Social factors affecting violent crime victimization in urban households

Gerard Guthrie

Abstract

This article explores data on levels, location and perceptions of violent crime from 16 urban household crime victimization surveys in Papua New Guinea in 2004-2008. Violence was highly feared. It was about half the level of property crime, but created emotional trauma. Total victimization differed considerably among towns, but within them men and women generally reported similar levels of violence happening to themselves. Household violence and sexual assault were special cases affecting women, but otherwise gender influenced perceptions of crime more than actual victimization. Where differences occurred, women were vulnerable to household violence and sexual assault. Men were more likely to have violent conflict with outsiders, with alcohol often involved. Three-quarters of the most troubling victimizations occurred in the household, where offenders were a volatile mix and more likely to be relatives and *wantoks*, or friends and neighbours, rather than spouses. Complex and evolving social issues included overcrowding, the presence of *wantoks*, and ethnic identity. Community courts and restorative justice could only have limited effect on serious crime, and could not deal effectively with outsiders.

Key words: Crime victimization, gender, Papua New Guinea, perceptions of crime, violence

Introduction

Violence and, especially, sexual assault on women remain important issues in Papua New Guinea, to which complex and evolving social factors contribute. Traditional elements have long been noted (see Counts *et al*. 1992), while a 1980's study by the Law Reform Commission found that domestic violence affected over two-thirds of families (Lak *et al*. 1992). Later, a 1998 World Bank gender review noted that studies indicated that 70% of married women had been beaten by their husbands. Women in some urban and rural areas faced intolerable levels of insecurity and fear of rape in their daily lives, restricted freedom of movement, unsafety in their homes and discrimination in the courts (Brouwer *et al*. 1998, p. 28). In recent years, considerable attention has been drawn to a range of social and cultural elements, including wife beating (Gaemate & Howley 2009), the effects of violence on children (Luluaki 2003), violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Lepani 2008; Eves 2010), misuse of firearms (Macintyre 2008; Capie 2011), the role of police (Human Rights Watch 2006; Macintyre 2008), the role of religious belief in coping (Hermkens2008), media reporting (McManus 2008), the effects of urbanization

(Goddard 2002; Guthrie 2012), and to government policy responses (Dinnen 2009).

Some of these recurring issues will appear in this article. The material comes mainly from a synthesis of 16 urban crime victimization surveys in eight towns and cities to provide, with some limitations, the most realistic and comprehensive estimates of urban household victimization in PNG (Guthrie 2008; 2012). Among the findings were:
- national mean levels of victimization of individuals and households did not change significantly from 2004-2008;
- national violent and property crime victimization levels did not increase;
- Port Moresby's victimization levels were actually average by PNG standards; and
- violent and property crime were stable for the city as a whole from 2004-2008.

This article further explores violent crime levels and location, perceptions of violent crime, gender-related issues such as sexual assault and the perpetrators of crime in the household, and the social contexts. In presenting 'objective' factual data about violence, the intent is not to downplay victims' very real subjective feelings, for example in some harrowing accounts in McManus (2008). Rather the intent is to provide evidence that may assist victims and their support groups to focus governmental, non-governmental and aid funding. Although the data is now five years old, it remains the most comprehensive overview of crime victimization in PNG and merits fuller access in the public domain.

Survey methodology

The surveys were primarily quantitative. A grounded approach allowed patterns to emerge from the data to provide information for official decision-makers interested in practical action. Sixteen surveys were undertaken over the five years 2004-2008, four in Port Moresby, three each in Arawa and Buka, twice in Lae, and once each in Goroka, Kainantu, Kokopo and Mt Hagen (Guthrie 2008, pp. 10-13; 117-126). The surveys were conducted by the AusAID-funded Justice Advisory Group in partnership with the National Research Institute from 2004-2007 and the Law & Justice Sector Secretariat from November 2007 to 2008. A structured questionnaire in random household cluster samples elicited perceptions of crime and allowed identification of types and amounts of victimization, including sexual assault and other violent crimes. Responses about victimization were treated as factually-based reports about actual events.

Altogether 6781 interviews in 2683 households (including repeat visits) occurred in towns with 72% of PNG's urban population, with sample numbers from 290 to 1003 per survey in a range of 105 to 284 households. The target groups were men and women in the 15-24, 25-34, and 35+ age cohorts. Interviewers filled age and gender quotas at each sample cluster based on the town's 2000 Census data to compensate for any bias in non-response.

Limitations included sample sizes that did not generate large cell numbers for more detailed cross-analysis. Three of the 16 samples over-represented the married and tertiary educated, so analysis used population estimates based on age and gender only. Otherwise, sample sizes and demographics allowed statistically reliable generalizations about each urban population.

The results provided considerable information about types of household victimization and perpetrators. Many interviews gave frank reports of domestic violence and sexual assault, but an important qualification is that interviewers considered that under-reporting occurred (Guthrie 2008, pp. 28-29). This problem derived from the methodology. The decision-makers' need for generalizations about entire urban populations led to surveys using short, closed-response questions supplemented by open-ended probe questions. The approach gathered extensive quantitative data, and basic qualitative data about some gender and violence issues, which generated grounded informal hypotheses for exploration (Guthrie & Guthrie 2012, p. 54). However, questionnaire surveys are not appropriate for obtaining in-depth information for organizations supporting victims – deeper understanding requires qualitative case studies (e.g. Dinnen 2001; Hinton & Earnest 2010).

Fieldwork constraints magnified the methodological issue. Interview teams comprised even numbers of men and women to undertake same-sex interviews (except for some slippage in the first 2004 Port Moresby survey). However, the structure of domestic authority could reduce the independence of the interview. It was sometimes difficult to separate interviewees from the influence and observation of other household members, so that the presence nearby of a dominant male or female could limit open communication, especially if victims or perpetrators were close. The impression from some fieldwork was that men could try to cover-up their role as perpetrators, while women who were angered by violence could be quite forthright even if individual victims in their households were silent. For example, in Goroka in 2008 a young male attempted unsuccessfully to interrupt an interview and drive the interviewer away (Guthrie &Laki 2008, p. 71). Family members initially described him variously as young, a drunk and mentally unstable, but the female interviewee later stated that he had sexually assaulted another household member. In a different house, a man demanded money to be interviewed and otherwise tried to limit interviewing: in a later interview, a woman stated that he had perpetrated domestic violence.

