

Selected Findings from BJS

March 1994, NCJ-147186

National Crime Victimization Survey

Elderly Crime Victims

In 1992, persons 65 or older experienced about 2.1 million criminal victimizations

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) asks about 100,000 people every 5 months about the crimes they sustained. By interviewing a large sample of households selected to represent the U.S. population, BJS is able to draw accurate conclusions about crime in the Nation. The NCVS includes the violent crimes of rape, robbery, and assault; personal theft; and crimes that occur in households such as burglary, household larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

Persons age 65 or older are the least likely of all age groups in the Nation to experience crime

Age	Number of victimizations per 1,000 persons or households		
	Violent crime	Personal theft	Household crime
12-24	64.6	112.7	309.3
25-49	27.2	71.2	200.2
50-64	8.5	38.3	133.0
65 or older	4.0	19.5	78.5

Persons age 65 or older comprise about 14% of persons age 12 or older interviewed in the NCVS but report less than 2% of all victimizations. Unless otherwise noted, the data presented here are from a special analysis of the NCVS for elderly victims that aggregated data from 1987 to 1990. Trend data and information on the current rates of elderly victimizations are from the 1992 NCVS.

Persons between the ages of 12 and 24 have the highest victimization rates for all types of crime, while those age 65 or older have the lowest.

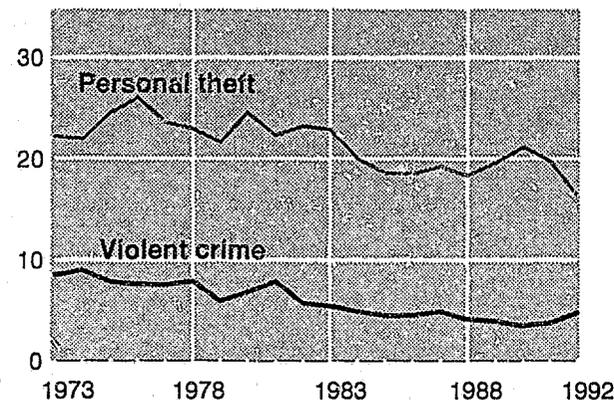
- The violent crime rate is nearly 16 times higher for persons under age 25 than for persons over 65 (64.6 versus 4 victimizations per 1,000 persons in each age group). The rate for robbery, one of the crimes of violence,

Crime victimization rates among the elderly have generally been declining

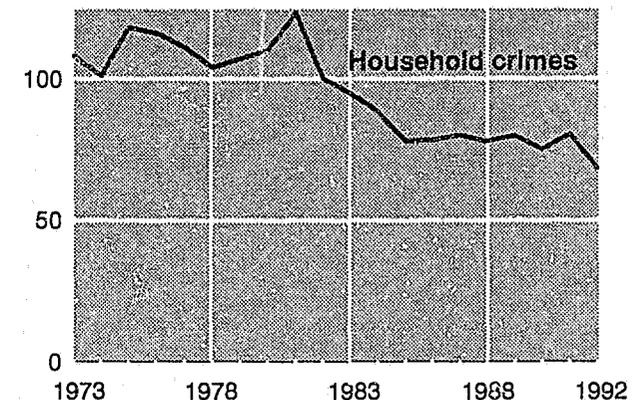
- Over 20 years, the lowest rate of violent crime against the elderly was recorded in 1990, 3.5 per 1,000 persons age 65 or older. This was 61% lower than the 9 crimes per 1,000 persons in 1974, the peak year.

- The rates for personal theft and household crime among the elderly in 1992 were the lowest ever recorded in the 20-year history of NCVS.

Number of victimizations per 1,000 persons age 65 or older



Number of victimizations per 1,000 households headed by a person age 65 or older



for those under 25 is nearly 6 times higher than for those age 65 or older.

- According to the FBI, 5% of the murder victims in 1992 were age 65 or older.
- Just as for personal crime victimizations, persons over the age of 65 are significantly less likely to become victims of all forms of household crime than younger age groups.
- Personal larceny with contact (purse snatching and pocket picking) is an exception. Those who are 65 or older were about as likely as those under age 65 to be victims of personal larceny with contact.

The elderly appear to be particularly susceptible to crimes motivated by economic gain

Crimes motivated by economic gain include robbery and personal theft, as well as the household crimes of larceny, burglary, and motor vehicle theft. Like the general population, the elderly are most susceptible to household crimes and least susceptible to violent crimes. Unlike younger victims of violence, elderly victims of violence are about as likely to be robbed as assaulted. Robberies are 38% of the violent crimes against the elderly but 20% of the violence experienced by persons younger than age 65.

