When comparing NCS findings and police crime data, it becomes evident that the latter represents quite a small portion of the crimes actually committed (figure 2). For instance, in NCS 2005 citizens declare to have been victims of 542,161 crimes, while the police registered only 101,806 crimes during the year. There are two basic reasons for this disparity:

1. Victims of crime report criminal incidents to the police, but the police fail to register a significant share of them, i.e. they apply various police “filters” as a result of which much of the reported crime goes unrecorded.

2. For a variety of reasons (considering the incident too trivial, not believing that the police would be of help, etc.), citizens fail to report a number of crimes to the police, thus leaving part of the crimes unreported on which the latency rate depends.

During the period 2001–2005 the impact of police filters continually diminished, whereas latency became progressively important, reaching a level where half of all crimes are never reported to the police.

5.1. Unrecorded Crime

The most likely reason for keeping reported crime out of police records is that the police seek to demonstrate an effective performance since crime rates are a matter of close scrutiny by political parties. Political pressure on the police is not uncommon in any country, but a long tradition of crime recording tends to keep such demands at a low. This is not the case in Bulgaria, where it is still a significant consideration and the collection of crime data at the district level remains a problem. A comparison of crime statistics among local police departments in the period 1990–2000 reveals anomalies such as an increase or decrease of recorded crime between 200% and 300% within two consecutive years. When asked to identify the causes of such fluctuation, the police almost universally point to new appointments at the highest positions of the respective department.

Besides political pressure, career development considerations and related performance criteria also have an impact on crime recording. As democratic mechanisms in the country are consolidated, this factor is gaining in importance. The Ministry of Interior focuses on two criteria as conducive to officers’ career prospects:

1. the level of recorded crime;
2. the clear-up rate of recorded crimes.

On the one hand, the swelling of unrecorded crime is viewed as a sign of police inefficiency. On the other, the basic performance indicator—whose high values imply efficiency—is the clear-up rate. To measure
up to both yardsticks, many police departments turn either to recording less crimes, or to selectively recording the crimes with better chances of solution. This approach is also counterproductive from the perspective of community policing—a newly acknowledged priority of the police which involves a special program implemented in 2003. Nevertheless, the persistent filtering out of certain crimes discourages citizens to report and further increases latency levels.

Senior officials at the MoI are fully aware of the mechanics of deliberate crime rate lowering and clear-up rate boosting; the average citizen, though, is only vaguely familiar with them. This issue needs to be widely discussed to find appropriate methods for its resolution. To facilitate the process, some of the techniques and mechanisms used in police filtering of reported crime are described below.

Filtering starts at the territorial units (the Area Police Departments–APDs) of the MoI. Local APD chiefs do not like to stand out among other departments as regards crime rates. They would rather stick to the so-called “golden mean strategy”. APDs avoid becoming the focus of attention of higher ministry officials by keeping the recorded crime rates of their area neither at the top, nor at the bottom of the list. Both APDs and MoI’s Regional Police Directorates (RPDs) employ two main practices to that purpose:

1. Maintaining the number of recorded crimes at roughly the same level as the previous year, with possible slight decreases; any sharp falls in the crime level, albeit factual, would present the risk of inspections from the central level;
2. Approximating the level and trends of crime to those of neighboring APDs or RPDs with similar characteristics.

The particular techniques that the police uses not to record offences are as follows:

• The police discourages the victim reporting the crime by: a) persuading the citizen that the offense is a minor incident not worth reporting; b) keeping the victim from meeting with the competent officer as long as possible until he/she is dissuaded from reporting; c) demanding numerous supporting documents; d) referring the citizen to another APD.

• Receiving the written account without filing it. Some offenses are registered only after they are solved (to boost the clear-up rate) or when monthly or yearly statistics have to be “adjusted”. Several police department chiefs have been discharged for registering only crimes that have been cleared-up.60

• Recording more serious crimes as minor incidents, e.g. pickpocketing or robbery as lost documents. According to experts, such cases constitute 10 to 20% of all filed crime accounts.

UNRECORDED AND UNREPORTED CRIME

- Various procedures through which a prosecutor can rebuff the instituting of pre-trial proceedings (Art. 213 of the Criminal Procedure Code).

The tendency of APDs not to record crimes that would not be cleared up stands out even more when Bulgaria’s clear-up rates are compared internationally. For instance, according to Interpol data on European countries, Bulgaria ranks third in solved crimes after Romania and Greece (figure 19a) and is second only to Romania in solved thefts (figure 19b). Whether the Romanian, Greek and Bulgarian police services are the most effective in Europe is a matter of another evaluation; yet Bulgaria’s high clear-up rates point to the kind of statistical anomalies that a focus on a single police performance criterion can cause.
5.2. Unreported Crime

Which groups report crime least often?

- young people—up to 24 years of age (65%);
- men (54%);
- Roma people (74.6%).

In pre-1990 Bulgaria, not to report a crime could easily be interpreted as complicity, so this was a rare, far from problematic practice. In the 1990s, Bulgarians reported fewer and fewer crimes, thus reaching by 2001 the average European level of unreported crime. The unreported crime rate has continued to grow after 2001, whereas in Europe it has been on the decline.

