



## Bureau of Justice Statistics

# Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1994

- **NCVS-measured crimes**
- **Demography of victims**
- **Victims and offenders**
- **Geography**
- **The crime event**
- **Victims and the criminal justice system**
- **Survey instrument**
- **Survey methodology**
- **Glossary**

*A National Crime Victimization Survey Report*

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
Bureau of Justice Statistics



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*A National Crime Victimization Survey Report*

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**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

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Director

This report was prepared by Tina Dorsey and Jayne Robinson of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, under the supervision of Michael R. Rand and Thomas Hester. Bruce Taylor and Patsy A. Klaus provided statistical review and verification. Christopher Laskey, of the Bureau of the Census, produced the tables in this report. Marilyn Marbrook supervised production, assisted by Yvonne Boston.

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Note: Subject citations refer to table numbers, not page numbers.

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

# Highlights

- Residents age 12 or older experienced approximately 42.4 million crimes in 1994. Thirty-one million (73%) were property crimes, 10.9 million (26%) were crimes of violence, and approximately a half million (1%) were personal thefts.

- The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicates there were 51 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older and 308 property crimes per 1,000 households.

- The National Crime Victimization Survey measures personal and household offenses, including crimes not reported to police, by interviewing all occupants age 12 or older in a nationally representative sample of U.S. households.

- Violent crimes include rape/sexual assault, robbery, and both aggravated and simple assault, as measured by the NCVS, and murders from FBI data on homicides reported to the police (see box on page vii).

- Pocket picking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching comprise personal theft. Property crimes consist of household burglary, motor vehicle theft, and thefts of other property.

### 10.9 million violent crimes in 1994

The 10.9 million violent victimizations included: 430 thousand rapes/sexual assaults, 1.3 million robberies, over 2.5 million aggravated assaults, and 6.6 million simple assaults (table 1).

FBI data indicated 23,305 homicides and nonnegligent manslaughters were reported to police during 1994 (see box on page vii).

In terms of crime rates, for every 1,000 persons age 12 or older, there were 51 victims of violence, including:

- 1 sexual assault,
- 2 rapes or attempted rapes per 1,000,
- 6 completed or attempted robberies,

### Criminal victimization experienced in the United States in 1994

|                                   | Number in millions | Rate per 1,000 <sup>a</sup> | Percent of measured crime | Percent of this crime reported to police |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <b>All crimes</b>                 | 42.4               | --                          | 100%                      | 36%                                      |
| <b>Violent crime</b>              | 10.9               | 51                          | 26%                       | 42%                                      |
| Simple assault                    | 6.6                | 31                          | 16                        | 36                                       |
| Aggravated assault                | 2.5                | 12                          | 6                         | 52                                       |
| Robbery                           | 1.3                | 6                           | 3                         | 55                                       |
| Rape/Sexual assault               | .4                 | 2                           | *                         | 32                                       |
| <b>Personal theft<sup>b</sup></b> | .5                 | 2                           | 1%                        | 33%                                      |
| <b>Property crime</b>             | 31.0               | 308                         | 73%                       | 34%                                      |
| Property thefts                   | 23.8               | 236                         | 56                        | 27                                       |
| Household burglary                | 5.5                | 54                          | 13                        | 50                                       |
| Motor vehicle theft               | 1.8                | 18                          | 4                         | 78                                       |

--Not applicable.  
\*Less than .1%.

<sup>a</sup>Per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, or per 1,000 households  
<sup>b</sup>Includes pocket picking and purse snatching.

- In 1994 for every 1,000 persons age 12 or older, there occurred:
  - 2 rapes or attempted rapes
  - 3 assaults with serious injury
  - 4 robberies with property taken.

- The violent crime rate has been essentially unchanged since 1992, following a slight increase between 1985 and 1991. Property crime continued a 15-year decline.

- The young, blacks, and males were most vulnerable to violent crime:
  - 1 in 9 persons age 12 to 15, compared to 1 in 196 age 65 or more
  - 1 in 16 blacks, compared to 1 in 20 whites
  - 1 in 17 males, compared to 1 in 24 females.

- 12 aggravated assaults, and
- 31 simple assaults.

In 1994 there were about 9 murder victims per 100,000 persons.

Attempted violent crimes accounted for 71% (7.7 million) of the 10.9 million crimes of violence. Attempted violent crimes included attempted rapes, attempted robberies, and attempted or threatened violence — including threats with weapons.

- Compared to those households with annual incomes of \$15,000 or more, persons in households with incomes of less than \$15,000 were:
  - 3 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted
  - 2 times more likely to be robbed
  - 1½ times more likely to be a victim of an aggravated assault.

- Almost two-thirds of victims of completed rapes did not report the crime to the police.

- Two-thirds of victims of rape or sexual assault knew their assailants.

- A third of robbery victims were injured as a result of the incident.

Almost a quarter (2.7 million) of all violent victimizations resulted in an injury to the victim. Rape, gun shot or knife wounds, or other injuries requiring hospitalization constitute serious harm. Minor injuries include bruises, black eyes, or broken teeth.

In 1994 a third of all robberies resulted in an injury to the victim. In 36% of completed and 24% of attempted robberies the victim sustained an injury.