Injured elderly victims of violent crime are more likely than younger victims to suffer a serious injury

Violent offenders injure about a third of all victims. Among the violent crime victims age 65 or older, 9% suffer serious injuries like broken bones and loss of consciousness. By comparison, 5% of younger victims suffer serious injuries. In addition, when injured, almost half the older victims but a fourth of the younger ones receive medical care in a

Outcome	Percent of violent crime victims	
	Under 65	65 or older
Injured	31%	33%
Serious	5	9
Minor	26	24
Received medical care	15	19
Hospital care	8	14

Note: Serious injuries are broken bones, loss of teeth, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, rape or attempted rape injuries, or undetermined injuries requiring 2 or more days of hospitalization. Minor injuries are bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, swelling, or undetermined injuries requiring less than 2 days of hospitalization.

hospital.

Elderly violent crime victims are more likely than younger victims to face assailants who are strangers

Most victims of violent crime are attacked by a stranger rather than by a relative or someone whom the victim knows. Robbery victims age 65 or older are more likely than younger victims to be particularly vulnerable to

Percent of violent crime victims whose offenders are:

	Relationship			
	Relatives	Acquaintances	Strangers	unknown
Crimes of violence				
Under 65	8%	33%	56%	3%
65 or older	8	20	64	8
Robbery				
Under 65	5	17	74	4
65 or older	3	5	83	9
Assault				
Under 65	9	36	52	3
65 or older	13	32	47	8

offenders whom they do not know.

Place of occurrence

	Place of occurrence					
	Total	At home	Near home	On the street	In public or business facility	Elsewhere
Crimes of violence						
Under 65	100%	14%	11%	39%	21%	15%
65 or older	100	25	25	31	9	10
Robbery						
Under 65	100	13	9	52	16	10
65 or older	100	20	21	37	13	10
Assault						
Under 65	100	14	12	36	21	15
65 or older	100	27	29	27	7	10

	Percent of violent crime victims	
	Under 65	65 or older
Unarmed offenders	65%	62%
Armed offenders	35	38
Type of weapon used		
Guns	36%	41%
Knives or sharp instruments	30	29
Blunt objects	19	18
Other weapons	15	12

Most victims of violent crime, regardless of age, face lone assailants, but the likelihood of encountering multiple offenders varies by type of crime

About half the robbery victims age 65 or older are accosted by multiple robbers; more than half of the robbery victims under 65 face single offenders. For aggravated assault, the reverse is true. Younger victims of aggravated assault are more likely than older victims to face multiple offenders (29% versus 20%).

Elderly victims less often than younger victims act to protect themselves during a violent crime

Victims age 65 or older take self-protective measures in 58% of their victimizations, compared to 73% of the younger victims. Moreover, the older victims are less likely to use physical action such as attacking or chasing the offender or resisting in some other way. Those persons age 65 or older who do protect themselves use nonphysical action, including arguing or reasoning with the offender, screaming, or running away.

Elderly victims of robbery and personal theft are more likely than younger victims to report those crimes to the police

Seven out of ten elderly victims and just over 5 out of 10 victims under age 65 report a robbery or attempted robbery to the police. No measurable difference, however, distinguishes older from younger victims in reporting aggravated assault or household crimes to the police.

Among the elderly, certain groups were generally more likely to experience a crime than others

Victim characteristics	Number of victimizations per 1,000		
	Persons 65 or older		Households headed by a person 65 or older
	Violence	Theft	Household crime
Sex			
Male	4.9	19.8	82.2
Female	3.4	19.4	74.3
Age			
65 to 74	4.7	22.9	82.2
75 and over	3.0	14.2	74.3
Race			
White	3.6	19.5	70.9
Black	7.6	19.6	154.1
Family income			
Less than \$7,500	12.0	29.1	76.3
\$7,500-\$14,999	8.4	30.4	70.2
\$15,000-\$24,999	6.5	40.3	81.3
\$25,000 or more	6.1	60.8	96.0
Marital status			
Never married	3.0	18.2	77.6
Widowed	4.2	4.2	75.1
Married	7.6	26.3	71.1
Divorced/separated	11.3	35.4	110.4
Place of residence			
Urban	7.1	26.4	112.6
Suburban	2.9	19.6	61.2
Rural	2.2	11.4	64.5
Form of tenure			
Own	3.1	17.8	82.0
Rent	7.7	26.7	66.8

< Elderly men generally have higher victimization rates than elderly women. Elderly women, however, have higher rates of personal larceny with contact such as purse snatching.

