Analyzing Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey

BJS Victimization Statistics Unit

December 9, 2021
Introductions
Introductions

*please use the Webex chat function*

- Name & affiliation
- How familiar are you with the NCVS?
  - Beginner, intermediate, advanced?
- How do you plan to use the NCVS?
- What statistical software program do you use?
Workshop overview

• NCVS presentation (30 minutes)
  - Background, methodology, survey instruments, accessing data and statistics

• Presentations by Dr. Keith Hullenaar and Dr. Tara Martin (20 minutes)

• Break (10 minutes)

• Data analysis demonstrations and questions (60 minutes)
Background on the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
What is the National Crime Victimization Survey?

- Currently sponsored and directed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
- Started in 1972 as the National Crime Survey
- Redesigned and renamed National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) in 1992
- One of two of the nation’s major sources of information on criminal victimization (with the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program)
What is the National Crime Victimization Survey?

Goals –
• Measure the ‘dark figure’ of unreported crime
• Provide an independent calibration for the UCR program
• Provide an indicator of the crime problem outside of indicators generated by police
• Provide a measure of victim risk
• Serve as an index of change in police reporting in the population
How are the data collected?

- Administered by U.S. Census Bureau interviewers to nationally representative sample of persons age 12 or older living in U.S. households
- Interviews everyone in a sampled household that is age 12 or older
  - Seven interviews over a course of 3.5 years (every 6 months)
  - First interviews in person, subsequent interviews conducted either in person or by phone
- Self-report survey – persons asked about criminal victimizations experienced during the prior 6 months
- Incident based – collects information about each victimization incident
What data are collected?

- Violent crime (rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault)
- Personal larceny (purse snatching and pick-pocketing)
- Property crime (burglary/trespassing, motor vehicle theft, and other types of household theft)
- Characteristics of victims and crimes for the population and for subgroups
- Only source of national data on topics including intimate partner violence, crimes against persons with disabilities, injury, firearms and crime, cost of crime, and reporting to police
More information on the NCVS

- BJS website – [https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/ncvs](https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/ncvs)
- Codebooks archived with public-use data files at National Archive of Criminal Justice Data – [https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD](https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD)
- Workshop materials –
  - NCVS Technical Documentation, 2016
  - NCVS Variance User’s Guide
  - *Criminal Victimization, 2020* annual bulletin
Survey instruments
#1 NCVS Control Card (Roster)

#2 NCVS-1 Screener

#3 or 4 (depending on CIR)
New demographic questions

#3 NCVS-2 Crime Incident Report (CIR)

Victims

Non-victims

#4 or 5 (depending on CIR)
Supplements
(ID theft, school crime, stalking, police-public contact, fraud)
NCVS-500 Control Card

• Basic record for each sample unit throughout each enumeration period
• Used by U.S. Census Bureau field representatives (FR) to locate/confirm they have contacted the correct sample household
• Household respondent = most knowledgeable adult household member
• Household roster = contains demographic information on every person living in the household
  • Demographic information such as age, race, Hispanic origin, sex, marital status, and educational attainment

*There is a copy of the NCVS-500 in your workshop materials*
NCVS-1 Basic Screen Questionnaire

- Contains questions designed to determine whether any crimes were committed against the *household as a whole (property crime)* or against an *individual household member (personal crime)* during the 6-month reference period
  - Household respondent answers questions about property crimes
  - All respondents answer questions about personal crimes
- Questions are written in a “short cue” format
  - The interviewer reads a question “stem” about whether the respondent has experienced a certain type of incident, and then gives examples of the type of incident in “short cues” to prompt respondent memory
NCVS-1 Basic Screen Questionnaire

• No crime estimates come from the screener questions – the screener is used to trigger recall of incidents
• If no incidents are recorded, the interview proceeds on a person-by-person basis until a questionnaire is completed for each person age 12 or older in the household

*For households that refuse to participate or are not available, an NCVS-7 Noninterview Record is completed, which contains select information about the household (e.g., housing unit type, reason for noninterview, public housing status, Indian country status, restricted access to the unit)

*There is a copy of the NCVS-1 in your workshop materials
NCVS-2 Crime Incident Report

