



The United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS)

1. Summary

The United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS) is a mandated annual questionnaire for UN Member States to manage the collection and dissemination of data on crime and the criminal justice system in line with the [International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes \(ICCS\)](#). This explanatory note provides a brief overview of:

- the UN-CTS mandate,
- the benefits of UN-CTS data collection,
- the utilisation of UN-CTS data,
- an explanation of the role of national Focal Points, and
- guidance on completing the questionnaire.

The content of this explanatory note is relevant for national entities involved in UN-CTS data collection, completion and submission.

2. Mandate

The UN-CTS was first introduced through the General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/3021\(XXVII\)](#) in 1972 and further formalized through the ECOSOC Resolution [1984/48](#). Following the ECOSOC Resolution [E/RES/2015/24](#) and driven by recommendations agreed upon at [the First Global Meeting of UN-CTS Focal Points](#), a comprehensive review of the UN-CTS was undertaken in 2016 to align it with the ICCS.

3. Benefits of UN-CTS data collection

The UN-CTS is an instrument for Member States to collect a core set of data that will help identify crime patterns and trends, assess the functioning of the criminal justice system, and monitor progress toward several targets of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Furthermore,



through its alignment with the ICCS, the UN-CTS helps Member States collect valid and internationally comparable data on crime and the criminal justice system.

Harmonizing data collection in the criminal justice system

The UN-CTS provides common concepts, definitions and counting rules for data on crime and criminal justice. It therefore provides a standard for data production, which can be adopted by all criminal justice institutions. This standardization carries further coordination and communication possibilities amongst national data producers, streamlines related data processes and provides a platform for the exchange of information and practices.

Identifying crime patterns

The UN-CTS is an opportunity for Member States to collect crucial data for analysing crime patterns and trends. For example, to fully understand intentional homicide patterns, specific disaggregating variables on the victim-perpetrator relationship, the situational context as well as the mechanism of killing need to be collected. This facilitates the analysis of socio-demographic factors and their links to crime for accurate and responsive evidence-based policies.

Improving the monitoring of the criminal justice system

Data on criminal justice system processes and personnel can be used to measure the efficiency of the criminal justice system and helps identify where procedures can be enhanced or resources better utilised. For example, collecting sex-disaggregated data on unsentenced detainees and the reasons for their incarceration can be used to analyse gender biases in the criminal justice system and – more broadly – to explore alternatives to imprisonment. These are critical data to foster implementation of important international standards in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice.¹

Improving SDG monitoring

The UN-CTS collects relevant national data on eight SDG indicators under Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), as well as Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Table 1 provides

¹ See for example: United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures ([Tokyo Rules](#)), United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders ([Bangkok Rules](#)), or United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners ([Nelson Mandela Rules](#)).

an overview of the eight indicators and shows the type of data source (administrative or survey-based) required for their measurement.

Table 1: SDG indicators covered by the UN-CTS

INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE
11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months	Household Survey
16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicides per 100,000 population, by sex and age	Administrative Records
16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months	Household Survey
16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live	Household Survey
16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms	Household Survey
16.3.2 Unsented detainees as a proportion of overall prison population	Administrative Records
16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months	Household Survey
16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months	Business Survey

Improving international comparability of crime statistics

The data submitted through the UN-CTS – if complying with given definitions – should be internationally comparable, and this offers the opportunity to understand global and regional crime patterns, to assess country-level trends in comparison with other experiences, learn lessons from other Member States, and to coordinate responses to cross-border issues, such as illicit trafficking, corruption, terrorism and transnational organized crime.

The UN-CTS is aligned with the crime categories of the ICCS, including definitions, numeric coding and use of disaggregating variables. The ICCS is a classification of criminal offences based on internationally agreed concepts, definitions, and principles, and it provides a framework to systematically produce and compare statistical data on criminal conducts, victims and perpetrators that are harmonized across domestic criminal justice institutions (police, prosecutions, courts, prisons) and across different data sources (administrative or survey). See Figure 1 for an overview of ICCS crimes captured by the UN-CTS (and **Annex II** for a more detailed list).

