



The National Crime Victimization Survey and National Incident-Based Reporting System: A complementary picture of crime in 2021

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The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) measure a set of offenses that overlap but are not identical, which leads to differences in estimates between the two data sources. The NCVS interviews victims on crimes both reported and not reported to police, while NIBRS collects data on crime recorded by law enforcement agencies. Restricting the NCVS to violent crime reported to police, and excluding

simple assault, aligns the NCVS and NIBRS measures as closely as possible. Taken together, these two measures of crime provide a more comprehensive picture of crime in the United States.¹

¹See *Criminal Victimization, 2021* (NCJ 305101, BJS, September 2022) for additional NCVS estimates and the FBI's Crime Data Explorer at <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/home> for additional NIBRS estimates. Additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics is available on the BJS website at bjs.ojp.gov. Additional information about the FBI is available on the FBI website at <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>.

Rate of crime per 1,000 reported to police in the National Incident-Based Reporting System and in the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2020 and 2021

Type of crime	Rate per 1,000 persons			
	2020 NIBRS ^a	2021 NIBRS ^{a*}	2020 NCVS	2021 NCVS [*]
Violent crime excluding simple assault	4.03	3.96	2.78	2.91
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	0.07	0.07	~	~
Rape/sexual assault ^b	0.42	0.43	0.26	0.25
Robbery	0.67	0.61	0.85	1.00
Aggravated assault	2.87	2.84	1.66	1.66
	Rate per 1,000 persons		Rate per 1,000 households	
	2020 NIBRS ^a	2021 NIBRS ^{a*}	2020 NCVS	2021 NCVS [*]
Property crime	20.25	19.33	31.19 †	27.82
Burglary ^c	3.08	2.71	4.18	3.66
Motor vehicle theft	2.40	2.68	3.18	3.32

Note: National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) crime rates are calculated differently. NIBRS-based crime rates are normally reported per 100,000 persons but were recalculated for this report to align with the reporting of NCVS crime rates per 1,000. NIBRS violent and property crime rates are calculated per 1,000 persons. NCVS violent crime rates are calculated per 1,000 persons, and NCVS property crime rates are calculated per 1,000 households. See the FBI's Crime Data Explorer at <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/home> for NIBRS standard errors. See *Criminal Victimization, 2021* (NCJ 305101, BJS, September 2022) for NCVS standard errors.

~Not applicable.

*Comparison year.

†Significant difference from comparison year at 95% confidence level.

^aIncludes crimes against persons age 11 or younger, persons who are homeless, persons who are institutionalized, and crimes against commercial establishments. These populations are included in NIBRS, but out of sample for the NCVS.

^bSee the FBI's 2019 *Crime in the United States* publication at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/rape> for the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program's definition of rape. See *Criminal Victimization, 2021* (NCJ 305101, BJS, September 2022) for details on the measurement of rape or sexual assault in the NCVS.

^cNIBRS 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, 2020 and 2021; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2020 and 2021.

Based on the NCVS, the total violent victimization rate, which includes victimizations reported and not reported to police, in 2021 was 16.5 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older (not shown). This rate was not statistically different from the rate in 2020. The rate of property victimization (reported and not reported to police) in 2021 was 90.3 victimizations per 1,000 households, which was not statistically different from the 2020 rate (not shown).

In 2021, the rate of violent crime, excluding simple assault, reported to police was 2.9 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, which was not statistically different from the 2020 rate. During this same period, the rate of property crime reported to police declined from 31.2 property crimes per 1,000 households in 2020 to 27.8 per 1,000 households in 2021.

By comparison, the NIBRS violent crime rate was 4.0 per 1,000 persons in 2021, which was not statistically different from the 2020 rate. The 2021 property crime rate was 19.3 crimes per 1,000 persons, which was also not statistically different from the 2020 rate.

The overall crime estimates from these two sources trend in a similar way over time. However, estimates from NIBRS and NCVS may differ because the two sources use different methods to measure an overlapping but nonidentical set of offenses:

- NIBRS includes murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, and commercial crimes (including burglary of commercial establishments), while the NCVS excludes those crime types.
- The NIBRS and NCVS definitions of rape and sexual assault differ slightly. The NIBRS definition of rape is “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim,” and the measure includes the three offense types of rape, sodomy, and sexual assault with an object.² Attempts or assaults to commit rape are also included, while statutory rape and incest are excluded. The NCVS definition of rape includes coerced or forced sexual intercourse. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category could

²For more information on rape data collected by the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program, see the 2019 *Crime in the United States* publication at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/rape>.

include incidents where the penetration was from a foreign object such as a bottle. It includes attempted rape, threatened rape, male and female victims, and incidents involving victims and offenders who are the same sex or different sexes. Sexual assault is defined as a wide range of victimizations, separate from rape, attempted rape, or threatened rape. These crimes include attacks or threatened attacks involving unwanted sexual contact between the victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force and include such things as grabbing or fondling.

- The NIBRS property crime rates are per person, while the NCVS’s are per household. Moreover, because the number of households may not grow each year at the same rate 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 2021.
- NCVS estimates are based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of persons in U.S. households. NIBRS 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. NIBRS 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 NIBRS differs from that of the NCVS.

For additional information about the differences in crime measurement between the NCVS and the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program, of which NIBRS is a part, see the most recent version of *The Nation’s Two Crime Measures* (NCJ 303385, BJS, February 2022). For more information on NIBRS estimates, see BJS’s National Incident-Based Reporting System webpage at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/national-incident-based-reporting-system-nibrs> and the FBI’s National Incident-Based Reporting System webpage at <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr/nibrs>.