

# Training on Victimization Surveys

**Seong-Jin Yeon, Ph.D.**

**Director of International Strategic Research Center**

**Korean Institute of Criminology**



# Victimization Surveys:

- What are they?
- Why are they important?
- How do they compare with police data?

## Module 2



## Key messages:

- Administrative police based data cannot provide all information about crime
- A substantial proportion of crime is not reported to police
- The information gap is a problem in fighting crime and developing programs to assist victims



# Victimization surveys can:

- Fill much of the information gap
- Measure extent and characteristics of crimes, including those not reported to police
- Provide information about victims and crimes, not available from any other sources.

# Administrative police based crime data cannot provide all information about crime

## Police data:

- Exclude crime not reported and recorded
- Undercount “sensitive” crimes (e.g. sexual violence, domestic violence)
- Are impacted by availability of resources and programmatic directives
- Are generally summary statistics (counts of crime)
- Cannot provide detailed information about crimes, victims and offenders
- Cannot provide information about the impact of crime to victims

# Victimization surveys can fill much of the information gap

Victimization surveys are a viable source for information not available from administrative records:

- Collect detailed information about victims, offenders, offenses and consequences of crime to victims
- Provide a tool for calibrating administrative crime data
- Provide a means to evaluate effectiveness of crime related programs
- Provide a platform for criminal justice research

# Victims cite many reasons for not reporting crime

- Fear of the offender
- Fear of being blackmailed
- The offense was unimportant
- It would have been a waste of time
- Too lengthy and convoluted bureaucratic procedures
- I don't trust the authorities
- I did not have any proofs



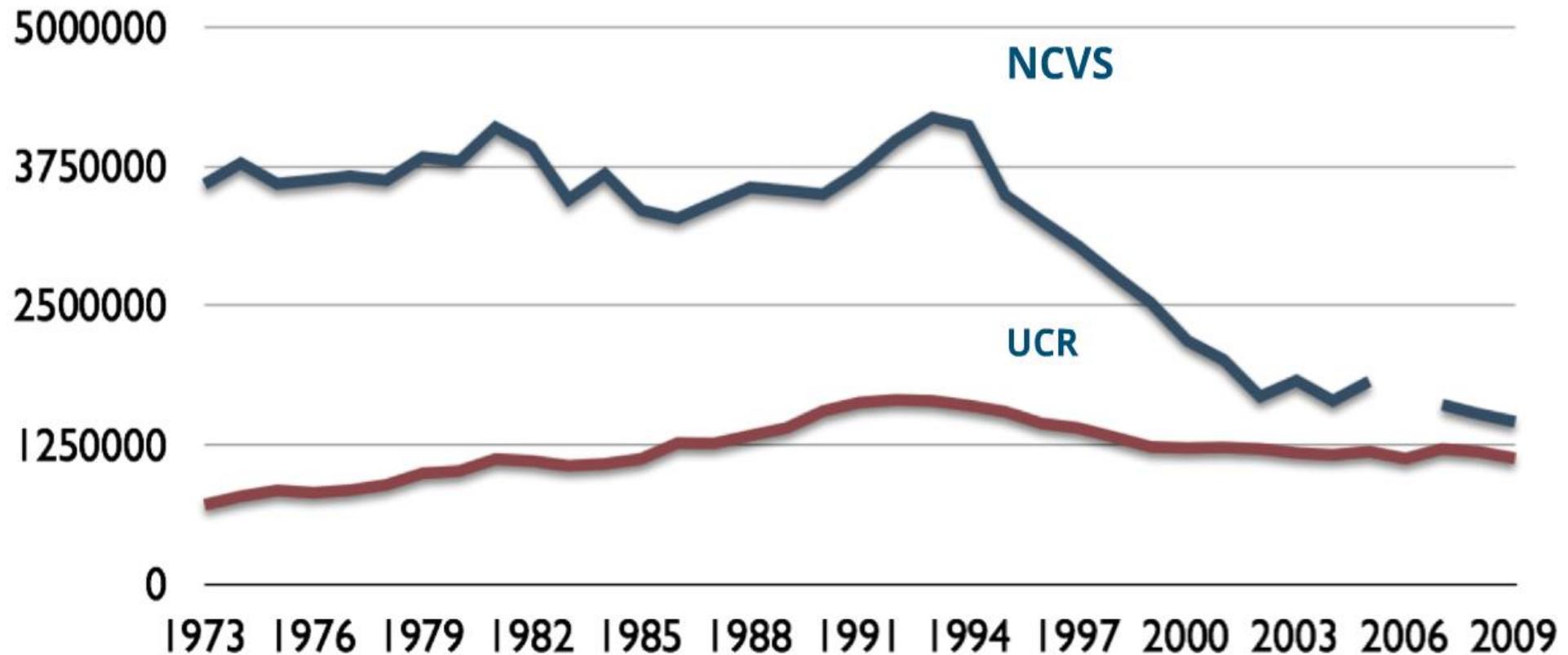
# The information gap is a problem in fighting crime and developing programs to assist victims

“If we knew more about the character of both offenders and victims, the nature of their relationships and the circumstances that create a high probability of crime conduct, it seems likely that crime prevention and control programs could be made much more effective.”

