SAFETY AND PREVENTION IN QUEBEC: FIRST ATTEMPT AT AN OVERARCHING APPROACH

STOCK TAKING AND ANALYSIS OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON SAFETY IN QUEBEC

SYNTHESIS

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FOREWORD

Any effort at prevention requires a minimum of information about the problems involved. Intervening to prevent events jeopardizing public safety means leveraging the knowledge we have at our disposal. It is imperative, therefore, to access information sources that tell us not only about the scope of the problems we seek to prevent, but also – and most importantly – about the links between problems jeopardizing our safety and the emotional and/or social factors that are at the root of these problems. What’s more, such information must be easily accessible, reliable and coherent. This is far from the norm. Most of the time, those tasked with prevention are confronted with a mass of fragmentary and at times contradictory information, the meaning and relevance of which are beyond the layman’s grasp — information that is not directly usable to structure prevention programs.

To address this state, observatories have sprung up around the world: examples include the Observatoire français des drogues et toxicomanies (OFDT), the Observatoire national de la délinquance (OND), the Observatoire international sur le racisme et les discriminations and the Observatoire de l’administration publique. Their mission is basically to facilitate interaction between producers and consumers of information, while structuring the information on the various societal problems in a way that meets the affected communities’ needs.

Regarding safety and prevention, in 2001, following extensive consultations with prevention stakeholders, the Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec unveiled its “Politique ministérielle en prévention de la criminalité — pour des milieux de vie plus sécuritaires” (Departmental Crime Prevention Policy: Making our Communities Safer). This policy proposes six strategies, including a component on research, development and training that seeks to develop greater expertise and facilitate the transfer of this expertise to those in the field. Through this component, the Ministry intends to support research and training activities in the field of crime prevention. In addition, the Ministry plans to (translation):

“Look into setting up a crime prevention or public safety observatory, which could be attached to the proposed Forum interministériel (interdepartmental forum) to make available a monitoring tool that can help us understand the hard realities in the field as regards the criminal and social phenomena on which it intends to take action.”

Under the aegis of the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC), the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) has devised a three-year project to build the foundation for a proposed Observatoire québécois de la sécurité et de la prévention dans les milieux de vie (Quebec observatory for community prevention and security).

Basically, the Observatory project is in response to three needs:

- The first springs from the observation that a prevention-based policy demands detailed, reliable information on current and future risks to which citizens are exposed, on the methods used to prevent these risks from materializing and on the effectiveness of these methods.
• The second is the need for data on security and prevention, not only at the federal and provincial levels but also within local communities, making it possible to model the actions taken and adapt them to the distinctive characteristics found locally.
• The third dictates a more direct, easy and accessible flow of information to those engaged, at the provincial, regional or local level, in ensuring security.

The results of the studies carried out by the observatory team are presented in two reports. The first, tabled in March 2006, focuses on: the challenges and definition of the field being studied, the identification and choice of relevant indicators, the sources of the security and prevention data currently available in Quebec, the tools to be used by the future observatory, and the various institutional aspects. The second, a status report, provides a first look at how the security of persons and goods has been compromised in certain environments. After providing an overview of Quebec security, the report takes a detailed look at the following issues: domestic violence, child neglect and family violence, violence in the workplace, violence at school, violence in health care and social services establishments, violence in public places, and property offences.

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INTRODUCTION

What is the security picture in Quebec? What risks and hazards are the province’s inhabitants exposed to? What resources have been developed to predict – and manage – compromises of public safety? Is it possible to identify social groups that are especially vulnerable? This stock-taking exercise is a first stab at providing a response, superficial though it may be, to these types of questions, given the inherent limitations posed by the available data.

The objectives were the following:

- Develop a tool that, using the available data, would help take stock of the security and prevention situation, first at the provincial level then at the regional and local levels.
- Compile an inventory of data sources currently available in Quebec on the nature and frequency of compromises of public security.
- Analyse this and assess its usefulness in terms of the information needs related to prevention.