**Table 1. Criminal victimizations and victimization rates, 1993-94:  
Estimates from the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey**

| Type of crime                      | Number of victimizations (1,000's) |                     | Victimization rates<br>(per 1,000 persons age 12 or older or per 1,000 households) |                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|--|--------------------|
|                                    | 1993                               | 1994                | 1993   | 1994               |
| <b>All crimes</b>                  | 43,547                             | 42,359 <sup>a</sup> | ...  | ...                |
| <b>Personal crimes<sup>1</sup></b> | 11,365                             | 11,349              | 53.7   | 53.1               |
| Crimes of violence                 | 10,848                             | 10,860              | 51.3   | 50.8               |
| Completed violence                 | 3,213                              | 3,205               | 15.2   | 15.0               |
| Attempted/threatened violence      | 7,635                              | 7,654               | 36.1   | 35.8               |
| Rape/Sexual assault                | 485                                | 433                 | 2.3  | 2.0                |
| Rape/attempted rape                | 313                                | 316                 | 1.5  | 1.5                |
| Rape                               | 160                                | 168                 | .8   | .8                 |
| Attempted rape                     | 152                                | 149                 | .7   | .7                 |
| Sexual assault                     | 173                                | 117 <sup>b</sup>    | .8   | .5 <sup>a</sup>    |
| Robbery                            | 1,291                              | 1,299               | 6.1  | 6.1                |
| Completed/property taken           | 815                                | 795                 | 3.9  | 3.7                |
| With injury                        | 274                                | 288                 | 1.3  | 1.3                |
| Without injury                     | 541                                | 507                 | 2.6  | 2.4                |
| Attempted to take property         | 476                                | 504                 | 2.3  | 2.4                |
| With injury                        | 96                                 | 122                 | .5   | .6                 |
| Without injury                     | 381                                | 382                 | 1.8  | 1.8                |
| Assault                            | 9,072                              | 9,128               | 42.9   | 42.7               |
| Aggravated                         | 2,563                              | 2,478               | 12.1   | 11.6               |
| With injury                        | 713                                | 679                 | 3.4  | 3.2                |
| Threatened with weapon             | 1,850                              | 1,799               | 8.7  | 8.4                |
| Simple                             | 6,509                              | 6,650               | 30.8   | 31.1               |
| With minor injury                  | 1,356                              | 1,466               | 6.4  | 6.9                |
| Without injury                     | 5,153                              | 5,184               | 24.4   | 24.3               |
| Personal theft <sup>2</sup>        | 517                                | 489                 | 2.4  | 2.3                |
| <b>Property crimes</b>             | 32,182                             | 31,011 <sup>a</sup> | 322.1  | 307.6 <sup>a</sup> |
| Household burglary                 | 5,984                              | 5,482 <sup>a</sup>  | 59.9   | 54.4 <sup>a</sup>  |
| Completed                          | 4,824                              | 4,573               | 48.3   | 45.4               |
| Forcible entry                     | 1,856                              | 1,725               | 18.6   | 17.1               |
| Unlawful entry without force       | 2,968                              | 2,847               | 29.7   | 28.2               |
| Attempted forcible entry           | 1,160                              | 910 <sup>a</sup>    | 11.6   | 9.0 <sup>a</sup>   |
| Motor vehicle theft                | 1,961                              | 1,764               | 19.6   | 17.5 <sup>b</sup>  |
| Completed                          | 1,291                              | 1,172               | 12.9   | 11.6               |
| Attempted                          | 670                                | 591                 | 6.7  | 5.9                |
| Theft                              | 24,238                             | 23,765              | 242.6  | 235.7 <sup>b</sup> |
| Completed <sup>3</sup>             | 23,020                             | 22,743              | 230.4  | 225.6              |
| Less than \$50                     | 9,653                              | 9,377               | 96.6   | 93.0               |
| \$50-\$249                         | 7,682                              | 7,874               | 76.9   | 78.1               |
| \$250 or more                      | 4,253                              | 4,251               | 42.6   | 42.2               |
| Attempted                          | 1,218                              | 1,022 <sup>a</sup>  | 14.3   | 10.1 <sup>a</sup>  |

Note: Completed violent crimes include completed rape, sexual assault, completed robbery with and without injury, aggravated assault with injury, and simple assault with minor injury. The total population age 12 or older was 211,524,770 in 1993; in 1994 it was 213,747,400. The total number of households in 1993 was 99,926,400; in 1994 it was 100,808,030.

...Not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>The difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>b</sup>The difference is significant at the 90% confidence level.

<sup>1</sup>The victimization survey cannot measure murder because of the inability to question the victim.

<sup>2</sup>Includes pocket picking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching.

<sup>3</sup>Includes thefts in which the amount taken was not ascertained. In 1993 this category accounted for 1,433,000 victimizations and in 1994, 1,241,000.

There was little or no change between 1993 and 1994 in most NCVS measured crimes. Comparisons between these years are discussed in more detail on page ix.

### **31 million burglaries, motor vehicle thefts, and household thefts**

In 1994 the NCVS measured 31 million household burglaries, motor vehicle thefts, and thefts of other property, accounting for 73% of the more than 42 million victimizations. During the year, households experienced 1.8 million motor vehicle thefts, 5.5 million household burglaries, and 23.8 million thefts of other property.

Of the almost 5.5 million household burglaries, 4.6 million, or 83%, were completed burglaries. In the remaining 0.9 million (17%), the offender attempted forcible entry. In a third of the completed burglaries, the burglar forced entry into the home; in two-thirds, the burglar gained entry through an unlocked door or open window.

Of the 22.7 million completed thefts of property, there were 9.4 million (41%) property thefts of less than \$50, 7.9 million (35%) between \$50 and \$249, 4.3 million (19%) of \$250 or more, and 1.2 million (5%) in which the property value was not known.

Expressed as rates per 1,000 households, there were 54 burglaries, 18 motor vehicle thefts, and 236 property thefts.

### Murder in the United States, 1994

In its annual compilation of local police agency statistics for 1994, the FBI reported 23,305 murders and nonnegligent manslaughters — a 5% decrease from the previous year.

The national murder rate was 9 per 100,000 inhabitants.

In its annual report *Crime in the United States*, the FBI defines murder as the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another. The incidence of murder varies by U.S. region, and characteristics of murder victims vary according to sex, race, and age.