Even so, relatively low reported incidents of actual violence were consistent with perceived crime levels. No aberrations in the data appeared to indicate variations among the surveys in respondents' openness about these delicate issues; nor did interviewers who participated in more than one survey indicate that candour varied. Thus, the baseline surveys indicated minimum levels of sexual assault and domestic violence, while the longitudinal surveys reliably showed trends in victimization levels. A strength was that the questionnaires provided data about the settings in which victimization occurred and about perpetrators.

Fear of crime

To put violent crime into one perspective, victimization levels were often high, but most surveys found around two to three times more property crime during the previous 12 months. On average across the surveys, 2.3 households were victimized by property crime to every one by violent crime (Guthrie 2008, pp. 26-27). Ratios ranged from a high 7.0:1 in Buka in 2006 (with low reported levels of violence), to a low of 1.7:1 in Lae and Port Moresby in 2008.

In contrast to a national mean of 38.3% of households victimized by stealing, Table 1 shows that the reported occurrence of sexual assault on a household member averaged 3.7% across the surveys (varying significantly among towns from 0%-11%) (Guthrie 2008, pp. 15, 42; survey data). There were very similar levels of perceived and actual crime (35.8% v. 38.3% for crime involving stealing, and 3.8% v. 3.7% for sexual assault). Reported levels of sexual assault varied non-significantly from 0.4%-9%.

Critically, however, violence often appeared to create long-lasting psychological scars. In contrast to the similar and relatively low levels of reported and perceived violence, all surveys found that sexual assault was particularly feared (by an average of 25.3% of respondents, ranging from 16%-39% in the 16 surveys). The perceived occurrence of domestic violence, at 5.4% (varying from 2%-15%), was slightly higher than the 3.8% for sexual assault, although open-ended questions did show that violence could be chronic in abusive relationships. However, despite domestic violence apparently being similar in frequency, sexual assault was three times more feared.

Table 1: National indicators of sexual assault and domestic violence, 2004-2008

Indicator	PNG Mean 2004-2008 *(%)*
Household the victim of stealing	38.3
Stealing and robbery perceived as the most frequent crime in own area	35.8
Household the victim of sexual assault	3.7
Sexual assault perceived as the most common crime in own area	3.8
Sexual assault the most feared crime	25.3
Domestic violence perceived as the most common crime in own area	5.4
Domestic violence the most feared crime	8.3

The 2008 Goroka and Kainantu surveys illustrate these points (Guthrie &Laki 2008, pp. 23, 31-37). Minor property crime, such as stealing, was a constant irritant, happening to 62% of households in Goroka and 67% in Kainantu in the

previous 12 months. In Goroka, stealing actually attracted over three times the number of comments (57% or 117 out of 205) about the most troubling crime compared to the number of comments on violence. Yet, stealing was little feared, by only 6% in Goroka and 2% in Kainantu. Killing and sexual assault were reported as occurring in a relatively low 4% of households in Goroka and 16% in Kainantu. Nonetheless, violence outside the home (including killing) and sexual assault were the two most feared crimes, by 51% and 56% respectively. Among the 17% (35 of 205) of comments in questionnaires about the most troubling crime that had affected respondents in the previous 12 months in Goroka, many showed fear of violence and deep emotional trauma. For example:

- *It is not safe to even walk outside your home.*
- *They used a factory made gun to rob us right in front of the gate at home.*
- *They killed my uncles.*
- *This incident could lead to ethnic or group conflict.*
- *It nearly took my life.*
- *My husband is violent and I am scared most of the time.*
- *When he sees me around he hits me.*

Some comments from Kainantu indicated the depth of fear about sexual assault:

- *My two brothers were killed as revenge by a criminal who I had arrested and jailed for attempted rape of my daughter.*
- *They took our sister out and raped her all night.*
- *It destroyed sister's life from being seen as someone who was a rape victim and thus could not marry someone decent.*

Violence

Survey questions asked about seven types of violence: assault, unprovoked violence, stealing with force (robbery), provoked violence, sexual assault, firearm use, and killing. How frequent were they, and did the towns have similar levels? (Guthrie 2008, pp. 14-31; 2012).

1: Violent crime frequency

Urban crime victimization levels varied considerably nationwide. The key indicator of violent crime victimization gave the mean percentage of *each one* of the seven types of violence in the previous 12 months. Graph 1 shows that Kainantu had the highest levels, with 20% of households being victims. Goroka, Kokopo, and Port Moresby in 2007 were middlemost, all with 8%. Three surveys in Arawa and Buka were the lowest, with 1%. The national mean was 7.5%. The differences from the mean were highly significant (X^2=62.1, df=15, p>.001), i.e. the towns had very different amounts of violent victimization.

Graph 1: Household the victim of violent crime, all surveys 2004-2008
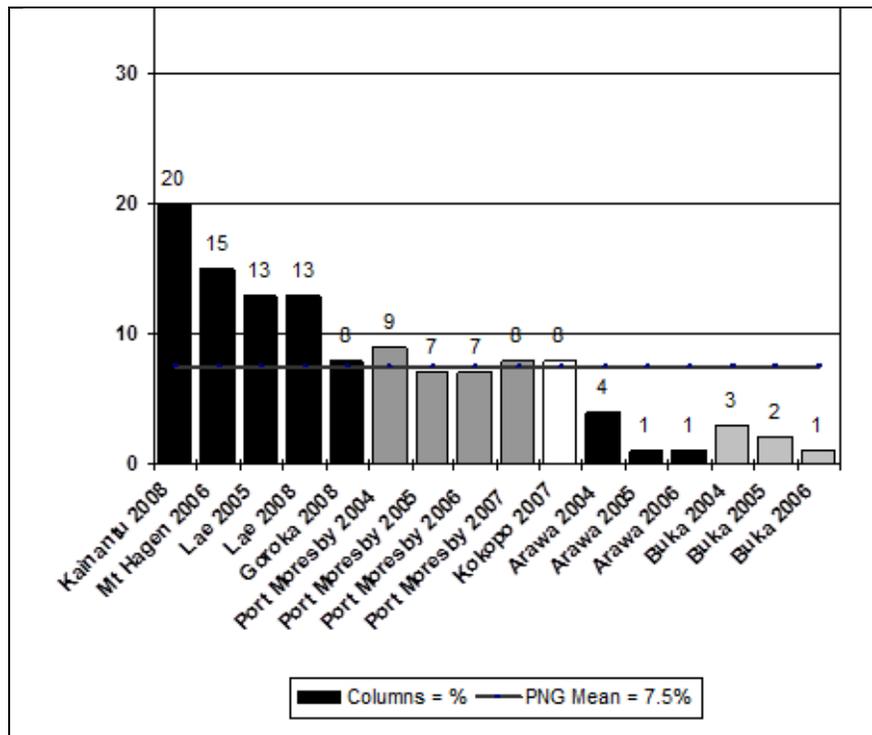
While Port Moresby's overall crime victimization was stable from 2004-2008, levels could fluctuate greatly from year-to-year within it (Guthrie 2008, pp. 25-27, 103; 2012, pp. 26-29). Graph 2 shows violent victimization rates from the eight sample sites in Port Moresby, which were representative of high-cost urban houses and apartment buildings with strong perimeter security, mid-priced suburban houses with wire fences, and migrant settlements and a traditionally-based village mainly containing huts and small houses with limited barrier security. The difficulty reading the graph is the story: individual sites fluctuated considerably in an apparently random and localized way.

