



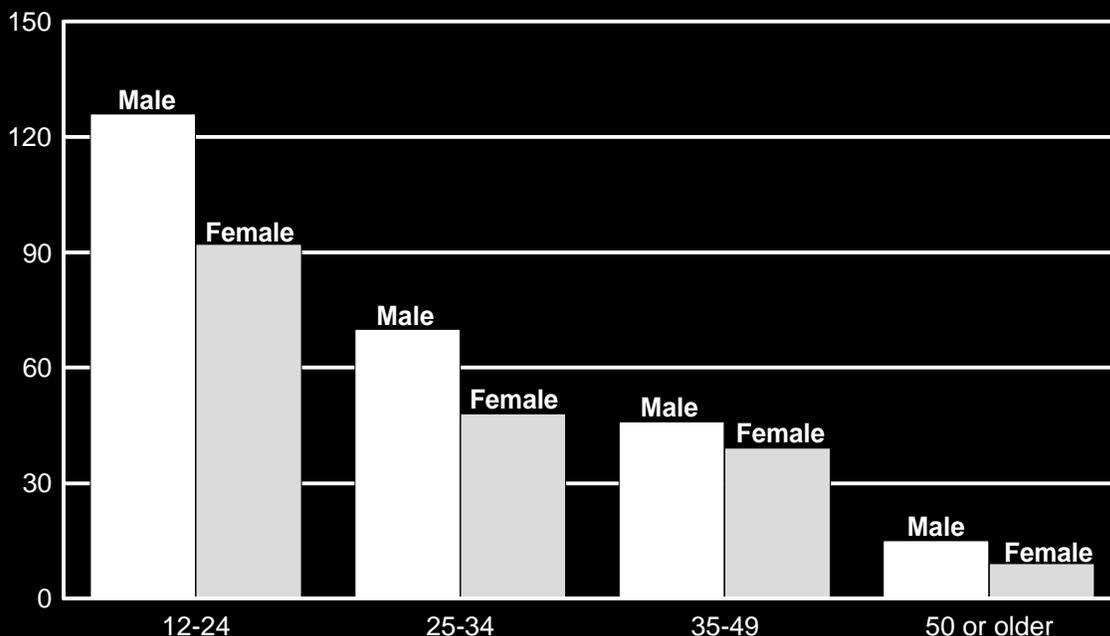
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Estimates from the Redesigned Survey

Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1993

Violent crime victimization rates for persons age 12 and over,
by age and sex of victim

(Number of victimizations per 1,000 persons)





Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1993

A National Crime Victimization Survey Report

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This report was prepared by Craig A. Perkins, Patsy A. Klaus, Lisa D. Bastian, and Robyn L. Cohen of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, under the supervision of Michael R. Rand. Bruce M. Taylor provided statistical review. Christopher Laskey, of the Bureau of the Census, produced the tables in this report. Thomas Hester and Tina Dorsey edited this volume. Marilyn Marbrook supervised production.

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The participation of the American people who took the time to respond to the survey questionnaire were integral to the success of this important research.

Data presented in this report may be obtained from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at the University of Michigan, 1-800-999-0960. The name of the dataset is Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1993 (ICPSR 6406).

This report and other reports and data are available from the BJS Internet page: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

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*Victimization rate table - all others are counts or percents.

Highlights

Overall victimization

- Overall during 1993 there were almost 11 million violent victimizations and over 32 million property crimes. Expressed as the number of crimes per 1,000, there were 51 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons and 322 property crimes per 1,000 households.
- In terms of crime rates per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, there were 2 rapes or sexual assaults (including attempts), 6 robberies, 12 aggravated assaults, and 31 simple assaults. Murder is not measured in the survey because of the inability to question the victims.
- There were 322 property crimes per 1,000 households. These included 60 burglaries per 1,000 households, 20 motor vehicle thefts, and 243 property thefts.
- Seventy percent of the violent victimizations were attempted but uncompleted criminal incidents, such as attempted robberies or threats involving weapons.

