



**Victimization of the Azerbaijani
Population: Combating Criminal and
Illegal Activities through Engagement
with Relevant Institutions**



**SOCIAL
RESEARCH
CENTER**



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The Social Research Center (SRC) was established by Decree No. 525 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 8, 2019. It operates as a public legal entity, systematically analyzing the development dynamics of social relations. The SRC identifies current trends, forecasts changes in this field, and investigates their potential impact on society. Applying modern information technologies and scientific approaches, the SRC conducts social research and surveys public opinion. Its findings are then provided to governmental bodies for consideration and action.

SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTER

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Victimization of the Azerbaijani Population: Combating Criminal and Illegal Activities through Engagement with Relevant Institutions

ANALYTICAL REPORT

*/Victimological research - based on the results of
a public opinion survey/*

Author:

Ingilab Shahbazov,
senior consultant of the public opinion
research department

Research team:

Public opinion research department

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Editor:

Agshin Mammadov

Editor (English):

Pasha Bayramov

Graphic designers:

Gurban Jalilov

Babek Jafar

Address:

Republic of Azerbaijan, AZ 1006, Baku city,
Yasamal district, Ismayil bey Gutgashinli street, 18.

Phone: (+994 12) 510-70-78

(+994 12) 510-23-75

(+994 12) 510-70-69

Mail: info@stm.az

Internet address: www.stm.az

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Phone: (+994 12) 431 11 00

(+994 50) 314 09 37

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OVERVIEW

1214 respondents were randomly selected for the survey, which was conducted via calls to both mobile and landline phone numbers.

81.5% of the population reported that they had not experienced any crime in the last three years, which is a positive indicator for evaluating the criminogenic situation in Azerbaijan. Among the 18.5% who were victims of crime during this period, the most common offense was purchasing poor quality food or drink, accounting for 7.7% of cases. Financial fraud and theft were reported by 5.3% and 4.8% of respondents, respectively. Additionally, 4.5% reported instances of bribery demands from public officials, doctors, police officers, or teachers. Only 1.2% of respondents reported being physically attacked.

Money was the most frequently stolen property, comprising 29.3% of stolen items. Among those who reported bribery demands, incidents were most common in the healthcare sector (37%), followed by the police (20.4%) and education (18.5%).

In 62.5% of criminal cases, the perpetrator was a stranger, while in 12.5% of cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim. The perpetrator remained unidentified in 18.3% of cases.

Of the crime victims, 48.7% and 42.4% reported experiencing financial loss and psychological trauma to some extent or to a great extent, respectively. The police enjoyed the highest level of trust among law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, with 45.1% of respondents expressing trust. However, 46% expressed distrust in the courts. While 35.4% of respondents had a high level of trust in regulatory agencies, 40.7% did not.

Following a crime, only 38% of the 224 individuals who experienced it filed complaints with state institutions or courts. This suggests that the level of latent crime in Azerbaijan may differ from official crime statistics, a phenomenon also observed in developed countries such as the USA, Canada, and Great Britain.

The primary reason for not reporting crimes was that the issue was resolved between the parties involved (40%). However, 65% of victims expressed dissatis-

faction with the outcomes of their complaints.

Most of the population (70.6%) does not have any security mechanisms in their homes, with safe doors and iron bars being the most common security measures (16.7% and 13.8%, respectively).

A significant portion of the population (70%) believes they are unlikely to experience theft, while 85.5% believe they are unlikely to face physical violence while walking on the street. However, the proportion of those who perceive a high likelihood of being robbed (6.2%) is higher than those who anticipate facing physical violence (1.4%).

Residents of cities and towns are more likely to perceive a higher risk of theft compared to rural populations.

The majority of the population (87.9%) does not take any special measures to protect themselves while walking on the street, although women are more likely than men to resort to self-defense measures. Rural residents are less likely to take self-defense measures compared to urban dwellers.

Women, pensioners, and individuals aged 18-25 and 46-65+ have a lower risk of being victims of crime according to the survey results.

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the safety of the population stands as a main duty of every state. Since attaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has largely maintained control over its criminogenic environment. Unlike many post-war nations, Azerbaijan exhibits significantly lower levels of armament and firearm use in criminal activities. A pivotal shift in the fight against crime occurred in 1994 with the decree "On measures to strengthen the fight against crime, reinforce the rule of law, and uphold legal principles," marking a fundamental change in Azerbaijan's crime-fighting landscape. Over the past 25 years, significant positive changes have occurred in security and crime prevention efforts.

Despite the generally satisfactory level of public safety in our country, no victimological surveys have been conducted throughout the history of independence. This leads to a dearth of information concerning the experiences of crime victims, the responsiveness of law enforcement agencies to victim appeals, and the overall public perception of various law enforcement entities. However, what exactly is victimology?

What is victimology?

It arose as a part of the science of criminology, and the science of victimology that arose later (victim - means "victim" in Latin) is a field that studies the damage of the population from crime and its material, moral, psychological and sociological effects on that person from quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Victimology looks at all stages of the criminal process from the perspective of the victim. In other words, this science studies the experience, situation and behavior of the victim throughout the process. Until the scientific formation of victimology, the main focus in the study of the criminal process was the person who committed the crime, or rather, his social-psychological profile, the punishments assigned to him, the course of the trial, etc. factors such as However, in recent years, the "victims" of crime have been studied in detail, which has resulted in the emergence of a large number of new theories and an increase in society's perceptions of victims.

The advancement of victimology has led to a detailed exploration of previously overlooked issues concerning crime victims. We now possess more comprehensive information regarding the short and long-term physical, psychological, and financial impacts of crime on victims. Factors such as employment status, psychological profile, marital status, and others also influence an individual's adaptation to the post-crime situation, an aspect meticulously studied by victimology. Concurrently, victimological studies have empirically demonstrated that individuals can react differently to the same crime. For instance, the consequences of experiencing physical violence may vary based on factors such as gender, financial income, and place of residence. Furthermore, victimology research has introduced the concept of "victim-blaming" into scientific discourse, which remains a significant concern in many modern justice systems.

