Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bulletin

Tracking Offenders: The Child Victim

Society views as especially heinous a
crime in which the victim is a child.
Generally lacking both the physical and
psychological strength to resist or de-
fend themselves adequately, children
can suffer trauma that leaves physical
and mental scars lasting a lifetime.
Society's official response to a crime
when a child is the victim is, therefore,
a matter of general concern.

This bulletin focuses on the criminal
justice system's handling of offenders
against children, comparing it with the
processing of offenders against all vic-
tims.

The statistics presented here do not
permit sharply drawn conclusions. Prob-
lems of offense definition, identifica-
tion of the victims' ages, comparability
of data from different jurisdictions, and
missing data cloud the findings in ways
that cannot currently be accurately
estimated or fully appreciated.

Consequently, the findings pre-
sented here are best described as pre-
liminary results of a pilot study
addressing the processing of offenders
against children.

Overview of findings

Overall, the pattern for these
crimes strongly resembles that for all
felony offenses (See BJS bulletin,
"Tracking Offenders," November 1983,
NCJ-91572). The "funnel effect" is
readily apparent: at each stage of the
adjudication process, the number of of-
fenders is reduced, leaving only a com-
parative few to be sentenced to prison

The first bulletin to present data
for the Offender-Based Transac-
tion Statistics (OBTS) was pub-
lished in November 1983. That
bulletin, "Tracking Offenders,"
presented preliminary aggregate
data from four unnamed States in
order to demonstrate the utility of
a dataset that can trace felons
from their arrests to the final
dispositions of their cases. This
bulletin presents data supplied by
six States since the publication of
"Tracking Offenders." While the
analyses presented are from initial
data, and subject to change as
more data become available, they
are based on previously unavail-
able data and suggest a trend that
merits further study.

The data show that offenders
against children are prosecuted
and convicted more often than
other offenders. Yet, fewer of-
fenders against children are incar-
cerated and, when incarcerated,

receive shorter sentences to prison.
Whether this pattern is attributable
to the offender/child victim rela-
tionship, differences in the severity
of crimes against adult victims as
opposed to crimes agains. child vic-
tims, or other, undiscovered, causes
cannot be determined from these
data.

Participation in the OBTS program
is growing. In addition to the States
shown here, Minnesota and the Virgin
Islands will provide data for calendar
1982 and another three States have
indicated they may participate.

BJS continues to encourage all
States to participate in the OBTS
program. As this and the prior
"Tracking Offenders" bulletin illus-
trate, OBTS represents a powerful
tool for investigating how the
criminal justice system responds to
the more serious offenders.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

terms exceeding 1 year. Befitting the
seriousness of the crimes addressed
here, 9 of every 10 persons arrested for
these crimes are prosecuted. Among
persons arrested for any felony, the
comparable figure is 1 of every 2.

Among those prosecuted for the
four offenses studied here, 2 are con-
victed for every 1 whose case is dismis-
sed. This is about the same proportion
as for all felony arrestees. Because of
the higher prosecution rate, however,

half of all offenders in the four crime
groups analyzed are convicted com-
pared to a third of all felony arrestees.

But, as is the case with all felony
arrestees, the majority of convicted
persons are not incarcerated—rather,
they are placed on probation or given
suspended sentences.

Table 1 shows that most persons ar-
rested for four specific crimes against
children are prosecuted (93 of every

100 arrested), and a majority of those arrested are convicted (64 of 100 arrests). However, a minority of those convicted are incarcerated (24 of 64), while a third of those incarcerated are sentenced to more than a year in prison (8).

The race of the offender does not appear to be a factor in the probability of conviction (61% of white arrestees compared to 60% of other arrestees); however, probability of conviction if arrested does vary by sex of the offender (64% of male arrestees compared to 53% of female arrestees).

The probability of being sentenced to more than a year in prison if convicted decreases with the offender's age up to age 39 before increasing for those aged 40 and older. Sixteen percent of persons aged 19 and under convicted of offenses against children are sentenced to a prison term exceeding 1 year compared to 13% of persons aged 20 to 24, 8% of persons aged 25 to 29, and 7% of persons aged 30 to 39 years. The comparable figure for persons aged 40 and over convicted of offenses against children is 24%.

In looking at particular offenses, table 1 shows that for all offenders (regardless of the age of the victim), 19 of every 100 persons arrested for kidnapping receive a prison sentence of more than a year. However, Offender-Based Transaction Statistics (OBTS) data indicate that for kidnapping involving a child victim, approximately 4 out of 100 persons arrested receive a prison sentence of more than a year.

