

**Methodological problems of a
victimization survey:
an overview of a continuous
working progress in Italy**

Maria Giuseppina Muratore

Istat – National Statistical Institute of Italy

muratore@istat.it

1997/98: First survey on Citizens safety
(a five-year survey)

2002: Second survey on Citizens safety

- Estimates the dark number
- Characteristics of victims, of offenders and on the relationship between the victim and the offender
- Fear of crime and social alarm
- Social Deterioration
- Coping skills of victims, defence strategies
- Relationship with the police

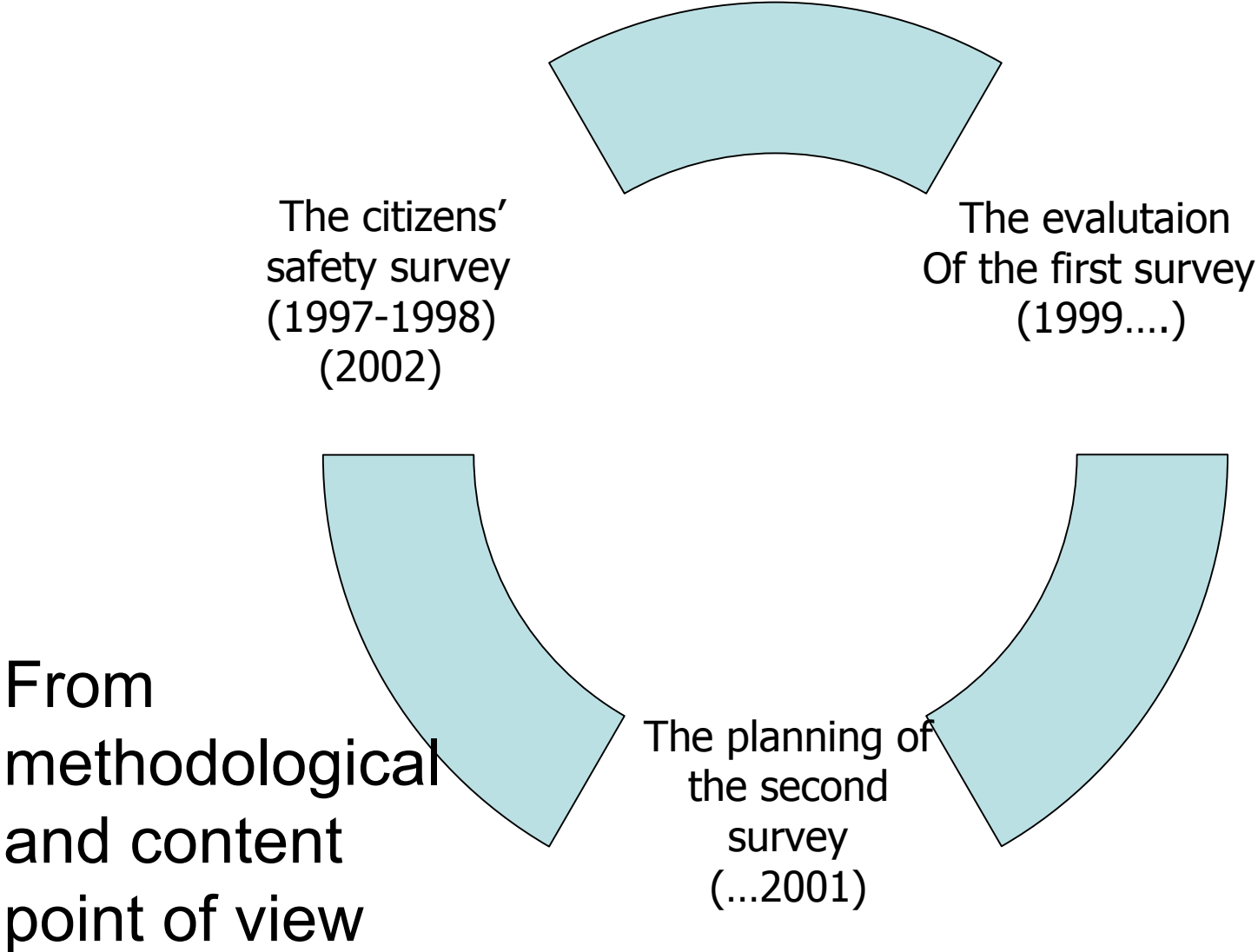
Methodological aspect

- The sample made of 60.000 households is random at two stages with a stratification of units at the first stage
- 1 persons 14 and over is interviewed
- The data are collected with the telephone (CATI) method
- The survey provides estimates at a regional level (21 area)
- Female interviewers
- Long training: 3 days theoretical, 2 technical
- Daily monitoring process
- Interviewers evaluation

Crime measured

- Pickpocket
- Bag-snatching
- Simple theft without contact
- Robbery
- Household burglary
- Motor vehicle theft
- Theft of parts and properties in the motor vehicle
- Assault and threat
- Unlawful entry
- Vandalism
- Sexual crimes, such as harassment, rape and sexual blackmail at work

The evaluation project : a continuous among the two surveys

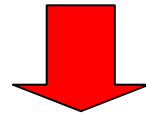


Our focus: content evaluation

Some mistakes in the field:

- The telescoping effect
- The crime classification bias
- The accurate recognition of a crime as attempted or perpetrated
- The reporting to the police

Some strategies were adopted



How do they work?

