NOTE DE DOSSIER

Results of Eurobarometer 58.0 (Autumn 2002)
Analysis of Public Attitudes to Insecurity, Fear of Crime and Crime Prevention

Main findings

- The feeling of insecurity has increased slowly but steadily across the EU as a whole between 1996 and 2002; the only member State to experience a consistent decrease in the feeling of insecurity over this period was Germany. In Autumn 2002, feelings of insecurity are highest in Greece, the UK and Italy, and lowest in Denmark, with women and the elderly being the demographic groups who are most likely to feel insecure. The level of contact with drug-related problems also increased across the EU over the same period, with the UK showing the largest gains. In Autumn 2002, the countries where respondents reported the highest level of contact with drug-related problems were Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands and the UK; the lowest level was reported in Denmark. Younger respondents were most likely to report such contact. The greatest apprehension about becoming a victim of crime was seen in Greece, while German and Austrian respondents showed the least fear of such victimisation.

- In all member states, over half of all respondents felt that better policing would help reduce crime. Respondents in the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy were least likely to think that the police were doing a good job.

- Across the EU, respondents were significantly more likely to think that young people would be more effectively deterred from crime by targeted crime prevention programmes than by tougher sentencing. A majority of respondents also thought that poverty and unemployment and lack of discipline were factors that could encourage youth to commit crime.

- Two in three respondents across the EU think that organised crime has infiltrated the economy and civil society. They are less likely to think that it has infiltrated government, either at the national or the local level. Respondents in Greece and in Italy were generally the most likely to suspect the infiltration of the economy, society or institutions by organised crime.
Sampling and methodology

- The data analysed are derived from the Eurobarometer 58.0 survey, which was carried out in Autumn 2002. The survey questioned 16067 respondents in face to face interviews in the 15 Member States, over the period 1 September – 7 October 2002. A sample of 1000 respondents was surveyed in each member state, except for Germany (2000 respondents), the United Kingdom (1000 respondents in Great Britain, 300 in Northern Ireland) and in Luxembourg (600 respondents).

- Previous surveys covering some of the same questions were carried out in Autumn 1996 (Eurobarometer 44.31) and in Autumn 2000 (Eurobarometer 54.1).

- Some of the questions used in this survey were originally designed to resemble similar questions in the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS). However, the focus of the two surveys is distinct, as Eurobarometer is designed to study public opinion in general, while the ICVS has a narrower focus. Further, due to methodological differences and the relatively small sample sizes in each, comparisons of the results of the two surveys should be made with caution.

*The Eurobarometer surveys were coordinated at the request of DG JAI by PRESS/B1 (Public Opinion Analysis Sector) of DG PRESS.*

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2 For more information on ICVS, see [http://www.unicri.it/icvs/](http://www.unicri.it/icvs/)
1. **FEELING OF SECURITY IN OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD**

1.1. Feeling of security by Member State

Respondents were asked ‘How safe do you feel walking alone after dark in the area where you live?’ as a way of assessing their personal feeling of security.

Respondents in the northernmost member states, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, were most likely to report the greatest feeling of security. This feeling was especially strong in Denmark, where the majority of respondents (60%) felt very safe.

At the other end of the scale, respondents in Greece, the UK and Italy reported the greatest feeling of insecurity i.e. feeling either a bit unsafe or very unsafe (42% in the UK and in Italy, 43% in Greece). Nearly one in five respondents in the UK (19%) and over one in five of Greek respondents (22%) said that they felt very unsafe.

1.2. Trends in the feeling of insecurity

The feeling of insecurity has shown an upward trend in most Member States over the period that this question was asked by Eurobarometer.

In the graph below, the proportion of respondents saying that they felt unsafe (either a bit unsafe or very unsafe) has been plotted over time. Across the EU as a whole, there has been a small but consistent increase in the feeling of insecurity over the period that the surveys have been conducted, with 32% of respondents in 1996, 33% in 2000 and 35% in 2002 saying that they felt either a bit unsafe or very unsafe.
The only Member State where there has been a continuous decline since 1996 in the feeling of insecurity is Germany. This trend is particularly marked in the Länder which formerly comprised the GDR.

- **Countries where the feeling of insecurity has increased since 1996**: UK, Italy, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark
- **Countries where insecurity increased between 1996 and 2000, but then decreased**: Greece, Ireland, Belgium
- **Countries where there has been an overall decrease in the feeling of insecurity**: Germany, Spain, Portugal, Austria

### 1.3. Demographics of the feeling of security

Across the European Union, women are much more likely than men to say that they do not feel safe after dark in their neighbourhood.

