

## Erratum

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*Below Preface was supposed to be published in Issue 30(3) of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS, to introduce the articles from the Crime and Statistics panel organize at the 59<sup>th</sup> ISI World Statistics Congress.*

### Preface

The importance of crime statistics cannot be overstated: measuring crime is crucial for a better understanding of this phenomenon and above all for developing effective public policies to fight it. Unfortunately, the subject has traditionally been neglected as a priority in the production of official statistics for many countries. In recent years, the increasing technological sophistication and the expansion of globalization have imposed new challenges to all nations regarding crime. With a greater awareness of this problem, many countries have realized the need to count with national statistical systems which can provide comprehensive and timely information on crime.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has promoted several initiatives to globally improve and expand the production of statistics on crime and criminal justice. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) has partnered with UNODC in this endeavour, and among other projects they jointly established in 2011 a Centre of Excellence in Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice located in Mexico City. Together they also prepared a road map for improving the availability and quality of crime statistics which was approved by both the United Nations Statistical Commission and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in early 2013.

In August 2013, Angela Me from UNODC and Mario Palma from INEGI organized the panel *Crime and Statistics: a Dangerous Liaison? Issues, Challenges and Future Directions* for the 59<sup>th</sup> ISI World Statistics Congress with the aim of promoting a discussion on the production and dissemination of crime statistics among different experts covering experiences of individual countries and National Statistical Offices (NSOs).

There are many aspects to the measurement of crime. The papers presented at the panel (and published in their entirety in this edition of the IAOS Journal) underline particularly four relevant aspects on this issue. The first one is the leading role that NSOs may play in the production of crime statistics; the second is the relevance of victimization surveys as one of the main sources of information on crime; the third is the necessity of comprehensive and high quality crime information; and finally the fourth one is the use of a varied array of statistical tools and methods not only for producing statistical information on crime, but also for visualizing and interpreting it.

In the first article, James Lynch focuses on the role victimization surveys play in a system of crime statistics, he especially analyzes their contribution to systems where police and court administrative records have traditionally been the main source of information on crime and on the government's response to it. Lynch also looks at the technological, logistical and political challenges that victimization surveys face and suggests strategies for confronting these challenges and adapting the role of victimization surveys to them.

The second and third articles look at the experiences of producing crime statistical information in two individual countries: South Africa and Mexico. Likewise Lynch, Pali Lehola highlights in his article the importance of victimization surveys as one of the sources of data that, along with administrative records, help to build a more comprehensive system of crime statistical information. Mr. Lehola examines the results of the *Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS)* conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2011, his discussion of this topic provides evidence of the victimization surveys' contributions for a better understanding of the crime phenomenon and its consequences.

Following, Mario Palma refers to the complexity of measuring crime. Based on the experience of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI), he examines the different actors and elements involved in the production of crime official statistics. Palma particularly considers the various roles that NSOs have to play –in the context of a national statisti-

cal system— in order to produce useful, comprehensive and high quality crime information.

Closer to the ISI Congress, we had the good news that the IAOS' 2013 Prize for Young Statisticians was awarded to Kieran Martin and Martin Ralphs for the paper "Using Kernel Methods to Visualize Crime Data", which was obviously a subject of great interest and—upon the suggestion of Stephen Penneck (then president of IAOS)— the paper was presented during the panel. Martin and Ralphs apply kernel smoothing methods to visualize crime statistics produced by different agencies of the United Kingdom government. Their analysis shows how these methods can be a very useful tool for visualizing and interpreting data because they allow users to observe trends in crime both over time and within geographical areas.

In discussing the papers, Angela Me who acted as discussant, emphasized the need for reviewing models for national systems of crime statistics. In Mexico and South Africa crime statistics systems rotate around the national statistical office, which has a central role in defining the standards for statistics which are generated in the forms of administrative records by other entities. The NSO in these two countries has also taken up the important role of producer of crime statistics by implementing a regular programme of national victimization surveys. Other countries may have different models to organize crime statistics where the role of coordinator is taken by other institutions outside the NSO. While the NSO is in the best position to play the role of the "technical super partes", in other countries the NSO is not a major player in crime statistics and different solutions have been put in place with good results. While it may not be possible to define the best system which fits all countries in the world the important element is that each country identifies a national coordinator which has the authority, expertise and the necessary resources to define and implement statistical standards on crime and criminal justice data. The discussant also commented the different experiences presented at the panel on the implementation of victimization surveys. There seemed to be two phases in the role of these surveys: phase one as presented by Mexico and South Africa where there is a clear recognition of the lim-

its of administrative records and surveys are viewed as essential elements to measure the crime which do not come to the attention of the authorities; phase two as revealed by the experience in the US where victimization surveys have been implemented for decades providing a comprehensive understanding of the volume of unreported crime related to the most common forms of crime such as theft, robbery, or burglary and their role has become most valuable to study some specific forms of crime which are most difficult to measure such as violence against women or fraud. In general Angela Me exhorted the presenters to design victimization surveys in a way that they can answer the changing questions that users may have on crime and criminal justice. For example it may be beneficial for countries which are in phase one to carefully look at the design of screening questions for all common forms of crime while countries which are on phase two may more carefully review methodology for defining and measuring very specific and complex forms of crime. She also emphasized that victimization surveys could play a bigger role in national systems for crime statistics and that countries could think of developing a system of surveys on crime. As many countries have embarked in household victimization surveys, these can be expanded to cover businesses (as shown in the Mexican experience), prisons (as shown in the US experience) and users of criminal justice institutions.

The papers presented at the panel depict different perspectives and experiences—from both the academic and governmental spheres— regarding the production of statistics on crime; we hope they contribute to the discussion and, especially, to the further development of this crucial subject.

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