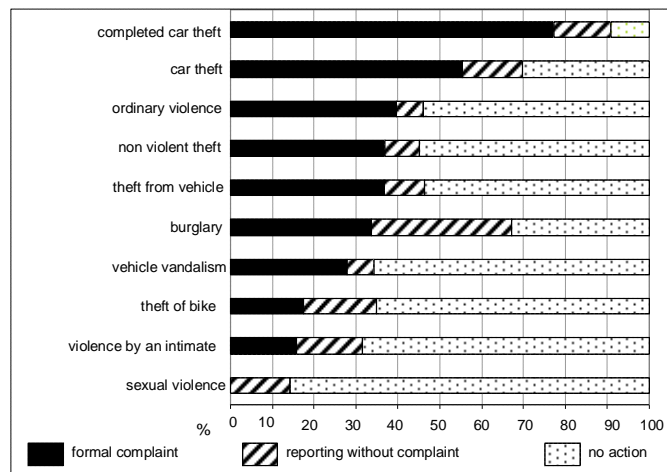


Figure 2: Reporting to the police or the Gendarmerie, Aubervilliers (%)

Victimization Surveys and Police Statistics

One objective of victimization surveys is to compare the data they yield with the source most frequently used to measure crime; that is, police statistics.

Incidence rates

Several indicators drawn from these surveys are used for comparison with police statistics. They include:

- the incidence rate, which measures the number of victimisation incidents experienced per 100 respondents during the reference period: it is the product of the rate of prevalence multiplied by the average number of incidents endured per victim (or repeat victimization);
- the rate of apparent incidence, which measures the number of victimisation incidents experienced per 100 respondents, of which acts the police or gendarmerie may have cognisance, since the victims claimed to have filed a complaint; this is the product of the rate of incidence multiplied by the complaint rate.

Application of these two rates to the reference population yields estimates in absolute figures. Since these are calculated on the basis of a sample, they are expressed within a confidence interval, that is, the range of values between which there is a probability, set at 95% here, that the real figure will lie.

As a rule, police and *gendarmierie* statistics display far lower figures than those provided by survey estimates. The gap is variable, however, and depends enormously on the type of offences and the location, and the relationship is sometimes reversed, as seen below.

⁸ Total incapacity to work.

Let us take the example of ordinary violence and violence by an intimate in Saint-Denis:

	all violence*	robbery	insults & threats*	with TIW > 8days*	with TIW > 8days or 222-13 penal code*
incidence 2002-2003-2004	13 252 [11 439-15 065]	8 238 [7 122-9 353]	2 686 [1 779-3 593]	403 [32-774]	2 015 [1 188 -2 841]
complaint rate -%/	51,3 (agr**) - 21,1 (ap)	57,7	15,0 (agr) - 0,0 (ap)	75,0(agr) -66,7(ap)	50,0 (agr) - 33,3 (ap)
apparent incidence 2002-03-04	6 299 [5 528-7 070]	4 750 [4 106-5 393]	316 [227-404]	284 [22-546]	836 [492-1 179]
police data 2002-03-04					
assault + attempted homicide [1]	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....2 800
robbery [2].....	.....	.....5 009	.....	.....	.....
threat, blackmailing[3].....	.....	.....	.....763	.....	.....
[1]+[2]+[3].....	.....8 572	.....	.....	.....	.....
sample size			1 512		
1999 Census pop 15+			67 692		

* including "ordinary" violence and violence between intimates.

** a distinction is made here between reporting rates for ordinary violence (viol) and for violence by an intimate (int).

Read: The estimated incidence for all violence is 13,252, which figure is halfway between the minimum and the maximum for the confidence interval, shown in brackets.

Table 4: Ordinary violence and violence by intimates: comparison between the survey and police statistics, Saint-Denis

If we take the broadest perimeter (all violence), the survey shows a slightly higher frequency (1.55 times as high) than police findings (between 11,439 and 15,065 in the survey, versus 8,575 for the police) and an apparent incidence (that of victimizations reported to the police (for which a complaint was lodged), between 5,528 and 7,070 here) that is, surprisingly, considerably lower than police figures. This situation is specific to Saint-Denis and in fact to this kind of victimization. But still and all, why do the police record more violence than the survey? One explanation could have something to do with the presence of the *Stade de France* (the national stadium) in Saint-Denis. Matches may occasion fights either inside the stadium or in its vicinity, which are reported in that town although the victims are not necessarily local residents. Now, the survey only counts violent offences endured by residents of the town. In addition to the presence of the stadium, there may be other explanations: the presence of the Basilica, a major tourist attraction, the massive influx of workers in the Plaine-Saint-Denis area, the presence of railway junctions, all could be hypothesised as additional causes for the oversize of police statistics. The latter hypotheses do not hold up, however, since in that case similar exceeding figures would be observed for thefts of various kinds, which is not the case. One is therefore inclined to think that the "excessive" police figures are due to fights involving non-residents of Saint-Denis. Given the variable nature of this violence we should go beyond, this overall comparison, into greater detail.

The situation is less surprising for the large block of *violent thefts*: the survey shows a frequency 1.64 times higher than that found in police statistics. But this time the propensity to report totally accounts for the difference, since police data fit within the confidence interval for apparent incidence (5,009 is between 4,106 and 5,393, which are the lower and upper boundaries of the survey based confidence interval).

For *insults and threats* the findings coincide with our interpretation. The deficit in police figures, in comparison with the survey's, is large (3.52), but here again the official figures are much higher than the apparent incidence claimed by local residents. This is most probably due to disputes involving non-residents.

As for more serious violence, with TIW, police data are far higher than those uncovered by the survey as having caused an incapacity to work for over 8 days:

- one explanation may be the provisions of the criminal code (art. 222-13), which allow police officers to record violence without TIW>8 days but with aggravating circumstances as a misdemeanour, and therefore to include it in their statistics. If we add cases of that type in the survey, to the extent they are detectable (see last column of the table), the police figure is

still far higher than the number of cases for which respondents claim to have lodged a complaint.

- Logically, then, an additional hypothesis is needed: disturbance by the above-mentioned variable. For these more serious cases of violence, as for "all violence", the Saint-Denis police force probably records a large number of cases in which the victim does not reside on the territory of the city.

Contrasting the two sources of information on crime yields an image of the "piecemeal violence" that is not reported to the police and does not appear in statistics, but nonetheless does bother people. Furthermore, it points up the fact that police statistics may be of a local, specific, non-generalisable nature; in Saint-Denis in particular, they are only a very partial reflection of the violence actually experienced by local residents. Last, this comparison will be all the more valuable when it is further enriched by longitudinal study of changes over time. Observing a rise in police figures, requires to further determine whether it is due to a increase in offending or to a greater tendency for victims to report offences, or again, to changes in administrative recording practices. Only the repetition, at regular intervals, of comparisons between official data and non-institutional data can tell apart these different causes and produce a reasoned discourse on the evolution of the phenomenon.

Aside from their scientific value, with the renewal of several chapters of the sociology of crime (urban sociology of crime, sociology of actors in the criminal justice system, etc.), victimisation surveys have qualities that make them more appropriate than administrative statistics as a tool for steering and evaluating public safety policies, especially at the local level which is usually the level at which such policies are implemented. This explains why regions, metropolitan areas and *cities* are increasingly demanding surveys on victimization and feelings of insecurity.

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For further information : *Enquêtes locales 2005 sur la victimation et l'insécurité* voir les cinq rapports sur http://www.cesdip.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=11 ; cf. aussi les 2 rapports *Victimation et Insécurité en Île-de-France* (enquêtes 2001 et 2003) *eod.loc*.