The rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities (29.5 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older) was 2.5 times higher than the rate for persons without disabilities (11.8 per 1,000) in 2015. Each year from 2009 to 2015, the rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities was at least twice the age-adjusted rate for persons without disabilities. One in 5 disabled violent crime victims believed they were targeted because of their disability.

Defining disabilities

The Bureau of Justice Statistics’ National Crime Victimization Survey defines a disability as the product of interactions among an individual’s body—including their physical, emotional, and mental health—and the physical and social environment in which they live, work, or play. A disability exists when this interaction results in limitations of activities and with restrictions to full participation at school, work, home, or in the community. Disabilities are classified according to six limitations:

- hearing (deafness or serious difficulty hearing)
- vision (blindness or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses)
- cognitive (serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition)
- ambulatory (difficulty walking or climbing stairs)
- self-care (a condition that causes difficulty dressing or bathing)
- independent living (physical, mental, or emotional condition that impedes doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor or shopping).

About the crimes

The rate of serious violent crime (rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) for persons with disabilities (12.7 per 1,000) was more than three times the rate for persons without disabilities (4.0 per 1,000). Additionally, the rate of simple assault against persons with disabilities (19.6 per 1,000) was more than twice the rate for persons without disabilities (8.7 per 1,000).