

**CRIME TRENDS
IN BULGARIA
2000 – 2010**



**CENTER FOR
THE STUDY OF
DEMOCRACY**

The present study examines crime trends in Bulgaria between 2000 and 2010 based on a comparison between surveys of crime victims (National Crime Survey) and police statistics. In addition to overall crime trends data, the report presents data on ten different categories of crime, as well as regional specifics of crime in Bulgaria. Criminal justice and socio economic data is also analysed in an attempt to explain the observed trends in crime.

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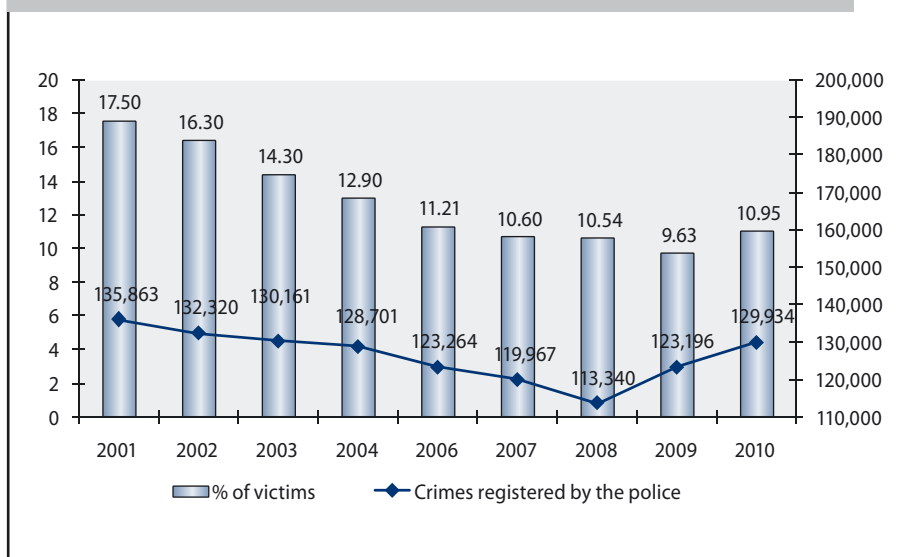
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Crime Survey (NCS) was first introduced in Bulgaria in 2002 by the Center for the Study of Democracy. Drawing on a national survey of victims of crime, it provides in-depth analysis of the trends and volume of crime in Bulgaria. Conducted annually since 2006, the NCS collects data through a national representative survey of 2,500 citizens. This method generates reliable information on both crimes registered by police, and crimes that the victims do not report to police. The method and questionnaire used in the NCS are largely based on the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) developed by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). Additional modules were added over the years to reflect specifics of crime in Bulgaria. The NCS covers the most widespread types of property and violent crime, including car theft, burglary, theft of personal belongings, and violent crime. Since 2009, a range of questions related to various types of frauds were also added.

Figure 1. Victimization index and police statistics



The present study builds upon a previous CSD study that examined crime-trends in Bulgaria between 2000 and 2005, and it aims to provide analysis of longer trends. The 2000 to 2010 period, examined in this study, is characterised by a dynamic social and economic development in Bulgaria. Following the 2000–2008 period, when crime continuously declined, in 2009 the country entered into a severe economic crisis. For the first time since 2001 there was an increase in overall crime rate. Both sources of crime data, the NCS and Ministry of Interior statistics, indicate a continual decline in crime rates from 2001 through 2008, followed by a rise after 2009.

Regional specifics

For the first time the NCS has been able to include separate analysis of crime victimisation in six regions of Bulgaria. The analysis showed the following regional specifics:

- **The lowest level of crime** in Bulgaria is observed in the North-Western region, followed by the South-Central one.
- **In certain regions, levels of unreported crime are much greater.** The differences are largest between the South-Western and the North-Central regions: despite similar levels of victimisation that the NCS observed in the two regions, the police in the North-Central region record almost twice less crimes per 100,000 people.
- For some regions, e.g. the Northern-West, NCS data indicates that crime has declined in the period 2006–2010, while according to police statistics the level of crime has not changed (this is probably due to a lower rate of unreported crime).

In 2010, the sharpest increase in the share of citizens who have become victims of crime is observed in the capital Sofia (from 13 % to 21 %). However, police statistics for Sofia recorded a 7.5 % decline in reported crime in 2010 compared to 2009.

Reported and unreported crime

The NCS has consistently showed that there are significant differences between the number of crimes that victims report and the number of crimes that the police registers. For a number of reasons police officers choose to ‘filter out’ and not to register certain crimes (e.g. insignificant crime that are difficult to solve).

The bigger share of crimes that are not included in the police statistics, though, are the unreported crimes. Between 2000 and 2009 unreported crimes in Bulgaria have been generally on the decrease. With the beginning of the economic crisis in 2009, this trend was reversed. There are various factors that explain the levels of unreported crime in Bulgaria. For instance, the reasons behind the notable increase of crime reporting between 2008 and 2009, was the **growing confidence in the police**. The increase of unreported crimes between 2009 and 2010, on the other hand, is largely related to **a growth of petty crimes** that cause little financial loss to the victim. In Bulgaria the average levels of unreported crimes for certain types, e.g. car theft and burglaries, are comparable to the levels in most EU Member States, but overall unreported crimes remain higher than the EU average. In terms of regional specifics, the following observations could be made:

- In Sofia and in small towns the levels of unreported crimes are lower.
- In villages and in district centres levels of unreported crimes are higher.

- The highest levels of unreported crime are observed in the North-Central and in the South-Eastern regions of the country.

Explaining crime trends

While many different factors may be impacting the dynamics of specific categories of crimes, there are also some general ones determining the overall crime trends. Overall economic growth between in the 2000s could explain to some extent the fall in crime in the decade. However, with the economic crisis of 2009–2010 all this was reversed, as personal incomes fell and unemployment started to grow. The impact of these economic factors on the dynamics and structure of crime may have some exceptions. For instance, the economic crisis drove down car thefts (due to the shrinking market of second-hand cars or auto parts). The use of drugs and paid sex was also on the decrease. On the other hand, various property crimes have been on the rise, such as burglary, theft of personal belongings and violent crime. The impact of the economic crisis has been mitigated by two important demographic trends that since 2000 have had a growing impact: the continuing **decline of the share of young male population** in active crime age (15 to 30), and the **emigration** of part of the Bulgarian crime groups to Western Europe. Finally, the gradual revival of the criminal justice system that started in 1999–2000 (after a decade-long collapse in the 1990s) contributed to falling victimisation rates, as sentences and imprisonment rates rose continuously. On the other hand, in 2008–2009 this impact started to ‘wear-off’ as prisons reached capacity, no new construction of prisons took place, and courts started to give shorter imprisonment sentences, or other alternatives such as probation or conditional sentences, whose effect on crime rates is questionable.

Trends in individual crime categories

Property crime has seen significant decline over the 2000–2010 period, with some increase in petty crimes in the 2009–2010 period. The number of **car thefts has continuously declined**. A gradual decrease of car theft for ransom is observed after 2006, as this type of crime becomes less profitable to criminals due to the significant import of cheap second-hand cars, which car-theft victims may buy instead of paying a ransom.

For the period 2009–2010, NCS registered a significantly higher rise in ‘thefts from homes’ (a category that includes also burglaries) than registered by the police: **while the police data indicates a growth of 11 %, NCS registered a 61 % rise in burglary of adjacent home facilities** (cellars, attics, garages and other adjacent buildings). The main reason for the discrepancy is the considerable growth in theft that is not reported to the police: **44 % higher for unreported thefts from home, and 49 % higher for burglaries from adjacent facilities**. This is due not so much to an erosion of confidence in police but to the fact that these type of burglaries cause relatively minor damages.

Violent crime has had a more complex dynamics over the observed period. Despite the persistent **decline in homicide rates** (they are back to the pre-1988 level of 2 per 100,000), homicide is still **above the EU average**. After several years of relative stabilisation, a sharp increase in offences against the person was

observed between 2009 and 2010. The NCS registers **a rise in unreported threats and violent attacks**, while the police statistics shows no change from the levels of previous years. This hike can be best explained by the economic crisis and the growing unemployment rate, factors that generate personal conflicts, including conflicts in the households.

The effect of the economic crisis will most likely be felt throughout 2011. As some macro-economic indicators suggest that Bulgaria's economy is beginning to recover, and the 'risk population' (15 to 30 year-old males) continues to decline, the crime rate is likely to enter a downward trend.

INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Center for the Study of Democracy published the analysis of the data from National Crime Surveys (NCS) for the period 2000-2005¹. The study compared the dynamics of police crime statistics and the trends outlined by the surveys of crime victims. For a first time such analysis made an attempt to examine the changes in the main categories of crime and the factors explaining the observed reduction in crime levels. The current analysis revisits the dynamics of crime in Bulgaria for a longer period (2000-2010) in a comparative perspective to the situation in the other EU Member States. It discusses the attitudes of Bulgarian citizens towards the police and the social and economic factors that drive national crime trends.

The severe economic crisis that began in 2009 dominated the public agenda for the two following years. The current analysis aims at outlining the major trends in crime by utilizing sources alternative to official information: namely, a series of **national crime-victimisation surveys, conducted since 2001**. In the US and some EU Member States, this type of surveys have a history of over 30 years² and apply methodologies that provide comparability with police statistics and with data from similar surveys performed in other countries.

The NCS follows the methodology of the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) developed by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), and adds some specific for Bulgaria modules. During the years since the first national victimisation survey³ various revisions of the survey methodology and re-assessment of the data were done⁴. At the same time, to secure comparability of data, the core questions from the ICVS was preserved. The last NCS was conducted in the period 20 January – 28 February 2011.

The structure of the current study provides several levels of analysis. The first part explains the methodology and terminology applied in the study. The second part presents the general conclusions about the crime level, drawing comparisons with previous periods, with police statistics and with some international crime trends. Factors impacting the dynamics of crime are also discussed in this part. The last part of the analysis contains data and assessment of the level of victimisation by type of crime.

¹ Crime Trends in Bulgaria: 2000–2005, Sofia, Center for the Study of Democracy, 2006.

² Hans von Hinting, with his book *The Criminal and His Victim* (1948) is the founder of victimology, a sub-division of criminology. The first national victimisation survey is carried out in USA in 1966.

³ Conducted by Vitosha Research Agency in 2002.

⁴ In the period 1997–2002 the Center for the Study of Democracy developed a series of victimisation questions included in monthly national representative surveys, in an attempt to outline the dynamics of crime in the country (as part of a larger UNDP project on Early Warning Systems).

Research methods

The current study combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The **NCS is a quantitative survey**, representative for the Bulgarian population over 15 years of age.⁵ The size of the sample in each of the last 5 surveys (2006 – 2010) is 2,500 respondents. This sample size is larger than the typical sample size for surveys in Bulgaria and enables the analysis of both some categories of crime, and the outlining of regional specifics. The Bulgarian NCS is comparable with recent surveys of crime in EU Member States where samples vary between 1,000 and 2,000 respondents.⁶ **Qualitative methods** applied in the study include regular meetings and interviews with law-enforcement experts from the MoI and police departments at all levels. As these meetings and interviews are carried out in the context of various projects, they are not quoted separately in this study.

The NCS registers information about crimes of which the respondents have been the victim in the last 5 years; in the previous year; and/or in the current year of the survey. From the mid 2000s the surveys are carried out at the very beginning of each year (usually in February). Experience from similar surveys in Western Europe, and analysis of the data from the Bulgarian NCS, indicate that this timing of the surveys minimizes misrepresentation of the victims' experience for the calendar year preceding the study. For instance, data collected in January-February 2011 reflects the period January-December 2010, and for the last 5 years, the period 2006-2010. The main topics covered by the NCS are summarized in Table 1. In addition to the types of crime included in the NCS, since 2009 some types of fraud were added to the survey (e.g. real estate, telephone and bank card fraud).

Summarised results of the NCS are presented mostly through the **victimisation index**, which shows the share of the population that has been victim of the **ten categories of crimes** (see table below). Where appropriate the data presented is not only about the number of victims, but the **number of crimes** (as some victims might have been victimised more than once). The third main type of data is **'unreported crime'** (i.e. crimes not reported to the police), which may include either the share of victims who did not report the crime to the police, or the number of crimes not reported to the police.

Not all types of crime, registered by the police, are covered by the NCS. Crimes where the victim is not clearly defined (e.g. drugs related crimes described in art. 242, 253, 270, 343 of the Penal Code, or traffic offences, art. 340-344), and also crimes that are too rare to be captured in the survey sample (e.g. some offences against marriage and family, such as 'illegal adoption', art. 182 (a,b) of the Penalty Code) are excluded from the NCS.

⁵ The research method for collection of data is a standardized personal interview at the respondent's home. To secure reliable information about the levels of reported and unreported crime, complete anonymity is guaranteed to respondents, and interviewers get special training, different from traditional marketing or social surveys.

⁶ However, data from the Bulgarian NCS does not provide the quality of information collected in crime surveys with much larger samples (e.g. the sample size in USA for similar surveys is 60,000, and in the UK, 46,000).

Table 1. Topics in the National Crime Survey (NCS)

Crimes against citizens over the past 5 years	When	How often (last year)	Where	Did you report it to the police?	Any details related to reporting the crime	Seriousness of incident	Additional questions ⁷
Crimes against property							
Theft of car	•	•	•	•		•	•
Theft from car	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bicycle theft	•	•	•	•		•	
Theft from homes	•	•		•	•	•	•
Attempted burglary	•	•		•	•	•	
Theft from adjacent facilities	•	•		•	•	•	•
Crimes against the person							
Robbery	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Theft of personal property/pick pocketing	•	•	•	•		•	•
Sexual offences	•			•		•	
Assault/threat	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Whenever possible, a comparison has been drawn between the data of the victimisation surveys and police statistics. Police statistics suffers from some significant limitations: it does not capture the volume and the trend of unreported crime. Victimisation surveys are a tool for an independent **evaluation both of the crime level itself, and of the performance of police**. Although there is a statistical error in any survey of this kind, the obtained data and observed trends are highly representative and reflect the overall state of crime. Instances where the crime trends observed are not statistically significant to draw definitive conclusions are specifically noted. This is particularly true for some of the regional data, where instead of year-by-year trends, average data for the past five years is presented.

In many ways, police statistics and NCS are **complimentary sources of information** Police statistics captures some types of crime that are not covered by NCS, and vice versa. Where there are considerable discrepancies between the two sources for one and the same type of crime, further analysis and discussion of the reasons for the discrepancy are needed.

⁷ Additional questions relate to why the crime was reported to the police; how efficient was the police in tackling the reported crime and any reasons for an unsatisfying action on their part; the estimated value of the stolen item; available theft insurance, etc.

Based on NCS data, three major reasons for the discrepancies between police statistics and the actual crime level can be tentatively outlined:

1. Citizens **do no report to police** that they have been victims of crime (e.g. if they believe police cannot help them or consider the crime too minor to report). This situation is described by the term '**unreported crime**'.
2. Citizens report to police that they have been a victim of crime, but **police do not register** the crime (e.g. if the local police department tends to register only crimes that can be solved, or if the victim cannot describe clearly the circumstances of the crime). This phenomenon is called '**institutional filters**' (or '**police filters**').
3. The Penalty Code or police do not include some form of crime, as it is considered insignificant, while the victim perceives it as serious. Good examples are some types of fraud: minor consumer fraud may be perceived by citizens as crime, while in practice offenders may be subject to administrative sanctions only.

Institutional 'filters'

Of the factors listed above, the 'police filter' deserves special attention. There are several known reasons for the police not to register crimes,⁸ although a precise quantitative evaluation of each of them would be impossible. **Political and executive pressure** for reporting 'lower levels of crime' is typical for public institutions responsible for internal security in most European countries. The reason to exercise this type of pressure is that in many modern democracies a rise in the level of crime has no smaller electoral implications than a rise in unemployment or a decline in incomes.

A second factor, predetermined by the first one, is that non-registration of crimes by police may have positive impact on the performance record of a given police officer or a police department. In countries with well developed police criminal statistics, the data on crime dynamics of a certain district or even neighbourhood are often the major factor for performance evaluation of police staff: a decline in registered crimes is considered an indicator for a job well done. Furthermore, certain crimes are more difficult to solve than others, and 'clearance rate' is another classical indicator of police performance. In both cases, non-registration of crime may impact *positively* the performance evaluation and, subsequently, the career development of a police officer.

After 1990, a series of changes in the system of crime registration took place in Bulgaria, with long-term negative effects. The major criterion for good performance and effectiveness in the police is the **clearance rate** and the overall

⁸ "Registered crime is a reported crime on which a prosecutor has ordered a preliminary investigation and an investigator from the MoI has been appointed to work on the case; or the preliminary check has been completed and the case materials have been sent to a prosecutor with a recommendation that a preliminary investigation is started, led by an investigator." – *Police Statistics, Methodological notes*.

number of registered crimes. The result is that a larger number of registered crimes in a given period, and respectively lower clearance rate, present a risk for police management at various levels. There is a clear incentive for Police Departments to avoid the registration of crime, or to register only crimes that have a higher chance of being solved, thus improving their clearance rate. At the same time, within the Mol there is no effective system for internal control of the crime reporting data.

The analysis of crime registration at the level of District Police Departments and anonymous interviews with police supervisors revealed an additional **third factor**: 'the striving to stay in the middle-ground'. Police Departments (at district or regional levels) that try not to show different dynamics of crime compared to the others (to avoid special attention from their superiors at the Mol) apply two basic practices:

- A stable number of registered crimes is maintained, and when possible the numbers are slightly reduced compared to prior periods. The registration of either a sharp rise or decline in crime rate is risky (even when it is real), because it may trigger checks.
- The level and dynamics of crime are compared to those in neighbouring or similar Police Department or Regional Directorates of the Mol, with the intention to avoid any 'suspicious' differences.

Various techniques for avoiding registration of the reported crimes are applied. The most typical ones are the following:

- Creating maximum obstacles for the victim (or the person reporting the crime) to file a report. Various approaches may be used: a) convincing the victim that the offence is minor; b) the victim is forced to wait for a long time for the officer to whom to report, so that the victim may give up filing a report; c) requiring a maximum number of documents; d) sending the victim to a different District Police Department.
- Accepting the report of the victim, but failing to register it properly. Heads of Police Departments have been punished and fired for registering only those crimes that they can solve. Another well established practice is to take and accumulate reports which are registered only when the crimes are solved, or when it is deemed necessary to produce a more realistic monthly or annual statistical report.
- 'Re-classifying' a crime as a report of 'lost personal belongings', e.g. a pick-pocket theft or burglary may be reclassified as 'loss of documents'.
- Various techniques of deleting crimes that have already been registered, including a prosecutor's statement that no crime has been committed.

In 2009, the Mol adopted a new policy for crime registration. A number of District Police Department heads were removed, accused in manipulating police statistics. Internal regulations governing crime registration were also issued, and citizens were encouraged to report crimes. As a result, police reported a significant rise in registered crimes. The effect, however, seem to have been short-

lived, as in 2010 the previous level of unregistered crime was observed again. The next chapter will discuss in greater detail these developments.

Apart from police, prosecutors and investigators may also influence the registration (or non-registration) of a reported crime. But their role is more of a 'secondary' filter, and thus they have a much more limited impact on overall crime statistics than police.

Unreported crime

The unreported crime levels for particular categories of crime depend on a variety of factors. The NCS measures both the rate of crimes included in the survey, and the weight of the various reasons for not reporting the crime to police. The NCS handles a wide spectrum of reasons why victims do not report crimes:

- The crime is not considered serious and the damages are minor;
- The victim decides to handle the consequences of the crime by him/herself, or is familiar with the offender;
- The victim decides that the police is not necessary;
- Instead to the police, the victim contacts another institution;
- The victim believes that the police cannot do anything, as there is no evidence;
- The victim believes that police would not do anything;
- Fear of revenge from the offender;
- Fear from the police.

