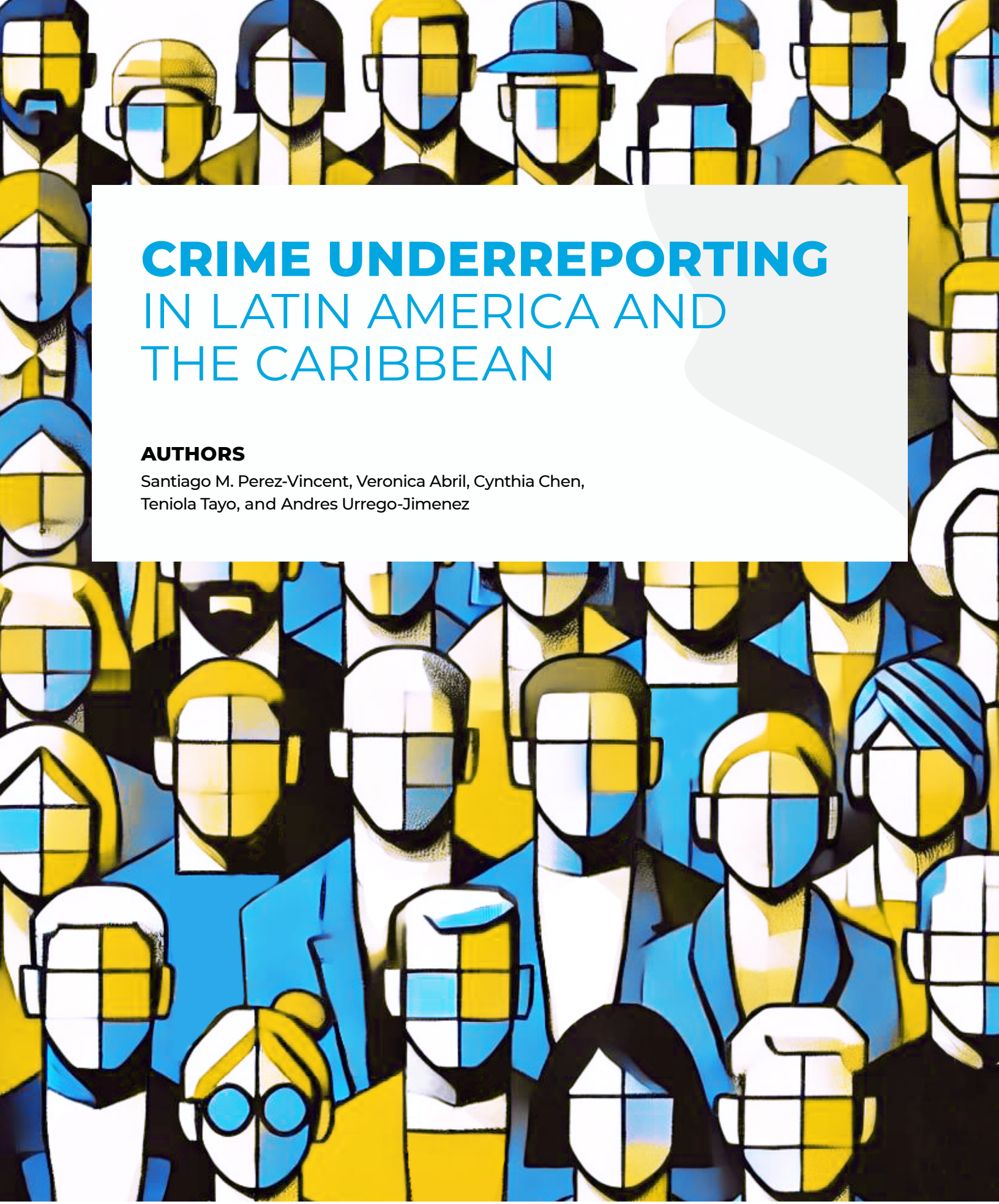

CRIME UNDERREPORTING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Abstract

Crime underreporting poses a significant challenge for governments and law enforcement agencies. This study examines the extent, characteristics, and drivers of crime underreporting and provides evidence-based policy recommendations to address it. Using information from victimization surveys from 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries, the analysis reveals widespread crime underreporting, with an average of approximately three out of four crimes not reported in the countries examined. Low and heterogenous reporting rates point to potential biases in official crime statistics, with certain crimes and victim groups over- and underrepresented. A comprehensive literature review yields a menu of evidence-backed interventions, including remote reporting methods, public information campaigns, diversifying police forces, and reducing deportation risk. Beyond these policies, strengthening data collection through better and more frequent victimization surveys and alternative data collection methods, and addressing fundamental challenges such as the integrity and efficacy of law enforcement institutions appear critical to achieve long-term improvements in crime reporting and, ultimately, support effective crime responses.

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1. Introduction*

Just as a doctor needs to examine the full range of a patient's symptoms to prescribe the right treatment, governments and law enforcement agencies must have an accurate picture of crime to design effective policies that keep citizens safe. Imagine, however, if the patient could only report some of their symptoms, or the doctor did not receive important information. The doctor's diagnosis would be incomplete, and the treatment could be inadequate. The same can be said for crime reporting. When crimes go unreported, the statistics are incomplete, and the policies designed to combat them are prone to be inefficient. Furthermore, changes in reported crime levels can be misleading, as they may reflect variations in reporting behavior rather than actual changes in crime incidence. These are the challenges that most governments and law enforcement agencies around the world face with crime underreporting. In the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, where crime is highly prevalent, the problem of crime underreporting is especially relevant because it hinders the allocation, effectiveness, and monitoring of policies in a highly critical area for the region's development. This study examines the extent, characteristics, and drivers of crime underreporting in the LAC region and presents a set of evidence-based policy recommendations to overcome this challenge.

Understanding Crime Underreporting:
Academic Insights into Victims' Reporting Behavior

In its first section, the document presents a systematic literature review on the global drivers of crime underreporting. Based on the results of the review, it proposes a conceptual framework to understand crime reporting behavior. The framework differentiates between immediate considerations that enter a victim's decision process—such as efficacy, material, social, psychological, personal safety, and legal consequences—and broader moderating factors that shape these considerations, such as individual and perpetrator characteristics, crime specifics, community and societal traits, process attributes, and institutional aspects.

* The authors thank David Puebla and Tomás Pacheco for their excellent research assistance.

The review identifies several considerations associated with crime reporting. Material considerations include the costs and the potential financial benefits of reporting, such as insurance claims. Social considerations encompass the potential impact on others of reporting a crime. Psychological factors have to do with the stigma of victimization, societal norms, and the pursuit of justice, while personal safety considerations involve the fear of retaliation or further victimization. Legal considerations include the risk of deportation or legal entanglement, and efficacy considerations involve the perceived effectiveness of law enforcement actions and the possibility of resolving the matter without official intervention.

In addition to these direct inputs, the review identifies various factors that influence the weight given to each consideration in the decision process: victim demographics, attributes of the offender, the nature of the crime, the community and social environment, the complexity of the reporting process, and the institutional context, including trust in law enforcement, perceptions of criminal justice institutions integrity, and the quality of treatment that victims expect to receive. This framework captures the intricate process that victims undergo when considering whether to report a crime.

Assessing Crime Underreporting in LAC: Insights from National Victimization Survey

Drawing upon the insights gained from the literature review, the second section of this report examines the extent and determinants of crime underreporting in the LAC region, using information from victimization surveys conducted across ten countries. The first observation from this analysis pertains to the differences in the methods used to calculate crime underreporting rates in the region. Although this issue has been recognized in the past and the standardization of surveys has been promoted,[1] data comparability continues to pose a significant challenge in the region. This analysis identifies key elements that limit the comparability of statistics across countries: (i) the questions asked, as most surveys ask only whether a crime was reported, but some also assess if reporting led to the opening of a formal investigation; (ii) the unit of analysis, as underreporting is calculated at the household, individual, or crime level depending on the survey; (iii) the types of crimes included; (iv) the incidents considered, as some surveys ask about the reporting of all incidents while others refer only to the last or the most relevant episode for each crime category; (v) the scope or representativeness of the sample, as some surveys only include urban areas while others cover both urban and rural areas, with the age range of individuals covered by the surveys also varying across countries. These differences and the small number of surveys highlight the need for more, better, and more standardized victimization surveys.

1 See, for example, the VICLAC initiative by UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence: https://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx/index.php/iniciativa-viclac/ (accessed June 5, 2024)

Despite the challenge of limited data comparability, the analysis of the victimization surveys reveals that underreporting of crime is widespread across the region, with 60 to 90 percent of crimes not reported in the countries under study. Underreporting also varies significantly across different types of crimes and degrees of violence of the crime. For instance, motor vehicle thefts are more likely to be reported than residential burglaries. Moreover, victims of violent crimes such as those involving weapons or the use of force are more likely to report crimes.

In the countries examined, efficacy considerations, such as believing that the authorities could not have helped or having solved the issue independently, emerge as the predominant reasons for not reporting crimes. Material considerations, including the complexity and time required for the reporting process, also significantly deter reporting. Personal safety concerns, particularly fear of reprisal, influence the decision about whether to report crimes in some countries. Distrust of the authorities and the belief that the incidents are not serious enough are other common factors linked to reduced reporting.

When the statistics of underreporting are disaggregated by type of crime, the reasons for not reporting show distinct patterns. For robbery and theft, material considerations are prevalent, with robbery victims more likely to fear reprisal and distrust the police, while theft victims cite lack of evidence. Assault and battery victims emphasize personal safety and awareness considerations, while extortion victims report a wider set of reasons for not reporting, including ignorance about the reporting process, having solved the issues by themselves, fear of reprisal, and fear of the police.

The analysis of victimization surveys also provides valuable insights into the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and the decision to report a crime. While most findings vary across countries, some patterns emerge. Differences across sexes in reporting are not consistent, though in some countries, women are more likely than men to cite personal safety concerns as a reason for not reporting. Age also appears to be a relevant factor, with middle-aged individuals reporting crimes more frequently than younger ones, and different age groups showing different perceptions regarding the seriousness of the crime and the complexity of the reporting process. The most consistent finding relates to educational attainment: individuals with higher education levels tend to report crimes more often. Furthermore, groups with different educational attainment put different emphasis on personal safety and the complexities involved in the reporting process. This pattern suggests that multiple factors influence the decision whether to report a crime and highlights the need for country-specific analyses to identify which factors are most influential in different contexts.

Addressing Crime Underreporting:
Evidence-Based Interventions to Promote Reporting

The variation in reporting rates across different types of crimes and different subpopulations highlights potential biases in the official crime statistics. These biases can affect citizen security and justice policies and the allocation of resources and can hinder their effectiveness.

To mitigate these issues, the third section of this report presents a review of the literature and evidence on policies addressing crime underreporting. The review identifies policies addressing process-related factors, which seek to reduce transaction costs and improve accessibility; policies addressing social factors, which include the provision of information and interventions to improve norms and attitudes towards reporting; and policies addressing institutional factors, which encompass strategies to improve police-citizen interactions, public perceptions, and regulations to mitigate the fear of deportation.

Overall, the evidence is limited. Only a few interventions—such as remote reporting methods, public information campaigns, diversifying police forces, and reducing deportation risk—have shown consistent positive results. However, their efficacy is generally limited to specific crimes or populations. Remote reporting methods effectively address material considerations linked to non-reporting, such as the time involved in the process, and have been successful in increasing the reporting of crimes such as theft. However, their efficacy is less clear in promoting the reporting of crimes such as injuries or assaults, where fear of retaliation is a major concern, especially if remote reporting is not anonymous. Diversifying police forces, particularly by increasing the proportion of female officers, has been linked to increased reporting of violence against women but no other types of crimes. Similarly, policies reducing deportation risk have increased reporting by migrant populations who face legal considerations when interacting with law enforcement. Some other policies with evidence in related areas appear promising for addressing specific considerations for not reporting, though more specific evaluations are necessary to assess their actual impact.

The evidence, along with the diverse reasons given for not reporting, suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to address underreporting might be ineffective, and supports a combination of policies tailored to specific contexts. Importantly, the literature review on policies to reduce underreporting does not encompass all factors behind crime underreporting. It focuses on more immediate factors rather than structural issues such as inequality or the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. To achieve long-term change in the social attitude toward crime reporting, it is important to also tackle systemic issues.

Beyond enacting policies that aim to reduce underreporting, it is imperative to strengthen data collection through improved administrative recording of incidents, more frequent victimization surveys and greater use of alternative data collection methods. High-quality,

standardized surveys will provide more accurate and comprehensive insights into the prevalence and nature of crime and the factors influencing reporting behavior. This, in turn, will enable policymakers to design more targeted and effective interventions.

In addition to enhancing data collection and recording, addressing structural issues within communities and law enforcement institutions is crucial. Tackling impunity and corruption will help build public trust in the authorities, a factor frequently mentioned among the reasons for not reporting crime in LAC. Efforts to ensure that law enforcement agencies operate effectively and with integrity can mitigate fears of revictimization that often deter victims from reporting crimes. Furthermore, these structural reforms are necessary to address the broad efficacy concerns identified in the study, where victims frequently doubted the authorities' ability to help.

For instance, while specific policies, such as public information campaigns, might increase the perception of criminal justice institutions effectiveness among the public and promote reporting, reducing impunity by ensuring that crimes are thoroughly investigated and perpetrators are held accountable is the main strategy to address efficacy considerations sustainably. Similarly, while certain training programs in procedural justice might improve the quality of treatment and help enhance reporting by improving the experience of doing so, combating corruption in criminal justice institutions is likely the primary way to address the fear of retaliation that hinders reporting. Likewise, addressing discrimination, both within law enforcement and in society at large, is essential to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, feel safe and supported in reporting crimes.

These broader efforts are essential not only for improving crime reporting but also for supporting effective crime responses and fostering a safer society. By integrating these structural reforms with policies directly aimed at reducing underreporting, governments can develop a comprehensive approach that addresses both the immediate and the underlying causes of crime underreporting, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of crime prevention and response strategies.

2. Understanding Crime Reporting: A Comprehensive Literature Review

This section presents the findings from an extensive literature review on the drivers of crime reporting behavior. The framework proposed to organize the findings of the review categorizes the elements influencing this process into considerations and factors. Considerations are the immediate inputs in the victim's cost-benefit analysis, encompassing efficacy, material, social, psychological, legal, and personal safety aspects that victims assess when determining whether to report a crime. Factors serve as moderating influences that shape the perception and value attributed to these considerations, including individual characteristics, the nature of the crime, the social and procedural context, and the institutional context. This structure aims to clarify the complex interplay between the direct and indirect influences on victims' decisions to report crimes.

2.1.
Methods

This literature review focuses on academic research papers, including articles from peer-reviewed journals and post-graduate theses, that examine the causes of underreporting.[2] Detailed information on the systematic review protocol is available in Appendix 1.

The identification of relevant literature was carried out in three stages. The first was a broad scoping exercise to outline the field of inquiry. This initial step was followed by targeted keyword searches on an extensive list of online libraries and databases. The search strategy focused on the key concepts of "underreporting" and its "drivers," using various related keywords.[3] The initial selection of papers was reviewed to select those related to the scope and goal of our study. Finally, an in-depth review of these papers was performed to discover additional studies cited in them.

2.2
Results: Considerations and Factors in Crime Reporting Behavior

The findings from our literature review encompass dozens of studies that analyze crime reporting behavior across diverse contexts, populations, and types of crime. The primary takeaway is clear: victim reporting behavior is complex, incorporating various considerations and influenced by numerous intertwined factors. To structure these findings from the literature review, we propose a conceptual framework, building upon the substantial existing body of literature.

Conceptual Framework

Myers (1980), in his seminal work on the subject, suggests that the theories to explain victim behavior after a crime can be categorized as either the economic or utilitarian perspective, or the contextual or incident-specific perspective. The utilitarian argument posits that post-victimization behavior is determined by a cost-benefit analysis that victims perform to decide whether the costs of reporting a crime outweigh the benefits of doing so.

2 Studies that merely describe the problem of underreporting without exploring its causes, studies with sample sizes smaller than 100, and those that report victimization survey results without additional analysis, were excluded.

3 In addition to "underreporting," the search included with the following related keywords: "reporting," "non-reporting," "hidden figure," and "dark figure." The "drivers" concept was explored using also the following keywords in conjunction with the "underreporting" keywords: "drivers," "reasons for," "causes of," "why do people," "understanding," "factors affecting," "exploring," "explaining," and "determinants." The same search was carried out in Spanish, using the words "subregistro" (or alternatively "subreporte," as a translation for "underreporting") and "determinantes" (translation of "drivers"). Subregistro was expanded with the following keywords: "crimen," "delito," "cifra oculta," "cifra oscura," "no denuncia," and "no reporte"; while "determinantes" was used in conjunction with the "subregistro" keywords and expanded with the following keywords: "razones," "causas," and "factores."

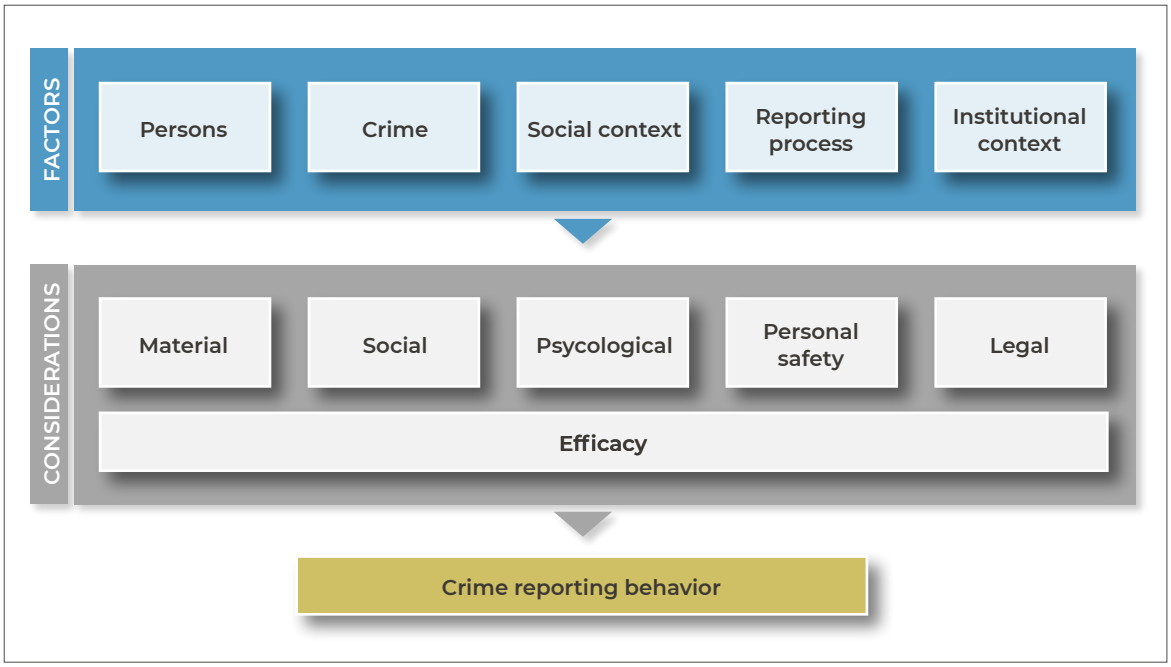
Opponents of this view advanced the contextual perspective, which argues that variations in crime reporting behavior are directly attributable to the nature of the victimization itself as well as the context in which the crime is committed.

The approach taken in this paper incorporates both perspectives, using rational choice as an organizing framework while considering contextual or incident-specific factors as modifiers of the cost-benefit analysis. This combination of perspectives fits Myers' (1980: 28) argument that, despite the limitations of the utilitarian model, "victims may nonetheless act as if they rationally calculated the costs and benefits of reporting." The key to this mixed approach lies in defining "cost" and "benefit" considering the non-pecuniary gains and losses that may influence a victim's decision, which may vary depending on the specific features of the victimization. The incorporation of alternative considerations makes it possible to explain reporting behavior that deviates from predicted behavior by the basic rational choice model.

Informed by a comprehensive review of the literature, we propose a conceptual framework to try to explain the complex process involved in crime reporting. This framework introduces two central concepts: considerations and factors. Considerations are direct inputs into the "cost-benefit" analysis, embodying the perceived costs and benefits that victims balance when considering whether to report a crime. These encompass efficacy, material, social, psychological, legal, and personal safety considerations. Conversely, factors are moderating influences that shape how these considerations are perceived or valued by each individual on each occasion. While these factors do not themselves represent "costs" or "benefits", they influence the weighting of the cost-benefit analysis. They have to do with the characteristics of the individuals involved, the nature and characteristics of the crime, the social context, the reporting process, and the institutional context. By differentiating between considerations and factors, this paper seeks to better dissect the intricate dynamics driving crime reporting.