Among persons arrested for sexual assault, about 17 of every 100 receive prison sentences of more than a year. The comparable figure for sexual assault involving a child victim is about 13 of every 100 persons arrested.

For other sex offenses, 10 of every 100 persons arrested receive prison sentences exceeding 1 year. Among persons arrested for other sex offenses with child victims, the comparable rate is 8 of every 100.

Among persons arrested for family offenses, about 4 of every 100 are sentenced to prison terms of more than 1 year. Among persons arrested for family offenses involving a child victim, the comparable statistic is approximately 2 of 100.

When these four offense categories are combined, approximately 8 of every 100 persons arrested for offenses against children receive prison sentences of more than a year, compared to about 12 of every 100 persons arrested when all victims are considered together.

Analysis of State patterns

The American system of justice has evolved from the English common law into a complex series of procedures and decisions. The due process guarantees of the U.S. Constitution require that specific steps be taken in the administration of criminal justice, but criminal cases may be handled differently in different jurisdictions according to State criminal codes. Consequently, it is appropriate to discuss each of the States separately.

California. California (table 2) differs slightly from the overall pattern of offender processing shown in table 1. Most persons arrested for offenses against children are prosecuted (89 of every 100 arrestees), and a majority of arrestees are convicted (72 of 100). A majority of those convicted are incarcerated (40 of 72 persons convicted), but a relative few (7) are sentenced to prison terms of more than a year.

Whites arrested for offenses against children appear to have a higher conviction rate than other races (73% of white arrestees are convicted compared to 65% of other arrestees), and males are more likely to be convicted than females (74% of male arrestees are convicted compared to 63% of female arrestees). Age does not appear to affect the probability either of conviction or of being sentenced to a prison term exceeding 1 year.

Table 1. Four States (average 1980 and 1981 OBTS data; California, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	For 100 arrests		of those prosecuted				of those convicted		Incarcerated	
	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Total	Less than 1 year	More than 1 year
Offense										
Four offense average										
Child victim	7	93	25	2	2	64	40	24	16	8
All victims	10	90	27	4	2	57	31	26	14	12
Kidnapping										
Child victim	6	94	39	1	0	54	30	24	20	4
All victims	10	90	34	3	1	52	22	30	11	19
Sexual assault										
Child victim	10	90	19	4	2	65	30	35	22	13
All victims	14	86	26	5	1	54	26	28	11	17
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	5	95	11	1	2	81	59	22	14	8
All victims	5	95	18	7	5	65	35	30	20	10
Family offenses										
Child victim	7	93	29	1	2	61	42	19	17	2
All victims	10	90	34	1	3	52	34	18	14	4
Offender characteristics										
Race										
White										
Child victim	8	92	26	2	3	61	35	26	18	8
All victims	8	92	27	3	3	59	33	26	15	11
Other										
Child victim	8	92	26	4	2	60	37	23	14	9
All victims	16	84	27	6	2	49	21	28	11	17
Sex										
Male										
Child victim	7	93	25	3	1	64	38	26	17	9
All victims	10	90	28	4	2	56	30	26	13	13
Female										
Child victim	8	92	33	1	5	53	39	14	13	1
All victims	8	92	33	1	4	54	36	18	15	3
Age										
19 years and under										
Child victim	14	86	23	1	0	62	37	25	15	10
All victims	8	92	35	3	2	52	29	23	10	13
20 to 24 years										
Child victim	7	93	25	1	4	63	37	26	18	8
All victims	11	89	26	4	2	57	30	27	13	14
25 to 29 years										
Child victim	5	95	23	6	3	63	39	24	19	5
All victims	9	91	27	5	2	57	30	27	15	12
30 to 39 years										
Child victim	5	95	26	2	0	67	46	21	16	5
All victims	10	90	25	4	2	59	34	25	15	10
40 years and over										
Child victim	10	90	19	2	2	67	37	30	14	16
All victims	13	87	27	3	3	54	30	24	16	8