- Victims sustained a rape or some other non-rape injury in over 2.6 million incidents; about 29% of all robberies involved injury.

Sex, race, and age of victim

- One in sixteen males and 1 in 24 females were a victim of violent crime.
- One in fifteen blacks and 1 in 20 whites were a victim of violent crime.
- Hispanics and non-Hispanics had similar rates for rape/sexual assault, simple assault, and personal theft. However, Hispanics sustained significantly higher rates for robbery and aggravated assault. Hispanics had a robbery rate twice that of non-Hispanics.
- The youngest age group surveyed — those age 12 through 15 — had the greatest risk of being violent crime victims. The risk decreased steadily with age, from 1 in 8 persons age 12-15 to 1 in 179 for those 65 or older.
- Persons age 12 to 15, who accounted for about 7% of the population their age and older, experienced

12% of all rapes and 17% of sexual assaults measured by the victimization survey.

- In general, persons from households with low incomes experienced higher violent crime victimization rates than persons from wealthier households. Persons living in households with yearly incomes under \$7,500 were more than twice as likely to fall victim to violence as persons in households with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Victims and offenders

- Robbery and aggravated assault were more likely to be committed by strangers to the victim than non-strangers. Rape/sexual assault and simple assault were more likely to be committed by nonstrangers than strangers.
- About 1 million violent crimes committed during 1993 were against victims related to the offender. In more than 500,000 incidents the offender was the victim's spouse or former spouse. Of these, 9% were rapes or other sexual assaults; 5%, robberies; 15%, aggravated assaults; and 71%, simple assaults.

Property crimes account for three-quarters of all crimes experienced by individuals or households

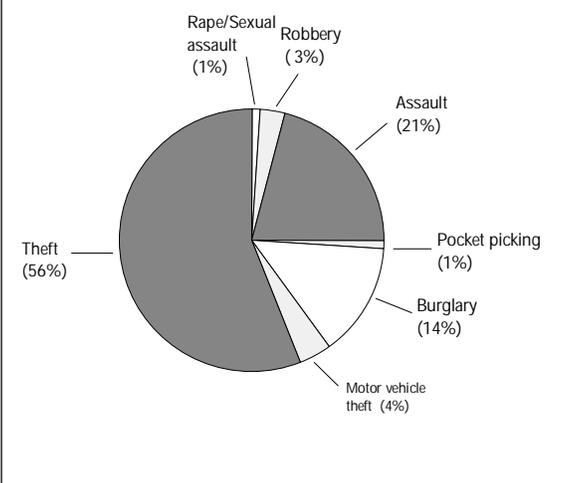


figure 1

Most robberies and aggravated assaults were committed by strangers to the victim

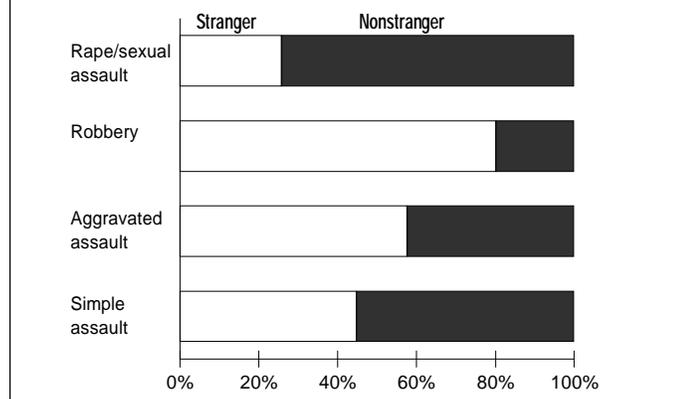


figure 2

- Females were victimized by relatives at 4 times the rate of males (8 violent victimizations per 1,000 females versus 2 per 1,000 males).