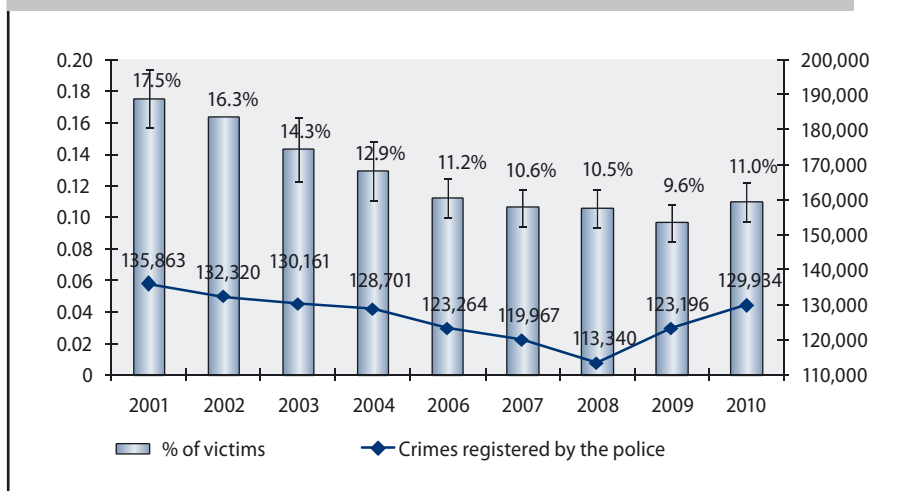
1. GENERAL CRIME TRENDS

1.1. Police statistics and victimisation studies: in the shadow of economic crisis

The current study focuses on a critical period in Bulgaria's development, when crime-related factors are more complex in comparison with the period from 2000 to 2005, which was the timeframe of the first CSD study on crime trends. In the middle of the 2006–2010 period the country entered a serious economic crisis. The NCS registers a serious deterioration of the criminal situation after

2009, which represents a reversal of the positive trends in the previous years back to 2001, when a comparison between victimisation survey results and police statistics was first introduced (Figure 2).⁹ Both sources of crime data (the NCS and the Police) support this conclusion. On the one hand, the crisis adds new hurdles to the analysis. On the other, however, it offers the opportunity to test different hypotheses about the impact on crime of several economic and social factors: the fluctuations of the GDP, the average income per capita, the increase in household indebtedness, emigration, demographic changes, and imprisonment rates.

Figure 2. Victimization index and police statistics



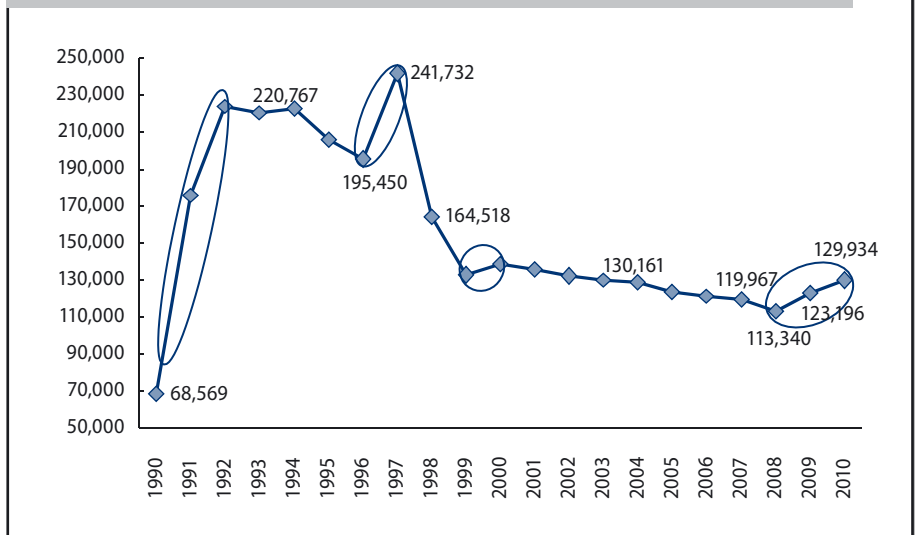
Due to the fact that the NCS was introduced only in 2002,¹⁰ any comparisons with previous periods of economic crises (1990–1992, 1996–1998) have to be limited to police statistics. The official figures about the period before 1989 show that the beginning of the process of democratic changes and transition to market economy coincided with a sharp increase in crime incidents. The number of offences jumped from 400 per 100,000 population in mid 1980s to 2,500 per 100,000 in the period 1990–1991. With political stability settling in the country at the end of the 1990s the situation normalized. Accordingly, the registered crime rate on average fell to around 1,600 for every 100,000 citizens.

⁹ The victimisation index for the period 2001–2004 includes also victims of motorbike thefts. As this type of crime is very rare in Bulgaria (due to the limited number of motorbikes) it was dropped from the questionnaire, that was used the following years.

¹⁰ There exists a limited possibility to compare police data with victimisation study figures obtained by a UNODC questionnaire in 2000. The victimisation survey identified a rise of criminal offences, which police statistics registered later in that year.

There are four periods during the last 20 years of sharp increases in the number of registered crimes, usually coinciding with political or economic upheavals (see Figure 3):

Figure 3. Police registered crimes 1990–2010



Source: Mol.

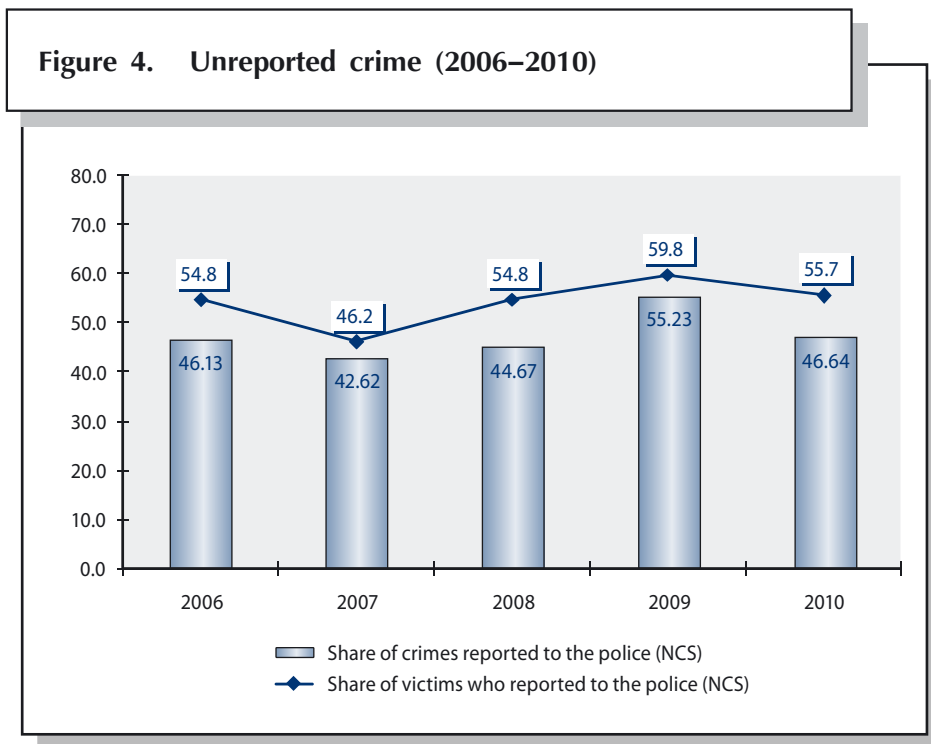
The first significant rise in the number of offences coincides with the period 1990–1992 and could be linked to the crisis-ridden changes in the economy, in addition to the cataclysmic shutdown of the law enforcement and judiciary institutions in the country. These developments resulted in a four-fold increase of the number of offences over the two-year period. The second upheaval coincided with the financial/banking and political crisis in 1996–1997, which followed a relative stabilization in mid 1990s. This was the period of record level registered crime offences since 1944 and represented a jump of 25 % compared to the 1995 level. In 2000, police statistics registered another

limited rise in criminal offences (4,6 %), although it was not related to crisis. The last increase was observed in the period 2009–2010; it was related to the world financial crisis, which impacted negatively the social-economic situation in the country. The rise in the number of offences in two consecutive years is a precedent since the start of transition in 1989-1990. These developments signal the return to the 2003-2004 levels of police registered criminal offences.

Another interesting detail from the NCS 2009 is the fact that although the number of victims decreased, the overall number of offences increased (see Figure 6). In 2010 the NCS registered another sharp increase of the number of offences, which equalled that in 2004. The discrepancies between the downward crime rate indicated by NCS 2009 and the opposite trend of police statistics for the same year pose a legitimate question. One possible explanation could be the fact that the decrease is not statistically significant. Another explanation is linked to the types of offences at the beginning of the crisis. Initially there was a substantial increase of the incidents of non-professional offences – robberies, small thefts (of agricultural products, thefts from basements and attics). These types of crime target the most vulnerable persons and households. The end result is that **the same people suffer from an increased number of offences.**

1.2. Unreported crime

The level of unreported crimes to the police (see Figure 4) is an indicator with a strong impact on the overall crime analysis in the country. It is the unreported crimes that serve as a basis for the main comparisons between the NCS and the police statistics. There are two types of unreported crimes. The first one is the number of victims who did not report to the police about the offence they suffered; this number is used to establish the general number of crimes unreported to the police. The second type of data consists of crimes that are reported to the police, but for a variety of reasons are not registered and are not included in police statistics.



Source: NCS.

Over the last 5 years research indicates relatively stable levels of unreported crime. The figure above shows that on average 54 % of victims reported to the police, while 47 % of all offences were reported. It is worth noting that the real level of unreported offences represents one of the best indicators for the level of trust in police. Two trends require further explanation. On the one hand, in 2007 there was a significant increase of unreported offences, i.e. people reported less criminal incidents to the police. On the other hand, in 2009 there was a significant decrease of unreported offences. Both changes (2007 and 2009) should be viewed in light of the political events and the media coverage during this period. The 2009 data was obtained in the period February–March of 2010,

when the Ministry of Interior enjoyed a relatively favourable media coverage, comparable to that from the period of 1997 (“Mosquito operation”).

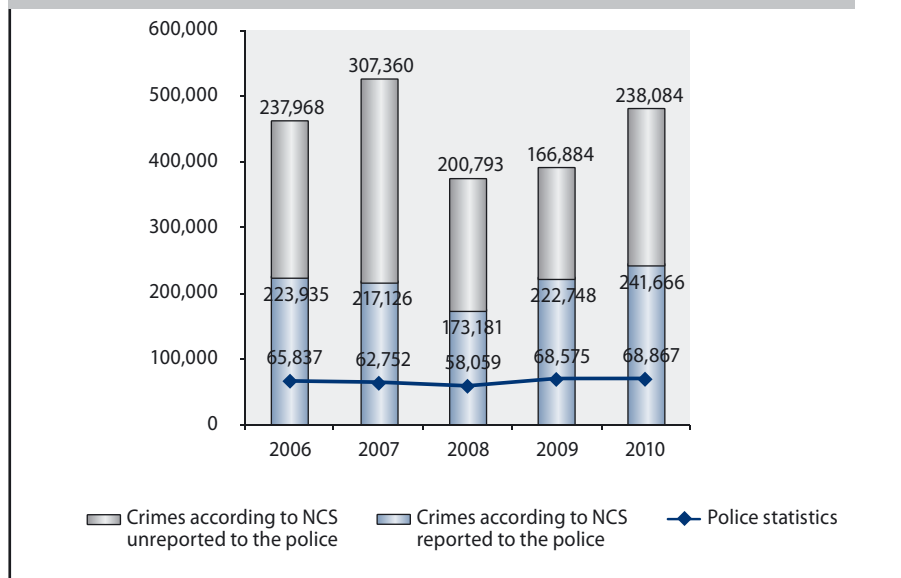
When discussing unreported crime, one should consider the fact that the share of unreported incidents is different for the different types of offences. Serious crimes, such as car theft, tend to have very low rates of unreported crime, in comparison with that of thefts from cars or ‘thefts of other belongings’ (for an extensive explanation see chapters 3 and 4). Bulgaria has similar levels of unreported thefts of cars or robberies with those in most of the EU states, but the overall level of unreported crime incidents is higher (see Table 2).

Table 2. Share of crimes reported by victims in Bulgaria and EU (%)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2005
	Bulgaria						EU
Theft of car	96	85	90	93	91	100	92
Theft from car	40	51	50	56	50	37	65
Thefts from homes	68	70	52	56	81	66	79
Robbery	31	30	50	60	64	76	54
Theft of personal property	30	35	26	32	41	48	51
Assault/threat	29	100	53	83	100	67	36
Average for 11 groups of crimes	43	46	43	45	55	47	58

Source: NCS, EU ICS.

The most important data that the NCS provides on an annual basis concerns the actual number of offences, the level of reporting them to the police, as well as the number of offences that the police do not register. This information is extremely important in the framework of the discussion about the overall effectiveness of the Ministry of Interior and about the effectiveness of its different structures. Figure 5 shows the two groups of offences – reported and unreported to the police.¹¹

Figure 5. Reported and unreported crimes

Source: NCS, Mol.

¹¹ The figures do not take into consideration the cases where the respondents have been the victims of more than one of the same offence. The requirement that the NCS should follow the internationally accepted standards in victimization studies does not allow the addition of the actual number of the same type of offences (for example thefts or burglaries) which targeted the same person/respondent.

From the NCS data for the 2006–2009 period (Figure 5)¹² it is clear that while the average annual number of offences is around 550,000, the police registers only 100,000 of them. The 450,000 unregistered offences split almost evenly between unreported (around 230,000), and “filtered”, i.e. reported but not registered, by the police (around 220,000).

While police statistics reflects the levels of reported offences, some changes are observed in the effect of “police filters” (as an example, according to 2009 NCS, there was a 28 % increase in offences reported to the police; however, the number of offences registered by the police increased by only 8 % over the same period).

The comparisons between the NCS and police statistics from 2001 onward show the emergence of a sustained trend of narrowing the difference between the number of offences registered by the police, and the number of the offences declared by the victims (both reported and unreported). With the beginning of the economic crisis however, this trend was reversed: the difference between the two figures started to grow again from 370,000 in 2008 to 480,000 in 2010.

The increase of the number of offences related to the economic crisis coincides with changes in the crime structure. While offences which imply the involvement of professional criminals (burglaries of homes, car thefts, etc.) continue to follow the long-term downward trend, offences which are easier to commit, such as pick-pocketing, thefts from homes and adjacent facilities (attics, basements, villas), and thefts of personal belongings are on the rise.

This change in crime structure is recognizable also in the typology used in police statistics: while all other types of crime decrease, the number of offences against property increase dramatically.

¹² The question refers to victimisation during the year preceding the survey. One should also take into account the fact that respondents may misrepresent in which period a crime took place, a phenomenon that victimologists call ‘telescoping’.

1.3. International comparisons

The attempts to compare crime activities levels in Bulgaria with those in the other EU Member States face various challenges due to the differing penal codes and, accordingly, discrepancies among police statistics. This explains why many criminologists in Europe consider the victimisation surveys, despite some inherent inaccuracy, the best assessment tool available. The latest ICVS in the EU was done in 2005¹³ (see box below), but it still gives probably the best basis for comparison between EU MS. Another possible approach to international comparisons is to **compare trends in registered crimes** rather than the number of crimes per 100,000 population. To this end, the present report uses the national police statistics reported to Eurostat.

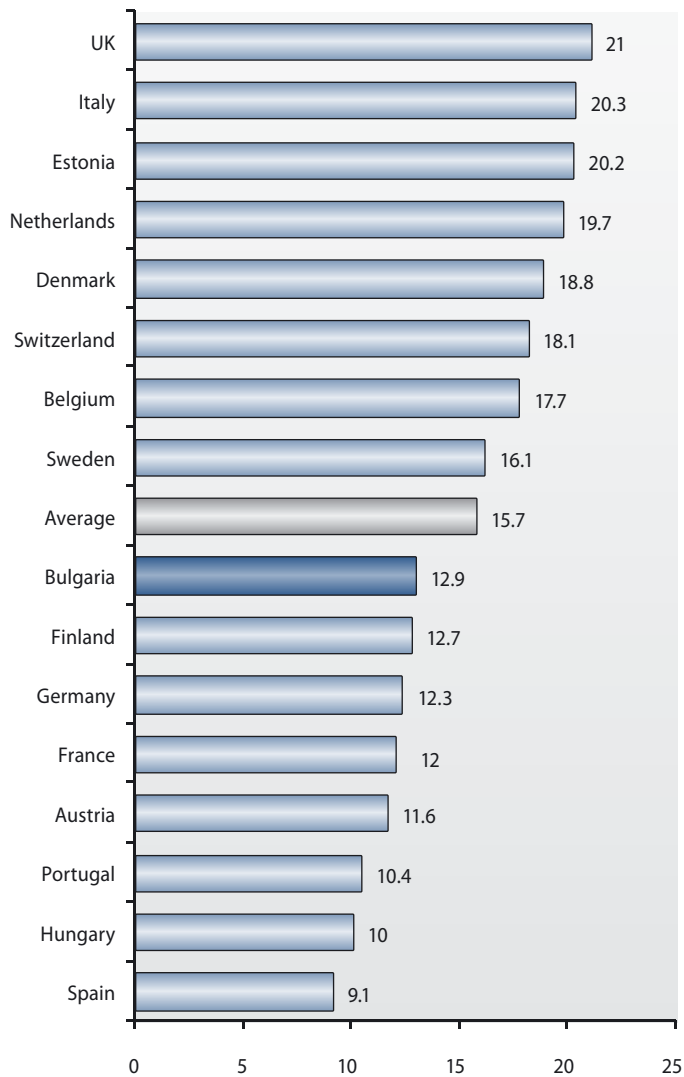
Comparisons between victimisation surveys in different countries is also difficult, due to the discrepancies between the research methods used. The most frequently encountered problems are:

- The research covers different time-spans (for example, the respondent is asked whether he was the target of an offence during the previous year or during the last 12 months).
- The studies have different frequency: while some surveys are conducted annually, others are produced on a monthly basis, using accumulated data and presenting quarterly crime analysis
- Discrepancies between the questions asked: longer questions provide more accurate and detailed answers.

The International Crime Victims Surveys (ICVS) tried to overcome these problems. In the framework of these surveys all the participating countries compare the same types of crime over the same period of time. CSD's questionnaire used in the NCS is largely compatible with the ICVS

¹³ The data about Bulgaria is from the NCS 2005.

**Figure 6. Victims of crime in 2005
(% of the population)**



While the crime victims data (Figure 6) shows Bulgaria to have close to the EU average level of crime victimisation, the registered crime data (Figure 7) puts the country at an even better position.¹⁴ In this pre-crisis period most of the European states register a decrease in crime levels. In analyzing the trends for that period it should be noted that in addition to the general trend of decline in crime, common to a great number of countries both inside and outside Europe, there also existed other factors, specific to certain countries. As an example, in most of the EU MS, in addition to the demographic factors (namely the ageing of the population, the rise in immigration), additional anti-terrorist measures were undertaken. In this general context, the 7% decrease of crime in Bulgaria over the period 2006–2008 is not only a confirmation of the existing trend since the end of the 1990s, but also places the country in the group of states with the most substantial crime decrease.

Source: Van Dijk, J.J.M., van Kesteren, J.N. & Smit, P. (2008). *Criminal Victimization in International Perspective, Key findings from the 2004-2005 ICVS and EU ICS*. The Hague, Boom Legal Publishers, NCS 2004.

¹⁴ The last crime data published from Eurostat is for the period 2006-2008.

