

Business Crime Scoping Exercise

Methodological work to consider the scope and feasibility of a new survey to measure commercial victimisation

Patten Smith and Paul Harvey
Ipsos MORI

Two national Surveys of Commercial Victimisation (CVS) have previously been carried out by the Home Office (1994 and 2002). The independent Smith review of crime statistics¹ called for regular surveys of commercial and industrial victimisation to supplement measures of victimisation of households and individuals provided by the British Crime Survey. A scoping exercise for a new survey of business crime was therefore commissioned. There were three main components to this work: a review of previous business crime surveys; a series of consultations with Home Office and external stakeholders to identify key survey requirements; and development of survey design options.

The key findings are as follows:

- Previous CVS surveys conducted by the Home Office and the Scottish Government (previously the Scottish Executive) are among the most rigorous of their kind to date. The existing CVS methodology should be retained to provide good

quality data at a reasonable cost and to enable comparisons with previous rounds of the CVS.

- Key stakeholders require up-to-date information on crime experienced by businesses, costs of crime and perceptions of the police response to crime.
- A telephone survey of business premises of all sizes should be conducted. A supplementary survey of head offices should also be considered. The survey questionnaire should be based largely on that used in the 2002 CVS, with modifications to reflect changes in crime patterns and policy priorities.

A new CVS will fill an important gap in data on the nature and extent of crime against businesses, as well as valuable feedback on how retailers view the service they get from the police. This will inform the formulation of sound policy to reduce these crimes.

¹ Smith, A. (2006) *Crime statistics: An independent review*. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/crime-statistics-independent-review-06.pdf>

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Keywords

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This scoping study examined the feasibility of developing a new survey to measure business crime. The work reviewed Home Office and external stakeholder requirements and presented a set of recommendations for the design and implementation of a new survey of business crime. There were three main components to the work: a literature review of business crime surveys; a series of consultations with Home Office and external stakeholders to identify key survey requirements; and development of survey design options.

Review of previous business crime surveys

National and local surveys from both the UK and other countries were reviewed with a view to establishing best practice to date. Most studies suffered from serious methodological shortcomings, notably: use of non-scientific sampling methods; incorrect or no reporting of response rates; and low response rates. The most successful surveys generally used telephone or face-to-face data collection methods. The surveys conducted in the UK by the Home Office and the Scottish Government (previously the Scottish Executive) were amongst the most rigorous conducted in the world to date. Consequently, there are good grounds for retaining the Home Office's existing Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) methodology to provide good quality data at a reasonable cost and to enable comparisons with previous rounds of the CVS.

Consultation with stakeholders

This involved three elements: interviews with nine external stakeholders to obtain information on the possible use and design of a survey; a workshop with internal research and policy staff to understand the Home Office's core requirements for a survey; and a longer workshop involving

a broader group of external and internal stakeholders to discuss the interim findings. Overall most stakeholders wanted a survey to focus on collecting high quality factual data on the frequency and cost of crime for retail, manufacturing, service, and transport and distribution sectors as well as businesses involved in the 'night-time economy'.

Three general categories of crime and crime-related behaviour to be covered by the survey were agreed: (i) property crime, (ii) violent crime and (iii) anti-social behaviour. Stakeholders also wanted the survey to cover response to crimes and perception measures such as confidence in the police. Also, the survey should be flexible enough to deal with new crimes as they arise and, if possible, enable analysis at very local levels to be carried out. Data should be released quickly after fieldwork in order to ensure that results are timely.

Survey design

The authors recommend that a telephone survey of business premises should be conducted biennially and that a supplementary survey of head offices should also be considered. The surveys could cover retail, manufacturing, service, and transport and distribution sectors (excluding public transport) but there is not a clear demand to include public sector organisations, the financial sector or utilities. Premises of all sizes should be included. The optional head office survey should cover head offices of premises in the premises sample that belong to multi-premises organisations. The interviews should take no longer than 25 minutes to complete, within a limited time-frame. The premises interview should be focused on victimisation, crime prevention measures, insurance, local policing, and background information about the business. The head office interview should be focused on cost data.

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The authors recommend that data should be collected by telephone because this represents the most cost-effective method for obtaining data of reasonably high quality. The Experian National Business Database (NBD) should be used as a sampling frame for both premises and enterprises due to its coverage of business telephone numbers.

The sample selection should be designed to include a disproportionately higher number of larger premises/enterprises (i.e. the sample should be disproportionately stratified by size of business) to allow separate analyses to be conducted by employment size group and improve the statistical precision of key survey estimates. In drawing samples for both the premises and head office components of the proposed survey, the authors would also expect to stratify by industry, either proportionately (to reduce sampling variance) or disproportionately (to boost sample sizes for certain industry subgroups). The proposed sample design would easily accommodate both extensions of the survey to Northern Ireland and Scotland, and local boost surveys, if desired.

The authors' initial suggestion is that, if all four sectors discussed with stakeholders are included (retail, manufacturing, services, and transport and distribution), the core premises survey should cover 8,000 premises in total, with 2,000 interviews per sector. This design would deliver confidence intervals of around ± 3.5 per cent around a 50 per cent estimate in each sector. A sample of this size would also be large enough to allow for a boost of 'night-time economy' premises. The authors also recommend that inclusion of a supplementary sample of 500 head offices of multi-premises organisations should be considered as an option. Before any new survey is implemented, an empirically based feasibility study should be undertaken to check key aspects of survey implementation.