This report must not be seen as an exhaustive and fully reliable assessment of compromises of Quebecers’ security. It is no more than a trial run of the instrument we have developed, so that we can identify its potential, highlight its limitations and determine how to improve it, in light of the existing data sources and means available. To the extent that this project will be pursued, it will be possible to analyse Quebec’s security in greater depth and to detail security issues not only provincially, but regionally and locally as well.

Carried out as part of the Quebec observatory for community prevention and security project, this stock-taking exercise is based on an assessment and analysis of the available data based on the following conceptual framework:

- The data on the prevalence of compromises of security within the population,
- The data on use of assistance resources, and
- The data on societal reaction.
The data on the **prevalence** of compromises of security are gathered as part of surveys of a representative sampling of the population. They inform us of the number of persons who report having had their security compromised over a given period (generally one year or five years). These compromises are not necessarily reported to the police.

The data on **use of assistance resources** indicate the number of victims who, after having had their security compromised, go to the police or to health or social services establishments.

Lastly, the data on **societal reaction** provide information on the follow-up on these compromises by the criminal justice system (police, the courts, correctional services) and by youth protection agencies.

**DATA SOURCES: AN ASSESSMENT**

We will now summarize the results of our analysis of the data sources used.

1. **Data on prevalence**

Generally speaking, the information on prevalence of compromise of security can be considered fairly satisfactory. Most of the relevant areas are covered by recurrent victimization surveys, using a rigorous methodology. That said, there are some serious shortcomings, chief among them the following:

a. The sample used for Statistics Canada’s victimization survey is too small to allow a detailed analysis of the provincial data, especially when it comes to relatively rare incidents, such as physical violence.

b. Unfortunately, institutional settings and households – comprising persons living in institutions such as homes for the aged, residential and long-term care centres, youth centres and correctional establishments – are systematically excluded from the victimization surveys, both federally and provincially.

c. Violence in schools is not covered by any recurrent survey; it receives marginal attention, and the number of schools surveyed is too small. The same is true of violence in institutional settings.

d. The fact that the surveys generally focus on specific areas makes it difficult, if not impossible, to analyse relationships and cross-referencing among various problems, particularly among the various forms of heterovictimization (violence, property offences) and autovictimization (suicide, drug/alcohol abuse, pathological gambling).

e. The definitions of the problems being studied and of the reference populations, as well as the consideration given to the various environments, vary from one survey to another, which precludes integrating the data from a variety of sources to form a comprehensive picture. This is the case particularly of the definition of “psychological violence”.

f. The limitations inherent in victimization surveys, particularly the small sample size, preclude obtaining information on victimization at the local level. For the same reason, reference is rarely made to living environments.

2. Data on use of assistance resources

Victimization surveys provide meaningful information on this subject, although use of this information at the provincial level is subject to the limitations cited in the previous paragraph. The statistics produced by youth protection services can also be considered, by and large, to be a good source of information. There are serious shortcomings, however:

a. The data on calls made to the police, which can occasionally be gleaned from management reports compiled by various police forces, are not covered in provincial surveys.

b. Given the number of organizations offering assistance to victims and the transfers that take place from one organization to the other, it is impossible to estimate in any reliable way the number of people availing themselves of such services.

c. The statistics produced by certain organizations for primarily administrative purposes are difficult to access, due either to their complex structure or their cost – to wit, the case of the “Intégration CLSC” database managed by the Régie de l’assurance maladie.

3. Data on societal reaction

Police statistics are the source of the most detailed information on the nature of the offences reported to police, on the victims and on the perpetrators. But these details are absent from the surveys conducted in other sectors of the penal system, particularly the courts and correctional services. Of the shortcomings identified, the following strike us as especially glaring:

a. The characteristics of property offence victims are not identified by police statistics.

b. It is impossible to determine the frequency of certain problems which do not correspond to a legal category, in particular domestic violence. While domestic violence can be reconstructed in police statistics through the relationship between perpetrator and victim, this is not the case with judicial or correctional statistics.

c. Court surveys contain no reference to the living environments in which the offences took place. The same is true for the correctional service statistics.