Figure 7. Changes in the levels of registered crime against the person 2006–2008

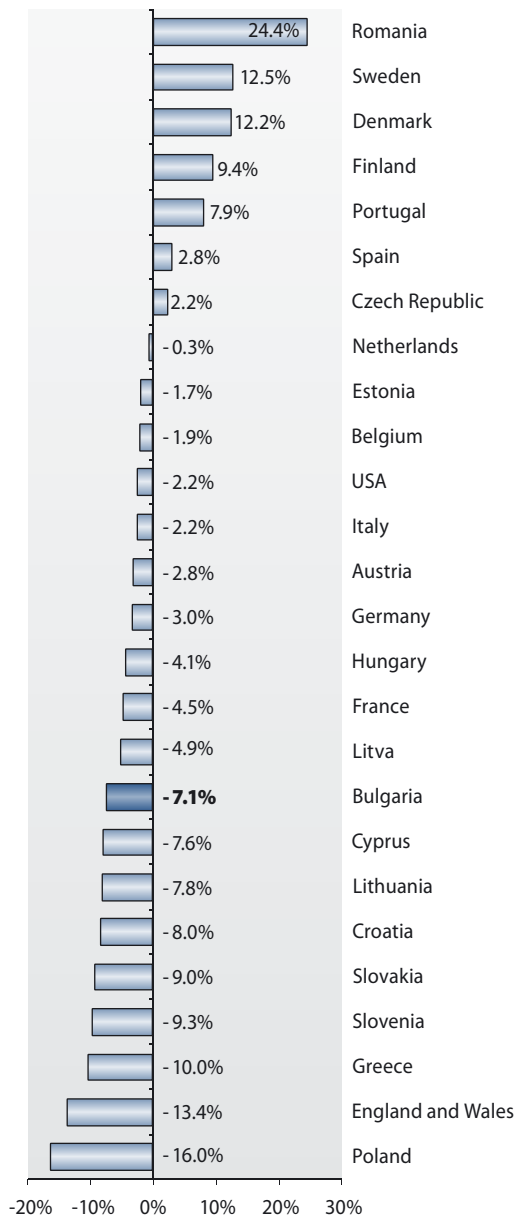
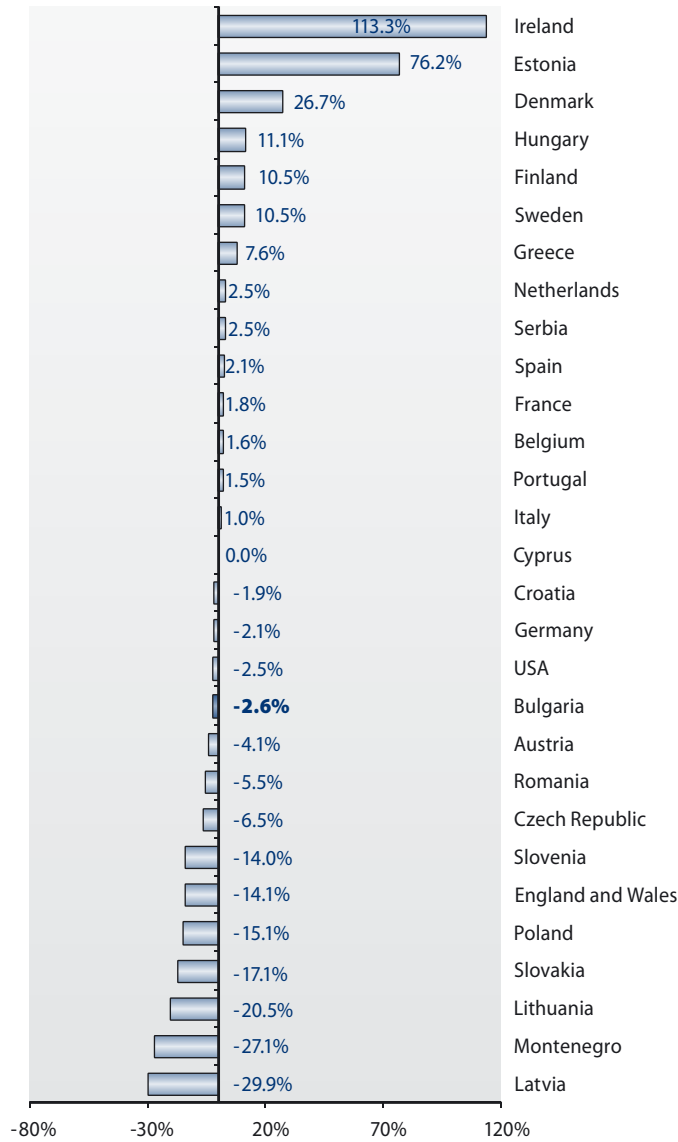


Figure 8. Changes in the levels of registered crime 2006–2008 (according to police statistics)



Source: Eurostat.

The Eurostat data about violent crime give another perspective: lower unreported rate as police filters are seldom applied. Here again Bulgaria is situated in the centre of the table. As for the significant changes in countries like Ireland and Estonia, they could be the product of an earlier exposure to the economic crisis impact.

As we noted earlier, registered crime data for the EU for the period 2009-2010 is still not published by Eurostat. Some initial comparisons could be made based on partial data from some EU MS. The registered trends are quite different. Bulgaria experienced in 2009 an overall increase in crime, accompanied by changes in its structure. Similar processes are developing also in other states (See Table 3).

Table 3. Total volume of registered crimes in some EU Member States (2008–2009)

	2008	2009	Change
Bulgaria	113,340	123,196	8.0
Latvia	48,491	53,079	8.6
France	2,345,327	2,350,706	0.2
Germany	6,114,128	6,054,330	-1.0
Portugal	431,918	427,687	-1.0
Scotland	385,509	377,433	-2.1
Czech Republic	343,799	332,829	-3.3
Ireland	588,030	564,273	-4.2

Source: Statistical office of the respective Member State.

As a whole, changes affect the overall structure of crime, rather than the overall crime rate. In Germany, for example, during the 2009 crisis year police statistics registered a 7.1 % increase in burglaries, despite the overall decrease of offences in the country.¹⁵ A similar increase in burglaries was observed also in Austria, 4.4 %, and in France, 1.5 %. The UK Home Office in its annual survey of crime victims registered a 14 % increase in burglaries compared to the previous year, a 12 % increase of bicycle thefts and an 8 % increase of other thefts from homes.¹⁶ In the Czech Republic, Portugal, and Ireland, a general downward trend was observed, with a decrease in the main types of offences against persons and property. In the following chapter we discuss in detail the changes in crime and the possible reasons behind them.

¹⁵ Crime rate drops to record low – <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,15093336,00.html>

¹⁶ Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to December 2010.

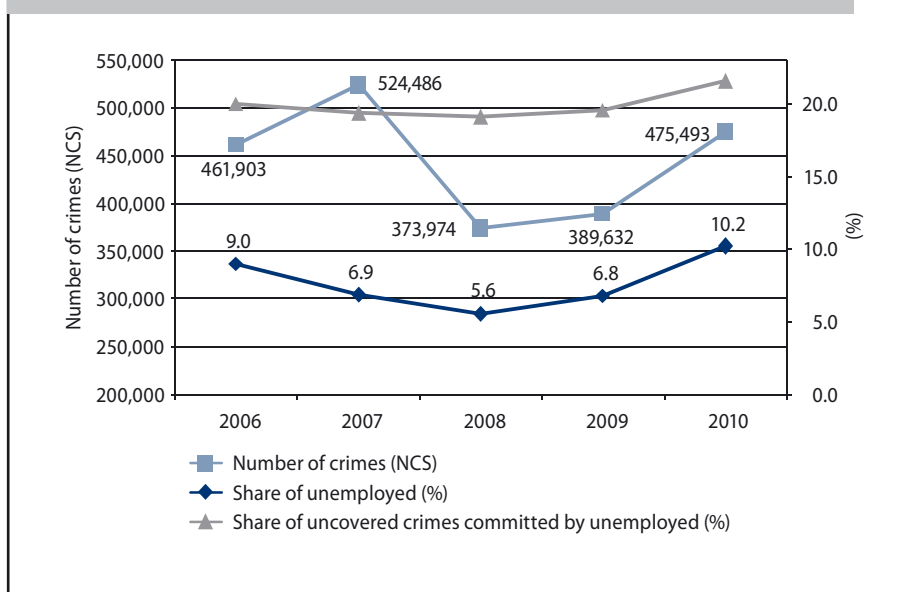
2. DYNAMICS OF CRIME LEVELS

The global economic crisis and its negative effect on the economic situation in Bulgaria is by far the key factor contributing to the changes in crime dynamics in the country after 2008. In terms of domestic factors, the personnel changes at the Ministry of Interior, including several ministers and Secretary Generals, directors of directorates and heads of District Police Department and of Regional Directorate of Mol influenced the crime situation in Bulgaria and had impact on the attitude of victims and police officers towards crime (police filters and unreported crime). The low level of unreported crimes in 2009, reflecting the increased levels of trust towards the police, can be explained by the positive attitudes towards the new government of GERB, which were formed as a result of extensive media coverage. Last but not least, labour migration both within Bulgaria and internationally impacts crime dynamics in the country. These processes are revealed by regional analysis and data comparisons from police statistics and the NCS.

2.1. The global economic crisis and its impact on the crime situation in Bulgaria

The global economic crisis had a delayed impact on Bulgaria's economy. The negative effects on the economy and society as a whole were first felt at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009.

Figure 9. Unemployment and levels of crime



Unemployment, which had been gradually decreasing since 2001 to reach record low levels in 2008, increased rapidly back to the levels of 2004–2005 (Figure 9): from 7 % to 10 % between 2009–2010. The rise in unemployment for the same period affected disproportionately the so called “risk group” of the male population, 15 to 29 years of age: unemployment grew from 16 % to 23 %. The share of unemployed offenders, though, increased only slightly from 20 % to 22 %. Therefore the connection between unemployment and crime data should be interpreted very carefully, as they may be skewed both by problems with

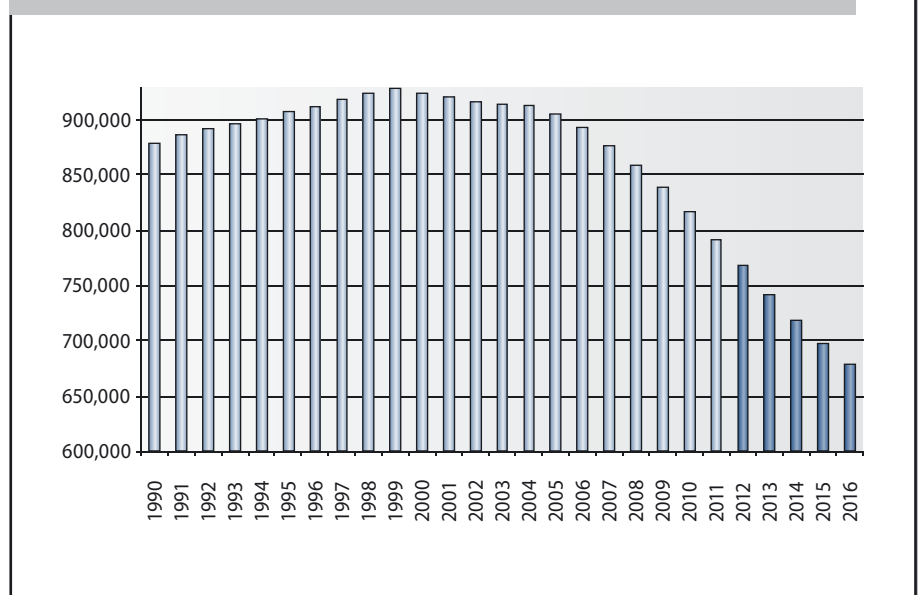
the national statistics and problems in the Ministry of Interior registration practices. The significant share of the gray economy also makes the unemployment data questionable, as actual rates may be significantly higher than the official ones.

The effect of unemployment on crime levels is a subject of debate in criminology, but a correlation between the two is accepted in general. In the US, for instance, criminological research has shown a connection between unemployment and certain types of crimes, such as house break-ins, burglaries and theft of and from cars. Data from such studies reveal that a 1 % decrease in unemployment leads to 1 % decrease in property related crimes. No connection has been established between economic factors and crimes against the person, such as murder, rape or assault.

Demographic changes in the male population give another reason for precaution in establishing correlations between crime and unemployment. Data from 1999 onwards indicates that there has been a steady decrease in the number of males aged 15 to 30 – a risk group that tends to commit crime more frequently. Globally, men at this age group are responsible of committing between 60-70 % of all crime. Data from Bulgaria reveals that the crime rates are similar: in 2010 54 % of crimes uncovered by the police were committed by men aged 14 to 30.

This group has decreased by 10 % for the period 2000–2010, dropping by almost 15,000 people each year from 2006 to 2010 (see Figure 10). The increase in the levels of crime for the period 2009–2010 reveals that the expected effect of the decrease in the size of this risk group has been offset by the worsening socio-economic situation, which is the main factor impacting the growing crime rate.

**Figure 10. Male population in Bulgaria
15 – 30 years of age**

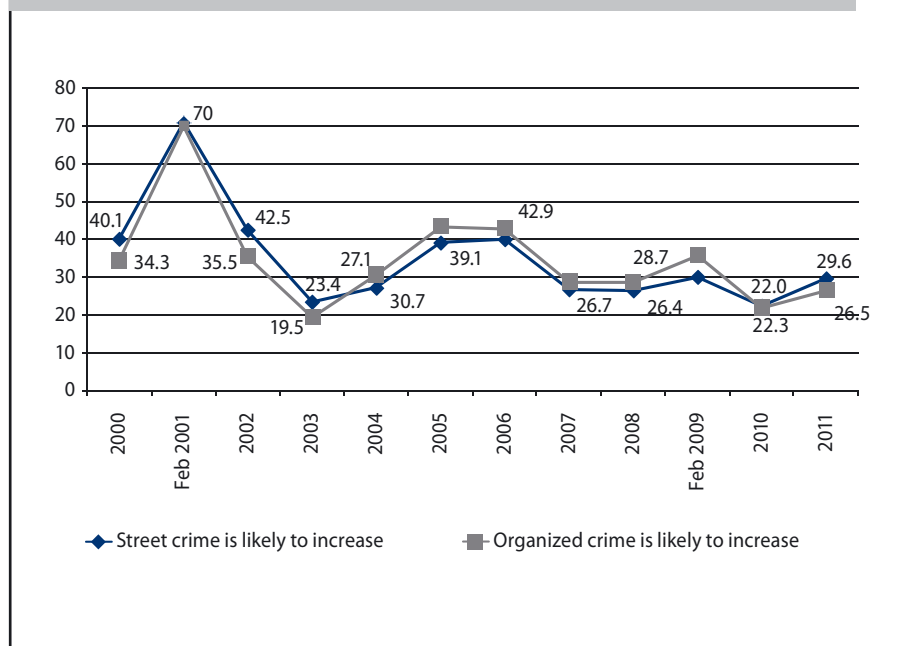


Source: National Statistical Institute.

2.2. Changes in public attitudes towards the police

The public perceptions of crime are significantly impacted by the mass media coverage of incidents of serious crime. This explains why almost 30 % of the respondents believed that crime levels had increased in the last months of 2008, although a decrease was registered by both police data and the NCS.

Figure 11. Perceived trends in 'street' and organised crime

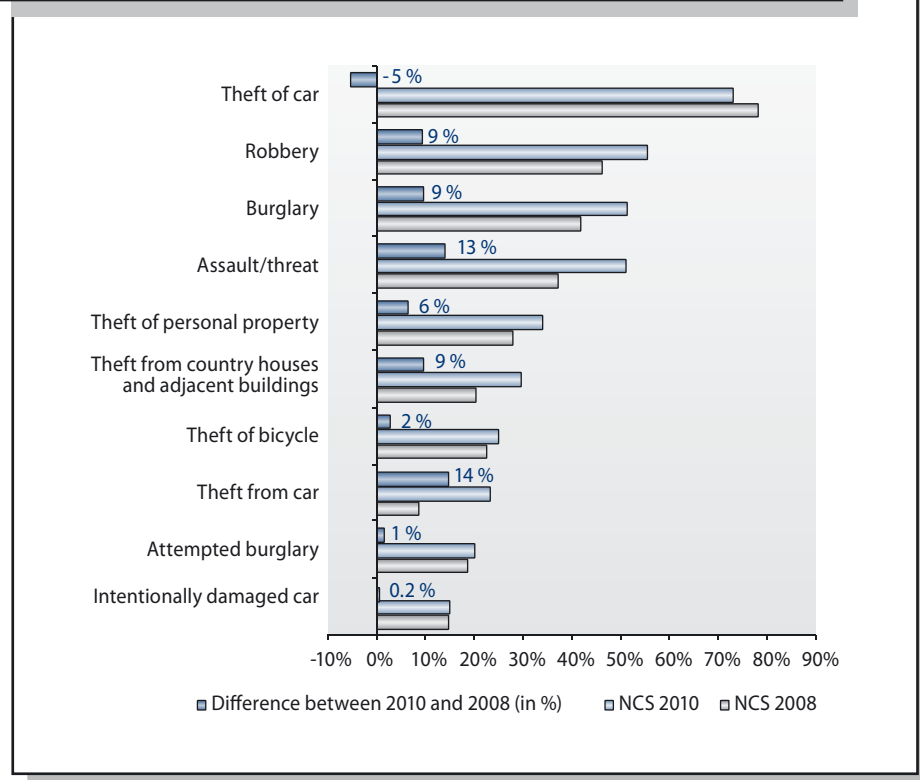


The heated public debate on crime in 2009 along with the wide media coverage of special police operations are the main reasons for the sharp increase in crimes reported to the police. At the same time, the population became more sensitive towards crime (Figure 12): among the victims of all types of crimes, there is an increase in the number of people that consider the crime they have suffered "very serious".

Source: NCS.

The **subjective** perceptions of the population are heavily influenced by the media coverage of crime. Thus, active media coverage of police operations leads citizens to believe that there has been an increase in crime rates, which in turn leads to a decrease in unreported crime and a raise in the crimes registered by the police (as indicated by the 2009 data). Media portrays this increase in registered crime as an increase in the crime rates in a certain region, which again affects public opinion. The only instrument for breaking this vicious cycle is the use of analysis based on objective data from victimisation surveys that are based on internationally recognized methodologies for data collection. This methodology is not affected by external factors such as changes in the registration methods, and measures **consistently** the level of crime, with a quantifiable error of measurement which is constant and homogeneous in the course of time.

Figure 12. Share of people defining the crime they became victim of as “very serious”



Source: NCS.

2.3. The role of law enforcement and the criminal justice system

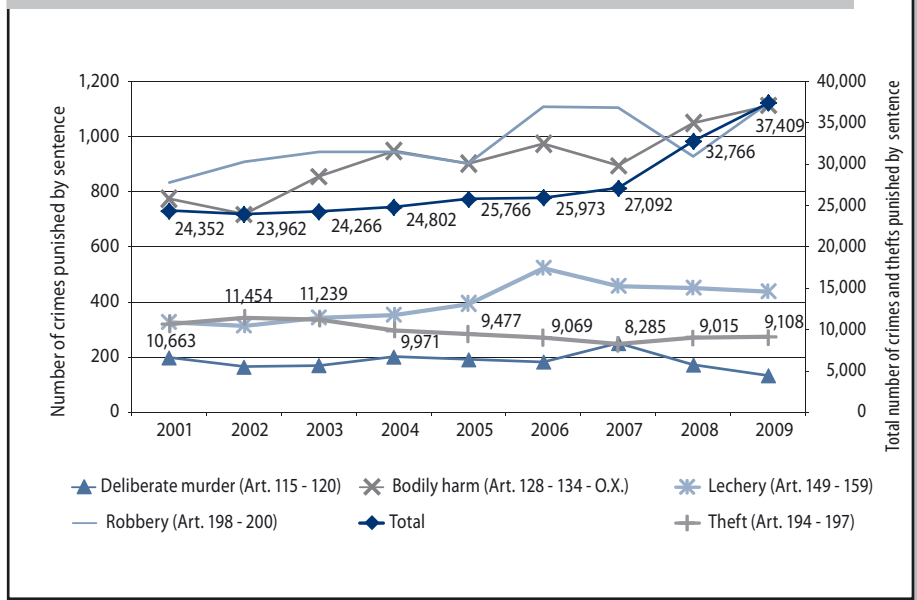
The role of law enforcement in crime reduction is a subject of vigorous debate, which is often politicised. Various factors tend to have both positive and negative impact on crime reduction. However, it is hard to quantify their influence and to define clear causal relations. These complexities explain the controversial and radical opinions on the role of law enforcement in reducing crime rates.

Criminologists often refer to changes in the size of police force to explain changes in the levels of crime. The size of the police force in Bulgaria has been classified information for many years. Although the number of personnel of the police force was finally revealed in 2010 by the Ministry of Interior, data on changes in the size of the police from the previous years is not available, making a detailed analysis of the relation between police-force size and crime rates impossible. If detailed data by region and by year existed, it could provide a basis for analysis of the following causal relations:

- changes in the number of security and criminal police and the prevention effect of their actions as evidenced by the reported crime rates in a certain region.

- changes in the number of security and criminal police and the effects on the number of unsolved crimes as a proportion of all reported crimes

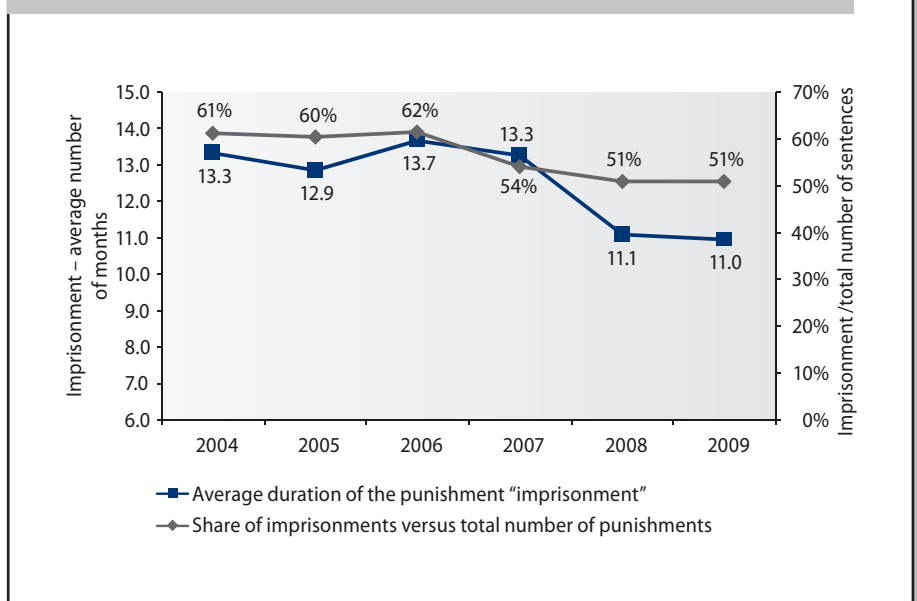
Figure 13. Number of issued sentences



Both approaches, though, would face limitations, as the use of “institutional filters” when registering crime remains unknown.

