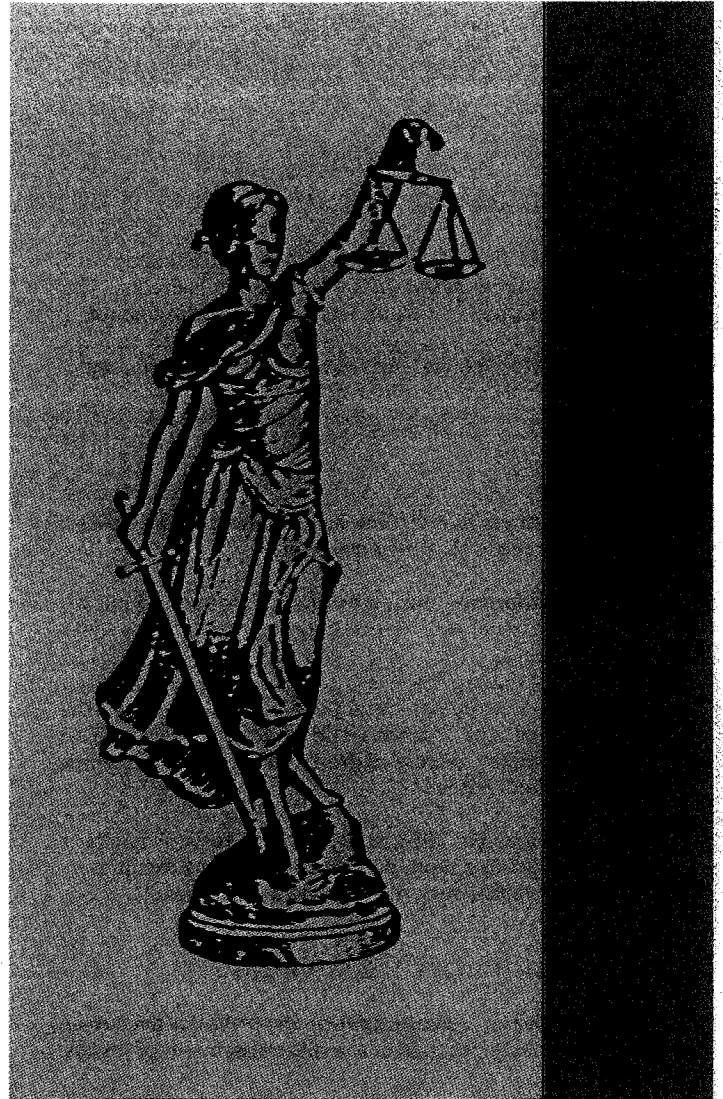


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# National Crime Victimization Survey

*Fact Sheet*



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U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

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U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
*Helping You Make Informed Decisions*





## What Is the National Crime Victimization Survey?

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is a nationwide survey based on a sample of households. The survey is designed to obtain detailed information about persons victimized by certain types of crime, such as theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, robbery, assault, rape, and purse snatching/pocket picking.

### The NCVS . . .

- Reflects crimes that victims do not report to the police, as well as those that they do report.
- Provides information used by law enforcement, judicial, and correctional agencies to improve their effectiveness and planning.
- Is the only current source of detailed information on the characteristics of both the victim and the crime and gives a more complete picture of the extent and nature of crime in the United States.
- Was redesigned in 1993 to improve the survey's ability to measure victimization, particularly certain difficult-to-measure crimes, such as rape and sexual assault.

### Who conducts this survey?

- The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the NCVS for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of the U.S. Department of Justice.
- The Census Bureau collects and processes the information and aids the BJS in the analysis of the data.
- The BJS is responsible for the publication of the results.

### How is the information collected?

- The NCVS involves interviews of households scientifically sampled in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- Sample survey methods permit the study of small numbers of people to obtain needed facts about the entire population of the country. These methods greatly reduce the cost of collecting information.
- Interviews are conducted by the Census Bureau interviewers either in person or by telephone.

