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PUBLIC TRUST AND PERCEIVED SAFETY AS OUTCOME INDICATORS OF CRIME PREVENTION: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN

Shakhboz Jumanazar ugli Nusratullaev

Independent Researcher, Tashkent State University of Law

E-mail: shaxxxxx1100@gmail.com

Abstract

This conference paper argues that crime-prevention effectiveness should not be assessed through recorded crime rates alone. It uses survey evidence from Uzbekistan to examine perceived safety, victimization, non-reporting, and trust in local prevention officers as complementary outcome indicators. The empirical material comes from two surveys conducted in April 2026: a district-level sample in Tashkent (n=341) and a nationwide sample (n=2,433). The local sample reported higher overall perceived safety than the national sample (85.0% versus 78.7%), but substantially lower perceived safety after 22:00 (44.3% versus 57.0%). Self-reported victimization during the previous year was lower locally (15.2% versus 24.1%), while non-reporting among respondents who had experienced or witnessed an offence was broadly similar (14.7% versus 13.3%). Average trust in the local prevention inspector was slightly higher (6.89 versus 6.49 on a ten-point scale), yet direct willingness to contact the inspector was lower (46.0% versus 55.3%). The paper identifies this as a “passive trust” gap and argues for a multidimensional outcome framework combining crime data with survey-based measures of safety, victimization, reporting behaviour, and institutional trust.

Keywords: Crime prevention; public trust; perceived safety; victimization; crime reporting; police legitimacy; outcome indicators; Uzbekistan.



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1. Introduction

Recorded crime rates are indispensable for crime-prevention policy, but they are not sufficient as a stand-alone measure of preventive effectiveness. Recorded crime reflects not only offending but also reporting behaviour, police recording practices, detection activity, administrative classification, and public willingness to engage with law-enforcement institutions. A fall in recorded crime may therefore coexist with persistent fear, low trust, or hidden victimization; conversely, increased reporting may raise recorded crime even when institutional trust is improving.

For this reason, international victimization research treats public surveys as an important complement to administrative statistics. Victimization surveys can capture experiences that never enter police records, perceptions of safety, reporting decisions, and evaluations of justice institutions [1]. Crime-prevention guidance similarly stresses that evaluation should examine outcomes and local experience rather than activity volume alone [2].

Trust is especially important in a prevention system built around community contact. Citizens who consider the local prevention officer fair and effective may be more willing to share information, report emerging risks, seek help before a problem escalates, and cooperate with preventive interventions. Procedural-justice research has repeatedly linked perceived fairness and legitimacy to public cooperation with police [3, 4].

This paper asks a narrow empirical question: what is gained when crime-prevention performance is measured not only through crime data, but also through perceived safety, victimization, non-reporting, and trust? Using a district-level survey and a national comparison sample from Uzbekistan, the paper shows that these indicators can move in different directions and reveal problems that recorded crime statistics alone would not identify.



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2. Method

The empirical material comes from two surveys conducted in April 2026. The first covered 341 respondents in one urban district of Tashkent; the second covered 2,433 respondents across Uzbekistan. The surveys included questions on overall neighbourhood safety, safety after 22:00, victimization during the previous year, whether experienced or observed offences were reported, preferred reporting channels, and trust in the local prevention inspector.

The source methodology reports that the sample sizes were adequate for overall estimates at a 95% confidence level, while analysis of narrow demographic subgroups was treated as indicative because statistical power declines in smaller cells. The survey also acknowledged the standard limitations of this type of research: social-desirability bias in questions about trust, recall bias in victimization questions, and systematic under-reporting in sensitive categories.

The analysis in this paper uses the raw survey indicators rather than a composite index. This is intentional. Raw indicators make it possible to identify internal contradictions - for example, high general safety but low nighttime safety, or positive subjective trust but lower direct willingness to contact the local officer - that can be obscured when variables are collapsed into a single score.

3. Findings

Table 1. Selected public-trust and safety indicators

Indicator	Tashkent district (n=341)	Uzbekistan (n=2,433)	Difference
Neighbourhood safety rated good/very good	85.0%	78.7%	+6.3 pp
Feels safe after 22:00	44.3%	57.0%	-12.7 pp
Victimized during previous year	15.2%	24.1%	-8.9 pp



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Indicator	Tashkent district (n=341)	Uzbekistan (n=2,433)	Difference
Did not report after experiencing/witnessing an offence	14.7%	13.3%	+1.4 pp
Average trust in prevention inspector (0-10)	6.89	6.49	+0.40
High trust in prevention inspector (7-10)	56.0%	53.2%	+2.8 pp
Would contact prevention inspector directly	46.0%	55.3%	-9.3 pp

The first finding is that general perceived safety and nighttime safety tell different stories. In the district sample, 85.0% of respondents described neighbourhood safety as good or very good, compared with 78.7% nationally. Yet only 44.3% reported feeling safe after 22:00, compared with 57.0% in the national sample. The 40.7-point gap between general and nighttime safety within the district shows why a single global safety question can be too coarse for local prevention management. Second, self-reported victimization was substantially lower in the district sample than in the national sample: 15.2% versus 24.1% during the previous year. This is an important positive signal, but it should not be interpreted as a complete measure of preventive effectiveness. Victimization is affected by exposure, demographic structure, offence type, memory, and willingness to disclose incidents.