Instances arise where the victim is perceived as partially culpable by outsiders, as well as by law enforcement and judicial authorities. For example, in a 2005 survey conducted by Amnesty International, one in three respondents stated that women were to some extent responsible in cases of aggression.

In the fields of criminology and victimology, crimes are categorized into visible and invisible types based on whether the victim immediately perceives the crime. Visible crimes encompass acts such as injury, poisoning, and home invasion, while invisible crimes include phenomena like environmental pollution and rights violations. Representatives of victimology assess a person's risk of becoming a crime victim using various tools (models), taking into account factors such as the social environment, economic situation, and others. An intriguing finding about risks is their variability across populations. Farrell and Pease (2007) reported from their UK experience that most crimes affect only a small proportion of the entire population, indicating an uneven distribution of the likelihood of being harmed by crime in society.

One of victimology's significant contributions to the study of crime has been victimization surveys.

¹Amnesty International (2005) New poll finds a third of people believe women who flirt partially responsible for being raped, 2005. www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-new-poll-finds-third-people-believe-women-who-flirt-partially-responsible-being.



Victimization survey and its benefits

Sociological research on crime victims has been ongoing for over 50 years. While such surveys initially took place in the United States, they rapidly expanded to other developed nations. In the 1970s, foundational studies were initiated in Great Britain, Finland, and the Netherlands. Notably, these countries quickly recognized the inadequacy of relying solely on official statistics compiled by law enforcement agencies to gauge the true criminogenic situation. Consequently, regular victimization surveys became imperative.[1] While these surveys are primarily conducted at the national level, they can also be undertaken at the local level, such as within specific regions of cities, villages, or settlements.

Victimization surveys do not aim to study all offenses. Many types of crimes, such as acts of aggression, illegal drug possession, and violations against entrepreneurs, are often excluded from such surveys, leading to certain limitations. [2] However, victimization surveys prove particularly effective in addressing certain criminological issues, such as verbal abuse, cybercrimes, honor crimes, harassment, and offenses involving reluctance to contact the police due to shame².

To illustrate the specific features of victimization surveys, let's consider the process of recording a criminal incident. As outlined by British criminologists Norris and Coleman, two processes are required for a criminal act to be officially registered:³

1. The victim must report the criminal incident to law enforcement authorities, or it must be detected by them.

2. Law enforcement agencies must then officially register the criminal incident based on this report.

This implies that not all criminal acts are immediately registered. Each year, a certain number of criminal cases go unreported, a phenomenon known as latent criminality in criminology. In economically developed countries, latent crime has been measured for years, highlighting the

shortcomings of official statistics.[3]

The "British Crime Survey," conducted periodically in Great Britain, revealed at least a twofold difference between latent crime rates and official statistics. Similar findings were reported by the annual National Crime Victimization Survey in the United States. While the "International Crime Victimization Survey" covered numerous countries, including Azerbaijan, for several years, it has since been discontinued. This global survey addressed latent criminality and also inquired about crimes not always reflected in official statistics, such as bribery and poor-quality service provision.

In recent years, several organizations in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan have organized similar surveys, indicating the spread of such research in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Notably, the "Evaluation of the Russian Police" public opinion survey, presented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in 2019, extensively examined the victimization levels and indicators of the population.⁴

Why do victims sometimes refrain from contacting law enforcement agencies about a crime? Criminologists have identified several reasons, which we will now discuss:

- Financial constraints often deter citizens from making applications and engaging in subsequent processes such as court proceedings, expert assessments, and legal aid services, which can be costly and time-consuming.⁵

- Not being considered serious enough to apply for law violations with little damage;

- The possibility of the criminal taking revenge on the victim (this factor is especially relevant in cases of domestic violence);⁶

- Ignorance of how to file a complaint about a crime to which authority (for example, this situation is often observed in financial crimes)

- Compensation of the damage by the offender without any recourse;

- Resolving the issue by mutual agreement between the parties.

²Hoyle, C. (2012) 'Victims, the criminal process, and restorative justice', in M. Maguire, R. Morgan and R. Reiner (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology (5th edn)*. Oxford: Oxford University press

³Coleman, C. and Norris, C. (2013) *Criminology*. London, Routledge

⁴МВД России (2020). *Общественное мнение*. <https://xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/publicopinion>

⁵Kaukinen, C. (2002), "The help-seeking of women violent crime victims: findings from the Canadian violence against women survey", *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 22(7/8), pp. 5-44.

⁶Boateng, F. D. (2015). *Victims of sexual assaults: The experiences of Ghanaian women*. *International Review of Victimology*, 23, 343-360.

Victimization in Azerbaijan

According to the State Statistics Committee (SSC) data for 2018, the number of officially registered criminal acts was 26,381, marking the 3rd highest negative indicator in the history of independence[1]. Various factors contribute to the fluctuating levels of crime each year, including population growth, periods of economic development and stagnation, the emergence of new opportunities for criminal activity, trends in reporting crimes to relevant institutions by the population, and the recording practices of law enforcement agencies.

To gain insights into victimization in Azerbaijan, we can refer to the bulletin "Victims as a result of crimes recorded in 2018," presented by the SSC. In that year, 21,382 victims were identified across the country. Absheron region (63 people), Baku city (48 people), and Sumgait city (25 people) ranked highest in terms of the number of victims per 10,000 people. For most cities and regions, this number ranged from 10 to 20[2].

Despite the wealth of data, victimization surveys have not been conducted in Azerbaijan since its independence. Efforts are underway to address this gap in research.

