2. GENERAL TRENDS

2.1. Police Statistics and Victimization Surveys Compared

NCS findings corroborate what police statistics have captured: compared to 2004, in 2005 the number of crimes and crime victims went down (figure 1). The decrease that the police statistics registered in 2005 (8.6%) is twice the annual decrease for the period 2001–2004, when it ranged between 3.4% and 4.9%.

The NCS also reveals a record drop in the number of crime victims—compared with 2004, they fell by 18% in 2005. The annual decrease that NCS had registered in the four years preceding the 2005 survey ranged between 4% and 12%.

To make the data more comparable, figure 1 separates out the drugs and transport-related crime data. These two groups of crimes do not always have a victim (e.g. drunk driving) or if they do, the victim and the perpetrator could be one and the same person (e.g. a drug user). Similarly to corruption-related crimes, they are almost never reported and therefore are recorded in police statistics when the police uncover a crime.

The compared data shows a marked discrepancy between police statistics and NCS findings—the number of crimes as measured by the NCS is much greater than the number of crimes registered by the police (figure 2). The gap between the number of crimes actually committed and those registered by the police has nonetheless been narrowing over the period 2001–
2.2. Crimes against Businesses

In its second component, the NCS surveys businesses that became victims of crimes in 2005. A comparison of NCS data and the data from the 2000 UNICRI business victimization survey in Sofia indicates that between 1999 and 2005, crimes against businesses and crimes against individuals were decreasing at almost the same rate. Whereas in 1999 the share of companies based in Sofia that reported to have been victimized was 32%, in 2005 only 19% of them were victims of crimes, while their nationwide share was 22%.\(^7\) No comparative national data was gathered for 1999. Lacking a special statistical category for crimes against companies, police statistics are comparable with victimizations surveys only in respect to a few crimes, such as thefts from stores or offices. Comparing data from both sources reveals that NCS and police statistics register a similar trend of a falling crime rate.

In contrast to the crimes against households or individuals, the number of unreported crimes in the business sector is much smaller. Unreported crime in the business sector has been on the decrease in the past five years. The fall of unreported crime rates, therefore, is one possible explanation why police statistics register a smaller decline in business-sector crime (17%) than does the NCS (31%).

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\(^6\) Mol data on transport and drug-related crimes are not taken into account in this figure.

\(^7\) In 2000, the respondents were asked: “In 1999 (January 1–December 31), was any crime against your company committed at this particular site?”

\(^8\) In the 2000 survey the question referred to a period of one year—“In 1999 (January 1–December 31), was any crime against your company committed at this particular site?”, while in 2005 it covered the period between January 1 and September 30—“In 2005 (January 1–September 30), was any crime against your company committed at this particular site?” As the timeframes differed, the data for 2005 was recalculated and estimated for 12 months. These questions did not include frauds.
2.3. International Perspectives

The NCS presents evidence that Bulgaria’s crime rate remains slightly lower than the average rate for European countries. Over the past five years, the country’s prevalence rate has fallen by nearly 4 percentage points—from 17.5% in 2001 to 12.9% in 2004 (figure 4a).

In the 1999 to 2004 period, though, crime rates have also dropped in most EU countries. There are some countries where the decrease is bigger than in Bulgaria, such as in Poland, where the share of victims among the population fell from 23% to 14.6%, or in Sweden, where it went...
from 25% down to 19%. The UK, however, had a negligible decrease from 26% to 25.2%.\(^9\)

International comparisons of crime data often encourage speculation. First of all, police statistics and victimization surveys are different instruments. Apart from that, the measuring methods they use vary across countries. Thirdly, police statistics differ in quality and precision in the separate countries. Finally, the same crime may be classified in a number of different ways depending on national legislation.

To solve part of these problems, an overall methodology of conducting International Crime Victims Surveys (ICVS)\(^{10}\) was developed.\(^{11}\) The ICVS was first conducted in 1989. All participating countries used questions about the same crime categories and time periods. The NCS uses a methodology and questionnaires comparable with those of ICVS. The use of the ICVS methodology (figure 4a) makes it possible to compare countries as disparate as Bulgaria and Sweden. Thus, it is evident that the crime rate in Bulgaria is slightly lower (6.2 percentage points) than that of Sweden. A comparison of police statistics in the two countries, instead, reveals the number of registered crimes in Bulgaria to be 7.5 times less than in Sweden (figure 4b). This discrepancy best illustrates the difficulty of comparing police statistics internationally. Several reasons for that can be listed:

1. **The criminal justice systems of the various countries** criminalize different types of acts.
2. **There are different methods of recording crime**: some countries record minor offenses (misdemeanors) as administrative violations, while others register them as criminal offenses (therefore making them part of the police statistics).
3. **Variation in the quality of collected data**: some states have police data of poor quality, as they do not apply adequate quality control over data collection, lack computer equipment (in offices, let alone police vehicles) and have low computer literacy among police staff.
4. **Varying levels of unreported crime**. In many developing countries where trust in police is low, this is of particular concern.