Third, the non-reporting rate was relatively close across the two samples: 14.7% in the district and 13.3% nationally among respondents who had experienced or witnessed an offence. Reporting-channel preferences were also revealing. In the district, 56.6% indicated that they would use the central emergency line (102), while 46.0% would contact the prevention inspector directly. Nationally, the pattern was reversed: 48.5% preferred the emergency line and 55.3% the prevention inspector. Overall willingness to contact law enforcement through



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either route was high in both samples, but the preferred institutional channel differed.

Fourth, subjective trust did not fully translate into direct contact behaviour. The district's average trust score for the prevention inspector was 6.89 out of 10, slightly above the national average of 6.49. High trust (7-10) was also somewhat more common locally (56.0% versus 53.2%). Nevertheless, direct willingness to contact the inspector was 9.3 percentage points lower. This divergence is analytically important: citizens may evaluate an institution positively in the abstract while preferring a more centralized, immediate, or predictable channel when an actual problem arises.

4. Discussion

The results support a multidimensional concept of crime-prevention outcomes. Recorded crime is a necessary indicator, but it measures only events that become visible to the administrative system. Victimization surveys add information about hidden incidents; perceived-safety questions capture the lived security environment; reporting behaviour reflects accessibility and expected usefulness; and trust measures the relationship between the community and the institution expected to prevent harm.

The nighttime-safety result illustrates why perception is not a soft or secondary indicator. A neighbourhood may have a favourable general reputation and a relatively low self-reported victimization rate while residents still feel unsafe in specific time periods. That gap points toward concrete prevention questions: lighting, transport, public-space management, visible guardianship, recurrent disorder, and the distribution of patrol or community presence. Perception therefore helps localize the problem that aggregate crime counts may conceal.



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The trust/contact divergence suggests what may be called a passive-trust gap. Positive evaluations of an officer do not necessarily produce active cooperation. This distinction matters because community-oriented prevention depends not only on legitimacy but also on usable access. If residents prefer a central emergency channel even when they express trust in the local inspector, performance evaluation should ask why: availability, response speed, clarity of responsibility, previous experience, or the perceived seriousness of problems may all shape channel choice. This has direct implications for outcome measurement. A prevention inspector should not be evaluated solely by the number of conversations, visits, meetings, or recorded offences. A stronger framework would combine: (1) administrative crime and repeat-incident data; (2) self-reported victimization; (3) perceived safety, including time- and place-specific questions; (4) non-reporting and reporting-channel behaviour; and (5) trust and perceived fairness. No single measure should dominate because each has its own bias and scope.

The empirical findings should also be interpreted conservatively. The district and national samples are not identical populations, and the district figures should not be treated as causal evidence that a particular prevention practice produced the observed differences. The survey design is better suited to diagnostic comparison than to causal attribution. In addition, trust questions may be affected by social desirability, and victimization questions by recall and under-reporting. The value of the framework lies in triangulation: when administrative data, survey-based victimization, perceived safety, and trust are considered together, the risk of mistaking one imperfect indicator for the whole outcome is reduced.

5. Conclusion

Crime-prevention effectiveness should be measured through a portfolio of outcomes rather than a single crime-rate indicator. The Uzbekistan survey evidence shows why. General perceived safety was high in the district sample, yet nighttime



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safety was markedly lower than the national benchmark. Self-reported victimization was lower, but non-reporting remained present. Trust in the local prevention inspector was slightly higher, yet direct willingness to contact the inspector was lower.

These findings do not contradict one another. They describe different dimensions of prevention performance. A system can perform well on one dimension and weakly on another. For policy and performance management, the relevant question is therefore not simply whether recorded crime increased or decreased, but whether people are safer, feel safer, report problems, trust the responsible institutions, and receive a response that encourages future cooperation.

For Uzbekistan, a practical next step would be to institutionalize a recurring public-safety survey with stable core questions and comparable methodology across territories. Such a survey should complement, not replace, police statistics. The strongest prevention-assessment model is one in which recorded crime, victimization, perceived safety, reporting behaviour, and institutional trust are interpreted together.

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