- Used to gather detailed information about incidents reported in the NCVS-1
- One Crime Incident Report (CIR) is completed for each crime incident reported in the NCVS-1
- Attribute/incident based – questions focused on details regarding the criminal incident
- Crime estimates come from the CIR – after confirming a crime was committed
Within the CIR, questions are asked in topical modules:

- Location and presence (items 10a & 20a)
- Attack/threat/injury/medical care (items 31a-35b)
- Emotional consequences (items 36a-37i)
- Actions against the offender (items 41a-46a)
- Offender information/characteristics (items 58a-86b)
- Attempted and completed thefts (items 88-107d)
- Property damage and police (items 108-129)
NCVS-2 Crime Incident Report

- Series crimes
  - Victimizations that are similar in nature and occur with such frequency that a victim is unable to recall each individual event or describe each event in detail (e.g., domestic violence)
  - Interviewers can identify and classify these similar victimizations as series victimizations and collect detailed information (on the CIR) on only the most recent incident in the series
  - Can exist for any crime type
NCVS-2 Crime Incident Report

• Use of narratives for editing and coding
  • Last question on CIR asks interviewer to write a summary of the incident
  • Incident data are compared to incident summaries and pertinent information in case notes
  • Particular attention is paid to questions that classify crime incidents (i.e., location, presence, physical attack, attempted attack, threat, and theft)

• Type of crime
  • Details collected in the CIR allow crimes to be classified with substantial detail

*There is a copy of the NCVS-2 in your workshop materials
NCVS crime classification

• **Violent crime**
  – Completed
  – Attempted
  – Rape/sexual assault
    • Rape
      – Completed
      – Attempted
    • Sexual assault
  – Robbery
    • Completed
      – With injury
      – Without injury
    • Attempted
      – With injury
      – Without injury

• Assault
  – Aggravated
    – Completed with injury
    – Attempted/threatened with weapon
  – Simple
    – Completed with injury
    – Attempted/threatened without weapon

• **Purse snatching/pick-pocketing**
  • Completed purse snatching
  • Attempted purse snatching
  – Pick-pocketing
NCVS crime classification

- **Property crime**
  - Burglary/trespassing
    - Completed
    - Forcible entry
    - Unlawful entry without force
    - Attempted forcible entry
  - Motor vehicle theft
    - Completed
    - Attempted

- Other household theft
  - Completed
    - Less than $50
    - $50-$249
    - $250 or more
    - Amount not available
  - Attempted
Accessing NCVS data and statistics
How to access NCVS data and statistics?

Three ways –
1. BJS statistical reports
2. N-DASH online data tool (https://ncvs.bjs.ojp.gov/Home)
3. Data files – public-use files and restricted-use files
N-DASH Online Data Tool

Rate of Violent Victimization, 1993-2020

Rate of Rape/Sexual Assault, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, and Simple Assault Victimizations, 1993-2020

Percent of Violent Victimization by Victim-Offender Relationship, 2020

https://ncvs.bjs.ojp.gov/Home
NCVS public-use data files

Archived at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)

https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/
# NCVS public-use data files

## Search Results

Showing 1 - 50 of 52 results. [Show all](#)

### national crime victimization survey

#### search tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies (52)</th>
<th>Data-related Publications (422)</th>
<th>Variables (2)</th>
<th>Series (53)</th>
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#### Study Title/Investigator

1. **National Crime Victimization Survey, [United States], 2019** (ICPSR 37645)
   - United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics
   - **Released/Updated**: 2020-09-21

2. **National Crime Victimization Survey, [United States], 2011** (ICPSR 34061)
   - United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics
   - **Released/Updated**: 2021-01-25

3. **National Crime Victimization Survey, [United States], 2012** (ICPSR 34650)
   - United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics
   - **Released/Updated**: 2021-01-26

4. **National Crime Victimization Survey, [United States], 2013** (ICPSR 35164)
   - United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics
   - **Released/Updated**: 2021-01-25

[https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/](https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/)
NCVS restricted-use data files
Available through the U.S. Census Bureau’s Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDC)

https://www.census.gov/fsrdc
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https://www.census.gov/fsrdc
NCVS supplements