The U.S. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.

Task Force Report: Crime and its impact: An Assessment, 1967

# Victimization surveys can measure the extent and characteristics of crimes, including those not reported to police



In the U.S., the gap between survey and police estimates of violent crime have diminished because of improvements in police data systems

# South Africa Example

The table in the next slide presents data from the South Africa Victimization Survey of 2011.

It demonstrates the difference between overall crime measured by the survey and crime reported to police.

	Total crime experienced in 2011	Crime experienced at least once in 2011		Crimes reported to the police in 2011		Crime under reporting rates 2011
Types of crimes	Number in thousands	Number in thousands	Percent	Number in thousands	Percent	Percent difference
Types of crime	<b>Total crime</b> <b>Police reported crime</b> <b>Difference</b>					
Households crimes	<span style="font-size: 2em; color: red;">↓</span> <span style="font-size: 2em; color: red;">↓</span> <span style="font-size: 2em; color: red;">↓</span>					
Car Thefts	66	63	.5	57	92.2	9.5
House breaking/burglary	874	730	5.4	426	58.5	41.6
Home Robbery	229	200	1.5	118	61.4	41
Theft of livestock	242	178	1.3	71	40.1	60.1
Theft of crops	108	40	.3	7	18.3	82.5
Murder	36	16	.1	15	98.2	6.3
Theft from car	183	162	1.2	89	56.5	45.1
Deliberate damage of dwellings	50	47	.4	28	62.6	40.4
Moto vehicle vandalism	56	56	.4	23	40.6	58.9
Bicycle theft	29	27	.2	10	36.8	63
Other crimes experienced	70	55	.4			



## **Victimization surveys serve many important functions:**

- Provide information to the public
- Provide information to support public policy and program assessment
- Provide a platform for criminal justice research
- Provide a platform for international comparisons

**Victimization surveys provide answers to many questions about crime.**



How much crime is there?

What types of offences are being committed?

What are the risks of becoming a victim?

What is the impact on vulnerable groups?

Is there a relationship between fear of crime and actual levels?

what are the characteristics of victims and offenders?

How much crime is reported to authorities?

How prevalent are emerging crimes?