4-Resources, prevention

The information on collective resources that have to do, directly or indirectly, with security management is extremely fragmented and scattered, due to the number of organizations concerned. And this information is difficult to interpret, since administrative language often makes it hard to understand the figures listed in management reports and other documents of that nature.
SAFETY AND LIVING ENVIRONMENTS IN QUEBEC

The stock-taking focuses on the following offences:

- Domestic violence;
- Family violence, particularly mistreatment and abuse of children;
- Violence in schools;
- Violence in the workplace;
- Violence in institutions;
- Violence in public places and,
- Property offences.

1. Current state of affairs

The assessment of the situation in Quebec in terms of compromise of security depends in large part on the barometers used, and particularly on the interpretation of the very notion of security and of the role assumed by the State in managing the security situation. The figures presented in the stock-taking report provide those involved in managing and preventing compromises of security with benchmarks and orders of magnitude; however, we still have to ponder what these figures are telling us about Quebec society and the quality of life of its inhabitants. Everyone agrees that total security is not an attainable objective in an open and democratic society. Consensus is harder to achieve, however, when determining the degree of insecurity that a society can tolerate, without throwing into question the normative foundations on which it lies.

For some, a compromise of security encompasses the slightest incidents and actions that, on a day-to-day basis, can affect even momentarily an individual’s welfare or undermine his expectations towards the people around him. For others, the notion of security is limited to infractions recorded in the Criminal Code that violate a person’s physical integrity or asset integrity. Depending on the approach adopted and in the absence of unequivocal assessment criteria, the data presented in the stock-taking can be used to dramatize or downplay the situation. But the figures themselves cannot provide the key to a rigorous assessment. Beyond the conclusions suggested by the data presented, it is important to consider the data not as an end point but as a starting point for reflecting on and analysing the social processes and contexts in which the problems in question take place.
Violence in the family

As regards **domestic violence**:

- 2 out of 100 people aged 15 and over fall victim to physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their current or ex-spouse over the course of a year [GSS, 1999].
- The rate of prevalence is more or less equal for men and women: 1.8% for men and 2.5% for women. But it is women who most often avail themselves of assistance resources. Thus, in 2003-2004 Quebec’s transition homes recorded 8 564 admissions [THS, 2003-2004].
- In terms of societal reaction, 16 458 files on domestic violence were opened by the police in 2003, of which 11 869 culminated in the laying of charges, or 72.1% [MSP-VC, 2003]. In 2004, the courts opened 9371 dockets relating to cases of domestic violence. Of these, 20% culminated in a custodial sentence [MJ, 2004].

As regards **family violence**:

- The prevalence of mistreatment and abuse of children at the hands of their parents is relatively high in cases of psychological violence (72.6%) and minor physical violence (42.9%). Cases of severe physical violence are relatively less frequent, affecting 6 out of 100 children aged 0 to 17 [EVFVE, 2004].
- During the year 2005-2006, youth protection services received 68 036 reports of mistreatment: of this number, 47% were followed up on. In addition, 71% of the cases assessed involved neglect, 16% physical abuse and 11% sexual abuse [DPJ, 2005-06]. In half the cases assessed, the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse (DPJ) recommended placing the child in a foster home or a placement resource [EIQ-1999].
- With respect to societal reaction, the data supplied by the Ministère de la Sécurité publique indicates that a quarter of the acts of violence against children under 18 reported to police were committed by their parents or other relations [MSP-P, 2003].

Violence in schools

As regards **violence between students**:

- Nearly one out of every two children aged 9 to 15 (48.6%) has been the victim of physical, emotional or verbal violence in a school setting over the course of a year. Physical violence affects only one out of 10 children [ESSEA, 1999].
- In addition, 11.2% of primary (grades 5 and 6) and secondary school students have been bullied at least once during their years in school [MSP-T, 2002].
- Unfortunately, we have no reliable data that we can use to estimate the proportion of victims of school violence having recourse to assistance resources.
- In terms of the societal reaction, police statistics indicate that 2 138 youth under the age of 18 have been the victims of school violence, committed by 2 570 youth in the same age class. In 68% of cases, the offence was assault [MSP-P, 2003].
As regards violence against teachers:

- Estimates with regard to prevalence range from 28% [CSQ, 1998] to 46% [DSPQ, 2002]. This means that over the course of their career, roughly a quarter to half of teachers have apparently been the victims of some form of violence committed by students.
- It seems, however, that the victims hesitate to avail themselves of assistance resources. In 2003, 243 teachers reported to the Commission de la santé et la sécurité au travail (CSST) injuries attributable to acts of violence at school (or 15% of all the reports received) and 34 (or 7.1%) reported psychological harm.
- However, we do not have any reliable data to estimate the number of victims and perpetrators of school violence for which there was a police investigation, sentencing or a legal action.

Violence in institutions

There are no reliable data to paint a picture of violence against institutional users. This shortcoming is all the more serious in that it involves an especially vulnerable population.

With regard to violence against staff, reliable and representative data are not available. We would point out the following, strictly for information purposes:

- According to a survey of its members conducted by the Association des infirmières et infirmiers d’urgence du Québec, 81% of nurses reported having been assaulted at work, all forms of assault combined [AIIUQ, 2000].
- In addition, CSST data indicate that 24% of injuries attributable to workplace violence involve health personnel [CSST, 2004].
- In terms of societal reaction, statistics compiled by the Ministère de la Sécurité publique indicate that 0.4% of infractions against the person take place in a hospital or a clinic [MSP-P, 2004]). A distinction cannot be made, however, between users and personnel in the institutions in question.

Violence in the workplace

- As regards prevalence, 42 000 males and females aged 15 and up have reported one form or another of harassment by their co-workers in the five years preceding the survey. This amounts to a prevalence rate of 1% [GSS, 2004]. It should be pointed out that those committing acts of violence in the workplace are mainly co-workers (41%) and superiors (32%) [CGSST, 2004].
- Regarding the use of assistance resources, it appears that 7.1% of the complaints lodged with the Commission des normes du travail involve psychological harassment [CNT, 2004-05]. Elsewhere, in 2004 the CSST accepted 1 871 claims for injuries attributable to workplace violence (physical or emotional violence and sexual assault) and paid out $13.2 million in income replacement compensation and in medical assistance or rehabilitation costs [CSST, 2004].
- We do not currently have any data on the number of incidents of workplace violence reported to the police, on the number of convictions handed down by the courts or on the number of persons serving time.
Violence in public places

- Over the course of a year, the rate of prevalence of violence in public places is 1.4% for the whole of the Quebec population aged 15 and over. More specifically, 37% of the incidents of violence mentioned by respondents took place in the street and in other public places; of these, 40.3% occurred outside the victim’s neighbourhood [GSS, 2004].
- Regarding the use of assistance resources, the proportion of claims accepted by the Direction de l’indemnisation des victimes d’actes criminels (IVAC) for crimes committed in a public place is 21.4% compared to 48.6% for crimes committed in the victim’s home [IVAC, 2005].
- In terms of societal reaction, of the 75,094 infractions against the person recorded by police forces in 2004, 14% (10,400) took place in public places [MSP-P, 2004]. It also appears that 23% of sexual assaults recorded by the police took place in public places, as against 67% in a private residence [MSP-AS, 2004].

Property offences

As regards the prevalence of the **victimization of persons and households**:

- In 2004, 15 out of 100 Quebec households were the targets of property offences and 6 inhabitants out of 100 were the victims of theft of personal property [GSS, 2004].
- We know very little about the use of assistance resources by victims of property offences. In the specific case of car thefts, the Groupement des assureurs automobiles indicates that in 2004 there were 23,379 claims for damage caused by partial or total theft of vehicles. The damage and the cost of settling the claims came to $221,598,391 [GAA, 2004].
- In terms of societal reaction, 72.3% of Criminal Code infractions investigated by the police in 2004 were property crimes [MSP-P, 2004].
- All told, property infractions caused the victims losses estimated to be at least $983 million [MSP-P, 2004].
- According to the Adult Criminal Court Survey (ACCS), 78% of cases involving a property crime lead to a conviction [ACCS, 2003-04]. Half of the convictions (51.7%) are probation sentences, while custodial sentences account for a further 32.7% [ACCS, 2003-04].
- In the youth courts, 69% of property crime cases lead to convictions [YCS, 2003-04].