Annual reports from the SSC on crime levels have several shortcomings. Firstly, some illegal acts were either not reflected in the reports submitted by various law enforcement agencies to the SSC, or the figures did not entirely correspond with reality. Additionally, similar to other countries, the level of latent crime in Azerbaijan is likely higher than official figures suggest. It's worth noting that certain actions, often termed as "invisible crimes" in literature, are prone to escaping the attention of law enforcement agencies and can be studied more accurately through specialized surveys conducted with randomly selected citizens. Such crimes include financial fraud, bribery, among others[3].

The purpose of the project

The main goal of this victimological survey is to analyze the processes of victimization (victimization) in the population, trends, dynamics of criminality in society, social portrait of victims, etc. to present/



offer events. The main purpose of the survey is to:

- Studying the level of latent criminality;
- Studying the attitude of citizens to law enforcement agencies;
- Determination of opinions on personal physical security of citizens;
- Studying the attitude of citizens towards order in the area where they live;
- Determining the differences between citizens who apply to law enforcement agencies and those who do not.

Some factors that positively affect the likelihood of reporting a crime to the relevant authorities

Methodological principles of the research

Methodological approach

The quantitative method was used in conducting the survey. The survey covered Baku-Absheron, Ganja-Gazakh, Sheki-Zagatala, Guba-Khachmaz, Lankaran, Karabakh, Central Aran and Nakhchivan economic regions. The Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the occupied regions were not covered in the survey.

the selected clusters contacted. In cases of refusal, the next third number was attempted.

Proportionality was maintained by meticulously considering socio-demographic indicators in respondent selection. Thus, the weight of each socio-demographic group (gender and age) in the survey was determined in proportion to their representation in the country. A total of 1214 respondents were randomly chosen for the survey, and details regarding the composition of the selection are provided in the table.

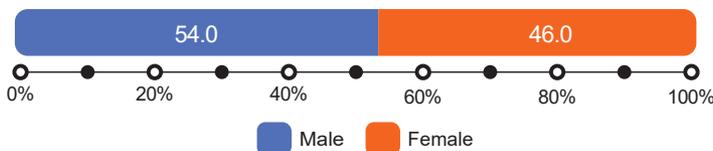
Before the large-scale study, a pilot study involving 10 respondents was conducted. Necessary adjustments to the questionnaire were made based on the test results.

It is important to acknowledge the issue of "social desirability," a phenomenon widely recognized in social sciences, particularly in surveys on sensitive topics. Respondents may alter their responses to create a favorable impression or avoid discomfort in the presence of interviewers, potentially impacting the accuracy of results. Given the sensitivity of certain questions in this survey, we acknowledge the possibility that "social desirability" may have influenced the outcomes to some extent.



Demographics

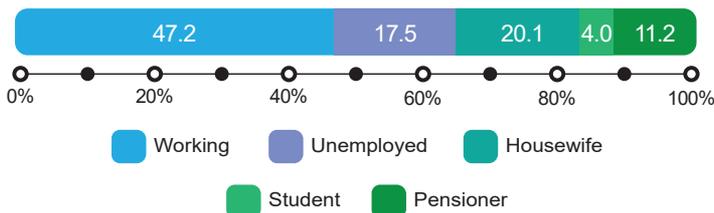
Gender



Age



Employment



Living place



Selection of respondents

The research employed a multi-level stratification approach to random sampling, ensuring equal participation opportunities for all citizens. Initially, settlements to be included in the survey were identified. Subsequently, landline telephone numbers of respondents were randomly selected based on the general population, with every third number from

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 27 (19 specific and 8 socio-demographic) questions and 4 blocks. In the first block, there are questions about whether the respondent has been harmed by any criminal act in the last 3 years, whether he has applied to the relevant institutions if he has been harmed, and whether he trusts law enforcement agencies. Those who have not suffered any crime during the last 3 years also participated in the survey, but some questions were not asked. Thus, it was possible to identify potential socio-demographic differences between victims and non-victims of criminal acts. In the second block, questions were asked about the citizen's living conditions and the infrastructure of his house. In the next block, it was requested to assess the probability of exposure to crime. Socio-demographic questions were presented in the last block.

Instruction

Guidelines for interviewers were carefully prepared. Prior to beginning their work, interviewers underwent comprehensive training conducted by the Center's staff. The training session familiarized them with the questionnaire and provided detailed instructions. Each question in the questionnaire was thoroughly explained, and interviewers were given the opportunity to administer a test question to ensure their understanding.

Method of inquiry

Considering the restrictions imposed by the quarantine regime and the health considerations of all involved parties, telephone interviews were utilized for conducting the survey. Modern technologies were employed in this process, with surveys being administered through tablets. SurveyToGo, a modern survey program, has been increasingly utilized in recent years, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. This program offers several advantages, including efficient monitoring of the survey team's work, real-time online monitoring of the survey process, and the acquisition of reliable information.

Field work

The survey was conducted on June 3-18, 2020. Anonymity was ensured in all interviews. Respondents were assured that their responses would only be used in aggregate form. This factor ensured high reliability of the data collected as a result of the survey.

Data processing and analysis

After the survey was concluded, the data gathered from each questionnaire was entered into the database and analyzed using a specialized program, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Relationships between variables were examined utilizing the Pearson correlation technique. To aid readers in interpretation, significant relationships between variables were presented according to the degree of randomness of the correlation ($p < 0.01$ indicates a stronger correlation, whereas $p < 0.05$ suggests a relatively weaker correlation).

Analysis of survey results

1. Victimization due to crime

As a result of the survey, it was found that 81.5% of the respondents reported no harm from any criminal act during the last 3 years, indicating a positive trend in Azerbaijan's criminogenic situation. In other words, only 18.5% of the population experienced any form of crime during this period.