# Policy use of victimization survey data

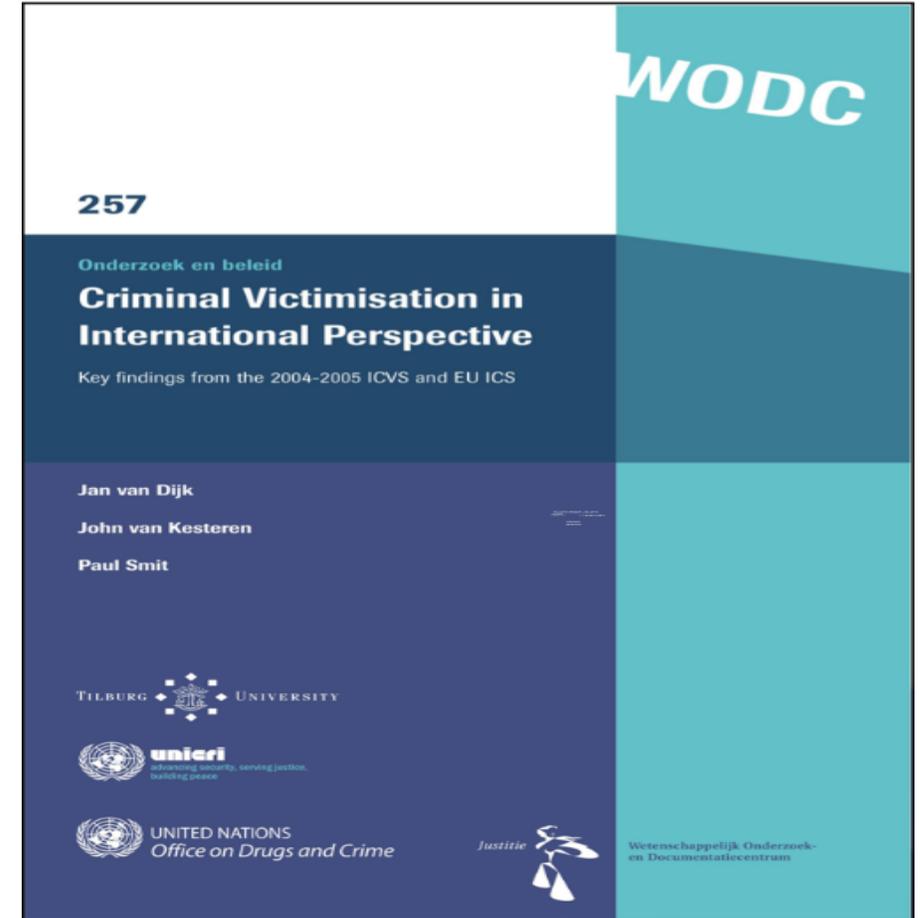
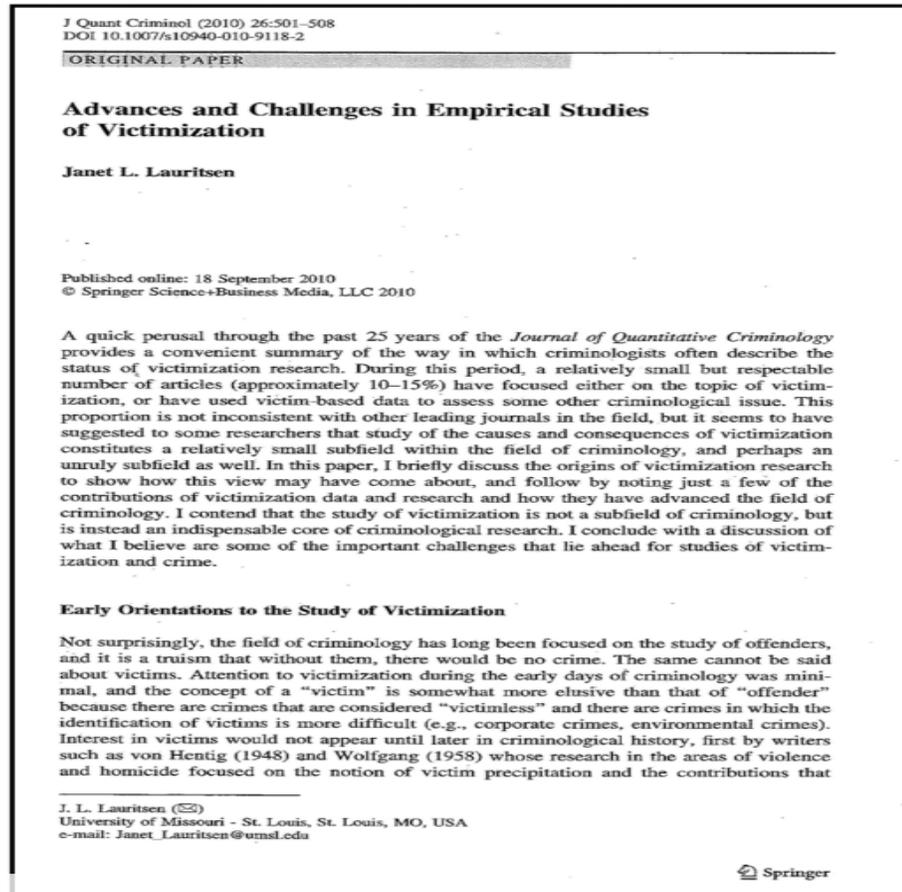
“The nature, degree and consequences of criminal activity, as well as people’s perceptions of their safety are issues that influence directly the quality of people’s lives. A sound evidence base is essential in the development of crime prevention policy and programmes aimed at preventing or reducing crime, improving community safety and reducing fear of crime in communities”

“National crime victimization surveys provide a valuable source of information to policy makers and can be used to understand the nature of both personal and household crime as well as people’s perceptions of safety in the community and their confidence in law enforcement agencies.”

# Victimization surveys:

Provide a platform for criminal justice research

Provide a platform for international comparisons



# Summary

- Victimization surveys are one component of a comprehensive program to measure crime and its impact
- Together police and survey data can do more than either can do alone
- Both programs should be viewed as complementary, not competing
- Both have strengths and weaknesses
- Police data can provide information about crimes not covered by surveys: e.g. homicide, commercial crimes
- Survey data provide a rich source of information not available from police data

