CORRELATES OF VICTIMISATION FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE 1991 QUEENSLAND CRIME VICTIM SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

The major aim of this paper is to examine who is at risk of becoming the victim of an offence against the person and, more specifically, the victim of a violent crime. There is increasing evidence that criminal victimisation is not an indiscriminate visitation but, rather, certain people in certain situations are far more likely to be a victim (Goldstein 1994). Data from the 1991 Queensland Crime Victim Survey (QCVS) were analysed to investigate the nature of assault victimisation risks, and to explore in some detail the correlates of reported assaults and other crimes against the person.

MEASURING THE DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE

Violent crime is important because it creates great fear in the community, and because on occasion it involves serious physical injury and psychological trauma. The fact that violence usually involves direct confrontation with another human being who is intent on inflicting harm makes it qualitatively different from most other forms of injury-producing behaviours. Nevertheless, it is important to keep crimes against the person in perspective. From a statistical point of view, injuries arising from other causes are far more common. Moreover, the groups who are often most fearful, such as the elderly, are in fact the least at risk.

Motor vehicle traffic accidents have been for many years the major cause of injuries in Australia, especially in younger age groups. However, in the decade to 1992, suicide overtook traffic accidents as the major cause of death across all age groups. Deaths resulting from intentional injury by others (of which 98% are homicides) are few in comparison with traffic accidents, suicides or other accidents (chiefly falls). In 1992 there were 327 such deaths, or 4.4 per cent of the total of 7,489, with men comprising 62.4 per cent of the victims (National Injury Surveillance Unit 1994). In contrast to other injuries, the peak age for victimisation was around 35 for men and 30 for women. However, homicide statistics, being the tip of a complex iceberg, give an incomplete picture of the nature of criminal violence, most instances of which do not lead to death. Data on non-fatal injuries suggest that young people (particularly young men under the age of 25) are most at risk.

Vimpani (1991) reports data from 86,820 cases recorded in Accident and Emergency Centres in 22 hospitals which show that in 1988 the number of non-fatal injuries due to intentional violence among those aged 15 to 24 exceeded the total for all older age groups. Males comprised 73 of all the young victims. However, although more representative than the statistics on homicide, the hospital data probably also provide a biased picture of injuries arising from intentional violence. This is because surveys of Accident and Emergency Centres in major hospitals indicate that cases of self-inflicted injury and assault are over-represented in the cases being missed by self-reporting procedures. Young, intoxicated males figure prominently amongst these missing cases.
The crime victim survey has become one of the main tools utilised by criminologists to gain a clearer picture of the incidence of major forms of crime, particularly over time. These surveys have indicated that criminal victimisation, especially for violent offences, is rare and is strongly related to being young, male, and socially marginalised (Fattah 1991). The published findings of the 1991 QCVS are consistent with this picture. Respondents under the age of 30 reported the highest incidence of victimisation for any personal offence (other than verbal abuse), young males were more likely to be the victim of an assault or attack than young females, and 25 per cent of attacks and assaults (other than those involving the deliberate use of a weapon) took place in Brisbane's inner suburbs (Government Statisticians Office 1992).

However, crime victim surveys have definite limitations with respect to the measurement of violence. There is clear evidence that a great deal of violence, especially violence against women and children within family relationships, is hidden from both police and survey interviewers. Consequently, using standard survey methods, it has been almost impossible to identify the actual levels of domestic violence in our society. Perhaps the most reliable statistics are provided by the British crime survey, which suggests that 56 per cent of all assaults on women are domestic, compared to only 8 per cent of assaults on men (Davidoff & Dowds 1989).

Unfortunately, official statistics on such matters are also extremely unreliable, the legislation and police responses to domestic violence have been plagued with inconsistencies, and many offences are not reported to the police. Nevertheless, official data on murders are reliable, and provide a useful corrective to the survey picture of victims as being overwhelmingly male. Criminal Justice Commission data on murders in Queensland for the years 1980 to 1991 show that 42 per cent of victims were women, and that 23.4 per cent of murders were spousal killings. In two-thirds of these spousal murders males killed females (Criminal Justice Commission 1994).

Understanding the nature of domestic violence is important. Crime prevention strategies which are appropriate outside the home are unlikely to have the same effect inside the home, and the psychological and physical impact of violence in the home is likely to be substantively different to the impact of violence outside the home. For these reasons, we attempt in this paper to extract as much information as possible on domestic violence from the Queensland Crime Victim Survey. Nevertheless, it will be apparent from our analyses that, because the data are so limited, few conclusions can be drawn.