Some conclusions on the effect of **penal policies and the criminal justice process** on crime rates can be formed using the existing statistical data provided by courts. Imprisonment has a controversial effect on combating and preventing crime. Statistical data reveals that more than half of prisoners in Bulgaria are repeat offenders.¹⁷ On the other hand, international data supports the notion that imprisonment has a positive effect on crime rates, as a professional criminal conducts about 200 crimes per year on average.

Figure 14. Imprisonments



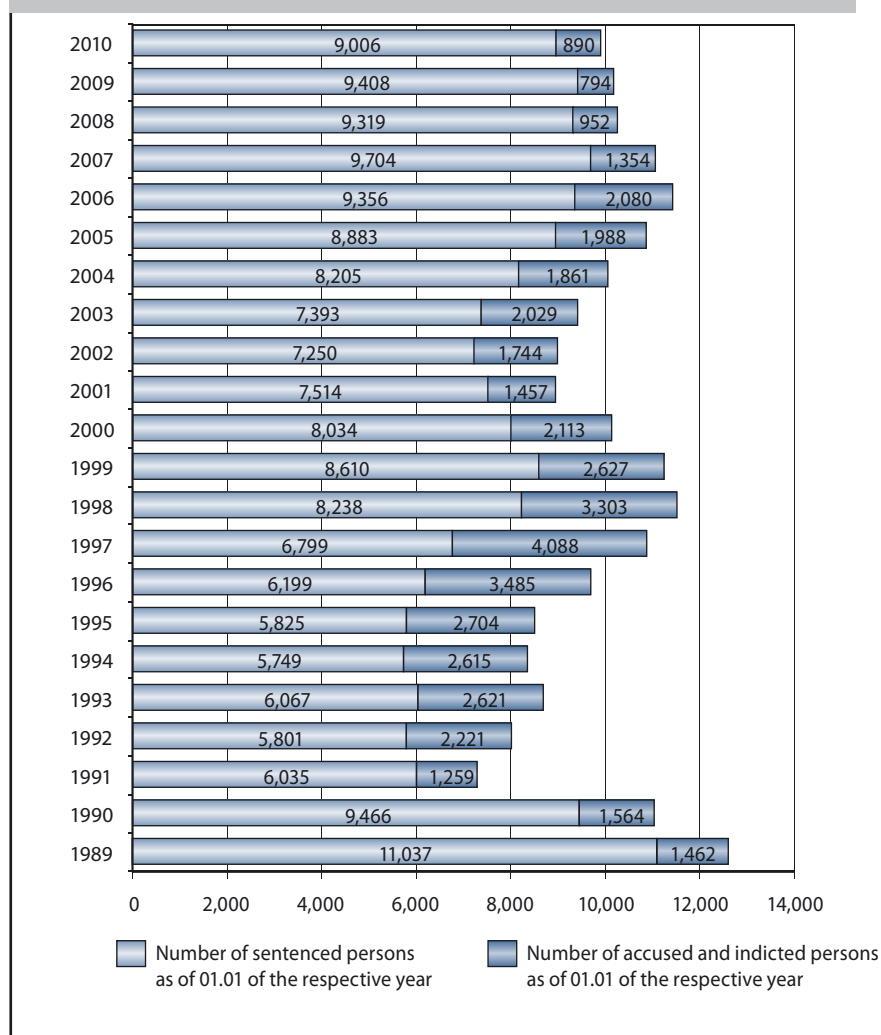
The number of convictions has increased in the reported period. However, two tendencies make the actual effect of this increase unclear:

- Sentences for imprisonment became less frequent in the period 2004–2009.
- The average length of the imprisonment sentence decreased by 9 % from 13.3 months to 11.0 months for the period 2004–2009.

Source: Ministry of Justice / National Statistical Institute

¹⁷ Bulgaria generally has higher imprisonment rates than most Western European countries, and in line with penal traditions in ex-Soviet bloc countries.

Figure 15. Number of convicted, prosecuted and investigated persons in detention facilities



As a result of this penal policy, the actual number of prisoners has been on the decrease since 2007 (Figure 15).

Source: Ministry of Justice

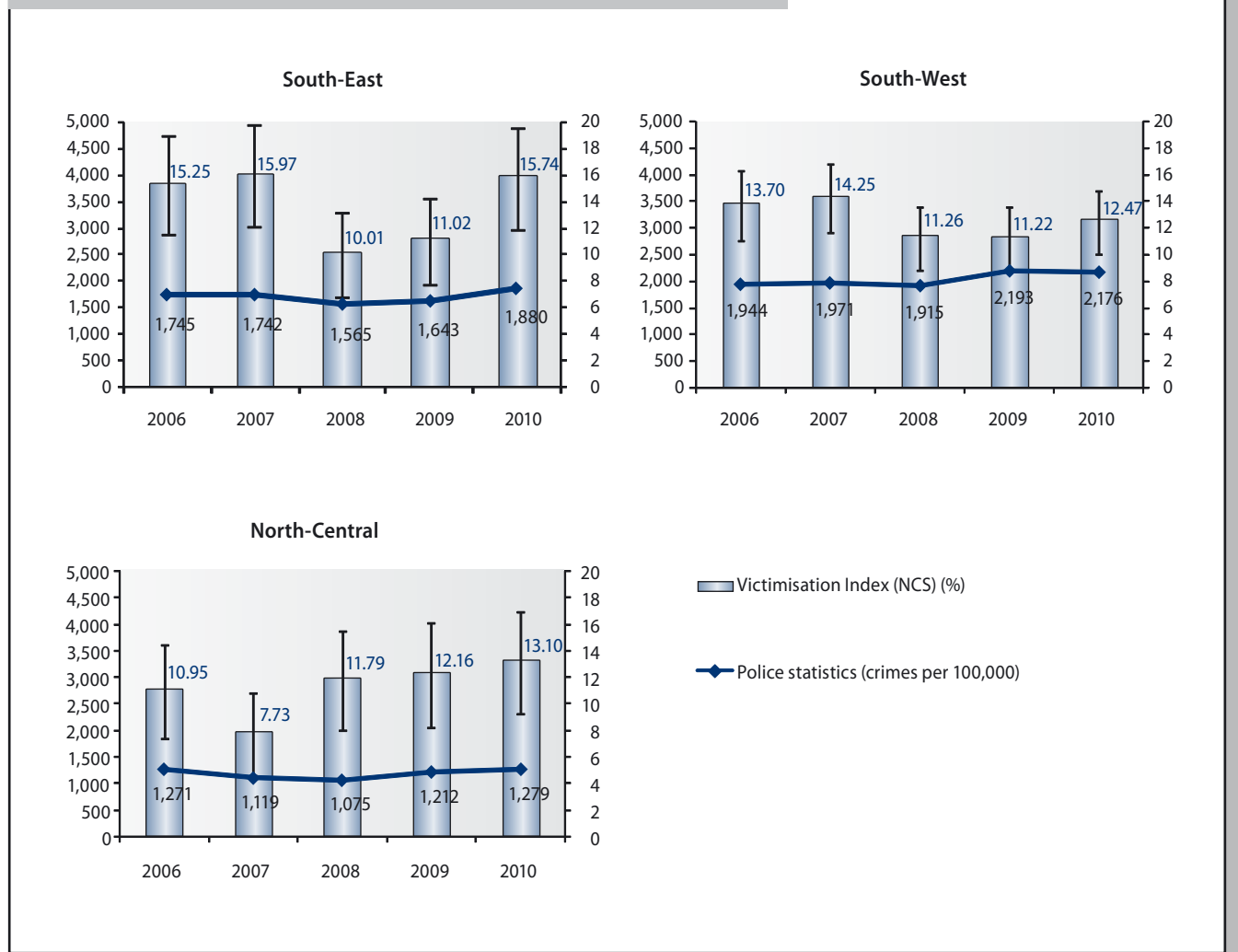
2.4. Regional crime specifics

The NCS reviews regional levels of crime for the first time in the present study. The small samples of the study make annual comparative analysis difficult. That is why, an analysis by Bulgaria's 28 administrative regions (each of which has a Regional Police Directorate) is also impossible. The aggregation of systematic data for the past five years allows, though, for some conclusions to be made with regards to the specifics of crime based on 6 larger NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics)¹⁸ regions and in the capital, Sofia. Regional comparison by NUTS regions reveal higher rates of victimisation

¹⁸ A full list of Bulgaria's NUTS regions and the administrative regions that they include is available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NUTS_of_Bulgaria

in the South-East, South-West and North-Central regions (the average victimisation indexes for these regions for the past five years are 13.6, 12.6 and 11.1 respectively, see Figure 16).

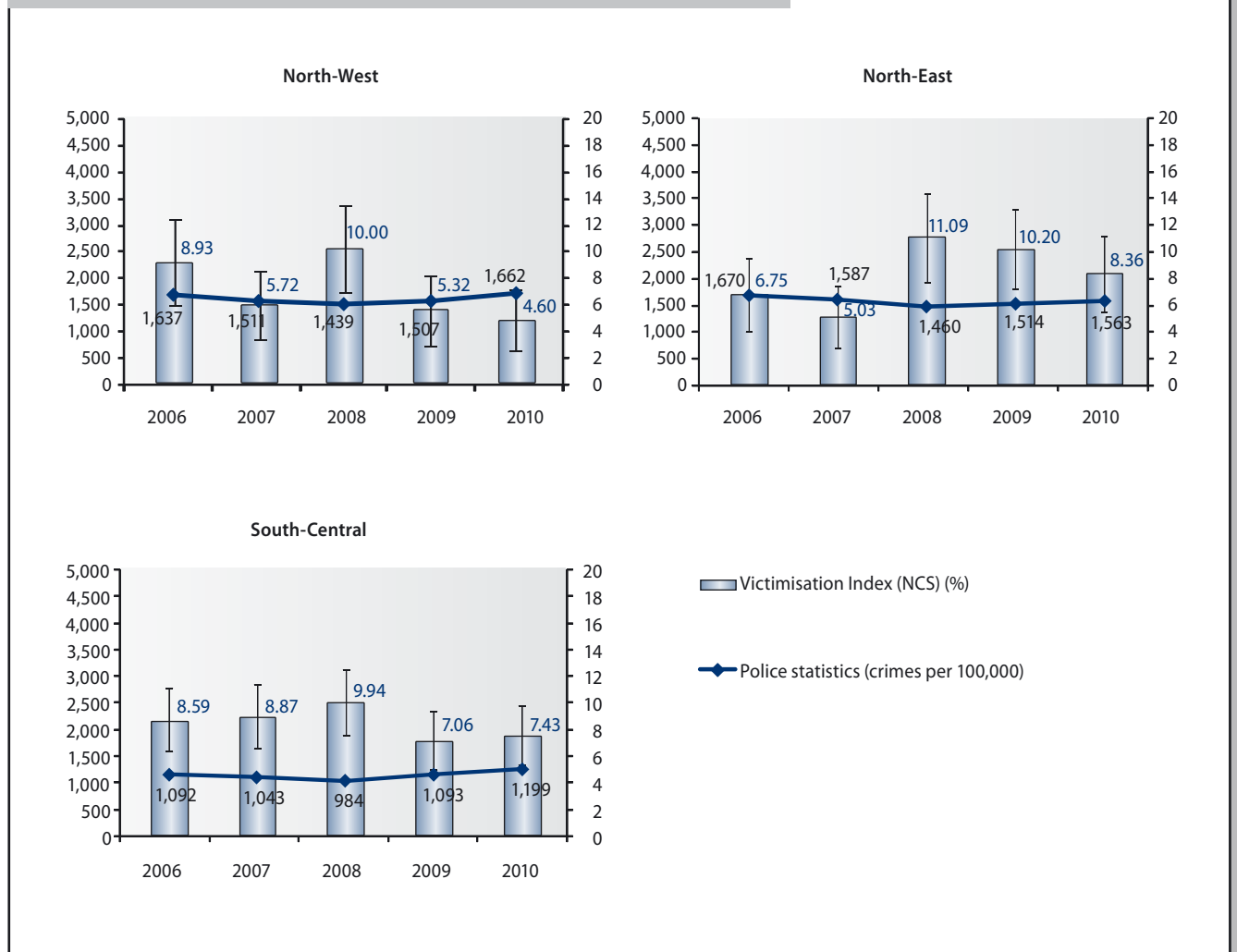
Figure 16. Regions with higher crime levels



Source: NCS, Mol.

The victimisation indexes on the other hand are lower in the North-West, North-East and South-Central regions (the average victimisation indexes for these regions for the past five years are 6.9, 8.3 and 8.4 respectively, see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Regions with lower crime levels



Source: NCS, Mol.

Several conclusions can be made based on the regional datans:

- **The region with the lowest level of crime** in Bulgaria is the North-West, followed by the South-Central region.
- **In some regions, the police register significantly lower number of crimes than the national average:** the biggest differences in registered crimes are between the South-West and the North-Central region. Although there are similar levels of victimisation in these regions, the registered crime per 100,000 people is almost twice lower in the North-Central region.
- Data from the NCS reveals **a decrease in the level of crime** in some regions, such as the North-West, for the period 2006–2010, while police statistics show no change in the level of crime (possibly due to a decrease in unreported crime).

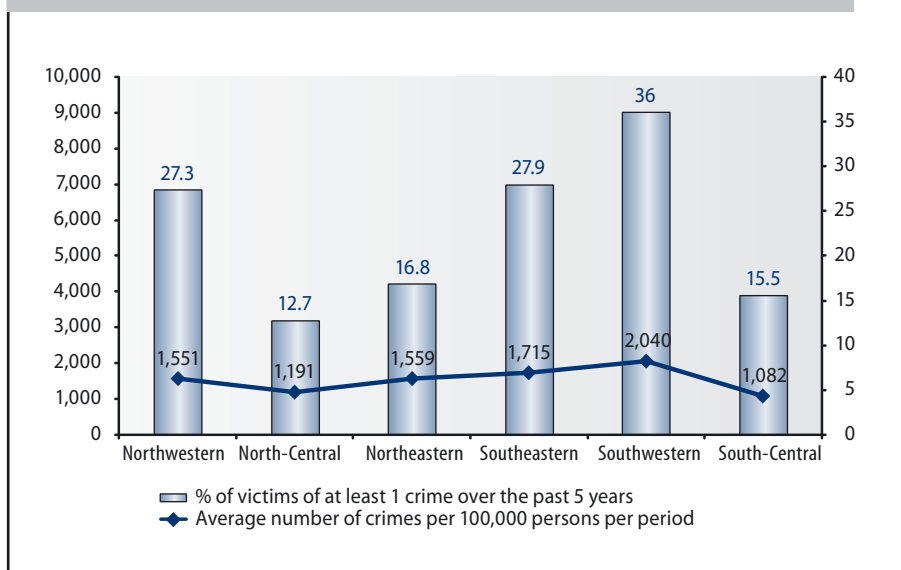
The different levels of urbanization, whereas higher level of urbanization is associated with higher levels of victimisation, are some of the factors explaining the differences in the levels of crime between the regions (see Table 4). Other factors are socio-economic – the NCS demonstrates that the households/persons with higher income become victims of crime more frequently. Hence, wealthier regions register higher levels of victimisation. A tendency of decrease in the levels of crime in the small towns and villages is noted, while in **regional centres crime is on the rise**.

Table 4. Income and urbanization of the Bulgarian population (2008)

	GDP (BGN) per capita	Sofia	Cities over 50,000 population	Cities 10,000-49,999 population	Towns 501-9,999 population	Towns under 500 population
North-Western region	5,897	0 %	25 %	25 %	42 %	8 %
North-Central region	6,249	0 %	31 %	19 %	43 %	7 %
North-Eastern region	7,836	0 %	50 %	10 %	30 %	10 %
South-Eastern region	7,513	0 %	45 %	16 %	31 %	8 %
South-Western region	15,161	55 %	7 %	13 %	21 %	4 %
South-Central region	6,340	0 %	36 %	18 %	36 %	10 %

Source: National Statistical Institute.

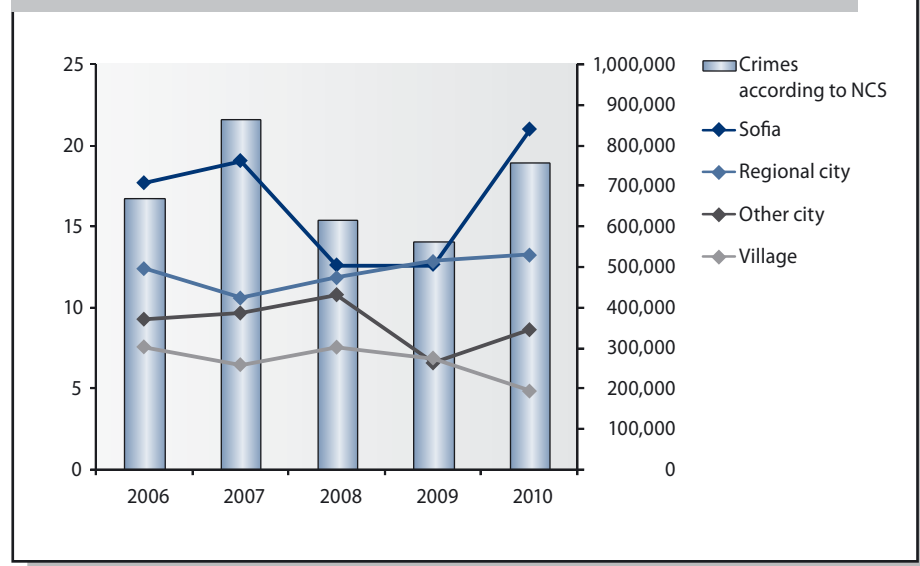
Figure 18. Victims of at least one of the nine crime types over the last 5 years



For 2010, the highest increase in the victimisation index is for the city of Sofia (from 13 % to 21 %). However, police statistics for Sofia registered a 7.5 % decrease in crime rates compared to 2009.

Source: NCS, Mol.

Figure 19. Share of victimised respondents (victim of at least one crime) by type of location



Source: NCS.

The falling number of crimes in Sofia registered by the police could be partially due to the increase in unreported crime. The share of victims who reported crimes to the police has decreased from 2009 to 2010 year by 7.8 % in Sofia (by 7.2 % in the villages, by 6.7 % in the “other cities” and by 3.6 % in the regional centres). Other possible explanation could be a change in the nature of crime – an increasing number of crimes in Sofia are considered minor and for this reason they remain unreported to the police.

Despite the above stated grounds, there is not a single explanation of the big discrepancy between the level of crime reported in the NCS and the decrease in crimes registered by the Sofia

Directorate of the MoI, which contradicts all analyses of the patterns and trends of Bulgarian crime outlined both in the NCS and police statistics. Against a backdrop of increasing level of criminality in the country, a decreasing level of crime in one of the Bulgarian cities with the highest level of victimisation could render no other explanation than a more intensive use of police filters.

2.5. Unreported crime

The reasons victims do not report crimes are related to a number of demographic and geographical factors, as well as the type of crime of which they have become victims:

- **Age:** victims aged 30-59 report crimes to the police least often – 52.7 %. By comparison, 60.8 % of the victims aged 15-29 and 55.8 % over 60 years of age have reported that they became victims of crime in 2010.
- **Gender:** Men report crime more often than women: 58 % of male victims report a crime, as opposed to 54 % of female victims.
- **Crime category:** more serious crimes are reported more often than minor ones.
- **Type of location:** in Sofia and small towns the level of unreported crime is lower than in villages and regional centres.