Geography

- City residents were robbed at more than 3 times the rural residents' rate.
- Households in U.S. cities were victimized by motor vehicle theft at almost five times the rate experienced by rural households.
- In each region — Northeast, Midwest, South, and the West — households in urban areas had the highest victimization rates for property crimes in general, followed by households in suburban areas. Households in rural areas had the lowest rates of property crimes.
- The western region had the highest victimization rates for both violent and property crimes overall.

The crime event

- Violent incidents occurring at night most frequently were committed between 6 p.m. and midnight.
- Property crimes were more likely to have occurred between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Twenty-seven percent of all violent incidents occurred in or near the victim's home. Including those, about half took place within 5 miles of the victim's home. Only 4% took place more than 50 miles from home.
- Twenty-nine percent of all violent crime victims believed the offender or offenders were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the offense — 20%, under the influence of alcohol only; 4%, drugs alone; and 4%, both drugs and alcohol.
- About 42% of the violent crimes and 33% of the property crimes were reported to police. Seventy-eight per-

cent of the almost 2 million completed or attempted motor vehicle thefts were reported to law enforcement agencies.

- The most common reason given for not reporting violent victimizations to the police was that the crime was a private or personal matter (21%). The next most common reason cited was that the offender was unsuccessful in committing the crime (18%).
- For property crimes the most common reason for not reporting to the police was that stolen property had been recovered (29%). The next most common reason given for failing to report a property crime was that there was a lack of proof relating to the crime (11%).
- Whether victimized by a violent or a property crime, victims rarely received assistance from either governmental or private agencies.

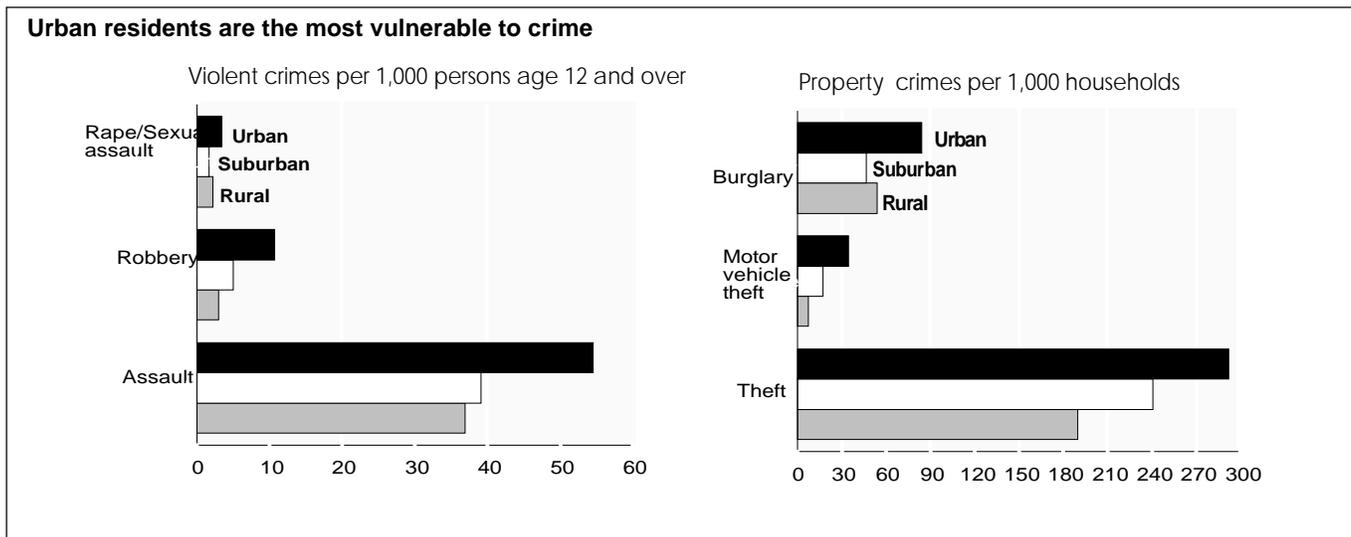


figure 3

National Crime Victimization Survey

This report presents information on criminal victimization in the United States during 1993. This edition, the 21st in a series of annual reports, is the first that presents data from the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).