However, there has been little change over time in the relative levels of security or insecurity felt by each sex. The majority of respondents, both male and female, feel *fairly safe* when walking alone after dark in the area where they live.

Of those who felt less safe,

- In 1996, 19% of men and 44% of women said that they felt either a *little unsafe* or *very unsafe*, with 3% of men and 13% of women feeling *very unsafe*.
- In 2002, these figures had grown to 24% and 45% respectively, with 7% of men and 16% of women feeling *very unsafe*. 

Feelings of insecurity are also linked to age: the oldest respondents are those who are least likely to feel safe.

- Only 17% of those aged 55 or over feel very safe, compared to nearly a quarter of younger respondents.
- 16% of those aged 55 or over feel very unsafe, compared to 10% or less of younger respondents.
2. PERSONAL CONTACT WITH DRUG-RELATED PROBLEMS

As a second index of the feeling of personal security, respondents were asked whether they had had any contact, over the course of the previous twelve months, with drug-related problems. Such problems ranged from seeing people using or dealing drugs, to finding used syringes and other drug-related paraphernalia in the area in which they lived.

2.1. Contact with drug-related problems by Member State

In 2002, respondents in five countries - Greece, the UK, the Netherlands, Italy and Portugal - reported a higher than average likelihood of contact with drug-related problems in their residential area.

In four of these five countries (Greece, the UK, the Netherlands and Italy), increases in the level of contact with such problems over the period 1996-2002 reflect increases in the level of insecurity over the same period (cf. graph below and graph in section 1.2).

Only in Portugal, where increased contact with drug-related problems was also reported, has there been a net increase in the feeling of security over the same period.
Over the last 12 months, how often were you personally in contact with drug related problems in the area where you live?

Time trend in level of contact with drug-related problems (often/ from time to time)

2.2. Demographics of contact with drug-related problems

Men are slightly more likely than women to have had contact with drug-related problems in their neighbourhood, although the difference is not significant.

However, there is a clear age-related pattern of response. The younger the respondent, the more likely they are to have come into contact with drug-related problems, perhaps as a result of greater awareness or knowledge of the realities of drug use.
3. **FEAR OF CRIME**

3.1. **Fear of becoming a victim of crime**

Respondents were asked to estimate the likelihood that they might fall victim to different types of crime. The examples of crime to which they might fall victim ranged from theft to burglary and robbery.

![Graph showing fear of various crimes over the coming 12 months]

Across the EU, respondents were most likely to say that they feared becoming the victims of theft (29%). The crime that they were second most apprehensive about was burglary or break-in at home (26%). The fear of crime involving personal attacks such as assault or mugging was slightly lower (24% feared each).

The risk of theft or mugging in order to steal mobile phones was feared less than other crimes, probably because not all respondents own mobile phones. ³

3.2. **Fear of becoming a victim of crime by Member State** ⁴

Greek respondents were the most apprehensive of becoming the victims of crime in every category: over half of them felt that they were at risk from theft or burglary or

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³ It should be noted that the survey did not ask respondents whether they were owners of mobile phones prior to asking this question. For this reason, and because the fear of mobile phone-related crime is lower than for other crimes, the remainder of this section omits the two items on the fear of mobile-phone related crime.

⁴ Figure are reported for Germany only, as the results for East Germany and for West Germany were nearly identical.
break-in at home (53% felt at risk from theft and 54% at risk from burglary, respectively).

The next most apprehensive national group was found in France, where over 40% of respondents felt at risk from theft or burglary.

The countries where respondents showed the least fear of becoming the victims of crime were Austria and Germany. The feeling of being at risk of assault, for example, was felt by only 5% of Austrian respondents, compared to 42% of Greek respondents.

There is little correlation between the fear of being a victim of crime and the feeling of security, or the level of contact with drugs.

3.3. Demographics of fear of becoming a victim of crime

For each of the above items, there was very little difference in response between men and women respondents. Women respondents were slightly more likely to fear being the victim of each of the crimes listed, but this difference accounted for only two or three percentage points at most, and was not statistically significant.