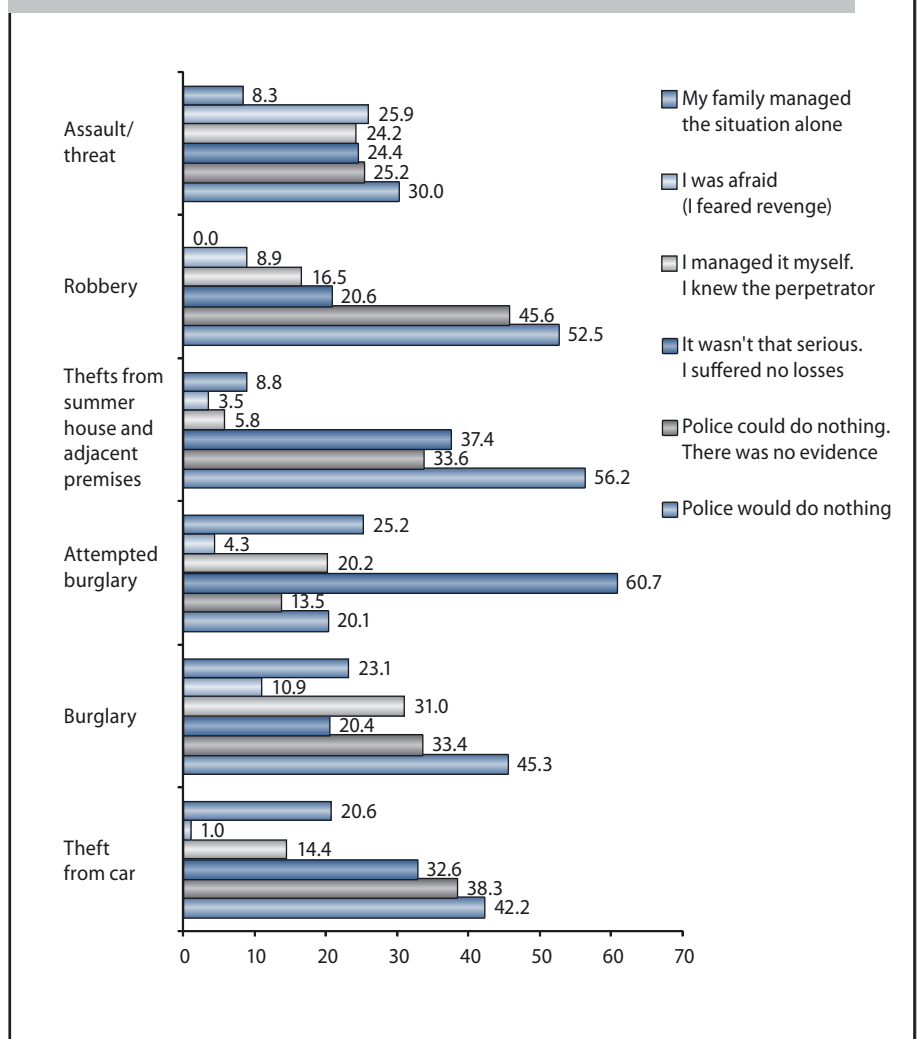
- **Region:** in some regions of Bulgaria, like the North-Central, crimes are likely to be reported less often.

The 2010 NCS indicates that the main reasons why victims decide not to report a crime to the police are the extent of trust they have in the police, the seriousness of the damage they have suffered, and their fear of revenge by the offender. The following reasons for non-reporting were most often mentioned by victims (see Figure 20):

- **Police would do nothing** – this is the most often named reason when it comes to all crime categories with the exception of burglaries and thefts from cars.
- **Police could do nothing/There is no evidence** – this explanation is given especially when victims think that it would be really hard to find the perpetrator, in cases of robberies or thefts from adjacent premises (attics, basements)
- **It wasn't that serious, I suffered no losses** – this explanation represents a more general trend when suffered damages are light and victims are reluctant to report the crime to the police (thefts from adjacent facilities, attempted burglaries or fraud).
- **My family handled the situation alone** – it refers to situations when the perpetrator is either a relative or an acquaintance of the family.

The lack of trust in the police is given as an explanation for not reporting a crime only with regard to certain crime categories. Victims of thefts of cars or assaults/threats believe that the police are willing to and capable of helping them. When it comes to robberies the reason for not reporting is **the victim's fear of revenge**. As far as assaults and threats are concerned, victims very often explain their reluctance to report the crime by answering "other reasons" or "it wasn't for the police" because in many of the cases there are personal reasons involved.

Figure 20. Reasons for not reporting a crime



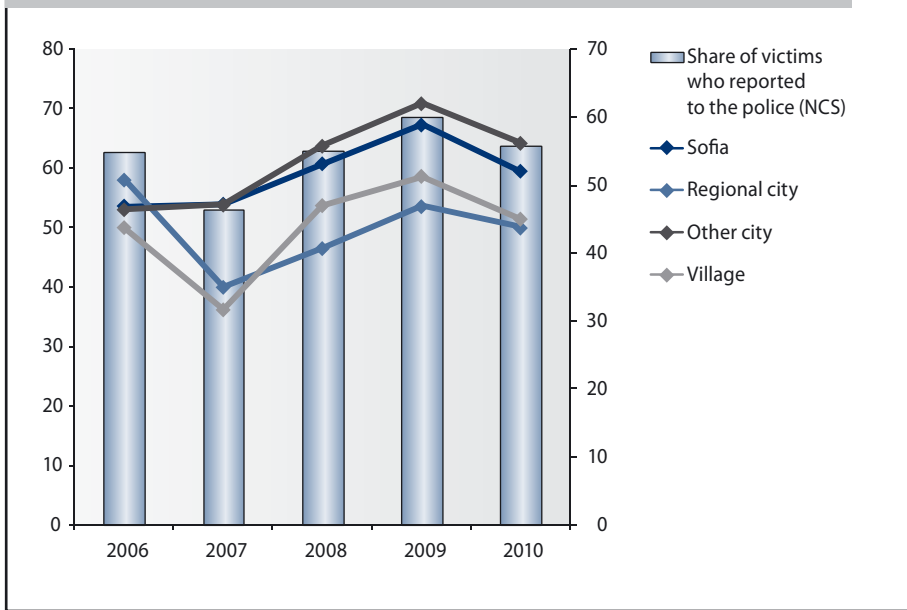
Source: NCS.

The type of location also determines a specific dynamics of unreported crime (Figure 21). Several trends have been identified:

- In Sofia and smaller towns the level of reported crime is the highest.
- In villages and regional centres the share of unreported crime is much larger.

In villages where the access of people to the police is more limited, the high level of unreported crime is easy to explain. On the other hand there is no apparent reason for the high levels of unreported crime in regional centres. The possible explanation could be the low trust in the police force capacity in these areas as well as the insignificance of the suffered damage.

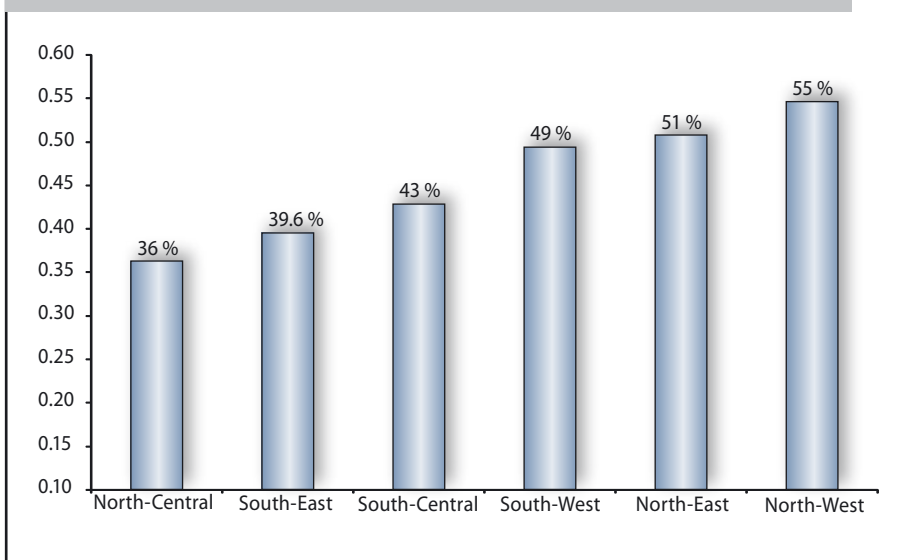
Figure 21. Unreported crime: levels by type of location (%)



Source: NCS.

According to the NCS there are different levels of crime reporting, varying from region to region. Although crime reporting differs by year, over the past 5 years sustainable differences in the level of “hidden crime” between regions have been observed, with the highest levels in the North-Central and South-Eastern regions.

Figure 22. Share of reported crimes by region (average 2006–2010, %)



Source: NCS.

3. PROPERTY CRIME

During the 2001–2010 period, trends in property crime were influenced by a variety of socio-economic factors that had positive impact on some categories of crime, and negative on others. While economic affluence led to the decline of some crimes, it pushed others up, and vice versa: the economic crisis caused a rise in certain crimes, and reduced crime victimisation of others. The next two chapters present the findings of the NCS on property crimes and crimes against the person. For each category of crime, the respective section presents:

- a comparison of the trends according to the NCS and the police statistics;
- a comparison of police statistical data between Bulgaria and other EU Member States (wherever such data exists);
- factors for not reporting crimes.

The property crimes included within the NCS and examined in the following sections are:

- car theft;
- theft from homes (including attempted burglaries);
- theft of personal belongings (including bicycles);
- thefts from cars;
- fraud (a new section that has been examined in the 2009 and 2010 NCS).

3.1. Car theft¹⁹

Crime victims consider car-theft, together with burglaries, the most serious crime, as the financial and psychological harms are usually greatest.²⁰ Car-theft is (1) usually related to organised crime and (2) closely related to the markets for used cars and spare-parts, which in turn, implies, that it is connected to the overall economic situation in Bulgaria. In addition, some of the cars are stolen only to be sold to scrap yards. Therefore, partially, the car-theft crime rate may be related to the scrap market and international scrap prices. During the 2001–2011 period, the observed trends in car-theft depended on a multitude of factors:

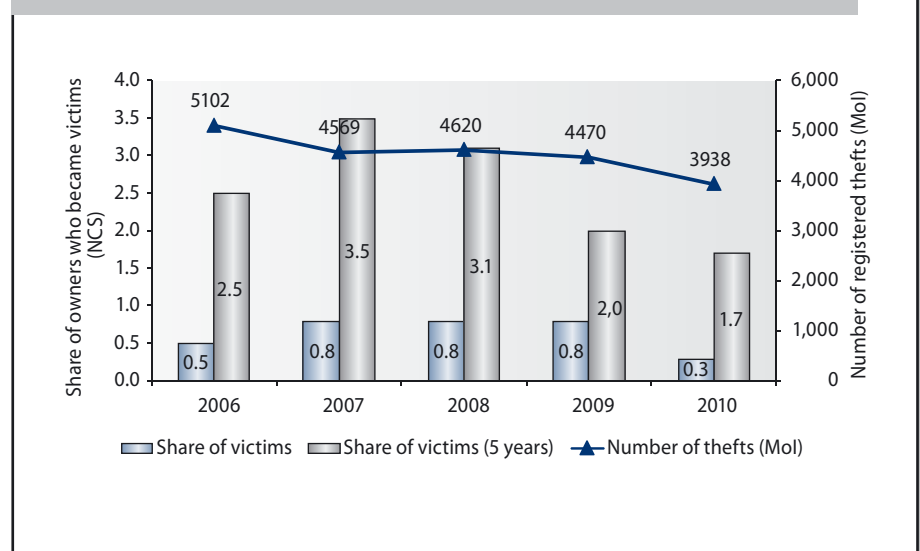
¹⁹ The NCS includes cars, vans, and caravans (motor-homes). The question on motor-cycles theft did not produce adequate answers in previous years due to the low-level of motorcycle ownership in Bulgaria: therefore it was discontinued after 2008.

²⁰ Due to the very small number of car thefts, the survey sample is not big enough to allow for a statistically significant analysis.

- After 2001, a significant part of the criminal groups engaged in car-theft emigrated towards Western Europe and North America. A significant part of the stolen, especially luxury cars, sold in Bulgaria were imported from abroad.
- The phenomenal growth in the import of low-priced used cars, and increasing anti-theft measures even of older vehicles made the theft of low-priced cars unprofitable and further shifted the targets of criminal groups towards luxury vehicles.
- In 2008, the mandatory Traffic Police inspection during a car-registration of the chassis' vehicle identification number (VIN) was removed. Interviewed police officers reported an immediate noticeable increase in car-thefts.
- The economic crisis in 2009 and 2010 was accompanied with three-fold decrease in the number of new and used cars sold, accompanied in 2009 by a 12 % decrease in the number of registered car-thefts.
- In 2010, the number of car-thefts remained stable, as police reported an increase in the number of insurance fraud schemes.²¹

The trends that the NCS and the police statistics register are quite similar (see Figure 23), with only one significant difference in the 2006 and 2007 period, which could be explained by the then still significant number of 'ransom' related car-thefts.

Figure 23. Theft of cars: victims and registered crimes



Two indicators show that the main part of car-thefts are related to thefts for the purposes of further sale for car-parts and scrap, while thefts related to ransom are on the decrease. First, the NCS shows that the share of stolen cars that are valued over €7,500 (15,000 BGN) are less than 20 % of all car-thefts. Second, less than 20 % is the share of stolen vehicles that had car-theft insurance. If a car is stolen for the purpose of being resold, the associated costs for criminal networks are so high, that normally cars need to be worth over €15,000.

Source: NCS, Mol.

²¹ Owners overburdened by lease payments sold their cars to car-thieves.

For many years one of the explanatory factors of the high share of unreported car-thefts was the significant number of cars that were stolen and then returned to the owner in exchange for **ransom**.²² During the last 5 years, ransom related thefts have been generally on the decrease in comparison to the 2001 – 2006 period. The NCS 2005 reported that 31 % of car-theft victims stated that they were asked for a ransom. The 2011 NCS shows only 2.9 % of victims being asked for ransom. The police statistics on ransom-related car-theft (Art.346.3 of the Penal Code) also show a similar downward trend: 36 in 2006, 27 in 2007, 20 in 2008, 10 in 2009 and only 7 in 2010. The downward trend in ransom related car-theft could be explained partly with the criminal groups focus on theft of luxury vehicles (which are usually insured and unlikely to pay ransom), as well as influx of low priced used cars, whose price is usually close to the value of a ransom being requested (i.e. instead of paying €1,000 ransom to get their car back, owners may consider spending €1,500 on a fairly decent used car).

Table 5. Demanded ransom for stolen cars (%)

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Were you asked to pay ransom for your stolen motor vehicle last time? ²³	Yes	14.2	17.9	14.5	17.8	2.9
	No	85.8	82.1	85.5	82.2	97.1

Source: NCS.

Car-theft is one of the crime categories that is characterised by very high level of reporting by victims, as usually car-insurance payouts mandate that the car-theft should be reported. The NCS 2006–2010 data shows that car-theft reporting rates were relatively stable, ranging from 84 % to 100 % of car-theft incidents being reported. The year-by-year variations could be explained with the small sample size. The high-reporting rates are also associated with the fact that car-theft is considered a serious crime: over 70 % of victims determine the crime as ‘very serious’.²⁴

The cross-country comparisons of registered motor vehicle theft are difficult due to the great differences in the ways this crime is recorded, as well as lack of differentiation between types of vehicles. For instance, in some countries (like Spain) motorcycle thefts constitute as much as 30 % of stolen motor vehicles, while in others, like Bulgaria, they constitute less than 1 % – yet international statistics are usually provided for ‘motor vehicles’, rather than ‘cars’ only. The criminal codes also define car-theft differently (e.g. ‘unlawful possession’ vs. ‘theft’) and sometimes police statistics combine both, or report

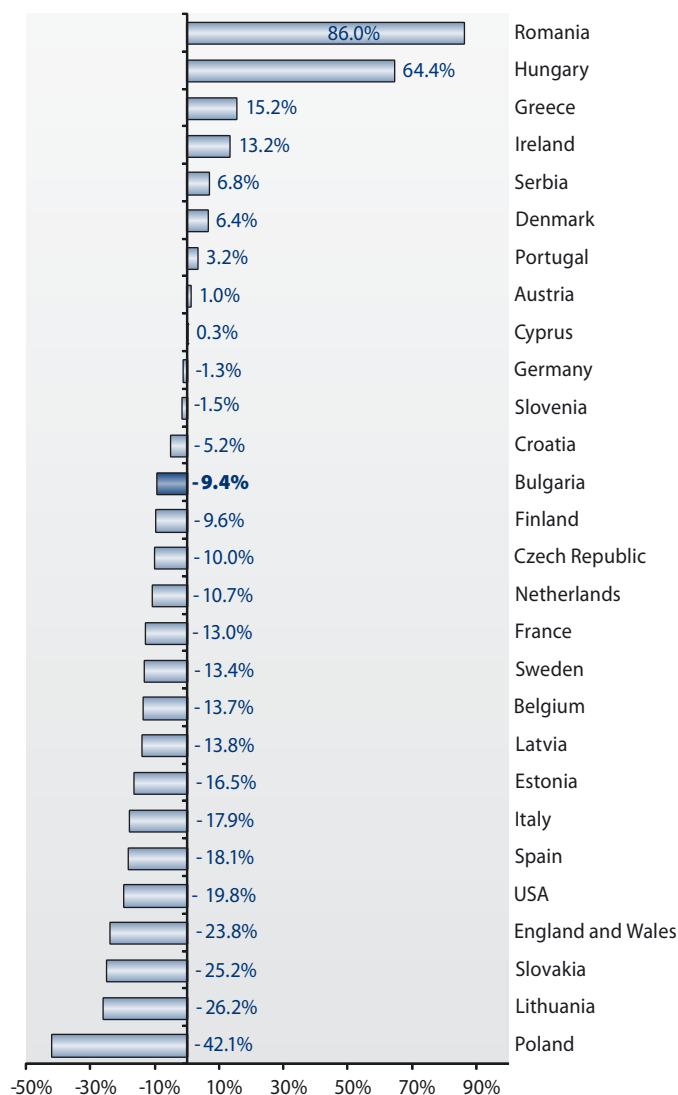
²² More details about ransom related car-thefts is provided in Organised Crime in Bulgaria: Markets and Trends, Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, (2007), pp. 145-175.

²³ This question is asked to all respondents who have become victims of thefts of cars over the past 5 years.

²⁴ The scale of the question’s answer has three levels: ‘very serious’, ‘somewhat serious’, and ‘not very serious’.

only one of the categories.²⁵ During the 2006–2008 period, the decline of registered car-theft in Bulgaria is 9.4 %, while in most other countries examined it is greater.

Figure 24. Registered car theft – relative change in % (2008 versus 2006) for some countries



There are various factors that could explain the different levels of victimisation amongst countries. One factor is the **average age of cars**, which is much lower in Western Europe, making them much more attractive to criminal groups. That could be one explanation why car-thefts per 100,000 owners is lower in Bulgaria than in most other EU Member States (except Poland and Romania), according to 2008 Eurostat data. Another factor is the so called 'joy-ride thefts', which are a rare phenomenon in Bulgaria, or more generally in Eastern Europe. With improving car security measures, these thefts have been on the decrease across the EU in the past decade, though, so they provide less and less of an explanation of the different levels of victimisation. Similarly, another declining trend has been the ransom related thefts, which are observed not only in Bulgaria, but also in other countries in Eastern Europe or the Western Balkans. Unlike victims of 'joy-ride' thefts, victims of theft-for-ransom often do not report theft to the police or withdraw their report once they are contacted by the thieves.

Source: Eurostat.

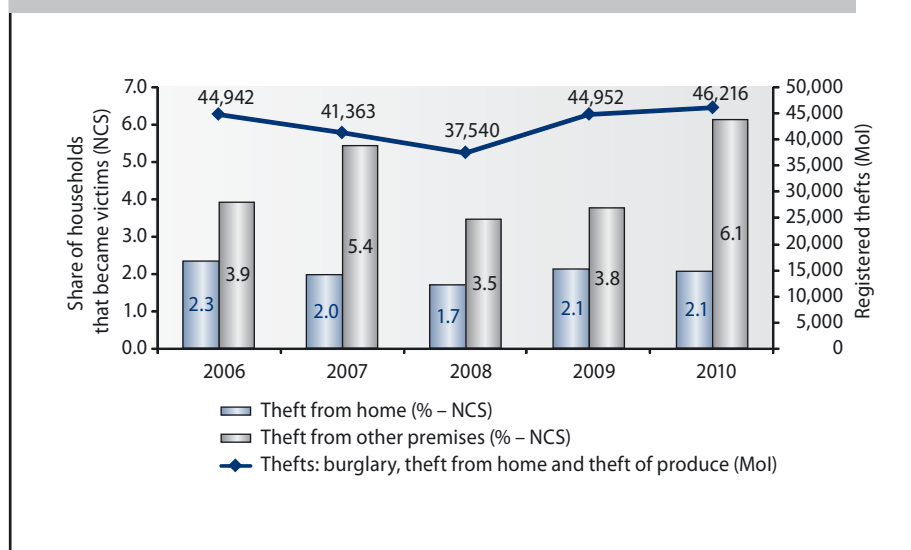
²⁵ The Bulgarian police data, in that respect, is a typical example as the data provided to Eurostat is only of 'car-theft' and excludes 'unlawful possession'. On the other hand, the data provided to UNODC is only of both 'car-theft and 'unlawful possession', which is more appropriate as this is the real number of cars stolen.

3.2. Thefts from homes

Thefts from homes and burglary in particular remain the property crimes most often registered by the Bulgarian police. Due to its importance, this type of crime is the most commonly reported by the victims. Because of its social impact, burglary is also one of the most politically sensitive crimes in Bulgaria.