Another dimension of victimisation which has been highlighted in recent research is the phenomenon of repeat victimisation. British crime survey figures indicate that between 4 and 5 per cent of respondents are the victims of 43 per cent of the crimes and approximately 50 per cent of respondents who identify as being a victim are the victim of multiple crimes. Farrell and Pease (1993) have identified four factors which are related to repeat victimisation: (a) living in a bad area; (b) living a chaotic or vulnerable lifestyle; (c) being the victim of relationship crimes; and (d) being the victim of retail crime such as shop theft. Understanding the nature of repeat victimisation will allow for the more efficient allocation of crime prevention effort and resources, and for this reason we have attempted in the analysis to investigate the factors which distinguish repeat victims from "one off" victims. Again, however, data limitations prevent clear conclusions.

Another aspect of crime victimisation that has received attention recently in the research literature concerns geographical or ecological effects. Crime victim surveys have been criticised because of their lack of geographic specificity and the tendency to treat respondents as autonomous individuals who are unconnected with their environment (Skogan, 1992). In recent years it has been suggested that contextual variables such as area stability and cohesion, local unemployment rates, and residential mobility, explain victimisation better than individual measures of lifestyle (Mayhew & Hough, 1991). In the 1991 QCVS, questions were asked concerning the respondents' perception of and attitudes to their immediate environment. We make use of these questions to explore some of the ecological aspects of violence in Queensland.
A final aspect of violent behaviour which has been identified in the literature as being of crucial importance is alcohol use (Homel, in press). Violence in and around licensed premises has been a particular focus of concern in Australia in recent years (Homel & Clark 1994; Stockwell 1994). When the analysis of the QCVS data was planned, it was hoped to include the location of an assault (in or near licensed premises), or the intoxication of the offender as judged by the victim, as variables in the analysis. Unfortunately the method employed in the survey to categorise the location of a crime against the person did not allow for the separation of licensed premises from other kinds of public places, and the question on the judged intoxication of the offender was asked of verbal abuse victims only. Consequently it proved impossible in the present analysis to explore the roles of alcohol or of public drinking as correlates of violence.

**STRATEGY OF ANALYSIS**

In order to make the best use of the information available in the Queensland Crime Victim Survey, and to investigate as far as possible the key dimensions identified in the literature, we adopted an analytic strategy somewhat akin to peeling an onion. Each stage of analysis involved discarding a part of the sample and then “decomposing” the remainder of the sample.

First, we focused on all victims of personal crimes, including victims of verbal abuse. The key question here was what factors distinguished any kind of victim from people who did not report being the victim of any personal crime in the previous twelve months.

The second stage of analysis – the second layer of the onion – involved discarding non-victims and comparing people who were victims of verbal abuse only with victims of “genuine” crimes against the person, including both assault and property offences. The third stage or layer took us closer to our major objective, since it involved discarding verbal abuse victims in order to compare victims of one or more property offences only (i.e., “pure” property victims) with victims of assault, whether or not they also reported a property offence.

At the fourth stage, we began to differentiate types of assault, by discarding the pure property offenders and comparing victims of one or more domestic assaults (whether or not any other offence was reported, and whether or not a single or multiple victimisation was reported) with people who reported being assaulted only in non-domestic situations. In other words, the key question at the fourth stage was how victims of domestic and “public” assaults differ.

The fifth and sixth stages of unpeeling the onion involved a focus on multiple assault victimisation. Too few people reported being the victim of domestic violence to allow analysis of multiple victimisation for domestic assaults, so domestic violence victims were discarded in these last stages. In stage five, victims of a single non-domestic assault (and nothing else) were compared with people who were victims of multiple non-domestic assaults, or “mixed” victims of both assault and property crime. At stage six, victims of multiple non-domestic assaults, but no property crimes, were compared with victims of at least one non-domestic assault and at least one property crime. This last comparison allowed us to compare “pure” multiple assault victims with people who reported being victims of both property offences and assault.

The overall strategy of analysis is summarised in diagrammatic form in Figure 1.

In order to focus more precisely on the correlates of physical assault, we also carried out supplementary analyses excluding people who simply reported being threatened with assault. We used a simplified dependent variable which distinguished non-victims of physical assault from victims; and, among the victim group, victims of physical domestic violence from victims of physical non-domestic violence. Selected results from these analyses are reported in this paper.
METHOD

QUEENSLAND CRIME VICTIM SURVEY

In 1991 the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Government Statistician’s Office conducted the Queensland Crime Victim Survey (QCVS) to examine Queenslanders’ experiences with crime. Data were collected from a sample of 6,315 households throughout Queensland using face-to-face interviews and four interview schedules with household members. Interview schedules included (a) Household Form, (b) Household Crime Questionnaire, (c) Personal Crime Questionnaire, and (d) Victim Questionnaire.

Data collected using the Personal Crime Questionnaire were used for the analyses presented in this report. Respondents were asked to report on their experiences with victimisation in the previous 12 months. In each household, one member over the age of 14 was randomly selected to participate in the interview. If possible these interviews were conducted in private. However, because of practical difficulties associated with the interview situation many interviews were unable to be conducted in private.