< The elderly age 65 to 74 have higher rates of victimization than those age 75 or older.

< Elderly blacks are more likely than elderly whites to be crime victims. However, rates of personal larceny that did not involve contact between the victim and offender were greater for whites.

< The elderly with the lowest incomes experience higher violence rates than those elderly with higher family incomes. Those elderly with the highest family income have the highest rates of personal theft or household crime.

< Elderly persons who are either separated or divorced, from among all marital statuses, have the highest rates of victimization for all types of crime.

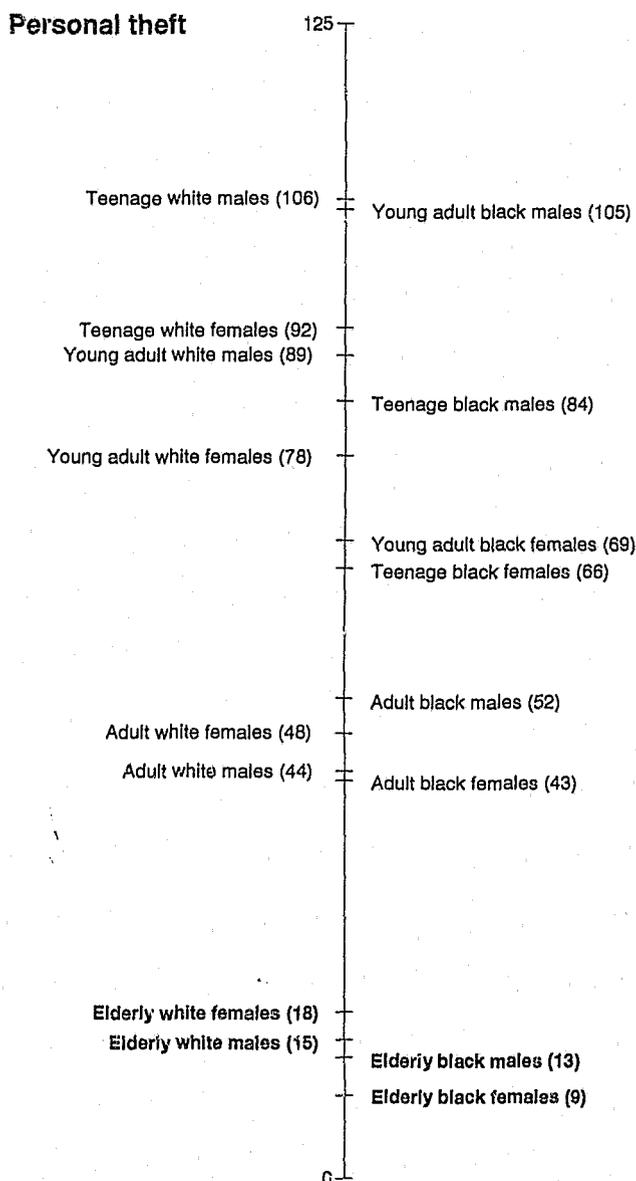
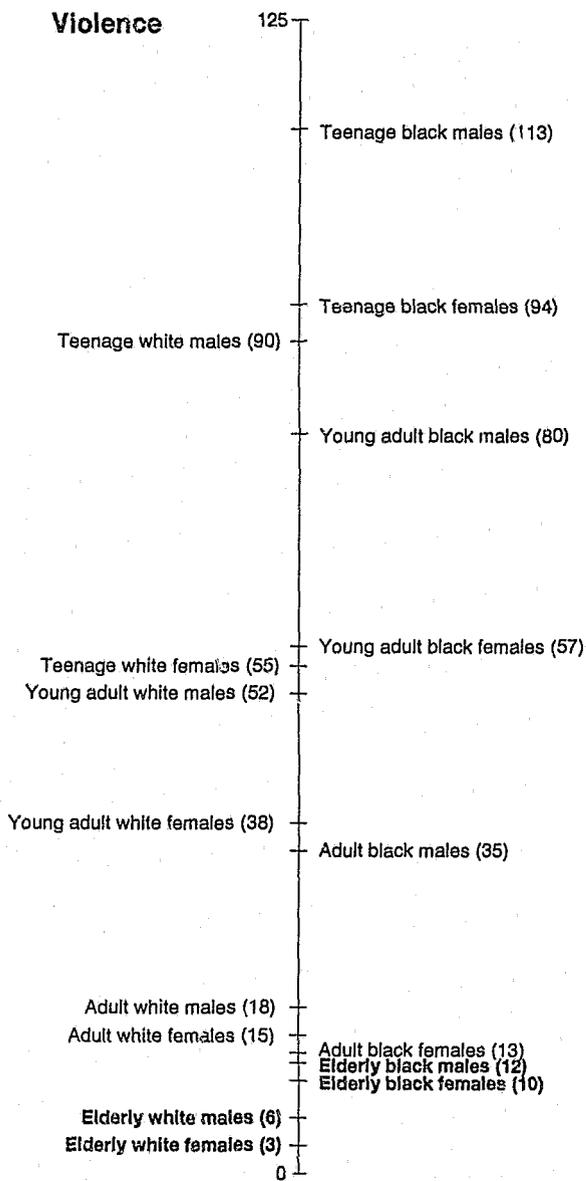
< Elderly residents in cities have the highest rates of victimization for all types of crime, compared to suburban or rural elderly.