Life in the settlements was actually no more violent than elsewhere. Overall, from 2004 to 2007, the mean violent crime levels reported in the medium and high security areas within Port Moresby (Town and the three suburbs of Tokarara, Gerehu 2 and Renbo) were not significantly different from the low security areas (the village of Vabukori and the three settlements of Gordons Ridge/Erima, East Boroko and Nine Mile) (X^2=4.05, df=3, p=.26). Perceived increases in violence in Port Moresby were consistent only with random fluctuations within particular areas rather than statistically significant underlying changes to the city as a whole. Media reported local 'outbreaks' of crime as though they were city-wide, but did not report decreases, leading to a false impression of constant increase rather than localized fluctuations around the city average. It was not possible to measure fluctuations within the other

towns, but the pattern of unpredictable, apparently random, localized victimization appeared consistent with them.

Graph 2: Household violent crime victimization within Port Moresby, 2004-2007
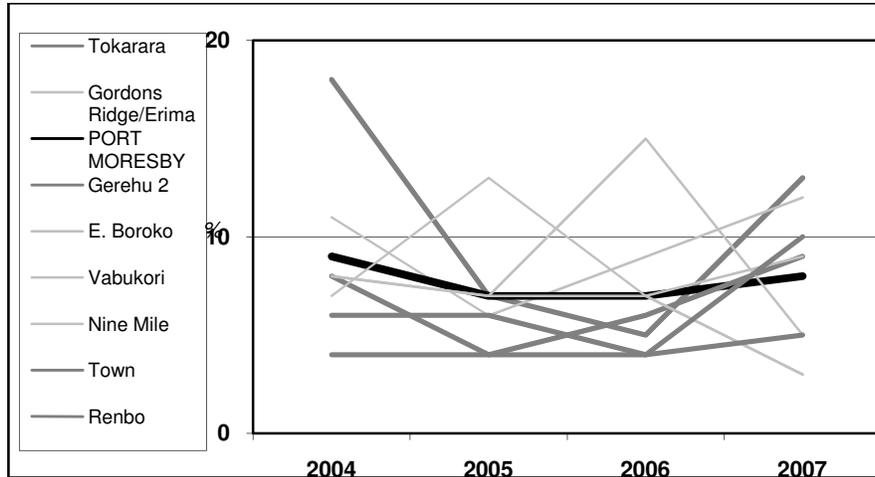
Another indicator showed how often household members had been subject to high levels of victimization (five or more times in the previous 12 months, including both violent and property crime). Graph 3 shows that Kainantu again was highest. Port Moresby in 2005 was the middlemost town, with 15%. Three surveys in Arawa and Buka had the lowest results at 1%, with both towns decreasing from 2004 to 2006.

Graph 3: Household the victim five or more times, all surveys 2004-2008
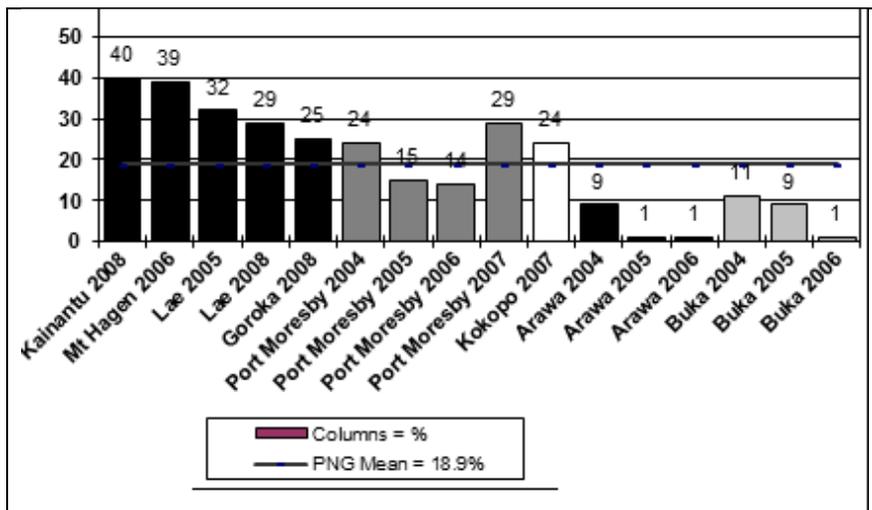
The national mean was 18.9%, with highly significant differences from it (X^2=136.1, *df*=15, *p*>.001). In Kainantu, 40% of households reported five or more cases of victimization during the previous 12 months, with 10% (11 out of 109) actually reporting it as occurring 26 times or more a year, or once a fortnight on average. One household reported an astonishing 94 incidents, i.e. nearly twice a week, while another had 80 cases and a third had 71.

Most troubling recent crime

Respondents who reported that they or their household had been victimized in the previous 12 months were asked to identify which crime concerned them or their household most. This particular crime was not necessarily the most serious that had occurred, or the most feared, but the respondent considered it to be the most troubling (and different household members may have considered different crimes to be the most troubling). Generally, the most troubling event was actually stealing because violent victimization had not occurred.