Of households sampled in the QCVS, 16.1 per cent were unable to be interviewed. However, only 0.7 per cent of households approached refused to participate in the survey. In 11.2 per cent of households the interviewers made three calls and were unable to contact any members of the household. In a further 4.8 per cent of households the interviewers made contact but were unable to carry out the interview for a
number of reasons, including a lack of interpreters in rural areas, and illness. Unfortunately, it is very likely that victims are over represented in uncontacted households. Many of these will be highly mobile households; households frequently associated with high levels of victimisation (Skogan 1992).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

NATURE OF VICTIMISATION

To investigate the nature of victimisation, two dependent variables were created from respondents' reports of victimisation, following the analysis strategy outlined above. The Appendix contains the questions asked respondents concerning their personal victimisation experiences. The two variables are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Method of Construction of the Dependent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Dependent Variable: The Nature of Victimisation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Not a victim of verbal abuse or any crime</td>
<td>4768</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Verbal abuse victim only</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Domestic assault, single or multiple, whether or not any other offence was reported</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. One or more property crimes only</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. One only non-domestic assault and no property victimisation</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. More than one non-domestic assault and no property victimisation</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. At least one non-domestic assault and at least one property crime</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6315</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Dependent Variable: Victimisation for physical assault</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Not a victim of physical assault</td>
<td>6083</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Domestic physical assault, single or multiple, whether or not any other offence was reported</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. One or more non-domestic physical assaults, whether or not property victimisation was reported</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6315</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus of the first dependent variable was on assault victimisation. For this variable the definition of assault included threats of assault. This variable consisted of the seven categories of victimisation set out in Table 1. These comprehensive categories allowed the investigation of a range of victimisation experiences. The focus of the second dependent variable was on more serious assault victimisation. For this variable threats of assault were excluded, so that only actual physical assaults were counted. The small number of victims of physical assault prevented the elaborate distinctions that were possible when all kinds of personal victimisation were analysed. Despite the small number, however, it was considered vital to maintain the distinction between domestic and non-domestic physical assaults.

Responses were included in the category of domestic assault when the victim of an assault identified the assault as either a current or former spouse or de facto, or a current or former boyfriend or girlfriend. This definition extended the definition used in the report of the Queensland Domestic Violence Task Force (March 1988) which did not include current or former boyfriend or girlfriend. Any respondent who reported that they had been a victim of domestic violence, no matter what other crimes they also reported being the victim of, was assigned to the domestic violence category.

Despite giving primacy to reports of domestic assault, very few cases were reported: 58 when threats were included, and 35 when only physical assault was counted. Perhaps not surprisingly, verbal abuse was the most common category, at 10.6 per cent of the sample. The next most frequent type of offence was property crimes, at 8 per cent (6.9% + 1.1%), with assault victimisation (including threats) being reported by 7.1 per cent of the sample.

Note that the percentages in Table 1 are unweighted. Technically, if one wishes to make valid statements about the whole population of Queensland, sample statistics such as percentages should be weighted to take account of the effect of household size when randomly sampling one person from each household, or to take account of other aspects of the sampling structure. None of the statistics in this paper are weighted, for two main reasons. First, the emphasis of the paper is on exploring predictors of crime victimisation, and to include household size as a covariate in the cross tabulations would substantially increase the complexity of the analyses while creating a problem of consistency. Why privilege household size as a control variable, thus introducing the complexities of three-way cross tabular analysis, when many other variables, such as age or gender, deserve primacy on both theoretical and empirical grounds as covariates?

Secondly, weighting the data produces only slight differences in the percentages and log odds reported. For example, if the data had been weighted the percentage of 15-19 year old non-victims would have dropped from 51.5 per cent (unweighted) to 50.6 per cent (weighted). Nearly all other comparisons of weighted and unweighted percentages yield equally slight differences.

As the analyses were conducted primarily to explore the relationships among the variables, rather than to generate population estimates, it was felt that the slight differences between the weighted and unweighted figures would have little impact on the overall interpretation. Consequently, all graphs are based on unweighted percentages, and depict (appropriately) odds analyses of the sample. Although strictly speaking they should not be interpreted as population estimates but as sample contrasts or statistics, when the data are presented in graphical form the distinction is mostly of little practical importance.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The groups of independent variables included in these analyses were (a) personal descriptors (b) respondents’ attitudes to and perceptions of their suburb/area and (c) interviewers’ observations of the suburb/area. The personal descriptors included in the analysis were age, gender, marital status, labour status, education, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, language spoken at home, housing status, country of birth and locality.
The respondents' attitudes to and perceptions of their suburb or area were indicated in their responses to a range of survey questions, including questions concerning the length of time the respondent had lived in the suburb/area, how satisfied they were with their suburb/area, and their perception of the level of crime in the suburb or area. Their perception of their suburb or area was based on their response on a four point Likert scale, from very common to not at all common on the frequency of the following public incivilities: (a) graffiti on the walls or buildings, (b) drunks or vagrants on the streets, (c) rubbish or litter lying about, (d) homes or gardens in bad condition, and (f) noisy neighbours or loud parties.

