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**SUMMARY**

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## **VICTIMISATION TO VIOLENCE IN FINLAND** **Results from 1980–2003 National Surveys**

This anthology analyses exposure to violence in Finland based on national victim surveys. Most "everyday" acts of violence are not accounted in official records or statistics. In Finland, five national victim surveys dealing with personal safety have been carried out in a uniform way since 1980, the last one dating from 2003. These surveys provide information about trends in the prevalence and nature of different kinds of accidents and violence. In this anthology eight authors analyse the results of these surveys, approaching them from different angles. In addition to this, there is a general introduction, a concluding chapter as well as an epilogue.

### **1 Introduction: Trends and Patterns in National Surveys 1980–2003** *Reino Sirén and Päivi Honkatukia*

The introductory chapter describes general trends of exposure to violence in Finland. In 1980, every tenth 15 to 74 year old reported that he or she had been a victim of violence (including threats and attempts to hit), during the last twelve months. Eight years later the victimisation rate was two percent units lower. In the 1990s the prevalence of violence rose again, and according to the latest survey in 2003 it was 11 percent. It should, however, be noted that the increase in the victimisation rate during 1988–2003 concerns only threats of violence, not factual physical violence. The number of persons who have experienced at least pushing or being prevented from moving, as well as more serious forms of physical violence has remained quite stable from 1988 onwards. This applies both to males and females. (Figure 1.)

Exposure to violence is prominently an age- and gender-specific phenomenon. The prevalence of violence is highest in the youngest age group. In 2003, every fourth 15 to 24 year old male had been a victim of violence (24 %), and among females every sixth (16 %). For young people the frequency of being subjected to violence relates, not only to minor violence like threatening, but also to physical violence and violence that resulted in injuries. For males the prevalence of violence diminishes steadily with age. For females the rate of violence does not diminish as evenly. This is due to the differences in the character of violence against men and women. Male victimisations are typically leisure-time related street and pub fights, the prevalence of which is strongly age-related. In 2003, 4 percent of 15 to 24 year old men had been subjected to physical violence in the street and 3 percent in bars and pubs.

Violence against women more commonly involves family violence and work-related violence. In the case of work-related violence, (the last one being an increasing a type of violence) there has been an increase among young and middle aged women. In 2003, three out of hundred 25–34 year old females had been subjected to physical violence at their work.

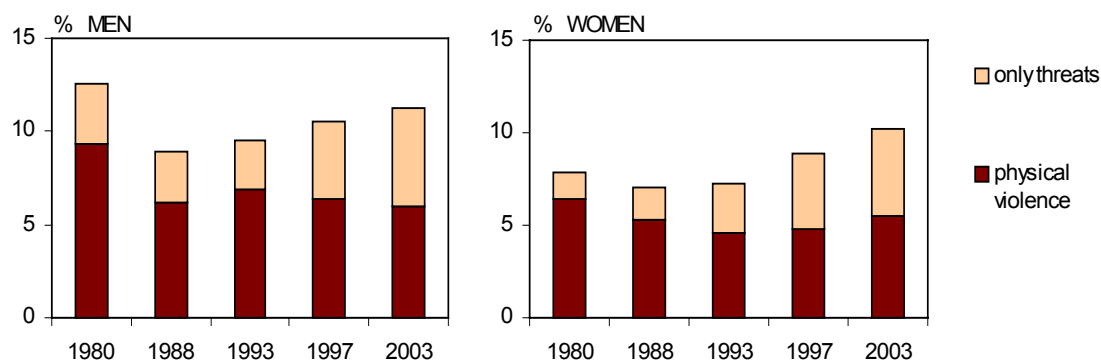
Women are more commonly victims of repeated violence than men, except for the youngest age group. This results from the fact that the forms of violence that women are typically victim of – family- and work-related violence – often are recurrent in nature.

