



Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings

April 1994, NCJ-147486

Violent Crime

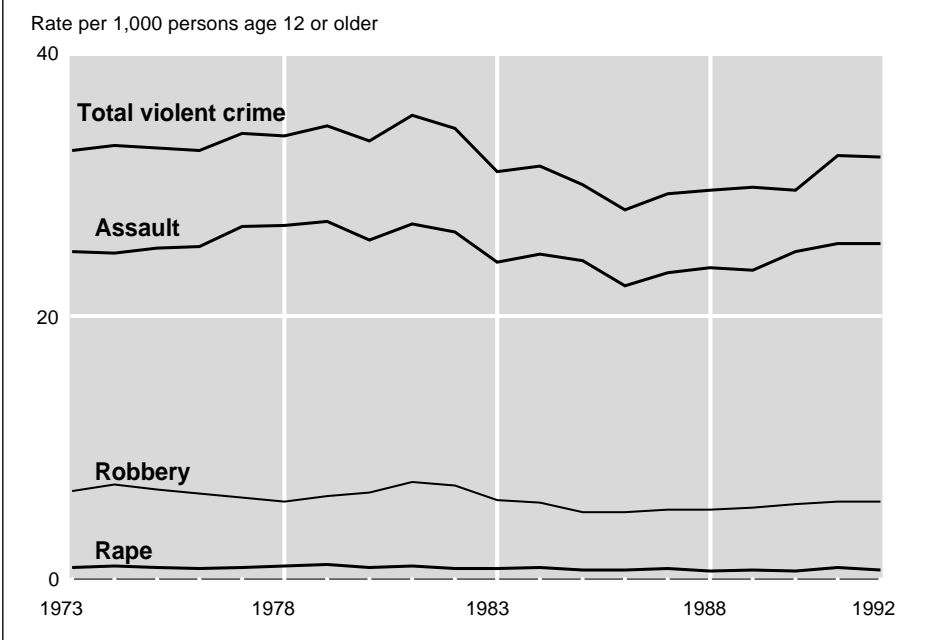
During the last 20 years, victims have described more than 119 million violent victimizations of rape, robbery, or assault in interviews for the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) sponsors this continuous household survey as the only national effort to provide accurate measures of crimes of violence and theft, both those not reported to law enforcement and those reported. The survey samples 43,000 U.S. households and 100,000 persons age 12 or older, and it reports on attempted as well as completed crimes.

The NCVS does not include homicide. However, two other national sources of data about murder exist: the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program and *Vital Statistics of the United States* produced by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Information from these sources is presented on page 3.

How much violent crime is there in the United States?

- In 1992 there were 6.6 million violent victimizations, including 141,000 rapes, 1.2 million robberies, and 5.3 million assaults.
- 4.9 million households, or 5% of all households, had a member victimized by violence during 1992.

The violent crime rate in 1992 was lower than in the early 1980's



- Americans have a greater chance of being a violent crime victim than of being injured in a motor vehicle accident.

What are the trends in violent crime?

- 1992 NCVS violent crime rates were unchanged from 1991 and were 9% below 1981, the peak year. The rates declined partly because older persons, who experience less violent crime than younger persons, comprise an increasing proportion of the population.

- The percentage of households with a member who had been a victim of violence (other than homicide) in 1992, 5%, was the lowest recorded since 1975, when these estimates were first available.

- For some segments of the population, crime is not decreasing; in 1992 the violent crime rate for blacks was the highest ever recorded in the NCVS.
- Young people age 16-24 consistently have the highest violent crime rates. Trends in these age groups vary from year to year, but the overall trend has

been increasing. The rate for those age 12-15 was the highest ever in 1992; it was the highest ever for those age 16-19 in 1991.

Who are the victims of violent crime?

- Teenage black males have the highest victimization rate (113 per 1,000 in 1992), while elderly white females have the lowest rate (3 per 1,000). Teenagers in general have very high rates: 90 per 1,000 for teenage white males, 55 per 1,000 for teenage white females, and 94 per 1,000 for teenage black females.