- In addition to the core NCVS survey, short topical surveys or supplements are administered at the end of the NCVS interview to eligible respondents.
- Typically in the field for 6 months: January-June or July-December
- Supplements allow BJS to capture the changing landscape of crime.
- Between 2017 and 2019, BJS administered 5 different supplements on a rotating basis:
  - Identity Theft Supplement (ITS)
  - Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS)
  - School Crime Supplement (SCS)
  - Supplemental Fraud Survey (SFS)
  - Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS) – stalking
NCVS supplements

- Public-use files
  - Can be found at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD)
  - Flat file, have core NCVS variables attached
  - See codebooks for generalized variance functions (GVF)
  - Or can use direct estimation for standard errors e.g., with Complex Sample option in SPSS

- Restricted-use files available through Census FSRDC
Presentations from NCVS data users

Dr. Keith Hullenaar – Fellow, Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, University of Washington

Dr. Tara Martin – Assistant Professor in the School of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
National Crime Victimization Survey:
Examining Victim Help-seeking and Health

Keith Hullenaar
Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center
University of Washington
My Background

> NCVS experience ~ 8 years
  – I took this workshop 4 years ago!

> PhD in Criminology, Pennsylvania State University

> Using NCVS to study violence issues
  1) Victim help-seeking
  2) Health consequences
  3) Adolescent violence
    > Patterns and trends
    > Policing
Project #1: Police Reporting and Healthcare Use after Violent Injury

Keith L. Hullenaar, Vivian H. Lyons, Jonathan P. Shepherd, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Monica S. Vavilala, Frederick P. Rivara
Submitted to Preventive Medicine (Nov 2021)

> Dark figure of violent injury
  - Unreported to police (Xie and Baumer, 2019)
  - Untreated by healthcare providers (Hullenaar and Frisco 2020)

> NCVS informs limitations in violent injury surveillance
  - Police reporting
  - Healthcare use

> What are the differences between police reports and healthcare records?
5.8 victimizations involving injuries reported to police or treated by healthcare per 1,000 persons 12 years or older.

Type of service:
- Police report and healthcare
- Only police report
- Only healthcare
5.8 victimizations involving injuries reported to police or treated by healthcare per 1,000 persons 12 years or older

Type of service
- Police report and healthcare
- Only police report
- Only healthcare

All injuries

Minor injuries

Serious injuries
Police Reporting and Healthcare Use: Limitations and Future Research

> Classification of “minor” and “serious” injury
  – More theoretical than empirical
  – NCVS capture type rather than severity of injury

> Healthcare use measures do not specify emergency medical services (ambulance)

> NCVS excludes populations at relatively high risk of violent injury
  – People experiencing homelessness

> Future research should leverage healthcare use outcomes
  – Healthcare use across different people injured by violence
  – Care for longer term problems (e.g., therapy for physical and emotional symptoms)
Health Consequences of Knowing the Attacker

Keith L. Hullenaar, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Frederick P. Rivara, Monica S. Vavilala, and Eric P. Baumer
Accepted at *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (Nov 21)

> Criminal justice and healthcare policy focus on family and intimate violence
  - Arrest and sentencing outcomes
  - Healthcare screening and interventions

> Research on consequences of violence focus on family and intimate violence

> Knowing the attacker → Greater harm?
  - Injured vs. uninjured victims of violence
Health Consequences of Victimization:
Limitations and Future Research

> Does not include validated physical or mental health scales
  – E.g., DSM-V diagnostic tool, SF-12/36, PCL (PTSD)
  – Acceptable for some journals, but not all

> Injury measures somewhat broad
  – Presence rather than severity

> Future research examine correlates of long-term physical and emotional symptoms
Conclusion

> **NCVS is the leading survey on violent victimization**
  - Few datasets compete with its breadth and detail on victimization

> **NCVS redesigns provided rare insight into violence and health**

> **Researchers must be mindful of its limitations and design**
  - Which you will learn today!
The Harborview Injury Prevention & Research Center (HIPRC) is a worldwide leader in injury cause and prevention research. Founded in 1985, we are affiliated with the University of Washington and Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

We are committed to public engagement and strive to partner with impacted communities in achieving injury prevention and health equity across the lifespan.