A large part of violence remains hidden. In the 2003 survey, only one out of six victims said that the violent act (the most serious one) had been notified to or was otherwise known by the police. Of those that had been (at least) hit by someone, 44 percent of men and 26 percent of women told that the incident was reported to the police. Moreover, 59 percent of the male victims, who had reported a case to the police, and 48 percent of the female victims, told that the police had recorded the case as a crime. Thus, violence against men is more commonly recorded than violence against women (26 % and 12 % respectively).

The most common reason for not reporting an incident was that it was considered trivial (69 % of men, 48 % of women). To be a victim of violence was also considered to be part of the working culture (18 % of women, 8 % of men).

A comparison between the 1997 and 2003 surveys reveal that both men and women have become less concerned about becoming a victim of violence, except for work-related violence, for which the respondents

express somewhat more concern. In the 2003 survey, about 90 percent of all 15–74 year olds considered their own residential environment to be quite safe or very safe. There was no difference in opinion among male and female respondents.



**Figure 1** Victims of violence. Men and women aged 15–74. Those who have only experienced threats and those who have also experienced physical violence (%).

The following seven chapters deepen the picture of violence encountered by the Finns, as indicated in this introduction.

## 2 Exposure to Violence in Urban Versus Rural Areas

*Martti Tuominen*

In Finland, the number of recorded cases of assault and battery clearly varies with the degree of urbanisation. Most violence is recorded in the capital and its surroundings, and least so in rural municipalities. In the Helsinki Metropolitan Area slightly more than 800 crimes per 100,000 inhabitants are recorded annually, whereas the corresponding number for the most rural areas is slightly more than 400.

So, in terms of recorded crime, regional differences are clear, but the picture changes somewhat when we look at findings from a 2003 survey on perceived violence. The analysis divides respondents into two groups according to the degree of urbanisation of their community. The most urban milieu is represented by the fifteen largest cities in Finland, whereas the control group partly consists of municipalities that according to Statistics Finland are densely populated, partly rural municipalities. This allows for a comparison between the most urbanised areas and a rural environment.

Also this survey confirms that violence and threats are more commonly perceived in cities than in the countryside. The quotient is not two, as with recorded crimes, but well one and a half. This difference is explained, not only by violence against women, but also men, who increasingly perceive violence in cities. Young people experience most violence, regardless of the area. Notwithstanding this, the difference in victimisation to violence between urban and rural milieus is greatest among middle-aged men.

Men in cities meet clearly more violence at work and elsewhere than men in the countryside. The higher risks of violence that women face in cities, primarily involve street violence. Alcohol is often involved in violent incidents, particularly among men, but in cities alcohol related violence among both men and women is consistently slightly less common than in the countryside. Also, it is slightly less common for violence to come into the open in cities than in the countryside.

In the big cities, witnessing violence in one's own neighbourhood makes people find it less secure. Not surprisingly, those who have both witnessed and become victims of violence in their own neighbourhood feel least secure in it.

### 3 Violence at Work *Markku Heiskanen*

Although lethal violence at work is uncommon in Finland, violence and threats measured by crime victim surveys have increased considerably over the last 20 years, especially for women. For men, the increase of violence at work has been less of a problem. (Figure 2.) At the same time street violence and family violence have decreased.