### How was I selected for this survey?

- We scientifically selected a cross-section of addresses, not you personally, to represent all households in the United States for this survey.
- We usually interview each selected address a total of seven times over a period of 3 years.
- If you move away while your dwelling is still in the survey, we would interview the family that moves in.
- Participation in this survey is voluntary and there are no penalties for refusing to answer any questions. However, your cooperation is extremely important, whether you were victimized or not, to help ensure the completeness and accuracy of the survey results.

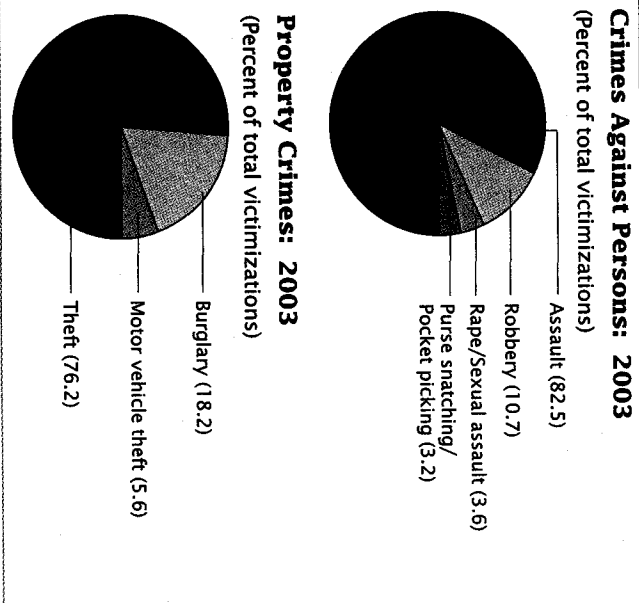
### What Information Do You Get From This Survey?

- The types and amount of crimes committed.
- Characteristics of victims.
- Offender characteristics for violent offenses.
- Details of crimes including . . .
  - When and where crimes occur.
  - Economic loss to the victim.
  - Extent of injuries suffered by the victim.
  - Whether the victim knew the offender or whether they were strangers.
  - Whether the offender used a weapon.
  - Whether the police were notified.

### What Are the Results From the NCVS?

- The BJS releases the results of the NCVS on an annual basis as well as issuing special topical reports on a periodic basis. It publishes only aggregate statistics on the country as a whole and never releases information about you as an individual.
- Results for 2003, the most recent year in which annual estimates are available, showed that assaults were the single most prevalent type of crime committed against persons (personal crime). They comprised about 82.5 percent of all personal victimizations for 2003 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**



- Assaults are defined as unlawful physical attacks or threats of attack made directly toward a person face-to-face. They are classified as simple or aggravated, with the severity of attack ranging from simple or minor to nearly fatal.
- The remainder of the personal crimes include robbery, rape/sexual assault, and purse snatching/pocket picking. These crimes collectively account for the remaining 17.5 percent of personal victimizations in 2003.

- Thefts, such as lawn furniture stolen from a backyard or a bicycle stolen from the driveway, were the most common of the property crimes reported for 2003, accounting for about 76.2 percent of all property crimes. Other crimes against property include burglary, at about 18.2 percent, and motor vehicle theft, at about 5.6 percent.

## Crimes Against Persons

### Sex of victim

- Males are more frequently victims of personal crimes of violence than females.

- For personal crimes of violence in 2003, males experienced about 27 victimizations per 1,000 persons, while females experienced about 20 victimizations per 1,000 persons.