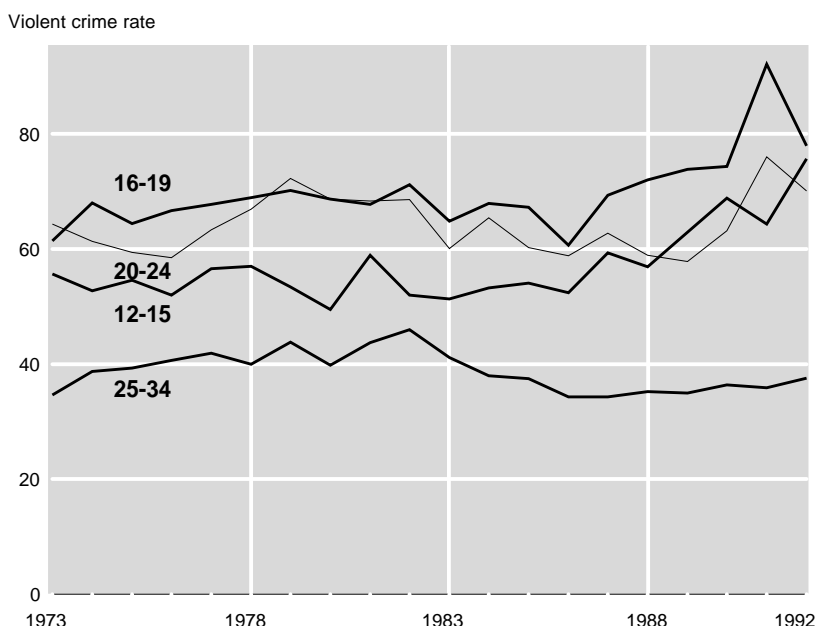
How does violence affect women?

- More than 2.5 million women experience violence annually.
- Men have higher rates overall than women (40 per 1,000 for men; 25 per 1,000 for women). However, violence against males has decreased since 1973, while the rates for females have remained relatively constant.
- Women are about equally as likely to be victimized by an intimate or relative, by an acquaintance, or by a stranger.
- Men are far more likely to be victimized by a stranger or acquaintance. A third of all violent victimizations of women but a twentieth of all violent victimizations of men are committed by a relative or intimate.
- In about 1 in 4 attacks on females, the offender used a weapon. About 1 in 3 of these weapons were firearms.

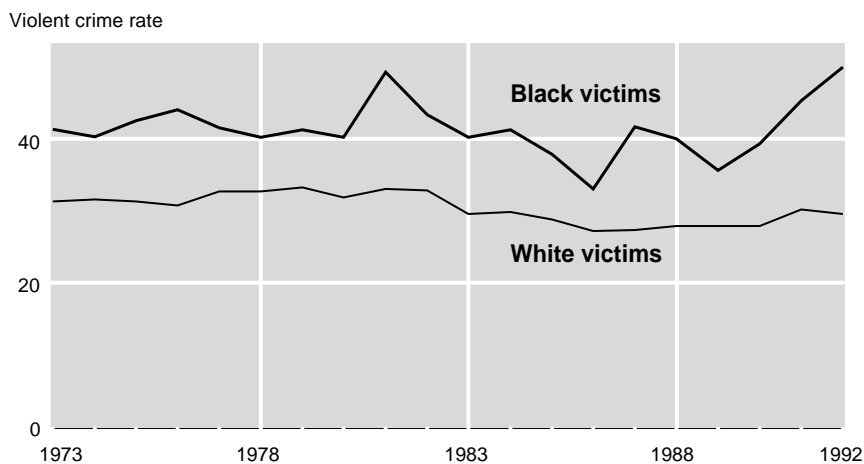
How does violent crime affect its victims?

- The proportion of victimizations that resulted in injuries to victims increased 10% between 1973 and 1991.
- On average, 2.2 million crime victims are injured each year.
- Of victims of violent crime who are injured, 51% require some medical attention; 19% are treated at an emergency room and released within a day; and 4% require hospitalization of more than one night.

Violent crime rates for the youngest age groups are increasing



In 1992 the violent crime rate for black victims reached the highest level ever recorded