Table 2. California (combined 1980 and 1981 OBTS data)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	For 100 arrests		of those prosecuted				of those convicted		Incarcerated	
	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Total	Less than 1 year	More than 1 year
Offense										
Four offense average										
Child victim	11	89	16	1	0	72	32	40	33	7
All victims	15	85	17	1	0	67	27	40	26	14
Kidnapping										
Child victim	10	90	26	1	0	63	29	34	33	1
All victims	14	86	20	1	0	65	22	43	23	20
Sexual assault										
Child victim	11	89	8	1	0	80	26	54	47	7
All victims	19	81	17	2	0	62	23	39	21	18
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	10	90	14	2	0	74	32	42	30	12
All victims	10	90	13	2	0	75	32	43	31	12
Family offenses										
Child victim	12	88	20	1	0	67	34	33	32	1
All victims	16	84	20	0	0	64	32	32	31	1
Offender characteristics										
Race										
White										
Child victim	10	90	16	1	0	73	33	40	34	6
All victims	12	88	17	2	0	69	29	40	28	12
Other										
Child victim	17	83	17	1	0	65	28	37	29	8
All victims	21	79	17	2	0	60	23	37	19	18
Sex										
Male										
Child victim	10	90	15	1	0	74	32	42	34	8
All victims	15	85	17	1	0	67	27	40	26	14
Female										
Child victim	14	86	22	1	0	63	34	29	28	1
All victims	14	86	22	1	0	63	33	30	27	3
Age										
19 years and under										
Child victim	12	88	13	1	0	74	39	35	31	4
All victims	14	86	14	1	0	71	35	36	23	13
20 to 24 years										
Child victim	10	90	15	1	0	74	31	43	37	6
All victims	16	84	17	1	0	66	25	41	25	16
25 to 29 years										
Child victim	12	88	17	1	0	70	29	41	34	7
All victims	16	84	18	1	0	65	25	40	25	15
30 to 39 years										
Child victim	10	90	18	2	0	70	32	38	32	6
All victims	15	85	18	2	0	65	26	39	27	12
40 years and over										
Child victim	11	89	15	2	0	72	34	38	31	7
All victims	13	87	17	2	0	68	31	37	28	9

New York. New York (table 3) tends to follow the pattern observed in table 1. Most arrestees are prosecuted (95 of every 100), and the majority are convicted (53 of 100 arrestees). Of those convicted, a minority are incarcerated (19 of 53 persons convicted), and fewer than half of these are sentenced to a prison term exceeding 1 year (9).

Race does not appear to be related to probability of conviction (46 of every 100 white arrestees are convicted compared to 46 of every 100 other arrestees); however, the sex of the arrestee appears related to probability of conviction (54 of every 100 male arrestees are convicted compared to 38 of every 100 female arrestees). While older offenders generally face an increased probability of conviction, the younger the arrestee, the greater the likelihood if convicted of receiving a sentence to prison exceeding 1 year.

Ohio. Ohio (table 4) submitted only a minimal number of records. The data are presented to demonstrate that OBTS can be used to detect patterns even with limited data. It is hoped that increased data-gathering in Ohio will confirm the pattern displayed in this table: most persons arrested for offenses against children are prosecuted (99 of 100 arrestees) and convicted (70 of 100 arrestees); a minority of those convicted are incarcerated (17 of 70 persons convicted); and a relative few (2) are sentenced to more than a year.

Race cannot be determined to be a factor at this point, given the small number of cases in Ohio's OBTS file. However, contrary to the pattern observed in other States, the probability of conviction for female arrestees exceeds the probability of conviction for male arrestees (80% of female arrestees are convicted compared to 61% of male arrestees).

As in New York, in Ohio the probability of conviction appears to increase with the age of the arrestee; 65% of arrestees between the ages of 20 and 24 are convicted compared to 75% of arrestees aged 25 to 29 and 80% of arrestees aged 30 to 39.

The small number of cases in the Ohio OBTS data file makes it extremely difficult to discern the relationship between the age of the arrestee and the probability of being sentenced to incarceration.