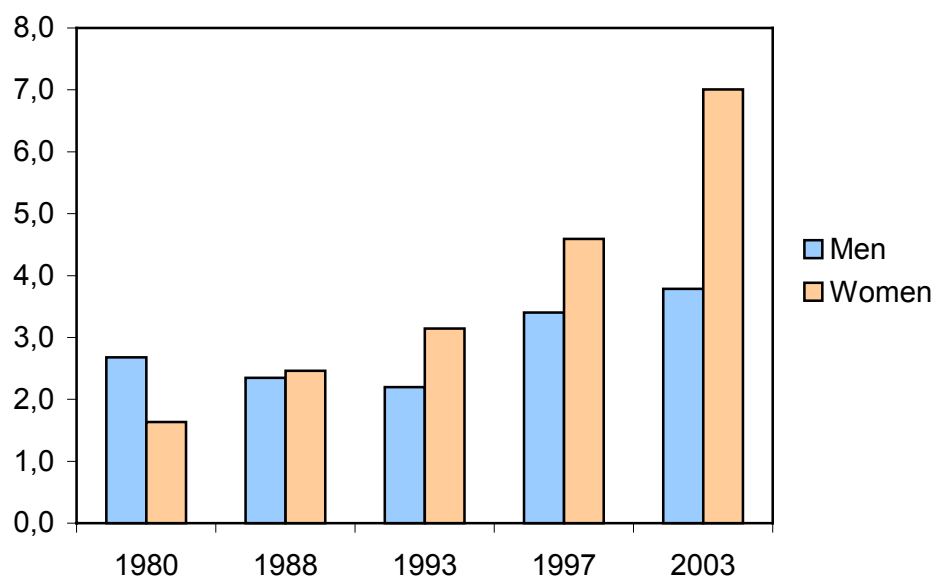
Six out of ten cases of workplace violence involved threats or attempts to hit (for men 70 %, for women 50 %). In 2003 the survey data did not contain cases of armed violence (e.g. convenience store robberies). Every tenth case of workplace violence resulted in physical injury. Physical injuries are, however, as such an insufficient indicator of the consequences of violence. Another study revealed that psychological consequences were experienced as equally severe as physical injuries.

Men commit most work-related acts of violence. The perpetrator was a male in 90 % of victimisation incidents involving men, and 80 % involving women. The share of female perpetrators has increased during the period 1980 to 2003. Due to the increase in workplace violence, the number of male

perpetrators has doubled since 1980, whereas the number of female perpetrators was six times higher in 2003, compared to the number in 1980. In cases involving male victims the perpetrators were often young, in the case of women's victimisations the perpetrators were also children under 15 years and elderly persons. The perpetrator was intoxicated in 60 % of men's and in 30 % of women's victimisations.

For women victimisation most often occurred in a health care situation, for men a control situation. Consequently the occupations of the victims differed by gender. The largest number of work-related violence experienced by women occurred in health care and hospital occupations, and most of the increase in women's victimisation to workplace violence emerged from this group. For men, the largest number of incidents was found in security occupations, and in health care.

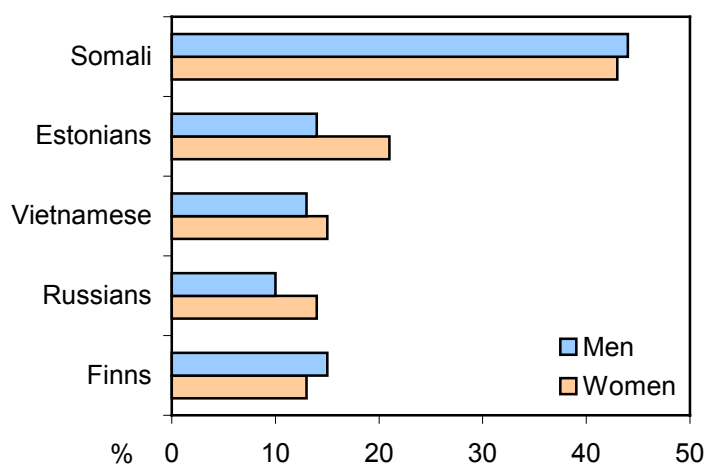
17 % of occupied persons were concerned about becoming a victim of workplace violence. The occupations in which concern about victimisation was highest, were the same as the groups in which victimisation was most common – e.g. half of male car drivers and nearly 60 % of female home aids and nurses.