Figure 1: ICCS crime categories

Level 1 Categories	
01	Acts leading to death or intending to cause death
02	Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm
03	Injurious acts of a sexual nature
04	Acts against property involving violence or threat against a person
05	Acts against property only
06	Acts involving controlled psychoactive substances or other drugs
07	Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption
08	Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State
09	Acts against public safety and state security
10	Acts against the natural environment
11	Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified

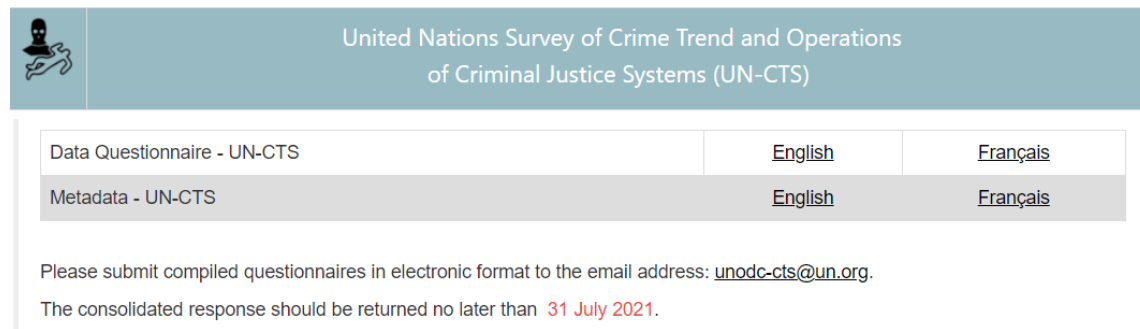
4. Utilization of UN-CTS data

Data collected through the UN-CTS are processed and publicly disseminated by UNODC through the [UNODC Data Portal](#) and, where they pertain to crime-related SDG indicators, on the [United Nations SDG Global Database](#). Furthermore, they are used by UNODC for several analytical products - such as the [Global Study on Homicide](#) - or for short research briefs included in the [Data Matters series](#). When necessary and possible, data from UN-CTS are integrated with data from other sources to fill data gaps while ensuring compliance with international definitions and standards. UN-CTS data are available for public use and their utilisation for programmatic or policy purpose is encouraged at country, regional and global level.

5. Data collection process

The UN-CTS is sent out every year on UNODC Data Day, which usually takes place during May. In Europe, the UN-CTS data collection is implemented jointly with [Eurostat](#), and in the Americas, data collection is implemented jointly with the [Organisation of American States \(OAS\)](#).

On Data Day, UNODC sends the new UN-CTS questionnaire to appointed UN-CTS Focal Points and sends a Note Verbale to Member States' Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Vienna. The data request to UN-CTS Focal Points and to Permanent Missions contains a unique access link for each Member State to UNODC's Data Collection Portal. Access is restricted to the Permanent Mission and the Focal Points who have received the link.

Figure 2: Snapshot of Data Collection Portal


United Nations Survey of Crime Trend and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS)		
Data Questionnaire - UN-CTS	English	Français
Metadata - UN-CTS	English	Français

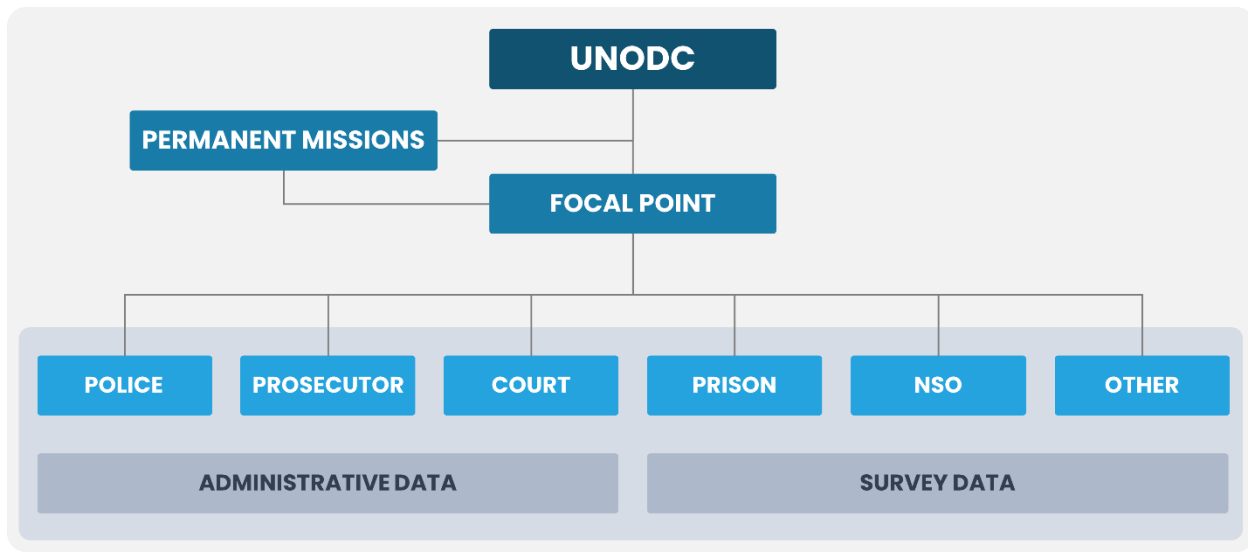
Please submit compiled questionnaires in electronic format to the email address: unodc-cts@un.org.
The consolidated response should be returned no later than **31 July 2021**.