Police statistics classify thefts from homes as “burglary” (article 195.3 of the Penal Code) or thefts without burglary: “theft of agricultural production, livestock, poultry” (Art. 195.3 and art. 194) and “thefts from homes” (Article 194). The NCS, on the other hand, does not distinguish whether the theft involved burglary or not (although in practice most ‘thefts from homes’ include a forced entry and could be classified as burglaries). It only differentiates between the types of living space from which the property is stolen: whether it is a flat (house or apartment building), or adjacent facility (attic, basement, garage, or other adjoining area). In addition it measures, **attempted burglary** as far as **homes** are concerned (but excludes attempted burglaries from other adjacent facilities).

Figure 25. Thefts form homes and adjacent buildings – comparative statistics Mol and NCS



Source: NCS, Mol.

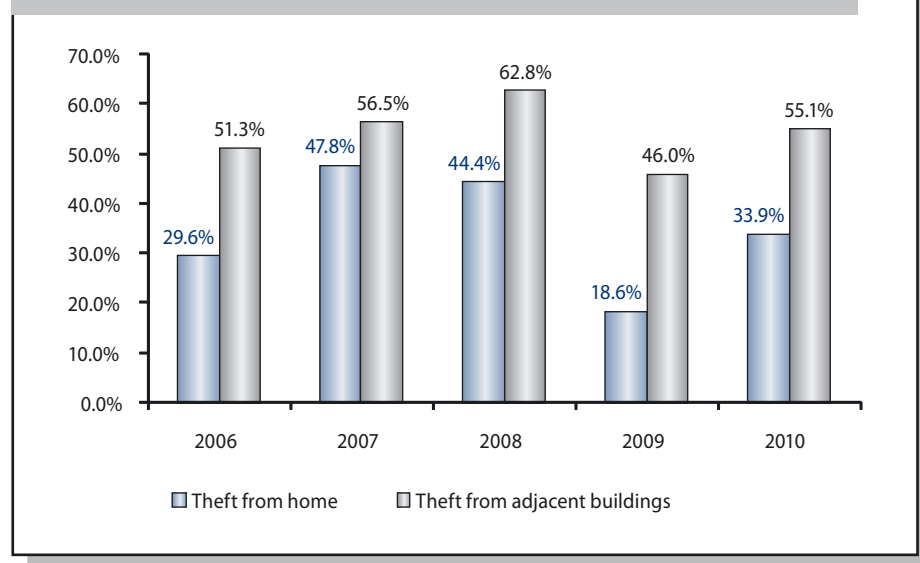
Both the NCS data for thefts from homes and the police statistics for burglary showed a reduction in the period 2006–2008 followed by an increase in 2009 (Figure 25). Besides the overall increase in this type of crime in 2009, as NCS data indicate, there was also a significant increase in the number of victims who reported burglary to the police (i.e. there was a noticeable reduction in unreported crime) – Figure 26. Thefts from facilities adjacent to homes also marked a sharp increase in 2010 (from 3.8 % to 6 % of households), which changes the overall picture.

Two discrepancies occur between the official statistics of Mol and the NCS data for this type of crime:

- The first one is the significant decrease in burglary in the 2006–2007 period, which police statistics recorded, while the **NCS data contradicts** this trend, as it registers an increase in burglaries, especially from facilities adjacent to homes. This can be explained largely by the lack of trust in the police during this period when the share of unreported crimes increased significantly (see Figure 26).
- The second contradiction concerns the 2009–2010 period when the trends of increase in crime, according to statistics of Mol and NCS, are the same, but the increase in **‘home thefts’ registered by the Mol is only 11 %** (with 1 %

growth in burglaries, and 9 % decrease in theft of agricultural production), while the NCS reports **61 % increase in theft from adjacent facilities**. The main reason for the significant difference is the increase in thefts not reported to the police: **44 % increase in unreported burglaries, and 49 % increase in unreported thefts from adjacent facilities** (basements, attics, garages and other adjacent facilities).

Figure 26. Share of thefts from homes not reported to the police

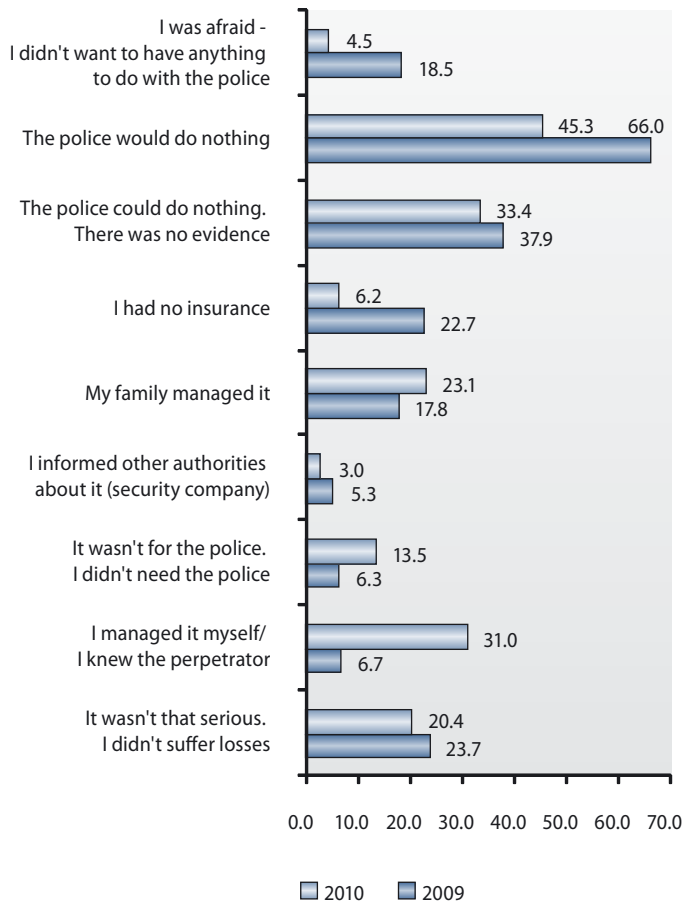


Source: NCS.

It is necessary to explain the drivers of the decreased number of reported burglaries. When asked about the reasons for not reporting, significantly less respondents in 2010 than in 2009 chose the answer “The police cannot do anything”. The main reason is therefore the increase in minor offenses and petty thefts, rather than mistrust in the police force.

The factors determining the trends in burglaries and thefts from adjacent facilities are different. For the most part **burglaries** of homes are the work of professional criminals. Thefts from adjacent buildings (where security measures are lower) and thefts with no element of burglary, are rather work of opportunistic criminals, often non-professionals, who might be drug addicts or simply people experiencing financial difficulties. While professional criminals mostly look for valuables with a quick turnover (jewellery or electronics) or cash, the non-professional ones steal any household belongings or agricultural production. This is why their motivation differs. Economic growth and differentiation of wealthy neighbourhoods have become focal points for professional thieves despite investment in security systems. At the same time, this population segment is less likely to become a victim of non-professional criminals (economic coercion criminals).

Figure 27. Thefts from homes: reasons for not reporting to the police



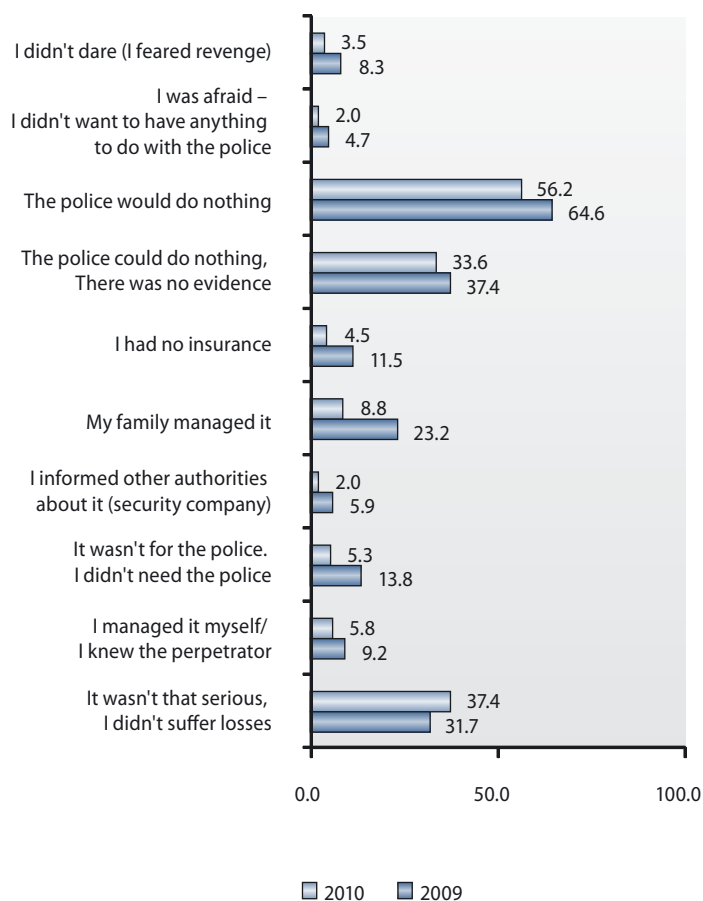
Source: NCS.

Economic recession makes burglary a lucrative undertaking for most professional criminals. There are certain categories of petty criminals, the drug addicts particularly, whose criminal activity can be directly linked with access to methadone programs, the price of heroin and other similar variables. Such estimates, though, have not been done in Bulgaria.

The effect of the economic recession can be seen very clearly in the increase in thefts from adjacent facilities, where even if there are elements of burglary, the crime does not require professional skills. On the other hand, thefts from homes with few exceptions are almost entirely cases of burglary, which require professional skills. In these cases, the effect of the economic recession is not so pronounced, and their levels have remained unchanged.

A more specific type of theft is that of bicycles, which in many cases goes along with theft from adjacent facilities. This theft is connected to the bicycle market, and hence to the economic situation in the country – after it skyrocketed in 2008, theft of bicycles decreased in 2009–2010 and maintained similar levels.

**Figure 28. Thefts form adjacent buildings:
reasons for not reporting to the police (%)**

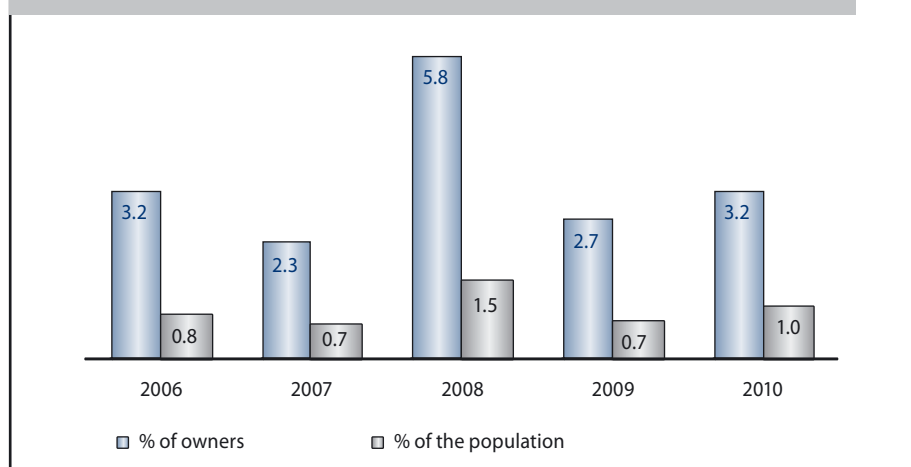


Source: NCS.

There was some decline in the share of victims of bicycle theft in 2010, who report the crime to the police (from 56.7 % to 42.7 %), reaching close to the 2008 level (43.5 %). At the same time, there is a trend of **increase in the number of people who consider theft of a bicycle a very serious crime**. This is probably a result of the growth in popularity of bicycles as means of transportation in recent years, as well as market penetration of more expensive bicycle models. Bicycle theft is paid special attention in most West European countries and there are different systems of crime prevention, as the police takes special measures (by registration of the frame), or encouraging owners to have bicycle theft insurance.

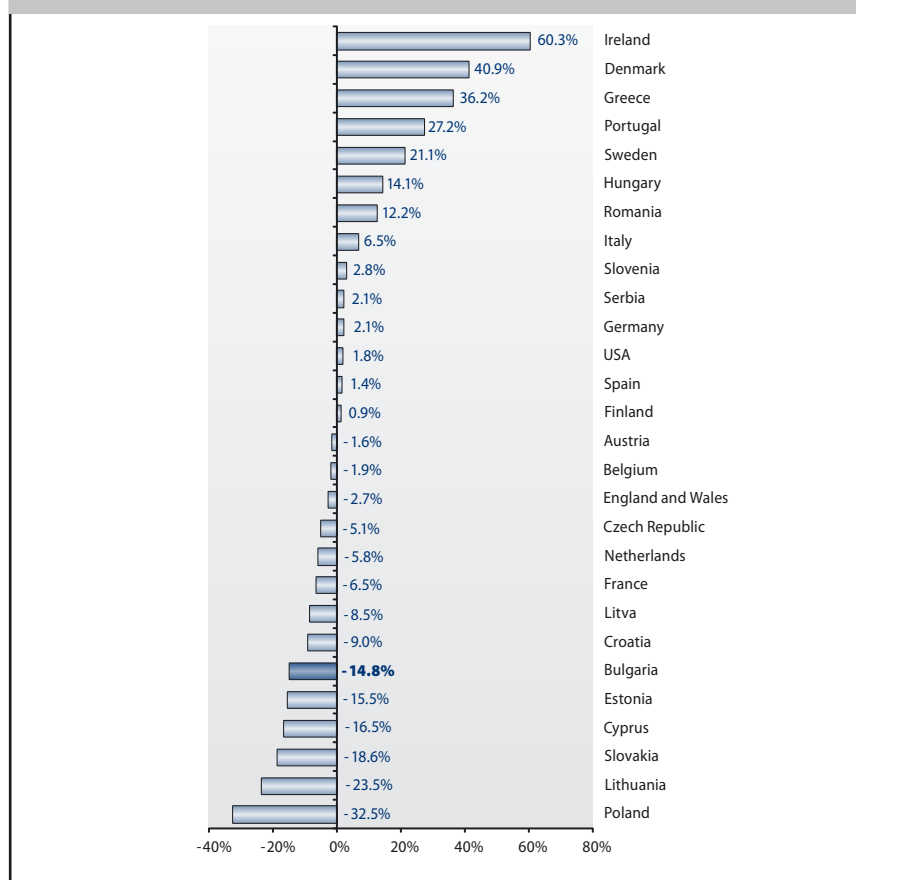
On international level the decline in burglary for Bulgaria in the period 2006–2008 is one of the most significant in Europe (Figure 30).

Figure 29 Thefts of bicycles – share of population and owners²⁶



Source: NCS.

Figure 30. Change in registered burglaries between 2008 and 2006 (%)



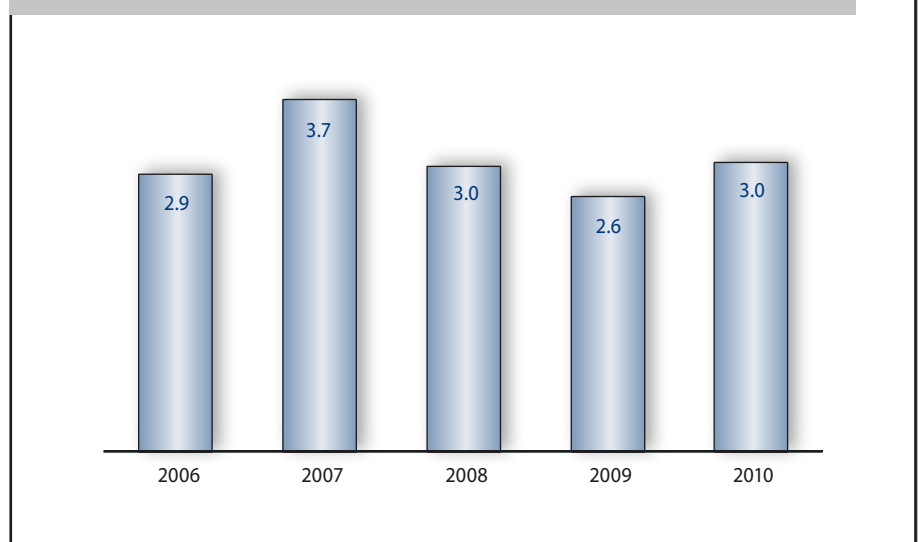
Source: Eurostat.

²⁶ 2007 – owners N = 650, population N = 2,463; 2008 – owners N = 733, population N = 2,499; 2009 – owners N = 654, population N = 2,500; 2010 – owners N = 663, population N = 2447; 2011 – owners N = 822, population N = 2,557.

3.3. Thefts of personal property

Thefts of personal property include theft without the use of threat or violence where the victims are outside of their homes (in public transport, restaurants, beach etc.). In the police statistics, this type of theft is usually registered as an ordinary theft (Art. 194), unauthorized use (e.g. Art. 207 of the Penal Code) or petty theft (if the item has been worn by the victim). NCS data show an increase in thefts of personal property in 2010 compared to 2009 (Figure 31). The reason might be the economic recession, which is a major factor for this type of minor offenses.

**Figure 31. Victims of theft of personal property
(% of the population)**



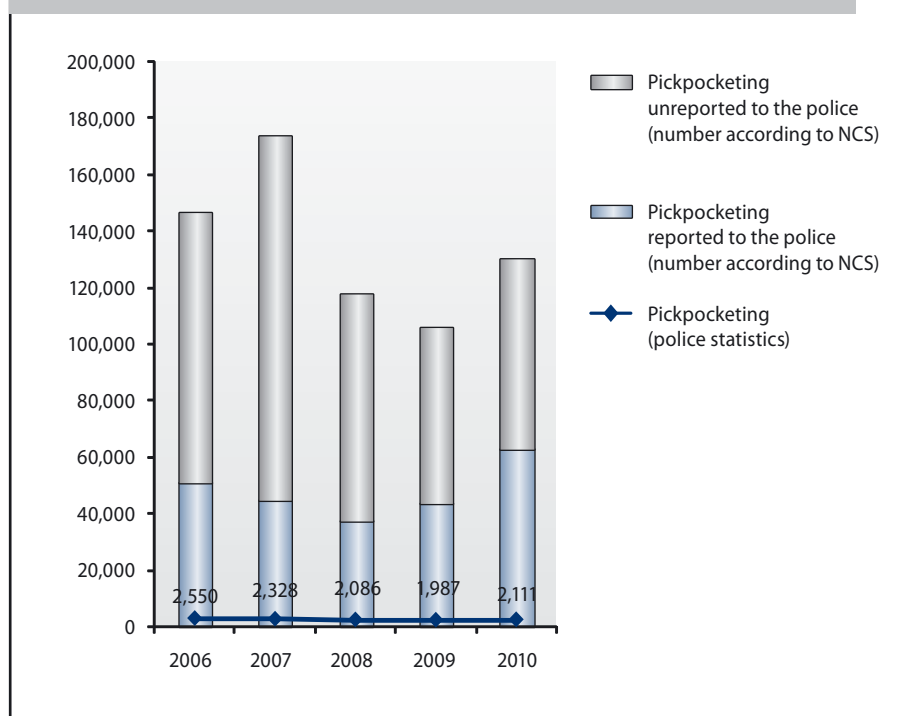
Source: NCS.

Pick pocketing takes the most significant share of the thefts of personal property (on average about two thirds, according to data from NCS). Overall, they are not considered to be a particularly serious crime by both police and citizens. The public opinion determines both its high rate of unreported offences and a small share in the overall crimes registered by police (Figure 32). In the case of petty crimes, the difference between the number of crimes reported to the police according to NCS, and those registered by the police is **about 20 times**.

Since much of the pick pocketing thefts are the work of organised criminal groups (in particular Kardarashi Roma), the emigration of these groups towards Western Europe in previous years reduced the number of pick pocketing crimes in Bulgaria (in 2001, after liberalisation of the visa regime, and in 2007, after the accession of Bulgaria to the EU). There was growth in pick pocketing crimes in 2010 and a return to the levels of 2008, a process explained by the economic recession.²⁷

²⁷ It must be noted and applied to all types of crime, especially in the category of petty thefts that NCS data does not cover foreigners, mostly tourists, who are often subject to petty theft and fraud.

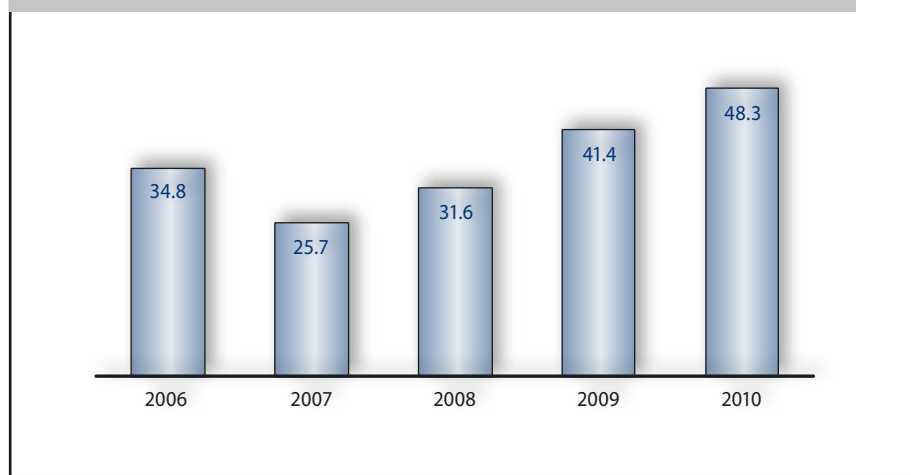
Figure 32. Pick pocketing – police statistics and NCS



Sources: NCS, Mol.