Supplemental demographic information was available for 22,076 murder victims. About 51% of these victims were black, 46% were white, and the remainder were Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans.

Victims were likely to be male and relatively young: 78% were male and 65% were under age 35. About 11% were under age 18.

Forty-seven percent of murder victims were related to or acquainted with their assailants; 13% of victims were murdered by strangers, while 40% of victims had an unknown relationship to their murderer.

Husbands or boyfriends killed 28% of female murder victims; wives or girlfriends, 3% of male victims.

#### The South and the West, with 56% of the population, accounted for almost 66% of all homicides

| Region       | Percent   |                 |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------|
|              | Homicides | U.S. population |
| <b>Total</b> | 100%      | 100%            |
| South        | 42        | 35              |
| West         | 23        | 21              |
| Midwest      | 20        | 24              |
| Northeast    | 16        | 20              |

### Victimizations reported to law enforcement authorities

Overall, 42% of the violent crimes committed in 1994 were reported to

police (table 2). Thirty-six percent of rapes, 20% of attempted rapes, and 41% of sexual assaults were brought to the attention of law enforcement

**Table 2. Victimizations reported to the police, 1993-94: Estimates from the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey**

| Type of crime                      | Number of victimizations reported (1,000's) |        | Percent of victimizations reported to the police |       |
|------------------------------------|---|--------|--|-------|
|                                    | 1993  | 1994   | 1993   | 1994  |
| <b>All crimes</b>                  | 15,299                                      | 15,187 | 35.1%  | 35.9% |
| <b>Personal crimes<sup>a</sup></b> | 4,654                                       | 4,673  | 40.9%  | 41.2% |
| Crimes of violence                 | 4,514                                       | 4,513  | 41.6   | 41.6  |
| Completed violence                 | 1,723                                       | 1,752  | 53.6   | 54.7  |
| Attempted/threatened violence      | 2,791                                       | 2,761  | 36.5   | 36.1  |
| Rape/Sexual assault                | 140   | 137    | 28.8   | 31.7  |
| Rape/attempted rape                | 106   | 90     | 34.0   | 28.3  |
| Rape                               | 56  | 61     | 34.7   | 36.1  |
| Attempted rape                     | 51  | 29     | 33.4   | 19.6  |
| Sexual assault                     | 33  | 47     | 19.4   | 40.7  |
| Robbery                            | 724   | 719    | 56.1   | 55.4  |
| Completed/property taken           | 551   | 512    | 67.6   | 64.4  |
| With injury                        | 189   | 192    | 69.0   | 66.7  |
| Without injury                     | 362   | 320    | 66.9   | 63.1  |
| Attempted to take property         | 173   | 207    | 36.3   | 41.1  |
| With injury                        | 46  | 65     | 48.3   | 53.4  |
| Without injury                     | 127   | 142    | 33.3   | 37.2  |
| Assault                            | 3,650                                       | 3,657  | 40.2   | 40.1  |
| Aggravated                         | 1,362                                       | 1,278  | 53.2   | 51.6  |
| With injury                        | 414   | 411    | 58.1   | 60.6  |
| Threatened with weapon             | 948   | 867    | 51.3   | 48.2  |
| Simple                             | 2,288                                       | 2,379  | 35.2   | 35.8  |
| With minor injury                  | 671   | 727    | 49.5   | 49.6  |
| Without injury                     | 1,617                                       | 1,652  | 31.4   | 31.9  |
| Personal theft <sup>b</sup>        | 140   | 160    | 27.0%  | 32.6% |
| <b>Property crimes</b>             | 10,646                                      | 10,514 | 33.1%  | 33.9% |
| Household burglary                 | 2,924                                       | 2,770  | 48.9   | 50.5  |
| Completed                          | 2,492                                       | 2,425  | 51.7   | 53.0  |
| Forcible entry                     | 1,391                                       | 1,308  | 75.0   | 75.8  |
| Unlawful entry without force       | 1,101                                       | 1,117  | 37.1   | 39.2  |
| Attempted forcible entry           | 432   | 345    | 37.3   | 37.9  |
| Motor vehicle theft                | 1,523                                       | 1,379  | 77.7   | 78.2  |
| Completed                          | 1,206                                       | 1,083  | 93.4   | 92.4  |
| Attempted                          | 317   | 296    | 47.4   | 50.0  |
| Theft                              | 6,198                                       | 6,365  | 25.6   | 26.8  |
| Completed <sup>c</sup>             | 5,850                                       | 6,061  | 25.4   | 26.6  |
| Less than \$50                     | 1,147                                       | 1,218  | 11.9   | 13.0  |
| \$50-\$249                         | 1,987                                       | 2,097  | 25.9   | 26.6  |
| \$250 or more                      | 2,424                                       | 2,462  | 57.0   | 57.9  |
| Attempted                          | 348   | 304    | 28.6   | 29.8  |

Note: Completed violent crimes include completed rape, sexual assault, completed robbery with and without injury, aggravated assault with injury, and simple assault with minor injury.

<sup>a</sup>The victimization survey cannot measure murder because of the inability to question the victim. Personal crimes include purse snatching and pocket picking, not shown separately under personal theft.

<sup>b</sup>Includes pocket picking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching.

<sup>c</sup>Includes thefts in which the amount taken was not ascertained.



authorities. Fifty-five percent of robberies, 52% of aggravated assaults, and 36% of simple assaults were reported to police.

Victims reported approximately a third of all property crimes. Motor vehicle theft was the most frequently reported property crime (78%), and theft of other property the least reported crime (27%).

The 1994 data indicated patterns in reporting to police. For example, victims were more likely to report incidents to police where:

- violent crimes were completed
- an injury resulted
- items valued at \$250 or more were stolen
- forcible entry occurred.