With regard to age, the oldest respondents (aged 55 years or more) were more likely than all other groups to fear becoming the victim of a burglary or a break-in. Conversely, the youngest respondents (those aged 15-24) were most likely to fear the threat of assault or mugging.
4. **Attitudes to Crime Prevention**

4.1. **Policing and crime prevention**

Across the EU, respondents agree that crime can be prevented through a combination of personal and public measures. The number of respondents who believe that *burglar alarms and special door locks* help to prevent crime (75%) is almost the same as the number who think that *better policing* would also help prevent crime (74%). However, respondents were less convinced about the effectiveness of communal crime prevention efforts such as *neighbourhood watch schemes*, with only 65% agreeing that they helped reduce crime. A slightly smaller proportion (60%) agreed that responsibility for crime prevention could be *shared by the police and private individuals or organisations*.

Finally, a little more than half of all respondents (55%) agreed that *the police are effective* in their area. More than a quarter of them (29%) disagreed with this statement.

| Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about crime prevention? |
|---|---|---|
| **Police and local/national government should share responsibility for crime prevention** | EU15 - Agree | EU15 - Disagree | EU15 - Don't know |
| Police and local/national government should share responsibility for crime prevention | 13 | 12 | 76 |
| Measures such as burglar alarms and special door locks can reduce crime | 6 | 19 | 75 |
| Better policing would reduce crime | 7 | 19 | 74 |
| A neighbourhood watch scheme can reduce crime | 8 | 27 | 65 |
| Private individuals and organisations could share responsibility for crime prevention with the police | 12 | 28 | 60 |
| All things considered, the police in my area are doing a good job | 16 | 29 | 55 |

4.2. **National attitudes to policing and crime prevention**

Respondents in each country are generally likely to agree that personal efforts at crime prevention (special door locks, burglar alarms) are effective against crime – over 50% of all respondents in each country agree - but they are less convinced about the effectiveness of community efforts such as Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

Both types of deterrent receive the support of over 80% of respondents in Sweden and in Ireland. The country where Neighbourhood Watch schemes are least favoured is Austria, where support is only 44%, compared to 66% for personal crime prevention efforts. In Spain and France, where support for Neighbourhood Watch schemes is also much lower than the EU average, exactly half (50%) of all respondents agree that they help to prevent crime.
With regard to the effect of policing, the graph below shows that at least half of all respondents in every country agree that better policing would help to prevent crime. Support for this view exceeds 80% in Ireland, the UK, Greece and Italy. However, in the countries where the demand for better policing is lowest, such as Finland, Denmark and Austria, respondents tend to agree that the police are already doing a good job.

Conversely, the greatest dissatisfaction with the work of the police is displayed in the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy, where less than half of all respondents agreed that the police are doing a good job. In each of these countries, the view that better policing would prevent crime was supported by at least three in four respondents.
The graph below shows national levels of support for the view that crime prevention is an official responsibility, to be shared by government (local or national) with the police, and the view that the police could share responsibility for crime prevention with private individuals or organisations.

In most member states, respondents who are favourable towards sharing of responsibility by the police and government are also favourable towards sharing of responsibility by the police and private individuals, although to a slightly lesser extent. The notable exceptions to this pattern are Germany, where there is significantly less enthusiasm for private responsibility than for government responsibility, and Finland, where the converse is the case.

It should also be noted that national support for sharing the responsibility of policing with private individuals or bodies is distinct from national enthusiasm for Neighbourhood Watch schemes. In Denmark and in Sweden, for example, extremely high levels of support for Neighbourhood Watch schemes are seen at the same time as very low levels of support for private-police sharing of crime prevention responsibility.
5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS CRIME COMMITTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

5.1. Crime Prevention among Young People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>EU15 - Agree</th>
<th>EU15 - Disagree</th>
<th>EU15 - Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young people would commit less crime if sentencing was tougher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people would commit less crime if they had better education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people would commit less crime if they were taught better discipline</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people are led to commit crime by poverty and unemployment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people should be targeted by more crime prevention programmes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the EU, respondents are more likely to believe that young people can be deterred from committing crime more by means of actively targeting them as the subject of crime prevention programmes (85%) than by means of tougher sentencing policy (62%).

Respondents are also very likely to agree that crime among young people may have origins in social or other deprivation. Across the EU as a whole, more than three in four respondents agree that young people are led into crime by poverty or unemployment (81%) and that they would commit less crime if they were taught better discipline (78%). Over two in three respondents (67%) agree that better education would serve as a deterrent to crime.