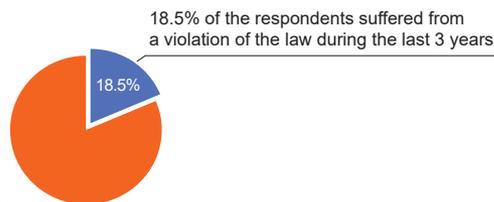
The analysis also considered differences between victims and non-victims of criminal acts over the last 3 years. Among the 224 victims surveyed, 57% were men, compared to 53% among non-victims. Currently, 21% of employed individuals reported being harmed by crime. However, this figure was lower among pensioners, with only 14% of the 136 pensioners surveyed reporting a violation of the law in the last 3 years, while it stood at 21% for the 212 unemployed. Additionally, 11% of housewives (244 people) experienced law violations during this period. Urban residents had a higher incidence rate at 21% compared to 16% for rural and town residents. In terms of age, individuals in the 26-35 and 36-45 age groups were more likely to be victims of crime. Thus, it can be inferred that various demographic factors influence a citizen's risk of exposure to crime.

The most common practice among the affected population in the last 3 years was the production, sale, or distribution of poor-quality products (7.7%). Students (4) 14,490, $p < 0.01$, as well as city and town residents (2) 10,139, $p < 0.05$, were the most likely demographic groups to have suffered from poor-quality food or drink.

This finding is noteworthy as the most recent report (2018) on crime levels presented by the SSC lists this act as one of the least reported cases. This highlights one of the advantages of victimization surveys over official statistics. Various reasons may account for this difference: some victims may not perceive the consumption of low-quality products as a serious enough offense to report to the police, while others may not consider it a criminal act at all. Additionally, considering that the Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, responsible for food safety control, was established only 3 years ago, some citizens may be una-



During the last 3 years, as a victim, which of the following violations of law have you faced?

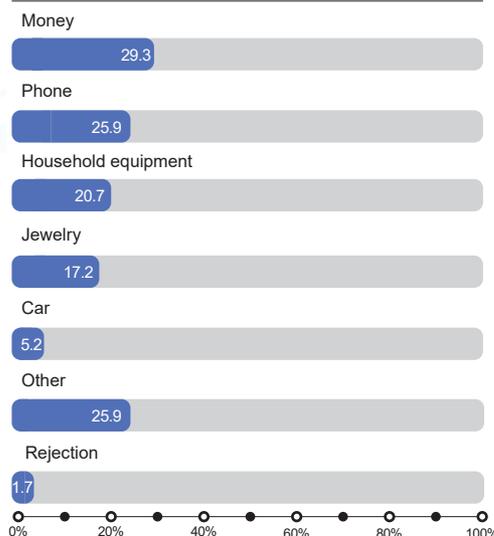


ware of its authority. Consequently, lack of information may deter victims from contacting the relevant institution.

Indicators of victims of financial fraud and theft stood at 5% and 4.8%, respectively. These figures align with recent reports on crime rates by the SSC, indicating that both financial fraud and theft are



What personal property has been stolen?



prevalent practices. While the absolute numbers may differ, the trend overlaps, as individuals who have suffered financial losses are inclined to report these crimes to law enforcement agencies in pursuit of financial restitution. Notably, working individuals are more susceptible to falling victim to financial fraud.

4.5% of respondents reported encountering situations where public officials, doctors, policemen, or teachers demanded bribes in the last 3 years. Additionally, 1% of the sample experienced physical harm to health.

Among the 54 respondents who reported facing demands for bribes, such instances were most prevalent in the fields of health (37%), police (20.4%), and education (18.5%). There exists a correlation between employment status and the likelihood of being a victim of bribery, with one in three unemployed and employed individuals experiencing such demands. This correlation can be attributed to various factors, including demands for bribes during job search or employment processes.

Regarding property theft in the last 3 years, 4.8% of respondents reported having items stolen, with money being the most frequently targeted possession (29%). Phones and household equipment followed closely, with theft rates of 26% and 21%, respectively. Additionally, 26% of respondents reported other types of items being stolen.

Only 1% of respondents experienced physical force during the last 3 years, mainly in the form of unarmed assault such as beatings. The low incidence of physical violence may be attributed to social perceptions of "acceptability," as some respondents may have responded to this question unrealistically. Notably, none of the respondents reported being subjected to organized firearm attacks, reaffirming the absence of a firearm problem in Azerbaijan.

1.1. Effects of crime

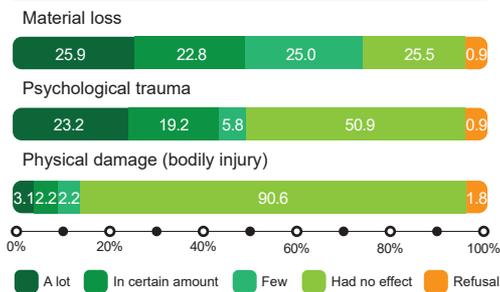
Victimological studies delve into the quantitative and qualitative impacts of criminal events on individuals through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Hence, this survey focused on assessing the effects of crime on individuals. Among the victims surveyed, 42.4% reported experiencing significant or certain financial loss, while 48.7% reported psychological trauma. Remarkably, 90% of victims did not suffer physical harm, underscoring the rarity of crimes against health compared to crimes against property. Notably, in terms of gender, a higher proportion of women than men reported experiencing psychological trauma to some degree or significantly (4)=15.456, p<0.01).

Interestingly, most victims of financial fraud reported no trauma or physical harm. However, nearly all victims who suffered financial loss also reported experiencing psychological trauma. A similar pattern emerged among victims of purchasing poor-quality food or drink and theft.

1.2. Who committed the crime?



In what forms and degrees have you suffered from crime?