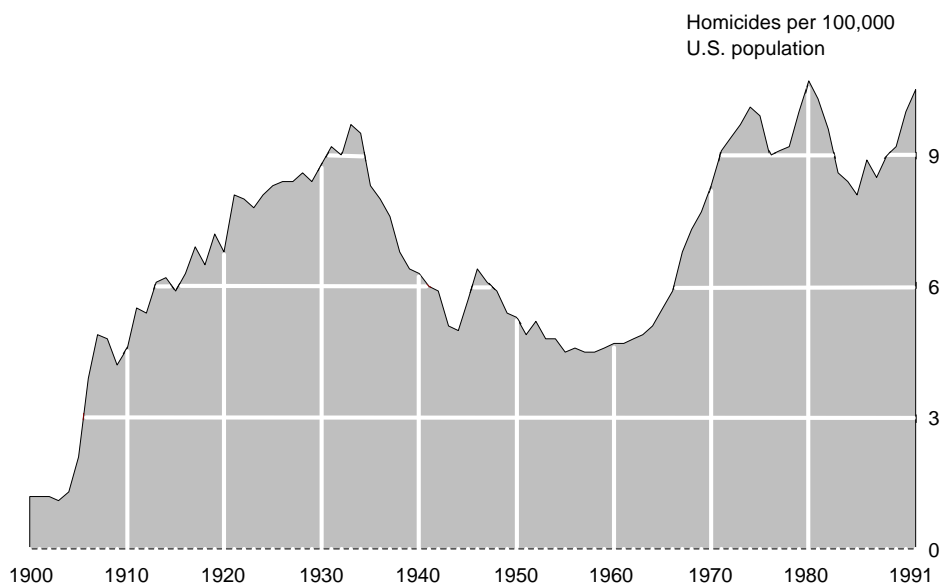


- Crime-related injuries account for more than 700,000 days of hospitalization annually—the equivalent to about 30% of the hospital days for traffic accident injuries and just over 1% of the days for treatment of heart disease.
- Hospitalized crime victims remain in the hospital for an average of 9 days, about the same length of stay as that of patients undergoing cancer treatment and 2 days longer than the hospitalization of those injured in traffic

accidents or receiving treatment for heart disease.

- In 1992 about 3 out of 10 victims who were injured did not have health insurance and were not eligible for public medical services.
- Of violent crime victims, 8% lost time from work. (All victims of crime, including property crime, lost more than 6.1 million days from work.)

In 1980 the homicide rate was at the highest level recorded this century



Source: *Vital Statistics of the United States*, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services.

- For all age groups, black males age 15-24 had the highest homicide rate (159 per 100,000 population).

Over 68% of the murders in 1992 were committed with firearms

According to the FBI, 23,760 murders were reported by law enforcement agencies in 1992. Handguns killed 55% of the murder victims. Knives or cutting instruments were used to kill almost 15% of the murder victims.

When the circumstances surrounding the murder were known, 30% resulted from the commission of another crime such as robbery, burglary, or narcotic drug law violations. Forty percent of the murders resulted from arguments. Male murder victims were more likely than female victims to have been killed during the commission of a felony.

In murders where the relationship between the victim and the offender was known, 44% of the victims were killed by an acquaintance, 22% by a stranger, and 20% by a family member. The victim was the wife or girlfriend of the murderer in 11% of the homicides. Half of the murders by strangers were committed during the commission of a felony.

Homicide data were reported on 25,180 offenders in 1992. Of these offenders for whom sex, age, and race were reported —

- 90% were male
- 50% were age 15-24
- 55% were black.

Homicide was the 10th leading cause of death for all Americans in 1991

According to *Vital Statistics*—

- For blacks of all ages, homicide was the fourth leading cause of death, but for black males and females age 15-24, homicide was the leading cause of death.
- For whites age 15-24, homicide was the third leading cause of death, exceeded only by accidents and suicide.

In 1991 most homicide victims were male, and most were between ages 15 and 44. The black victims represented almost half of all victims.

	Percent of homicide victims
All victims	100%
Age	
1-4	2%
5-14	2
15-24	31
25-44	47
45 or older	19
Sex	
Male	78%
Female	22
Sex and race	
Black male	40%
White male	36
White female	12
Black female	9

- Black males had the highest homicide rate (72 per 100,000 population), followed by black females (14 per 100,000), white males (9 per 100,000), and white females (3 per 100,000).

What are the economic costs of violent crime?

- Victims of violent crime lost \$1.4 billion in 1992 in direct costs, including medical expenses, time lost from work, and activities related to the crime, such as going to court.

- Violent crime victims suffered some economic loss in 23% of the victimizations.
- Victims lost an average of \$206 per violent crime in 1992.
- In 1992, of victims of robbery who had an economic loss, blacks were more likely than whites to lose \$250

or more: about 4 in 10 robberies of blacks compared to 2 in 10 robberies of whites resulted in a loss of \$250 or more.

Where does violent crime occur?

- Central cities, particularly those with populations between 250,000

and 499,999, have the highest per capita rates of violent crime.

- Nearly a quarter of all violent crimes occur either in the home (12% of all violent victimizations) or at school (12%). Thirty percent of all violent crimes occur on the street or in an open area, 7% near home, 7% at a relative's or acquaintance's home, and 5% in a club, bar, or restaurant.
- In 1992 residents of the Western States had the highest per capita rates of violent victimization, and those in the Northeast had the lowest.

Who commits violent crimes?