5.2. Crime Prevention among Young People by member State

At the national level, there is little difference between Member States in the level of agreement with the statements: ‘young people are led into crime by poverty or unemployment’, ‘young people would commit less crime if they were taught better discipline’ and ‘young people would commit less crime if they had better education’ – see first graph below.

Support for preventive measures, such as crime prevention programmes targeted at young people, is also high and fairly constant across the Member States. More direct measures such as tougher sentencing policy enjoy a lower level of support, which shows considerable national variation, as seen in the second graph below.
Do you agree that the following are effective ways of reducing the amount of crime committed by young people? (% agreeing)

- In Portugal, Ireland and the UK, respondents think that tougher sentencing is almost as useful as crime prevention programmes.
- In Denmark, Austria, Luxembourg and Sweden, respondents are twice as likely to think that crime prevention programmes are more useful than tougher sentencing.
- In the other eight countries, there is a small but clear preference for crime prevention programmes over tougher sentencing as a way of preventing youth crime.

Eurobarometer 58.0; fieldwork 1.9.02-7.10.02; 16067 respondents in EU15
6. **OPINIONS ABOUT ORGANISED CRIME**


Eurobarometer surveys have consistently shown that a large majority of citizens of the EU fear organised crime, which they see as a major threat to society.\(^5\)

This belief was displayed again in the results of the current survey, in which over two in three of all respondents across the EU agreed that organised crime has infiltrated civil society (71%) as well as the economy (65%) in their country. There was more scepticism about whether organised crime might have infiltrated government – only 47% felt that this was true for national government and 45% for local or regional governments.

![Graph showing opinion about organised crime infiltration](image)

6.2. **National Opinion about the extent of Organised Crime Infiltration**

Well over half of the respondents in each Member State agreed that organised crime had infiltrated civil society. A slightly smaller proportion agreed that organised crime had also managed to infiltrate the economy as well.

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\(^5\) In Eurobarometer 58, conducted in October 2002, 76% of all EU respondents named *organised crime* as one of their chief fears. The only thing that was more feared was *international terrorism* (by 82% of respondents). In the same survey, 89% also said that the fight against *organised crime and drug trafficking* should be an area for priority action by the EU. The only areas with higher priority were the *pursuit of peace and security in Europe* (91%), *international terrorism* (91%) and *unemployment* (91%). For further details, see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb58/eb58_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb58/eb58_en.pdf)
This belief was strongest in Greece, Sweden, Italy and Finland, where the infiltration of civil society by organised crime was a reality for over 80% of all respondents.

However, the belief that organised crime had infiltrated national or local government was strongest in Italy, where it was held by 71% of respondents. There was support for this belief from over half the sample in Ireland, Greece and Portugal as well.
Annex A - Questionnaire on Public Safety – Eurobarometer 58.0 (Autumn 2002)

Q. 1. How safe do you feel walking alone in the area where you live after dark? Do you feel very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe or very unsafe? (IF RESPONDENT SAYS NEVER GOES OUT, STRESS "HOW SAFE WOULD YOU FEEL…?")

Q. 2. Over the last 12 months, how often were you personally in contact with drug related problems in the area where you live? For example seeing people dealing in drugs, taking or using drugs in public spaces, or by finding syringes left by drug addicts? Was this often, from time to time, rarely or never?

Q. 3. Over the next 12 months, do you think there is a risk that you will personally be the victim of one of the following?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theft of mobile phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Theft of other personal property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Burglary or break-in at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mugging or robbery in order to steal a mobile phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mugging or robbery in order to steal something else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Assault or threat of assault</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. 4. I am going to read out a number of statements relating to crime and crime prevention. For each, one can you tell me whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree? (SHOW CARD)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Measures such as burglar alarms and special door locks can reduce crime in my area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Measures such as a neighbourhood watch scheme can reduce crime in my area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Better policing would reduce crime in my area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Taking everything into account, the police in my area are doing a good job in the fight against crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Police should share the responsibility for crime prevention with local and national government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Private individuals and organisations could share responsibility for crime prevention with the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Young people would commit less crime if they were taught better discipline by their parents or at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Young people would commit less crime if they had better education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poverty and unemployment lead young people to commit crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Young people would commit less crime if jail sentences were tougher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>There should be more crime prevention programmes targeted at young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Organised crime has infiltrated (civil) society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Organised crime has infiltrated the economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Organised crime has infiltrated local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Organised crime has infiltrated national government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>