Table 2 gives examples with data from the four most recent surveys along the Highlands Highway, which towns consistently had the highest victimization levels (Guthrie &Laki 2008, pp. 31-34). From 30% of respondents in Kainantu to 49% in Goroka identified stealing and breaking and stealing together as the actual crimes that troubled them most. Crimes of violence combined ranged from 38% in Mt Hagen to a very high 63% in Kainantu. Within this, domestic violence and sexual assault together were 3%-7% of reports – although subject to under-reporting, apparently considered less troubling than other forms of violence.

Table 2: Most troubling household victimization during previous year

Type of Victimization	Goroka 2008 (%)	Kainantu 2008 (%)	Mt Hagen 2006 (%)	Lae 2008 (%)
Stealing your property from you	40	20	32	30
Breaking into your house and stealing	9	10	14	14
Unprovoked violence (e.g. an attack by a stranger)	8	5	7	11
Assault	4	5	3	17
Provoked violence (e.g. pay back)	4	3	2	3
Robbery (stealing your property from you with some force or threat)	4	3	11	6
Domestic violence	2	2	2	1
Sexual assault	1	5	3	4
Killing (household member)	1	3	1	3

Note: Goroka 2008 *N*=100, non-response=72%. Kainantu 2008 *N*=116, non-response=65%. Mt Hagen 2006 *N*=88, non-response=73%. Lae 2008 *N*=202, non-response=48%. The high non-response rates derived mainly from respondents who were not victimized in the previous 12 months.

Gender issues

Differences among the towns in the frequency of violent crimes were highly significant. Were there also gender differences in the perceptions of law and order generally, and the amount and type of crime affecting men and women within towns, and were the towns different?

1: Perceptions of law and order

Table 3 illustrates gender perceptions on five measures for the city with the highest level of violent crime victimization (Mt Hagen), the middlemost city (Port Moresby) and the lowest (Buka) (Guthrie 2008, pp. 54-57). Men and women within each town had quite similar perceptions of high crime levels and of corruption increasing nationally; as well, that police performance was poor and local areas were unsafe from crime. More differentiated was sexual assault, which generated considerable levels of fear, especially among women in Mt Hagen and Port Moresby.

Table 3: Perceptions of law and order by gender

Measure	Mt Hagen 2006		Port Moresby 2005		Buka 2006	
	Males (Yes %)	Females (Yes %)	Males (Yes %)	Females (Yes %)	Males (Yes %)	Females (Yes %)
Is the crime problem in PNG very large?	66	85	50	57	73	65
Do you think corruption in PNG is increasing?	90	88	74	65	75	69
Do you think the police in your area are doing a good job?	11	25	23	31	36	30
Do you feel safe from crime in your area?	45	43	58	68	68	75
What crime are you most afraid of? – Sexual assault	10	64	20	39	51	49

Note: Mt Hagen 2006 *N*=328, Non-response = 0-1%. NCD 2005, *N*=165,930, Non-response=0-1%. Buka 2006 *N*=299, Non-responses=0-13%.

2: Sexual assault

Among ten key survey indicators, the most stressful gender issue was sexual assault. Graph 4 has the percentages of households where a member was reported as a victim in the previous 12 months (Guthrie 2008, pp. 28-29). The

highest reported levels were in Mt Hagen in 2006 and Lae in 2005, with 11% of households victimized. Port Moresby in 2006 and 2007, as well as Kokopo, were the middlemost towns, at 2%. Buka residents in 2004 and Arawa in 2005 reported no incidents of sexual assault. The national mean was 3.7% of households. The differences from the mean were highly significant (X^2=59.3, df=15, p>.001). Like other types of crime, sexual assault levels varied among the towns although, as discussed, the rates were likely to be under-reported.

3: Most troubling recent crime

Table 4 shows the crimes that individuals reported had occurred to themselves in the previous 12 months, using the same representative examples (Guthrie 2008, pp. 31-32). Generally, fewer than 5% of males or females in any of these towns reported that they had been a victim of any particular crime. Some figures in Mt Hagen were considerably higher, with significant differences between the level of crime affecting men and women (X^2=15.5,df=8, p=.05). Females were more likely to report as victims of assault and sexual assault; males especially of unprovoked violence. Port Moresby did not have significant differences between men and women (X^2=10.1,df=8, p=.26). Nor did Buka (X^2=3.14,df=8, p=.93), where males and females reported almost identically low levels of occurrence of all these crimes.

Graph 4: Household the victim of sexual assault, all surveys 2004-2008
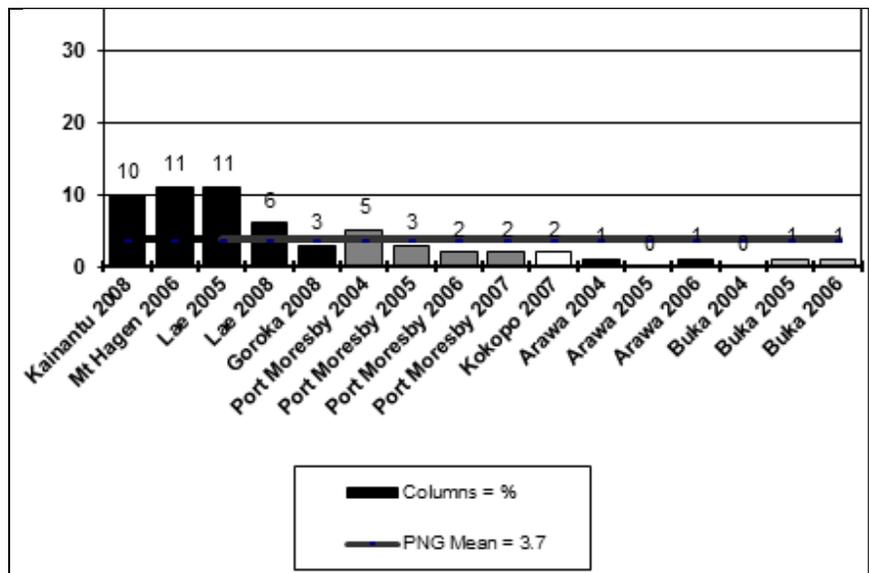
Table 4: Individual violent crime victimization by gender

Type of Crime	Mt Hagen 2006		Port Moresby 2005		Buka 2006	
	Males (Yes %)	Females (Yes %)	Males (Yes %)	Females (Yes %)	Males (Yes %)	Females (Yes %)
Unprovoked violence	13	7	6	10	2	1
Robbery	9	8	2	5	1	0
Assault	8	17	7	5	1	1
Firearm use	4	4	2	1	1	0
Provoked violence	3	4	3	2	0	0
Sexual assault	0	4	0	1	0	0

Note: Mt Hagen 2006 *N*=328, Non-response=72%-99%. Port Moresby 2005 *N*=165,091, non-response=91%-100%. Buka 2006 *N*=300, Non-response=92-100%. The high non-response rates derived mainly from respondents who were not victimized in the previous 12 months. Further cross analysis is limited by small cell sizes.