FIGURE 1

Conceptual Framework: Crime Reporting Process



One important observation arising from the literature review is that, prior to these considerations coming into play, there exists a foundational prerequisite: *awareness*. For the act of reporting to even be contemplated, victims need to recognize two fundamental facts. Firstly, they must acknowledge their victimization. This may not always be straightforward due to various social and personal factors that could obscure a person's perception of their own experiences, leading them to potentially not identify as victims of a crime. Secondly, they must be aware that the option to report the crime exists. Factors such as lack of knowledge about the criminal justice system or not realizing that a certain act is, in fact, a criminal offense, can prevent victims from considering the act of reporting. Consequently, the extent of such awareness or lack thereof can significantly influence whether a crime is reported.

In short, in this conceptual framework, the contemplation of crime reporting by a victim is contingent upon awareness—of the crime itself as well as the opportunity to report it. Conditional on awareness, the decision to report or refrain from reporting follows from the victim's assessment of the various considerations presented above, which are shaped by a set of factors related to the persons involved, the crime, and the social, procedural, and institutional context. Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of the model.

Considerations: Direct Inputs into the Reporting Process

A review of the academic literature reveals several considerations that weigh on a victim's decision to report a crime. These considerations, which we consider as the inputs of a cost-benefit analysis, include efficacy, material, social, psychological, legal, and personal safety aspects. Table 1 summarizes these different considerations

TABLE 1

Conceptual Framework: Crime Reporting Process

CATEGORIES	CONSIDERATIONS
Material	Transaction costs, perceived monetary gains, requirement for insurance claims
Social	Empathy, preventing the offender from victimizing others
Psychological	Feelings of shame, conforming to societal norms, desire for justice, preventing revictimization
Personal safety	Fear of retaliation, preventing repeated victimization
Legal	Fear of deportation, risk of being implicated for a previous offense, avoiding association with illegal activities involving stolen property
Efficacy	Perceived law enforcement efficacy, resolving the issue independently, lack of evidence

Material considerations in the decision to report a crime encompass both potential financial gains and the material costs and barriers encountered during the reporting process. These considerations are grounded in the practical aspects of crime reporting. On the one hand, transaction costs such as time, effort, and monetary resources can significantly burden the victim (Hardy, 2019). The perception of these costs extends beyond the initial reporting act to the anticipated time and effort required to navigate the justice system, potentially involving court appearances and multiple interactions with law enforcement. This broader perspective on time costs highlights why some victims opt not to report, even when the process seems straightforward. On the other hand, the potential for material gain, such as retrieving stolen property or obtaining restitution (Xie and Baumer, 2019), along with the necessity of an official crime report for insurance claims, are incentives to report (Bowles, Reyes, and Garoupa, 2009; MacDonald, 2001; Tarling and Morris, 2010).

Social considerations include victims' concern for the welfare of others. Empathy can influence the decision to report a crime. For example, bystanders who understand and share the feelings

of the victim might be prompted to report an incident that they witnessed, particularly if they believe that the victim is unable to do so. Similarly, empathy might influence the victim's behavior; understanding and sharing the feelings of the offender might prevent them from reporting the crime (Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Acierno, 2020; Jones et al., 2009; Tarling and Morris, 2010). Conversely, the desire to prevent the offender from victimizing others might increase the likelihood that the victim will report the crime (Hardy, 2019).

Psychological considerations in crime reporting encompass personal feelings, emotions, and apprehensions regarding victims' social identity and standing within their community that can sway their decision to report a crime. For instance, shame associated with the stigma tied to being a crime victim may discourage individuals from reporting (Ceelen et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2009; Spelman and Brown, 1984). Similarly, the desire to conform with societal or community expectations or norms might strongly encourage or discourage a person from reporting a crime (Ceelen et al., 2019; Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003). For example, concern about being labeled as an informant might influence the decision. Conversely, a strong motivator for reporting can also stem from the desire for justice, as victims may seek accountability for the offender to restore their sense of order and control over their lives. However, victims may also aim to prevent revictimization (that is, the emotionally taxing experience of reliving the trauma during the reporting process). The distress of recounting the incident, perhaps repeatedly, to law enforcement officers can be a significant deterrent to reporting (Fohring, 2020; Kidd and Chayet, 1984).

Personal safety considerations in crime reporting encompass victims' concerns for their own physical safety. On the one hand, the fear of retaliation by the offender or potential reprisal from law enforcement can prevent victims from reporting (Ceelen et al., 2019). On the other hand, the desire to prevent further victimization by the same offender may prompt victims to report the crime.

Legal considerations in crime reporting include victims' concerns about the potential legal consequences of reporting or not reporting a crime. On the one hand, legal concerns, such as the risk of deportation for immigrants or being implicated in previous offenses, can be an important deterrent from engaging with law enforcement agencies, especially for those in a vulnerable legal status (Justus and Kassouf, 2008). On the other hand, the need to report a crime to distance oneself from any illegal activities involving stolen property can be a compelling incentive to report a crime.

Finally, *efficacy considerations* encompass motives tied to whether engaging with the justice system could achieve *any* of the potential benefits sought from reporting a crime. Key among them is the perceived efficacy of law enforcement in resolving the reported crime, which can significantly influence the decision to report (Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Boateng, 2018; Gordon, 1990; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004; Kääriäinen and Sirén, 2011; Tolsma, Blaauw, and Te Grotenhuis, 2012;). Other considerations that do not always indicate a negative view toward law enforcement agencies include the belief

that victims have "resolved the issue by themselves" or the notion that "no evidence" exists to substantiate a claim. In scenarios where individuals doubt the police or criminal justice institutions' ability to effectively address the crime (Cuerda and Blackemore, 2020; Hardy, 2019), or when they feel that their own actions or lack of substantial evidence make reporting ineffective, they might opt against initiating a report, regardless of other specific considerations they might also have.

Factors: Underlying Drivers of Reporting

The review of the literature provides insights into the numerous factors that shape awareness and the sets of considerations that influence reporting behavior. The factors have been organized into several categories: those related to the individuals involved, the nature of the crime, the social context, the reporting process, and the institutional context. These factors are considered variables that shape victims' considerations when deciding whether to report a crime rather than inputs into the cost-benefit analysis. The following discussion may not entirely capture the interplay among these factors. Their influence on victim's considerations and, ultimately, on crime reporting behavior is likely interconnected in various and potentially complex ways, [4] Table 2 summarizes the factors affecting crime reporting. Table 3, located at the end of the section, links these factors to the considerations discussed above.

TABLE 2
Factors Affecting Crime Reporting Behavior

CATEGORIES	FACTORS
Individuals	Characteristics of the victim, characteristics of the perpetrator, relationship with the perpetrator
Crime	Type of crime, severity of the incident, other features of the incident
Social context	Characteristics of the community, characteristics of the society
Reporting process	Process features
Institutional context	Trust in institutions, perceived integrity, perceived quality of treatment

4 Vergani and Navarro (2020) illustrate this intricate interplay between factors and victims' considerations. Their analysis of crime underreporting among minority groups subject to hate crimes in Victoria, Australia, found that these minorities stated distinct types of barriers depending on the perceived severity of the incidents. Issues related to awareness (such as internalization and lack of knowledge) played more significant roles in the underreporting of less serious incidents, like verbal assault. Conversely, for more serious incidents such as physical violence and property destruction, personal safety considerations (such as, the fear of repercussions) and material considerations related to accessibility issues emerged as major deterrents to reporting.

INDIVIDUALS

Characteristics of the Victim. Certain sociodemographic attributes of victims may affect their likelihood to report crimes. Some studies suggest that men may report crimes less frequently than women (Catalano, 2006; Estienne and Morabito, 2016; Fohring, 2015; Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Kaukinen, 2002; MacDonald, 2001; Tarling and Morris, 2010; Tolsma, Blaauw, and Te Grotenhuis, 2012). This difference in reporting behavior could potentially be explained by societal norms around masculinity, leading men to perceive a higher psychological cost associated with reporting a crime. However, this pattern is not observed in all studies. Erentzen and Schuller (2020) report, for example, that within a Canadian sample, women were less likely to report non-hate-based crimes, though more likely to report hate-based crimes. In this vein, Justus and Kassouf (2008) suggested that, under certain conditions, women may be more influenced by fear of reprisal, affecting their willingness to report.

Another sociodemographic factor of the victim considered in studies of reporting behavior is their immigration and minority status. Research by Papadopoulos (2014) in England and Wales found that immigrants were less likely than native-born citizens to report property crimes. This observation is consistent with Alcalá and Birkbeck's (2020) findings among immigrant adolescents across 24 European countries. Similarly, Rennison's (2007) examination of reporting behavior in Illinois, United States, found that non-Hispanic Black individuals and unemployed individuals reported crimes less often. The underreporting observed among immigrants and minorities may stem from an aversion to interacting with law enforcement, due to legal, personal safety, or psychological considerations. This issue is particularly pronounced in the context of hate or bias crimes (Erentzen and Schuller, 2020), an example of the interaction between victims' attributes and the nature of victimization in shaping reporting behavior. Perceived distance and differences between themselves, the perpetrator, their neighborhood, and law enforcement officers deter victims of these crimes from coming forward (Balboni et al., 2001; Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015; Comino, Mastrobuoni, and Nicolò, 2020; Cuerden and Blakemore, 2020; Dowler and Sparks, 2008; Giannasi, 2014; Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta,2006; Jones, 2015; Pezzella, Fetzer, and Keller, 2019; Slocum, 2018; Wolff and Cokely, 2007). Moreover, language barriers and cultural differences (Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001) may add to the material challenges of reporting for immigrants. Additionally, for immigrants with uncertain legal status, the fear of legal repercussions, such as deportation, when interacting with law enforcement adds another layer of complexity, potentially further discouraging them from reporting crimes.

Victim's income has also been considered a potential factor affecting crime reporting behavior. While some studies have not found a strong correlation between income level and reporting (Sparks, Genn, and Dodd, 1977), others show a positive association between these two variables (Boateng, 2018; Kaukinen, 2002; Murphy and Barkworth, 2014). The

lack of a clear relationship is not necessarily surprising: high-income individuals may have a high opportunity cost of reporting (if reporting means not receiving an income for the time spent reporting) and, therefore, the perceived benefit of reporting may be estimated as lower than the value of the hours lost. However, low-income individuals may lack spare time, have a less flexible schedule, and be more vulnerable to employment loss, which may prevent them from using their time to report a crime.

Characteristics of the Perpetrator. The attributes of the crime's perpetrator can also influence the victim's likelihood of reporting the incident. Ayodele and Aderinto (2014) suggest that the victim's empathy toward the perpetrator's circumstances may factor into their decision not to report the crime. This empathic response is an example of social considerations influencing the victim's cost-benefit analysis. The socioeconomic status of the perpetrator can also influence material considerations; victims may perceive a higher likelihood of receiving compensation if the perpetrator has substantial financial resources. Moreover, a study by Minkler et al. (2022) based on interviews with juvenile crime offenders in the United States revealed that male youth have a 45 percent larger "dark figure of delinquency" than their female counterparts. In other words, young men were more likely to perpetrate a crime and avoid repercussions than young women. Although this discrepancy could be influenced by factors beyond differential reporting rates, it suggests that the gender of the perpetrator may affect the likelihood of crime reporting. This influence may be due to the influence of perpetrator's gender on different considerations, such as the fear of reprisal, the desire for justice, or the victim's empathy.

Relationship with the Perpetrator. The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator often significantly influences the victim's decision to report a crime. When the victim and the perpetrator share a social circle, concerns about disrupting these relationships or facing reprisal can amplify personal safety concerns, as well as the psychological and social cost of reporting (Singer, 1988). This dynamic has been particularly examined in cases of financial or emotional abuse among older adults (Acierno et al., 2020), and in instances of sexual assault (Griffin, Wentz, and Meinert, 2022; Ceelen et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2009; Ullman and Siegel, 1993). In these cases, victims are typically less inclined to report the crime when they know the perpetrator personally. In contrast, for other crimes, some articles found the opposite effect. For instance, MacDonald (2001) found that, in Great Britain, victims are more willing to report a property crime if they know the perpetrator. The sign of the effect is the same as in Estienne and Morabito (2016), who find a positive association between the relationship with the offender and reporting behavior in robbery and assaults, a result that may be linked with efficacy considerations, with victims possibly having more evidence to substantiate the report in these cases.

CRIME

Type of crime. There is broad consensus that the type and severity of the crime are important factors influencing a victim's decision to report (Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Bowles, Reyes, and Garoupa, 2009; Ceelen et al., 2019; Fohring, 2015; Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Graham, Kulig, and Cullen, 2020; Hart and Rennison, 2003; Kemp, 2022; Myers, 1980; Skogan, 1977; Sparks, Genn, and Dodd, 1977; Reynolds, 2022; Tarling and Morris, 2010). Many researchers have successfully replicated this observation, and it was consistent across most of the studies reviewed.

In general, property theft and vehicle theft are reported far more frequently than other crimes, even arguably more serious crimes like domestic violence (Bowles et al., 2009; Greenberg and Beach, 2004). This pattern may be attributed to the fact that the perceived benefit of reporting, particularly for theft, extends beyond law enforcement involvement, offering victims the possibility of obtaining a benefit through insurance claims (Bowles et al., 2009; Kääriäinen and Siren, 2011), or in preventing potential associations with unlawful activities involving the stolen property.

Severity of the incident. The relationship between the severity of the incident and the likelihood of reporting has been found to be robust and consistent across various studies. Regardless of the type of crime, incidents that involve greater severity—whether because of the use of weapons, the degree of violence employed, or the extent of damage to the victim—tend to be reported more frequently (see, for example, Ceelen et al., 2019, on sexual violence; Reynolds, 2022, on identity theft). This correlation might be driven by the heightened perceived benefits of reporting, such as the potential to prevent a violent offender from committing further crimes either against the original victim or others. Although some victims may avoid reporting to avoid the psychological trauma of reliving the incident, others may find that reporting the crime and seeking justice—a desire that could be proportionate to the severity of the harm suffered—serves as a crucial part of their coping mechanism.

In the realm of property crimes, the severity of the incident is typically associated with the value of the goods stolen or damaged. There is near consensus in the literature that the greater the value of the property involved, the higher the likelihood of reporting the crime (Bowles et al., 2009; Buikhuisen, 1975; Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Greenberg and Beach, 2004; Justus and Kassouf, 2008; MacDonald, 2001; Murphy and Barkworth, 2014; Myers, 1980; Reynolds, 2022. Skogan, 1977). This pattern is understandable: the higher the value of the goods, the greater the perceived benefit of reporting, particularly when victims have some level of trust that reporting will lead to the recovery of their property. However, even when recovery seems unlikely—as in situations where goods have been destroyed—other non-economic considerations may enter the decision-making equation. For instance, the magnitude of the loss might intensify victims' desire to see the offender held accountable and brought to justice as a means to cope with their situation.

Other features of the incident. Beyond severity and the value of the property stolen or damaged, other specifics of the incident itself can significantly influence the decision to report. For example, a study by Ceelen et al. (2019) on underreporting of sexual violence in the Netherlands discovered that victims who had consumed alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident were less likely to report the crime, possibly linked to heightened feelings of shame and guilt or perception of lack of evidence, which serve as deterrents to reporting. Additionally, crime environment may play a role. In a study of fraud reporting in Catalonia, Kemp (2022) found that victims were more likely to report online fraud than offline fraud. This increased propensity to report was largely due to a higher likelihood of victims recognizing online fraud as a crime. In contrast, in an online survey experiment, Graham, Kulig, and Cullen (2020) found that respondents were less likely to report online incidents, probably due to a perception that the police were less likely to identify and arrest an offender of a cybercrime compared to a traditional crime. The number of perpetrators involved in a crime also affects considerations for reporting. Slocum (2018) and Pezzella, Fetzer, and Keller (2019) show that the more perpetrators involved, the more likely a victim is to report the crime, a relationship that could be explained by a desire for justice proportional to the number of offenders. The context and circumstances of the incident add further complexity to the consideration mix that determines reporting behavior.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Characteristics of the Community. The environment in which the victimization occurred has been also identified as a factor influencing reporting behavior. Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta (2006) found higher reporting rates in communities with greater social cohesion. In closely-knit communities, individuals might be more motivated to report crimes to protect other potential victims or to maintain the social order within their community. Colavito (2007) and Davis and Henderson (2003) found that individuals expressing a higher perception of collective efficacy, that is, a sense of cohesion of among community and shared expectations to solve local problems, were also more likely to report crimes. Relatedly, Estienne and Morabito (2016) and Soares (2004) found lower reporting in communities with higher income inequality, a factor that may influence both cohesion and collective efficacy. Furthermore, several studies have found that victims from socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are significantly less likely to report crimes (Dowler and Sparks, 2008; Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Slocum, 2018), although Baumer (2002) presents less clear evidence on this relationship. Greenberg and Beach (2004) found that reporting behavior was heavily socially driven, with victims advised to report the crime being over 12 times more likely to report than those not told the same thing.

Research on the influence of community context on attitudes toward the police indicates that residents of high-crime neighborhoods are more likely to have negative perceptions of the police (Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, 2007; Reisig and Parks, 2000; Sampson and Bartusch, 1998). This is also true for those in neighborhoods with frequent negative police

interactions, including use of force or misconduct, which tend to be more prevalent in disadvantaged areas (Terrill and Reisig, 2003). In these situations, a subculture of legal cynicism can emerge, where crimes are not reported either due to efficacy considerations or because cooperation with them is stigmatized as snitching (social considerations) (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003; Warner, 2003).

Characteristics of the Society. In addition to local community dynamics, the broader societal or national context can influence an individual's decision to report a crime. Research suggests that more economically advanced countries may have higher crime reporting rates (Mayhew and Van Dijk, 1997; Soares and Naritomi, 2010; Tolsma, Blaauw, and Te Grotenhuis, 2012). Specifically, Soares and Naritomi (2010) found that variations in crime reporting across countries could be linked to per capita income levels, institutional stability, police presence, and corruption. According to Gingerich and Oliveros (2018), developed nations tend to have lower reporting costs due to a greater police presence and better access to police stations. Furthermore, given that development often correlates with stronger institutional capacity, victims in these countries might perceive a greater benefit in reporting crimes, owing to an increased confidence in their chances of receiving justice.

REPORTING PROCESS

Process features. The characteristics of the crime reporting process can significantly influence the considerations that victims weigh when deciding whether to report. Characteristics such as the complexity and length of the process can heighten material considerations by imposing higher costs. For example, a convoluted and prolonged reporting process can increase transaction costs, encompassing everything from tangible expenses like transportation to more abstract costs such as the time that could otherwise be spent on productive or leisure activities. This underscores the importance of understanding not just the act of reporting itself, but also the broader implications of engaging with the criminal justice system, which might involve extensive time commitments, including court appearances and multiple police interactions. Hardy's (2019) study of crime reporting in England revealed a lack of awareness among individuals about legislation, police procedures, and reporting pathways.

Moreover, the accessibility of the reporting process can impact material and psychological considerations for specific groups. Spelman and Brown (1984) pointed to challenges such as lack of knowledge about the correct local police contact and difficulties communicating with police personnel (Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001) as obstacles to reporting. Challenges such us language barriers or inadequate accommodations for people with disabilities can amplify the effort and resources required to report a crime, disproportionately affecting certain populations. Similarly, procedural elements that necessitate recounting the incident multiple times can intensify psychological burdens, exacerbating the trauma of revictimization.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Trust in Institutions. Trust significantly influences crime reporting behavior, as highlighted in various studies (Boateng, 2018; Hart and Colavito, 2011; Kääriäinen and Siren, 2011; Murphy and Barkworth, 2014; Tarling and Morris, 2010; Vergani and Navarro, 2021), especially those focusing on developing countries and minority populations in developed nations. Lack of trust can directly relate to considerations about the perceived usefulness of reporting a crime. It also affects personal safety considerations, such as the fear of reprisal by law enforcement, and psychological concerns regarding the fear of revictimization during the reporting process.

Perceived Integrity. The perceived integrity of law enforcement agencies is a factor that can also affect various considerations that victims weigh when deciding whether to report crimes. For example, if criminal justice institutions are viewed as corrupt, this belief can reduce the perceived efficacy of law enforcement agencies and can heighten the psychological barriers to doing it, as victims may fear revictimization. Moreover, the perception of institutional corruption can exacerbate material concerns and undermine social considerations for reporting, making individuals hesitant to incur any costs associated with reporting, especially for seemingly minor offenses like low-value robberies or thefts. This reluctance can stem from a belief that a corrupt system that is unlikely to pursue justice effectively undermines their civic duty to report a crime (Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Soares, 2004).

Quality of Treatment. The perceived quality of treatment from law enforcement officers can also shape considerations for not reporting a crime. For instance, previous negative interactions with law enforcement can lead to increased psychological reluctance to engage with the police due to fears of dismissive or hostile treatment. This is again especially relevant in contexts where police violence has been observed, as it can instill fear of reprisal or mistreatment among potential reporters (Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk, 2016; Gingerich and Oliveros, 2018; Sudbury, 2020). Overall, a perception of poor procedural justice —the extent to which officers treat individuals with dignity, respect, and fairness— can influence both psychological, personal safety, and efficacy considerations regarding police effectiveness, making victims less likely to report a crime (Graham, Kulig, and Cullen, 2020; Kwak, Dierenfeldt, and McNeeley, 2019).