**Figure 2** Victims of violence and threats at work. Men and women, of the labour force (%).

#### 4 Immigrants as Victims of Violence *Päivi Honkatukia*

The fourth chapter compares the experiences of violence between immigrants and the original population based on a 2002 survey on the living conditions of four immigrant groups in Finland (those born in Russia, Estonia, Somalia and Vietnam and now living mainly in the capital area) as well as a comparable sample from a sweep of the national victimisation survey in 2003. The results indicate that immigrants experience violence twice as often as the original population, but that these experiences less frequently cause them injuries. They also report their experiences to the police more often than the original population. Experiences of violence are most common among Somali respondents who, in terms of their outward appearance, differ most from the original Finns (see figure 3). They also most frequently reported that they have experienced racist violence.



**Figure 3** Victims of violence by nationality and gender (%). The 2002 immigrant survey and the 2003 national victim survey.

However, it seems as if the survey for immigrants did not catch the most sensitive experiences of violence in all the immigrant groups. This remains a challenge for future studies on victimisation experiences.

## 5 Exposure to Violence in Different Income Groups: 1980–2003 *Janne Kivivuori*

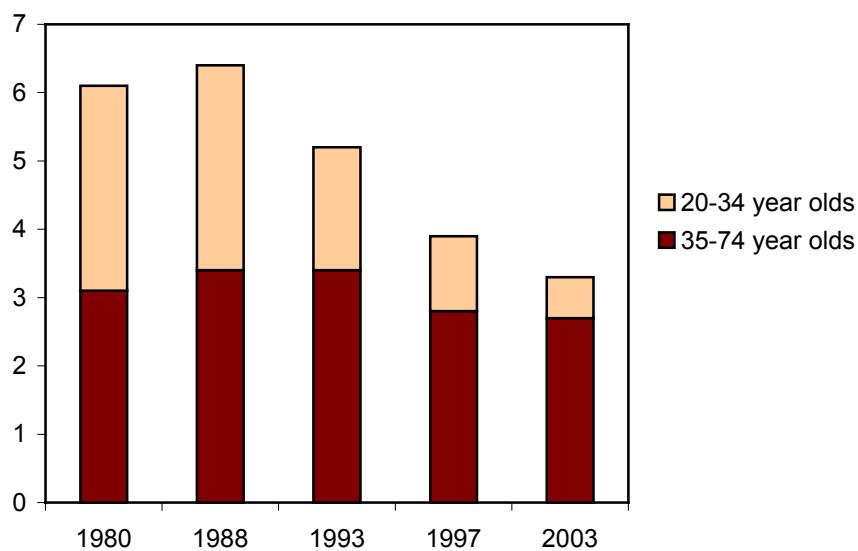
Studies from several countries indicate that the risk of becoming a victim of violence is greater in low-income groups when compared with middle- and high-income groups. This may be so because people with a low income are more vulnerable to victimisation, for several reasons. They may lack the means to protect themselves from violence, or their everyday routines may expose them to a greater risk of victimisation (for example, use of public transport instead of personally owned car). Moreover, the risk of victimisation has in some countries diverged among different income groups over recent decades. The concept of polarisation has been used to describe the differential trends in personal safety in various income categories.

This article uses Finnish national victimisation surveys to describe trends in violent victimisation by household income category (age group 20–74). The main finding is that the income-disaggregated risk of victimisation has diverged during the period 1980–2003. The likelihood of low-income persons becoming victims of violence has increased. Even more consistently, the likelihood of persons in the highest income decile becoming victims of violence has decreased. The former trend can be detected both for males and females, the latter trend only for males. In terms of type of violence, the low-income category was increasingly exposed to street violence and violence occurring in restaurants. In contrast, the highest income category became less exposed to these same types of violence.

When the age composition of the different income groups was analysed, it could be observed that the lowest income category had become younger with respect to the age composition, while the highest income category had become older. This finding suggests that the income polarisation of violence risk largely reflects the changing age composition of income groups (figure 4). Other relevant factors may be related to general income differentials in Finnish society, which have increased. Such processes may have been accompanied by increasingly divergent routine activities, especially patterns of leisure activities, of various income groups.