4: Juvenile justice and poverty reduction

The surveys did not investigate attitudes to juvenile justice in the narrow sense of how juveniles were treated by the legal system. All surveys nonetheless found considerable community concern about social justice in the broad sense of reducing poverty through job opportunities to help prevent youth turning to crime. People believed that better opportunities for young people and better facilities for communities would help reduce crime (Guthrie 2008, pp. 75-76). Such views were clear and consistent across the country.

The perpetrators

Further data about the most troubling crimes showed that they were more likely to:
- Occur at night (48% to 76% of cases across the 16 surveys).
- Happen when the victims were not alone (69% to 90% of cases).
- Happen disproportionally on Saturdays (17% to 45%).
- Sometimes involve weapons (11% to 61%).
- Sometimes involve injury (2% to 30%). In the injury cases, almost invariably the most common reason was alcohol and domestic disputes (Guthrie 2008, pp. 65-73).

Three other elements occurred frequently. The most troubling victimization often happened in the home (nationally, about three-quarters of cases), was perpetrated by groups (over half), and the victim often knew the perpetrator/s (two-fifths). These three elements remained consistent, not changing significantly from the national means over five years. Nonetheless, the three elements were not ranked consistently between the towns (W=.10, X^2=4.44, df=15, p<.99): the national averages often hid considerable local differences.

1: Location of most troubling crime

Nationally, 72.4% of troubling crime affecting households occurred in the home, ranging widely from a moderate 54% in Port Moresby in 2006 to a very high 89% in Buka in 2005 (Graph 5). The middlemost town was Kainantu at 71%. The differences from the national mean were not statistically significant (X^2=22.8,df=15, p=.09).

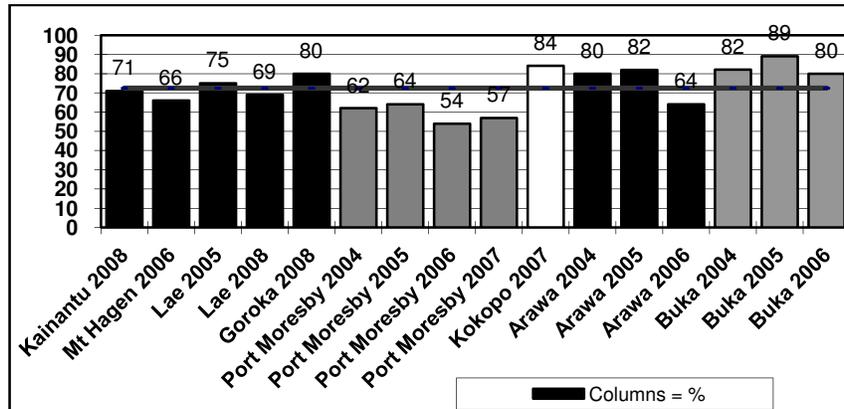**Graph 5: Most troubling crime occurred in the home**

Table 5 highlights similarities and differences in the location of such crimes for the highest, middlemost and lowest scoring towns. Victimization was by far most likely to occur in the home, followed by the street and shops. Buka was the most vulnerable in the home, while Port Moresby had a higher level of street crime.

Table 5: Location of the most troubling crime

Location	Buka 2005 (%)	Kainantu 2008 (%)	Port Moresby 2006 (%)
Home	89	71	54
Street	2	16	28
Shops	4	1	0
Workplace	1	1	1
Other	3	12	17
Total	100	100	100

Note: Buka   2005   *N*=92,   Non-response=68%.Kainantu   2008   *N*=218,   Non-response=34%. Port Moresby 2006 *N*=69,009, Non-response=58%. The high non-response rates derived mainly from respondents or other household members who were not victimized in the previous 12 months.

2: Number of Perpetrators

A second indicator about the most troubling crime measured the percentage of respondents who reported that there was more than one perpetrator, which was likely to be very threatening to victims. Graph 6 shows a range from a low 23% in Buka in 2005 to a high 75% in Mt Hagen. The middlemost city was Lae in 2005, at 56% almost exactly the national average, which was a high 56.1%. The differences from the mean were statistically significant (X^2=44.3,*df*=15, *p*>.001), i.e. across the country considerable variations occurred in the amount of group crime.

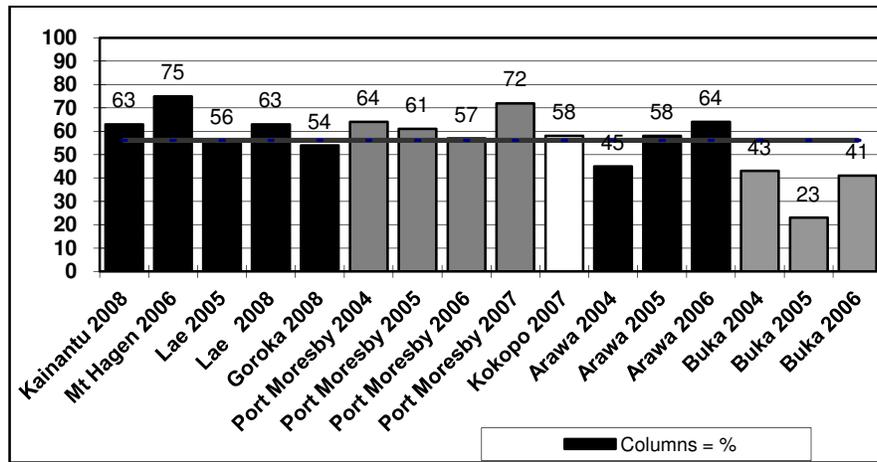**Graph 6: More than one perpetrator**

Table 6 shows the differences between the highest, middlemost and lowest scoring towns. A high 75% of victimization in Mt Hagen was perpetrated by groups; almost the opposite of Buka.