The interviewers were asked to provide an independent evaluation of the area or suburb by listing the frequency of a range of non-residential buildings visible from the property. These included hotels, schools, factories, churches and hospitals.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The relationships between the two dependent variables and the independent variables were examined using a series of chi-square analyses of two-way tables. Post-hoc analyses were conducted to explore significant bivariate relationships. These analyses were carried out through orthogonal decomposition of chi-square statistics for the two-way tables. The orthogonal contrasts for the major dependent variable are presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2 – DECOMPOSITIONS FOR THE MAJOR DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrasts</th>
<th>n1</th>
<th>n2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1 Victim v non-victim</td>
<td>4768</td>
<td>1547</td>
<td>6315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 Verbal abuse v crime against the person</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>1547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 Property victim only v assault victim</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4 Domestic assault v other assault</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5 Single non-domestic assault v multiple non-domestic assaults</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6 Multiple non-domestic assaults v at least one non-domestic</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of these analyses are presented graphically, plotting the log of the odds ratio for the probability of victimisation. Using this plotting process, a log odds ratio of zero indicated equal risk, but the points on the vertical axis have been relabelled to indicate untransformed odds ratios (so that the "equal risk" line corresponds to an odds ratio of 1.0).
RESULTS

PERSONAL DESCRIPTORS

Of the personal descriptors included in the analyses, age, gender, marital status, education, labour status, housing status and urban or rural location were significantly related to the respondents’ experiences with crime (Table 3).

TABLE 3 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL DESCRIPTORS AND THE NATURE OF VICTIMISATION (ASSAULT INCLUDING THREAT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Descriptors</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$G^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>834.45**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>119.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>570.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language spoken at home</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>253.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour status</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>706.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing status</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>248.97**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban/Rural</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.77*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

As there is not space to present the decompositions for all statistically significant bivariate relationships, age, gender, and labour status will be examined graphically to illustrate key relationships.
Three of the six orthogonal contrasts were significantly associated with age. The first significant contrast ($C^2(10) = 680.7, p < .001$) compared the risks of victimisation for any kind of offence, including verbal abuse, with not being a victim at all for each age group. Plotted in Figure 2 are the percentages of victims in each age group. The younger age groups were more likely to be the victim of a crime (including verbal abuse). Almost 50 per cent of respondents under the age of 25 had been the victim of a crime. Fewer than 5 per cent of respondents over the age of 65 had been the victim of a crime.

**Figure 2 - Risk of being a victim of an offence against the person (including verbal abuse), by age**
The second significant contrast \( (G^2(10) = 53.10, p < .001) \) compared, amongst victims of an offence against the person, the risk across age groups of being the victim of verbal abuse only with the risk of being the victim of a property offence or assault. This contrast is presented graphically in Figure 3. For each age group, the log odds ratio of victimisation for verbal abuse to victimisation for all other personal crime is plotted. This enables the comparison at each age group of the risk of victimisation of verbal abuse and the risk of victimisation for all other crimes. The 'equal risk' line corresponds to an odds ratio of 1.0 and a log odds ratio of zero. Of respondents who reported being a victim of an offence, the younger age groups were at a higher risk of victimisation for "real" crimes than for verbal abuse. Between the ages of 35 and 49, respondents were about equally likely to be the victim of either verbal abuse or a "real" crime. However, if an older person reported being the victim of an offence, the offence was more likely to be verbal abuse than the more serious assault or property crimes. Respondents in the 15–19 year old age category who reported being the victim of an offence against the person reported being a victim of a serious crime three times more often than being the victim of verbal abuse.

**Figure 3** - Victims of Offences Against the Person: The Risks of Victimization for Verbal Abuse Only, Compared with Victimization for Assault Or Property, by Age of Victim
The third significant contrast ($G^2(10) = 39.42, p < .001$) is amongst the victims of "real" crime (excluding verbal abuse). At each age group the risk of property victimisation is compared with the risk of assault victimisation (Figure 4). Young people, particularly those aged 20-24, were at greater risk of an assault (including threats) than a property crime. Conversely, victims over the age of 45 years were substantially more likely to be victims of a property crime than a violent crime.

**Figure 4 - Victims of Offences against the Person: The Risks of Victimisation for Property Offences Only, Compared with Victimisation for Assault, by Age of Victim**
In summary, young people are much more often victimised than older people; they are more often the victims of "real" crimes rather than verbal abuse; and when they are the victims of "real" crime they are more likely than older people to be victims of assault rather than property crime.