TABLE 3

Summary of Factors and Linked Potential Considerations for Reporting

TYPE OF FACTORS	SPECIFIC FACTORS	POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTED
Individuals	Characteristics of the victim	- Psychological (e.g., gender norms affecting stigma of reporting) - Personal Safety (e.g., fear of reprisal or repeated victimization may vary by gender) - Legal (e.g., fear of deportation for immigrants)
	Characteristics of the perpetrator	- Social (e.g., empathy toward the perpetrator) - Material (e.g., perceived monetary gains may vary by perpetrator's financial status) - Personal Safety (e.g., fear of reprisal may vary by perpetrator's characteristics)
	Relationship with the perpetrator	- Psychological (e.g., fear of facing social stigma may vary depending on the relationship with the perpetrator) - Personal Safety (e.g., fear of reprisal in close relationships)
Crime	Type of crime	- Material (e.g., reporting for insurance claims in vehicle theft) - Legal (e.g., association with crimes involving stolen property)
	Severity of the incident	- Psychological (e.g., desire for justice proportional to harm suffered) - Social (e.g., perceived benefit of preventing others' victimization higher for more severe incidents) - Material (e.g., value of stolen goods may increase perceived monetary gains)
	Other features of the incident	- Psychological (e.g., desire for justice proportional to number of perpetrators) - Efficacy (e.g., perception of police efficacy may vary by context of the incident, online vs. offline)
Social context	Characteristics of the community	- Social (e.g., social cohesion may increase perceived benefit of preventing others' victimization) - Efficacy (e.g., legal cynicism in areas with frequent negative police interactions) - Psychological (e.g., fear of social stigma in areas with frequent negative police interactions)
	Characteristics of the society	- Efficacy (e.g., institutional stability and police presence may increase perceived law enforcement efficacy) - Material (e.g., transaction costs may be lower in developed nations with better access to police stations)
Reporting process	Process features	- Material (e.g., complexity and length of process increase costs) - Psychological (e.g., process that require recounting incident multiple times may increase fear of revictimization)

Continues

Continuation

TYPE OF FACTORS	SPECIFIC FACTORS	POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTED
Institutional context	Trust in institutions	- Efficacy (e.g., trust may increase perceived law enforcement efficacy) - Personal Safety (e.g., trust may reduce fear of reprisal by law enforcement) - Psychological (e.g., trust may reduce fear of revictimization while reporting)
	Perceived integrity	- Efficacy (e.g., integrity may increase perceived law enforcement efficacy) - Personal Safety (e.g., integrity may reduce fear of reprisal by law enforcement) - Psychological (e.g., police misconduct may heighten fear of revictimization)
	Treatment quality	- Efficacy (e.g., disrespect may increase doubts about law enforcement handling reports fairly) - Personal Safety (e.g., fear of reprisal or hostile treatment) - Psychological (e.g., fear of revictimization due to previous negative interactions with law enforcement)

3. Crime Underreporting in Latin America and the Caribbean: What do Victimization Surveys Reveal?

This chapter examines crime underreporting behavior in Latin America and the Caribbean, drawing on recent national victimization surveys across the region. It reveals significant variations in reporting rates by crime type and incident characteristics, with motor vehicle theft generally reported more frequently than crimes such as bribery, fraud, and extortion. Victims of violent crime are more inclined to report than victims of non-violent crimes.

The analysis sheds light on the primary factors and considerations for non-reporting, such as widespread mistrust in authorities, perceived triviality of incidents, and concerns about the complexity of the reporting process. Moreover, it explores how victims' personal characteristics—sex, age, educational attainment, and income level—relate to reporting behavior. While findings vary by country, some consistent patterns emerge, such as that individuals with higher education levels are more prone to report crimes. Overall, the chapter highlights the complex relationship between crime characteristics, reporting barriers, and victim demographics, suggesting the need for tailored policy interventions to enhance reporting rates.

Crime underreporting can lead to underestimating the extent of citizen security challenges in a society. However, the problem of underreporting is not limited to this concern. Differences between reported and unreported crimes can introduce bias into the authorities' analysis, resulting in an inefficient distribution of police and citizen security resources. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that observed changes in reported crime levels can stem from fluctuations in both the actual crime rate and the crime reporting rate. This distinction is paramount, as it could lead to misinterpretations regarding the effectiveness of policies and evolution of crime trends, particularly for offenses with low reporting rates. If reported crimes do not accurately reflect the actual incidence of crime, statistical inferences about crime based on official data should consider the characteristics of reporting behavior (or, in statistical terms, the "sampling process"[5]) to avoid bias (Biderman and Reiss, 1967). Otherwise, the targeting and tailoring of citizen security policies based on these data might underrepresent sociodemographic groups and types of crime that are less likely to be reported.

This section examines crime underreporting behavior using data from ten national victimization surveys carried out in LAC countries over the last decade. First, it analyzes the extent of crime underreporting and how it varies depending on the type and features of the crime.[6] Then, it discusses the reasons for not reporting indicated by the victims, distinguishing them by type of crime. Finally, it examines how personal characteristics of the victim (sex, age, educational attainment, and income) relate to reporting behavior and different considerations for not reporting.

Before going into the analysis of victimization surveys, it is crucial to underline a key caveat: the comparability of data across countries is limited by the differences in survey methodologies. These differences, which include the questions asked, the unit of analysis considered (as underreporting is calculated at the household, individual or crime level depending on the survey), the number and scope of crimes and incidents considered (as some surveys ask about the reporting of all incidents while others refer only to the last or the most relevant episode for each crime category), and the coverage or representativeness of the sample (with some surveys focusing exclusively on urban areas while others spanning both urban and rural regions, and surveys covering different age brackets) limit the ability to draw direct comparisons between the findings from different countries (Zakula, 2015). Appendix 2 details the methodologies of the different surveys included in the analysis.

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5 In statistical terms, the reporting process can be likened to a sampling process: the process through which an element of the population of committed crimes enters the sample of observed crimes.

6 We use victimization surveys to calculate rates of crime underreporting. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that also the extent of crime reported in victimization surveys is affected by the data collection process. As stated by Biderman and Reiss (1967, p. 15): "In exploring the dark figure of crime, the primary question is not how much of it becomes revealed but rather what will be the selective properties of any particular innovation for its illumination. As in many other problems of scientific observation, the use of approaches and apparatuses with different properties of error has been a means of approaching truer approximations of phenomena that are difficult to measure. Any set of crime statistics, including those of the survey, involves some evaluative, institutional processing of people's reports. Concepts, definitions, quantitative models, and theories must be adjusted to the fact that the data are not some objectively observable universe of "criminal acts," but rather those events defined, captured, and processed as such by some institutional mechanism."

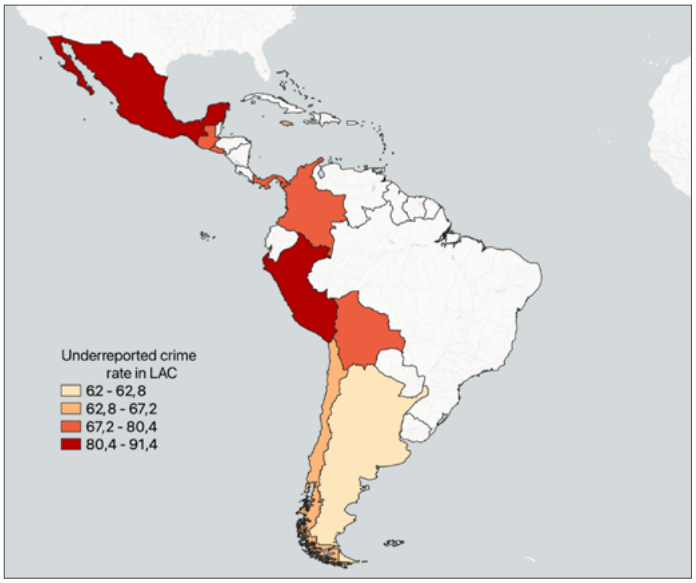
3.1
Underreporting by Type of Crime

Underreporting of crime is a widespread issue throughout the region. However, the extent of underreporting varies significantly depending on the type of crime and the characteristics of the incident. Theft of motor vehicles are usually among the most frequently reported crimes. Conversely, bribery, fraud, and extortion are among the least reported. Victims of violent crimes are more likely to report than victims of non-violent crimes.

Despite the variations across victimization surveys, the analysis consistently indicates that crime underreporting is a prevalent issue throughout the region. As illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the overall crime underreporting rates for 10 countries with available data, the underreporting rate is at least 60 percent in every country included in the analysis. This indicates that most crimes go unreported in all of the countries surveyed, with the rate reaching as high as 90 percent in certain cases. While the results may appear to hint that the underreporting rate tends to be lower in the southern countries of the continent, such as Argentina and Chile, than those found in Mexico and Peru, these differences may be influenced by the methodologies of the victimization surveys used in each country.

FIGURE 2

Rate of Underreporting in Latin America and the Caribbean



COUNTRY	UNDERREPORTING (%)
Argentina	62,7
Bolivia	74,0
Chile	67,2
Colombia	70,1
El Salvador	80,4
Guatemala	73,1
Jamaica	66,2
Mexico	91,4
Panama	72,7
Peru	83,0

Source: Author's elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panamá-2016, Peru 2021, Jamaica-2019, Guatemala-2018. Bolivia-2015. Differences across countries may be driven by differences in survey methodologies.

Beyond the high overall crime underreporting rates, the analysis of victimization surveys reveals large differences in underreporting rates among types of crimes. Table 4 shows underreporting rates for crimes against households, specifically separating residential burglary from motor vehicle theft. In cases where the data distinguish between the theft of entire motor vehicles and the theft of parts or objects from within vehicles, the underreporting rate for the theft of whole vehicles is consistently lower than that for residential burglary.[7] On average, across countries with available data, over 70 percent of residential burglaries go unreported, whereas this figure drops to about 30 percent for motor vehicle thefts. This observation aligns with the literature review in Section 2, which suggests that the material benefits of reporting motor vehicle theft—such as the requirement of an official crime report for insurance claims—or legal considerations — such as to avoid association with any illegal activities involving the stolen vehicle—may result in lower underreporting rates for this type of crime.

TABLE 4

Rate of Underreporting by Household Crime (%)

COUNTRY	Residential burglary	Theft: motor vehicle	Theft: motor vehicular parts	Theft: objects within motor vehicles	Theft: motorcycle scooter
Argentina	53.9	16.5	53.4		17.6
Chile	60.7	19.3		76.0	
Colombia*	74.8	72.1			
El Salvador	90.8	25.6			
Mexico	84.6	31.9	91.2		
Panama	68.6	20.7	84.0	67.4	12.1
Peru		18.2	89.5		35.2
Jamaica			51.5	68.2	
Guatemala	88.4	15.1	82.7	75.9	18.9
Bolivia*	52.0	67.0			
Average	**71.7**	**31.8**	**75.3**	**71.9**	**20.9**

Source: Author's elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panamá-2016, Peru 2021, Jamaica-2019, Guatemala-2018. Bolivia-2015. In countries with an asterisk (*), the survey question on motor vehicle thefts refer also to theft of motor vehicular parts and theft of objects within motor vehicles. The row "Average" reports the simple average across countries with information.

7 In Colombia and Bolivia (marked with an asterisk in Table 4), the survey question on motor vehicle theft also includes theft of motor vehicular parts and theft of objects within motor vehicles.

Table 5 presents underreporting rates for various crimes against individuals. It is worth noting that the types of crimes included in the surveys differ significantly among countries. For instance, Argentina, Guatemala, and Panama report on seven or more distinct crimes against individuals, each with a unique set of crimes. Colombia and Chile's surveys cover three crime categories. Additionally, the interpretation of each crime category may vary slightly from country to country due to differences in legal definitions and cultural perceptions. Despite these variations, the data offer insights into how underreporting rates differ by crime type. Bribery, extortion, fraud, and non-violent thefts are the least reported crimes, with average underreporting rates of 95.5 percent (across four countries), 77.2 percent (seven countries), 86.1 percent (six countries), and 79.2 percent (nine countries) respectively. Conversely, crimes such as assault and battery, kidnapping, and threats tend to have lower average underreporting rates, at 67.9 percent (nine countries), 57.9 percent (five countries), and 70.6 percent (seven countries), respectively. The high and varying rates of underreporting across different types of crimes can lead to underestimating the extent of citizen security challenges and to a biased representation of the nature of the problem in the official crime figures.

TABLE 5

Rate of Underreporting by Household Crime (%)

COUNTRY	Robbery (with violence)	Theft (without violence)	Fraud	Bribery	Assault and battery	Threats	Extortion	Kidnapping
Argentina	57.2	65.3	81.4	93.4	58.5	58.1		62.1
Chile	52.5	85.4			48.1			
Colombia		67.8			74.8		77.1	
El Salvador	82.8	83.2			85.1	80.9	65.1	
Mexico	89.4		92.6		82.3	85.9	92.3	83.3
Panama	66.3	83.2	85.9	97.2	71.6	65.5	90.4	
Peru		80.5	97.4			78.2	92.8	31.2
Jamaica	49.2	78.8	71.0	100.0	53.3	59.9	59.5	
Guatemala	72.9	83.3	88.8	91.4	69.9	65.6	63.7	50.1
Bolivia	78.0	86.0			68.0			63.0
Average	**68.5**	**79.2**	**86.1**	**95.5**	**67.9**	**70.6**	**77.2**	**57.9**

Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panama-2016, Peru 2021, Jamaica-2019, Guatemala-2018, Bolivia-2015.

Beyond the type of crime, the severity of the incident—particularly its violent nature—is another factor that might influence a victim's decision to report, as discussed in Section 2. This relationship is evident in data from victimization surveys in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, which provide details on whether the victim experienced violence, such as the use of force or a weapon, during the crime. The findings highlight that experiencing violence significantly influences a victim's likelihood to report the crime in these countries. Table 6 presents the results from a linear probability model that assesses the relationship between experiencing violence and the likelihood of reporting, both without (panel A) and with sociodemographic controls (panel B). The coefficients indicate the average difference in the reporting likelihood between victims of violent crimes and those of non-violent crimes. The analysis consistently reveals that victims of violent crimes are more likely to report. For instance, in Mexico, violent crimes are 15 percentage points more likely to be reported than non-violent crimes. Similar patterns are observed in other countries, with reporting likelihoods for victims of violent crimes being 13 percentage points higher in Argentina, 8 in Chile, and 11 in Colombia, compared to their non-violent counterparts. This significant positive relationship between experiencing violence and reporting remains robust even after adjusting for sociodemographic characteristics of the victim.

TABLE 6

Underreporting by Characteristics of the Crime: Violence

PANEL A: Without sociodemographic controls				
	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) Mexico
Violent crime	0.130*** (0.0313) [0.00]	0.0819*** (0.0261) [0.00]	0.112*** (0.0233 [0.00])	0.157*** (0.0156) [0.00]
No violent-mean	0.30	0.28	0.25	0.07
Controls	No	No	No	No
Observations	4155	3341	4960	22137
R-Squared	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03
PANEL B: With sociodemographic controls				
	(5) Argentina	(6) Chile	(7) Colombia	(8) Mexico
Violent crime	0.136*** (0.0315) [0.00]	0.0863*** (0.0264) [0.00]	0.118*** (0.0232) [0.00]	0.159*** (0.0159) [0.00]
No violent-mean	0.30	0.28	0.25	0.07
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4098	3300	4959	21390
R-Squared	0.02	0.01	0.05	0.03

Source: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10 ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by ordinary least squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation of each survey.

3.2
Reasons for Not Reporting Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean

This section examines the reasons for non-reporting as described in victimization surveys. The differences in survey methodologies hinder straightforward comparisons across countries, yet the analysis yields valuable insights.

Efficacy considerations, such as believing that the authorities could not help or having solved the issue independently, emerge as the predominant reasons for not reporting crimes. Material considerations, including the complexity and time required for the reporting process, also significantly deter reporting. Personal safety concerns, particularly fear of reprisal, influence the decision to report crimes in some countries. Additionally, distrust of authorities and the belief that the crime is not serious enough are common deterrents to reporting in others.

When disaggregating by type of crime, the reasons for not reporting show distinct patterns. For robbery and theft, material considerations are prevalent, with robbery victims more likely to fear reprisal and distrust the police, and theft victims more often citing lack of evidence. Assault and battery victims emphasize personal safety and awareness considerations. Extortion victims report a wider set of reasons for not reporting, notably ignorance about the reporting process, having solved the issues by themselves, fear of reprisal, and fear of the police.

These findings underscore the complexity of crime underreporting. They point to the need for comprehensive and context-specific policy interventions to effectively address the issue.

Crime victimization surveys frequently ask victims why they refrain from reporting crimes, which sheds light on the challenges they encounter in the decision-making process. However, discrepancies in survey methodologies and the categorization of reasons hinder cross-country and cross-survey comparisons. The conceptual framework introduced in Section 2 distinguishes between direct considerations affecting the decision to report and broader factors influencing these considerations. However, the reasons included in the surveys often conflate considerations and factors. For example, many surveys cite “lack of trust in institutions” as a reason for non-reporting, which in this study is viewed more as a factor influencing perceptions rather than a direct consideration. As indicated above, lack of trust could impact various aspects of the decision-making process related to, for example, efficacy

considerations about the usefulness of reporting a crime, personal safety considerations, such as the fear of reprisal by law enforcement, or psychological concerns regarding the fear of revictimization during the reporting process. We therefore assess it as factor rather than a direct input into the decision-making process.

To reconcile the reasons for non-reporting provided in victimization surveys with this conceptual framework, they were divided into five categories: awareness, efficacy, material, personal safety, and other factors. Awareness-related reasons include the belief that the crime could not be reported. Efficacy considerations refer to motives related to general usefulness of reporting to obtain *any* benefit and include instances where individuals felt they had "resolved the issue themselves" or had "no evidence." Material considerations encompass reasons related to the cost and complexity of the reporting process, potential financial benefits, and practical barriers. Personal safety includes fear of reprisal and fear of the authorities. The "other factors" category includes broader issues like mistrust in authorities, police advice against reporting, or beliefs that the crime was not severe enough to warrant action. Like mistrust in the authorities, the latter can also affect the victim's decision-making process through considerations of different nature. For example, in the case of property crimes, the fact that a crime is not deemed serious enough could mean that the potential gain from recovering the stolen good would not compensate for the cost or inconvenience of reporting (material consideration), but it could also signal that the victim considers that the aggressor did not merit punishment for the offense (social consideration). The absence of a standardized framework to classify these reasons makes it challenging to pinpoint the exact motivations behind the reluctance to report. Nevertheless, the analysis can provide some insights into the decision-making process behind reporting behavior.

Reasons for Not Reporting a Crime by Country

Table 7 presents the relative importance of the reasons for not reporting crimes in the seven victimization surveys that included the question. In some cases, such as Panama and Argentina, the totals may exceed 100 percent because the surveys allowed multiple responses.

The main reasons for not reporting crimes are related to efficacy considerations. Depending on the country, these include "having solved" the incident, lacking evidence to support the claim, or believing that authorities could not have done anything. The latter consideration ranks as the top reason in the four countries that include it (Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, and Panama), with percentages ranging from 31.5 to 42.9. Another frequent reason in this set is "I solved it by myself," indicated by 24 percent of respondents in Argentina and 22.5 percent in Panama. Finally, lack of evidence is widely cited in Guatemala (30.5 percent), Panama (30.8 percent), and Peru (20.4 percent).

Material considerations are the second most often cited reasons for not reporting in Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Among these reasons, the perceived complexity of the

reporting process and the time required are frequently mentioned, with significant percentages in Chile (15.7 percent), Colombia (26.3 percent), Mexico (32.6 percent, "loss of time"), Panama (12.4 percent), and Peru (34.5 percent, "loss of time") citing these procedural hurdles as reasons for not reporting.

Concerns about personal safety, particularly the fear of reprisal, also influence the decision not to report crimes. In El Salvador and Guatemala, nearly 19 and 17 percent of victims indicated this fear, respectively, with lower but noteworthy percentages in Panama, Peru, and Argentina. Additionally, a general dislike or fear of the police or the authorities further discourages reporting in some countries.

Awareness issues, such as the belief that the situation does not warrant police involvement, also affect crime reporting in some countries. In El Salvador, Panama, and Guatemala, about 5 percent of victims felt that the crimes were not suitable for police intervention.

Among other factors, respondents frequently mention mistrust in authorities, which can influence various aspects of a victim's decision-making process regarding reporting a crime. Consequently, in regions where institutional trust is generally low, such as in LAC, it is not surprising that respondents frequently select this option. Another common reason cited is that the crime was "not serious enough," which can also influence multiple considerations.