Table 6: Perpetrators in groups

| More than One Offender	Mt Hagen 2006 *(%)*	Lae 2005 *(%)*	Buka 2005 *(%)*
Yes	75	56	23
No	21	32	73
Don't know	4	12	4
Total	100	100	100

Note:Q.4.8. Mt Hagen 2006*N*=227; Non-response=31%.Lae 2005 N=226, Non-response=44%.Buka 2005 N=91, Non-response=69%. The high non-response rates derive from respondents who gave nil responses about victimization.

3: Perpetrator known to the victim

A third indicator about the most troubling crime measured the percentage of respondents who knew the perpetrator. Nationally, about one-third of urban

households (35.6%) had not been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months and therefore faced no perpetrators from inside the household or out. Where victimization had occurred, 42.5% of victims said they knew the perpetrators, 57.5% did not. Graph 7 shows a wide range from a low of 28% in Buka in 2006 to a high of 59% in Arawa in 2004. The middlemost surveys were in Port Moresby in 2004 and 2005. The differences from the mean of 42.5% were statistically significant (X^2=28.3,df=15, p=.02). Thus, victims often admitted to knowing the perpetrator, but this varied widely across the country.

Graph 7: Victim knew the perpetrator
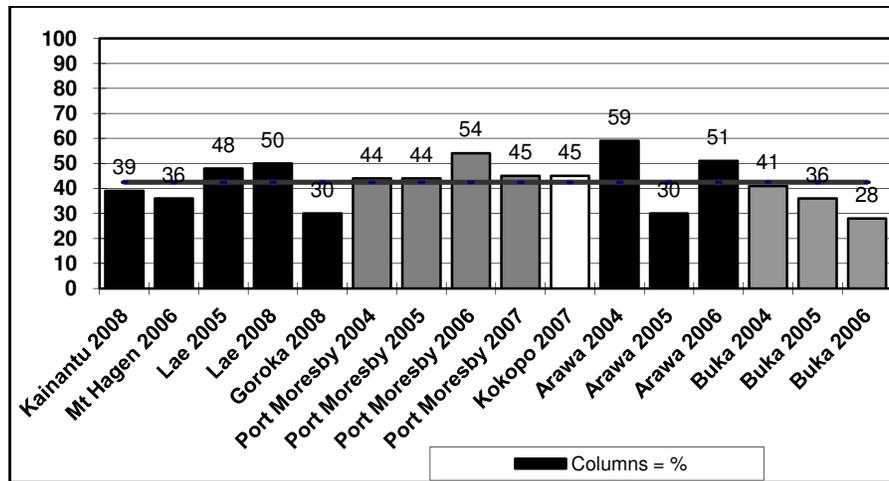
Where the perpetrators were identified, nationally they were a relative or *wantok* in 36% of cases (ranging very widely from 15% to 63%), a neighbour or friend in 31% (ranging widely from 18% to 46%), a spouse in 8% (ranging from 2% to 15%), and another person in 26% (ranging widely from 13% to 44%) (Guthrie 2008, p. 72). The bottom part of each column in Graph 8 shows in black the percentage of cases where the perpetrator was said to be a spouse. Clearly, the predominant perpetrators in all surveys were in the middle two groups, comprising relatives or *wantoks*, and neighbours or friends. The percentages within the four categories varied significantly from town to town, but every survey found that spouses were less likely to be the offenders than relatives and *wantoks*, or friends and neighbours. The likelihood was that domestic violence involved spousal abuse in households consisting of nuclear families, but, more commonly, spouses were part of a volatile mix of potential offenders in overcrowded households containing extended families.

Graph 8: Perpetrators of the most troubling crime
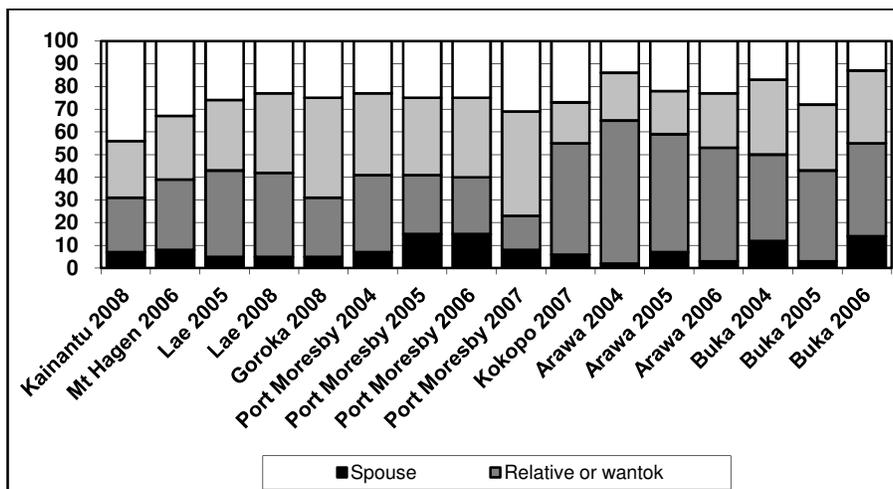
Social context

The social context and the cultural implications of the findings about perpetrators need exploration, especially because traditional influences can mean that the nature of family, household and neighbour in PNG varies considerably from elsewhere. Some data from the surveys indicated a complex and evolving mix of social factors affecting crime. This data is blended with informal observation from fieldwork and with insights from focus groups in survey sites in Port Moresby in a related project evaluation (Guthrie &Laki 2007, pp. 61-62).

1: Overcrowding

The surveys found an average of 4.7 adults and 3.3 children per urban household nationally (Guthrie 2008, pp. 62-63). Household totals ranged from 9.6 on average in Port Moresby in 2007 down to 5.2 in Arawa in 2005. Differences from the national mean were not statistically significant (X^2=4.16,*df*=15, *p*<.99), i.e. average numbers of household occupants were similar in all surveys. Observation showed that houses typically were quite small, especially in settlements; the implication of high occupancy being overcrowding. Survey field staff commented on this, seeing cases where household members slept outside in shelters and even an old fuel drum. Economic factors making sharing necessary include shortages of houses, their cost, and financial poverty.