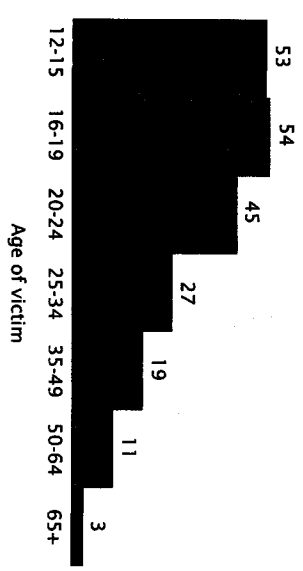
### Age of victim

- A person's age affects the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. NCVS findings show that younger persons are more frequently the victims of personal crimes than older persons.

- In 2003, those under the age of 25 were most likely to be victimized (see Figure 2). Persons age 16-19 had about 54 personal crimes per 1,000 persons, the highest victimization rate. Persons age 12-15 had about 53 personal crimes per 1,000 persons, while persons age 20-24 had about 45 personal crimes per 1,000 persons. On the other hand, persons age 65 and older had about 3 personal violent crimes per 1,000 persons, the lowest victimization rate.

**Figure 2.**

**Personal Crimes: 2003**  
(Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 and over)



## Property Crimes

- We classify property crimes reported to the NCVS into three major types: Burglary, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Theft (includes both attempted and completed crimes).

- Theft, the most prevalent property crime, occurs when an offender takes or attempts to take cash or property without personal contact. Incidents involving theft of property from within the sample household would classify as a theft if the offender has a legal right to be in the house, otherwise the incident would classify as a burglary.

- Burglary consists of the actual or attempted unlawful entry of a house, apartment, or other residential structure, such as a homeowner's garage.

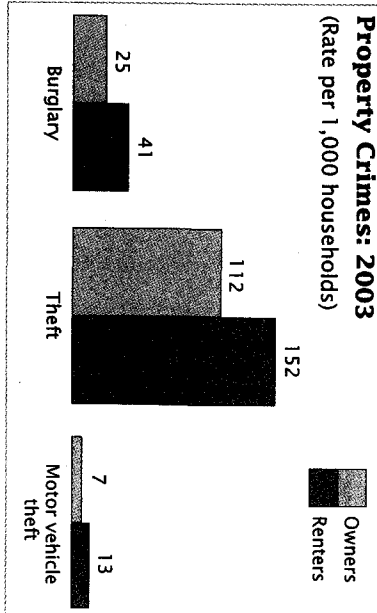
- Motor vehicle theft includes theft and attempted theft of cars, trucks, motorcycles and other vehicles legally entitled to use the public roads and highways.

- Survey results show that these crimes are more prevalent in large households with six or more persons than in households with fewer than six persons.

- As illustrated in Figure 3, renters had higher rates of victimization in 2003 than homeowners for each of the three major types of property crimes.

**Figure 3.**

**Property Crimes: 2003**  
(Rate per 1,000 households)

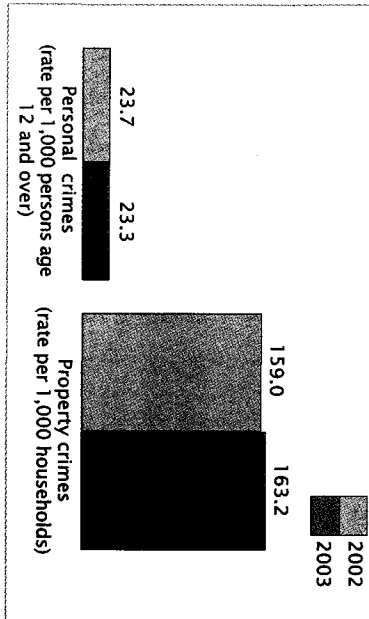


## Comparing Crime Data

- By comparing the NCVS data over time, criminal justice planners can determine whether or not there are any meaningful changes in criminal victimization patterns for certain types of crime.
- Between 2002 and 2003, the number of people victimized by personal crimes went from 23.7 per 1,000 persons age 12 and older to 23.3 per 1,000 persons. This represents a decrease of 0.4 victimizations per 1,000 persons (see Figure 4).
- Property crimes experienced an increase in the crime rate from 2002 to 2003. Property crimes went from 159.0 victimizations per 1,000 households in 2002 to 163.2 victimizations per 1,000 households in 2003, an increase of 4.2 victimizations per 1,000 households.