Telescoping effect

❖ In order to reduce telescoping



we use funnelling effect

4.1 IN THE LAST 3 YEARS, HAS ANYBODY SNATCHED AWAY BY FORCE OR ATTEMPTED TO SNATCH YOUR BAG OR VALUABLES (FOR EXAMPLE A WATCH, A BRACELET, A NECKLACE, A FUR ...), WITHOUT THREATENING NOR BY WEAPONS OR WORDS?

No 1
Yes 2

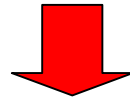
(If YES)

4.2 DID IT HAPPEN IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, THAT IS FROM SEPTEMBER 1996?

No 1
Yes 2 → n. times |__|__|
Doesn't remember 3

Experiments on telescoping effect

- We know this strategy limits telescoping
 - As experimented on a multipurpose survey
 - The sample was divided in two part, an experiment group and the control group (12,000 households each)
 - Burglary decreased from 3,1% to 2,6%
 - Other experiment made on these interviewees
 - to ask some more detailed questions as regard type of crime suffered, time of occurrence, the way of reporting to the police



The funneling tool is not sufficient

A new strategy: month and year

- New questions were inserted in the questionnaire:

ex. on burglary: wrong date				
Month	}	reference	before 1999	23
Season		period	1999	48
Year		2001-2002	2000	96

*Useful mechanism
of dear date*

combination of
the date of occurrence
and the date of
interviews

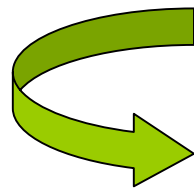
Implementation of correction

	% of error	change on weighed estimates (.000)	
• Pickpocket	10,5%	858	→ 764
• Bag-snatching	10,2%	276	→ 245
• Robbery	9,9%	237	→ 201
• Household burglary	19,0%	1018	→ 803
• Car theft	7,8%	1110	→ 1016
• Van theft	12,8%	70	→ 61
• Theft of parts of vehicle	19,3%	1621	→ 1276
• Assault	6,0%	263	→ 240

Crime Classification: just a look

From some open-ended item “*Other (specify)*” and the interviewers notes appear some mistakes in the classification of crime (1997-1998)

Even if the screening questions, identifying the occurrence of a crime, were accurately formulated with the use of examples



The possible mistakes were taken into account and new “wrong” items were inserted in the 2002 survey

For example for pickpocket:

in question “....how did things go?”


- ...unattended object... 31
 - ...the object was in a car 2
 - ...object taken with strength 2
- } Change of crime

For example for burglary:

in question “....what did they steal?”

- ... vehicle theft 3
 - ... vandalism act 1
 -unlawful entry 4
- } Change of crime

Consequences

- Corrections were made ex-post
- Only in one case was planned the on-line recognition of the error and the on-line prevention of it  Simple theft without contact
- In other cases sequence of questions was changed

 burglary 
car theft

Attempted/perpetrated crime

From some open-ended item “*Other (specify)*” and from incongruities between **questions on object stolen** and **questions on their value** appear some mistakes in crime definition (1997-1998)

The original screening questions:

- has anyone attempted to steal or stolen your wallet or some other object you were wearing without being aware at the moment.....

(if yes)

- Was anything really stolen? consider every time it happened ...

2002 version: screening questions and section questions

object stolen question } if any
value of object stolen } incongruence

A cycle of three questions to go in depth

• You told me someone has stolen you something, but you didn't have any economic damage, what's happen?

- things without value
- thief was no successful
- I recovered immediately the objects

1 → *consumed crime*

2 → *attempted crime*

3 → *consumed crime*

(If item 2 at previous question)

• So, the thief wasn't able to take your properties he wanted to steal neither for few time (second, minutes, hours...)?

- no, he can't be able
- yes, but only for few time
- I do not remember

1 → *attempted crime*

2 → *consumed crime*

3 → *attempted crime*

If "anything" at the question on the object stolen :

Then the thief wasn't able to take your properties he wanted to steal neither for few time?











No 1 → *attempted crime*

Yes 2 → *consumed crime*

Consequences

**Corrections were made ex-post:
studying the congruence between screening and
section data  screening was changed**

Some example:

•Pickpocket	52	attempted		consumed
	4	consumed		attempted
•Bag-snatching	25	attempted		consumed
	2	consumed		attempted
•Simple theft without contact	136	attempted		consumed
	12	consumed		attempted
•Household burglary in main house	77	attempted		consumed
	17	consumed		attempted
•Car theft	21	attempted		consumed
	16	consumed		attempted

Behavior reporting: *Does exist a subjective perception of reporting to the police?*

Some text about the question:

“did you report to the police?”

Data underline that contacting the police and making them aware of what has happened **does not mean** reporting to the police

Then, after having asked if they have reported the crime to the police, a new question asked:

“Did you went to the police station and did you actually signed the reporting sheet?”

Results

Percentage of victims informed the police (by phone, directly, informed by other), but didn't sign the report

Pickpocket	9,6
Bag-snatching	7,4
Simple theft without contact	12,7
Robbery	10
Household burglary	12,2
Motor vehicle theft	4,7
Assault	36,5
Threat	47,8

% calculated on all crimes, by type, suffered in the year

Data are less evident if only the last event is considered