TABLE 7

Reasons for Not Reporting a Crime (% by country)

	Argentina (2017)	Chile (2021)	Colombia (2020)	El Salvador (2018)	Mexico (2021)	Panama (2016)	Peru (2021)	Guatemala (2018)
MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS								
Long/complex process		15.69	26.32	3.90	8.08	12.43		5.67
The cost of the procedure is expensive				0.00		1.70		1.43
I had no insurance	3.83	0.07		0.00		0.63		9.17
I do not know the procedure to report	7.13		7.60	0.46				5.22
Loss of time					32.63	6.36	34.46	
PERSONAL SAFETY								
Fear of reprisal	5.93	3.25	3.14	18.74	0.57	9.63	6.63	17.04
Dislike or fear of the police/authority				5.85	3.71	2.72		16.80

Continues

Continuation

	Argentina (2017)	Chile (2021)	Colombia (2020)	El Salvador (2018)	Mexico (2021)	Panama (2016)	Peru (2021)	Guatemala (2018)
AWARENESS								
It was not competency of the authority		0.96		5.51		5.06		6.81
EFFICACY								
I solved it by myself	23.98			4.89		22.48	11.35	11.92
Lack of evidence	17.60	6.56	6.25	4.94	10.25	30.77	20.43	30.51
Authorities couldn't have done anything		40.87	42.89	31.53		33.82		
OTHER FACTORS								
Not serious enough	23.92	21.76	1.56	15.20	11.80	29.89	14.02	29.88
Mistrust in the authorities	32.64				14.58		13.79	28.52
The police recommended not to report		1.03	3.46					
I knew the offender		2.78	10.24					

Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panama-2016, Peru 2021, Guatemala-2018.

While an organized framework for victimization surveys, distinguishing between various considerations and factors, could refine our understanding and inform more effective policy interventions to reduce underreporting, the analysis of the existing victimization surveys delivers some broad insights. It underscores the complexity of crime underreporting, with multiple considerations and factors playing a role in the decision-making process. While efficacy and material considerations are widely significant, a range of reasons contributes to underreporting, with varying importance across countries. These results highlight the value of comprehensive yet context-specific solutions to address this issue.

Reasons for Not Reporting a Crime by Type of Crime

TABLE 8

Reasons for Not Reporting a Crime (% by crime)

	Robbery	Theft	Assault and battery	Extortion
MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS				
Long/complex process	12.6	8.6	7.6	15.4
The cost of the procedure is expensive	1.5	1.3	0.4	2.0
I had no insurance	1.6	4.1	4.8	0.7
I do not know the procedure to report	5.7	6.8	4.3	12.5
Loss of time				
PERSONAL SAFETY				
Fear of reprisal	20.5	9.8	17.9	32.3
Dislike or fear of the police/ authority	6.0	5.1	12.6	16.3
AWARENESS				
It was not competency of the authority	5.5	6.0	10.8	8.9
EFFICACY				
I solved it by myself	11.5	10.5	26.5	31.3
Lack of evidence	22.1	24.0	19.5	27.6
Authorities couldn't have done anything	56.4	22.0	34.4	60.3
OTHER FACTORS				
Not serious enough	21.4	22.8	27.0	14.2
Mistrust in the authorities	48.5	38.7	22.4	29.9
The police recommended not to report				
I knew the offender				

Note: This figure includes data from Argentina, El Salvador, Panama, and Guatemala, which ask separately about the four types of crimes in the victimization survey. Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, El Salvador-2018, Panama-2016, and Guatemala-2018.

Table 8 shows the percentage of times that different factors and considerations were used as a reason for not reporting a crime, disaggregated by type of crime. This table only includes data from Argentina, El Salvador, Panama, and Guatemala, which provide information for the same four types of crimes.

First, the reasons for not reporting robbery and theft are similar. In both cases, around one in five victims who did not report a crime cited material considerations. Among these, the complexity of the process was slightly more prevalent among robbery victims, while victims of theft more frequently cited lack of insurance and ignorance about the reporting procedure. Personal safety considerations, however, show clearer differences. Robbery victims are more likely to indicate fear of reprisal, consistent with the fact that robbery involves direct interaction with the perpetrator. Conversely, theft victims are more likely to cite efficacy considerations such as lack of evidence. Finally, robbery victims are significantly more likely to indicate mistrust in the police. This may reflect lower trust in population sectors affected by robbery or the perception that the police would not be effective or could even be complicit in such crimes.

Reasons for not reporting assaults and injuries differ from the previous two property crimes. In these cases, victims are less likely to cite material considerations (although they are still mentioned by a large share of those not reporting). Instead, personal safety considerations are relatively more important, particularly fear of reprisal, which is mentioned by almost 18 percent of non-reporting victims. Awareness considerations are also more often cited for assaults and injuries, with 11 percent of respondents mentioning this reason (twice the rate for victims of robbery or theft). Additionally, 27 percent of victims in these cases cited “solved it by myself,” compared to 11 percent for theft and robbery. The reason “not serious enough” is also more frequently mentioned, indicating that this type of crime may encompass a variety of intensities, leading people to either accommodate or seek solutions other than involving the police.

Finally, the reasons for not reporting extortion differ significantly from other crimes. One notable observation is that victims of extortion provide more reasons for not reporting, possibly indicating the complexity of the crime. This crime typically involves more interaction with the aggressor (or the threat of) and may affect more vulnerable populations subject to greater pressures and constraints. Victims of extortion are more likely to report ignorance about the reporting process compared to victims of other crimes. Personal safety considerations are also more prominent, with 32 percent citing fear of reprisal and 16 percent fear of the police. Additionally, a higher percentage of people indicate having solved the issue by themselves, averaging 31 percent across countries, which is higher than for assault and three times the rate for robbery or theft. Lack of evidence is also more commonly cited. Lastly, a lower percentage indicate their belief that the issue was not serious enough, highlighting the relevance of this type of crime.

The analysis reveals that reducing underreporting of crimes might require addressing multiple factors simultaneously and that tailored interventions might be necessary to address different types of crime. For example, personal safety and efficacy considerations are critical for assault and battery, while material considerations are more relevant for robbery and theft. Extortion, being more complex, might require more intense context-specific and crime-specific interventions to effectively reduce its underreporting.

3.3
Underreporting by Victims' Characteristics

This section examines how victims' personal characteristics correlate with their reporting behavior, using data from multiple victimization surveys across Latin America and the Caribbean.

While most findings vary across countries, some patterns emerge. Differences across sexes in reporting are not consistent. In some countries, women are more likely to cite personal safety concerns as a reason for not reporting. Age also appears to be a relevant factor, with middle-aged individuals reporting crimes more frequently than younger ones, and different age groups showing different perceptions regarding the severity of the crime and the complexity of the reporting process. The most consistent finding relates to educational attainment: individuals with higher educational attainment tend to report crimes more often. Furthermore, groups with different educational attainment put different emphasis on personal safety and the complexities involved in the reporting process.

Two main conclusions follow from the analysis. First, the variation in reporting levels across subpopulations confirms the potential for systematic bias in official crime figures, with groups of victims being over- or underrepresented in official statistics. Second, there is a need for context- and victim-specific policies to address underreporting.

In this subsection, we assess whether and how the decision to report a crime varies depending on personal traits of the victim. Using microdata from the victimization surveys presented above, the study estimates linear probability models for the decision to report a crime[8] using a set of victims' sociodemographic characteristics as independent variables.[9] Each table shows the estimated coefficient for each variable of interest and its statistical significance. In addition, we report q-sharpened values to account for multiple hypothesis testing following Anderson (2008).

As described in Section 2, sociodemographic characteristics of victims may influence their decision to report a crime by altering the perceived relative costs and benefits of taking this action. In the following analysis, we use information on the age, sex, educational attainment, and income level of respondents in eight victimization surveys to assess whether these traits are systematically associated with the likelihood of reporting a crime.

For the analysis, we focus on respondents who replied to have been victims of at least one crime and construct a dummy variable *(reporting)* at the individual level indicating whether the person reported *any* crime. We measure respondents' *age* using a 3-category scale (younger than 29, 30 to 59, older than 59). We use a binary variable for *sex* that takes the value of 1 for *female* respondents and 0 otherwise. We measure *education* using a 3-category scale: primary school or less; high-school or less; and tertiary education (including non-university professional education, university, and postgraduate education). Finally, we measure *income* with a 3-category scale (low, middle, and high), combining the different survey categories into these three groups.

For each country, we estimate a linear probability model using the *reporting* indicator as the dependent variable and categorical variables for the sociodemographic characteristics as independent variables. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the reporting rate varies significantly by type of crime. To address this issue, we include dummy variables for the type of crime among our control variables. This ensures that we can isolate the effects of our variables of interest from the influence of crime type. In other words, these control variables make

8 For each country, the following crimes are considered to construct the 'crime' variable. Argentina: robbery (with violence), theft (without violence), fraud, extortion, assault and battery, threat and bribery; Chile: residential burglary, motor vehicle theft, theft of objects within motor vehicles, robbery (with violence), theft (without violence), and assault and battery; Colombia: theft (without violence), assault and battery, and extortion; El Salvador: robbery (with violence), theft (without violence), assault and battery, threat, and extortion; Mexico: robbery (with violence), fraud, extortion, threat, assault and battery, and kidnapping; Panama: robbery (with violence), theft (without violence), fraud, assault and battery, extortion, and kidnapping; Guatemala: robbery (with violence), theft (without violence), fraud, bribery, assault and battery, threat, extorsion and kidnapping; Peru: theft (without violence), threat, extortion, fraud, and kidnapping.

9 Due to the differences in the victimization surveys, some of the analyses cannot be performed for all countries and, in most cases, the variables used are defined somewhat differently across countries.

it possible to observe whether individuals with different traits vary in their likelihood of reporting, conditional on having experienced the same types of crime.[10]

Following a similar empirical approach, we examine whether the reasons for not reporting crimes differ according to victims' personal traits. For this analysis, we modify the dependent variable to represent whether a person cited specific reasons for not reporting. We estimate a separate linear probability model for each set of reasons. This analysis uncovers whether different sociodemographic groups have different reasons for not reporting crimes. All models control for demographic and crime-type variables.

SEX

The analysis does not show a systematic difference across sexes in the probability of reporting a crime. Table 9 (panel A) reports the estimates of the female indicator variable coefficient in the model. It is worth mentioning that this analysis excludes sex crimes, which often require specialized surveys and studies due to their unique dynamics and underlying causes.[11]

Further, Table 9 (panel B) and Table A.1 (in Appendix 3) explore the reasons victims indicate for not reporting crimes and their association with the victim's sex. The data does not reveal any significant sex-based differences in the frequency of material considerations as a reason for not reporting. However, when it comes to personal safety concerns, there are differences between sexes in some countries. In Guatemala and El Salvador, women are more likely than men (by 12 and 10 percentage points (p.p.), respectively) to cite personal safety concerns, such as fear of reprisal, as reasons for not reporting a crime (as detailed in Table A.1 of Appendix 3). In Peru, women are 3.5 p.p. more likely than men to cite fear of reprisal as a reason for not reporting.

10 We estimate the linear probability model by ordinary least squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 15). All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation of the surveys.

11 For example, Jaitman and Anauati (2020) highlight that, on average, underreporting rates for gender-based violent crimes are 43 percent higher among women than men. In their analysis, they also found differences in reporting across sexes in non-gender-specific crimes, with women being 5 to 9 percent less likely to report them.

TABLE 9

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Sex

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
A. DECISION TO REPORT								
Report								
Female	0.006 (0.03) [1.00]	0.028 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.006 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.066 (0.06) [1.00]	0.002 (0.01) [1.00]	0.35 (0.05) [1.00]	-0.022 (0.02) [0.84]	-0.005 (0.03) [1.00]
B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOT REPORTING								
Material								
Female	-0.011 (0.02) [1.00]	-0.004 (0.02) [1.00]	0.002 (0.02) [1.00]	-0.070 (0.04) [0.79]	-0.035** (0.01) [0.08]	-0.029 (0.03) [1.00]	-0.017 (0.02) [1.00]	0.034 (0.03) [1.00]
Personal safety								
Female	-0.001 (0.01) [1.00]	0.005 (0.01) [1.00]	0.007 (0.01) [1.00]	0.096* (0.05) [0.41]	0.000 (0.00) [1.00]	0.015 (0.03) [1.00]	0.035*** (0.01) [0.00]	0.129*** (0.03) [0.00]
Awareness								
Female		-0.003 (0.01) [1.00]		-0.077* (0.04) [0.33]		0.030 (0.02) [1.00]		0.003 (0.02) [1.00]
Efficacy								
Female	-0.006 (0.02) [1.00]	-0.047 (0.03) [0.61]	-0.004 (0.01) [1.00]	0.048 (0.03) [0.84]	0.019** (0.01) [0.04]	0.023 (0.05) [1.00]		0.027 (0.03) [1.00]
Other factors								
Female	-0.032 (0.03) [1.00]	-0.006 (0.02) [1.00]	-0.004 (0.03) [1.00]	0.046 (0.07) [1.00]	-0.008 (0.01) [1.00]	-0.075 (0.05) [0.79]	-0.031 (0.02) [0.63]	-0.038 (0.03) [1.00]

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by ordinary least squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). Controls include educational level, age, and type of crime. All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation. Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panama-2016, Peru 2021, Guatemala-2018.

AGE

Our findings reveal that crime reporting rates vary by age in several countries, as detailed in Table 10 (panel A). Generally, individuals aged 30 to 59 tend to report crimes at higher rates than those under 30, with significant differences noted in Colombia, El Salvador, and Mexico. Additionally, those aged 60 and above also report crimes more frequently than the youngest group, with a statistically significant difference in Colombia.

Table 10 (panel B) and Table A.2 (in Appendix 3) examine differences across age groups in reasons for not reporting crimes. In Mexico and Peru, middle-aged and older individuals are less inclined to dismiss incidents as not serious enough for reporting. Instead, they are more likely to view the reporting process as time-consuming. Similarly, in Chile, these age groups are less likely to consider incidents as trivial and more likely to find the reporting process cumbersome or complex. In Chile, older respondents also more frequently cite mistrust in authorities as a deterrent to reporting.

TABLE 10

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Age

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
A. DECISION TO REPORT								
Report								
Age 30-59	0.034 (0.03) [0.450]	0.005 (0.03) [0.932]	0.101*** (0.02) [0.002]	0.151** (0.06) [0.079]	0.022*** (0.01) [0.032]	-0.035 (0.05) [0.727]	-0.005 (0.02) [0.927]	0.042 (0.04) [0.431]
Age +60	0.042 (0.05) [0.578]	0.001 (0.04) [0.954]	0.096** (0.04) [0.077]	0.095 (0.10) [0.536]	0.009 (0.01) [0.595]	0.087 (0.09) [0.536]	0.008 (0.03) [0.927]	0.055 (0.05) [0.431]
B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOT REPORTING								
Material								
Age 30-59	-0.011 (0.02) [0.727]	0.075*** (0.02) [0.002]	-0.056* (0.02) [0.079]	-0.047 (0.05) [0.462]	0.030* (0.01) [0.102]	0.010 (0.03) [0.927]	0.094*** (0.02) [0.001]	-0.063* (0.03) [0.141]
Age +60	0.049 (0.04) [0.366]	0.062** (0.02) [0.056]	0.003 (0.04) [0.932]	-0.033 (0.05) [0.727]	0.076** (0.03) [0.022]	-0.046 (0.04) [0.462]	0.099** (0.04) [0.052]	-0.033 (0.04) [0.629]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexi-co	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
Personal safety								
Age 30-59	-0.032 (0.02) [0.156]	-0.006 (0.01) [0.796]	-0.008 (0.01) [0.450]	0.020 (0.06) [0.905]	0.004 (0.01) [0.727]	0.008 (0.04) [0.932]	-0.019 (0.01) [0.171]	-0.033 (0.03) [0.510]
Age +60	0.022 (0.04) [0.727]	0.008 (0.01) [0.727]	-0.013 (0.01) [0.431]	0.029 (0.08) [0.905]	-0.004 (0.01) [0.727]	-0.078 (0.04) [0.171]	-0.035 (0.02) [0.156]	-0.009 (0.04) [0.932]
Awareness								
Age 30-59		0.005 (0.00) [0.431]		0.082* (0.04) [0.104]		-0.042 (0.03) [0.364]		0.020 (0.02) [0.431]
Age +60		0.006 (0.00) [0.431]		0.197 (0.13) [0.248]		-0.059* (0.03) [0.108]		-0.000 (0.02) [0.954]
Efficacy								
Age 30-59	-0.011 (0.02) [0.727]	0.037 (0.03) [0.431]	0.026* (0.01) [0.107]	-0.031 (0.04) [0.633]	-0.018* (0.01) [0.079]	-0.030 (0.05) [0.727]		-0.010 (0.04) [0.927]
Age +60	0.027 (0.04) [0.727]	-0.000 (0.04) [0.954]	0.017 (0.01) [0.431]	0.022 (0.06) [0.905]	-0.019 (0.01) [0.343]	-0.221* (0.09) [0.061]		-0.050 (0.05) [0.431]
Other factors								
Age 30-59	-0.062 (0.03) [0.171]	-0.093*** (0.03) [0.005]	-0.052 (0.03) [0.156]	-0.152 (0.08) [0.156]	-0.051*** (0.01) [0.001]	0.065 (0.04) [0.248]	-0.070*** (0.02) [0.005]	-0.031 (0.04) [0.578]
Age +60	-0.067 (0.05) [0.386]	-0.072* (0.03) [0.086]	-0.113** (0.04) [0.056]	-0.085 (0.13) [0.727]	-0.065*** (0.02) [0.007]	0.127 (0.08) [0.211]	-0.122*** (0.03) [0.001]	-0.006 (0.05) [0.932]

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation. Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panama-2016, Peru 2021, Guatemala-2018.

The analysis does not show consistent age-based differences in personal safety concerns as a reason for not reporting. Awareness-related reasons show varied patterns; for instance, older individuals in El Salvador more often indicate that incidents do not warrant police involvement, while this sentiment is relatively less common among older groups in

Panama. Regarding efficacy considerations, in Panama, older individuals are less likely to cite lack of evidence or unfamiliarity with the reporting process as barriers to reporting.

The variety of reasons for not reporting crimes across different age groups underscores the potential effectiveness of diverse and tailored policy interventions that cater to the concerns of each age group. For example, given that younger individuals may perceive incidents as less serious, educational campaigns could specifically target this demographic to underscore the value of engaging with law enforcement. For middle-aged and older individuals, who view the reporting process as overly time-consuming or complex, simplifying procedures and improving accessibility could be key strategies.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Table 11 (Panel A) presents the estimated coefficients for the differences in reporting rates across various levels of educational attainment.[12] While the results are not consistent across all countries, the data generally indicate that individuals with higher educational attainment, specifically those with post-secondary education, tend to report crimes more frequently than those with at most primary education. This pattern is significant in Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru.

Table 11 (Panel B) and Table A.3 (in Appendix 3) explore how the reasons for not reporting crimes vary by educational attainment. Although results differ across countries, certain patterns emerge. For instance, in three of the eight countries analyzed, individuals with higher educational attainment are less inclined to cite personal safety concerns as a reason for not reporting crimes compared to those with at most primary education. Moreover, in countries where "loss of time" is listed as a potential deterrent, individuals with higher educational attainment, including both high school and post-secondary levels, are more likely to view it as a significant barrier to reporting.

Some results are country specific. For example, in Chile, individuals with higher educational attainment are more prone to consider the incident as not serious enough to warrant reporting. In Mexico, those with higher educational attainment are more likely to be deterred by the perceived length and complexity of the reporting process, whereas they are less likely to cite a lack of evidence compared to individuals with primary education. These findings are not observed in other countries. These differences further underscore the importance of considering context- and victim-specific policies to address the barriers to crime reporting.

12 The omitted category is "primary school completed or less." The coefficients for the other two categories show the difference in average reporting rates versus the omitted category.