Table 3. New York (combined 1980 and 1981 OBTS data)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	For 100 arrests		of those prosecuted				of those convicted			
	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Incarcerated Total	Less than 1 year	More than 1 year
Offense										
Four offense average										
Child victim	5	95	40	1	1	53	34	19	10	9
All victims	5	95	46	3	1	45	23	22	10	12
Kidnapping										
Child victim	3	97	53	0	0	44	30	14	7	7
All victims	2	98	56	2	1	39	18	21	8	13
Sexual assault										
Child victim	9	91	41	2	1	47	24	23	9	14
All victims	6	94	43	3	1	47	21	26	10	16
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	1	99	12	0	0	87	75	12	12	0
All victims	0	100	45	1	0	54	32	22	20	2
Family offenses										
Child victim	1	99	38	1	0	60	48	12	11	1
All victims	5	95	57	1	0	37	28	9	7	2
Offender characteristics										
Race										
White										
Child victim	5	95	46	2	1	46	24	22	10	12
All victims	4	96	43	2	1	50	27	23	11	12
Other										
Child victim	6	94	46	1	1	46	27	19	10	9
All victims	6	94	50	3	1	40	18	22	10	12
Sex										
Male										
Child victim	5	95	39	1	1	54	34	20	10	10
All victims	5	95	46	2	1	46	23	23	11	12
Female										
Child victim	1	99	59	2	0	38	34	4	4	0
All victims	6	94	61	1	0	32	24	8	5	3
Age										
19 years and under										
Child victim	6	94	48	1	0	45	29	16	7	9
All victims	5	95	44	2	1	48	26	22	9	13
20 to 24 years										
Child victim	7	93	37	2	1	53	29	24	13	11
All victims	5	95	45	3	1	46	21	25	12	13
25 to 29 years										
Child victim	1	99	41	1	0	57	35	22	12	10
All victims	5	95	48	3	0	44	21	23	10	13
30 to 39 years										
Child victim	6	94	41	3	0	50	34	16	8	8
All victims	4	96	50	3	1	42	22	20	9	11
40 years and over										
Child victim	3	97	32	0	1	64	48	16	10	6
All victims	5	95	45	2	1	47	26	21	12	9

Table 4. Ohio (combined 1980 and 1981 OBTS data)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	For 100 arrests		of those prosecuted				of those convicted			
	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Incarcerated Total	Less than 1 year	More than 1 year
Offense										
Four offense average										
Child victim	1	99	27	2	0	70	53	17	15	2
All victims	3	97	28	2	0	67	50	17	11	6
Kidnapping										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	6	94	41	0	0	53	29	24	6	18
Sexual assault										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	13	87	27	0	0	60	40	20	7	13
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	0	100	0	20	0	80	40	40	20	20
Family offenses										
Child victim	1	99	27	0	0	72	56	16	16	0
All victims	0	100	27	2	0	71	59	12	12	0
Offender characteristics										
Race										
White										
Child victim	1	99	27	2	0	70	53	17	15	2
All victims	3	97	28	2	0	67	50	17	11	6
Other										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sex										
Male										
Child victim	1	99	34	4	0	61	42	19	15	4
All victims	4	96	32	2	0	62	45	17	9	8
Female										
Child victim	1	99	19	0	0	80	66	14	14	0
All victims	0	100	17	0	0	83	66	17	17	0
Age										
19 years and under										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	0	100	64	0	0	36	27	9	0	9
20 to 24 years										
Child victim	0	100	35	0	0	65	50	15	10	5
All victims	3	97	26	3	0	68	52	16	8	8
25 to 29 years										
Child victim	1	99	16	8	0	75	50	25	25	0
All victims	0	100	26	4	0	70	48	22	18	4
30 to 39 years										
Child victim	0	100	20	0	0	80	70	10	10	0
All victims	4	96	16	0	0	80	64	16	12	4
40 years and over										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	17	83	33	0	0	50	33	17	17	0

* Insufficient data to determine.

Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania (table 5), most persons arrested for offenses against children are prosecuted (89 of 100 persons arrested), and the majority of arrestees are convicted (61 of 100). As in other States, a minority of those convicted are incarcerated (21 of 61 persons convicted), and relatively few receive sentences exceeding 1 year (13).

Both race and sex appear to be related to the probability of conviction: 55 of every 100 white arrestees are convicted compared to 69 of every 100 other arrestees; and 69 of every 100 male arrestees are convicted compared to 30 of every 100 female arrestees.

Pennsylvania exhibits the same pattern of relationships between age and probabilities of conviction and sentencing to a prison term exceeding 1 year observed in table 1. Age does not seem to affect the probability of conviction, but the probability of receiving a sentence exceeding 1 year if convicted decreases from 25% for persons aged 19 and under to approximately 9% for persons aged 30 to 39 before increasing to 54% of persons aged 40 and over.

Utah. Utah (table 6), though providing data from only 1 year, can be compared to the multi-State pattern in part as a verification of observed patterns. As in the other States, in Utah most child offenders are prosecuted (90 of every 100 persons arrested), and most are convicted (80 of every 100 arrestees). A minority of those convicted are incarcerated (18 of 80 persons convicted), while relatively few of these receive sentences exceeding one year (2).