**Gender**

Only two of the six orthogonal contrasts were significantly associated with gender. The first significant contrast ($G^2(1) = 39.28, p < .001$) examined the risks of being a victim with the risks of not being a victim for each sex. Plotted in Figure 5 are the percentage of respondents in each category who reported being victimised in the previous 12 months. Males were more likely to be the victim of a crime than females, with 28.3 per cent of males reporting victimisation compared with 21.4 per cent of females.

![Bar chart showing percentage of victims by gender](image)

**Figure 5 - Risk of being a victim of an offence against the person (including verbal abuse), by gender**
The non-significant contrasts for verbal assault versus other assault, property victimisation versus assault victimisation, single non-domestic assault versus multiple non-domestic assaults, and multiple non-domestic assaults versus non-domestic assault and property indicate that both male and female victims were equally at risk of these personal offences. The other significant contrast compared victims of domestic assault with victims of non-domestic assault ($G^2(1) = 72.21, p < .001$). Figure 6 indicates that both men and women were at greater risk of non-domestic assault than domestic assault. However, women were at far greater risk of domestic assault than men.

This gender pattern was repeated for the second dependent variable involving serious physical assaults (excluding threats). Males (4.9%) were almost twice as likely as females (2.6%) to report being the victim of a serious assault. For both sexes the majority of reported serious assaults were not domestic (the perpetrator was not a partner or ex-partner). However, 38.8 per cent of females who claimed that they had been the victim of a serious assault reported that the assault had been perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner, compared with only 2.1 per cent of males. Although it is certain that the incidence of domestic violence is grossly under-reported, it is apparent from these data that females were at greater risk than males of being assaulted by a partner.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 6** - Victims of Assault (Including Threat): The Risks of Victimisation for Domestic Assaults Compared with Victimisation for Non-Domestic Assaults, by Gender of the Victim
AGE BY GENDER INTERACTION

To explore a suspected interaction between age and gender, an additional analysis was performed examining reported victimisations for assault (excluding threats and verbal abuse). Two-way analysis of variance was carried out, using an arc-sine transformation on the percentage of victims as the dependent variable. A significant interaction between age and gender was found ($\chi^2(10) = 35.38, p < .001$). The percentage of reported victimisation for males and females across each of the age groups are set out in Figure 7.

Younger respondents were at greater risk of being the victim of a physical assault than older respondents. However, the difference between the two sexes observed in the earlier analysis was only apparent in the under 35 year olds. Both males and females over the age of 35 were about equally at a low risk of a physical assault. Young males were more at risk of a physical assault than young females and they were at risk until an older age. Of all females, females in the 15–24 age group were at the highest risk. By the time a female reached 25, this risk had levelled out: not until their mid-30's do males reach this plateau.

**Figure 7 - Risk of Being the Victim of a Physical Assault by Age and Gender**
To summarise the effects of age and sex on victimisation risks: young people and males are victimised more overall; young people are more at risk of actual crimes against the person rather than verbal abuse alone; when victimised for personal crimes, they are more likely to be the victims of assault rather than property crime; when assaulted, young people are more likely than older people to be physically assaulted rather than threatened; young men (especially teenagers) are more at risk of physical assault than young women; but women are at more risk than men of being assaulted by their partners, even though overall they report more often being the victim of an assault by someone other than a partner. It is likely, however, that this last effect is an artefact of low reporting rates for domestic violence.

LABOUR FORCE STATUS

Five of the six contrasts were significantly related to labour force status. The labour force status of the respondent was significantly related to their risk of being the victim of a crime ($G^2(9) = 550.85, p < .001$). Almost 50 per cent of respondents in full-time study or on a sole parent’s pension reported being the victim of a crime (Figure 8). Only 5 per cent of respondents on an age pension or retired were the victims of any type of crime. This finding probably partly reflects the effects of age, with students being in the younger age groups and respondents receiving an age pension being in the older age groups.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8** - **Risk of being a victim of an offence against the person (including verbal abuse), by labour status**
Victims on the age pension, or who were retired, and victims who reported their occupation to be home duties, were at higher risk of verbal abuse compared with 'real' victimisation ($G^2(9) = 38.88, p < .001$). Conversely, victims who were full-time students or on a sole parent pension were at greater risk of victimisation for "real" crime compared with verbal abuse (Figure 9), reflecting to some extent once again the effects of age.

**Figure 9 – Victims of Offences Against the Person: The Risks of Victimisation for Verbal Abuse Only, Compared with Victimisation for Assault or Property, by Labour Status of the Victim**
When the labour force status of victims of property offences was compared with the status of victims of assault a significant difference was found ($G^2(9) = 27.45, p < .001$). Victims receiving an age pension or who were retired were more likely to report being the victim of a property offence than an assault. Victims on a sole parent pension, the unemployed or those on a sickness or disability pension were at higher risk of an assault than a property offence. Victims who reported their labour force status as full-time education, full or part-time employment were equally at risk of property and assault victimisation (Figure 10).

