



Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

A National Crime Victimization Survey Report

Criminal Victimization 1990

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Persons age 12 or older living in the United States experienced 6 million violent victimizations and 12.9 million personal thefts during 1990. In addition, American households were the victims of 15.4 million crimes according to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).¹ The NCVS measures the violent crimes of rape, robbery, aggravated and simple assault; personal thefts; and the household crimes of burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.²

- Between 1989 and 1990 the levels of both personal and household crime decreased significantly. Personal crimes declined 3.6% and household crimes 4.4% in 1990. The only crime levels to increase significantly were for personal larcenies with contact between victim and offender (such as pocket picking) and completed violent crimes.³

¹The National Crime Survey recently underwent a name change. In the future, the survey will be referred to as the National Crime Victimization Survey.

²For definitions of the crimes measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey and a description of NCVS operations, see *Measuring Crime*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-75710, February 1981.

³Because the numbers in this report are estimates based on a sample, some apparent differences may reflect sampling variation. Such differences are described in the report as not statistically significant or not measurably different. Unless one of these designations is used, any difference described reflects at least a 90% certainty that the difference is not the result of sampling variation. See the discussion on page 7.

- Since 1981, the peak year for victimizations, crime levels have dropped overall. The NCVS measured at least 18% fewer household crimes and personal thefts and 8% fewer violent crimes in 1990 than in 1981 (table 1 and figures 1-3).

- As with crime levels, crime rates—the number of crimes per 1,000 persons for personal crimes or per 1,000 households for household crimes—also dropped between 1989 and 1990. No crime category showed a significant increase in rates for 1990. Rates of personal crime, crimes of theft, including larcenies without contact, and household crime, including household larceny, all declined (table 2).

- Crime rates varied in different regions of the country. For instance, rates of personal theft decreased in the South and West between 1989 and 1990 but remained relatively stable in the Northeast and Midwest.

October 1991

The National Crime Survey was recently renamed The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), to emphasize more clearly the measurement of those victimizations experienced by our citizens.

The NCVS measures both crimes reported to the police and crimes that were not reported. Nearly two-thirds of all NCVS crimes, including slightly more than half of all violent crimes, are not reported to the police. This year's survey shows that the reporting rate for violent crime has increased.

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Victimization trends, 1973-90

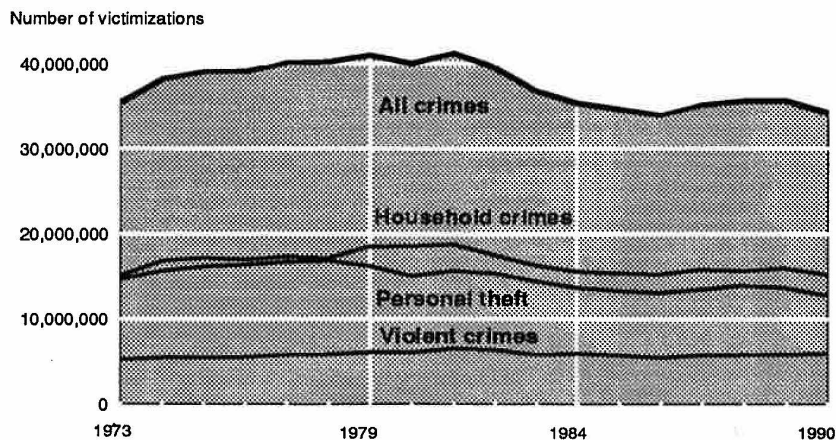


Figure 1

Crime decreased between 1989 and 1990

Since 1981, the peak year for victimizations, there has been a trend toward decreasing levels of violent crime, theft,

and household crime. The NCVS measured at least 18% fewer household crimes and personal thefts and 8% fewer violent crimes in 1990 than in 1981 (table 1 and figures 1-3).

Table 1. Victimization levels for selected crimes, 1973-1990

	Number of victimizations (in 1,000's)			
	Total	Violent crimes	Personal theft	Household crimes
1973	35,661	5,350	14,970	15,340
1974	38,411	5,510	15,889	17,012
1975	39,266	5,573	16,294	17,400
1976	39,318	5,599	16,519	17,199
1977	40,314	5,902	16,933	17,480
1978	40,412	5,941	17,050	17,421
1979	41,249	6,159	16,382	18,708
1980	40,252	6,130	15,300	18,821
1981	41,454	6,582	15,863	19,009
1982	39,756	6,459	15,553	17,744
1983	37,001	5,903	14,657	16,440
1984	35,544	6,021	13,789	15,733
1985	34,864	5,823	13,474	15,568
1986	34,118	5,515	13,235	15,368
1987	35,336	5,796	13,575	15,966
1988	35,796	5,910	14,056	15,830
1989	35,818	5,861	13,829	16,128
1990	34,404	6,009	12,975	15,419
Percent change, 1981-90 ^a	-17.0% ^b	-8.7% ^b	-18.2% ^b	-18.9% ^b

^aTotal victimizations peaked in 1981.