Sex appears related to probability of conviction if arrested (82 of every 100 males arrested for offenses against children are convicted compared to 63 of every 100 females arrested). The limited number of cases in the Utah OBTS data file preclude the identification of any relationship between the arrestee's age and probability of conviction or incarceration.

Table 5. Pennsylvania (combined 1980 and 1981 OBTS data)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Total	Less than 1 year	More than 1 year
Offense										
Four offense average										
Child victim	11	89	16	4	8	61	40	21	8	13
All victims	17	83	16	10	8	49	24	25	8	17
Kidnapping										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	19	81	19	10	3	49	17	32	7	25
Sexual assault										
Child victim	11	89	8	9	4	68	39	29	11	18
All victims	20	80	17	13	3	47	20	27	8	19
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	6	94	6	0	6	82	71	11	0	11
All victims	9	91	14	4	19	54	37	17	10	7
Family offenses										
Child victim	14	86	31	0	12	43	29	14	8	6
All victims	15	85	32	0	12	41	26	15	9	6
Offender characteristics										
Race										
White										
Child victim	17	83	16	3	9	55	29	26	12	14
All victims	15	85	18	6	11	50	27	23	11	12
Other										
Child victim	2	98	15	8	6	69	56	13	2	11
All victims	20	80	15	14	4	47	21	26	4	22
Sex										
Male										
Child victim	10	90	11	6	4	69	44	25	10	15
All victims	17	83	16	10	8	49	24	25	8	17
Female										
Child victim	15	85	33	0	22	30	22	8	4	4
All victims	15	85	32	0	15	38	23	15	10	5
Age										
19 years and under										
Child victim	25	75	8	0	0	67	42	25	8	17
All victims	14	86	16	11	7	52	26	26	7	19
20 to 24 years										
Child victim	10	90	14	2	14	60	38	22	12	10
All victims	18	82	17	9	7	49	22	27	8	19
25 to 29 years										
Child victim	9	91	17	13	13	48	40	8	4	4
All victims	16	84	17	11	7	49	24	25	7	18
30 to 39 years										
Child victim	6	94	25	3	0	66	47	19	13	6
All victims	18	82	17	10	8	47	23	24	11	13
40 years and over										
Child victim	18	82	9	4	4	65	30	35	0	35
All victims	16	84	15	10	10	49	29	20	6	14

* Insufficient data to determine.

Table 6. Utah (1981 OBTS data)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Total	Less than 1 year	More than 1 year
Offense										
Four offense average										
Child victim	10	90	9	0	1	80	62	18	16	2
All victims	6	94	17	1	2	74	47	27	11	16
Kidnapping										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	3	97	13	2	11	71	27	44	14	30
Sexual assault										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	7	93	20	1	2	70	40	30	6	24
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	1	99	19	0	0	80	61	19	19	0
Family offenses										
Child victim	8	92	9	0	0	83	65	18	17	1
All victims	7	93	11	1	1	80	62	18	16	2
Offender characteristics										
Race										
White										
Child victim	10	90	10	0	2	78	59	19	18	1
All victims	6	94	16	1	2	75	47	28	12	16
Other										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	2	98	17	2	4	75	39	36	12	24
Sex										
Male										
Child victim	9	91	8	0	1	82	64	18	17	1
All victims	5	95	16	1	3	75	47	28	12	16
Female										
Child victim	12	88	25	0	0	63	50	13	13	0
All victims	16	84	40	4	0	40	32	8	4	4
Age										
19 years and under										
Child victim	8	92	17	0	8	67	50	17	17	0
All victims	8	92	33	0	5	54	34	20	10	10
20 to 24 years										
Child victim	13	87	5	0	0	82	68	14	14	0
All victims	9	91	12	1	1	77	49	28	11	17
25 to 29 years										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	0	100	18	2	5	75	46	29	11	18
30 to 39 years										
Child victim	7	93	13	0	0	80	53	27	20	7
All victims	5	95	15	1	2	77	51	26	8	18
40 years and over										
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	4	96	22	1	1	72	42	30	18	12

* Insufficient data to determine.

Virginia. The Virginia data (table 7) are for illustrative purposes only. The State did not provide sufficient records to make determinations, and a programming error precluded an examination of sentences in greater detail than "not incarcerated" or "incarcerated."