**Figure 10** — **VICTIMS OF OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON: THE RISKS OF VICTIMISATION FOR PROPERTY OFFENCES ONLY, COMPARED WITH VICTIMISATION FOR ASSAULT, BY LABOUR STATUS OF THE VICTIM**
Labour force status was an important factor when comparing victims of domestic assault with victims of a non-domestic assault (Figure 11). Victims of assault who were recipients of a sole parent pension were more likely to report the assailant to be a spouse or de facto ($G^2(9) = 55.85, p < .001$). Victims of assaults in all the other categories of labour force status were more likely to be the victim of a non-domestic assault than a domestic assault.

**Figure 11 – Victims of Assaults (Including Threats): The Risks of Victimization for Domestic Assaults Compared with Victimization for Non-Domestic Assaults, by Labour Status of the Victim**
When the labour force status of victims of a single non-domestic assault was contrasted with victims of multiple non-domestic assaults no significant differences were found. However, when victims of multiple non-domestic assaults were compared with victims of at least one non-domestic assault and one property offence significant differences with respect to labour status were found ($G^2(7) = 22.79, p < .01$). Of the respondents who were victims of multiple offences against the person, students were at higher risk of both non-domestic assault and property victimisation (Figure 12). Victims of multiple offences in all other labour force status groups were more at risk of multiple non-domestic assaults. The group most at risk for multiple non-domestic assault was those which reported their occupation to be home duties. However, the number of respondents involved was very small. Twelve of the victims of multiple offences against the person reported their occupational status to be home duties, and eleven of these reported being the victim of multiple non-domestic assaults. The next highest at risk group was sole parents. In this analysis the assaults are not domestic (the assailant was not identified as a spouse, ex-spouse, de facto or ex-de facto), but because those identifying their occupations as ‘home duties’ or as ‘sole parents’ are likely to be women it is possible to speculate that these assaults were in fact perpetrated by someone well known to the victim.

**Relative risk - multiple non-domestic assault victimisation vs. both non-domestic assault victimisation and property offences**

![Graph showing labor status vs risk of victimisation](image)

**Labour status**

NB. There were 5 victims in the category 'age pension or retired' who were all victims of multiple non-domestic assault.

**Figure 12 – Victims of Multiple Offences Against the Person: The Risks of Victimisation for Multiple Non-Domestic Assaults Compared with Victimisation for Both Non-Domestic Assaults and Property Offences, by Labour Status of the Victim**
SUMMARY FOR PERSONAL DESCRIPTORS

Examination of the respondents' personal descriptors provide substantial evidence which dispels the notion of random victimisation. Certain groups of respondents were at higher risk of victimisation. Furthermore, when the nature of that victimisation was examined, relationships were found between the personal descriptors and specific crimes. It is possible to speculate on the interactions among these personal descriptors which would identify groups of high risk individuals. Unfortunately, because of the relatively small numbers of victims in some of the categories, it was not possible to statistically explore these interactions.

Respondents who were in full-time education, and those who were unemployed, were at very high risk of being a victim and the victim of a "real" crime. However, the type of crime they were at risk of was different for the two groups. Victims who were students were equally at risk of property, assault victimisation or both property and assault victimisation, whereas unemployed victims were at greater risk of an assault compared with a property victimisation. It can be speculated that both these groups of victims consist predominantly of young males who live (by normal standards) somewhat "chaotic" lifestyles. However the difference in risk of victimisation for property and assault victimisation probably reflects the difference between the two groups in socio-economic status. Students are more likely to be of higher socio-economic status and consequently have more property to steal. Unemployed people are of lower socio-economic status and have less property to steal.

Males were found to be at greater risk of victimisation than females. However, female victims of assault were at a higher risk of a domestic assault than were male victims of assault. Furthermore, respondents who reported their labour force status as recipients of a sole parent pension were at higher risk of assault than all over labour force status categories. It can be assumed that the majority of respondents on the sole parent pension are female. It is therefore not surprising that this group of respondents reported being most at risk of domestic assault.

Older people, regardless of gender, were at a very low risk of being the victim of a personal offence. Those who were a victim were very unlikely to be the victim of an assault. If they were the victim of a "real" crime, this crime was most likely to be a property offence.