As for **property offences committed against businesses**, the only information available comes from police statistics.

- These statistics indicate that 30% of b&e (break and enters) recorded by police in 2004 occurred in commercial or public establishments. Shoplifting accounts for about 14% of all theft under $5,000 reported to the police [MSP-P, 2004].
2. Trends

If taking stock of the security situation represents a difficult task, it becomes even more difficult when it comes to identifying and interpreting trends. Some of the surveys are not recurrent, others cover only a few years. Also, changes in statistical reporting methods and even in the definitions used sometimes leads to confusion – all that just to say that what follows must be seen in light of the gaps and shortcomings in the data used.

Family

According to the data from the Statistics Canada victimization survey, it seems that cases of domestic violence have remained relatively stable. Indeed, the prevalence of domestic violence has remained practically the same between 1999 and 2004. As for use of assistance resources, the number of calls to SOS Violence Conjugale has stayed basically the same since 1999, after steady growth between 1987 and 1998. In terms of societal reaction, cases of domestic violence recorded by police are up slightly since 1997, the increase being slightly more pronounced among male victims.

Regarding family violence, ISQ surveys on the topic in 1999 and 2004 show a degree of stability in the prevalence of mistreatment of children at the hands of their parents. However, when it comes to the use of assistance resources, reports received by youth protection agencies have been increasing steadily since 2001, the number of reports followed up on having stayed basically the same. We do not have any sources of information on changes in societal reaction to family violence.

Schools

Regarding violence between students or against teachers, there are no recurrent data sources allowing us to identify changes over time.

Workplace

In terms of prevalence and societal reaction, we do not have the data to identify trends in workplace violence. As for using assistance resources, the CSST database indicates that the number of injuries attributable to workplace violence recorded by the CSST has remained constant since 1998, from the standpoint of claims accepted. There was a marked increase, however, in rejected claims in 2003. Since 2000, the average period of compensation and the associated costs have risen steadily.

Institutional environment

Given the absence of recurrent surveys in this area, there are no data sources allowing us to say anything about trends related to institutional violence.

Public places

We do not have temporal series in regard to prevalence and assistance resources for violence in public places. As for societal reaction, data from police statistics indicate that the number of personal attacks in public places has remained constant since 2001.
Property offences

Regarding the prevalence of offences against personal and household property, the Statistics Canada victimization surveys indicate that the rates have dipped or held steady since 1993 for all forms of property offence, apart from household theft, which are on the rise. As for the use of assistance resources, the proportion of victims who report having gone to the police has remained steady for robbery and vehicle theft but declined for vandalism, theft of personal property and breaking & entering.

All data sources pertaining to societal reaction have trended downward slightly for property offences. Police data on these offences also reflect this overall downward (and even plateauing) trend since 1995. The decline in these offences is more pronounced when it comes to robbery and b&e, but less pronounced for motor vehicle theft. With specific reference to b&e, there has been a marked decrease since 1997 in the case of private residences, as against a slight increase in the case of businesses.

The number of sentences given in adult and youth courts to the perpetrators of property offences has held steady since 1994.

Because of the lack of recurrent surveys on business property offences, it is impossible, in the absence of any data, to identify trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations emerge from the observations in this report.

First, it is of the utmost importance that Quebec carry out a victimization survey, encompassing a large enough sample to allow a detailed analysis of compromises of security, and to take into account the distinctive characteristics of the various local communities and living environments.

Second, such a survey should comprise those generally excluded from victimization surveys, particularly the institutionalized (the incarcerated as well as those living in foster homes, shelters, etc.).

Third, in light of the deficiencies observed in this area, we recommend developing recurrent surveys on school safety, covering all the problems affecting the schools (violence, drugs, vandalism, street gangs, child prostitution).

Fourth, we advocate measures to ensure improved consultation and coordination among the agencies responsible for producing data on the security situation in Quebec.