However, the data presented still suggest a pattern: most offenders against children in Virginia are prosecuted (80 of every 100 persons arrested), and a majority are convicted (53 of every 100 arrestees). Contrary to the pattern observed in four of the six reporting States, the majority of those convicted are incarcerated (46 of 53 persons convicted).

Table 8 is included for research purposes. It reflects the number of OBTS records that are available from each participating State and the number extracted and used in the preparation of the previous tables and descriptions.

Again, a word of caution. The State tables cannot be used to make accurate inferences about what is occurring within a State or in the Nation as a whole. Rather, they suggest the need for further research to determine whether the patterns observed in existing OBTS data are unique to that data set alone or whether the observed patterns are indicative of State and national practices in the handling of offenders against children.

Interpreting the findings

In interpreting the results of this study, there are several important qualifications that must be noted.

First, OBTS uses the offense classification system developed for the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Under this system, most crime

Table 7. Virginia (1981 OBTS data)
Outcome for offenders by offense, race, sex, and age

Offense and offender characteristics	Not prosecuted	Prosecuted	For 100 arrests of those prosecuted				of those convicted	
			Dismissed	Acquitted	Other disposition	Convicted	Not incarcerated	Total incarcerated[a]
Offense								
Four offense average								
Child victim	20	80	27	0	0	53	7	46
All victims	16	84	24	3	0	57	18	39
Kidnapping								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	36	64	55	0	0	9	0	9
Sexual assault								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	8	92	31	0	0	61	7	54
Other sex offenses								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	12	88	14	2	0	72	24	48
Family offenses								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	19	81	30	5	0	46	13	33
Offender characteristics								
Race								
White								
Child victim	30	70	40	0	0	30	0	30
All victims	17	83	24	3	0	56	20	36
Other								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	15	85	22	3	0	60	11	49
Sex								
Male								
Child victim	23	77	23	0	0	54	8	46
All victims	16	84	22	3	0	59	18	41
Female								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	21	79	30	4	0	45	17	28
Age								
19 years and under								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	18	82	32	2	0	48	12	36
20 to 24 years								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	17	83	20	4	0	59	19	40
25 to 29 years								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	17	83	18	2	0	63	23	40
30 to 39 years								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	15	85	25	4	0	56	16	40
40 years and over								
Child victim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
All victims	13	87	27	7	0	53	17	36

* Insufficient data to determine.
[a] Data not available on length of sentence to incarceration due to programming error.

Table 8. OBTS Records available in participating States and those used for this study.

Offense	California 1980	California 1981	New York 1980	New York 1981	Ohio 1980	Ohio 1981	Pennsylvania 1980	Pennsylvania 1981	Utah 1981	Virginia 1981
Total available	184,620	196,529	103,581	113,600	8,485	7,181	35,995	42,272	17,242	31,925
Records for selected offenses extracted for bulletin										
Child victim	3,196	3,332	219	459	17	30	63	69	74	15
All victims	9,396	10,415	3,985	4,554	47	56	1,652	2,128	487	805
Kidnapping										
Child victim	186	208	7	23	2	3	0	0	0	0
All victims	1,809	1,823	380	123	11	6	178	531	63	22
Sexual assault										
Child victim	312	336	87	290	1	1	31	35	7	1
All victims	3,570	3,779	2,831	3,059	8	7	1,202	797	238	13
Other sex offenses										
Child victim	1,526	1,488	3	5	1	2	7	10	1	4
All victims	2,195	2,609	332	384	2	3	247	757	73	340
Family offenses										
Child victim	1,172	1,300	122	141	13	24	25	24	66	10
All victims	1,822	2,204	442	988	26	40	25	43	113	430

categories do not specify the minor/adult status of the victim. The general crime categories in OBTS data collected thus far for which offenders against children can be distinguished from offenders against all victims are kidnapping, sexual assault, other sexual offenses, and family offenses. Thus, this bulletin is limited to these offense categories.

Within these major groupings are crime categories where the victim can only be a minor, e.g. child neglect, categories where the victim can only be an adult, e.g. nonpayment of alimony, as well as categories that are subdivided by the status of the victim, e.g. kidnapping an adult for ransom and kidnapping a minor for ransom.

In each of the four major crime groups addressed here, there is also a residual category for cases where the status of the victim is not known, as well as a few crimes for which the status of the victim is unspecified. In preparing the data for this report, only the numbers reported for those offenses that specified a minor victim were aggregated to provide the total count of crimes involving minor victims in each broad category. Therefore, this method undercounts the number of such cases.