The present article is descriptive and exploratory in nature. In future, other composition factors than age should also be examined as possible explanations of income-based differentiation of the risk of victimisation. Such factors include, for example, family structure and geographical location. Especially the latter is a pertinent research topic because recent

Finnish research suggests that there are relatively strong segregation tendencies and pressures: well-to-do households express increasing willingness to 'flee' from socially heterogeneous urban areas to middle class suburbia surrounding the large cities. This kind of geographical mobility may partially explain the income divergence in regard to the risk for exposure to violence.



**Figure 4** Victims of violence, of persons belonging to households in the highest income decile (%).

## 6 The Decline in Family Violence Against Finnish Women, 1980–2003: An Examination of Rates Disaggregated by Household Type *Jukka Savolainen*

The risk of being victimised by a family member has declined sharply among Finnish women in the course of the last two decades. The purpose of this study is to examine this trend from the perspective of exposure reduction theory. According to this theory, the reduced rate of victimisation reflects changes in opportunities to commit acts of violence in a family context. As a consequence of growth in divorce rates, the ageing of the population, and the postponement of marriage and childbearing, more women reside in households without a spouse or a male partner compared to the situation 20 years ago. As one result of these trends, it is feasible to assume that opportunities for violent encounters between men and women of the same household have also declined in the population at large.

The incidence of family violence resulting in actual physical harm has dropped by more than 50 % between 1980–2003 among Finnish women. It is unlikely that all of this could be explained by changes in household demography. However, it is conceivable that changes in the structure of opportunities may account for an important share of this trend. I have examined this issue by calculating rates of family violence disaggregated by household type. This method adjusts for changes in the co-residence of women with male partners.

If much of the decline in family violence is a function of diminished opportunities, this trend should appear far less dramatic once we have taken into account differences in household composition. For example, if the decline in family violence has to do with declines in marriage and delays in family formation, we should find the slope for married mothers to be far less dramatic than for women in general.

My research finds no evidence for this theory. Instead, the rate of decline in family violence in the population of Finnish women is strongly related to actual reductions in the incidence of violence against women living in family-settings with male partners. The research suggests that this decline cannot be explained in terms of changes in the behaviour of Finnish men towards women. Between 1980 and 2003, the prevalence of violent victimisations by males, non-strangers, against Finnish women declined by less than 20 %. In 1980, more than 50 % of such violence was committed by a family member; in 2003, almost 80 % involved a male who was neither a member of the family nor an ex-spouse. These findings are consistent with the assumption that Finnish women have become more selective in their decision to reside with male partners. They are less likely to agree to live with a violent man.

## 7 Alcohol in the Victimisation to Violence *Reino Sirén*

The police statistics show that alcohol is an important factor in crimes involving violence in Finland. In the national victim surveys 1980–2003, questions concerning the presence of alcohol in violent incidents also throw light on the role of alcohol in less severe "everyday" violence, a considerable part of which is not reported to the police.

Equally, alcohol is often present in the violent incidents mentioned in the victim surveys. In the 2003 survey, 78 % of male victims and 50 % of female

