



Department of Justice

Crime -
Surveys

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20 YEARS OF MEASURING CRIME SHOWS FEWER OFFENSES OVERALL
BUT INCREASED VIOLENCE AGAINST MINORITIES AND THE YOUNG

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- After 20 years of asking Americans what their actual experiences with crime have been, the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) today identified several long-term trends:

--Overall, the number of criminal victimizations dropped 6 percent since the annual National Crime Victimization Survey began in 1973.

--The steepest declines are in household burglary and theft.

--Blacks are substantially more likely to be violent crime victims than are whites.

--Young minority males in central cities are violent crime victims at the highest rates the survey ever recorded.

The data are from the survey's 20th anniversary report, which noted that more than 4.4 million interviews were conducted from 1973 through last year.

"While the overall trends are positive, some groups of Americans are disproportionately the victims of increasing

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crime," observed Lawrence A. Greenfeld, the acting BJS director. "For example, last year blacks experienced the highest per capita rates of violent crime in the survey's history."

"The survey also documented the growing ratio of violent crime," Greenfeld pointed out. "In 1973 about 15 percent of all crimes were violent compared to 20 percent in 1992. Moreover, about a third of all victims of violence report an injury."

During the last two decades an estimated 37 million victims were injured, and more than one-third of those injured had no health insurance or were not eligible for public health benefits. Among other report highlights:

--Handguns are used in about 10 percent of all violent crimes. Handgun crime rates are above the 1986 low but have not returned to the highest rate reached in 1982.

--During 1991 an estimated \$19.1 billion were lost directly from personal and household crimes.

--Males are much more likely to be victims of violence inflicted by strangers than by family members or other close associates, whereas females are as likely to be hurt by family members and close associates as by strangers.

--About 30 percent of all violent crimes and 25 percent of home burglaries occur when the victim or victims are away from home on a leisure activity.

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--In approximately half of all female rapes the victim knew the offender. Strangers used some type of weapon in 29 percent of the offenses, compared to 17 percent by non-stranger rapists.

--In robberies during which the offender threatened the victim before the attack, those victims who defended themselves in some way were less likely to lose property but were more likely to be injured than were victims who took no action. When the offender had a handgun, the victim was seriously injured in 1 percent of the incidents in which self-protective measures were not taken, compared to 7 percent when such action was taken.

--Households earning more than \$30,000 annually are generally more likely than are households in most other income categories to experience theft of a motor vehicle, but as household income rises, burglary rates fall.

--Black male teenagers (that is boys and young men from 12 through 19 years old) are more likely to be violent crime victims than any other group of people. Their average annual rate is 113 victimizations per 1,000 residents--or almost one in nine black teenagers. For white male teenagers the rate was 90 per 1,000--or about one in 11.

--For adult black males (35 through 64 years) the violent victimization rate was 35 per 1,000. For adult white males, 18 per 1,000; adult white females, 15; adult black females 13;

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elderly (65 years or more) black males 12; elderly black females, 10; elderly white males, 6 and elderly white females, 3 per 1,000.

The rate of criminal victimizations for all U.S. residents compared to other life experiences is as follows:

<u>Occurrences</u>	<u>Yearly rate per 1,000 adults</u>
Accidental injury, all circumstances	220
Accidental injury at home	66
Personal theft	61
Accidental injury at work	47
Violent victimization	31
Assault (aggravated and simple)	25
Motor vehicle accident injury	22
Death, all causes	11
Victimization with injury	11
Aggravated assault	8
Robbery	6
Death from heart disease	5
Death from cancer	3
Rape (women only)	1
Accidental death, all circumstances	0.4
Death from pneumonia or influenza	0.4
Death in motor vehicle accident	0.2
Suicide	0.2
Death from HIV infection	0.1
Homicide and capital punishment executions	0.1

The survey measures rape, robbery, assault, burglary, personal and household larceny and motor vehicle theft. It does not measure murder, kidnapping or commercial crimes.

Last year 39 percent of all these crimes were reported to police--the highest since 1973, when it was 32 percent. The

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increased reporting rate was consistent with the fact that violent crime and motor vehicle theft have made up an increasing proportion of total crime during the last two decades.

The highest reporting rate last year was for completed motor vehicle theft--92 percent. The lowest was for personal larceny without contact--15 percent.

Single copies of the BJS special report, "Highlights from 20 Years of Surveying Crime Victims" (NCJ-144525), as well as other BJS statistical bulletins and reports may be obtained from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Box 6000, Rockville, Maryland 20850. The telephone number is 1-800-732-3277.

Data from the tables and graphs used in many BJS reports can be made available to news organizations in spreadsheet files on 5½" and 3½" diskettes by calling 202-307-0784.

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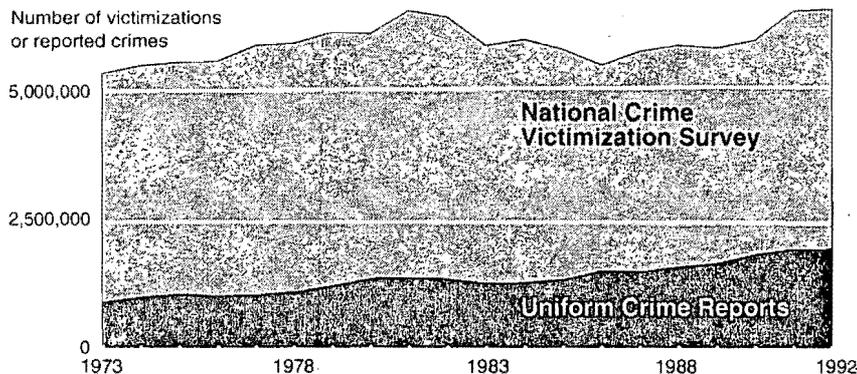
Highlights from 20 Years of Surveying Crime Victims

The National Crime Victimization Survey, 1973-92

*One of the most neglected subjects
in the study of crime is its victims ...*

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement
and the Administration of Justice, 1967

Violent crime from the Nation's two crime measures



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