- In 1992 strangers committed 54% of violent crimes; persons well known to the victims, 20%; casual acquaintances, 12%; and relatives, 7%.
- Victims of violence in 1992 reported that about 33% of offenders were less than 21 years old, about 86% were male, and 29% were black. About a third of the victims reported that they were attacked by multiple offenders.
- Victims reported that in most violent crimes the victim and the offender were of the same race. In 1992, in 73% of the violent crimes against whites, the offender was also white; in 84% of the violent crimes against blacks, the offender was black.
- About a third of victims of violence perceived the offender to have been using drugs or alcohol or both at the time of the offense.

How often are weapons used in violent crime?

- Handguns are used in about 13% of all violent crimes.
- Since 1988, handgun crime rates have risen. In 1992 the handgun crime rate, 4.5 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, was at the highest rate ever recorded, surpassing the previous high of 4.0 reached in 1982.
- One in every five rapes and over half of all robberies involve a weapon. When some type of weapon is used, it is a handgun in slightly more than 1 in 3 rapes and 4 in 10 robberies.
- Strangers are more likely than nonstrangers to use firearms.

Nonstrangers are somewhat more likely than strangers to use a knife.

- Four out of five violent incidents with firearms involve a handgun.

How do victims protect themselves?

- Victims take some type of measure to protect themselves in 71% of all violent victimizations.
- Men and women are about equally likely to take some kind of self-protective action. Men are more than twice as likely as female victims of violence to attack the offender, while women are more than twice as likely as male victims of violence to scream or give an alarm.
- Of those self-protective actions taken, about 2% involve the use of a weapon by the victim.

To what extent are crimes reported to police, and what is the police response?

- In 1992, 50% of all crimes of violence were reported to police, including 53% of rapes, 51% of robberies, 62% of aggravated assaults, and 43% of simple assaults.

- The most common reasons for not reporting violent crimes were that the victim viewed it as a private or personal matter (22%), the offender was not successful (18%), or the victim felt that the police would not want to be bothered or there was lack of proof (14%).
- When crimes of violence were reported to police, police arrived within 10 minutes in 56% of victimizations and within an hour in 89%. An additional 4% of victims said they did not know how long it took police to come.

Sources

BJS, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1992*, March 1994, NCJ-145125.

BJS, *Highlights from 20 Years of Surveying Crime Victims: The National Crime Victimization Survey, 1973-92*, October 1993, NCJ-144525.

BJS, *Violence against Women*, January 1994, NCJ-145325.

BJS Bulletin, *Crime and the Nation's Households, 1992*, August 1993, NCJ-143288.

FBI, *Crime in the United States, 1992*, October 3, 1993.

National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1991," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Supplement, August 31, 1993.

Violent victimization rate, by age and race of victim, 1973-92

Year	Number of rapes, robberies, or assaults per 1,000 persons								
	Age						Race		
	12-15	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65 or older	White	Black
1973	55.6	61.4	64.3	34.6	21.6	13.1	8.5	31.6	41.7
1974	52.7	68.0	61.3	38.7	20.9	11.8	9.0	31.9	40.7
1975	54.6	64.4	59.4	39.3	20.5	13.5	7.8	31.6	42.9
1976	52.0	66.7	58.5	40.6	20.0	12.2	7.6	31.1	44.4
1977	56.5	67.7	63.3	41.9	19.9	12.8	7.5	33.0	41.9
1978	57.0	68.9	66.9	39.9	19.9	11.4	7.9	33.0	40.6
1979	53.4	70.2	72.2	43.8	21.3	10.3	5.9	33.6	41.6
1980	49.5	68.7	68.7	39.8	21.1	11.8	6.8	32.2	40.6
1981	58.9	67.8	68.3	43.7	23.3	13.2	7.8	33.4	49.7
1982	52.0	71.2	68.6	46.0	21.5	10.5	5.7	33.2	43.7
1983	51.3	64.8	60.1	41.1	20.4	9.0	5.5	29.9	40.6
1984	53.2	67.9	65.4	38.0	21.4	10.1	4.9	30.2	41.6
1985	54.1	67.2	60.2	37.4	19.9	9.9	4.5	29.1	38.2
1986	52.4	60.7	58.8	34.3	20.0	8.2	4.5	27.5	33.4
1987	59.3	69.4	62.8	34.3	19.3	8.6	4.9	27.7	42.1
1988	56.9	72.0	58.9	35.2	21.8	10.2	4.1	28.2	40.4
1989	62.9	73.8	57.8	34.9	20.8	7.9	3.9	28.2	36.0
1990	68.8	74.4	63.1	36.4	19.2	7.5	3.5	28.2	39.7
1991	64.3	92.1	76.0	35.9	20.8	9.5	3.7	30.5	45.7
1992	75.7	77.9	70.1	37.6	21.2	10.0	4.8	29.9	50.4