TABLE 11

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Educational Attainment

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexi-co	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
A. DECISION TO REPORT								
Report								
High School	-0.004 (0.04) [0.966]	0.025 (0.04) [0.690]	0.075* (0.03) [0.085]	0.108 (0.07) [0.237]	0.022* (0.01) [0.092]	-0.049 (0.08) [0.690]	0.021 (0.02) [0.474]	0.064 (0.04) [0.187]
Post-secondary	-0.002 (0.04) [0.972]	0.107** (0.04) [0.059]	0.195*** (0.04) [0.001]	0.181* (0.08) [0.092]	0.036*** (0.01) [0.018]	-0.003 (0.07) [0.972]	0.059** (0.02) [0.059]	0.080 (0.05) [0.199]
B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOT REPORTING								
Material								
High School	-0.008 (0.02) [0.875]	0.026 (0.02) [0.435]	-0.053 (0.04) [0.284]	0.027 (0.03) [0.589]	0.058* (0.02) [0.061]	-0.021 (0.05) [0.883]	0.050 (0.03) [0.221]	-0.025 (0.03) [0.565]
Post-secondary	0.009 (0.02) [0.883]	0.038 (0.03) [0.317]	-0.092* (0.04) [0.061]	-0.046 (0.04) [0.393]	0.066** (0.02) [0.059]	-0.015 (0.06) [0.942]	0.069* (0.03) [0.085]	-0.108*** (0.03) [0.021]
Personal safety								
High School	0.022 (0.02) [0.474]	0.007 (0.01) [0.759]	0.001 (0.01) [0.966]	-0.135* (0.07) [0.112]	-0.007 (0.01) [0.549]	-0.166** (0.06) [0.059]	-0.025 (0.02) [0.199]	-0.019 (0.03) [0.759]
Post-secondary	0.003 (0.02) [0.942]	0.002 (0.01) [0.942]	-0.018 (0.01) [0.199]	-0.178** (0.07) [0.059]	-0.002 (0.01) [0.942]	-0.169** (0.06) [0.059]	-0.042** (0.02) [0.059]	-0.039 (0.04) [0.549]
Awareness								
High School		0.001 (0.00) [0.942]		0.100 (0.06) [0.199]		0.022 (0.02) [0.470]		0.007 (0.02) [0.883]
Post-secondary		0.004 (0.01) [0.679]		-0.016 (0.04) [0.883]		0.022 (0.02) [0.387]		-0.012 (0.02) [0.815]
Efficacy								
High School	-0.025 (0.03) [0.545]	-0.061 (0.04) [0.318]	0.022 (0.01) [0.199]	-0.120** (0.04) [0.059]	-0.032* (0.01) [0.061]	-0.038 (0.08) [0.815]		-0.094* (0.04) [0.062]
Post-secondary	-0.006 (0.03) [0.942]	-0.121** (0.05) [0.061]	0.032* (0.01) [0.065]	-0.107* (0.04) [0.064]	-0.045*** (0.01) [0.018]	-0.114 (0.08) [0.279]		-0.035 (0.05) [0.673]

Continues.

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexi-co	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
Other factors								
High School	0.046 (0.04) [0.471]	0.058* (0.03) [0.085]	-0.042 (0.04) [0.435]	-0.138 (0.08) [0.187]	0.006 (0.02) [0.890]	0.026 (0.07) [0.890]	-0.010 (0.03) [0.883]	-0.009 (0.04) [0.942]
Post-secondary	-0.007 (0.04) [0.942]	0.060* (0.03) [0.092]	-0.101* (0.04) [0.061]	-0.023 (0.09) [0.942]	-0.002 (0.02) [0.966]	0.006 (0.07) [0.966]	-0.027 (0.03) [0.474]	0.042 (0.05) [0.549]

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). Controls include sex, educational level and typo of crime. All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation. Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panama-2016, Peru 2021, Guatemala-2018.

INCOME

In line with the findings from the literature review presented in Section 2, the results on the relationship between income and crime reporting behavior are generally inconclusive. Table 12 (Panel A) presents the coefficient estimates for the difference in reporting rates across various income levels and the considerations for not reporting. None of the coefficients are statistically significant, and the point estimates are small and of varied sign, failing to reveal clear patterns.

Table 12 (Panel B) and Table A.3 (in Appendix 3) explore how the reasons for not reporting crimes vary across income groups. Again, no clear patterns emerge. There are only a few country-specific results. In Mexico, victims in middle and high-income groups are more likely to deem reporting as a loss of time, consistent with the idea of having a higher opportunity cost of reporting. In Panama, victims in high-income groups are more likely to express mistrust in authorities as a reason for not reporting.

Overall, the comparative analysis of the seven victimization surveys confirms that a victim's personal characteristics and the type of victimization shape their reporting decisions. However, some relationships are country-specific and cannot be generalized to other countries. Nevertheless, some relationships are consistent across several countries. First, violent crimes are more likely to be reported than non-violent ones. Second, middle-aged and older individuals are generally more likely to report, less inclined to dismiss incidents as not serious

enough for reporting, but more likely to view the reporting process as time-consuming or complex. Finally, individuals with higher educational attainment tend to report crimes more frequently than those with only primary education. They are also less inclined to cite personal safety concerns as a reason for not reporting crimes compared to those with at most primary education but are more likely to perceive it as a "loss of time."

Two main conclusions follow from the analysis. First, the variation in reporting levels across subpopulations and crime types confirms the potential for systematic bias in official crime figures, with groups of victims and types of crimes being over- or underrepresented in official statistics. Second, the need for context- and victim-specific policies to address underreporting of different crimes and among different subpopulations.

TABLE 12

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Income

	(1) Colombia	(2) El Salvador	(3) Mexico	(4) El Panama	(5) Peru
A. DECISION TO REPORT					
Report					
Medium income	0.013 (0.04) [1.000]	0.089 (0.07) [0.739]	0.016 (0.01) [0.739]	-0.048 (0.06) [0.965]	0.012 (0.02) [0.965]
High income	0.029 (0.08) [1.000]	0.025 (0.11) [1.000]	-0.009 (0.01) [0.965]	-0.092 (0.09) [0.944]	0.003 (0.02) [1.000]
B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOT REPORTING					
Material					
Medium income	-0.028 (0.03) [0.965]	0.004 (0.04) [1.000]	0.068** (0.02) [0.080]	0.032 (0.04) [0.965]	0.023 (0.02) [0.944]
High income	-0.025 (0.06) [1.000]	0.123 (0.08) [0.719]	0.082** (0.03) [0.145]	-0.019 (0.06) [1.000]	-0.004 (0.02) [1.000]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Colombia	(2) El Salvador	(3) Mexico	(4) El Panama	(5) Peru
Personal safety					
Medium income	-0.019* (0.01) [0.230]	0.036 (0.06) [0.965]	0.005 (0.01) [0.965]	-0.005 (0.04) [1.000]	-0.009 (0.01) [0.965]
High income	-0.016 (0.01) [0.590]	0.143 (0.10) [0.719]	-0.004 (0.01) [1.000]	-0.034 (0.05) [0.965]	-0.016 (0.01) [0.725]
Awareness					
Medium income		0.061 (0.05) [0.739]		-0.083 (0.06) [0. 739]	
High income		-0.074 (0.05) [0.712]		-0.051 (0.07) [0.965]	
Efficacy					
Medium income	0.023 (0.02) [0.935]	-0.059 (0.03) [0.590]	-0.030* (0.01) [0.230]	-0.038 (0.07) [0.965]	
High income	-0.037* (0.02) [0.258]	-0.010 (0.06) [1.000]	-0.028 (0.02) [0.651]	-0.056 (0.10) [0.965]	
Other factors					
Medium income	-0.008 (0.04) [1.000]	-0.125 (0.07) [0.609]	-0.011 (0.02) [0.965]	0.095 (0.05) [0.590]	0.023 (0.02) [0.944]
High income	-0.111 (0.08) [0.739]	0.247* (0.12) [0.389]	-0.006 (0.02) [1.000]	0.319*** (0.09) [0.013]	-0.001 (0.02) [1.000]

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by ordinary least squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation. Source: Authors' elaboration based on national victimization surveys in LAC, as follows: Argentina-2017, Chile-2021, Colombia-2020, El Salvador-2018, Mexico-2021, Panama-2016, Peru 2021, Guatemala-2018.

4. Addressing Crime Underreporting: A Systematic Review of the Evidence

This chapter presents the findings from a review of the literature and evidence on policies addressing crime underreporting. The review identifies three sets of policies that could integrate a menu of interventions to tackle this issue: those addressing process-related factors, which seek to reduce transaction costs and improve accessibility; policies addressing social factors, which include providing information and interventions to improve norms and attitudes toward reporting; and policies addressing institutional factors, which encompass strategies to improve police-citizen interactions, public perceptions, and regulations to mitigate the fear of deportation.

Overall, the evidence is scarce. Only a few interventions—such as remote reporting methods, public information campaigns, diversifying police forces, and reducing deportation risk—have consistent positive evidence, typically concentrated on specific crimes or populations. Nevertheless, other policies with evidence in related areas appear promising for promoting crime reporting.

Importantly, the literature review on policies to reduce underreporting does not encompass all factors behind crime underreporting. It focuses on more immediate factors rather than structural issues such as inequality or the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. To achieve true, long-term change in the collective attitude towards crime reporting, it is likely that these fundamental issues must also be addressed.

This chapter reviews policies to reduce crime underreporting, focusing on strategies that show promise in improving reporting rates, but excluding policies addressing broader structural factors like socioeconomic inequality.

4.1 Method

The effort to identify effective policies for increasing crime reporting employed a structured approach that mirrors the method used in the systematic literature review of underreporting drivers (Section 2). Initially, we conducted a broad scoping exercise to establish the context and scope of our search. This was followed by a focused search using specific keywords in various online databases and libraries to collect relevant literature[13] based on titles and abstracts. We then reviewed these selections to pinpoint articles and reports offering direct policy recommendations or meaningful discussions on enhancing crime reporting rates. Further, we conducted a detailed search for specific policies and programs mentioned in the identified literature. For the LAC region, we also specifically searched the websites of major police forces and judicial organizations for innovative tools and policies designed to encourage crime reporting. Appendix 4 provides a detailed description of the methodology, including the eligibility criteria, inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, scoping, and targeted keyword search.

4.2 Results

This section outlines the findings from the literature review on policies aimed at addressing crime underreporting. While policies tend to focus on aspects directly related to the reporting process and institutional context, effective policy design requires a deeper understanding of how these elements interact with individual and crime-related factors. This approach is essential for tailoring and targeting interventions to the specific needs of different groups and types of crimes. Furthermore, recognizing the diverse

13 The following are the terms included in the initial search and the subsequent search based on the policies identified in the initial literature: "crime reporting systems", "online crime reporting", "anonymous complaints and reporting", "crime evidence and police", "video surveillance effects on crime", "police CCTV", "police accessibility and reporting", "police public outreach crime reporting", "information hotlines crime reporting", "immigration effect on crime reporting," "hate crime and reporting," "knowing perpetrator effects on reporting crime," "crime reporting and trust in institutions," "police media relations," "crime shows and police," "police dramas and crime reporting," "effects of police misconduct on victimization reporting," "effects of police violence on reporting," "effects of implicit bias on reporting crime," and "police capacity and reporting."

material, social, psychological, legal, and personal safety considerations, as well as perceptions of law enforcement efficacy, can enhance the effectiveness of these policies by addressing the core reasons behind crime underreporting. Table 13 summarizes the evidence on interventions to address crime underreporting.

TABLE 13

Summary of Evidence on Interventions to Address Crime Underreporting

POLICIES	DESCRIPTION	MAIN EXPECTED MECHANISMS	EVIDENCE ON CRIME REPORTING
Remote reporting methods	Online (web, apps) and telephone reporting. It may or not be anonymous.	Reduce transaction costs. Reduce fear of revictimization during reporting. If anonymous, attenuate personal safety and legal considerations.	Positive evidence (thefts).
Improving access to reporting	Informational hotlines and additional reporting locations.	Increase awareness and reduce transaction costs.	Promising. Insufficient evidence.
Special reporting schemes	Programs such as multilingual assistance, third-party reporting, anonymous reporting.	Reduce transaction costs and psychological barriers among specific populations. If anonymous, attenuate personal safety and legal considerations.	Promising. Insufficient evidence.
Social marketing campaigns	Information campaigns utilizing media channels to promote desired behaviors and attitudes.	Increase awareness. Promote social considerations for reporting.	Positive evidence. Varied effectiveness.
Outreach programs	Targeted educational workshops, support services, and legal education and assistance.	Increase awareness. Address psychological and legal barriers among targeted populations.	Promising. Insufficient evidence.
Diversifying police forces	Increasing participation of underrepresented population groups (such as women) in the police.	Address psychological barriers (feelings of shame, fear of revictimization during process).	Positive evidence. Varied effectiveness.
Implicit bias training	Training to minimize potential police officers' unconscious biases.	Reduce revictimization during reporting process.	Promising. No evidence.
Body-worn cameras	Cameras attached to police uniforms to record police interactions with civilians.	Reduce fear of retaliation and revictimization from police.	Promising. Emerging evidence.
Closed-circuit television	Systems of video cameras allowing for monitoring and recording of activities.	Increase perception of efficacy (provide evidence for substantiating crimes).	Promising. Insufficient evidence.
Reducing deportation risk	Regulatory modifications aimed at reducing the deportation risk for immigrant populations.	Address legal considerations (especially fear of deportation) among immigrant populations.	Positive and robust evidence.

Policies Addressing Process-Related Factors: Initiatives to Reduce Transaction Costs and Increase Awareness

The most concrete and direct policies addressing crime underreporting aim at modifying process-related factors. The available evidence suggests that implementing remote reporting methods, such as online reporting forms (Rodríguez et al., 2018) or direct telephone reports (Rettig-Vargas 2016), can effectively lower transaction costs and increase reporting rates for crimes such as theft. These methods not only facilitate the reporting process by alleviating time and effort but also might address psychological considerations by offering less intimidating interactions with law enforcement. One additional advantage of these reporting methods is that they contribute to establishing a comprehensive database of reported crimes, thereby enhancing data collection and potential efficacy, aligning with victims' considerations regarding the usefulness of their report. Many LAC countries have already started using these approaches (Rodríguez et al., 2018), launching online and phone reporting programs and even developing apps to facilitate citizen reporting. However, these initiatives have not reached their full potential due to low public awareness, highlighting the need for parallel public awareness campaigns to maximize their effectiveness.

In deploying remote reporting methods, policymakers need to examine the pros and cons of identification-based vs. anonymous reporting. While identification can deter false reports, mandating it might increase fears related to personal safety and legal considerations, especially among vulnerable individuals (Justus and Kassouf, 2008). Achieving the right balance requires integrating legal frameworks, providing choices (and explanations of their implications), and allowing for differences among types of crimes and victims. Hence, context-specific solutions, such as gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms, might be necessary for striking this balance.

In addition to distance reporting methods, the literature has documented policies geared toward improving access to reporting by aiding victims who are willing to report crimes but encounter difficulties. Several studies have highlighted policies such as information hotlines on reporting procedures (Gust, 2012; Kennedy et al., 2006) and the installation of additional reporting locations. Recent initiatives, like the introduction of complaint booths in Buenos Aires' bustling areas, are designed to reduce the need for victims to travel to police stations, facilitating crime reporting (Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2022).

Certain programs also address process-related barriers for specific persons, groups, and communities. These include multilingual assistance or translators (Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001), and the implementation of third-party reporting centers and anonymous reporting schemes (Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015, Giannasi, 2014, Pezzella, Fetzer, and Keller, 2019, Retting-Vargas, 2016). This last measure enables victims to report crimes

without the need for direct contact with criminal justice institutions. This approach is particularly important for minority groups or immigrant communities, who may have greater fears or doubts about interacting with law enforcement.

Overall, distance-reporting methods seem to be effective in reducing the challenges related to time, money, distance, and other non-material barriers to reporting crimes. However, the specifics of how these methods are implemented, such as the choice between identification-based versus anonymous reporting, can be crucial. Furthermore, these methods may not fully address the obstacles faced by certain groups in reporting crimes. Complementary strategies to enhance the accessibility of crime reporting, through both broad and specific measures tailored to these groups, are intuitive and promising, yet the evidence supporting their effectiveness remains limited.

Policies Addressing Social Factors: Information and Interventions to Improve Norms and Attitudes toward Reporting

Some initiatives target social factors to encourage reporting by seeking to increase awareness of reporting channels or modify social norms and perceptions around crime reporting. These efforts encompass social marketing or behavioral change campaigns, which use media channels to promote desired behaviors and attitudes among target audiences, analogous to strategies that have been successfully applied to different public health issues (Bailey and Wundersitz, 2019). For instance, in Argentina, a campaign by UNICEF to foster community engagement and the reporting of violence against children correlated with a rise in calls to a domestic violence hotline (UNICEF, 2020). The most significant increase was noted among the neighbors of victims, which aligned with the campaign's emphasis on heightened community participation. An experimental study in the Netherlands assessing the effects of a persuasive campaign on sexual assault reporting found it to be successful in changing perceptions about the benefits of reporting and in bolstering societal expectations for disclosing such crimes, hinting at the effectiveness of targeted campaigns in motivating victims to report (Winkel and Vrij, 1993).

Recent studies on the impact of the #MeToo movement in the United States reveal that public discussions and media focus can considerably influence crime reporting behaviors. Regions with lower initial sexist attitudes witnessed a substantial increase in the reporting of sex crimes following the movement, showcasing how public dialogue can alter reporting standards and actions (Chen and Long, 2024). Nonetheless, not every campaign leads to a shift in reporting attitudes: an initiative in the Netherlands intended to heighten awareness about residential burglary and street violence improved perceptions of the criminal justice system but failed to significantly change attitudes toward reporting crimes (Kuttschreuter and Wiegman, 1998).

Another targeted initiative is the implementation of outreach programs, which can be adapted to various environments such as schools and communities. They typically consist of educational workshops, support services, and legal education and assistance. These programs aim to highlight the significance of reporting crimes, tackle psychological barriers such as the stigma associated with being a victim of crime, and cultivate a sense of justice (Giannasi, 2014, Pezzella, Fetzer, and Keller, 2019;). Specifically, these initiatives often focus on populations more susceptible to underreporting, including immigrant and marginalized communities, by addressing legal considerations by mitigating fears related to deportation or legal repercussions (Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001; Quinteros, 2014; Xie and Baumer, 2019).

Among the initiatives addressing social factors of underreporting, behavioral change campaigns have been effective in specific contexts. Outreach programs present promising yet less substantiated approaches, which can be used to target geographic or community-specific needs. While potentially effective, the implementation of these initiatives needs to recognize that these strategies primarily address immediate social factors influencing underreporting, such as prevailing attitudes. However, as discussed in Section 2, these attitudes (and reporting behavior in general) are deeply influenced by more structural issues. Although this review does not extend to these broader societal challenges, it is essential to understand that they may constrain the impact of initiatives targeting more immediate factors.

Policies Addressing Institutional Factors: Strategies to Improve Police-Citizen Interactions and Perceptions, and Regulations to Avoid Fear of Deportation

Policies addressing institutional factors influencing crime underreporting focus primarily on improving police-citizen interactions and mitigating immigrants' fear of deportation. The former mainly include strategies and training aimed at improving the quality of engagement between law enforcement and the public, addressing psychological and personal safety concerns related to crime reporting, and potentially influencing perceptions on the efficacy of doing so. The latter involves policies designed to reduce the vulnerability of immigrant populations to deportation, thus encouraging their interaction with law enforcement.

Regarding the first set of policies aimed at fostering better police-community relations, diversifying the police force, particularly by increasing the number of female officers, has been linked to higher crime reporting rates, especially for violent crimes against women. This finding, documented by Miller and Segal (2019), suggests the potential for greater representation to bridge the gap between law enforcement and communities. However, the effectiveness of such measures may vary across different contexts. Stanek et al. (2023), using a survey experiment among college students, found that in

that environment, the gender of the responding officer did not significantly impact women's willingness to report sexual assaults. This discrepancy underscores the need for a deeper understanding of when and why increased representation in policing promotes reporting. This policy might be particularly useful for populations or situations where non-reporting stems from fears of revictimization or doubts about police efficacy derived from lack of trust. However, further research is needed to elucidate the mechanisms underlying its success.

Building on the strategy of enhancing diversity within police forces, another approach to address crime underreporting involves implementing implicit bias training. This training is designed to minimize the barriers created by unconscious bias and aims to foster a more inclusive interaction between the police and the community. However, the evidence on its effectiveness in reducing bias is not robust (Lai and Lisnek, 2023; Worden et al., 2020), and, while it may alleviate concerns related to personal safety and skepticism about the police's effectiveness, its impact on increasing crime reporting remains uncertain.

Procedural justice training programs are designed to improve police interactions by teaching officers to treat the public fairly and respectfully, emphasizing listening to civilians' views and demonstrating an understanding of their needs and concerns. This training has been shown to increase trust in the police (Abril et al., 2023), reduce police misconduct (Wood, Tyler, and Papachristos, 2020), and reduce perceptions of police harassment and violence (Weisburd et al., 2022), which are important factors affecting several considerations for reporting crime. However, the direct evidence on procedural justice training and crime reporting is still emerging. Using survey data from a pioneering randomized field trial of procedural justice policing, Murphy and Mazerolle (2018) found that, among the overall population, procedural justice led to an increase in trust in police, but this did not extend to a greater willingness to report crimes. Still, the intervention did increase willingness to report crimes among younger immigrants. Similar to increasing diversity within the police force, this suggests that such training could be particularly valuable in contexts where non-reporting is driven by concerns about revictimization by the police or skepticism about their efficacy. Further investigation is needed to fully understand its impact on encouraging crime reporting.

Another strategy that has been explored to enhance police-community interactions involves the use of body-worn cameras by police officers. Body-worn cameras are recording devices attached to the uniforms of police officers to capture interactions with the public. Research indicates that these cameras can lead to reductions in the use of force by officers and a decrease in complaints against the police (Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland, 2015; Jennings, Lynch, and Fridell, 2015). The evidence on their effect on crime reporting is limited but promising: Ariel (2016) shows that body-worn cameras lead to greater willingness to report crimes to the police in low crime density residential street segments, although there were no discernible differences in hotspot street segments. This

heterogeneity underscores how the policies might be effective depending on the main barriers to reporting occurring in different contexts.

