



# The National Crime Victimization Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting program: A complementary picture of crime in 2020

SUPPLEMENT | NCJ 301775

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The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program measure an overlapping, but not identical set of offenses, which leads to differences in estimates between the two sources. Restricting the NCVS to violent crime reported to police, and excluding simple assault, keeps NCVS and UCR measures as similar as possible. Taken together, these two measures of crime provide a more comprehensive picture of crime in the U.S.

Based on the NCVS, the total violent victimization rate declined 22%, from 21.0 to 16.4 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older from 2019 to 2020. The rate of property crime victimization declined for the second year in a row, from 101.4 victimizations per 1,000 households in 2019 to 94.5 per 1,000 in 2020.

From 2019 to 2020, the rate of violent crime, excluding simple assault, reported to police decreased from 3.4 to 2.8 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older. During this same period, the rate of property crime reported to police did not change significantly (31.2 property crimes per 1,000 households reported to law enforcement in 2020). However, the rate of burglary reported to police declined from 6.0 per 1,000 households in 2019 to 4.2 per 1,000 in 2020.

By comparison, the FBI reported an increase in violent crimes from 2019 (3.8 per 1,000 persons) to 2020 (4.0 per 1,000) and a decrease in property crimes from 2019 (21.3 per 1,000 persons) to 2020 (19.6 per 1,000 persons). The FBI also reported a decrease in burglary from 2019 (3.41 per 1,000 persons) to 2020 (3.14 per 1,000 persons).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The BJS report *Criminal Victimization, 2020* (NCJ 301775, BJS, October 2021) compares against the 2019 UCR, the most recent data at the time the report was written. This supplement updates that comparison using 2020 UCR data.

## Rate of crime reported to police in the Uniform Crime Reporting program and in the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019-2020

Type of crime	Rate per 1,000 residents <sup>a</sup>		Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	2019 UCR	2020 UCR	2019 NCVS	2020 NCVS
<b>Violent crime excluding simple assault</b>				
Murder	0.05	0.07	~	~
Rape/sexual assault <sup>b</sup>	0.44	0.38	0.56	0.26
Robbery	0.82	0.74	0.90	0.85
Aggravated assault	2.50	2.80	1.92	1.66
	Rate per 1,000 residents <sup>a</sup>		Rate per 1,000 households	
	2019 UCR	2020 UCR	2019 NCVS	2020 NCVS
<b>Property crime</b>	21.31	19.58	33.00	31.19
Burglary <sup>c</sup>	3.41	3.14	6.03	4.18
Motor vehicle theft	2.21	2.46	3.12	3.18

Note: National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program crime rates are calculated differently. UCR crime rates are normally reported per 100,000 persons but were recalculated for this table to align with the reporting of NCVS crime rates per 1,000.

~Not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>Includes crimes against persons age 11 or younger, persons who are homeless, persons who are institutionalized, and crimes against commercial establishments. These populations are out of sample for the NCVS.

<sup>b</sup>The NCVS estimate includes sexual assault. The UCR estimate excludes sexual assault and is based on the program's revised definition of rape. See *Criminal Victimization, 2020* (NCJ 301775, BJS, October 2021) for details on the measurement of rape or sexual assault in the NCVS.

<sup>c</sup>The UCR defines burglary as forcible entry, unlawful entry where no force is used, or attempted forcible entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft. The NCVS defines burglary as the unlawful or forcible entry or attempted entry of places, including a permanent residence, other residence (e.g., a hotel room or vacation residence), or other structure (e.g., a garage or shed) where there was a completed or attempted theft.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019–2020; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Summary Reporting System, 2020.

Estimates from the UCR and NCVS will differ because the two sources use different methods to measure an overlapping but nonidentical set of offenses:

- The UCR includes murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, and commercial crimes (including burglary of commercial establishments), while the NCVS excludes those crime types.
- The UCR excludes sexual assault, which the NCVS includes.<sup>2</sup>
- The UCR property crime rates are per person, while the NCVS's are per household. Moreover, because the number of households may not grow at the same rate each year as the total population, trend data for rates of property crimes measured by the two programs may not be entirely comparable. There were 2.2 persons age 12 or older per household in 2020.

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<sup>2</sup>Sexual assault includes a range of victimizations and is separate from rape or attempted rape. It includes attacks or threatened attacks involving unwanted sexual contact between victim and offender, with or without force; grabbing or fondling; and verbal threats.

- NCVS estimates are based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of persons in U.S. households. UCR estimates are based on counts of crimes recorded by law enforcement agencies and are weighted to compensate for incomplete reporting.
- The NCVS does not measure crimes against persons who are homeless or who live in institutional settings (e.g., nursing homes and correctional institutions) or on military bases. Nor does the NCVS measure crimes against children age 11 or younger. The UCR measures crimes against all U.S. residents, including crimes against children age 11 or younger. In some states, mandatory reporting laws require that persons report certain crimes against youth. Due to these factors, the age distribution of crimes measured in the UCR differs from that of the NCVS.

For additional information about the differences between the NCVS and UCR, see the most recent version of *The Nation's Two Crime Measures* (NCJ 246832, BJS, September 2014).

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The full report (*Criminal Victimization, 2020*, NCJ 301775), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at [bjs.ojp.gov](https://bjs.ojp.gov).