Upon completion of the UN-CTS, submissions should be sent in electronic format to unodc-cts@un.org.

6. The role of National UN-CTS Focal Points

The UN-CTS Focal Point, appointed by each Member State, is the primary technical point of contact with UNODC regarding the compilation and submission of the questionnaire to ensure, as far as possible, a timely, accurate and complete response. UN-CTS Focal Points should be technical practitioners working in a national agency with responsibility for crime and criminal justice statistics in the country (e.g. Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice or National Statistical Office). Where no Focal Point has been appointed, Member States are encouraged to appoint a specific institution and person(s) for such role. Where this is not done, the Permanent Mission remains the responsible entity to ensure management of the data collection from relevant national agencies and submission to UNODC.

The responsibility to generate data on crime and criminal justice is distributed among different agencies/ministries at the national level. Therefore, the UN-CTS Focal Point should coordinate the collection of data from all relevant institutions and ensure their quality and consistency.

Figure 3: Institutions involved in UN-CTS process

The following specific tasks are performed by the Focal Point:

1. Ensure the questionnaire is distributed to other relevant national authorities for completion of all survey sections. The UN-CTS questionnaire requires data from: a) Police; b) Prosecution; c) Courts; d) Prisons; and e) the national authority/agency responsible for victimization surveys. Other national authorities/agencies might also be involved in data collection.
2. Ensure that data from all national authorities are accurate, complete and consistent.
3. Liaise with the national authorities in the event of missing data or when inaccuracies are identified.
4. Return the consolidated questionnaire to UNODC before the deadline and act as technical point of reference for communication with UNODC on issues related to data accuracy and consistency.
5. Act as the point of contact with UNODC regarding all aspects of the UN-CTS submitted by the Member State.

Changes of national Focal Points should be communicated to UNODC as soon as possible while keeping Member States' Permanent Missions fully informed, using the *Focal Point Contact Form* (see **Annex I**).

7. Guidance on completing the questionnaire

The UN-CTS is comprised of two parts, the Data File and the Metadata File. All files are provided in either Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, or Spanish.

Data File

The Data File contains detailed instructions on completing the questionnaire (Sheet 2) and provides definitions of core variables and rotating variables (Sheet 3) across the seven substantive sections covered in the UN-CTS (see Table 2 below). Additionally, an eighth section on the status of ICCS implementation was introduced in 2021:

Table 2: Overview of the Data File

SECTIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Introduction	UN-CTS Focal Point
Instructions	ALL: Police, Prosecution, Courts, Prisons
Definitions	ALL: Police, Prosecution, Courts, Prisons
1. Intentional Homicide	Police or other law enforcement agency
2. Violent crimes	Police or other law enforcement agency
3. Other crimes	Police or other law enforcement agency
4. Criminal Justice system process	ALL: Police, Prosecution, Courts, Prisons
5. Prisons	Prison/Probation Services
6. Criminal justice system personnel	ALL: Police, Prosecution, Courts, Prisons
7. Victimization surveys	NSO or other authority responsible for Victimization Surveys
8. ICCS Implementation	National Statistics Office

To provide the most accurate picture of crime patterns and trends, most of the data in the UN-CTS is collected annually. However, except for Intentional Homicide and Victimization Surveys, all other sections contain rotating modules, where data are only collected every two years.