These are the specific crimes included in each major offense grouping:

kidnapping—victim age status specified: kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping to sexual assault, and general kidnapping; victim age status not specified: abduction not for ransom or sexual assault, airplane hijacking, taking hostage for escape, and miscellaneous kidnapping.

sexual assault—victim age status not specified: forcible rape, carnal abuse, and other miscellaneous sexual assaults; sodomy (victim age status specified); and statutory rape (victim always a minor for this offense).

other sexual offenses—victim age status specified: homosexual act and incest; victim age status not specified: indecent exposure, voyeurism, and miscellaneous sexual offenses; fondling a child; and seduction of an adult.

family offenses—neglect of family, cruelty toward wife, bigamy, nonpayment of alimony, nonsupport of parent, cruelty toward child, child neglect, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and miscellaneous family offenses (victim age status not specified).

Three limitations imposed by the crime classification categories have an effect on interpretation of the data. There likely exist minor victims among

the offenses coded without the victim's age status. If the number of such unknown minor victims is large, their absence from the total number of cases involving known minor victims reported here could affect the observed results.

Second, the definition of a child is that adopted by the State providing the OBTS data. Therefore, the maximum age at which a victim may still be considered legally a child may differ among the States reported here.

Third, this bulletin does not examine the reason(s) for any observed differences in and among the States in the processing of offenders against children as compared to offenders generally. It simply describes the current situation as it is known through OBTS data, permitting the public and policymakers insight into what is happening should alterations in offender processing be contemplated.

Whether the patterns illustrated here are attributable to the offender/minor victim relationship, differences in the severity of crimes against adult victims as opposed to crimes against minor victims, or other unknown causes cannot be determined from these data.

Methodology

The calendar year as noted in this bulletin refers to the year of disposition of the alleged offense, not the year of arrest. Disposition refers to either a decision not to prosecute or a trial court finding, not any subsequent judicial appeal that may have occurred. It also reflects the sentence imposed, not the actual time that may have been served. Finally, the data focus on felonies (crimes for which the maximum sentence can be more than a year in jail or prison), rather than all types of crimes.

OBTS standards allow the States to submit data on the offender (including age, race, sex, and ethnic origin), the arrest (including arresting agency, date of arrest, arrest offense, and date and type of police disposition), prosecutor or grand jury action, court activities (court dates, disposition offense if different from charge offense, type of court, type of trial, type of counsel, and final plea), the judicial decision and, if convicted, the sentence imposed.

However, the standards are flexible, allowing the States to submit minimal data (age of offender, arrest date and charge, court-disposed offense and date, judicial decision, and sentencing data). Thus, the potential for definitive research into criminal justice issues

using OBTS data depends on the comprehensiveness of State submissions and the number of States reporting.

As a result, readers should view this bulletin as an exploratory effort, investigating the pattern of sentencing decisions involving offenders against child victims identified through available OBTS data. No assumption is made that the available OBTS data are representative of the State of their origin; nor is it assumed that collectively the data accurately reflect national trends or patterns.

The tables displayed in this bulletin array data in accordance with normal subdivisions: major offense category (and the categories summarized); race (limited to white and other as some States code only to this level); sex; and age (using, for consistency, the group distribution established in the first "Tracking Offenders" bulletin).

The OBTS program. 1980 was selected as the base year for the OBTS program since it is the earliest year that OBTS data were available from more than two States. Also, it will provide the opportunity for trend analysis when data from calendar years 1982 and 1983 are obtained within the next few months. Four States, California, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, have provided OBTS data for calendar 1980 and 1981. An additional two States, Utah and Virginia, have provided 1981 data. In addition to the States included in this bulletin, Minnesota and the Virgin Islands have agreed to provide 1982 data, and three States are now determining if they can provide OBTS data starting with 1983.

Access to OBTS data. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, in cooperation with the States and territories as well as the Regional Justice Information Services (REJIS) in St. Louis, has given researchers access to the 1980 and 1981 OBTS data files through the Criminal Justice Archive and Information Network (CJAIN). When 1982, 1983, and subsequent OBTS data are submitted, REJIS will continue the process of making OBTS data accessible through CJAIN. Researchers may obtain the 1980 and 1981 OBTS data from CJAIN, ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, telephone 313/763-5010.

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