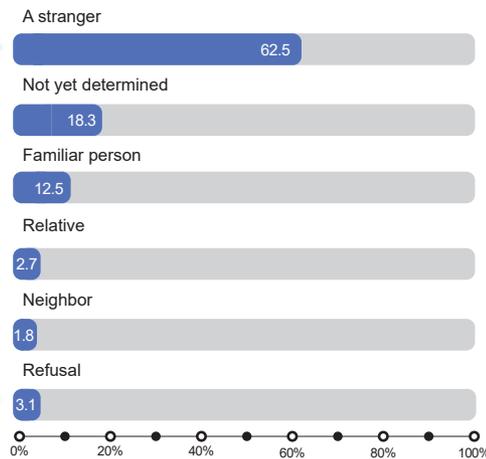
So, who were the perpetrators of these crimes? In 62.5% of criminal cases, the perpetrator was a stranger, while in 12.5% of cases, the perpetrator was an acquaintance. About one in five crimes remains unresolved, with the perpetrator unidentified. Interestingly, regardless of the type of residence—city, town, or village—in all cases, at least half of the crimes were committed by strangers. The identity of the perpetrator does not show any statistically significant relationship with the types of crimes. However, it is noteworthy that out of 58 people who were robbed, 34 reported that the perpetrator had not yet been identified, a higher proportion compared to other crimes.



In what area have you been asked for a bribe?

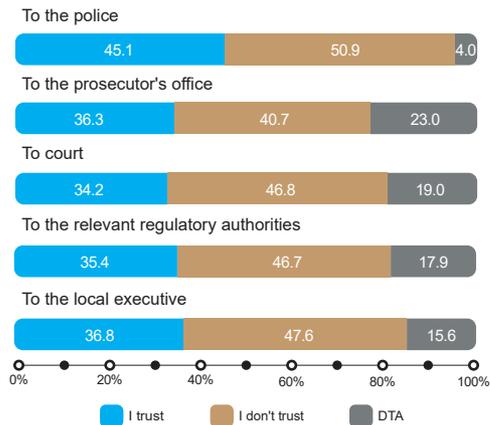


Who was the person who committed the crime





In general, how much do you trust the following institutions and systems?



2. Confidence in law enforcement and the court

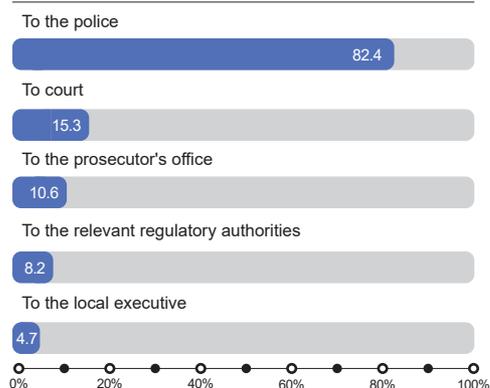
The police command the highest level of trust among the population, with 45.1% expressing confidence in their capabilities. Notably, both working and retired individuals exhibit higher levels of trust in the police (16) 46.268, $p < 0.01$. Conversely, the courts face a negative sentiment, with 46% of respondents expressing distrust towards them.

Moreover, the establishment of new supervisory agencies in recent years prompted an examination of respondents' trust in these entities. While 36.8% express trust in these agencies, a majority of 56% do not. Similarly, trust in prosecutor's offices stands at 36.8%, while 40% express distrust. This dichotomy illustrates the differing positions of the population regarding their trust in law enforcement agencies and the court system.

Interestingly, the correlation between trust in law enforcement agencies and



What power structures or law enforcement agencies have you complained to?



the court system and the decision to seek recourse from them has not been conclusively determined.

3. Appeal to the law enforcement agencies and the court about the crime

Law enforcement agencies are unable to detect all crimes that occur, underscoring the importance of victims reporting incidents to relevant institutions or courts for more accurate measurement of criminality, apprehension of perpetrators, and resolution of illegal acts. However, it's concerning that only 38% of respondents filed complaints after being victimized by a crime, leaving one-third of victims without recourse to any institution. This trend is not unique to Azerbaijan; similar patterns are observed in various countries worldwide. For instance, victimization statistics in the United States reveal that up to 42-50% of assault cases and 67% of home invasions went unreported between 1994 and 2010.⁷ In Ghana, 33% of assault cases and 26.7% of thefts were not reported to the police.⁸ Similarly, a survey in Russia in 2017 found that only 17% of crime victims in the past 5 years reported incidents to authorities.⁹

Interestingly, no socio-demographic factor was found to have a statistically significant effect on whether victims chose to report crimes. However, criminologists highlight that failure to report crimes not only hinders law enforcement efforts but also adversely impacts victims themselves. The literature underscores that police rely on citizen support for effective crime control, and victims may forfeit benefits such as compensation and perpetrator apprehension if they do not report incidents.

Among the institutions to which complaints were lodged, the police topped the list, reflecting its role as the primary interface of the justice system for citizens. This aligns with criminological studies in other countries where police are the first point of contact for crime complaints due to their prominent role in law enforcement.

3.1. Degree of satisfaction with the complaint and outcome

Looking at the results of other questions specifically addressed to the victims, it is known that most of them were not satisfied with the results of their appeals, or were not at all satisfied (65.9%). Such a level of dissatisfaction indicates that there

⁷Langton, L., Berzofsky, M., Krebs, C, Hope Smiley, M. (2012) *Victimizations Not Reported to the Police, 2006-2010. bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4393*

⁸Boateng, F. D. (2015). *Victims of sexual assaults: The experiences of Ghanaian women. International Review of Victimology, 23, 343-360.*

⁹Victim Support Foundation and Russian Public Opinion Research Center (2017). *First national victimization survey in Russia. https://victimsupport.eu/news/first-national-victimization-survey-in-russia/*

are certain problems in the management of complaints in law enforcement agencies. Bureaucratic obstacles in the investigation, failure to quickly find the criminal, etc. We can say that such factors cause dissatisfaction among citizens.