There is a tendency of increase in the share of victims of this type of crime who reported it to the police (Figure 33), the reason is probably the change in the victims' perception of this type of crime as more serious.

Figure 33. Share of victims who reported theft of personal property to the police (%)

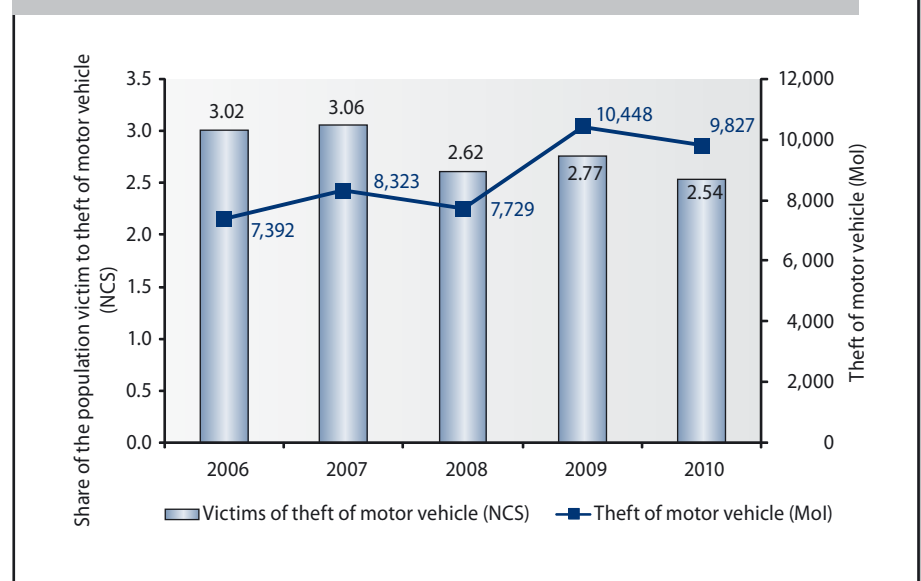


Source: NCS.

3.4. Thefts from cars

Thefts of parts and personal belongings from cars can be both an act of organised criminal groups and non-professional criminals. While the first category of crime is mostly associated with the market of second hand auto parts, in other cases the reasons are more complicated and might be associated with the general economic situation. The market for auto parts, particularly cheaper second hand parts, is also dependent on the general economic situation. With the reduction in sales of new and used cars in 2009 and 2010, the demand for auto parts consequently increased. However, there is discrepancy between police statistics and data from NCS (Figure 34). While police statistics show growth in this type of crime (except 2008), NCS data indicates a stable level, with a decrease in this type of theft since 2006. A possible explanation for this steady trend is the increasing number of new cars equipped with several anti-theft devices. The decline in 2009 and 2010, in particular in theft of car parts might be explained by the overall reduction in car use due to high fuel prices.

Figure 34. Thefts of parts and personal belongings from cars according to NCS²⁸ and Mol



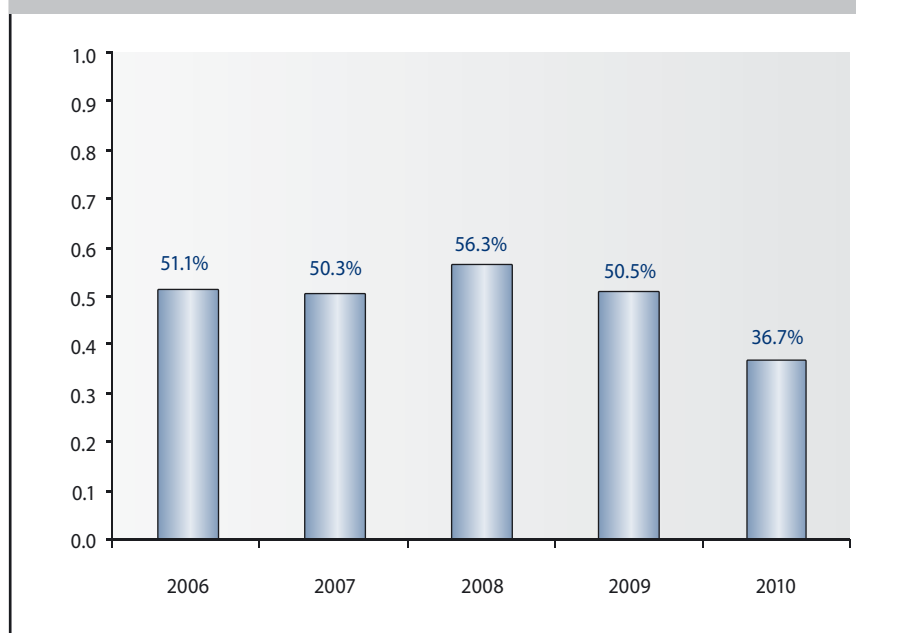
The discrepancy between the trend outlined by NCS and the crimes registered by police should be explained by the fact that while **there is a smaller number of reported thefts from cars, the police is registering a higher share of the reported incidents in the last 5 years.** This difference is particularly pronounced in the period 2009–2010. The most likely explanation is a change in the “police filters” for this type of crime, i.e. higher share of these offenses gets registered in the police statistics.

Source: NCS, Mol.

The reasons for the increase in the unreported rate in the period 2008 – 2010 are ambiguous. On one hand, car theft is considered a serious crime (between 30-40 % indicated that the crime was not particularly serious, and between 40-45 % defined it as relatively serious).

²⁸ The numbers are calculated on the basis of the share of respondents who were victims of this crime. Sampling error applies to all thefts from cars, i.e. amount of reported and non-reported.

Figure 35. Share of victims who reported theft from car to the police (%)



On the other hand, the main reason for victims not to report car theft is the lack of faith in the ability (and willingness) of the police to respond to the signal. In fewer cases the crime was not serious, according to the respondent, or the victims managed the situation by their own means (it should be noted that the response “I managed the situation myself, I know the offender” has increased by nearly 15 points in 2010).

Source: NCS.

Table 6. Reasons to report the theft of an item/car part to the police (%)

Reasons	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Police would not take any action	57.1	41.7	75.9	84.8	49.5
Police could do nothing/There was no evidence	49.0	44.1	36.6	48.1	34.1
It was not worth reporting, I suffered no losses	40.5	37.8	36.1	40.7	28.3
My family handled the situation	10.9	9.3	38.6	21.2	25.6
I managed it/I knew the perpetrator	3.1	6.7	8.3	5.5	20.7
It is not police business/I did not need the police	7.3	17.9	11.6	8.2	12.8
I had no insurance	5.7	14.2	11.1	26.2	11.3
I reported the crime to other authorities	0.0	6.3	0.0	5.5	6.4
I was afraid, I do not like the police, I do not want to have anything to do with the police	0.0	19.8	0.0	6.7	2.3

Source: NCS.²⁹

²⁹ Respondents gave more than one answer.

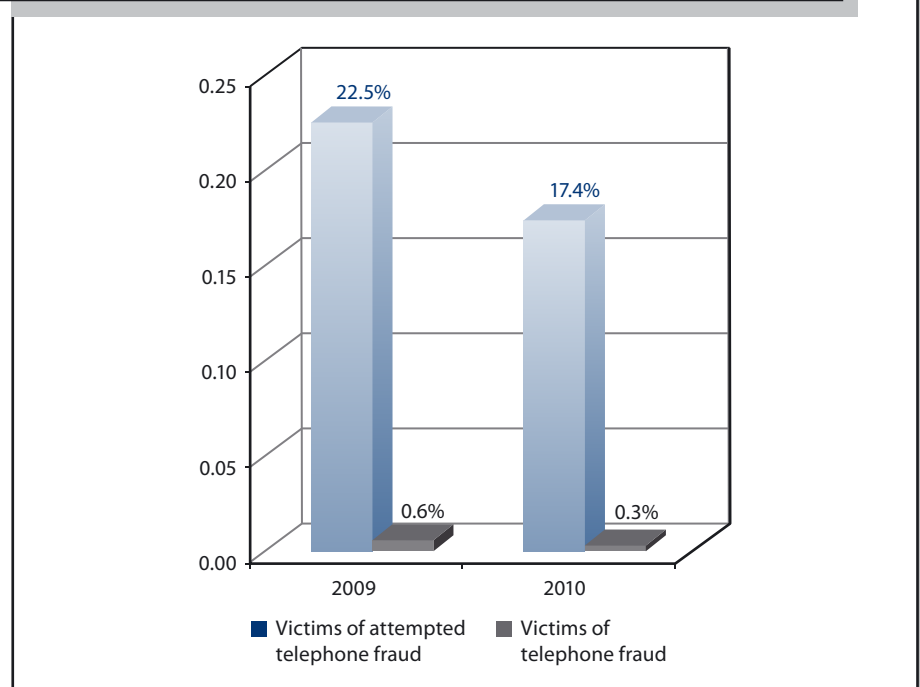
3.5. Frauds

The NCS includes a series of questions covering a wide range of crimes broadly classified as fraud. In the victims' perceptions, there is oftentimes a confusion between what behaviour should be the subject of administrative sanctions and what, of criminal prosecution: for example, consumer fraud (in which the victim is cheated of the weight of food purchased) and the offence of conman who has managed to delude the victim into giving him money, are qualified in the same term – fraud. For this reason any comparisons with police statistics are difficult. Furthermore, the Mol registers only about 2,000 incidents per year (2,090 crimes in 2010).

One particular form of fraud which gained wide public attention is referred to as 'telephone fraud' (Figure 36). For the most part, this is an area exploited by organised criminal groups. The 2009 NCS included the question "Did you happen to receive a fraudulent phone call during the past year? (For instance, a caller claiming that someone close to you has been hurt in a car accident and that you have to pay; or an offer to pick up a parcel)." 22.6 % of the respondents were victims of attempted fraud over the phone in 2009.

Of these, only 2.8 percent turned into victims of the fraud (i.e. nearly 1 of every 30 attempts was successful), or about 0.63 percent of the respondents. Only 11.9 % of the victims, though, reported the crime to the police. In 2010 telephone fraud attempts declined (17.4 %), and so did their success rate. Only 2 % of those who received a similar phone call became victims – about 0.35 % of all respondents. The low share of victims who reported the crime remained unchanged in 2010: 10.9 %.

Figure 36. Telephone fraud in 2009–2010 (%)



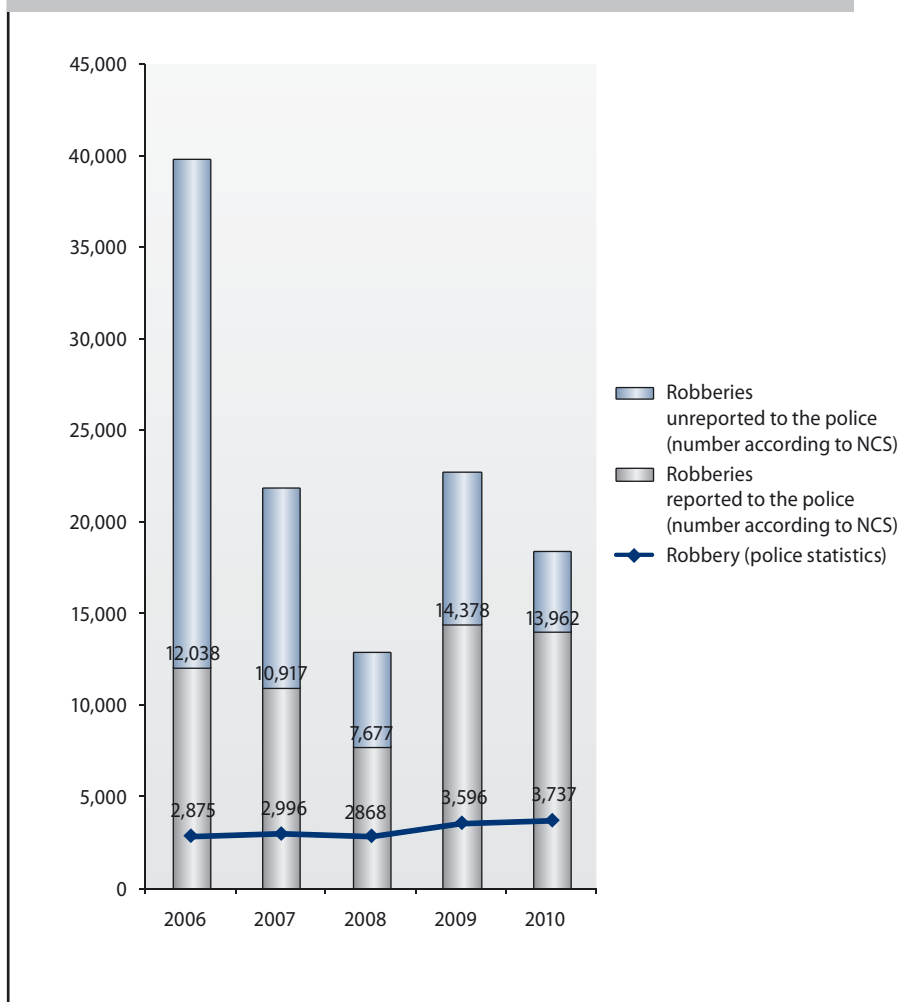
Source: NCS.

While the attempted phone frauds decreased in number in 2010, they continue to be widespread. The amounts the victims paid in 2010 varies between 10 and €3,000, with an average of over €500. This adds up to about €12 million of annual revenue for the criminal groups practicing this fraud.

3.6. Robberies

Robberies are one of the most serious crimes against property studied in the NCS as they also involve offences against the person. Robberies are often armed or include use of physical force or a violence threat. In 2010, in about 30 % of the cases described in the NCS cold arms or firearms were used. The comparison between the data provided by police statistics and NCS shows that after the gradual decrease over the period 2006-2008, there is again an increase in the number of robberies compared with the low levels of 2008 (Figure 36).

Figure 37. Unreported robberies and police statistics

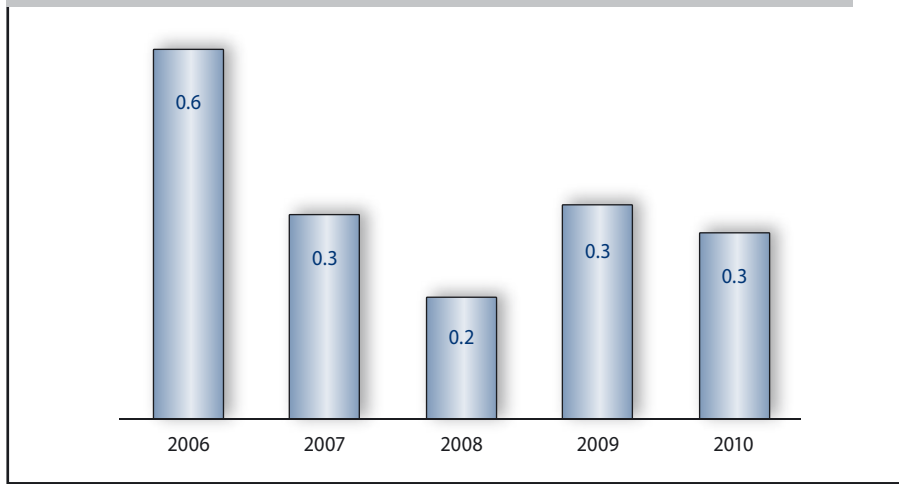


NCS data indicates an increase in the number of robberies registered by the police, and a **decline in the level of unreported** crime, with a tendency of **less use of police filters**.

There is also a change in the attitude of the public with regard to the seriousness of robberies, with the share of people defining this crime as very serious increasing by almost 15 % in comparison to the last survey.

Source: NCS, Mol.

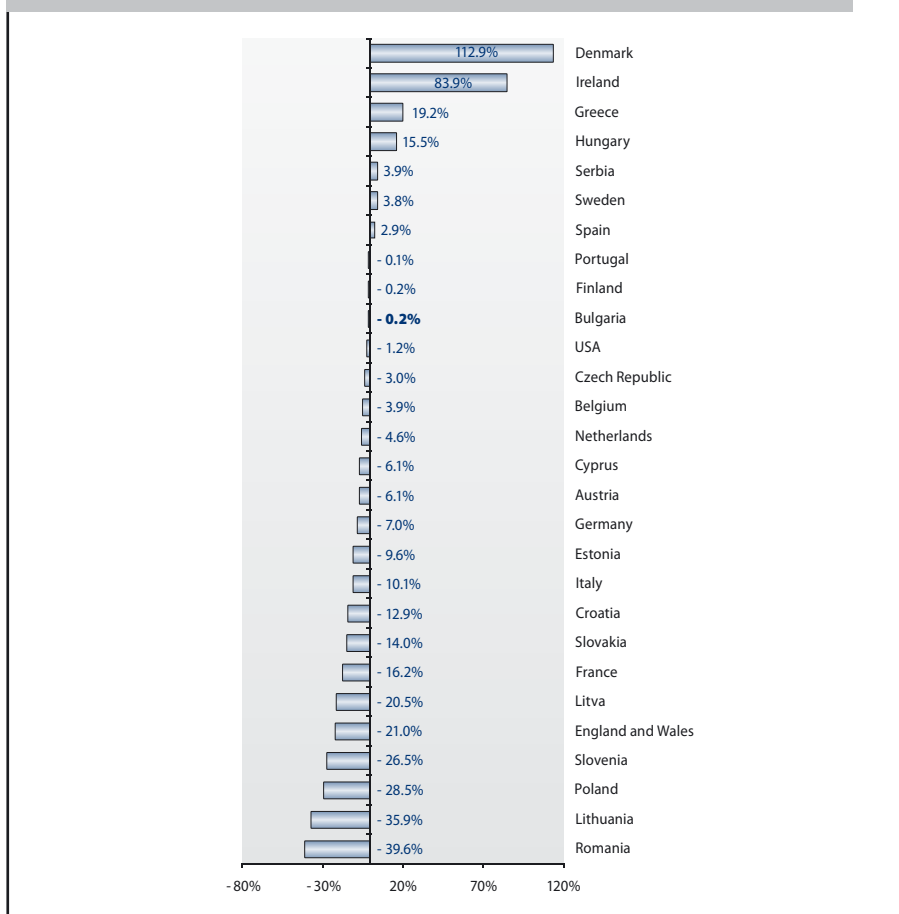
Figure 38. Share of victims of robbery in the year preceding the year of the respective survey (% of the population)



Although NCS data shows a declining level of robberies for the period 2006–2008, police statistics registered only a slight difference between 2006 and 2008 which to a certain extent is at odds with the common European and world trend for the same period (Figure 39). This could be explained with the increasing number of reported crimes registered by the Bulgarian police in 2008.

Source: NCS.

Figure 39. Registered robberies: relative change in % (2008 versus 2006)



Source: Eurostat.

4. CRIMES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON

The NCS examines several categories of violent crimes: robbery (presented in the previous chapter), assaults/threats and sexual offences. Considering the very low frequency and the small samples, sexual offences are not analysed in the current study, as only between 0.1 %–0.36 % of respondents for the period 2001-2010 reported such incidents, and the fluctuations over the years are quite large. Yet, even the lowest reported rate of 0.1 % suggests at least 7,000 sexual assaults annually. These numbers are in huge disproportion with the official police statistics, which reports an annual number for sexual assaults, rapes, attempted rapes and coerced homosexuality of around 500–700 offences. In other words, around 90 % of the incidents in this category remain either unreported or unregistered. The focus of the current chapter is on assaults, but it also discusses homicides.

4.1. Homicides

This category of crimes is not covered in the victimisation surveys and yet it draws special attention when comparing international law enforcement statistics, as it is considered an indicator for the general level of crimes against the person. There are relatively reliable databases to make comparisons on an international level.³⁰ In contrast with other categories of crime, there is no unreported factor to consider, as homicides are thoroughly registered in police statistics. Regarding Bulgaria, the registered homicides are a good indicator of the long-term crime trend, showing stable decrease in overall crimes against the person since 1995.