Victims cite many reasons for deciding whether or not to report particular crimes to law enforcement authorities.\*

Victims of violent incidents most often cite as a reason for reporting the crime to the police the desire to prevent future acts of violence. Victims also reported incidents because they thought it was the right thing to do.

Among victims who chose not to report a violent crime to the police, many indicated that they felt the matter was private or personal in nature.

Victims of personal and property thefts frequently reported the incidents to enable recovery of their stolen property and to collect insurance, or chose not to report because they had been able to recover their property or because the theft attempt had been unsuccessful.

### Characteristics of victims of violence

Males, blacks, Hispanics, the young, the poor, and inner city dwellers were the most vulnerable to violence (table 3).

Except for rape/sexual assault, every violent crime victimization rate for males was higher than for females.

Males were about twice as likely as females to experience robbery and aggravated assault. However, there were 4 rapes or sexual assaults per 1,000 females age 12 or older compared to 0.2 rapes per 1,000 males.

Blacks were more likely than whites or persons of other races — Asians or Native Americans — to be victims of robbery or aggravated assault.

In 1994 there were 16.6 aggravated assaults per 1,000 black persons, 10.9 per 1,000 whites, and 11.9 per 1,000 persons in other racial categories.

**Table 3. Victimization rates for persons age 12 or older, by type of crime, sex, age, race, ethnicity, income, and locality of residence of victims, 1994**

| Characteristics         | Victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------|---------|------------|-------|---------|------|----------------|
|                         | All crime  | Crimes of violence     |                     |         |            | Total | Assault |      | Personal theft |
|                         |  | All crimes of violence | Rape/Sexual assault | Robbery | Aggravated |       | Simple  |      |                |
| <b>Sex</b>              |  |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
| Male                    | 61.7   | 59.6                   | .2                  | 8.1     | 51.3       | 15.3  | 35.9    | 2.0  |                |
| Female                  | 45.1   | 42.5                   | 3.7                 | 4.1     | 34.7       | 8.1   | 26.6    | 2.5  |                |
| <b>Age</b>              |  |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
| 12-15                   | 117.4  | 114.8                  | 3.1                 | 12.0    | 99.7       | 22.2  | 77.6    | 2.6  |                |
| 16-19                   | 125.9  | 121.7                  | 5.1                 | 11.8    | 104.8      | 33.7  | 71.1    | 4.2  |                |
| 20-24                   | 102.5  | 99.2                   | 5.0                 | 11.3    | 82.9       | 26.6  | 56.4    | 3.3  |                |
| 25-34                   | 63.2   | 60.9                   | 2.9                 | 7.5     | 50.6       | 13.7  | 36.9    | 2.3  |                |
| 35-49                   | 41.4   | 39.5                   | 1.6                 | 5.2     | 32.8       | 7.6   | 25.2    | 1.9  |                |
| 50-64                   | 16.8   | 15.1                   | .2*                 | 2.3     | 12.6       | 3.3   | 9.3     | 1.7  |                |
| 65 or older             | 7.2  | 5.1                    | .1*                 | 1.4     | 3.6        | 1.2   | 2.4     | 2.1  |                |
| <b>Race</b>             |  |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
| White                   | 51.5   | 49.4                   | 1.9                 | 4.8     | 42.7       | 10.9  | 31.8    | 2.1  |                |
| Black                   | 65.4   | 61.8                   | 2.7                 | 14.0    | 45.0       | 16.6  | 28.4    | 3.6  |                |
| Other                   | 49.1   | 47.6                   | 2.5*                | 9.0     | 36.1       | 11.9  | 24.2    | 1.6* |                |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>        |  |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
| Hispanic                | 63.3   | 59.8                   | 2.6                 | 9.8     | 47.4       | 16.2  | 31.2    | 3.5  |                |
| Non-Hispanic            | 51.9   | 49.8                   | 2.0                 | 5.6     | 42.1       | 11.1  | 31.0    | 2.1  |                |
| <b>Household income</b> |  |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
| Less than \$7,500       | 88.3   | 83.6                   | 6.7                 | 11.1    | 65.8       | 20.5  | 45.3    | 4.7  |                |
| \$7,500-\$14,999        | 60.8   | 58.6                   | 3.3                 | 7.1     | 48.1       | 13.8  | 34.3    | 2.2  |                |
| \$15,000-\$24,999       | 51.7   | 49.9                   | 2.3                 | 5.9     | 41.7       | 13.2  | 28.5    | 1.8  |                |
| \$25,000-\$34,999       | 51.3   | 49.3                   | 1.2                 | 4.6     | 43.5       | 11.3  | 32.3    | 2.0  |                |
| \$35,000-\$49,999       | 49.3   | 46.8                   | .9                  | 4.8     | 41.1       | 10.1  | 31.0    | 2.6  |                |
| \$50,000-\$74,999       | 47.6   | 46.1                   | .8                  | 4.2     | 41.1       | 9.5   | 31.6    | 1.5  |                |
| \$75,000 or more        | 42.7   | 40.0                   | .9*                 | 4.5     | 34.6       | 8.0   | 26.5    | 2.7  |                |
| <b>Residence</b>        |  |                        |                     |         |            |       |         |      |                |
| Urban                   | 67.6   | 63.6                   | 2.7                 | 10.9    | 50.1       | 14.8  | 35.2    | 4.0  |                |
| Suburban                | 51.8   | 49.6                   | 1.8                 | 5.1     | 42.7       | 11.0  | 31.7    | 2.2  |                |
| Rural                   | 39.8   | 39.2                   | 1.7                 | 2.6     | 34.9       | 9.2   | 25.8    | .6   |                |

Note: The victimization survey cannot measure murder because of the inability to question the victim.

\*Estimate is based on about 10 or fewer sample cases.

The victimization rates for rape/sexual assault were not significantly different among the three racial groups.