Looking at the applicants, it can be determined that the gender distribution of those who decided to apply is almost the same. In general, it was determined that no socio-demographic factor had a statistically significant effect on the application decision.

3.2. Reasons of not complaining

The main reason victims of crime in Azerbaijan refrain from filing complaints is the resolution of issues between parties, cited by 40% of respondents. This suggests that in many cases, citizens may not feel the need to involve law enforcement agencies, opting instead for local resolution through informal support groups, such as family members, relatives, elders, or clergy. Similar trends are observed in other countries, where victims choose not to report crimes to police but seek assistance from informal support networks.^{10 11}

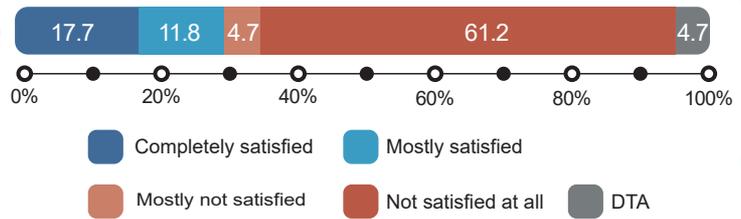
Another significant factor is the belief among victims that filing a complaint may not yield the desired outcome or that the crime is not serious enough to warrant a complaint, accounting for one-fourth of unreported cases. Additionally, 12.2% of victims cite lack of trust in the court and other institutions as a deterrent to filing complaints.

Analysis reveals that victims of certain crimes, such as buying poor-quality food or drink, are more likely to refrain from reporting incidents to relevant authorities. Notably, victims of bribery by public officials, doctors, policemen, or teachers often choose not to file complaints due to skepticism about the efficacy of reporting or opting for self-resolution.

In cases where crimes are not reported due to lack of knowledge about whom to approach or how to apply, this is predominantly observed in incidents of financial fraud or purchase of substandard products. The delayed impact and uncertainty about relevant supervisory agencies contribute to victims' reluctance to report such incidents. These challenges in reporting crimes are not unique to Azerbaijan but are prevalent in various contexts worldwide.



How satisfied are you with the outcome of your application?



4. Personal security (apartment infrastructure)

A well-established theory in criminology posits a link between housing infrastructure and the risk of crime, particularly property crimes¹². For instance, studies have demonstrated that individuals residing on higher floors of buildings are less susceptible to property crimes due to the "tower effect"¹³. In Western societies, it's been observed that residents of social housing are more prone to encountering law violations compared to those in private residences, largely due to prevalent material poverty in social housing areas. Consequently, respondents were queried about their living arrangements.

The majority of respondents (74.8%) reside in courtyard houses, with an overwhelming majority (96.4%) sharing their home with others. In terms of residential areas, slightly more respondents inhabit urban settings (46%) than rural areas (39%). Regarding housing types, courtyard homes are predominant in villages and towns, whereas apartment dwellers are more common in cities.

Notably, a significant portion of the population (70.6%) lack any security measures in their apartments. This may be attributed to various factors, including financial constraints that prohibit the

¹⁰Boateng, F. D. (2015). *Victims of sexual assaults: The experiences of Ghanaian women. International Review of Victimology*, 23, 343-360.

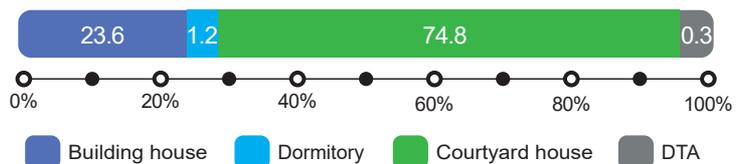
¹¹Sidebottom, A. (2015) *On the Correlates of Reporting Assault to the Police in Malawi, The British Journal of Criminology*, 55(2), 381- 398.

¹²Holzman, H. R. (1996). *Criminological Research on Public Housing: Toward a Better Understanding of People, Places, and Spaces. Crime & Delinquency*, 42(3), 361-378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128796042003002>

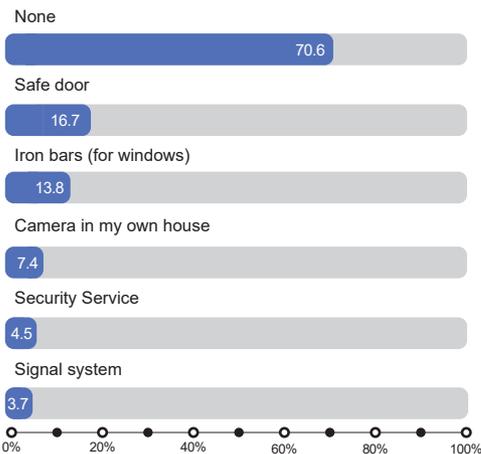
¹³Blakely, E. (1995). *Fortress communities: The walling and gating of American suburbs. Land Lines*, 7, 1-3.



What kind of apartment do you live in?



What security mechanisms are available in your home or the building where you live



installation of security mechanisms or a perceived lack of necessity for such measures among certain citizens.

The most common security mechanisms observed are secure doors and iron bars on windows, accounting for 16.7% and 13.8% of respondents, respectively. Working individuals exhibit a significantly higher likelihood of having at least one security mechanism in their homes compared to non-working individuals and others ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, there's a correlation between higher monthly income and the presence of security measures in the apartment ($p < 0.01$). Notably, the majority of the rural population lacks any security

mechanisms at home ($p < 0.01$). As expected, respondents with at least one security mechanism tend to underestimate the likelihood of experiencing a burglary ($p < 0.01$). Interestingly, the type of housing did not have a statistically significant impact on respondents' perceptions of the risk of crime.