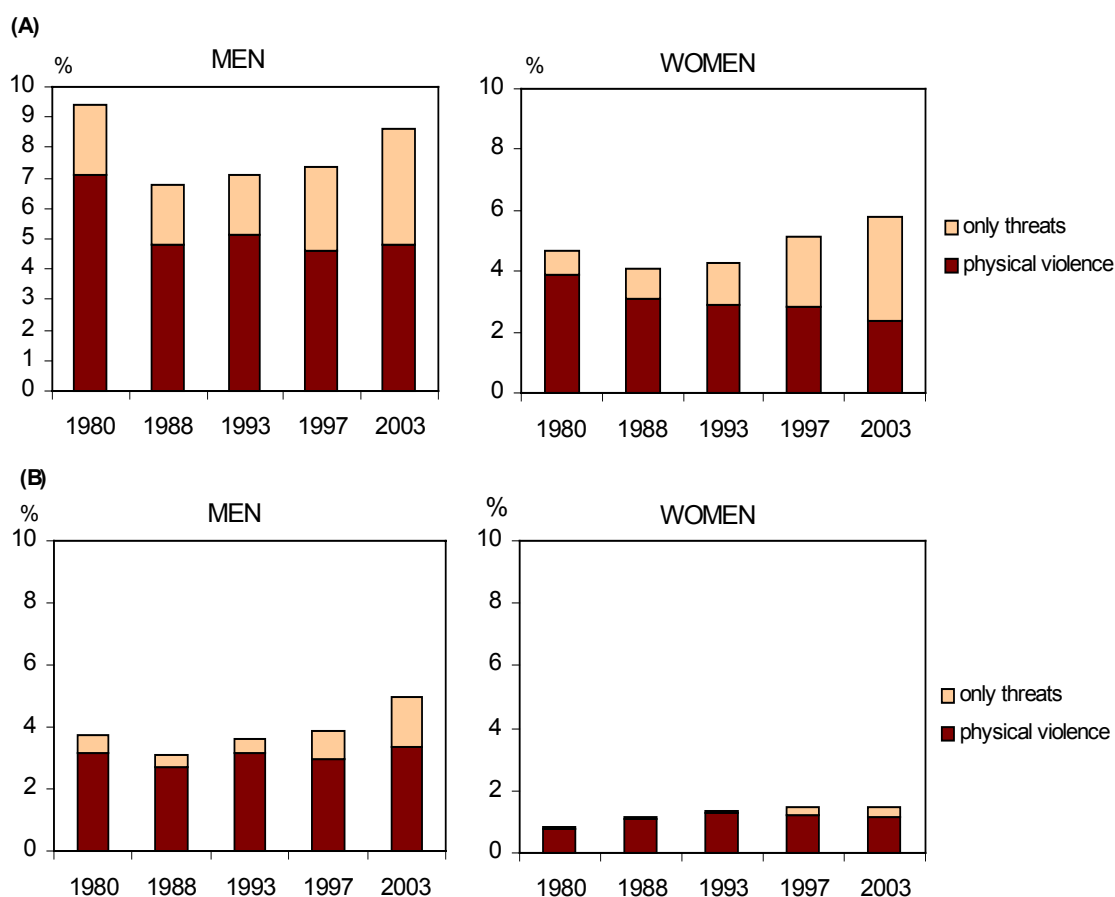
victims told that the assailant was intoxicated (in the most severe victimisation cases during the last 12 months). A considerable number of victims, or 45 % of men and 15 % of women, conceded that they were themselves under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident.

However, there are considerable variations in the prevalence of intoxication of the parties among different types of violent incidents. At one end there is violence in bars, pubs and dance clubs, where it is almost a rule that the offender or the victim or both were under the influence of alcohol. At the other end there is work-related violence, where the victim was hardly ever and the perpetrator less often intoxicated than the average.

The victim surveys can provide an answer to the question whether alcohol related violence has increased or decreased during the last twenty years, and if so, in what ways.

Statistics indicate that since 1980, the total consumption of alcohol has increased by two and a half litres in absolute alcohol, among the population over 15 years. This increase amounts to almost a third. Also, according to population surveys, both men and women drink alcohol more often and get intoxicated more often. Following the increase in the consumption of alcohol, the alcohol related violence has increased between 1988 and 2003. Firstly, there has been an increase in the prevalence of those who have reported becoming a victim of violence by an intoxicated person. However, this increased prevalence is only seen in threats or attempts to hit etc., not in actual physical violence (figure 5 A). Secondly, also the prevalence of those who became victims of violence while under the influence of alcohol has increased. This is also the case concerning physical violence (figure 5 B). This general trend in alcohol related violence is not the same in all types of violence. Alcohol relatedness has increased in male-victim (somewhat also in female-victim) street violence and in male-victim bar and pub violence. In these categories the proportion of intoxicated offenders has always been high, but as a new trend victims also more often report their own intoxication in these incidents. In family violence and in other instances of violence in near relations, there has been no change in alcohol relatedness. Especially in work-related violence involving female-victims – which has increased – it has become more common that the offenders are sober. So, the portion of incidents involving alcohol out of all violence (the offender/the victim or both intoxicated) has in fact not increased. Especially women increasingly experience violence where alcohol is not present.