Persons under age 25 had higher violent victimization rates than those 65 or older. Persons age 16 to 19 were about 30 times more likely than persons age 65 or older to be victimized by assault.

Hispanics had higher violent crime rates than Non-Hispanics.

Persons from households with lower incomes were more vulnerable to violent crime than those from higher income households. Persons with household incomes of less than \$15,000 per year had significantly higher violent crime rates for all categories of violent crime when compared with those who had household incomes of \$15,000 or more per year.

| Type of crime        | Rates per 1,000 persons age 12 or older       |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
|                      | Annual household income of less than \$15,000 | Annual household income of \$15,000 or more |
| <b>Violent crime</b> | 68.6  | 46.9  |
| Rape/sexual assault  | 4.7   | 1.3   |
| Robbery              | 8.7   | 4.9   |
| Aggravated assault   | 16.5  | 10.6  |
| Simple assault       | 38.8  | 30.2  |

**Higher property crime victimization rates: households of blacks, Hispanics, the poor, urban dwellers, and renters**

Minorities, urban dwellers, and those who rent their homes experienced the highest rates of property crime. The impact of income varied, depending on the type of property crime.

Black households suffered higher rates of property victimization for all property crime than did white households ( 341 versus 302 per 1,000 households, respectively).

Hispanic households had a significantly higher rate of property crime victimization than non-Hispanics (426 incidents per 1,000 households versus 298, respectively) (table 4).

Households earning \$50,000 or more annually had a theft rate 50% higher than those households earning less than \$7,500 annually. Households earning under \$7,500 a year suffered almost twice the rate of household burglary compared to those with the highest annual earnings.

City residents experienced higher rates of property crime (376 per 1,000 households) than either suburban residents (296) or rural area dwellers (246).

Renters had significantly higher property crime rates than home owners.

**Recent trends**

Between 1993 and 1994 there were no changes in violent crimes measured by NCVS, except for a decline in sexual assault. While sexual assault decreased, the overall rape/sexual assault category showed no change.

Motor vehicle theft and property theft rates showed statistically significant declines between 1993 and 1994. There was some evidence of declines in the rates and levels of overall property crimes, household burglary, attempted forcible entry, and attempted theft.

Since its inception in 1973, the survey has identified fluctuations in crime levels and rates over extended periods. Because of the survey design, the data presented in these highlights are not directly comparable with data collected prior to 1993. While some

**Table 4. Property victimization rates, by type of crime, race, ethnicity, income, residence, and form of tenure of head of household, 1994**

| Characteristics         | Victimizations per 1,000 households |          |                     |       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|-------|
|                         | Total                               | Burglary | Motor vehicle theft | Theft |
| <b>Race</b>             |                                     |          |                     |       |
| White                   | 301.9                               | 51.7     | 15.6                | 234.6 |
| Black                   | 341.3                               | 70.8     | 26.6                | 243.8 |
| Other                   | 334.9                               | 64.3     | 34.1                | 236.5 |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>        |                                     |          |                     |       |
| Hispanic                | 425.5                               | 71.0     | 39.9                | 314.5 |
| Non-Hispanic            | 298.0                               | 53.1     | 15.6                | 229.3 |
| <b>Household income</b> |                                     |          |                     |       |
| Less than \$7,500       | 295.8                               | 78.6     | 13.9                | 203.2 |
| \$7,500-\$14,999        | 296.6                               | 65.4     | 15.2                | 216.0 |
| \$15,000-\$24,999       | 307.0                               | 60.5     | 16.3                | 230.2 |
| \$25,000-\$34,999       | 307.1                               | 50.9     | 20.0                | 236.3 |
| \$35,000-\$49,999       | 325.8                               | 51.6     | 17.0                | 257.2 |
| \$50,000-\$74,999       | 356.3                               | 39.6     | 20.7                | 296.0 |
| \$75,000 or more        | 356.6                               | 40.9     | 17.7                | 297.9 |
| <b>Residence</b>        |                                     |          |                     |       |
| Urban                   | 376.4                               | 69.4     | 29.3                | 277.7 |
| Suburban                | 296.5                               | 46.5     | 15.6                | 234.3 |
| Rural                   | 246.4                               | 49.6     | 6.9                 | 189.8 |
| <b>Form of tenure</b>   |                                     |          |                     |       |
| Home owned              | 272.2                               | 45.5     | 14.5                | 212.2 |
| Home rented             | 371.2                               | 70.3     | 22.8                | 278.1 |

crimes exhibit short-term changes that differ from previous longer-term trends, many patterns discernible for 1992-94 continue general trends in crime rates that existed during previous years.

**Violent crime** rates generally declined from 1981 to 1986 (a drop of 20%), and then rose from 1986 to 1991 (up

15%). Since 1992, violent crime victimization rates have remained generally stable. Both victimization levels and rates show little change in 1992, 1993, and 1994 (table 5).

**Robbery** rates increased slightly during the late 1980's, but never reached

the peak rates experienced earlier in the decade. Since 1992 the robbery rate has remained unchanged.

**Aggravated assault** levels have shown yearly fluctuations but the overall trend was slightly downward from 1974 to 1991. Neither the increase in aggravated assault from 1992 to 1993 nor the decrease from 1993 to 1994 is statistically significant.

**Theft** rates declined slightly in 1994 from the previous year, continuing a steady decrease that has persisted since 1979.

**Burglary** rates continued a downward trend that has existed since the survey began in 1973.

**Motor vehicle theft** rates steadily increased for several years beginning in the mid-1980's. There is some evidence of a decline in the motor vehicle theft rate from 1993 to 1994.

Except for an increase in reporting of sexual assault and theft, there were no statistically significant changes in reporting of crimes to police between 1993 and 1994 (table 6).