HIPRC Research priorities include: Global Injury, Injury Care, Safe & Active Transport, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Violence Prevention, and Firearm Injury & Policy.
USING THE NCVS TO STUDY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Tara Martin, Ph.D.
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
My Research Areas

- Domestic and intimate partner violence (DV/IPV)
- Help-seeking behaviors
- Methodological approaches to studying victimization
Strengths of the NCVS for DV Research

• Unreported crime
• Victim–offender relationship information
• Incident, victim, and household characteristics
• Help-seeking measures, including reasons for reporting/not reporting
• Longitudinal and panel data
Limitations of the NCVS for DV Research

- Excludes high-risk populations and younger children
- Does not include all types of DV/IPV
- Limitations to the help-seeking measures
- Repeat victimization can only be measured for 3 years
- Subsetting the sample often requires pooling the data
- Possible threshold for “criminal” victimization
Manipulating the NCVS

3 Incidents
3 Victimizations

1 Victim
Manipulating the NCVS

From *Trends in the Prevalence of Arrest for Intimate Partner Violence Using the National Crime Victimization Survey*
Manipulating the NCVS

Restructuring from long to wide format for repeat victimization

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<th>YEARQ.5</th>
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Practical Tips for Using the NCVS

• Understand the measures and skip patterns
• Check your subsample sizes
• Know where to find help
  – Technical Documentation
  – Variance estimation guides
  – Prior BJS report methodology sections
Thank you!

Tara Martin
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
temartin@ualr.edu
Break (~10 mins)
Data analysis demonstrations
Conducting basic analyses using the NCVS

• Resources for calculating victimization (and incident) rates, numbers, and percentages
  • NCVS Resource Guide and Codebooks (NACJD)
  • NCVS Technical Documentation (also in workshop materials)
• Variance estimation
  • User’s guides
    • Generalized variance function (GVF) parameters
    • Direct variance estimation
  • Significance testing files (included in ‘NCVS workshop replication example.xlsx’)
• NACJD Learning Guide for the NCVS
• NCVS library recodes
Replicating the Criminal Victimization, 2020 bulletin

We will be replicating the highlighted estimates today.

### TABLE 1
Number and rate of violent victimizations, by type of crime, 2016–2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of violent crime</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Rate per 1,000</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Rate per 1,000</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violent crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rape/sexual assault</td>
<td>298,410</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>393,980</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>734,630</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>458,810</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>613,840</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>573,100</td>
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<td>Assault</td>
<td>4,560,600</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>4,604,850</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>5,077,790</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>1,040,580</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>993,170</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1,058,040</td>
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### TABLE 2
Number and rate of property victimizations, by type of crime, 2016–2020

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<th>Type of property crime</th>
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<th>2020</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Rate per 1,000</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Rate per 1,000</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15,815,310</td>
<td>118.6</td>
<td>13,340,220</td>
<td>108.4</td>
<td>13,502,840</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burglary/trespassing</td>
<td>3,160,450</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>2,538,170</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>2,639,620</td>
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<td>Burglary</td>
<td>2,205,180</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>1,688,890</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>1,867,620</td>
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<td>Trespassing</td>
<td>955,270</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>849,280</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>772,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>618,330</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>516,810</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>534,010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other theft</td>
<td>12,036,530</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>10,285,240</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>10,329,210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Replicating the estimates in CV20 – overview

In SPSS –
1. Use **incident** data file to generate number of violent and property crimes
2. Use **person** data file to generate number of persons age 12 or older in the U.S.
3. Use the **household** data file to generate the total number of households in the U.S.

In Excel –
1. Calculate **rates**, dividing the number of crimes by the population counts and multiplying by 1,000
2. Calculate **standard errors** using GVF
Key recodes

- Type of crime (TOC)

*Also included in the workshop files –*
- Victim-offender relationship
- Injury
- Weapon use

*Missing data*
- Out of universe – respondent was skipped out of question
- Residue – treated as ‘missing/unknown’
Replicating the estimates in tables 1 & 2

In SPSS (see ‘NCVS replication syntax.sps’)
1. Access incident data file (38136-0003-Data)
   a. Include recodes of interest (type of crime)
   b. Exclude non-U.S. crimes (v4022 ne 1)
2. Generate number of victimizations
   a. Total number of victimizations – both violent and property
   b. Apply victimization weight to get weighted number of victimizations (SERIES_WEIGHT)
3. Generate person and household populations
   a. Access person (38136-0002-Data) and household data files (38136-0001-Data)
   b. Apply person (WGTPERCY) or household (WGTHHHCY) weight to get population estimates
Replicating the estimates in tables 1 & 2