Similarly, closed-circuit television (CCTV), systems of video cameras that enable monitoring and recording of activities, can enhance the successful resolution of reported cases where they are implemented (Armitage, Smyth, and Pease, 1999; Ashby, 2017; McLean, Worden, and Kim, 2013; Morgan and Dowling, 2019) and have been linked to reductions in various types of crime (Piza et al., 2019). Although the impact of CCTV on the willingness to report a crime is not well studied, CCTVs can address efficacy considerations for not reporting by providing a source of evidence. This can lead the public to believe that resolution is more likely, thereby increasing the likelihood of reporting (Beck and Willis, 1999).

The second set of policies encompasses regulatory modifications aimed at reducing the risk of deportation for immigrant populations. Although not primarily focused on addressing crime underreporting, these policies have shown consistent evidence of positively impacting reporting rates among immigrants. Recent studies (Comino, Mastrobuoni, and Nicolò, 2020; Pearson, 2024) indicate that immigration amnesty initiatives, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which provide temporary deportation protection and work authorization, have markedly increased reporting rates among undocumented immigrants. By lessening legal concerns, these policies foster increased engagement with law enforcement, indirectly encouraging crime reporting. This impact highlights the complex nature of crime reporting behaviors, which can be affected by various intertwined factors associated with victim and crime characteristics, as well as the broader social and institutional environment.

Addressing Fundamental Issues for Sustained Change in Crime Reporting

Most policies discussed in this chapter focus on immediate factors such as transaction costs or public misperceptions, rather than structural issues like social cohesion, inequality, or the actual effectiveness of the criminal justice system. It is likely that these fundamental issues must be addressed to achieve sustained change in society's collective attitude toward crime reporting. For example, factors affecting victims' considerations regarding crime underreporting, such as a lack of trust in law enforcement institutions due to corruption, are systemic issues that require collective efforts across all branches of government and society. Addressing social factors contributing to reluctance to interact with law enforcement among certain populations, such as discrimination or bias, will likely require systemic policies beyond those discussed in this document, such as implicit bias training. Efforts to improve public perception of the criminal justice system effectiveness in solving crimes must be supported by actual changes in effectiveness to achieve long-term impact, in addition to procedural justice training or body-worn cameras.

Complementing Improved Reporting with Other Data Initiatives

Beyond policies aimed at reducing underreporting, it is imperative to strengthen data collection through improved administrative recording of incidents (Strom and Smith, 2017) and more frequent victimization surveys as well as alternative data collection methods. High-quality, standardized surveys will provide more accurate and comprehensive insights into the prevalence and nature of crime and the factors influencing reporting behavior. This, in turn, enables policymakers to design more targeted and effective interventions to address the issue.

However, even with improved crime reporting, many aspects of criminal activity may still go unnoticed. Complex issues such as criminal governance, illicit economies, security perceptions and attitudes towards law enforcement agencies might require specific actions that extend beyond traditional reporting mechanisms. These challenges necessitate the integration of various data sources, including administrative data, specialized surveys, and intelligence data, to capture a complete picture of criminal activity and its broader impacts.

Administrative data, which include records from various government agencies such as health, education, and social services, can provide valuable insights into the indirect effects of crime and the characteristics of affected populations. For example, healthcare records can reveal patterns of injuries related to violent crime that are not reported to the police. Similarly, data from social services can help to measure the prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse.

Specialized surveys designed to capture information on specific types of crimes or victim populations can also complement improved reporting. These surveys can target hard-to-reach populations, such as immigrants, marginalized communities, and victims of human trafficking, who might be less likely to engage with traditional reporting mechanisms. By tailoring the survey design and implementation to the unique needs of these groups, more accurate and comprehensive data can be collected.

Intelligence data, which involves gathering and analyzing information about criminal organizations and their activities, is crucial for understanding and addressing complex criminal phenomena such as drug trafficking, organized crime, and corruption. By leveraging intelligence data, authorities can gain insight into the structure, operations, and networks of criminal organizations, allowing for more effective interventions and preventive measures.

Ultimately, improving crime reporting is only one part of the solution. A comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing crime requires integrating multiple data sources to capture the full extent of criminal activity and its impacts on society. This holistic approach enables authorities to act not only reactively but also preventively, addressing the root causes of crime and implementing strategies to mitigate its effects before they escalate.

5. Conclusions: Addressing Underreporting to Reduce Crime

As mentioned in the introduction, just as a doctor needs to examine the full extent of a patient's symptoms to prescribe the right treatment, governments and law enforcement agencies must have an accurate picture of crime to design effective policies that keep citizens safe. To obtain this accurate picture, crime reports are a fundamental piece of information, which law enforcement agencies rely on to design patrolling strategies, evaluate performance, and monitor criminal activity. The reliability and accuracy of this information crucially depend on citizens' willingness to report crimes to the authorities.

This study finds that crime underreporting is prevalent throughout the LAC region, with varying rates across different types of crimes and victims. Motor vehicle theft usually has the highest reporting rate, while bribery, fraud, and extortion are among the least reported crimes.

A number of considerations and factors explain these high and varying rates of underreporting. While the empirical analysis is limited by differences in methodologies for victimization surveys across the LAC region and the relatively few recent surveys available, some interesting patterns emerge. Broadly, in the LAC countries analyzed, efficacy considerations, such as believing authorities could not help, are the predominant reasons for not reporting crimes. Material considerations, including the complexity and time required for the reporting process, and personal safety concerns, such as fear of reprisal, also influence the decision to report crimes, with varying relevance across countries. When disaggregating by type of crime, the reasons for not reporting show distinct patterns, with victims of robbery and theft emphasizing material considerations, and assault and extortion victims more frequently underscoring personal safety concerns.

Beyond the type of crime, characteristics of the victims also influence the decision to report or not report a crime. For example, in some countries, women are more likely to cite personal safety concerns as a reason for not reporting than men. Middle-aged individuals report crimes more frequently than younger ones and are less likely to dismiss crimes as not serious, even if they are more frequently deterred by the complexity of the reporting process. The most consistent finding relates to educational attainment: individuals with higher educational attainment tend to report crimes more often and are less likely to refer to personal safety issues as a barrier for not reporting.

Overall, these patterns provide two main results. First, the variation in reporting levels across subpopulations and crime types confirms the potential for systematic biases in the official figures of crime, with certain groups of victims and crimes being over- or underrepresented in these data. Second, the variety of reasons for not reporting and their differences across countries, crimes, and subpopulations underscore the complexity and the resulting need for context- and victim-specific policies to address underreporting.

This complexity argues against a one-size-fits-all approach and instead advocates for a combination of alternative policies tailored to specific contexts. The available evidence provides a menu of policies, including some addressing process-related factors to reduce transaction costs and improve accessibility, others addressing social factors through information provision and interventions to enhance norms and attitudes towards reporting, and still others targeting institutional factors to improve police-citizen interactions, public perceptions, and reduce the fear of deportation. While only a few interventions, such as remote reporting methods, public information campaigns, diversifying police forces, and reducing deportation risk, have shown consistent positive results, other policies (including procedural justice training, body-worn cameras, or CCTV) also appear promising for promoting crime reporting.

Efforts to reduce crime underreporting should be complemented and assessed with improvements in the administrative recording of incidents and of alternative data sources, primarily victimization surveys. Strengthening efforts to standardize and update these surveys is crucial. LAC countries require more frequent, higher quality, and more standardized victimization surveys, considering national and regional available standards.[14] This is fundamental for measuring and comparing crime victimization and reporting rates across countries and over time, enabling policymakers to design more effective interventions and monitor their impact.

14 See, for example, the VICLAC initiative by UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence: https://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx/index.php/iniciativa-viclac/ (accessed June 5, 2024)

Yet, even with strengthened alternative data sources, official reports will remain critical for advancing judicial processes and conducting granular crime analysis. Clear assessments of crime and violence require improved administrative data. Advancing these efforts necessitates more evidence from the region on what works to reduce underreporting, achievable only through further research and evaluation of existing and innovative policies. Such research should identify the most effective policies and strategies and examine why some work better in specific contexts.

However, while policies addressing immediate factors behind underreporting might prove effective, achieving long-term change in society's collective attitude toward crime reporting will likely require addressing fundamental challenges such as the integrity and efficacy of law enforcement institutions. In this way, a comprehensive policy and research agenda that acknowledges and addresses the underlying causes of underreporting can be a productive approach to ultimately tackling crime and violence.

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APPENDIX I

Literature Review on Drivers of Crime Underreporting

APPENDIX II

Country Data Methodology

APPENDIX III

Additional Tables

APPENDIX IV

Review on Policies to Reduce underreporting

APPENDIX I

Literature Review on Drivers of Crime Underreporting

A. Methodology

Protocol

The authors did not identify any previous systematic reviews on drivers of crime underreporting. Given the unavailability of specific protocols for this topic, the review followed the methodological guidelines by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Specifically, the protocol was adapted from the protocol from Carthy et al. (2018), which was registered in The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews in September 2017.[15] Our protocol was not registered.

B. Criteria for Selection

Types of Studies

The studies included in this review consisted of academic research papers and some grey literature. The research papers were sourced from peer-reviewed journals and post-graduate theses.

15 Svailable at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8427989 (accessed July 13, 2023).

Inclusion Criteria

Studies examining the causes of crime underreporting were included in this review. The main criteria for selection were that they focused on drivers of crime underreporting and not on crime itself. There was no limit for publication date.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies that focused on merely describing the issue of underreporting without an exploration of its drivers were excluded from this report. Studies with a sample size lower than 100 were also excluded from this search. Studies that report results of victimization surveys but did not carry out any additional analysis were also excluded.

Types of Settings

The types of settings included cities, states, countries, and supra-national regions.

C.
Search Methods for Identification of Studies

The identification of relevant literature was carried out in three stages:

1. General scoping exercise
2. Targeted keyword search in databases and online libraries for initial selection of results.
3. Detailed review of reference lists of the initial studies of results to find additional ones.

This process was carried out between August and October 2020, and complemented between October and December 2022.

Scoping Exercise

The research team developed a comprehensive list of search terms drawing from the experience of working on an earlier version of the study. The scoping strategy was therefore based on the main concepts of crime underreporting and drivers of crime underreporting.

Concept 1 – Crime underreporting: The following keywords were used in conjunction with the word crime - “underreporting,” “reporting,” “non-reporting,” “hidden figure,” “dark figure,” and “non-reporting.” The same search was carried out in Spanish, using the following keywords: “subregistro,” “subreporte,” “crimen,” “delito,” “cifra oculta,” “cifra oscura,” “no denuncia,” and “no reporte.”

Concept 2 – Drivers: The “drivers” concept was explored using the following keywords in conjunction with the “underreporting” keywords: “drivers,” “reasons for,” “causes of,” “why do people,” “understanding,” “factors affecting,” “exploring,” and “explaining.” The same search was carried out in Spanish, using the following keywords: “determinantes,” “razones,” “causas,” and “factores.”

The use of different iterations for both concepts enabled the expansion of the scope of the search.

Targeted Keyword Search

Keyword searches were carried out in the major social science journals as well as the crime-themed journals identified from the database search.

Hand-searching of Reference Lists

A manual search was carried out on the reference lists of the first set of aggregated studies. This proved very effective in identifying the seminal papers on this topic.

D.
Data Collection and Analysis

Selection of Studies

After the search was completed, the identified papers were imported into Mendeley, following a process of manually searching for and removing duplicate papers. The titles, abstracts, and full texts of the identified papers were examined against the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. At the end of this process, a final list of studies to be included in the review was produced.

E.
Results of the Search

Considerations

CONSIDERATIONS	PAPERS
Material	Bowles, Reyes, and Garoupa, 2009; Hardy, 2019; MacDonald, 2001; Tarling and Morris, 2010; Xie and Baumer, 2019
Social	Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Acierno, 2020; Hardy, 2019; Jones et al., 2009; Tarling and Morris, 2010
Psychological	Ceelen et al., 2019; Fohring, 2020; Jones et al., Kidd and Chayet, 1984; 2009; Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003; Spelman and Brown, 1984
Personal safety	Ceelen et al., 2019
Legal	Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Boateng, 2018; Cuerda and Blackemore, 2020; Gordon, 1990; Justus and Kassouf, 2008; Kääriäinen and Sirén, 2011
Efficacy	Tolsma, Blaauw, and Te Grotenhuis, 2012; Hardy, 2019

Factors

CATEGORIES	FACTORS	PAPERS
Persons	Characteristics of the victim	Catalano, 2006; Erentzen and Schuller, 2020; Estienne and Morabito, 2016; Fohring, 2015; Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Justus and Kassouf, 2008; Kaukinen, 2002; MacDonald, 2001; Tarling and Morris, 2010; Tolsma, Blaauw, and Te Grotenhuis, 2012
	Immigration and minority status	Alcalá and Birkbeck, 2020; Balboni et al., 2001; Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015; Comino, Mastrobuoni, and Nicolò, 2020; Cuerden and Blakemore, 2020; Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001; Dowler and Sparks, 2008; Erentzen and Schuller, 2020; Giannasi, 2014; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Jones, 2015; Papadopoulos, 2014; Pezzella, Fetzer, and Keller, 2019; Rennison, 2007; Slocum, 2018; Wolff and Cokely, 2007
	Victim's income	Boateng, 2018; Kaukinen, 2002; Murphy and Barkworth, 2014; Sparks, Genn, and Dodd, 1977
	Characteristics of perpetrator	Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Minkler et al., 2022
	Relationship with the perpetrator	Acierno et al., 2020; Ceelen et al., 2019; Estienne and Morabito, 2016; Griffin, Wentz, and Meinert, 2022; Jones et al., 2009; MacDonald, 2001; Singer, 1988; Ullman and Siegel, 1993

Continues

Continuation

CATEGORIES	FACTORS	PAPERS
Crime	Type of crime	Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Bowles, Reyes, and Garoupa, 2009; Ceelen et al., 2019; Fohring, 2015; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Graham, Kulig, and Cullen, 2020; Greenberg and Beach, 2004; Hart and Rennison, 2003; Kääriäinen and Siren, 2011; Kemp, 2022; Myers, 1980; Reynolds, 2022; Sparks, Genn, and Dodd, 1977; Skogan, 1977; Tarling and Morris, 2010;
	Severity of the incident	Buikhuisen, 1975; Ceelen et al., 2019; Bowles, Reyes, and Garoupa, 2009; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Greenberg and Beach, 2004; Justus and Kassouf, 2008; Murphy and Barkworth, 2014; MacDonald, 2001; Myers, 1980; Reynolds, 2022; Skogan, 1977
	Other features of the incident	Ceelen et al., 2019; Graham, Kulig, and Cullen, 2020; Kemp, 2022
Social context	Characteristics of the community	Colavito, 2007; Dowler and Sparks, 2008; Estienne and Morabito, 2016; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Greenberg and Beach, 2004; Slocum, 2018; Soares, 2004;
	Attitudes toward police	Reisig and Parks, 2000; Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003; Sampson and Bartusch, 1998; Terrill and Reisig, 2003; Warner, 2003
	Characteristics of society	Gingerich and Oliveros, 2018; Mayhew and Van Dijk, 1997; Soares and Naritomi, 2010; Tolsma, Blaauw, and Te Grotenhuis, 2012;
Reporting process	Process features	Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001; Hardy, 2019; Spelman and Brown, 1984
Institutional context	Trust in institutions	Boateng, 2018; Hart and Colavito, 2011; Murphy and Barkworth, 2014; Kääriäinen and Siren, 2011; Tarling and Morris, 2010; Vergani and Navarro, 2021
	Perceived integrity	Ayodele and Aderinto, 2014; Gingerich and Oliveros, 2018; Soares, 2004; Spelman and Brown, 1984
	Quality of treatment	Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk, 2016; Gingerich and Oliveros, 2018; Graham, Kulig, and Cullen, 2020; Sudbury, 2020

APPENDIX II

Country Data Methodology

This section describes the methods and sources used to calculate the rates of underreporting in LAC countries. The section is divided into four parts: (i) selection of countries; (ii) selection of variables for statistical analysis; (iii) underreporting rates by country; (iv) methodological limitations.

Selection of Counties

One of the main objectives of this research is to present an overview of the extent of crime underreporting in the region. To do so, we first identified recent official victimization or citizen security surveys in LAC countries, based on information provided by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime's (UNODC) *Centro de Excelencia para Información Estadística de Gobierno, Seguridad Pública, Victimización y Justicia*.

This initial scoping exercise yielded a list of 17 countries in the region with publicly accessible information on crime underreporting. We then screened these victimization surveys based on two criteria: public availability of microdata and recency of published information and data, keeping only surveys published in or after 2015 (that is, at most ten years before the completion of this study).

Table A2.1 presents the results of the selection process, including the availability of microdata, the sources from which the information was gathered, and observation notes concerning the countries that were not selected for the sample. For the purposes of this research, ten countries were considered for the aggregate analyses and eight countries were sampled for the regression analyses using available microdata.

TABLE A2.1

Victimization Surveys

COUNTRY	NAME OF SURVEY	SOURCE	REFERENCE PERIOD	MICRODATA	LINK
Argentina	Encuesta Nacional de Victimización	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y censos -INDEC-	2016	Yes	https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Institucional-Indec-BasesDeDatos-5
Bolivia	II Encuesta de Victimización, Prácticas y Percepción	Ministerio de Gobierno	2015	No	https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publications/informe-nacional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-en-bolivia
Chile	Encuesta Nacional Urbana de Seguridad Ciudadana (ENUSC)	Instituto Nacional de Estadística -INE-	2021	Yes	https://www.ine.cl/estadisticas/sociales/seguridad-publica-y-justicia/seguridad-ciudadana
Colombia	Encuesta de convivencia y seguridad ciudadana (ECSC)	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística -DANE-	2020	Yes	https://microdatos.dane.gov.co/index.php/catalog/
El Salvador	Encuesta de Victimización y Percepción de Inseguridad / Encuesta de Cultura de Paz	Dirección General de Estadística y censos	2018	Yes	http://www.seguridad.gob.sv/dia/monitoreo-y-evaluacion/encuesta-de-victimizacion/
Guatemala	Encuestas del Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia (ENPEVI)	United Nations Development Programme	2018	Yes	https://mingob.gob.gt/la-encuesta-nacional-de-percepcion-de-seguridad-publica-y-victimizacion-2018-enpevi-2018/
Jamaica	The Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey (JNCVS)	Statistical Institute of Jamaica	2019	No	https://www.mns.gov.jm/sites/default/files/pdf/JNCVS%202019%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf
Mexico	Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE)	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía -INEGI-	2021	Yes	https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/envipe/2021/

Continues

Continuation

COUNTRY	NAME OF SURVEY	SOURCE	REFERENCE PERIOD	MICRODATA	LINK
Panama	Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción de Seguridad Ciudadana	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo -INEC-	2015-2016	Yes	https://www.siec.gob.pa/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=16&Itemid=239&limitstart=0
Peru	Encuesta Nacional de Programas Presupuestales	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática -INEI-	2021	Yes	https://proyectos.inei.gob.pe/microdatos/

SELECTION OF VARIABLES

The study seeks to measure how different features of crimes and victims influence the propensity to report a crime. The selected victimization surveys provide several characteristics of crimes and victims. The study focuses only on features that are measured in most countries and that have already been identified as potential drivers of non-reporting in the literature. These features are:

1. Sociodemographic variables
    - **a.** Sex
    - **b.** Education level
    - **c.** Age
    - **d.** Income level
2. Variables related to the crime
    - **a.** Type of crime
    - **b.** Violent vs. non-violent nature of crime
3. Variables relating to expectations and process of reporting
    - **a.** Reasons for not reporting

Once the countries and variables were selected, we constructed a fact sheet for each survey to identify its main characteristics and to detect potential sources of discrepancies, such as differences in calculation methodologies and differences in the types and definitions of crimes.

Tables A2.2 to A2.9 present details about each survey selected, including crimes, underreporting calculation methodology, questions posed, and respondent characteristics, among others.

TABLE A2.2

Argentina Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	2016
Survey implementation period	March to May 2017
Sample	46,765 households
Scope	Urban
Respondent	The household section of the survey is answered by the head of household, or by a member of the household who is at least 18 years old. To respond the individual section of the survey, a person of 18 years or older is selected at random.
Responsible institution	Ministerio de Seguridad - Presidencia de la Nación; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)
Question	*La última vez que ocurrió este hecho, ¿usted o alguna otra persona hizo la denuncia formal?* The last time this incident happened, did you or any other person report it formally?
Crimes included	Vehicle theft (Including cars and trucks) Vehicle parts theft Motorcycle theft/ Burglary Kidnapping Robbery Robbery (without violence) Bank Fraud Fraud Passive bribery Physical aggression Threat Sexual offences
Methodology	The survey asks about the last time each one of the crimes happened. The survey is answered by the head of household and asks if the reporting was made by him/her or another person. The underreporting rate is calculated by dividing the number of crimes that were not reported by the total number of crimes. The results are weighted either by the person or household factor depending on the crime.
Additional information	A single rate of underreporting is not calculated: all rates are measured for the household and for the person, yielding two statistical results. The document reports the rate for crimes against the person.