For the past 20 years data have been presented in a series of annual reports prepared under the National Crime Survey (NCS). The survey name was changed to the National Crime Victimization Survey in conjunction with changes introduced as a result of the survey redesign. The Bureau of the Census has administered the National Crime Victimization Survey for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (formerly the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) since the program began in 1972.

All of the data presented in this report were derived from a continuing survey of the occupants of a representative sample of housing units in the United States. About 100,000 persons age 12 or older living in 50,000 housing units were interviewed. Ninety-six percent of the households selected to participate did so; 93% of persons in these selected households were interviewed.

The redesign of the survey was a decade-long effort to improve its ability to measure victimization, particularly certain difficult-to-measure crimes like rape and sexual assault. As a reflection of this survey redesign the format of the criminal victimization report series has changed as well.

Appendix II provides a comparison of certain items on the questionnaire that have changed as a result of the redesign. Improvements and other fundamental changes introduced by the redesign make comparisons to earlier data inappropriate.

Appendix III contains a crosswalk chart so that tables which readers may have referenced in previous editions can be easily found in this report. However, readers should be cautioned that the data from the redesigned survey are not directly comparable with data published in previous years.

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Introduction

NCVS-measured crimes

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is one of two Justice Department measures of crime in the United States. A pioneering effort when it was begun in 1972, the survey was intended to complement what is known about crime from the FBI's annual compilation of information reported to law enforcement agencies (Uniform Crime Reports). The survey, which also counts incidents not reported to the police, provides a detailed picture of crime incidents, victims, and trends from the victim's perspective. Data are collected every year from a sample of approximately 50,000 households with more than 100,000 individuals age 12 or older.

Victimizations are categorized as personal or property crimes. Personal crimes, including attempts, involve direct contact between the victim and offender. Property crimes do not involve personal confrontation and include the crimes of household burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft.

Since crime victims are asked directly about crime, crimes are measured whether or not they were reported to the police. No attempt is made to validate reported crimes by checking them against other sources of criminal data, such as police records.

Crimes not measured by the NCVS

The NCVS does not measure murder, kidnaping, or crimes against commercial establishments such as commercial burglary and robbery. (Murder is **not** measured by the NCVS because of the inability to question the victim.) Crimes such as public drunkenness, drug abuse, prostitution, illegal gambling, con games, and blackmail are also excluded.

Sometimes people are not aware they have been victims of a crime, making such crimes difficult to measure accurately. Buying stolen property and embezzlement are examples of this type of crime. In addition, many attempted crimes of all types are probably underreported because victims were not aware of their occurrence.

Survey redesign

The report presents the first detailed findings from a comprehensive survey redesign program. This section presents a brief overview of the redesign; more detailed information on the redesign can be found in appendixes II and IV. The survey was redesigned because —

- **Criticism** of the earlier survey's capacity to gather information about certain crimes, including sexual assaults and domestic violence prompted numerous improvements.

- **Improved survey methodology** enhances the ability of people being interviewed to recall events.

- **Public attitudes** toward victims have changed, permitting more direct questioning about sexual assaults.

The new methodology was systematically field tested and introduced starting in 1989, and its results are being published for the first time this year. New questions were added to accommodate heightened interest in certain types of victimizations. Improvements in technology and survey methods were incorporated in the redesign. An advisory panel of criminal justice policymakers, social scientists, victim advocates, and statisticians oversaw the work of a consortium of criminologists and social and survey scientists who conducted research on improved procedures.

With the redesigned survey, victims are now reporting more types of crime incidents to the survey's interviewers. Previously undetected victimizations are being captured. For example, the survey changes have substantially increased the number of rapes and aggravated and simple assaults reported to interviewers.

