

# Crime and Victimization

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 1997 *National Crime Victimization Survey* data released in December of 1998, U.S. residents age 12 or older experienced nearly 35 million crimes in 1997. Of these victimizations, approximately 26 million involved theft, household burglary or car theft; 8.6 million involved the violent crimes of rape, sexual assault, robbery, and nonsexual assault; and 0.4 million involved personal thefts such as purse snatching.

(Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1998, December). *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.)

Translated into the number of violent and property crimes per 1,000 persons or households, crime rates for 1997 show 39 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons and 248 property crimes per 1,000 households. (Ibid.)

A 17 percent decline in the robbery rate was largely responsible for the 7 percent overall drop in 1997 in the nation's crime rate as reported in the *National Crime Victimization Survey*. (Ibid.)

Significantly, the rate of rape and sexual assault did not decline in 1997. (Ibid.)

According to the FBI's *Crime Clock*, in 1997: one violent crime occurred every 19 seconds; one property crime occurred every 3 seconds; one murder occurred every 29 minutes; one forcible rape occurred every 5 minutes; one robbery occurred every 1 minute; one aggravated assault occurred every 31 seconds; one burglary occurred every 13 seconds; one larceny-theft occurred

every 4 seconds; and one motor vehicle theft occurred every 23 seconds. The Crime Clock is designed to convey the annual reported crime experience by showing the relative frequency of the occurrence of Crime Index crimes. (Federal Bureau of Investigation. (released November 22, 1998). *Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Reports, 1997*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.)

In 1997, the Crime Index total (which measures the following crimes reported to law enforcement: murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson), estimated at approximately 13.2 million offenses, dropped 2 percent from the 1996 total. This decline represents the lowest annual serious crime count since 1985 and the sixth consecutive annual decline. (Ibid., p. 7)

In 1997, an estimated 1.6 million violent crimes were reported to law enforcement, indicating a 3 percent decrease from the 1996 level. (Ibid., p. 12)

From 1996 to 1997, violent crime decreased in the nation's cities collectively by 4 percent and in the suburban counties by 2 percent. Rural counties, however, reported an increase of 3 percent in violent crime. (Ibid.)

The nation's violent crime rate fell 10 percent between 1995 and 1996 and was 16 percent lower than in 1993. Overall property crime was down more than 8 percent in 1996 and was 17 percent lower than in 1993. (Ibid.)