In Excel (see ‘NCVS workshop replication example.xlsx’) –

1. Calculate victimization rates
   a. Access SPSS output
   b. Link output to a worksheet tab
   c. Divide violent victimization numbers over person populations and multiply by 1,000; divide property victimization numbers over household populations and multiply by 1,000
   d. Also, consider unweighted cell sizes to determine reliability of each estimate
Calculating the standard errors for tables 1 & 2

In Excel (see ‘NCVS workshop replication example.xlsx’) –

1. One GVF worksheet for numbers, another rates and percentages
2. Include appropriate GVF parameters for analysis
   a. See ‘GVF parameters.xlsx’
3. Enter or link estimates (number, rate, percent)
   a. In significance testing worksheet for rates and percentages –
      - indicate whether you are estimating rates or percentages
      - enter or link base for rate or percent
4. Standard errors are calculated in the worksheet (also, confidence intervals (CI) and coefficients of variation (CV))
Updates from BJS

• Subscribe to JUSTSTATS
  • Stay up-to-date with data releases, statistical report releases, and data tool updates
• Follow BJS on Twitter and Facebook
• Additional BJS webinars in December 2021 -- https://bjs.ojp.gov/events
  • Updates from BJS on the NCVS
  • Measuring Hate Crimes in the U.S.
BJS Victimization Statistics Unit

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Additional reference slides
NCVS public-use file (PUF) structure

- 2000-level variables contain information about the household and respondent
- 3000-level variables cover information about each person
- 4000-level variables include information about each incident
- Annual files include collection year data from January 1 – December 31
  - Based on date of interview, not date of incident
- Most sampled persons/households should be included twice in the person/household level file
  - Interview 1 – January-June; Interview 2 – July-December
  - 1/7 phases in during July-December; 1/7 phases out + replacement households
NCVS weights

Household file
- V2116 (Household weight) – adjusts each 6-month period to total U.S. households
- WGTHHCY (Adjusted household weight) – divides v2116 by 2 for annual count of U.S. households

Person file
- V3080 (Person weight) – adjusts each 6-month period to U.S. population
- WGTPERCY (Adjusted person weight) – divides v3080 by 2 for annual U.S. population
NCVS weights

Incident file

- **WGTVICCY** (Adjusted victimization weight) – provides total count of victimizations (no adjustment for series crimes)
- **SERIES_WEIGHT** – accounts for high-frequency repeat victimizations or series victimizations (available for all years on concatenated file 1992-2020; available on annual files 2015+)
- **SERIES_iWEIGHT** – accounts for high-frequency repeat incidents or series incidents (available 2016+, formerly called v4527 incident weight with no series crime adjustment)
NCVS weights

In 2020 –

• Household weight (WGTHHCY) ranged from 61 to 10,090
• Person weight (WGTPERCY) ranged from 72 to 17,608
• Victimization weight (SERIES_WEIGHT) ranged from 151 to 77,560

*In other words, a weighted count of about ~77,000 victimizations could be based on \( n = 1 \) or \( n = 100s \), depending on characteristics of victim

Always important to check unweighted counts

BJS flagging rule for 10 or fewer sample cases = may contribute to large standard errors and/or coefficient of variation (CV) > 50%
Unit of analysis

Household estimates: based on counting *households* affected by the crime

→ For property victimizations in bulletin, based on the SERIES_WEIGHT

→ 5 property crimes among these 10 households
Unit of analysis

Victimization estimates: based on counting

**victimizations**
- Uses the SERIES_WEIGHT
- 5 victimizations among these 10 people

Prevalence estimates: based on counting

**victims**
- Uses the WGTPERCY
- 2 victims among these 10 people
Unit of analysis

• It is possible to move between person-level and household-level analyses when examining prevalence.

• Consider a household of 3 people where there is a reported burglary and a reported simple assault.

• Examples from recent bulletins —
  – prevalence of property crimes per household (1 household victimized by burglary)
  – prevalence of property crimes per person, assigning burglary and motor vehicle theft to everyone in the household (3 burglary victims that live in this household)
  – prevalence of violent crime per person (1 victim of simple assault).