In the redesigned survey other victimizations, such as non-rape sexual assault and unwanted or coerced sexual contact that involves a threat or attempt to harm, are also being measured.

The survey now includes improved questions and cues that aid victims in recalling victimizations. Survey interviewers ask more explicit questions about sexual victimizations. Advocates have also encouraged victims to talk more openly about their experiences. Together, these changes substantially improve reporting for many types of personal and household crime.

Major redesign changes

All crimes

A new screening questionnaire (to determine whether the respondent has been the victim of any crime within the scope of the survey) uses extensive, detailed cues to help respondents recall and report incidents. These new questions and cues jog memories of the respondents and let them know that the survey is interested in a broad spectrum of incidents, not just those involving weapons, severe violence, or strangers. Because of these changes, substantial increases occur in the extent to which victims tell the interviewers about simple assault (defined as assault without a weapon or resulting in minor injury) and sexual crimes.

Domestic violence

Multiple questions and cues on crimes committed by family members, intimates, and acquaintances have been added. The survey also encourages respondents to report incidents even if they are not sure whether a crime has been committed. The survey staff review these reported incidents using standardized definitions of crimes. Thus, within the categories of violent crime measured by the NCVS, the redesign will produce fuller reporting of those incidents that involved intimates or other family members.

Sexual crimes

The new NCVS broadens the scope of covered sexual incidents beyond the categories of rape and attempted rape. These include:

- sexual assault (other than rape)
- verbal threats of rape or sexual assault
- unwanted sexual contact without force but involving threats or other harm to the victim.

These new categories, broadened coverage, and more extensive questions on sexual victimizations have elicited information on about 3 to 4 times as many sexual crime victimizations as in the past.

Selection of survey participants

The survey collects its data from a nationally representative sample of individuals age 12 or older living in U.S. households. Basic demographic information, such as age, race, sex, and income, is collected to enable analysis of victimizations of various subpopulations. Interviews are translated for non-English speaking respondents.

Each month the U.S. Bureau of the Census selects respondents for the NCVS using a "rotating panel" design. Households are randomly selected, and all age-eligible individuals in a selected household become part of the panel. Once in the sample, respondents are interviewed every 6 months for a total of seven interviews over a 3-year period. The first and fifth interviews are face-to-face; the rest are by telephone when possible. After the seventh interview the household leaves the panel and a new household is rotated into the sample. The interview takes about 1/2 hour. The NCVS has consistently obtained a response rate of about 95%.

The NCVS questionnaire

The NCVS questionnaire does more than simply ask participants if they have been victimized by crime. A screening section provides respondents with a series of detailed questions and cues on victimizations and the situations within which crimes may take place. If any screening question elicits a positive response to a crime within the scope of the survey, interviewers collect details about the victimization in an incident report.

The screening section describes crimes in simple language, avoiding technical and legal terms such as *aggravated assault*. Attempting to elicit an accurate account, interviewers provide respondents with detailed features that may characterize a criminal incident, such as offender behavior, crime location and whether the offender was a stranger, acquaintance, or relative. If a feature produces a positive response, details on the incident are gathered. When NCVS data are processed, incident report data are classified by elements necessary to define the incident as a crime. If an incident does not satisfy

these criteria, it is not counted as a crime.

Uses of NCVS data

NCVS data have informed a wide audience concerned with crime and crime prevention. Researchers at academic, government, private, and nonprofit research institutions use NCVS data to prepare reports, policy recommendations, scholarly publications, testimony before Congress, and documentation for use in courts. Community groups and government agencies use the data to develop neighborhood watch and victim assistance and compensation programs. Law enforcement agencies use NCVS findings for training. The data appear in public service announcements on crime prevention and crime documentaries. Finally, print and broadcast media regularly cite NCVS findings when reporting on a host of crime-related topics.