Partly the high number of household occupants stemmed from traditional housing arrangements in some areas. The definition of household used in the surveys came from the 2000 Census: 'a person or group of persons living and eating together and sharing arrangements for cooking and the other necessities …'. An extreme example in Port Moresby was a block in Five Mile settlement,

which was occupied along traditional lines by five dwellings containing over 40 *wantoks*. This was taken as one household not five because the occupants said they shared eating arrangements. A very different household in Renbo suburb comprised three single mothers and their children. They appeared to have banded together for support, but this may have had cultural roots in a common Highlands tradition of women and children living collectively and separately from adult men.

2: **Wantoks**

In some survey households, *wantoks* appeared to give considerable support. A high-covenant house in central Port Moresby had 11 occupants: a senior public servant, his wife and children, plus relatives from the village who kept house, maintained security and contributed casual earnings. However, social obligations to *wantoks* could be a burden. The financial strain and overcrowding could be high and unwelcome, particularly when the *wantoks* were footloose single men (described by one fieldworker as 'perpetual adolescents') trying out urban life, with little to contribute financially, and prone to idleness, gambling on cards and drinking. Responses to open-ended questions suggested that the resulting tensions helped explain involvement of *wantoks* in household disputes.

3: Identity and urbanization

All the towns surveyed had considerable numbers of migrants (defined as being born outside the province in which the survey was located). The national mean was 36.0% in the seven towns where data was collected, ranging from 7% in Arawa in 2006 to 66% in Port Moresby in 2007. Overwhelmingly, migrants identify with their home *ples*. The effect was described by Goddard (2002, pp. 5-6) in Erima settlement in Port Moresby as creating a volatile habitat of mixed migrants living in enclaves and competing for housing and jobs. Although trying to get along with their neighbours as best they could, violent confrontations were common, especially when alcohol added to chronic friction among diverse and mutually suspicious ethnic groups.

In some towns, tradition could be a very distinctive feature that controlled social life to a considerable degree. This was particularly apparent in Mt Hagen. As well as substantial areas of modern housing, Mt Hagen contains many distinct ethnic settlements from within and outside the province. Migrants generally concentrate with their *wantoks* in settlements within the town, which are 'adopted' by traditional clans, who usually lived adjacent to the town. The migrants must follow the clans' strong traditional systems of obligations, rights and responsibilities. Dispute resolution mechanisms provide a structure for urban crime control, but the clans can be very competitive and lively elements in the conflicts and allegiances that are part of collective daily life. This situation can also be affected by rural disputes over tribal land, payback and compensation, and the fluctuating alliances generated for both urban and rural dwellers.

Insights from Port Moresby suggest that complexities over ethnic identity were increasing there. Although populated mainly by migrants, about 35% of the adult population was born in the city. Among them, those identifying with the local area included the many descendants of the original Motu people, found especially in coastal villages like Vabukori. Here, traditional lineages predominantly lived towards one end of the village, while the other end had many households based around descendants of traditional trading partners along the coast. These two groups were now heavily intermarried, leading one village leader to comment that distinctions between them would disappear within two or three decades. For others, identification with *ples* elsewhere could be very strong. For example, two male field assistants in Nine Mile in 2004, who were in their late 20's, had been born in Port Moresby of Simbu parents around the time of Independence, but had never visited Simbu Province. They identified proudly as Simbus, even though they would be unlikely to have land rights in their parents' villages. In contrast, growing numbers of younger people born in the city, especially from 'mixed marriages' of parents from different provinces, identify as 'Moresbyites' (this insight comes from Fiona Hukula). They are often without strong ties to their parents' villages or land rights in them, and are the beginnings of a landless urban class. Variations on the same complexities seemed to be developing in other survey towns, especially Lae, although the researchers spent less time there and were less able to observe them.

4: Community responses

Authority embedded in extended family, language, friendship and church networks had many informal roles in social control (Guthrie 2008, pp. 73-75; 2012, pp. 30-32). Community dispute resolution mechanisms were the prime recourse across the country, especially in settlements. Here, they could deal with much of the low-level crime that was a constant irritant in daily life, and crimes where the offender was a member of the community. However, community mechanisms could only have limited effect on serious crime, nor could they deal effectively with outsiders, over whom little, if any, social control could be wielded if, indeed, they were known. Additionally, they could be ineffective where behaviours, such as wife beating, were considered to be within men's traditional rights (Counts *et al.* 1992; Gaemate & Howley 2009), and therefore not ones in which the community should be involved. In some PNG village societies a wife's brothers have the responsibility of preventing her husband beating her too strongly, but this social control may be ineffective in isolated urban households, especially if cousin-brothers do not accept this responsibility.

As shown elsewhere (Guthrie 2008, pp. 80-98), negative perceptions of the police were widespread. The 2005 Lae survey showed that only 32% of respondents had reported to the police the victimisation that troubled them most in the previous year. The overall level of reports to the police was estimated at an extremely low 2% of victimizations, but there were more reports about violence than property crime despite less violent victimization (Guthrie, Hukula, &Laki 2007, pp. 30-31). Police were therefore likely to

retain a role in serious crimes, cases where the offenders were outsiders or unknown, or those that could not be resolved in the community. These were all situations where community-based courts (Goddard 2002) and restorative justice options (Dinnen 1997) could only have limited effect.

Conclusion

All the urban household crime victimization surveys found that fear of violent crime was high, especially because of its occurrence in the home, group violence, and the believed ineffectiveness of policing. However, it is worth recognizing that perceptions are a very important influence over fear of crime and beliefs about it whether or not they are objectively true (Guthrie 2012, p. 28). People also remember violent crimes longer than they remember petty theft. Another influence on fear levels is the strong oral culture. Stories and gossip about crime spread fast though informal networks. Media coverage about crime spreads information quickly among those who access the media. Whether or not the stories are true, repetition soon makes them social facts.

