

# Characteristics of Crime Incidents and Victim Demographics: An Examination of Reporting Behaviors

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## RESEARCH QUESTION

*Is the decision to report a crime to police influenced by demographic characteristics of the victim and/or characteristics of the crime?*

## LITERATURE

- The majority of crimes are not reported to the police, and there is little known about why some crimes are reported and others are not (Block & Maxfield, 2011; Hart & Rennison, 2003).
- One of the most important factors in whether a victim reports a crime to the police is the seriousness of the offense (Kääriäinen & Sirén, 2011; Tarling & Morris, 2010).
- Prior research indicates that a weapon used during the commission of the crime increases the odds of reporting (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019).

## HYPOTHESES

*Hypothesis 1:* Crime incidents in which the offender has a weapon will be reported to law enforcement more often than incidents where no weapon was present.

*Hypothesis 2:* Crime incidents in which the offender was unknown to the victim will be reported more often than incidents where the victim was acquainted with the offender.

*Hypothesis 3:* Crime incidents that occur in closer proximity to the victim's home, are violent, include victims who report a larger number of crime incidents in the last year, victimize females, victimize those with a higher level of income, and victimize older citizens will be reported more often.

## METHODOLOGY

- Data was obtained from the National Crime Victimization (NCVS) Concatenated File 1994-2020.
- Dependent variable:*  
Did you report the incident(s) to law enforcement? (Yes/No)
- Independent variable:*  
  - Demographic Variables*  
Age, sex, household income
  - Crime Incident Variables*  
Weapon, relationship to offender, distance from victim's home, the number of crime incidents, type of crime
- A binary logistic regression model was used after multiple imputation was complete and the complex sampling design was accounted for.

## RESULTS

Variables	
Weapon Present	.70 (.04)***
<i>Crime Incident Variables</i>	
Offender is Stranger	.50 (.03)***
Crime Distance	-.24 (.01)***
Violent Crime	.47 (.03)***
Crime Incidents	-.38 (.03)***
<i>Demographic Variables</i>	
Sex	.12 (.03)***
Income (Log)	-.01 (.02)
Age	.00 (.00)
Constant	-.08 (.02)
Adjusted Count R <sup>2</sup>	.40

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

## RESULTS

- Stronger odds of reporting a crime were found when: a weapon was present, the offender was unknown, the crime occurred closer to the victim's home, the victim did not experience a high number of crime incidents in a year, the crime was violent, and the victim was female.
- The odds of reporting a crime were 2.01 times larger when a weapon was present. The discrete change indicates the chance of reporting a crime increases by approximately 13% when a weapon was present.
- The odds of reporting a crime to the police were 1.64 times larger if the victim was unacquainted with the offender.

## CONCLUSION

- The current study provides support that a victim's likelihood to report a crime is higher if a weapon was present and/or the offender was unknown and may be more impactful than characteristics of the victim.
- NCVS could expand data to include geographic information to examine differences across space. Human trafficking questions should also be included in future surveys. The impact of injury also needs to be thoroughly examined.
- Future research must continue to explore the reasons victims do not report crimes and steps that can be taken to increase reporting.

## REFERENCES

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