### Juvenile victims

Teenagers and young adults were more likely to become victims of violent crime than older persons. In 1994, about a third of all victims of violent crime were ages 12 to 19. Almost half of all victims of violence were under age 25.

In the same year, there were 111 rapes/sexual assaults, robberies, or aggravated or simple assaults for every 1,000 persons under age 25.

**Table 5. Victimization rates and comparison of changes in victimization rates for violent and property crimes, 1992-94**

| Type of crime             | Victimization rates per 1,000 |       |       | Percent change of victimizations per 1,000 |         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|--|---------|
|                           | 1992                          | 1993  | 1994  | 1992-94                                    | 1993-94 |
| <b>Crimes of violence</b> | 49.3                          | 51.3  | 50.8  | 3.0%                                       | -1.0%   |
| Rape/Sexual assault       | 2.9                           | 2.3   | 2.0   | -31.0                                      | -13.0   |
| Robbery                   | 6.2                           | 6.1   | 6.1   | -1.6                                       | 0       |
| Assault                   | 40.2                          | 42.9  | 42.7  | 6.2  | -5      |
| Aggravated assault        | 11.1                          | 12.1  | 11.6  | 4.5  | -4.1    |
| Simple assault            | 29.1                          | 30.8  | 31.1  | 6.9  | 1.0     |
| <b>Personal theft*</b>    | 2.3                           | 2.4   | 2.3   | 0  | -4.2%   |
| <b>Property crimes</b>    | 325.3                         | 322.1 | 307.6 | -5.4%                                      | -4.5%   |
| Household burglary        | 58.7                          | 59.9  | 54.4  | -7.3                                       | -9.2    |
| Motor vehicle theft       | 18.6                          | 19.6  | 17.5  | -5.9                                       | -10.7   |
| Theft                     | 248.0                         | 242.6 | 235.7 | -5.0                                       | -2.8    |

\*Includes pocket picking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching.

**Table 6. Number of victimizations experienced and percent reported to the police, 1993-94**

| Type of crime          | Victimizations   |        | Percent change, 1993-94 | Percent reported to the police |       | Difference between percents, 1994-93 |
|------------------------|------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|
|                        | Number (1,000's) |        |                         | 1993                           | 1994  |                                      |
| <b>All crimes</b>      | 43,547           | 42,359 | -2.7%                   | 35.1%                          | 35.9% | .8                                   |
| <b>Personal crimes</b> | 11,365           | 11,349 | -.1                     | 40.9                           | 41.2  | .3                                   |
| Crimes of violence     | 10,848           | 10,860 | .1                      | 41.6                           | 41.6  | 0                                    |
| Rape/Sexual assault    | 485              | 433    | -10.7                   | 28.8                           | 31.7  | 2.9                                  |
| Rape/sexual attempted  | 313              | 316    | 1.0                     | 34.0                           | 28.3  | -5.7                                 |
| Sexual assault         | 173              | 117    | -32.4                   | 19.4                           | 40.7  | 21.3                                 |
| Robbery                | 1,291            | 1,299  | .6                      | 56.1                           | 55.4  | -.7                                  |
| Assault                | 9,072            | 9,128  | .6                      | 40.2                           | 40.1  | -.1                                  |
| Aggravated             | 2,563            | 2,478  | -3.3                    | 53.2                           | 51.6  | -1.6                                 |
| Simple                 | 6,509            | 6,650  | 2.2                     | 35.2                           | 35.8  | .6                                   |
| <b>Personal theft*</b> | 517              | 489    | 5.4%                    | 27.0%                          | 32.6% | 5.6                                  |
| <b>Property crimes</b> | 32,182           | 31,011 | -3.6%                   | 33.1%                          | 33.9% | .8                                   |
| Household burglary     | 5,984            | 5,482  | -8.4                    | 48.9                           | 50.5  | 1.6                                  |
| Motor vehicle theft    | 1,961            | 1,764  | -10.0                   | 77.7                           | 78.2  | .5                                   |
| Completed              | 1,291            | 1,171  | -9.3                    | 93.4                           | 92.4  | -1.0                                 |
| Attempted              | 670              | 591    | -11.8                   | 47.4                           | 50.0  | 2.6                                  |
| Theft                  | 24,238           | 23,765 | -2.0                    | 25.6                           | 26.8  | 1.2                                  |

\*Includes pocketpicking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching.

This rate was more than twice as high as that for persons between ages 25 and 49 and about 11 times as high as that for persons age 50 or older (table 7).

**While making up 23% of the population age 12 or older, persons from 12 to 24 were victims of almost half of all violent crime**

| Victim's age | Percent of population 12 or older | Percent of violent victimizations |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Total</b> | 100%                              | 100%                              |
| 12 to 15     | 7                                 | 16                                |
| 16 to 19     | 7                                 | 16                                |
| 20 to 24     | 8                                 | 17                                |
| 25 to 34     | 20                                | 23                                |
| 35 to 49     | 28                                | 21                                |
| 50 to 64     | 16                                | 5                                 |
| 65 or older  | 14                                | 1                                 |

These large differences in victimization rates by age occurred for each of the violent crimes measured by the survey. For example, there were 4 rape/sexual assaults per 1,000 for persons under age 25, 2 per 1,000 for those ages 25 to 49, and 0.1 per 1,000 for those age 50 or more.

Rates for robbery were twice as high for those under 25 as for those ages 25 to 49. For persons under age 25, the robbery rates were 12 per 1,000 compared with 2 per 1,000 for those persons age 50 or more.