TABLE A2.3

Chile Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	12-month period prior to survey administration
Survey implementation period	October to December 2021
Sample	21,180 households
Scope	Urban
Respondent	Individuals 15 years or older
Responsible institution	INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICAS (INE)
Question	*¿Usted o alguien denunció el o los delitos?* Did you or anybody reported the crime(s)?
Crimes included	Vehicle theft Theft from vehicles Burglary Surprise robbery Robbery Robbery (with violence) Physical Aggression
Methodology	For each type of crime, the survey asks if the incident or incidents were reported.. The underreporting rate is calculated by dividing the number of people who responded affirmatively to the previous question by the total number of victims. The results are weighted by the household factor.

TABLE A2.4

Colombia Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	January to December 2020
Survey implementation period	August to October 2020
Sample	129,919 people in 41,725 households
Scope	Urban and Rural
Respondent	The household block is answered by the head of the household or the spouse. The individual is answered by all members aged 15 or older.
Responsible institution	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)
Question	*¿Se denunció el (delito) ante alguna autoridad competente?* Was the (crime) reported to a competent authority?
Crimes included	Burglary Theft Vehicle Theft Physical aggression Extorsion
Methodology	For each type of crime, the survey asks if the respondent (or someone in the household) reported the last incident occurred in 2018. The underreporting rate is calculated by dividing the number of people who responded affirmatively to the previous question by the total number of victims.
Additional information	The expansion factor at the person level is used in all indicators.

TABLE A2.5

El Salvador Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	Last 12 months
Survey implementation period	April to June 2018
Sample	1,530 people
Scope	National
Respondent	The entire survey is completed by a qualified1 informant 18 years of age or older.
Responsible institution	Ministerio de Economía, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos
Question	*¿Usted o alguna otra persona denunció formalmente el hecho ante alguna autoridad competente?* Did you or someone else formally report the incident to a competent authority?
Crimes included	Robbery with violence and weapon Robbery with violence without weapon Robbery without violence or weapon Extorsion Threat Property damage Forced displacement Others
Methodology	For each type of crime, the survey asks the respondent for the "most significant" crime incident in the reference period The underreporting rate is calculated by dividing the number of people who responded affirmatively to the previous question by the total number of victims.
Additional information	The expansion factor at the individual level is used in all indicators.

TABLE A2.6

Mexico Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	January to December 2020
Survey implementation period	March and April 2021
Sample	102,297 households
Scope	Urban and rural
Respondent	The household section of the survey is answered by an appropriate informant and the individual section of the survey is answered by an informant (18 years of age or older) selected from the household.
Responsible institution	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)
Question	Mexico's survey asks three questions: *¿Acudió ante el Ministerio Público a denunciar el delito?* Did you go to the Public Ministry to report the crime? *¿Algún otro integrante de este hogar acudió a denunciar el delito ante el Ministerio Público?* Did any other member of this household report the crime to the Public Ministry? *¿Inició el Ministerio Público la averiguación previa o carpeta de investigación?* Did the Public Ministry started a preliminary inquiry or opened an investigation?
Crimes included	Total vehicle theft, partial vehicle theft, vandalism, burglary, or attempted burglary, robbery or theft in the street, another form of robbery, fraud, extortion, verbal threats, physical aggression, kidnapping, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other
Methodology	First, the survey asks whether the respondent or any family member was a victim of one of the crimes listed above and how many times it happened. Then, the survey asks if the respondent or any family member reported each crime. The underreporting rate is calculated by dividing the total number of unreported crimes by the total number of crimes committed. Note that the dataset is at the crime level, unlike the data from other countries, which is at the individual level. This rate is calculated using the crime factor as expansion mechanism.
Additional information	Even though the list of crimes includes vandalism, the calculation of the underreporting rate excludes this crime

TABLE A2.7

Panama Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	June 2015 to May 2016
Survey implementation period	June 2016
Sample	16,296 households
Scope	Urban
Respondent	The complete questionnaire is answered by an appropriate informant who is chosen randomly from among the people aged 18 years or over in the household.
Responsible institution	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, IDB, UNODC, European Union.
Question	*¿Usted o alguna otra persona denunció formalmente el hecho ante alguna autoridad competente?* Did you or someone else formally report the event to a competent authority? (Information will be collected from last three incidents, starting with the most recent)
Crimes included	Car theft Auto parts theft Theft of objects in a vehicle Burglary Robbery with violence Robbery without violence (theft) Bank fraud Fraud Physical assaults and injuries Threat Extortion Bribery
Methodology	The form asks about the reporting of the last three incidents of each type of crime. For each type of crime, it is considered reported if the victim reported any of the three incidents and not reported if none of the incidents were reported. The overall reporting rate considers if the victim reported any type of crime. The expansion factor at the individual level is used in all crime prevalence indicators. However, for the rate of complaints, the person and household expansion factor are considered.

TABLE A2.8

Guatemala Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	Past 12 months
Survey implementation period	November 2016 to October 2017
Sample	17.784 households
Scope	National
Respondent	The informants are individuals aged 18 or older for the crimes committed against the individuals.
Responsible institution	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática.
Question	*¿Usted o alguna otra persona denunció formalmente el hecho ante alguna autoridad competente?* Did you or someone else formally report the incident to any competent authority? *De estas.....veces ¿cuántas fueron denunciadas?* Of these (number of times for each crime) ¿How may were reported?
Crimes included	Vehicle thefts Thefts of motor vehicle parts Motorcycle theft Residential burglary Violent robbery Theft (nonviolent) Bank fraud Fraud Bribery Assault and injury Threats Extortion
Methodology	The form asks about the reporting of the last three incidents of each type of crime. For each type of crime, it is considered reported if the victim reported any of the three incidents and not reported if none of the incidents were reported. The overall reporting rate considers if the victim reported any type of crime. *Crimes are expected to be expanded using a specific expansion factor by type of crime. To have comparable results and as results do not change, we use the household expansion factor.*

TABLE A2.9

Peru Survey Information

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Reference period	Past 12 months
Survey implementation period	January to December 2021
Sample	28, 624 urban households (3,578 clusters) and 15,376 rural households (961 clusters).
Scope	Urban
Respondent	The informants are individuals aged 14 or older for the crimes committed against individuals. For the crimes against the household the head of household responded.
Responsible institution	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática.
Question	*De estas.....veces ¿cuántas fueron denunciadas?* Of these (number of time for each crime), how may were reported?
Crimes included	Theft or attempted theft of vehicle (includes car, moto-taxi, motorcycle or bicycle) Theft or attempted theft of vehicle parts Fraud Robbery or attempted robbery of cash, wallet, or mobile phone Commercial burglary Threat Kidnapping or extortion Abuse or sexual assault OtherCommercial burglary
Methodology	The surveys asks how many times the respondent was a victim of each type of crime and how many times he/she reported them. For each type of crime, it is considered reported if the victim reported any of the incidents. The overall reporting rate considers if the victim reported any type of crime. The expansion factor at the individual level is used in all indicators.
Additional information	The underreporting rate includes both crimes that were committed and those attempted. Even though the survey has a national scope, the victimization chapter was completed only in the urban area of Peru. The whole survey uses a single factor to calculate rates.

Rates by Country

We calculate underreporting rates with the microdata available for each selected survey following the methodology designed for each survey. The first step was to replicate the results presented in official presentations or reports. Once the replication exercise was completed, we proceeded to calculate the additional measures of interest for this research.

Construction of Sociodemographic Variables

To facilitate the data analysis, the research team decided to create new categories of analysis. People's age was measured using a 3-category scale (min-29, 30-59, 59-max). Sex was a binary indicator, taking the value of 1 for women. Education was measured with a 3-category scale: "1 = Primary school or less", "2 = High School or less" and "3 = Tertiary education, including non-university professional education, university, and postgraduate education." Finally, income was measured with a 3-category scale, combining when necessary the official national categories into these three groups.

Table A2.10 presents detailed information about the way these categories for sociodemographic variables were constructed. It presents the questions included in the victimization surveys to construct the variables as well as the possible question for each answer and the name of the variable.

TABLE A2.9
Sociodemographic Variables

		Panama	El Salvador	Colombia	Argentina	Chile	Mexico	Peru
Sex	Question	Sexo	Sexo de la persona	Sexo	Sexo del jefe del hogar	Sexo	Sexo	Sexo
		1. Hombre 2. Mujer	1. Hombre 2. Mujer	1. Hombre 2. Mujer	1. Hombre 2. Mujer	1. Hombre 2. Mujer	1. Hombre 2. Mujer	1. Hombre 2. Mujer
Age	Question	**Edad** (d_edad)	**Edad en años** (s2r1p2_9)	**¿Cuántos años cumplidos tiene?** (p5785)	**Edad en años cumplidos del jefe del hogar** (j_hch04)	**Edad** (rph_edad)	**¿Cuántos años cumplidos tiene (NOMBRE)?** (Edad)	**¿Qué edad tiene en años cumplidos?** (p208_a)
	Up to 29	<30	<30	<30	<30	<30	<30	<30
	30-59	30-59	30-59	30-59	30-59	30-59	30-59	30-59
	60+	>59	>59	>59	>59	>59	>59	>59

Continues

Continuation

		Panama	El Salvador	Colombia	Argentina	Chile	Mexico	Peru
Education	Question	¿Qué nivel y qué grado o año escolar más alto aprobó?	Último nivel que aprobó	¿Cuál es el nivel educativo más alto alcanzado por...?	¿Cuál es el nivel más alto que cursa o cursó?	Indique el último curso aprobado en el nivel más alto alcanzado por (nombre)	¿Hasta qué año o grado aprobó (nombre) en la escuela?	¿Cuál fue el último nivel y grado o año de estudios que aprobó?
	Primary School	Ningún grado, Prekinder o prejardín, Kinder o jardín, Primaria, Vocacional	Ninguno, Educación básica	Ninguno, Preescolar, Basica primaria (1-5)	Primario, E.G.B. (1° A 9° año)	Básica, Primaria o Preparatoria	Preescolar, primaria	Secundaria incompleta, Secundaria completa
	High School	Secundaria	Educación media	Basica secundaria (6-9), Media (10-13)	Secundario (1° a 5° o 6° año), Polimodal (1° a 3° o 4° año)	Media científico-humanista, Humanidades (sistema antiguo), Media Técnico Profesional, Técnica Comercial, Industrial o Normalista (sistema antiguo),	Secundaria, normal básica, preparatoria o bachillerato	Secundaria incompleta, Secundaria completa
	Higher School	Superior no universitaria, Superior universitaria, Especialidad (Postgrado), Maestría, Doctorado	Superior no universitaria, Superior universitaria	Superior o universitaria	Terciario, Universitario, Posgrado universitario	Profesional, Postítulo, Magíster, Doctorado/ Postdoctorad	Carrera técnica con preparatoria terminada, Licenciatura o profesional, Maestría o doctorado	Sup no universitaria incompleta, Sup no universitaria completa, Sup universitaria incompleta, Superior universitaria completa, Posgrado

Continues

Continuation

		Panama	El Salvador	Colombia	Argentina	Chile	Mexico	Peru
Income	Question	¿En cuál de estos rangos se encuentra el ingreso total de su hogar al mes?	ingresos familiares mensuales	Estrato para tarifa	N/A	N/A	N/A	Estrato sociodemográfico
	Low	Menos de B/.100.00, 100 a 124, 125 a 174, 175 a 274, 275 a 399	Ningún ingreso, Menos de $ 125, $ 125 - 250	1.2				5.4
	Medium	400 a 599; 600 a 799; 800 a 999; 1,000 a 1,499; 1,500 a 1,999	$ 251 - $ 375, $ 376 - $ 500	3.4				3
	High	2,000 a 2,499; 2,500 a 2,999; 3,000 a 3,999; 4,000 a 4,999; 5,000 y más	$ 501 - $ 625, $ 626 - $ 750, Más de $ 750	5.6				2.1
Sex	Question	N/A	N/A	*¿Durante el hurto lo(a) amenazaron o lo(a) agredieron utilizando*	*Sufrió alguno de los crímenes violentos*	*¿Fue efectivamente herido usted o el miembro del hogar afectado por el (los) responsable(s) usando el (las) arma(s) que portaban?*	*¿Le causaron alguna lesión física con el arma (heridas)? ¿Utilizaron otro tipo de violencia física?*	N/A
				a. Arma de Fuego b. Arma blanca (objetos corto-punzantes c. Otros objetos (palos, piedras, botellas, etc). d. Uso de fuerza física e. Drogas o sustancias (Burundanga, escopolamina, etc)	Sí No	Sí No	Sí No	

Table A2.11 shows the distribution of sociodemographic variables in the LAC region among respondents who indicated being victims of a crime.

TABLE A2.11

Distribution of Sociodemographic Variables by Country (%)

	Argentina	Chile	Colombia	El Salvador	Mexico	Panama	Peru	Guatemala
SEX								
Female	44.66	54.07	50.59	47.33	53.02	58.69	59.59	52.30
Male	55.34	45.93	49.41	52.67	46.98	41.31	40.41	47.70
AGE								
Up to 29	33.333	24.81	33.99	26.99	36.44	26.66	31.29	35.76
30-59	52.94	57.62	55.19	57.52	53.25	61.42	45.64	53.16
60+	13.72	17.57	10.82	15.49	10.31	11.93	23.07	11.08
EDUCATION								
Primary	19.43	11.13	14.64	39.78	9.49	14.78	42.03	9.14
High	37.72	43.12	49.06	30.83	48.08	45.81	45.57	47.90
Tertiary or higher	42.85	45.75	36.30	29.39	42.43	39.41	12.40	42.96
INCOME								
Low			68.92	49.68	9.92	21.71		47.02
Medium			28.40	32.26	75.42	67.61		28.90
High			2.67	18.06	14.67	10.68		24.07

Definition of Strata and Clusters

Table A2.12 presents the variables used as strata, and population weights for each country.

COUNTRY	Stages	Primary sampling units	Strata	Sampling weight
Panama	3	llave_upm (vivienda)	dominio	fac_viv
El Salvador	1	IdBoleta	IdArea (rural- urbano)	FexFinal_nr_Calibrado
Colombia	1	DIRECTORIO(viviendas)	N/A	FEX_C
Argentina	1	N/A	N/A	f_persona
Chile	1	N/A	varstrat	fact_hog
Mexico	1	Upm	est_dis	fac_del
Guatemala	1	N/A	N/A	FAC_HOG
Peru	1	N/A	N/A	factor

Methodological Limitation

A key limitation of the study is the unavailability of updated victimization surveys for several countries in the region.[16] An additional limitation is the lack of comparability across existing victimization surveys in different countries. Even though UNODC's project *Centro de Excelencia para Información Estadística de Gobierno*, *Seguridad Pública*, *Victimización y Justicia* has made progress in constructing guides to standardize surveys throughout the region, there is still significant variation. This variation applies to the definition and measurement of crime underreporting. We identify five main elements in this matter:

1. **Questions asked.** Most surveys ask and consider only whether a crime was reported, but some also assess if reported crimes led to the opening of a formal investigation.

2. **Unit of analysis.** Underreporting rates can be measured by the number of crimes that occurred or by the number of victims of those crimes.

3. **Scope and definition of crimes.** Most surveys differ in the set of crimes considered to measure underreporting and their definitions. For example, some countries exclude vandalism in the calculation of underreporting rates, as it is assumed to be a rarely reported crime (Mexico). Also, some countries include within the underreporting rate crimes that were not consummated (Peru).

4. **Scope of incidents.** Beyond the typologies of crimes considered to measure underreporting, surveys also differ on which specific incident within each category is used to measure the rate. For example, some surveys ask about the last crime in each category, while others consider the most relevant, or a random incident for each type of crime. Few surveys ask about all incidents in the reference period.

5. **Target population.** The respondent in the target population in each country also differs. The first difference is the age range of the target population, which ranges from 14 years of age in Peru to 18 years of age in other countries. The second difference refers to geographical coverage. Most surveys consider only urban settings to measure underreporting, but some also cover rural areas. Finally, some surveys are limited to the head of household, while others consider all members of the household above the specified age.

16 The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) collects information on crime victimization for most countries in the region. However, this survey has a small sample size and is not designed for a disaggregated analysis of victimization.

These methodological differences may impact underreporting rates, as different crimes and victims are more or less likely to be reported. They also hinder the possibility to directly compare underreporting rates across countries in the region. The results in this study are meant to be a descriptive diagnostic of this phenomenon in the region, and comparison across countries should always consider the methodological differences across surveys.

APPENDIX III

Additional Tables

TABLE A.1

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Sex (disaggregated reasons)

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS								
Long process/Complex bureaucratic process								
Female		–0.004 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.016 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.076 (0.04) [0.74]	–0.007 (0.01) [1.00]	–0.071 (0.04) [0.84]		–0.016 (0.02) [1.00]
The cost of the procedure is expensive								
Female						–0.012 (0.01) [1.00]		0.005 (0.01) [1.00]
I had no insurance								
Female	–0.001 (0.01) [1.00]	0.000 (0.00) [1.00]				0.005 (0.00) [1.00]		0.039* (0.02) [0.35]
I do not know the procedure to report crimes								
Female	–0.012 (0.01) [1.00]		0.019 (0.01) [0.70]	0.007 (0.01) [1.00]		0.004 (0.02) [1.00]		0.017 (0.01) [1.00]
Loss of time								
Female					–0.033** (0.01) [0.11]		–0.032 (0.02) [0.99]	

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
PERSONAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS								
Fear of reprisals								
Female		0.005 (0.01) [1.00]	0.007 (0.01) [1.00]	0.125** (0.04) [0.06]	0.000 (0.00) [1.00]	0.015 (0.04) [1.00]	0.042*** (0.01) [0.01]	0.068** (0.02) [0.04]
Dislike or fear of the police/authority								
Female	–0.001 (0.01) [1.00]			–0.035 (0.03) [1.00]	0.000 (0.00) [1.00]	–0.014 (0.02) [1.00]		0.066** (0.02) [0.04]
AWARENESS CONSIDERATIONS								
It was not appropriate for the police or competent authority								
Female		–0.003 (0.01) [1.00]		–0.077* (0.04) [0.32]		0.041 (0.03) [1.00]		0.003 (0.02) [1.00]
EFFICACY								
I solved it by myself								
Female	0.004 (0.02) [1.00]			0.044* (0.02) [0.35]		0.041 (0.05) [1.00]	–0.007 (0.01) [1.00]	–0.003 (0.02) [1.00]
Lack of evidence								
Female	–0.006 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.011 (0.01) [1.00]	–0.004 (0.01) [1.00]	0.005 (0.03) [1.00]	0.020** (0.01) [0.05]	–0.062 (0.06) [1.00]	0.060*** (0.02) [0.02]	0.027 (0.03) [1.00]
Police/authorities couldn't have done anything								
Female		–0.036 (0.03) [1.00]	0.014 (0.02) [1.00]	0.035 (0.07) [1.00]		–0.037 (0.06) [1.00]		
OTHER FACTORS								
Not serious enough								
Female	0.002 (0.03) [1.00]	–0.012 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.002 (0.00) [1.00]	0.022 (0.04) [1.00]	–0.014 (0.01) [0.84]	–0.105 (0.07) [0.99]	–0.034* (0.02) [0.31]	–0.016 (0.03) [1.00]
Mistrust in the authorities								
Female	–0.035 (0.03) [1.00]				0.006 (0.01) [1.00]		–0.003 (0.02) [1.00]	–0.028 (0.03) [1.00]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
The police recommended not to report the crime								
Female		0.006 (0.00) [1.00]	–0.001 (0.01) [1.00]					
I knew the offender								
Female		0.001 (0.01) [1.00]	–0.019 (0.02) [1.00]					

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by ordinary least squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). Controls include educational level, age and type of crime. All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation.