Nevertheless, there are categories of crimes in police statistics that can safely be compared. An example is intentional homicide (completed), which has turned into a standard measurement for the level of crime across countries.\(^{12}\) This report uses only police data that is internationally

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\(^9\) International data throughout the report is quoted as “EUICS” and refers to *analysis of data* (not a publication) from the EUICS Consortium database (http://eb.gallup.hu/webview/index.jsp), last accessed on April 17, 2006.

\(^{10}\) International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) has been followed up by the EU International Crime Survey (EUICS).

\(^{11}\) Comparison between victimization surveys can also pose certain problems since the various countries have adopted different models of victimizations research. Most prominently, 1) surveys refer to different timeframes—respondents are either asked about the last 12 months or the last calendar year; 2) the frequency of surveys differs—they may be done annually, monthly, etc.; 3) different questionnaires are used in the surveys.

\(^{12}\) This measure can only be questioned by those willing to speculate that in some countries corrupt policemen might record murders as suicides.
comparable (with the exception of figure 4b). The data used is taken from the UNODC biannual criminal justice statistics compiled from UN member states. There is fairly little data from other countries allowing for an international comparison of victimization of businesses. The last International Crime Business Survey (ICBS) that included Bulgaria was conducted in 2000 in several Central and East European capitals. As the survey indicated, the rate for crimes against businesses in Sofia (31.5%) did not deviate significantly from that of other capitals.

Bulgaria also took part in a survey of companies conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) in 2005. This survey, however, studied only part of the crime categories covered by NCS—those involving frauds of employees and outsiders. PWC surveyed mainly companies whose staff exceeded 200 employees. NCS 2005 confirmed the trend that employee fraud is growing—a trend captured by the PWC survey as well. According to the PWC findings, Bulgaria’s level of crimes against businesses is close to that of most central and east European countries.

Despite its falling rate in the period 2000–2005, crime continued to inflict serious damages on both households and companies. Those damages are manifold, ranging from stolen and destroyed property (table 2) to the victims’ trauma or potential income loss. Companies, on the other hand, suffer from reduced productivity. Moreover, crime leads to extra expenses such as those for medical, protection or insurance services sought by citizens or the companies’ costs of repairing damages, buying security and insurance.

NCS 2005 for the first time presents the chance of estimating the direct costs of thefts and robberies for persons, households and companies. Their total amount for the year 2004 was somewhere between €106

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14 The information presented in this graph is based on analysis of data (in SPSS format) presented to CSD by UNICRI.
15 PricewaterhouseCoopers (2005), Global Economic Crime Survey.
16 The NCS registered twice as many crimes as did the PWC survey because the questionnaires covered different time periods. PWC asked about crimes committed in the preceding two years, whereas the NCS 2005 referred to the preceding 9 months. The recall frame of both citizens and companies tends to be no longer than a year, which provides a plausible explanation for the disparate results of the two surveys.
and €132 million. These values, however, do not take into account much of the financially most damaging crime, such as large-scale fraud against companies either by employees or outsiders (see sections 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 of the present report).

### Table 2. Damages by Crime in 2004 (Mill. €)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime category</th>
<th>Stolen property value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of car</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen car ransom</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from car</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted burglary</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle theft</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickpocketing</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from company (2005)</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>106.65</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vitosha Research–NCS 2005

17 Calculations for this crime were made on the basis of the **average value** of the damage as reported by the victims, amounting to €6,000. This estimate takes into account all crimes without the cases of fraud and does not include replacement costs. This figure was obtained on the assumption that there are around 45,000 companies in Bulgaria. The number of registered companies is 1.2 million, but in 2004 only 370,000 companies paid taxes, nearly 45,000 of which had annual revenues exceeding €25,000 (according to interviewed tax officials). Finding out the actual number companies is made difficult by the fact that there are individuals owning several companies which they register either to be exempt from VAT, to commit financial fraud, or to reduce the payable taxes as much as possible.