

## Data Audit

### Objectives

The purpose of the Data Audit stage is to identify sources of data that can be used in estimation. The results of this process can also be used to identify gaps and to formulate a research programme to fill them.

Identifying the best possible set of data to use as a base for cost of crime estimation is critical. It is ideally done in consultation with experts who have wide familiarity with national and international data sources. This may involve consulting a range of individuals or organisations with specialist areas of knowledge. For example, compiling estimates of the costs of violent crime will require as a minimum: good knowledge of health service cost structures; awareness of the definitions of categories of violent crime used in the country; Knowledge of the kinds (and costs) of sanctions used with violent offenders and of victim studies.

### Requirements

The principal requirement for cost estimation is information on the following aspects:

- Physical victim impacts (proportion of crimes in which injuries are incurred and the extent of impact)
- Value of property stolen or damaged
- GDP per capita (for valuing time lost from work)
- Health treatments and service cost (in relation to physical injuries to victims)
- Criminal Justice System (CJS) data and costs.

### Approach

There are, in effect, two ways of going about a data audit. The first, set out in the previous paragraph, is to work back from the cost 'lines' or categories in the classification of the costs of crime. This proceeds from our account (in the costing principles and methodology section) of the idealised methods of estimating costs. It identifies *what is required*.

The other, which we outline below, is to review some likely data sources to see *what is available*. An effective data audit strategy will need to combine elements of both. It is an exercise in pragmatism and opportunism. There are no countries where all the data ideally needed are actually available.

### Recommended method

As a starting point we would recommend a data audit covering four key areas, as follows:

#### 1. Review EU and international statistical data resources

Review standard EU and international data sources for coverage of the country for which estimates are to be made. This should include checks of the following:

**European Source Book** for recorded crime numbers

**ICVS** ask the following questions:

Is the country covered? If so then establish:

When were sweeps completed?

Which offences are included?

How much data is there on the incidence of offences?

Are the classifications of offences consistent as between ICVS and the recorded crime data for the country? if not then explore the scope for building a mapping between offence categories (eg from the Criminal Code) and the categories used in ICVS

**UNODC** for numbers in prison, proportion detained etc

**CEPEJ** for prosecution and other criminal justice system costs etc.

**Other** list and detail relevant data from other sources

## **2. Review of principal domestic statistical data resources**

Review main national data sources on criminal justice areas. List what is available and comment on things known to be unavailable. Expected coverage includes:

### **National crime victimisation survey**

Is there a major national survey of crime victims? How often is it conducted? What is the sample size? How is the sample constructed?

Comment on:

Is the sample size sufficient to make the findings representative at national level (and at lower levels as well?)

The coverage of offence types

Quality of data on loss of time, extent and type of personal injuries

Coverage of the type and scale of injuries received in violent incidents, including:

the scale of emotional harm experienced

the value of victims' property lost or damaged

time lost from work or other activities

length and type of disruption to normal activities

Is the classification of offences consistent with the ones used in the recorded crime data? if not then explore the scope for matching incidents

What other surveys (local or national) ask about criminal victimisation

**Recorded crime data** Review web sources and documents such as annual reports of police authorities, annual general statistical reports etc. to establish:

What offence classifications are covered?

How frequently are data published?

How far back do data stretch? (not needed in detail)

Have there been significant changes in recent times in the classification of offences, the recording practices used by the police etc?

**Police data** Review web sources and documents such as annual reports and any breakdowns by activity or offence type.  
Note whether the police record their activity (time use) in a way that can support estimates of the proportion spent on particular offence types?

**Sentencing data** Establish the proportion given different types of disposal and what is known about:

types of disposal used (by offence type),  
distribution of the length of custodial sentences and the  
average term served by offence type,  
the use made of community-based disposals and the  
distribution of programme length by offence type

**Courts data** If possible find out the average duration of hearings by offence type.  
Find out what is known about how courts allocate their hearing time  
across offence types.

**Prosecutions** Find numbers by offence type and, if possible, an indication of the  
resources per case required by offence type

**Criminal injuries compensation** Find data on the average amounts paid and the  
number of payments made by offence type

**Probation** Review annual reports and any data on numbers on community  
programmes, and establish:  
Are estimates available of the costs of the various types of orders  
available to courts broken down by the length of order?  
If not what is known about the caseloads of probation officers by the  
type of offender or orders officers supervise?  
If probation staff supervise offenders released on licence from prison is  
it known (by offence type) what proportion breach conditions and are  
returned to prison?