The rates of aggravated assault were almost 3 times as high for victims under 25 as for those ages 25 to 49.

| Type of crime        | Rates per 1,000 persons age 12 or older |       |             |
|----------------------|---|-------|-------------|
|                      | 12-24                                   | 25-49 | 50 or older |
| <b>Violent crime</b> | 110.9                                   | 48.4  | 10.3        |
| Rape/sexual assault  | 4.4                                     | 2.1   | .1          |
| Robbery              | 11.7                                    | 6.1   | 1.9         |
| Aggravated assault   | 27.3                                    | 10.1  | 2.3         |
| Simple assault       | 67.5                                    | 30.0  | 6.0         |

### Examining violent incidents

Excluding those crimes in which the victim/offender relationship was not known, 53% of persons victimized by violence did not know their assailant. Almost 8 out of 10 robberies were committed by strangers compared to 3 out of 10 of all rapes/sexual assaults. Just over half of all rapes/sexual assaults were committed by people either well-known or casually known to the victim (table 8).

While overall violent crimes were about as likely to occur during the day as during the night, some crimes exhibited different patterns.

Fifty-three percent of incidents of violent crime occurred between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. About two-thirds of simple assaults, compared to a third of aggravated assaults, took place during these hours. Approximately two-thirds of rapes/sexual assaults occurred at night — 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

In 1994 about a quarter of incidents of violent crime occurred at or near the victim's home. Among common locales for violent crimes were on the street other than those near the victim's home (20%), at school (13%), or at a commercial establishment (13%).

Twenty-three percent of victims of violent crime reported being involved in some form of leisure activity away from home at the time of their victimization. Twenty-two percent said they were at home, and another 22%

**Table 7. Rates of violent victimizations by age of victim, 1992-94**

| Type of crime by age of victim | Victimization rates per 1,000 |      |      | Percent distribution |      |       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------|------|----------------------|------|-------|
|                                | 1992                          | 1993 | 1994 | 1992                 | 1993 | 1,994 |
| <b>All violent crime</b>       | 49                            | 51   | 51   | 100%                 | 100% | 100%  |
| 12 to 15                       | 114                           | 121  | 115  | 16                   | 17   | 16    |
| 16 to 19                       | 107                           | 117  | 122  | 15                   | 15   | 16    |
| 20 to 24                       | 98                            | 94   | 99   | 18                   | 16   | 17    |
| 25 to 34                       | 58                            | 59   | 61   | 24                   | 23   | 23    |
| 35 to 49                       | 39                            | 43   | 40   | 21                   | 23   | 22    |
| 50 to 64                       | 13                            | 17   | 15   | 4                    | 5    | 5     |
| 65 or older                    | 5                             | 6    | 5    | 2                    | 2    | 1     |
| <b>Robbery</b>                 | 6                             | 6    | 6    | 100%                 | 100% | 100%  |
| 12 to 15                       | 13                            | 14   | 12   | 15                   | 16   | 14    |
| 16 to 19                       | 11                            | 12   | 12   | 12                   | 12   | 13    |
| 20 to 24                       | 14                            | 11   | 11   | 21                   | 15   | 16    |
| 25 to 34                       | 8                             | 7    | 8    | 27                   | 24   | 24    |
| 35 to 49                       | 4                             | 5    | 5    | 16                   | 22   | 23    |
| 50 to 64                       | 2                             | 3    | 2    | 6                    | 8    | 6     |
| 65 or older                    | 2                             | 1    | 1    | 5                    | 3    | 3     |
| <b>Aggravated assault</b>      | 11                            | 12   | 12   | 100%                 | 100% | 100%  |
| 12 to 15                       | 20                            | 23   | 22   | 13                   | 14   | 14    |
| 16 to 19                       | 27                            | 30   | 34   | 16                   | 16   | 19    |
| 20 to 24                       | 23                            | 27   | 27   | 19                   | 20   | 20    |
| 25 to 34                       | 13                            | 15   | 14   | 23                   | 24   | 23    |
| 35 to 49                       | 10                            | 9    | 8    | 23                   | 20   | 18    |
| 50 to 64                       | 3                             | 4    | 3    | 4                    | 5    | 5     |
| 65 or older                    | 1                             | 1    | 1    | 2                    | 1    | 1     |

mentioned they were at work or traveling to or from work when the crime occurred.

One in five violent crimes occurred in or near the victim's home. Including these, almost half occurred within a mile from home and about 70% within five miles. Only 5% of victims of violent crime reported that the crime took place more than fifty miles from their home.

In 3 out of 10 incidents of violent crimes, offenders used or threatened to use a weapon. NCVS defines assaults involving weapons as aggravated; thus almost all aggravated assaults (95%) involved a weapon. (Assaults without weapons are classified as aggravated if the victim suffers a serious injury.) Offenders had or used a weapon in slightly more than half of all robberies, compared with 16% of all rapes/sexual assaults.

**Table 8. Victim-offender relationship, victim's activity, weapons, and characteristics of the criminal incident, by crimes of violence, 1994**