RESPONDENTS’ ATTITUDES TO AND PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SUBURB/AREA

Table 4 presents the results of the bivariate analyses examining the relationship between the respondents’ ratings on their attitudes to and perceptions of their suburb or area and their crime victimisation experiences. All the relationships between the major dependent variable and the respondents’ attitudes to and perceptions of their suburb or area were statistically significant.
### Table 4 – Relationship Between the Nature of Victimisation (Major Dependent Variable) and the Respondents’ Satisfaction with and Perception of their Area/Suburb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with the suburb/area</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$G^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in this suburb/area</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>232.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely to move in next two years</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>317.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with this suburb/area</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>223.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do people in this suburb/area help each other or go own way?</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>91.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of crime in the area</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>217.26**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of the suburb/area</th>
<th>df</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti on walls and buildings</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>168.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunks and vagrants on the streets</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>311.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubbish and litter lying about</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>207.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes and gardens in bad condition</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>167.87**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy neighbours or loud parties</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>220.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism and deliberate damage to property</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>282.47**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Once again there is not enough space to present graphically all the significant decompositions. However, similar patterns of victimisation were found across all the variables assessing the respondents’ attitudes to and perceptions of their area or suburb. For the majority of the variables only two of the contrasts were significant. Not surprisingly the first contrast, comparing non-victims with the victims of any offence against the person (including verbal abuse) was significant across all variables. The second significant contrast compared the victims of property offences with assault victims.
The graphical analysis of the decompositions associated with the variable asking respondents to rate the frequency of drunks and vagrants on the street will be presented since it conveniently captures most of the relevant information. Figure 13 presents the results of the first significant contrast ($G^2(5) = 254.14$, $p < .001$). If the respondent reported drunks and vagrants on the streets as being very common they were more likely to be the victim of a crime against the person.

**Figure 13** – Risk of Being the Victim of an Offence Against the Person (Including Verbal Abuse), by Reported Frequency of Drunks and Vagrants on the Streets.
Victims who reported drunks and vagrants in the street being a very or fairly common event were at higher risk of an assault compared to a property victimisation (Figure 14). Victims who lived in areas in which drunks and vagrants in the street were not very common were at greater risk of a property crime compared to an assault victimisation.

All the variables asking about the respondents' attitudes to and perceptions of their area or suburb showed similar patterns. It is assumed that these variables are capturing the level of social disorganisation in an area or suburb. The higher the levels of social disorganisation the more likely residents are to be the victim of a crime, and victims in "disorganised" areas are more likely to be victims of assault rather than a property crime.

**Relative risk - property victimisation vs assault victimisation**

![Diagram showing relative risk between property and assault victimisation](image)

**Figure 14 - Victims of Offences Against the Person: The Risks of Victimisation for Property Offences Only, Compared with Victimisation for Assault, by Reported Frequency of Drunks and Vagrants on the Streets**
INTERVIEWERS OBSERVATIONS OF THE SUBURB/AREA

The interviewers were asked to provide independent observations of the area or suburb by reporting on the types of buildings visible from the respondent’s residence. As indicated in Table 5, only three of the building types were significantly related to the respondents’ victimisation experiences.

**TABLE 5 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NATURE OF VICTIMISATION (MAJOR DEPENDENT VARIABLE) AND THE INTERVIEWERS’ REPORT ON THE SUBURB/AREA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of building visible from household</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>G^2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No non-residential</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank, shop, restaurant, petrol station</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory, warehouse, industrial</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.99**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School, college, university</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital, clinic, nursing home</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports ground, public park</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm buildings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.61**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non residential</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

*  \( p < .05 \)

**  \( p < .01 \)

When the subsequent analyses were performed examining the significant relationships between the major dependent variable and the interviewers reported sighting of office buildings and farm buildings, only the first contrast, the likelihood of the respondent being a non-victim compared to the victim of any crime, was found to be significant (office buildings; \( G^2(1) = 7.13, p < .01 \); farm buildings; \( G^2(1) = 17.94, p < .001 \)). Respondents who had office buildings visible from their dwelling were more likely to be the victim of a crime than respondents who did not have office buildings visible from their dwelling. The opposite situation was observed when farm buildings were visible from the property, with these respondents being less likely to have been a crime victim than respondents who could not see a farm building from their house.

Analyses examining the relationship between the interviewer’s observation of a hotel from the respondent’s property and the orthogonal contrasts again found only one contrast to be significant. Surprisingly, respondents who lived in sight of a hotel were no more likely to be the victim of a crime than all other
respondents. However, of respondents who were the victim of a crime, those living in sight of a hotel were more likely to be the victim of a "real" crime (84.6%) than those not living in sight of a hotel (56.1%) ($G^2(1) = 9.52, p < .01$).

**DISCUSSION**

Overall, the results of the analysis of the 1991 QCVS support the existing literature on victimisation, which shows that crime victimisation is rare and that risks are distributed unequally. The results indicated that young, single males were at greatest risk, particularly for assault. This pattern of risk was also found among respondents who lived in areas with a high incidence of social incivilities.