Metadata File

The Metadata File is fundamental to understanding the data provided in the Data File, including clarifying definitions and counting rules used by different countries. Completion of the Metadata File is *only required once* but needs to be updated in-line with national changes, such as adjustment to legislation or counting rules. Each metadata section requires completion by respective responsible agencies, but all responsible agencies should understand respective metadata and the instructions before data entry. The Metadata File contains an 'additional

comments' section enabling the explanation of nuances regarding variable definitions or data production.

Table 3: Overview of the Metadata File

SECTIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Introduction	UN-CTS Focal Point
Instructions	ALL: Police, Prosecution, Courts, Prisons
Intentional Homicide metadata	Police or other law enforcement agency
Violent crimes metadata	Police or other law enforcement agency
Other crimes metadata	Police or other law enforcement agency
Police metadata	Police or other law enforcement agency
Prosecution metadata	Prosecution
Courts metadata	Courts
Prisons metadata	Prison/Probation Services
Victimization surveys metadata	NSO or other authority responsible for Victimization Surveys

Further Support

UNODC is committed to supporting the UN-CTS Focal Points and Member States in their completion of the UN-CTS. For any questions, comments or feedback please write to:

- UN-CTS team (Vienna headquarters) unodc-cts@un.org
- UNODC-INEGI Centre of Excellence (Latin America and the Caribbean) unodc-mexico.cde.estadistica@un.org
- UNODC-KOSTAT Centre of Excellence (Asia and the Pacific) unodc-kostat.coe@un.org

Further Reading

- [International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes \(ICCS\)](#), March 2015

Annex I: UN-CTS Country Focal Point Contact Details

Please email the completed form to unodc-cts@un.org

Country Name:	_____
Details of Organization	
Ministry / Agency / Institute:	_____
Department/ Office/Section:	_____
Street:	_____
City / State:	_____
Email address:	_____
Phone (country code, area code, number):	_____
Details of responsible officer	
Salutation (Mr./Ms.):	_____
First Name:	_____
Last Name:	_____
Functional title:	_____
Email address:	_____
Fax (country code, area code, number):	_____
Phone (country code, area code, number):	_____
Alternative responsible officer	
Salutation (Mr./Ms.):	_____
First Name:	_____
Last Name:	_____
Functional title:	_____
Email address:	_____
Fax (country code, area code, number):	_____
Phone (country code, area code, number):	_____

Date:

Annex II: ICCS crimes captured by the UN-CTS**Intentional homicide**

01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death

0101 Intentional homicide**0102 Attempted intentional homicide****Violent crimes**

02 Acts causing harm or intending to cause harm to the person

020111 Serious assault

020221 Kidnapping

0208 Acts intended to induce fear or emotional distress

03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature

0301 Sexual violence

03011 Rape

03012 Sexual assault

03019 Other acts of sexual violence

0302 Sexual exploitation

030221 Child pornography

04 Acts against property involving violence or threat against a person

0401 Robbery**Other crimes**

05 Acts against property only

0501 Burglary**0502 Theft**

05021 Theft of a motorized vehicle or parts thereof

06 Acts involving controlled psychoactive substances or other drugs

0601 Unlawful acts involving controlled drugs or precursors

06011 Unlawful possession, purchase, use, cultivation or production of controlled drugs for personal consumption

06012 Unlawful trafficking, cultivation or production of controlled drugs or precursors not for personal consumption

07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption

0701 Fraud**0703 Corruption**

07031 Bribery

07032- Other acts of corruption

07039

07041 Money laundering

08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State

08051 Smuggling of migrants offences

09 Acts against public safety and state security

09012 Trafficking of weapons and explosives

09031 Unlawful access to a computer system

09032 Unlawful interference with a computer system or computer data

09033 Unlawful interception or access of computer data

09051 Participation in an organized criminal group

09061 Participation in a terrorist group

09062 Financing of terrorism

10 Acts against the natural environment

1001 Acts that cause environmental pollution or degradation**1002 Acts involving the movement or dumping of waste****1003 Trade or possession of protected or prohibited species of fauna and flora****1004 Acts that result in the depletion or degradation of natural resources**