## Figure 4.

Comparison of Crime Data: 2002 to 2003



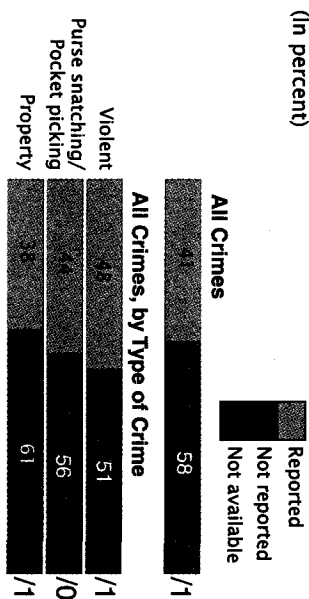
## Reporting Crimes to the Police

- The NCVS was intended to complement what is known about crime from the FBI's annual compilation of information reported to police (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. The majority of crimes measured by the NCVS in 2003 were not reported to the police. About 58 percent of all victimizations, 51 percent of violent crime, 56 percent of purse snatching/pocket picking, and 61 percent of property crime were not reported to the police (see Figure 5).

## Figure 5.

Reporting Crimes to the Police: 2003

(In percent)



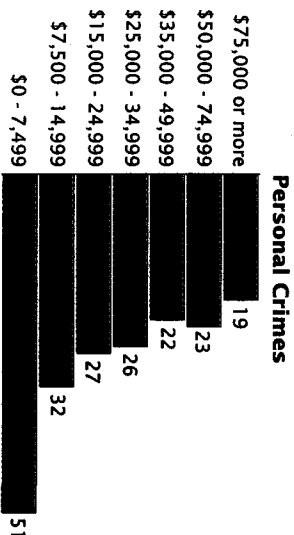
## Household Income

- Analysis of the NCVS data shows that, in some instances, household income can be an important indicator of the likelihood of being victimized by a particular type of crime.
- In 2003, crimes that involved violence and purse snatching/pocket picking occurred more frequently among individuals who earned less than \$7,500 annually. The income group with the lowest victimization rate for these crime types was households with an income of \$75,000 or more (see Figure 6 below).

## Figure 6.

Total Personal Crimes of Violence and Purse Snatching/Pocket Picking by Annual Household Income: 2003

(Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 and over)



## A Word About Confidentiality...

- We use the information you provide for statistical purposes only. Anyone who might see your answers has to take an oath and is subject to a fine or imprisonment for improperly disclosing any information you provide (U.S. Code, Title 13, Section 9).
- The charts and graphs shown in this facts sheet were created from a compilation of data provided by respondents like you and are examples of how the data are used to provide information on many topics related to crime and victimization. Your name and address are NOT part of the statistical totals released to the public.
- It is illegal for us to provide anyone, including other government agencies, with information about you as an individual.

## Other Publications

- This fact sheet contains only a few of the highlights of the NCVS findings. The BIS publishes other reports periodically to meet the needs of the many interested persons in law enforcement, government, and the private sector who analyze the crime problem and plan programs for combating it. By participating in the NCVS, you are contributing to the knowledge needed to plan effective programs to combat crime.

- The BIS publishes a wide variety of special reports on topics such as Black and Hispanic victims, elderly victims, the crime of rape, robbery victims, motor vehicle theft, and so forth. You may obtain the most recent copies of these and other reports from the NCVS data by writing to or visiting the BIS Web site at:

Justice Statistics Clearinghouse/NCJRS  
PO Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/)

## Useful Information

National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE
National Center for Victims of Crime	1-800-FYI-CALL
Child Help USA National Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-4-A-CHILD
Eldercare Locator	1-800-677-1116