Substantial evidence was found to support relationships between the level of social disorganisation in a suburb or area and the nature of victimisation. Victims of any offence were more likely than non-victims to live in an area in which respondents reported a range of social incivilities, including graffiti on the walls, rubbish and litter lying around, vandalism, noisy neighbours, homes and gardens in bad conditions and drunks and vagrants on the streets. Furthermore, respondents who reported high mobility and low satisfaction were more likely to be the victim of any offence than victims who reported low mobility and high satisfaction. Of victims, assault victims were more likely to live in a socially disorganised suburb or area compared with victims of a property offence.

The relationship between social disorganisation and the nature of victimisation supports Skogan's (1992) assertion that it is extremely important to include both ecological factors as well as individual or personal factors when examining the probability of victimisation. It is not possible to disentangle completely individual variables and ecological variables, as areas high in social disorganisation are also areas in which young, single, unemployed people congregate. Nevertheless, these ecological circumstances are the most highly correlated with criminal victimisation and especially assault victimisation. Evidently, the risk of personal victimisation is not evenly distributed even amongst young people. Certain individuals are at higher risk, as are individuals living in specific social situations.

The interviewers' perceptions of the area or suburb provided some support for the increasing risk of victimisation within specific geographical locations, but this support was not as strong as expected. Apparently, it is the behaviour of individuals within certain locations that is highly associated with the increased risk of victimisation, rather than the actual presence of certain buildings in the area or suburb. However, the presence of a hotel was associated with an increased risk of personal victimisation. When this is examined in conjunction with the increased presence of drunks and vagrants it is apparent that alcohol plays an important role in the nature of victimisation. Unfortunately, as indicated earlier, it was not possible to explore further the role of alcohol in the respondents' victimisation experience, as the QCVS only collected data about alcohol in relation to verbal abuse. In the light of both the literature and the results of the analyses, this was clearly a major defect in the design of the survey.

Contrary to previous research, little evidence was found that victims of multiple crimes were any different from victims of a single crime. This may have been due to the way the nature of victimisation categories were formed, but it was probably more related to the reluctance of respondents to report domestic violence. Repeat victimisations occur more frequently in relationship crimes (Farrell & Pease 1993). Domestic violence is arguably the most under-reported and under-recorded crime. However, in these data the problem was compounded as the individual interviews may not have always been conducted in private. Consequently, in situations of domestic violence the victim and perpetrator may have been present during the interview. Furthermore, many respondents may not have considered crime within the household as "real" crime - "real" crime occurring only between strangers. Women appeared readier to report assaults by non-intimates than by intimates.
Although too few cases of family violence were reported for detailed analysis, those at greatest risk of such violence appeared to be women who were separated, divorced, or living in de facto relationships. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine if the assaults on separated or divorced women occurred prior to the separation. Domestic violence is, of course, a major factor in separation and divorce. However, domestic violence does not stop at the point of separation. US Department of Justice figures suggest that up to 75 per cent of domestic assaults reported to the police occur after separation (Hart, Stuehling, Reese, & Studding 1990). The question then arises whether domestic violence escalates after separation. If this were so, it would have substantial implications for the protection of women and the prevention of violence. However, an alternative explanation may be that women are more prepared to identify and report violence after the separation.

This analysis of the 1991 Queensland Crime Victim Survey has raised more questions than it has answered. To explore these issues, victims need to be asked about their lifestyles, social relations, protective and policing arrangements, and the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the incident. Both the macro and micro environment of victims need be explored using qualitative as well as quantitative data collection techniques. These surveys would use selective sampling techniques to maximise the use of resources and to ensure high risk populations are adequately surveyed. Progress in criminological research on victimisation clearly depends, in part, on the use of different kinds of surveys, designed with more explicit theoretical frameworks, which address these and many other specific research questions, such as the role of victim precipitation, the long term psychological impact of victimisation, and the impact of victimisation on fear of crime.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES


APPENDIX

VICTIMISATION QUESTIONS FROM THE PERSONAL CRIME QUESTIONNAIRE

Q. 10 The following questions relate to offences which occurred in Queensland during the last 12 months. We are interested in incidents which relate to you personally, not other members of the household.

Offence K: In Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months, has anyone deliberately used a weapon on you?

Offence M: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) have you been attacked, punched or kicked; or assaulted, sexually or otherwise, either be a stranger or someone you knew?

Offence N: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) has anyone threatened to use force or violence on you in a manner that actually frightened you, or threatened property of yours?

Offence P: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) have you had an item stolen from your person, e.g. a wallet, purse or watch?

Offence Q: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) has anyone tried to steal an item from your person?

Offence R: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) have you had any property stolen from an office, school, shop or anywhere else you left it?

Offence S: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) has anything of yours been deliberately damaged or tampered with by vandals or thieves?

Offence T: (Apart from what you’ve already told me, in Queensland, at any time during the last 12 months) have you been subjected to verbal abuse from anyone you came in contact with, including work colleagues?