Fifth, we recommend that the various sources of data on compromises of security be identified by territory (municipality, MRC or neighbourhood in the case of urban centres).

Sixth, we recommend that a permanent structure be put in place to ensure continuity in the work done by the team in charge of this project.
APPENDIX
DATA SOURCES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Prevalence

[GSS, 1999]
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, General Social Survey, Victimization component

Assistance resources

[THS, 2003-2004]
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Homes Survey

Societal reaction

[MSP-VC, 2003]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, Domestic crime in Quebec

[FAMILY VIOLENCE

Prevalence

[EVFVE, 2004]
Institut de la statistique du Québec, Enquête sur la violence conjugale dans la vie des enfants du Québec

Assistance resources

[DPJ, 2005-2006]
Association des centres jeunesse du Québec, Assessment by youth protection directors

[Societal reaction

[EIQ-1999]
Marc Tourigny, Micheline Mayer and John Wright, L’Étude sur l’incidence et les caractéristiques des situations d’abus, de négligence, d’abandon et de troubles de comportement sérieux signalés à la Direction de la protection de la jeunesse au Québec

[MSP-P, 2003]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, Statistics on crime
VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

VIOLENCE BETWEEN STUDENTS

Prevalence

[ESSEA, 1999]
Institut de la statistique du Québec, Enquête sociale et de santé auprès des enfants et des adolescents

[MSP-T, 2002]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, Les jeunes et le taxage au Québec

Assistance resources
No source of data

Societal reaction

[MSP-P, 2003]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, Statistics on crime

VIOLENCE AGAINST TEACHERS

Prevalence

[CSQ, 1998]
Centrale des syndicats du Québec, Enquête sur la violence en milieu de travail et en milieu de vie

[DSPQ, 2002]
Direction régionale de santé publique de la Capitale nationale, La violence au travail en milieu scolaire. Portrait d’un phénomène peu connu.

Assistance resources

[CSST, 2003]
Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, Database

Societal reaction
No source of data

VIOLENCE IN INSTITUTIONS

VIOLENCE AGAINST USERS

Prevalence
No source of data

Assistance resources

[PU, 2005-2006]
Protecteur des usagers (Protecteur du citoyen), 2005-2006 Annual Report

Societal reaction
No source of data

VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONNEL

Prevalence

[AIIUQ, 2000]
Association des infirmières et infirmiers d’urgence du Québec, Sondage auprès du personnel des urgences au Québec

Assistance resources

[CSST, 2004]
Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, Database

Societal reaction

[MSP-P, 2004]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, Statistics on crime

VIOLENCE IN WORKPLACE

Prevalence

[GSS, 2004]
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, General Social Survey, Victimization component

[CGSST, 2004]
Chaire en gestion de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CGSST) de l’Université Laval, Le harcèlement psychologique au travail au Québec

Assistance resources

[CNT, 2004-2005]
Commission des normes du travail

[CSST, 2004]
Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, Database
**Societal reaction**

[MSP-P, 2003]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, *Statistics on crime*

**VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC PLACES**

*Prevalence*

[GSS, 2004]
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *General Social Survey*, *Victimization component*

*Assistance resources*

[IVAC, 2005]
Indemnisation des victimes d’actes criminels, *2005 Annual Report*

**Societal reaction**

[MSP-P, 2004]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, *Statistics on crime*

[MSP-AS, 2004]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, *Statistics on sexual assault*

**PROPERTY OFFENCES**

**OFFENCES AGAINST HOUSEHOLDS**

*Prevalence*

[GSS, 2004]
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *General Social Survey*, *Victimization component*

*Assistance resources*

[GAA, 2004]

**Societal reaction**

[MSP-P, 2004]
Ministère de la sécurité publique, *Statistics on crime*

[ACCS, 2003-2004]
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Adult Criminal Court Survey*
[YCS, 2003-2004]  
Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Youth Court Survey*

**OFFENCES AGAINST BUSINESSES**

*Prevalence*  
No source of data

*Assistance resources*  
No source of data

*Societal reaction*  

[MSP-P, 2004]  
Ministère de la sécurité publique, *Statistics on crime*