TABLE A.2

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Age (disaggregated reasons)

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS								
Long process/Complex bureaucratic process								
Age 30-59		0.075*** (0.02) [0.002]	–0.023 (0.02) [0.718]	–0.058 (0.05) [0.702]	–0.004 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.004 (0.05) [1.000]		0.001 (0.02) [1.000]
Age +60		0.063** (0.02) [0.073]	0.009 (0.03) [1.000]	–0.039 (0.05) [1.000]	–0.013 (0.01) [0.718]	–0.060 (0.07) [0.890]		–0.033 (0.02) [0.285]
The cost of the procedure is expensive								
Age 30-59						0.011 (0.01) [0.580]		0.020** (0.01) [0.073]
Age +60						0.010 (0.02) [1.000]		0.005 (0.01) [0.884]
I had no insurance								
Age 30-59	–0.006 (0.01) [1.000]	0.000 (0.00) [1.000]				0.006 (0.01) [0.718]		–0.041 (0.02) [0.350]
Age +60	–0.011 (0.01) [0.842]	-0.001 (0.00) [0.738]				0.004 (0.00) [0.718]		0.019 (0.03) [1.000]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
I do not know the procedure to report crimes								
Age 30-59	–0.007 (0.01) [1.000]		–0.033* (0.01) [0.101]	0.012 (0.01) [0.738]		–0.006 (0.03) [1.000]		–0.027 (0.02) [0.580]
Age +60	0.059 (0.04) [0.382]		–0.005 (0.02) [1.000]	0.006 (0.01) [0.836]		–0.067* (0.03) [0.255]		–0.028 (0.02) [0.718]
Loss of time								
Age 30-59					0.047*** (0.01) [0.010]		0.114*** (0.02) [0.001]	
Age +60					0.100*** (0.03) [0.003]		0.128** (0.04) [0.016]	
PERSONAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS								
Fear of reprisals								
Age 30-59		–0.006 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.008 (0.01) [0.718]	0.007 (0.05) [1.000]	–0.002 (0.00) [0.718]	–0.008 (0.04) [1.000]	–0.022 (0.01) [0.289]	0.011 (0.03) [1.000]
Age +60		0.008 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.013 (0.01) [0.718]	–0.014 (0.07) [1.000]	–0.004 (0.00) [0.718]	–0.110 (0.06) [0.289]	–0.041 (0.02) [0.289]	–0.012 (0.03) [1.000]
Dislike or fear of the police/authority								
Age 30-59	–0.032 (0.02) [0.285]			–0.003 (0.04) [1.000]	0.007 (0.01) [0.707]	0.017 (0.02) [0.875]		–0.039 (0.02) [0.465]
Age +60	0.022 (0.04) [1.000]			0.031 (0.04) [1.000]	–0.000 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.028 (0.03) [0.753]		0.015 (0.03) [1.000]
AWARENESS CONSIDERATIONS								
It was not appropriate for the police or competent authority								
Age 30-59		0.005 (0.00) [0.718]		0.082* (0.04) [0.187]		–0.058 (0.04) [0.591]		0.020 (0.02) [0.718]
Age +60		0.006 (0.00) [0.718]		0.197 (0.13) [0.465]		–0.083* (0.04) [0.196]		–0.000 (0.02) [1.000]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
EFFICACY								
I solved it by myself								
Age 30-59	0.006 (0.02) [1.000]			0.019 (0.02) [0.875]		–0.112* (0.06) [0.271]	0.004 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.004 (0.03) [1.000]
Age +60	0.017 (0.05) [1.000]			0.005 (0.04) [1.000]		–0.208** (0.07) [0.044]	–0.019 (0.01) [0.469]	–0.029 (0.02) [0.718]
Lack of evidence								
Age 30-59	–0.011 (0.02) [1.000]	0.006 (0.01) [1.000]	0.026* (0.01) [0.196]	–0.050 (0.04) [0.580]	–0.018* (0.01) [0.196]	–0.081 (0.06) [0.702]	–0.055** (0.02) [0.029]	–0.003 (0.03) [1.000]
Age +60	0.027 (0.04) [1.000]	–0.020 (0.01) [0.361]	0.017 (0.01) [0.718]	0.017 (0.05) [1.000]	–0.020 (0.01) [0.610]	–0.232** (0.09) [0.075]	0.025 (0.04) [1.000]	–0.009 (0.04) [1.000]
Police/authorities couldn't have done anything								
Age 30-59		0.032 (0.03) [0.718]	–0.039 (0.03) [0.469]	–0.130 (0.08) [0.383]		–0.053 (0.06) [0.875]		
Age +60		0.022 (0.04) [1.000]	–0.065 (0.04) [0.466]	–0.108 (0.09) [0.718]		–0.050 (0.11) [1.000]		
OTHER FACTORS								
Not serious enough								
Age 30-59	–0.049 (0.03) [0.349]	–0.089*** (0.02) [0.006]	0.003 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.070 (0.06) [0.718]	–0.056*** (0.01) [0.001]	0.082 (0.06) [0.702]	–0.076*** (0.02) [0.001]	-0.006 (0.03) [1.000]
Age +60	–0.060 (0.03) [0.375]	–0.075* (0.03) [0.094]	0.007 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.050 (0.11) [1.000]	–0.065*** (0.01) [0.001]	0.248* (0.11) [0.178]	–0.102*** (0.03) [0.002]	0.029 (0.04) [1.000]
Mistrust in the authorities								
Age 30-59	–0.034 (0.03) [0.718]				0.006 (0.01) [1.000]		–0.009 (0.02) [1.000]	–0.035 (0.03) [0.718]
Age +60	–0.037 (0.05) [1.000]				–0.003 (0.02) [1.000]		–0.039 (0.02) [0.465]	–0.034 (0.04) [0.884]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
The police recommended not to report the crime								
Age 30-59		–0.002 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.003 (0.01) [1.000]					
Age +60		–0.002 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.006 (0.01) [1.000]					
I knew the offender								
Age 30-59		–0.003 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.005 (0.02) [1.000]					
Age +60		0.004 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.058* (0.02) [0.094]					

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation.

TABLE A.3

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Educational Attainment (disaggregated reasons)

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS								
Long process/Complex bureaucratic process								
High School		0.025 (0.02) [0.573]	–0.024 (0.03) [0.735]	0.011 (0.03) [0.915]	0.016 (0.01) [0.376]	–0.042 (0.07) [0.794]		–0.005 (0.02) [0.969]
Post-secondary		0.038 (0.03) [0.453]	–0.038 (0.03) [0.536]	–0.048 (0.04) [0.513]	0.033** (0.01) [0.044]	–0.010 (0.08) [1.000]		–0.016 (0.02) [0.721]
The cost of the procedure is expensive								
High School						–0.029 (0.03) [0.620]		–0.003 (0.01) [0.915]
Post-secondary						–0.039 (0.03) [0.460]		–0.013 (0.01) [0.376]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
I had no insurance								
High School	0.004 (0.01) [0.915]	0.001 (0.00) [0.376]				0.006 (0.01) [0.569]		0.022 (0.02) [0.564]
Post-secondary	0.010 (0.01) [0.564]	-0.000 (0.00) [0.854]				0.001 (0.00) [0.794]		-0.023 (0.02) [0.569]
I do not know the procedure to report crimes								
High School	–0.012 (0.01) [0.721]		–0.028 (0.02) [0.487]	0.016 (0.02) [0.619]		–0.044 (0.05) [0.640]		–0.026 (0.02) [0.460]
Post-secondary	–0.002 (0.02) [1.000]		–0.054* (0.02) [0.146]	0.002 (0.00) [0.735]		–0.019 (0.06) [0.915]		–0.061*** (0.02) [0.017]
Loss of time								
High School					0.057* (0.02) [0.131]		0.068* (0.03) [0.192]	
Post-secondary					0.058* (0.02) [0.131]		0.099** (0.03) [0.058]	
PERSONAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS								
Fear of reprisals								
High School		0.007 (0.01) [0.807]	0.001 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.086 (0.06) [0.453]	–0.010* (0.00) [0.187]	–0.254** (0.09) [0.058]	–0.026 (0.02) [0.400]	–0.015 (0.03) [0.794]
Post-secondary		0.002 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.018 (0.01) [0.335]	–0.108* (0.05) [0.211]	–0.010* (0.00) [0.180]	–0.265** (0.08) [0.043]	–0.043** (0.02) [0.128]	–0.026 (0.04) [0.794]
Dislike or fear of the police/authority								
High School	0.022 (0.02) [0.620]			–0.071* (0.03) [0.165]	0.003 (0.01) [0.911]	–0.082 (0.07) [0.534]		–0.022 (0.02) [0.715]
Post-secondary	0.003 (0.02) [1.000]			–0.093* (0.04) [0.187]	0.010 (0.01) [0.490]	–0.053 (0.06) [0.721]		–0.036 (0.03) [0.534]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
AWARENESS CONSIDERATIONS								
It was not appropriate for the police or competent authority								
High School		0.001 (0.00) [1.000]		0.100 (0.06) [0.335]		0.029 (0.03) [0.647]		0.007 (0.02) [0.911]
Post-secondary		0.004 (0.01) [0.789]		–0.016 (0.04) [0.911]		0.032 (0.03) [0.564]		–0.012 (0.02) [0.854]
EFFICACY								
I solved it by myself								
High School	0.025 (0.03) [0.721]			–0.051* (0.02) [0.192]		–0.078 (0.09) [0.693]	0.001 (0.01) [1.000]	–0.038 (0.03) [0.407]
Post-secondary	0.023 (0.03) [0.735]			–0.040 (0.03) [0.453]		–0.094 (0.08) [0.534]	0.027* (0.01) [0.217]	0.005 (0.04) [1.000]
Lack of evidence								
High School	–0.025 (0.03) [0.701]	–0.001 (0.01) [1.000]	0.022 (0.01) [0.335]	–0.069 (0.04) [0.259]	–0.032* (0.01) [0.148]	0.010 (0.10) [1.000]	–0.042 (0.03) [0.453]	–0.042 (0.03) [0.513]
Post-secondary	–0.006 (0.03) [0.996]	–0.027 (0.01) [0.242]	0.032* (0.01) [0.148]	–0.067 (0.03) [0.239]	–0.044** (0.01) [0.044]	–0.153 (0.09) [0.354]	–0.073* (0.03) [0.131]	–0.019 (0.05) [0.911]
Police/authorities couldn't have done anything								
High School		–0.062 (0.05) [0.460]	–0.052 (0.04) [0.442]	–0.031 (0.07) [0.911]		–0.010 (0.09) [1.000]		
Post-secondary		–0.096* (0.05) [0.202]	–0.088* (0.04) [0.153]	–0.113 (0.08) [0.453]		0.041 (0.08) [0.879]		
OTHER FACTORS								
Not serious enough								
High School	–0.005 (0.04) [1.000]	0.059** (0.02) [0.120]	–0.002 (0.01) [0.996]	–0.111 (0.06) [0.285]	–0.008 (0.01) [0.794]	–0.007 (0.10) [1.000]	–0.008 (0.02) [0.915]	–0.015 (0.03) [0.854]
Post-secondary	–0.011 (0.03) [0.915]	0.059* (0.02) [0.131]	–0.006 (0.01) [0.735]	0.109 (0.07) [0.354]	–0.028* (0.01) [0.184]	–0.004 (0.10) [1.000]	–0.017 (0.02) [0.736]	0.062 (0.04) [0.453]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Argentina	(2) Chile	(3) Colombia	(4) El Salvador	(5) Mexico	(6) Panama	(7) Peru	(8) Guatemala
Mistrust in the authorities								
High School	0.052 (0.04) [0.460]				0.021 (0.02) [0.490]		0.004 (0.02) [1.000]	0.011 (0.03) [0.915]
Post-secondary	0.019 (0.03) [0.794]				0.035* (0.02) [0.180]		0.005 (0.02) [0.996]	0.019 (0.04) [0.911]
The police recommended not to report the crime								
High School		0.005 (0.00) [0.376]	0.004 (0.01) [0.915]					
Post-secondary		0.007 (0.00) [0.335]	–0.007 (0.01) [0.794]					
I knew the offender								
High School		–0.006 (0.02) [0.911]	0.024 (0.02) [0.619]					
Post-secondary		–0.006 (0.02) [0.911]	0.022 (0.03) [0.721]					

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation.

TABLE A.4

Reporting Behavior and Victim's Income (disaggregated reasons)

	(1) Colombia	(2) El Salvador	(3) Mexico	(4) Panama	(5) Peru
MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS					
Long process/Complex bureaucratic process					
Medium income	–0.017 (0.03) [1.000]	–0.011 (0.04) [1.000]	0.009 (0.01) [1.000]	0.085* (0.04) [0.466]	
High income	0.005 (0.06) [1.000]	0.121 (0.08) [1.000]	–0.002 (0.01) [1.000]	0.055 (0.08) [1.000]	

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Colombia	(2) El Salvador	(3) Mexico	(4) Panama	(5) Peru
The cost of the procedure is expensive					
Medium income					0.007 (0.02) [1.000]
High income					–0.003 (0.02) [1.000]
I had no insurance					
Medium income					0.005 (0.00) [1.000]
High income					0.005 (0.00) [1.000]
I do not know the procedure to report crimes					
Medium income	–0.011 (0.02) [1.000]	0.015 (0.01) [1.000]		–0.023 (0.04) [1.000]	
High income	–0.030 (0.03) [1.000]	0.002 (0.00) [1.000]		–0.031 (0.05) [1.000]	
Loss of time					
Medium income			0.073*** (0.02) [0.034]		0.031 (0.03) [1.000]
High income			0.089** (0.03) [0.085]		–0.004 (0.02) [1.000]
PERSONAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS					
Fear of reprisal					
Medium income	–0.019* (0.01) [0.387]	–0.002 (0.05) [1.000]	–0.002 (0.00) [1.000]	–0.000 (0.05) [1.000]	–0.011 (0.01) [1.000]
High income	–0.016 (0.01) [1.000]	0.115 (0.09) [1.000]	–0.005 (0.00) [1.000]	–0.038 (0.07) [1.000]	–0.019 (0.01) [1.000]
Dislike or fear of the police/authority					
Medium income		0.021 (0.03) [1.000]	0.009 (0.01) [1.000]	0.021 (0.02) [1.000]	
High income		0.029 (0.05) [1.000]	0.000 (0.01) [1.000]	0.008 (0.03) [1.000]	

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Colombia	(2) El Salvador	(3) Mexico	(4) Panama	(5) Peru
AWARENESS CONSIDERATIONS					
It was not appropriate for the police or competent authority					
Medium income		0.061 (0.05) [1.000]		−0.121 (0.09) [1.000]	
High income		−0.074 (0.05) [1.000]		−0.084 (0.10) [1.000]	
EFFICACY					
I solved it by myself					
Medium income		−0.035 (0.02) [1.000]		0.132* (0.06) [0.466]	0.007 (0.01) [1.000]
High income		0.002 (0.04) [1.000]		0.024 (0.08) [1.000]	0.003 (0.01) [1.000]
Lack of evidence					
Medium income	0.023 (0.02) [1.000]	−0.024 (0.03) [1.000]	−0.030* (0.01) [0.466]	−0.085 (0.09) [1.000]	−0.025 (0.02) [1.000]
High income	−0.037* (0.02) [0.466]	−0.012 (0.04) [1.000]	−0.030 (0.02) [1.000]	−0.101 (0.13) [1.000]	0.014 (0.02) [1.000]
Police/authorities couldn't have done anything					
Medium income	0.032 (0.04) [1.000]	−0.123 (0.07) [1.000]		0.027 (0.09) [1.000]	
High income	−0.080 (0.07) [1.000]	0.004 (0.12) [1.000]		−0.042 (0.12) [1.000]	
OTHER FACTORS					
Not serious enough					
Medium income	−0.013* (0.01) [0.363]	−0.027 (0.05) [1.000]	−0.011 (0.01) [1.000]	0.144 (0.08) [1.000]	0.022 (0.02) [1.000]
High income	−0.011 (0.01) [1.000]	0.166 (0.10) [1.000]	−0.006 (0.02) [1.000]	0.471*** (0.12) [0.013]	0.018 (0.02) [1.000]

Continues

Continuation

	(1) Colombia	(2) El Salvador	(3) Mexico	(4) Panama	(5) Peru
Mistrust in the authorities					
Medium income			0.004 (0.02) [1.000]		0.002 (0.02) [1.000]
High income			–0.004 (0.02) [1.000]		–0.023 (0.02) [1.000]
The police recommended not to report the crime					
Medium income	0.010 (0.01) [1.000]				
High income	0.015 (0.03) [1.000]				
I knew the offender					
Medium income	–0.045 (0.04) [1.000]				
High income	–0.048 (0.06) [1.000]				

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and q-sharpened values -considering all coefficients reported in the table- (Anderson, 2008) in brackets. * Significant 10%, ** significant 5%, *** significant 1%. We estimate the linear probability model by ordinary least squares (OLS) using the program Stata (version 18). Controls include sex, educational attainment, age, and type of crime. All inferential statistics are estimated using the survey (svy) prefix command in Stata, and the stratification and sample weights described in the official documentation.

APPENDIX IV

Review on Policies to Reduce Underreporting

A. Methodology

Protocol

The authors did not identify any systematic reviews of literature on policies to reduce crime underreporting. Given the unavailability of previous specific protocols for this topic, the review followed the methodological guidelines by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Specifically, the protocol was adapted from the protocol from Carthy et al. (2018), which was registered in The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews in September 2017 (available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8427989/, accessed July 13, 2023).

B. Study Consideration Criteria

Types of Studies

Studies considered had to fall into one of the following categories: a) published in peer-reviewed academic journal; b) accepted graduate theses; c) published as a white or working paper from a government agency or multilateral institution; d) subject-specific reports published by official task forces from state justice departments; and e) proceeding transcripts from academic conferences.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies considered for this review are defined by proximity and relevance to the topic of crime underreporting, specifically: “reducing crime underreporting,” “increasing incentives to report crime,” and “barriers to crime reporting.”

Exclusion Criteria

Studies that address the broader topic of reducing crime but fail to address the reporting gap between actual crimes and reported crime were excluded. Furthermore, studies that fail to either propose or recommend policy to reverse factors of offer case studies of relevant real-world projects that were successful in increasing reporting of victimizations (decrease underreporting) were excluded.

C.
Search Method for Identification of Studies

The identification of relevant literature was carried out in four stages:

1. General scoping exercise
2. Targeted keyword search in databases and online libraries for initial selection of results.
3. Detailed review of reference lists of the initial studies of results to find additional ones.
4. Additional keyword search of specific policies, programs, and literature found within relevant journals identified in steps two and three.

Scoping Exercise

The results of the systematic review of the literature on drivers of crime underreporting (see Section 2 and Appendix 1) guided the scope of the search. We focused on “immediate” drivers of underreporting, excluding systemic or structural issues (such as income level or inequality) that may affect crime reporting.

Targeted Keyword Search

In the end, the relevant literature was identified through the search of a broad set of keywords, which can be organized according to the following categories.

TABLE A.3.2
Search Terms

CATEGORIES	SEARCH TERM
Process-related factors	Crime reporting systems Online crime reporting Anonymous complaints and reporting Police accessibility and reporting Police public outreach crime reporting Information hotlines crime reporting Immigration effect on crime reporting
Social factors	Hate crime and reporting Knowing perpetrator effects on reporting crime
Institutional factors	Crime reporting and trust in institutions Police media relations Crime shows and police Police dramas and crime reporting Police misconduct effects on victimization reporting Police violence effects on reporting Implicit bias effects on reporting crime Police capacity and reporting
	Crime evidence and police
	Video surveillance effects on crime
	Police CCTV
	CCTV effects on crime reporting

With the intention of covering a greater number of papers and case studies for LAC, we replicated the search using the keywords translated into Spanish. Keyword searches were carried out in the major social science journals as well as in the crime-themed journals identified from the database search.

Hand-searching of Reference Lists

A manual search was carried out on the reference lists of the first set of aggregated studies. This proved very effective in identifying the seminal papers on this topic.

D.
Data Collection and Analysis

Selection of Studies

After the search was completed, identified papers were imported into Mendeley, following a process of manually searching for and removing duplicate papers. The titles, abstracts, and full texts of the identified papers were examined against the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. At the end of this process, a final list of studies to be included in the review was produced.

E.
Results of the Search

POLICY	REFERENCES
Remote Reporting Methods	Rettig-Vargas, 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2018
Improving Access to Reporting	Gust 2012; Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2022; Kennedy et al. 2006
Special Reporting Schemes	Chakraborti and Hardy 2015; Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001; Giannasi 2014; Pezzella et al. 2019; Rettig-Vargas 2016
Social Marketing Campaigns	Bailey and Wundersitz, 2019; Chen & Long, 2024; Kuttschreuter and Wiegman, 1998UNICEF, 2020; Winkel and Vrij, 1993;
Outreach Programs	Davis, Erez, and Avitabile, 2001; Giannasi, 2014; Pezzella, Fetzer, and Keller, 2019; Quinteros, 2014; Xie and Baumer, 2019
Diversifying Police Forces	Miller and Segal, 2019; Stanek et al., 2023
Implicit Bias Training	Lai and Lisnek, 2023; Worden et al., 2020
Procedural Justice Training	Abril et al., 2023; Murphy and Mazerolle, 2018; Weisburd et al., 2022; Wood, Tyler, and Papachristos, 2020
Body-Worn Cameras	Ariel, 2016; Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland, 2015; Jennings, Lynch, and Fridell., 2015
Closed-circuit television	Armitage et al., 1999; Ashby, 2017; Beck and Willis, 1999McLean, Worden, and Kim, 2013; Morgan and Dowling, 2019; Piza et al., 2019;
Reducing Deportation Risk	Comino et al., 2020; Pearson, 2024


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