The upward trend of non-reporting continued throughout 2005. Most EU countries, however, experienced a decrease in unreported crime throughout the period 1999–2004 for nearly all offense categories. The level of underreporting varies across crime categories and is influenced by a number of factors. Bulgaria’s unreported crime rate is close to the one of Portugal, Spain and some of the new EU member states where only 40% of crimes are reported.

### Table 8. “Did you report to the police the latest crime you became a victim of?” (2001–2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft of car</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from car</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car vandalism</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle theft</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle theft</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted burglary</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary of summer house, attic, cellar</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of personal property</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault/Threat</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average for 6 crime categories(^6)</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vitosha Research–NCS; EUICS

In a number of offense categories, Bulgaria’s rate of underreporting is close to the EU average—car theft, attempted burglary, assault and threat (table 8); for others, the Bulgarian level far exceeds that of EU countries:

1. **Theft from cars.** In the EU such thefts are reported nearly 25% as often. Their reporting in Bulgaria in the last five years was way below the EU average.

2. **Burglary.** Non-reporting of this crime fell between 2001 and 2005, but still remains below the EU average, largely because of the increase between 2004 and 2005.

\(^6\) Average values are calculated on the basis of six crimes: theft from car, bicycle theft, burglary, attempted burglary, robbery and theft of personal property. The rest of the crimes are either reported rather regularly, or are so small in number to make a statistically valid analysis impossible. Sexual offenses and assaults/threats are not included because of the use of violence involved in many of the cases.
3. **Robbery.** In Bulgaria, 70% of robberies remain unregistered, whereas in the EU their share is 45%.

4. **Theft of personal property.** Reporting figures for this crime have steadily been declining in the last five years.

There are a number of reasons why citizens refrain from reporting to the police, depending on the type and severity of the crime. As regards thefts from cars and burglaries, for instance, non-reporting is due to the public believing that:

- **The police will not do anything.** This shows a general mistrust in the police coupled with the conviction that the police are not interested in helping citizens. In 2005, this was cited more often as the reason for non-reporting than in 2004.
- **The police cannot do anything/do not have the necessary evidence.** That is, the police, even if they are willing, do not have the capacity to uncover the crime.
- **“It was not that serious” or “I did not lose much”.** This reason reflects the general trend of rarely reporting minor incidents to the police.

Lack of trust in the police, however, is associated with only some types of crimes. Victims of car theft and victims of assault or threat display more confidence that the police would and are able to help them. One important reason for not reporting robberies is that **victims are afraid of reprisal.** In the case of assaults and threats, victims often pick the answers “other reasons” or “it is not police business” as many such incidents have to do with interpersonal, familial or group relations.

In the EU, the dominant reason why someone does not report a crime is that the incident and the damage done are considered insignificant. In contrast, Bulgarians rank insignificance of the incident only as the third most important reason for not reporting. Unlike the EU, in Bulgaria mistrust of the police comes in first. In 2000, mistrust was the reason for not reporting crime in 11–14% of the cases in the EU and in 50% of the cases in Bulgaria (table 9).
Table 9. International comparative surveys: reasons for non-reporting (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>Assault/Threat</th>
<th>Theft from car</th>
<th>Burglary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The police could do anything/There was no evidence</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police would not do anything</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was not that serious, I did not lose much</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I solved it myself/I know the perpetrator</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We (my family) solved it ourselves</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t dare report (fear of reprisal)</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was not police business/The police were not needed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vitosha Research–NCS; EUICS

5.3. Unreported Crime against Companies

In contrast to households, companies in the period 1999–2005 tended to report more often all categories of crime. The largest growth was observed in the reporting of thefts by outsiders and customers (from 16.7% to 52%) as well as of thefts by employees (from 7.1% to 50%).

This growth appears to be motivated by the increasing trust of business in the police. The top reason for non-reporting among the population—"The police would not do anything"—has declined significantly among business respondents. Whereas in 1999 43% of business representatives gave that answer, in 2005 not a single respondent mentioned it. Reporting to the
police has started to be viewed as a prevention measure as well (figure 24). The reasons, as stated by companies, behind reporting a crime were that the police will catch the perpetrator (80%), future crimes will be prevented (43%) and the victim will be compensated by the perpetrator (23%).

The decline of some crimes, such as racketeering and threats, which typically display high rates of unreported crime, also partially explain the drop in unreported crimes against companies.

**Figure 24. Reasons of companies for reporting/not reporting to the police (%)**

Analyzing police conduct and attitude in the cases when companies reported a crime is another approach to understanding the dynamics of (non)reporting. The most common cause of dissatisfaction among companies with police work is that “the police did not do enough” (78.6%). Many business respondents also replied that their company was not properly updated on the progress of the investigation (42.9%). As it is unlikely that police practices of informing victims on the course of their investigations in 1999 were any better, the increase between 1999 and 2005 is probably due to the higher expectations of business to police services. A substantial decrease (of roughly 30%) of answers that the police had not found or arrested the perpetrator is also observed. Some other indicators such as: “the police did not recover our property”, “were not interested” and “were slow to arrive” also displayed lower values. This testifies that the quality of police service has indeed increased as has the efficiency of their actions.
Figure 25. Reasons for companies’ dissatisfaction with the police (%)

- Did not do enough
- Did not find or arrest the perpetrator
- Did not inform us well
- Did not return the stolen property
- Showed no interest
- Did not treat us well/Were not polite
- It took them too long to arrive
- Other

Source: Vitosha Research–NCS