In bar and pub violence even the victims are often intoxicated (77 % and 65 % of male/female victims respectively, combined data  $n=20\ 980$ ). However, drinking is normal in this environmental context, so that from this one cannot infer what role the intoxication of the victim has had in the incident. In other types of violence the intoxication of the victim is not as self-evident. Of the victims of street violence 47 % of males and 19 % of females and of the male and female victims of violence in near relations 51 % and 29 % respectively (18 % of female victims of family violence) had been drinking before the incident. In these categories the intoxication of the victims is so frequent that it is unlikely that it be a mere coincidence. Thus, but with reservations, one could conclude that in some circumstances, intoxication directly increases the probability of becoming a victim of violence.



**Figure 5** (A) The prevalence of violence by intoxicated offenders (% of 15–74 year olds of the population). (B) The prevalence of violence involving intoxicated victims (% of 15–74 year olds of the population). The most serious incidents during the last 12 months.

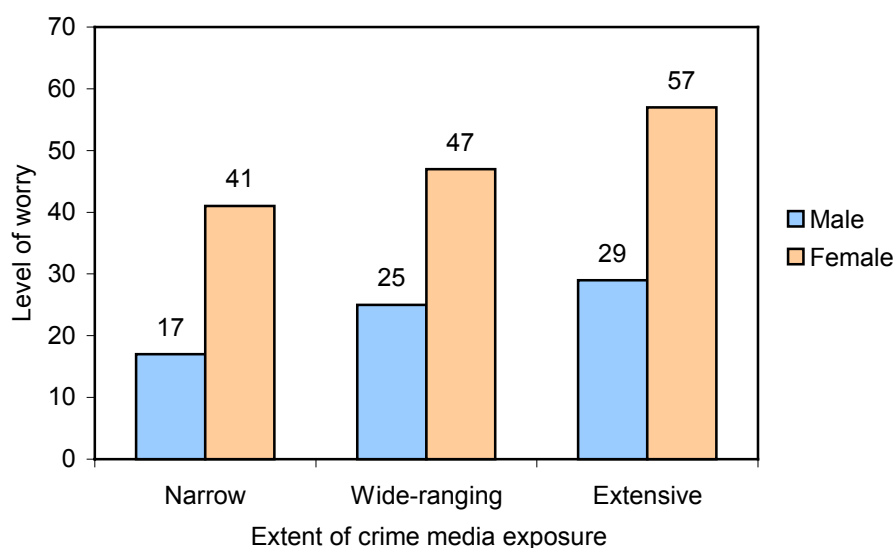
## 8 The Association Between Crime, Media and Fear of Violence *Mirka Smolej & Janne Kivivuori*

In several academic studies as well as in public debates, the media has been accused of being one central factor effecting public perceptions of crime arousing thereby increasing levels of fear. In this article, we explore the relationship between the publicity given crime and fear of violence through both bivariate and multivariate analyses. Our main objective is to examine whether the use of crime news is related to avoidance behaviour and fear of crime, when personal and vicarious victimisation experiences and a number of other relevant factors are held constant.

Using the 2003 sweep of the national victimisation surveys, we focus on two types of exposure to crime news: exposure to crime-related tabloid headlines, and the scope of exposure to different sources of crime news. Tabloid front pages are of special interest because people are, to some extent, involuntarily exposed to them in public spaces.