The historical overview of homicide rates dynamics shows several periods of interest. The hike in registered homicides in the beginning of the 1990s (1992–1995), when the homicide rates reached over 5 per 100,000, was followed by a sharp decline to 3 homicides per 100,000. Yet, these numbers continued to be twice the average EU rate of 1.6 per 100,000 for the period 1999–2001.³¹ A stable downward trend is observed in Bulgaria after 2000. During 2010 homicides continued to decrease in absolute values, but due to the dynamics of the emigration flows it is hard to estimate the exact rate per 100,000. A general conclusion can

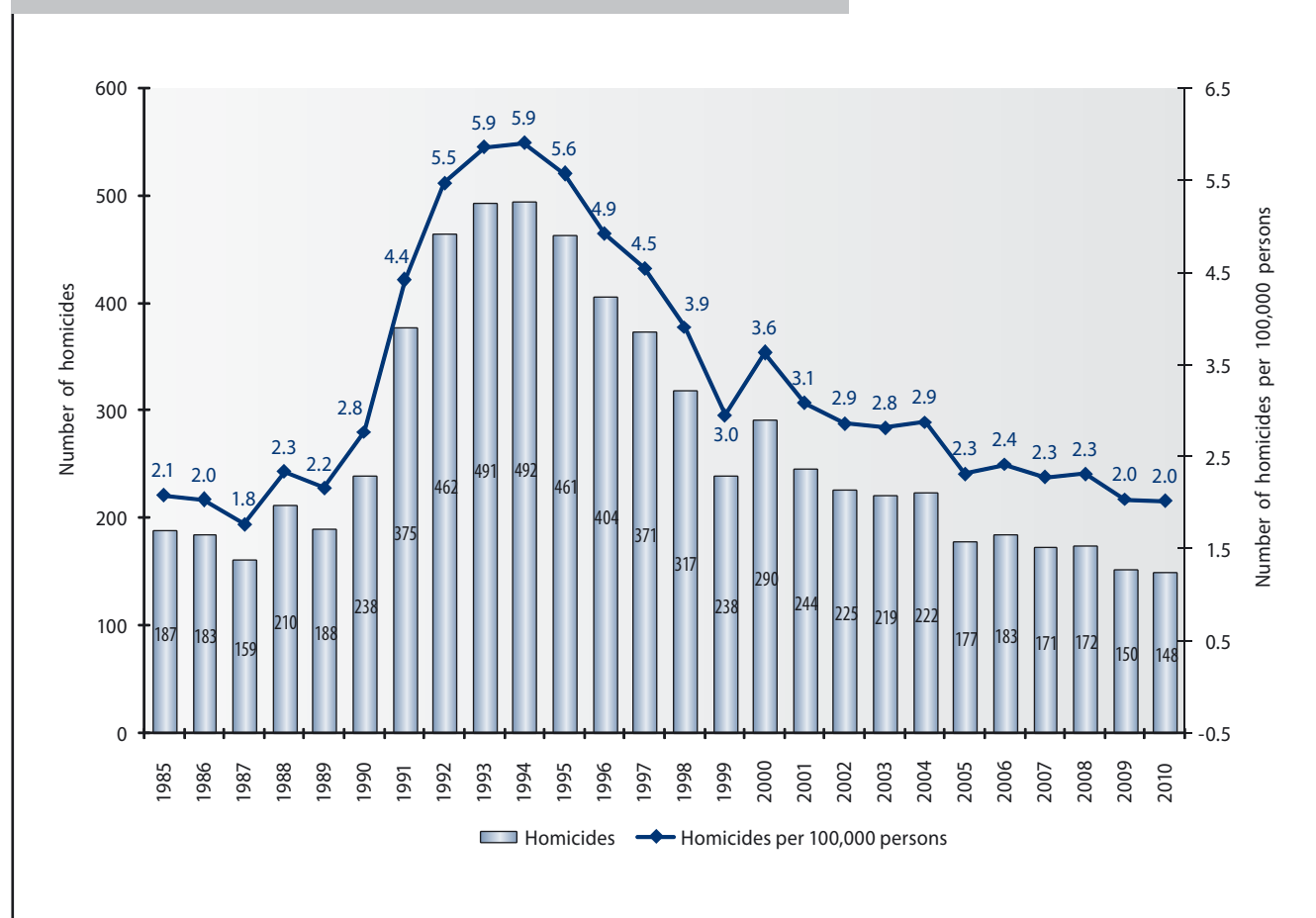
³⁰ The main difficulties related to comparisons on international level derive mainly from the fact that in certain countries the police registers the attempts for murder along with murders, while in others police registers them as separate categories. In some cases homicide could be registered as a suicide or natural death, which relates to the effectiveness of the investigation authorities, as well as to factors like corruption.

³¹ Barclay G. and Tavares C. (2003) International comparisons of criminal justice statistics 2001, Home Office

be made that for 2009 and 2010 homicide rates have stabilised at the levels before 1990, or about 2 per 100,000.

This tendency of decrease in the registered homicides in Bulgaria follows the

Figure 40. Homicides in Bulgaria (1985–2010)



Source: Mol.

common European trend in the last years. According to Eurostat, only Slovakia (5.6 %), Greece (8.3 %), Romania (12.6 %), Finland (18.9 %), Denmark³² (75.6 %) and Ireland (30.9 %) report increases. Yet, Bulgaria still has higher rates than most of the EU countries.³³ The criminological literature points out various factors which could explain the disparities in the homicide rates in different countries:

- **Access to firearms** (incl. illegal arms) and control over them (registration, storage, and use). For Bulgaria, previous research³⁴ has indicated that the rate

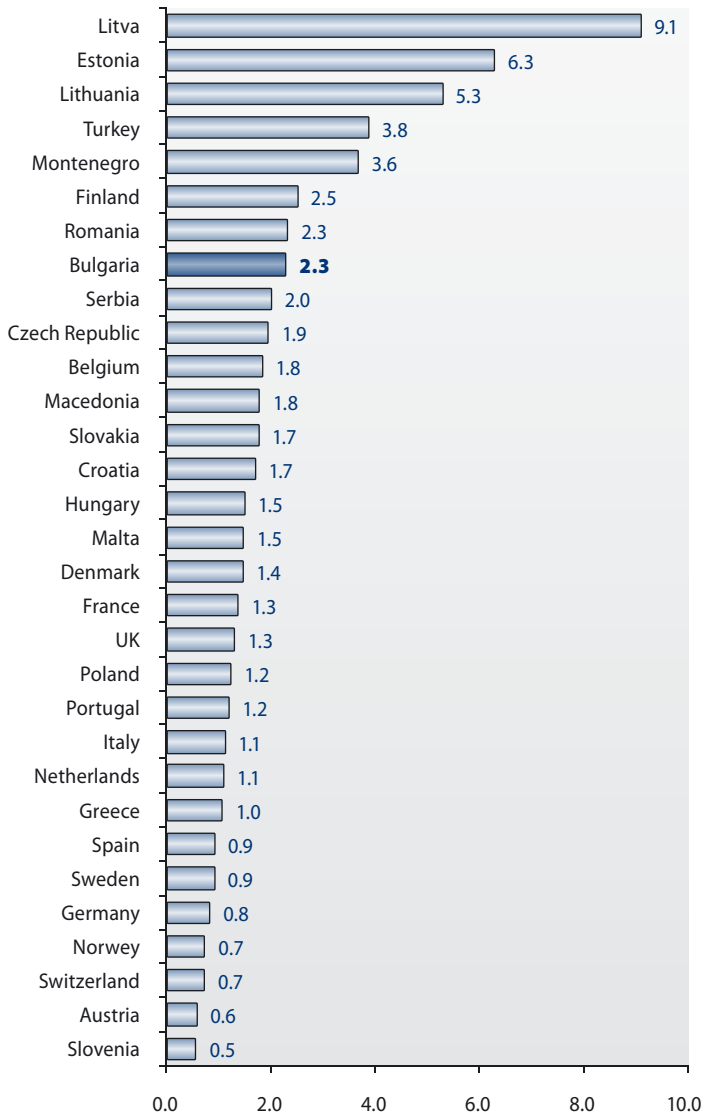
³² In Finland and Denmark, homicides are exceptionally low and this is why even small increases in absolute values produce high statistical variations.

³³ The last available international data is for 2008.

³⁴ CrimeTrends in Bulgaria, Sofia: CSD, p. 48.

of firearm homicides is higher than the rate in countries like the United Kingdom, where access to such arms is more restricted;

Figure 41. Europe: number of homicides per 100,000 people (2008)



Source: Eurostat.

- **Size of illegal markets:** certain organised crime activities, like drug distribution, are often accompanied by use of violence to control the market.

- **Prevalence of drug and alcohol use.**³⁵ In Bulgaria in 2010 it was found out that the perpetrator had been under the influence of alcohol in 26 % of all solved intentional murder cases (23 % for 2009), and that in 2 % of the solved cases the perpetrator was under the influence of drugs.

- **Average age of the population:** young and marginalised populations (in Western Europe, immigrant and minority groups) usually have higher levels of violence, including homicide;

- **Level of socio-economic development** (including factors like life expectancy, level of education, literacy and GDP per capita) on international scale show correlation with homicide rates:³⁶ in more developed countries the rate of homicides is lower. The improvement of these indicators of development after 1994–1995 in Bulgaria partially explains the gradual evolution to the average homicide rates in the rest of the EU countries.

³⁵ Regarding alcohol use is important to consider not only quantities consumed, but patterns of use as well. There are specific differences between EU countries regarding patterns of use (e.g. UK).

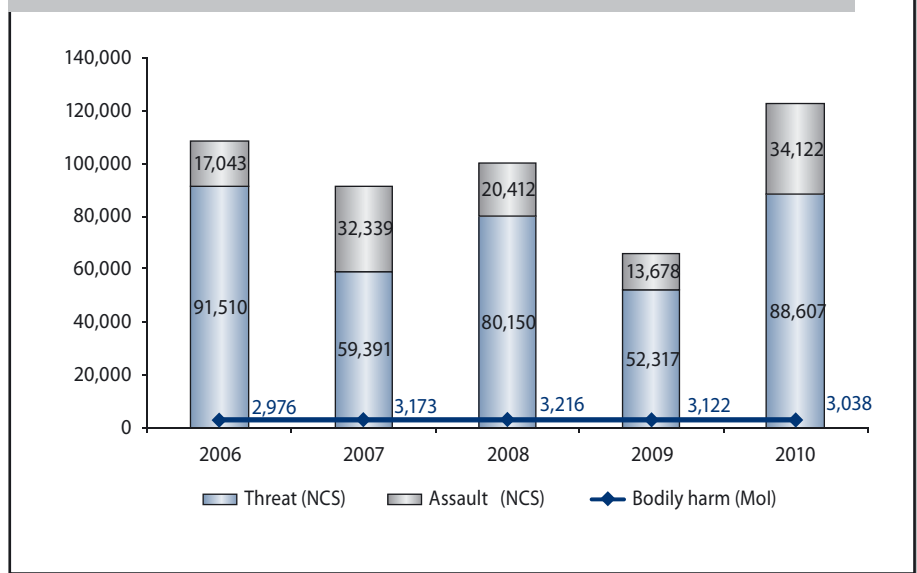
³⁶ Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2008) Global Burden of Armed Violence, Geneva: Geneva Declaration Secretariat, p. 72.

Numerous other factors, like penal policies against homicide, shifts in societal norms regarding the interpersonal violence and the urbanisation processes, need to be taken into consideration to fully explain the homicide rates in Bulgaria and its relative position to other European countries.

4.2. Assaults and threats

One of the areas covered by the NCS are assaults and threats. The police statistics usually registers these as physical injuries and threats. The tendency for increase of threats between 2009 and 2010 could be best explained by the economic crisis and the peak in unemployment – factors which very often generate interpersonal conflicts (including domestic conflicts). The observed fluctuations in the examined period could be rather attributed to the small sample and are not statistically significant. Apart from the significant increase between 2009 and 2010, it could be concluded that the annual rates are relatively stable for the period 2006–2010 and they are similar to the ones in the 2001–2005 period. The overall tendency from the end of the 1990s is towards decrease in that type of crime. The highest rates of assaults and threats are reported in the first National Crime Survey in 2001, when 2.1 % of all respondents indicated to have been victims of this type of crime.

Figure 42. Assaults and threats – police statistics and NCS



Usually threats without some element of certainty or verifiability are ignored and not reported to the police. On the other hand, the wording of the question in the NCS presumes that the victim has experienced “intense fear” of becoming the victim of assault or other crime, as described in the Penal Code. The NCS indicates that the unreported rate of assaults and physical injuries is relatively low. Yet, the high discrepancies with the police statistics suggest extensive “filtering” of these cases by the police. The police are trying to avoid registrations through settling the disputes or mediation of the conflict between the victim and the perpetrator.

Sources: NCS, Mol.

CONCLUSIONS

The sudden changes in the criminal situation in Bulgaria as a result of the economic crisis raised the public interest on this issue across the country. Furthermore, police statistics are traditionally received with scepticism. This makes the NCS an alternative and independent source of information which provides data that is easy to verify and compare with the official crime statistics.

The analysis presented in this study shows that the NCS data is generally in line with the crime trends reported by the MoI statistics. For the 2009–2010 period, the trends reported by MoI match with those outlined by NCS data not only in the number of offences (official police statistics suggest an increase of total crime by 14.6 %, while according to NCS data the growth is 20.4 %), but also in terms of structural changes – both sources indicate growth in unprofessional and petty crime.

Together with the opportunity to compare the general crime trends, the NCS provides evidence for the performance of law enforcement agencies and the changing public opinion of the police and the judicial system in the ‘crisis’ period (2009–2010) as opposed to the preceding period of declining crime rates (2001–2008).

The NCS identified a specific shift in the period 2008–2010. Regardless of the worsening crime situation in 2009 in comparison with 2008, the public trust in police increased. On the other hand, in 2010 the level of unreported crime reversed to the level of 2008, which was only partially due to the drop in trust towards the police, while a more important explanatory factor was the increase of petty crime (which is less reported). The analysis shows that these fluctuations in the trust levels cannot be explained with economic or crime determinants, but rather derive from the political situation and the trust in the government as a whole.³⁷ For the first time in the last 7–8 years public intolerance and concern with all categories of crime is on the rise. This change in attitudes is clearly observed with robberies. For the period 2001–2006 only one third of all robberies have been reported to the police, while in 2009 64 % of all victims have reported the incident, with an even higher number in 2010, 75 %. This is one possible explanation why there is a decline in robberies in comparison with other types of crime. Similar changes are observed with car thefts. Significantly lower percent of victims have decided to pay ransom to get their vehicle back.

The NCS offers some new topics for the public discussion of crime. Recent surveys provide data for the quantitative estimate of such unreported yet widely spread crimes like assaults, threats and frauds. For instance, limitations of the police statistics do not allow estimating the risks and losses for the population

³⁷ Therefore the 2009 increase in confidence in the police coincides with the new government, and the promises of fighting crime that were made, as well as the high political rating of the both the government and the Minister of the Interior. By the middle of 2010, when these ratings plummeted after a series of scandals and corruption allegations, the Minister of Interior’s rating dropped, as well as that of the government.

from telephone fraud. The NCS data indicated that over 20 % of all Bulgarian citizens have been exposed to this crime, and despite the small losses incurred, it is important to note that the victims of telephone fraud are from the most vulnerable group – the elderly people who less frequently seek assistance from the police. According to the 2010 NCS, the efforts of the law enforcement authorities have had an effect and the number of victims of this kind of fraud has declined by a half compared to the previous year.

At the beginning of the new decade, public expectations for overall reduction of criminality in the country are particularly high. It is still uncertain whether the impact of socio-economic factors driving crime rate upward will be felt in the coming years. Regardless of these factors, the failure of MoI to allocate the needed efforts and resources to curb overall crime might eventually have an adverse effect as higher crime rate may hinder the economic recovery.

ANNEX. METHODOLOGY

Comparison of police statistics across the European Union

The notion of **crime** is defined by a legal framework which regulates and establishes norms observed by all concerned institutions. Despite the common ideas that underpin the legislation of each country and the attempt to introduce a uniform system in all EU Member States, there are still persisting differences with regard to legal definitions of the nature of certain crimes as well as the methodology used in police statistics. For example, police statistics can capture a number of light offences which are subject to administrative but not criminal punishment. This often leads to wrong conclusions and speculations when comparing police statistics coming from different countries. Even in the event of a serious crime like deliberate murder punishable under each law system throughout the world, it is still impossible to make a correct comparison. The simplest way to exemplify this is that some countries do not differentiate between attempted murders and actually committed murders in their statistical data, whereas in others these two types of crime come under separate categories in their statistics.³⁸

The specificities of each law system make comparison among countries incorrect and speculative. For this reason Interpol gave up the publication of comparative data based on police statistics from various countries. Eurostat publishes information on the number of some main categories of crime (murder, burglary, robbery) on condition that even grouped in categories the absolute numbers should not be compared among countries, only **changes, trends and differences in time** are subject to comparison. The current study also employs this approach and the comparisons made steer way of data that is dependent on differences in legal systems and methodologies used for statistical crime categorization.

Repeat crime

Some people become victims of a certain type of crime more than once a year. This becomes apparent in the NCS when defining the level of actual crime. Unreported crime however is calculated on the basis of the last incident when the respondent became a victim of the crime in question. This assessment tends to be very close to the real level of crime, at the same time keeping the duration of the interview within a reasonable international standard for such surveys.

When comparing time trends in police statistics and NCS, one should always bear in mind the level of unreported crime, as the trend outlined by the police is missing the unreported crime (Figure 43).

³⁸ There is a number of reasons for ggincomparability of statistics even when it comes to such serious offences – for example, murders may be registered as suicides for a variety of reasons (corruption of law enforcement officers, lack of evidence pointing to the actual perpetrator, etc.).

Figure 43. Unreported crime, police filters, real and registered crime

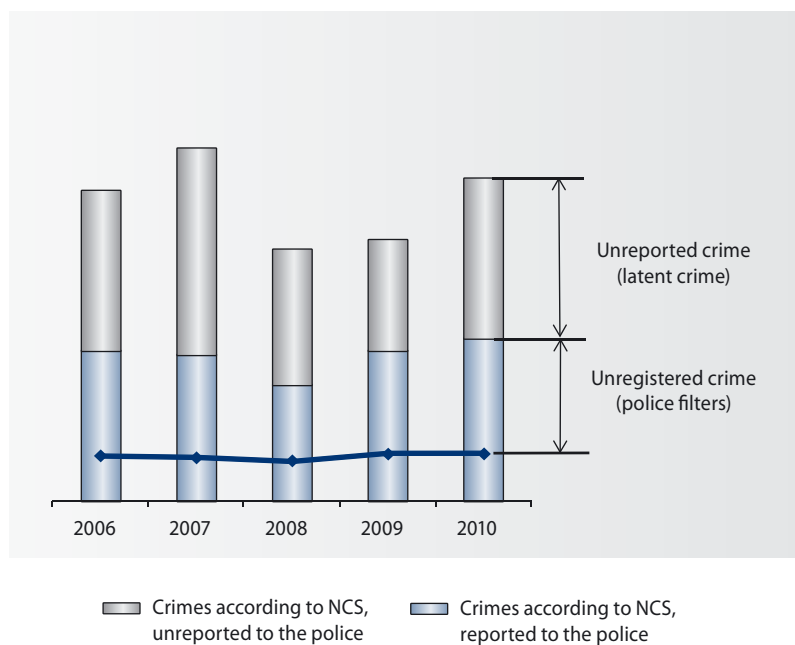


Table 7 summarizes the differences between police statistics and victimisation surveys. It is designed to help the more precise and profound understanding of the study.

Table 7. Police statistics and victimisation surveys

	Police Statistics	Victimisation Survey
Goals	Provides statistical data on registered crime; data used to measure police effectiveness	Provides additional information regarding crimes that are not reported to police or are not registered by the police; provides more detailed information about victims (education, income, relation to the perpetrator) and crime perpetrators.
Types of crime	All included in the Penal Code.	Only mass crimes categories: Property crimes (theft of or from a car, pick pocketing, theft of bicycles, burglary) Violent crimes: robbery, sexual offences, assault /threat
Ways of data collection	The police register: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crimes reported by citizens; • Crimes uncovered by the police themselves; • Crimes disclosed by public sources; • Other crimes specified in Mol internal regulations. 	National representative sociological survey using standard interviews (face-to-face): data on persons or households that have become victims of crime.
Representation	Over 100,000 crimes are registered per year	National representative sample of minimum 2,400 persons. Legal persons and minors may be covered in other surveys, applying a different methodology.
Measurement units	Number of crimes per 100,000 population	Number of victims per 100 persons (prevalence) Number of crimes per 100 persons (incidence)
Frequency of collected data	Daily	Annually: National surveys: in 2001 and 2005 (NSI), 2002 (UNICRI), 2003 (NCIOM), 2004–2005, 2007–2011 (CSD). Regional surveys: 1997 and 2000 only in Sofia (UNICRI), 2004 only in Varna (Varna Free Univ).

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