< Elderly renters are more likely than owners to experience both violence and personal theft. However, elderly homeowners are more likely than renters to be victims of household crime.

White women age 65 or older have the lowest violent crime rates

Black women age 65 or older have the lowest personal theft rates

Number of victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older



Note: Teenage = age 12-19
 Young adult = age 20-34
 Adult = age 35-64
 Elderly = age 65 and over

Sources

Most of the information in this report came from the BJS Special Report, *Elderly Victims* by Ronet Bachman, Ph.D., released in October 1992 (NCJ-138330). Other sources include: BJS, *Criminal Victimization in the U.S., 1992*, forthcoming (NCJ-145125); BJS, *Highlights from 20 Years of Surveying Crime Victims: The National Crime Victimization Survey*, October 1993 (NCJ-144525); FBI, *Crime in the United States, 1992*, October 1993; and National Opinion Research Center data presented in the BJS *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1992* (NCJ-143496).

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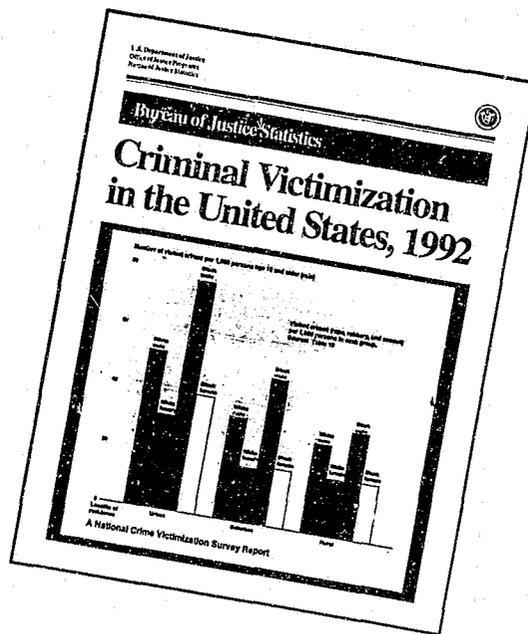
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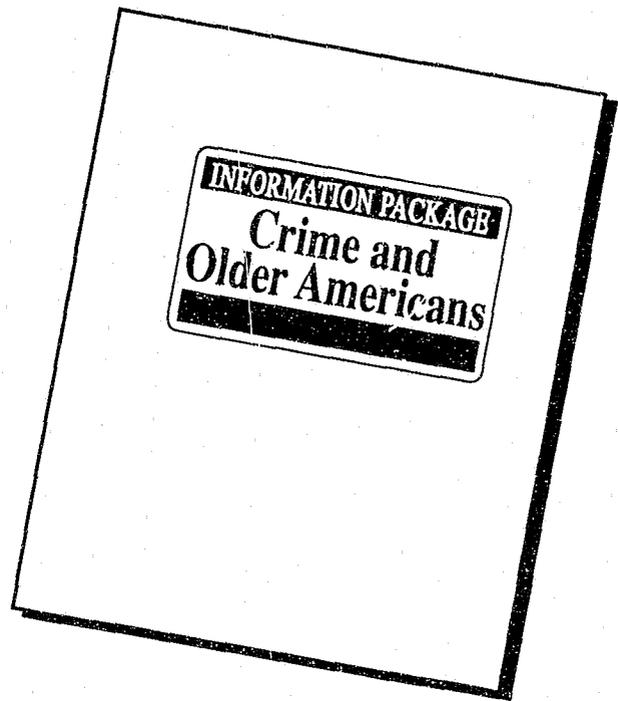
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