| Characteristics of incident           | Total violent crime | Crimes of violence  |         |       |                    |        |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|-------|--------------------|--------|
|                                       |                     | Rape/Sexual assault | Robbery | Total | Assault Aggravated | Simple |
| <b>Total</b>                          | 100%                | 100%                | 100%    | 100%  | 100%               | 100%   |
| <b>Victim/offender relationship*</b>  |                     |                     |         |       |                    |        |
| Relatives                             | 9%                  | 11%                 | 6%      | 9%    | 7%                 | 10%    |
| Well-known                            | 23                  | 35                  | 13      | 24    | 21                 | 25     |
| Casual acquaintance                   | 15                  | 21                  | 3       | 16    | 12                 | 18     |
| Stranger                              | 53                  | 33                  | 77      | 51    | 60                 | 48     |
| <b>Time of day</b>                    |                     |                     |         |       |                    |        |
| 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.                      | 53%                 | 31%                 | 42%     | 62%   | 36%                | 62%    |
| 6 p.m. to midnight                    | 35                  | 37                  | 43      | 37    | 33                 | 33     |
| Midnight to 6 a.m.                    | 12                  | 32                  | 15      | 1     | 32                 | 5      |
| <b>Location of crime</b>              |                     |                     |         |       |                    |        |
| At or near victim's home or lodging   | 26%                 | 37%                 | 24%     | 26%   | 25%                | 26%    |
| Friend's/relative's/neighbor's home   | 7                   | 21                  | 4       | 7     | 9                  | 7      |
| Commercial places                     | 13                  | 7                   | 8       | 14    | 11                 | 15     |
| Parking lots/garages                  | 8                   | 6                   | 12      | 7     | 9                  | 7      |
| School                                | 13                  | 3                   | 4       | 15    | 7                  | 18     |
| Streets other than near victim's home | 20                  | 8                   | 37      | 18    | 26                 | 15     |
| Other <sup>a</sup>                    | 13                  | 17                  | 10      | 13    | 12                 | 13     |
| <b>Victim's activity</b>              |                     |                     |         |       |                    |        |
| At work or traveling to or from work  | 22%                 | 8%                  | 16%     | 23%   | 21%                | 24%    |
| School                                | 13                  | 5                   | 7       | 14    | 8                  | 16     |
| Activities at home                    | 22                  | 38                  | 17      | 22    | 19                 | 23     |
| Shopping/errands                      | 4                   | 2                   | 11      | 3     | 4                  | 3      |
| Leisure activities away from home     | 23                  | 32                  | 21      | 23    | 28                 | 21     |
| Traveling                             | 10                  | 6                   | 20      | 9     | 12                 | 7      |
| Other                                 | 7                   | 8                   | 8       | 7     | 9                  | 6      |
| <b>Distance from victim's home</b>    |                     |                     |         |       |                    |        |
| Inside home or lodging                | 5%                  | 34%                 | 14%     | 14%   | 12%                | 14%    |
| Near victim's home                    | 16                  | 10                  | 13      | 15    | 16                 | 15     |
| 1 mile or less                        | 24                  | 12                  | 29      | 21    | 22                 | 21     |
| 5 miles or less                       | 26                  | 14                  | 22      | 24    | 25                 | 24     |
| 50 miles or less                      | 24                  | 23                  | 19      | 22    | 20                 | 22     |
| More than 50 miles                    | 5                   | 6                   | 4       | 4     | 5                  | 4      |
| <b>Weapons<sup>b</sup></b>            |                     |                     |         |       |                    |        |
| No weapons present                    | 71%                 | 84%                 | 45%     | 73%   | 5%                 | 100%   |
| Weapons present                       | 29                  | 16                  | 55      | 27    | 95                 | 0      |
| Firearm                               | 12                  | 6                   | 31      | 10    | 35                 | 0      |
| Other type of weapon <sup>c</sup>     | 17                  | 10                  | 25      | 17    | 60                 | 0      |

\*Excludes "don't know" relationships.

<sup>a</sup>Includes areas on street other than near victim's home, on public transportation or inside station, in apartment yard, park, field, playground, and other areas.

<sup>b</sup>An aggravated assault is any assault in which an offender possesses or uses a weapon or inflicts serious injury.

<sup>c</sup>Includes knives, other sharp objects, blunt objects, and other types of weapons.

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## Summary of crime characteristics

### *Rapes/sexual assaults*

- Two-thirds were committed by someone acquainted with, known to, or related to the victim.
- Two-thirds occurred in the evening or at night.
- About 6 in 10 occurred in the victim's or someone else's home.
- More than a third occurred as the victim engaged in activities in the home; another third occurred during leisure activities away from the home.
- Offenders had a weapon in 16% of all rape/sexual assault victimizations.

### *Robberies*

- Almost 8 in 10 were committed by strangers.
- About 4 in 10 occurred in the daytime; another 4 in 10 occurred in the evening before midnight.
- Robberies occurred in a variety of situations:
  - 1 in 5 during leisure activities
  - 1 in 5 during travel and almost 1 in 5 at home
  - 1 in 6 while at work or commuting to/from work
  - 1 in 10 while shopping
  - 1 in 14 at school.

- Weapons were present in 55% of robberies.

- More than half occurred at or within a mile of the victim's home.

### *Assaults*

- Strangers committed 1 in 2 simple assaults and 6 in 10 aggravated assaults.
- Simple assaults were almost twice as likely as aggravated assaults to be committed during the daytime.
- For both aggravated and simple assaults, about 1 in 4 occurred at or near the victim's home.
- 25% of aggravated assaults and 15% of simple assaults occurred on streets other than near the victim's home.
- In aggravated assaults, offenders had a firearm in more than 1 in 3 incidents and another type of weapon in 6 of 10. Simple assaults do not involve the use of weapons.

## Recent National Crime Victimization Survey data releases

*Changes in Criminal Victimization, 1994-95: National Crime Victimization Survey*, April 1997, NCJ-162032, 12 pages.

*Criminal Victimization, 1973-95: National Crime Victimization Survey*, April 1997, NCJ-163069, 8 pages.

*Effects of the Redesign on Victimization Estimates: Technical Report*, April 1997, NCJ-164381, 7 pages.

*Female Victims of Violent Crime*, December 1996, NCJ-162602, 4 pages.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

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## Introduction

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### 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

This report presents data from the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey. The redesigned methodology, introduced in 1992, presented a new crime screening procedure and incorporated other improvements into the survey. As a result, data based on the redesign are not comparable with data collected in previous years. *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1993*, NCJ-151657, was the first in this series that presented data from the redesigned survey. That report contains detailed information about the redesign program, including changes and improvements made to the survey.

### Major redesign changes

#### *All crimes*

The redesigned 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 is producing fuller reporting of those incidents that involved intimates or other family members.

#### *Sexual crimes*

The current 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 prior to 1993.

### 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.



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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.