Our main finding is that reading tabloid front pages is associated with both avoidance behaviour and higher levels of anxiety for becoming a victim of violence. We also found that people who are exposed to many sources of crime news are more likely to fear crime. These associations remain robust, when violent victimisation and vicarious victimisation (of relatives and friends) are controlled. Several factors traditionally used in explaining fear, such as age, sex and employment status, were also controlled. As an interesting by-product of our analyses, we observed that being unemployed was quite strongly associated with fear of crime in multivariate models.

Although the findings indicate a robust relationship between crime media and fear, the link probably depends on several contextual factors. We discuss various processes between exposure to crime news and fear that should be taken into consideration when studying this topic in the future. Firstly, the observed relation can be causal, when a lengthy exposure to crime news leads to feelings of fear and insecurity. Secondly, it is also possible that fearful people reinforce their world-view by seeking their way to crime news experiencing thereby the fear effect more strongly. Therefore future analyses of the links between exposure to crime news and fear of crime might benefit from measuring individual propensity to fear, so that contextual factors (such as neighbourhood characteristics) would be included in the analysis.



**Figure 6** The percentage of respondents (very or somewhat) worried about becoming victims of violence by extent of crime media exposure.

## Epilogue: What are victimisation surveys good for?

*Kauko Aromaa*

Over the last 30 years or so, after the first US work on crime victimisation in the mid-1960s, crime victimisation surveys have gradually become accepted as a major innovation in the assessment of certain crime-related issues. Despite widely discussed shortcomings, such surveys may serve a great variety of interest of knowledge that is relevant to decision-making on criminal policy issues. The overt political nature of crime issues observed in many Western societies would, indeed, increase the need for accurate and unbiased information about crime – its scope, trends and damages involved. In the absence of such information, policy decisions risk to be taken on the basis of beliefs only.

There are a great variety of victimisation surveys. This paper only concentrates on the variant where nationally representative population samples are surveyed for their personal experiences of victimisation and their attitudes and opinions of issues related to crime and crime control.

Knowledge that is relevant for criminal policy involve issues such as, assessing the volume, distribution of and trends in personal victimisation experiences. Also a multiplicity of more refined issues should be considered,

such as learning about public opinion related to crime and crime control, and also the fear of crime and what people have done about victimisation. The instrument may also be helpful if there is a need to assess the outcome of crime prevention programmes. Many further uses may be envisaged.

Victimisation surveys provide a multitude of relevant information. They have been used for making estimates of the overall prevalence and incidence of "surveyable" victimisation experiences; for estimates of unrecorded crime; for measures of repeat, serial, and multiple victimisation, victim careers, accumulation of risks, vulnerable groups; for measuring reporting/not reporting crimes to the police; for assessing precautionary and avoidance behaviour, use of protection measures; for estimates of psychological harm and other consequences, and material damage and other costs caused by victimisation; to depict fear and concern, or deterioration of quality of life caused by crime; to measure confidence in the criminal justice system, including police; punishment attitudes; expectations; to assess satisfaction with police performance both in general and in each concrete case; to find out what people understand by "crime"; to assess broad cost issues related to crime issues. Furthermore, the victimisation survey is flexible, it can use standard and changing modules at need; it is able to combine events that are recorded and attended to by different agencies (health care, social services, police, third sector or non-government organisations); it is able to combine events other than crime with the victimisation experiences (such as the physical safety approach), and personal characteristics (lifestyle, alcohol, risk-taking).

Ample experience has accumulated that demonstrates the numerous potentials this approach has to offer. Nevertheless, most countries have been remarkably slow in taking full advantage of the new instrument. This is likely to depend only in part on material obstacles. Of equal importance is the lack of awareness of the advantages, due to an insufficient dialogue between decision-makers, the general public, and scientists. Furthermore, the political crime discourse may, to a degree, see certain rhetoric advantages to relying on statistics of a more traditional law enforcement authority workload.