Gender influenced perceptions of crime more than actual victimization. Sexual assault and other forms of violence were highly feared, but they appeared to happen to small proportions of women in any one year compared to property crime (albeit their occurrence was probably under-reported). People had realistic perceptions of the relatively low level of violent crime in their local areas, but violence, particularly sexual assault, created fear and emotional trauma, especially because of its occurrence in the home and in groups.

Violence was exacerbated by complex and evolving social factors in the urban setting. The social context in which victimization occurred included a sometimes volatile mix adding to the effects of overcrowding: the not always welcome presence of *wantoks*, mixed ethnic groups (some local, others migrant) prone to distrust, and, at least in Port Moresby, an urban identity beginning to emerge among young people brought up in the city without strong connection to their parents' villages.

Domestic violence and sexual assault were special cases predominantly affecting women. Total levels of victimization differed considerably from town to town, but within towns both men and women generally reported similar amounts as actually happening to themselves and were vulnerable to similar levels of violence. Where differences occurred, women were vulnerable to household violence and sexual assault, while men were more likely to come into violent conflict with outsiders, with alcohol often a factor. However, community dispute mechanisms could be ineffective when violence was considered as customary; they could only have limited effect on serious crime; and they could not deal effectively with outsiders or the unknown. Coupled with perceived police ineffectiveness, all this added up to considerable powerlessness for female victims.

Three-quarters of the most troubling victimizations reported in these surveys occurred in the household. The overall picture was of high levels of

overcrowding contributing to violence. The number of domestic violence and sexual assault cases was too small to investigate reliably, but the evidence suggests that they happened to a small proportion of women in any one year, however sexual assault, in particular, was highly feared, very traumatic and long-remembered. Violence could be chronic in abusive relationships, but women were apparently more prone to victimization by men who were not their partners.Notably, every survey found that in the most troubling cases of victimization, the offenders were a volatile mix and more likely to be relatives and *wantoks*, or friends and neighbours, rather than spouses.

References

Brouwer, E., Harris, B., & Tanaka, S. (Eds) (1998). *Gender analysis in Papua New Guinea*. World Bank: Washington.

Capie, D. (2011). Smalls arms, violence and gender in Papua New Guinea: Towards a research agenda. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 52(1), pp. 42-55.

Counts, D., Brown, J., & Campbell, J. (Eds) (1992). *Sanctions and sanctuary: Cultural perspectives on the beating of wives*. Westview: Boulder.

Dinnen, S. (1997). Restorative justice in Papua New Guinea. *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 25, pp. 245-262.

Dinnen, S. (2001). *Law and order in a weak state: Crime and politics in Papua New Guinea*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu.

Dinnen, S. (2009). Thirty years of law and order policy and practice: Trying to do 'too much, too badly, with too little'?', in May, R. (Ed.). *Policy making and implementation: Studies from Papua New Guinea*. ANU E Press: Canberra, pp. 233-260.

Eves, R. (2010). Masculinity matters: Men, gender-based violence and the AIDS epidemic. In V. Luker, & S. Dinnen (Eds.). *Civic insecurity, law, order and HIV in Papua New Guinea*. ANU E Press: Canberra, pp. 47-79

Gaemate, S. & Howley, P. (2009). Wife beating: A case study. *Contemporary PNG Studies*, 11, pp. 115-128.

Goddard, M. (2002). Reto's chance: States and status in an urban Papua New Guinea settlement. *Oceania*, 73(1), pp. 1-16.

Guthrie, G. (2008). *Urban crime victimization in Papua New Guinea, 2004-2008: A Synthesis*, Justice Advisory Group, Port Moresby.

Guthrie, G. (2012). Sectoral aid and urban crime victimization in Papua New Guinea. *Contemporary PNG Studies*, 17, pp. 16-34.

Guthrie, G. & Guthrie, K. (2012). *Basic research methods for Papua New Guinea*. UPNG Press: Port Moresby.

Guthrie, G., Hukula, F., & Laki, J. (2007). Lae community crime survey, 2005, *Special publication No.43*, National Research Institute: Port Moresby.

Guthrie, G. & Laki, J. (2007). Yumi lukautim Mosbi. *Impact evaluation 2006*, Justice Advisory Group: Port Moresby.

Guthrie, G. & Laki, J. (2008). *Goroka and Kainantu community crime surveys, 2008*. Justice Advisory Group: Port Moresby.

Hermkens, A. K. (2008). Josephine's journey: Gender-based violence and Marian devotion in urban Papua New Guinea. *Oceania*, 78(2), pp. 151-167.

Hinton, R. & Earnest, J. (2010). Stressors, coping, and social support among women in Papua New Guinea. *Qualitative Health Research*, 20(2), pp. 224-238.

Human Rights Watch (2006). Papua New Guinea: Still making their own rules: Ongoing impunity for police beatings, rape, and torture. *Human Rights Watch*, 18(13C), pp. 1-52.

Lak, R. *et al.* (1992). Final report on domestic violence. *Report No.14*. PNG Law Reform Commission: Boroko.

Lepani, K. (2008). Mobility, violence and the gendering of HIV in Papua New Guinea. *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 19(2), pp. 150-164.

Luluaki, J. (2003). Sexual crimes against and exploitation of children and the law in Papua New Guinea. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 17(3), pp. 275-307.

Macintyre, M. (2008). Police and thieves, gunmen and drunks: Problems with men and problems with society in Papua New Guinea. *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 19(2), pp. 179-193.

McManus, M. (2008). Domestic and sexual violence: Youth and media reporting in Papua New Guinea. In E. Papoutsaki, & U. Harris, (Eds). *South Pacific Islands Communication: Regional Perspectives, Local Issues*. Asian Media Information & Communication Centre: Singapore, pp. 219-234.

Author

Dr Gerard Guthrie has researched in PNG for some 10 years since 1975, mainly in education, aid project evaluation, and crime victimization. He was a member of the PNG Justice Advisory Group from 2004-2008 and Director of the surveys discussed in this article, on which he mainly worked with Fiona Hukula and James Laki of the National Research Institute. Formerly Editor of the *Papua New Guinea Journal of Education*, he is author of *The Progressive Education Fallacy in Developing Countries: In Favour of Formalism* (Springer, New York, 2011) and co-author with Karina Guthrie of *Basic Research Methods for Papua New Guinea* (UPNG Press, Port Moresby, 2012).