**Prisons** Review annual reports of prison authorities plus sentencing statistics  
and any annual census of prisoner numbers to establish:  
What is known about the total costs of running prisons? Is it  
known how this varies with the type of prison (e.g. 'local', 'high  
security', 'male only')  
Is an annual (or other frequency) audit conducted of inmates by  
offence type  
Is use made of suspended sentences and, if so, on what scale? What  
are the breach rates and what is the distribution of time served

**Enforcement of fines** Review reports on courts or organisations responsible  
for enforcing financial sanctions (and/or compensation orders against  
offenders) to establish the number fined by offence type and the total  
spending on enforcement. Try to establish:  
What use is made of fines? What is done with offenders failing to  
pay? If they get sent to prison, how much time do they serve?

**CJ sector budgets** Review data on public expenditure programmes (especially if  
based on international standards such as COFOG returns) to establish  
what is known about:  
spending by justice agencies  
the degree to which spending can be disaggregated by offence  
type.

**Other surveys**            Investigate whether there are any other surveys (local or national) asking about criminal victimisation  
If so, summarise any information or tables that might be useful

### **3. Review of other domestic statistical resources**

Review one-off studies that may contain useful data. Promising areas where data may be available include:

**Criminal injuries:**        Data collected by private or government insurers on the number of (and/or the extent of) criminal injuries e.g. payments from a criminal compensation fund

**Value of life and limb:** Review estimates used by other government agencies, e.g.: transport or environment or other departments who use estimates for appraising transport, environmental and other projects where physical injury is involved

**Health data**

Are data available on the costs of primary care and hospitalisation (by case or day?)

Are data available on the costs of treating particular injuries?

**Insurance data**

What data are available from the insurance industry about crime?

What proportion of turnover is accounted for by transactions costs?

What kinds of consequences of crime are insurable (eg property theft from dwellings or from the person; homicide; theft of or from vehicles; time lost from work)?

**Jury awards for personal injuries**

What data are available from court awards for injuries experienced in non-criminal settings, eg civil negligence claims?

**Judicial commentaries on the scale of victim loss**

What data are available from victim statements or judicial comments about the type or scale of losses experienced by victims?

**Studies of the relationship between recorded crime, victim survey and self-reported offence numbers**

**Estimates of the volume of drug-related crime:**

Does the country file a Reitox report with ECMDDA?

**Estimates of losses from business crime (shoplifting, fraud, credit card fraud, collated by business lobby groups)**

### **4. National economic and demographic data**

Data on:

Population (number of individuals by age band, eg under 16, and adults)  
Households (number)  
GDP per capita  
Average adult earnings  
Unemployment rate  
Exchange rate (relative to Sterling and Euro)

### **Next steps**

The purpose of conducting a data audit is to identify sources that are available and also where gaps occur. The result of an audit will thus be some data that can be readily used, some areas where data can be used to help inform working assumptions and some areas where little or nothing has been found. Judgments have to be made about how best to make use of what is available.

### **Making best use of data available**

In the short term, the challenge is to make as much use as possible of the local data identified in the audit by applying standard methodology. This will include identifying gaps and the scope for filling them by making inferences from other domestic data sources (eg surveys of lost working time by reason for absence; social security or health data sources)

### **Transferability**

Where nothing much can be found there remains the option of adapting estimates that are available from other countries. For example you might know how many victims of violence have suffered injuries that keep them off work but you do not have a detailed account of how many days were lost, or what the average loss of income was.

It may, in this event, be possible to use information or estimates from elsewhere. For example you may have an estimate from another country about the average number of days off work suffered by victims of assault. These days could be valued at a domestic wage rate to get a first approximation of the income loss from assault. In the case of homicide it may be possible to estimate a value of life lost by adapting calculations done for another country to domestic income levels.

### **Formulating a domestic research and data collection agenda.**

Identifying the gaps in coverage of existing data will give clues about how existing data collection efforts (eg domestic crime victim surveys) might be adapted to produce missing information. For example, it might be comparatively easy to add a question to the survey asking how many days assault victims took off work.

Over the longer term there may be scope to develop survey instruments for collecting new sorts of primary data on the extent and consequences of victimisation