In criminological studies, living arrangements have been a focal point. Individuals living alone typically perceive a greater sense of vulnerability and are less likely to report crimes to law enforcement agencies. However, the overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) cohabit with another individual, suggesting that most live with family members. This implies two key points regarding security: firstly, living with at least one other person reduces the fear of crime, and secondly, many may not feel the need for security devices due to living with others. Nonetheless, further research is necessary to substantiate these findings in our context.

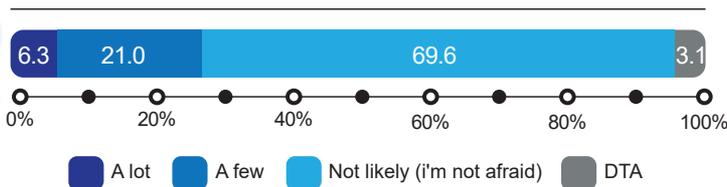
5. Personal security (outside the apartment)

In social sciences, a commonly measured parameter is citizens' fear of falling victim to crime. According to our survey, a significant portion of the population (69.6%) expressed low likelihood of experiencing theft, and 85.6% felt safe from physical harm while walking on the street. This indicates a positive trend in terms of the criminogenic situation. However, it's noteworthy that a higher percentage of respondents overestimate the likelihood of being robbed compared to experiencing physical violence while walking (6.3% and 1.4%, respectively). This difference in anxiety levels can be attributed to both official statistics and the findings of our victimization survey, highlighting the prevalence of theft compared to crimes against health.

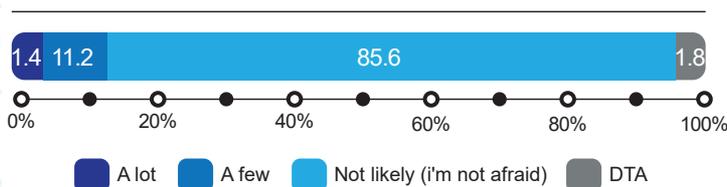
Fear levels vary among demographic groups, with the middle age group exhibiting lower levels of fear compared to others ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, urban residents perceive a higher likelihood of encountering theft compared to rural residents ($p < 0.01$). Occupationally, both working individuals and housewives rate the probability of experiencing physical harm while walking lower ($p < 0.01$). Interestingly, while a majority of respondents with higher monthly incomes feel less susceptible



How likely are you to experience theft?



How likely are you to encounter physical violence while walking down the street?



to theft, those with lower incomes tend to believe there's no possibility of theft at all ($p < 0.05$). This discrepancy may stem from the perception that individuals with higher incomes possess more valuables, making them potential targets for theft.

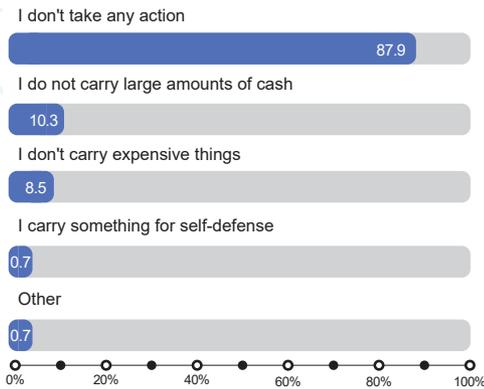
A similar trend was observed regarding the likelihood of encountering physical violence while walking down the street ($p < 0.05$). Notably, unlike many previous studies, our survey did not find a statistically significant relationship between respondents' gender and fear of crime. Furthermore, victims of financial fraud tend to rate the possibility of theft higher ($p < 0.01$).

The same trend was observed among victims of buying poor quality food or drink ($p < 0.01$). Victims of theft rate the likelihood of encountering a thief higher than that of encountering a public official, doctor, policeman, or teacher asking for a bribe ($p < 0.01$), as well as higher than other crime victims ($p < 0.01$). Overall, regardless of the type of crime experienced, citizens expressed some degree of concern about encountering theft, which aligns with findings from previous victimization surveys, indicating that past victimization increases fear of future victimization. Interestingly, the probability of encountering physical harm while walking on the street did not significantly influence whether the respondent had experienced theft.

It's reassuring that the majority of the population (87.9%) does not take any special measures to protect themselves while walking on the street, possibly indicating a general perception of safety and effective public security. However, one in ten individuals avoids carrying large amounts of cash for self-defense. Women are more likely than men to resort to self-defense



What special measures do you take to protect yourself while walking on the street?



measures ($p < 0.01$), and rural residents are less likely than urban dwellers to take any precautions ($p < 0.01$). Retired individuals, students, and the unemployed were more inclined to forgo self-defense measures compared to other occupational groups ($p < 0.01$). Interestingly, as monthly income increases, the number of individuals not taking self-defense measures also increases, although this trend was not observed among those earning above 1001 manat monthly ($p < 0.05$).

Public transport, including buses and subways, is the most common mode of transportation among survey participants (48.6%). Approximately an equal number of people walk daily without using any transport, while relatively fewer respondents use passenger cars on a daily basis. The reason for inquiring about daily transportation habits is the higher likelihood of experiencing physical harassment or theft among those who regularly use public transport or walk compared to passenger car users.

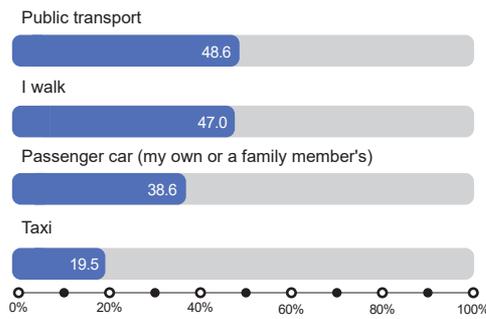
¹⁴Ferguson, K. M., & Mindel, C. H. (2007). Modeling fear of crime in Dallas neighborhoods: A test of social capital theory. *Crime and Delinquency*, 53(2), 322–349.
Katz, C. M., Webb, V. J., & Armstrong, T. A. (2003). Fear of gangs: A test of alternative theoretical models. *Justice Quarterly*, 20(1), 95–130.

	Gender	Age	Monthly income	Employment	Type of settlement
Any measure to protect oneself while walking on the street	**		*	**	**
The possibility of facing theft			*		**
The possibility of encountering an act that physically harms health while walking on the street		**	*	**	
Existence of a security mechanism	**		**		**

Table 1. Correlation matrix showing the relationship between demographic variables and personal safety questions. One star indicates that the strength of the relationship is at 0.05, two stars at 0.01.



What means of transport do you use daily?



A correlation was found between daily transportation habits and self-defense measures ($p < 0.01$). Notably, about 64% of individuals who avoid carrying expensive items or large sums of cash opt for public transportation, while 38.3% of those not employing any self-defense measures use public transport regularly. Additionally, 37% of individuals carrying self-defense tools are predominantly pedestrians.

Men tend to favor passenger cars, while public transport is more commonly used by women, which may contribute to heightened fear of criminal acts among women. Among respondents with a monthly income exceeding 501 AZN, private car usage is more prevalent, while walking is less common ($p < 0.01$).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

While public safety in our country generally meets desired standards, there has been no history of conducting victimological surveys during our period of independence. This survey, conducted by the Social Research Center, draws upon the methodologies of leading countries worldwide in crime measurement. It was tailored to our local context and methodological capabilities. Through this survey, we thoroughly examined reasons why victims refrain from reporting to law enforcement agencies, as well as the psychological, financial, and other negative impacts of crime on citizens, along with the level of trust citizens have in law enforcement agencies and the court system.

Based on our findings, we offer the following recommendations:

1. The importance of increasing institutional trust

Following a crime, only 38% of the 224 affected individuals filed complaints with a state institution or court. Moreover, a significant portion of these appeals (65.9%) did not yield satisfactory results. This underscores the urgent need to enhance the investigation process and bolster public trust in these institutions. Notably, trust in the courts has been consistently low, as highlighted in previous surveys conducted by the Center for Social Research. Addressing bureaucratic hurdles in investigations and other procedural matters is imperative. Additionally, expanding the scope and enhancing the quality of legal assistance can incentivize more victims to come forward and seek redress. It's worth noting that previous research in our country has identified a severe shortage of lawyers, particularly in non-urban areas, which discourages many victims from reporting crimes.

2. Awareness through the press

Media organizations can play a crucial role in educating citizens about the importance of reporting crime to relevant institutions. Social media platforms, in particular, can be utilized by law enforcement agencies and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan to disseminate information to the public. Through these

channels, the benefits of filing a criminal complaint—such as obtaining compensation, apprehending the perpetrator, and temporarily removing them from society—can be effectively communicated. For instance, a victim of financial loss may not be aware of the process and possibility of seeking compensation.

Moreover, the survey revealed that many respondents lack knowledge about whom to approach and how to do so if they have been victimized. To address this issue, information about the various forms and procedures for filing complaints can be prominently displayed on the websites of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and other relevant regulatory and supervisory bodies. Further details on this recommendation are outlined in the subsequent proposal.

3. Development of an online application portal

There is a need to develop an online application portal for criminal incidents. This practice exists in different forms in Turkey and Great Britain. The advantage of the online portal is that it reduces the load on the hotline to a certain extent, and sometimes serves to achieve a more optimal result by directing calls to the appropriate departments. So, for example, when people who have suffered from financial fraud in Great Britain or who have witnessed the incident enter information about it into the portal, the system shows them which office they should call specifically. In this way, the workload of the police authorities is somewhat reduced, and the agency that is more suitable for investigating the crime is interested in the issue. Because applying only to the police authorities for all types of crimes can lead to the conclusion of the application in an ineffective or unsatisfactory form.

4. Crimes against property as a major criminogenic problem

Theft appears to be a more prevalent crime compared to health-related offenses, a trend consistent with neighboring countries as well. Both the victimization



survey and official statistics in our country support this observation. However, reducing theft rates primarily hinges on improving the material and economic circumstances—an area beyond the direct purview of law enforcement authorities. Responsibility for this lies predominantly with institutions within the economic sector of the government. Nevertheless, law enforcement agencies can take proactive measures in this regard.

Primarily, there is a necessity to identify areas that are infrastructurally conducive to criminal activities. Typically, areas with inadequate lighting and limited community cohesion tend to have a more unfavorable criminogenic environment. Through the initiative of law enforcement agencies, physical enhancements of these areas and the promotion of social engagement among residents can be undertaken by relevant authorities. Closer collaboration between the police and citizens is imperative. Alongside stringent police oversight in these areas, bolstering social oversight is equally essential. There is a pressing need to implement the principles of "community policing," extensively examined in English-language literature, within our country.

The victimization survey highlighted that instances of poor quality food or drink affecting individuals are not uncommon. To minimize such occurrences, concerted efforts from law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies are essential. Enhancing oversight over the safety of food products and the operations of entities in the food industry by the Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AQTA), established in 2017, is paramount. Beyond mere oversight, there is a need to actively encourage affected citizens to report incidents to AQTA. It is worth noting that over the past three years, AQTA has routinely conducted inspections, potentially averting many cases of purchasing substandard food or drinks through its regulatory measures and inspections.



**SOCIAL
RESEARCH
CENTER**

18, Ismayil ba Kutkashenli Str., Yasamal district, Baku, AZ1073, Azerbaijan
Telephone: (+994 12) 510-70-78; (+994 12) 510-23-75; (+994 12) 510-70-69

info@stm.az www.stm.az