^bThe difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Between 1989 and 1990 the levels of both personal and household crime decreased significantly (table 2). Personal crimes declined 3.6% in 1990 and household crimes decreased 4.4%. Specifically, decreases in the numbers of completed thefts, especially larcenies without contact, as well as attempted forcible entries, and household larcenies resulted in these overall declines. The only crime levels to increase significantly were for the personal larcenies with contact between victim and offender (such as pocket picking) and the completed violent crimes.

As with crime levels, crime rates—the number of crimes per 1,000 persons for personal crimes or per 1,000 households for household crimes—also dropped between 1989 and 1990. Rates of personal crime, crimes of theft, including larcenies without contact, and household crime, including household larceny, all declined. Overall, no crime categories showed significant increases in rates for 1990.

Trends in victimization rates of personal crimes, 1973-90

Number of victimizations per 1,000 persons

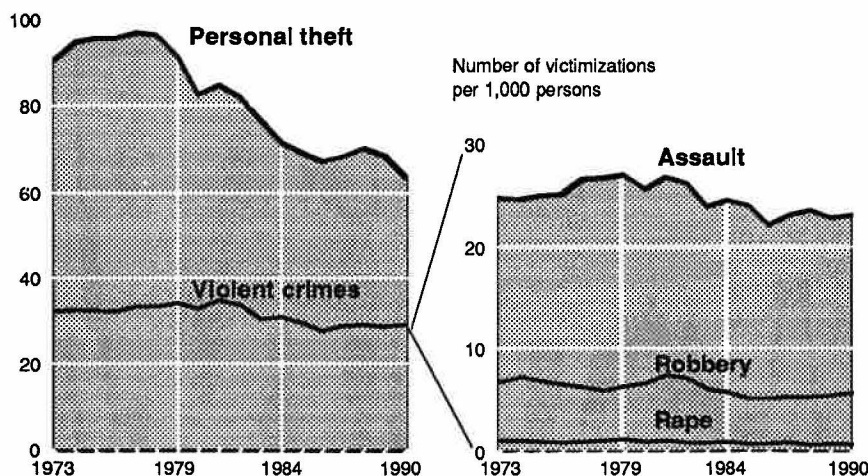


Figure 2

Trends in victimization rates of household crimes, 1973-90

Number of victimizations per 1,000 households

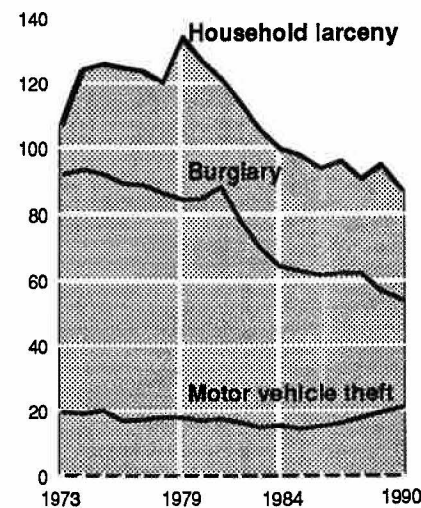


Figure 3

Crime rates did vary, however, in different regions of the country. For instance, rates of personal theft decreased in the South and West between 1989 and 1990

but remained relatively stable in the Northeast and the Midwest (table 5). Although rates of household crime decreased in all regions, these declines

were significant solely in the South and West. There was evidence of an increase in the violent crime rate for the Midwest only.

Trends in crime rates, 1973-90

In several major crime categories, victimization rates have been declining fairly consistently since the survey began in 1973. For example, the rate of personal crime in 1990 was significantly lower than rates for every other year except 1986 (tables 3 and 4). The personal theft rate of 63.8 thefts per 1,000 persons in 1990 was the lowest the NCVS has ever recorded for this crime. This is the result of a declining rate of personal larceny without contact. Similarly, the rate of household crime reached an all time low of 161 crimes per 1,000 households because of a drop in the rate of household larceny. Other crimes have remained very stable over the 18 years that the NCVS has been in existence; rates of personal larceny with contact, for example, have changed little since 1973.

Table 2. Changes in victimization levels and rates for personal and household crimes, 1989-90

	Number of victimizations (1,000's)			Victimization rates		
	1989	1990	Percent change, 1989-90	1989	1990	Percent change, 1989-90
All crimes	35,818	34,404	-3.9% ^a
Personal crimes	19,691	18,984	-3.6% ^a	97.8	93.4	-4.5% ^a
Crimes of violence	5,861	6,009	2.5	29.1	29.6	1.5
Completed	2,196	2,422	10.3 ^a	10.9	11.9	9.2
Attempted	3,665	3,587	-2.1	18.2	17.6	-3.0
Rape ^c	135	130	-3.8	.7	.6	-4.7
Robbery	1,092	1,150	5.3	5.4	5.7	4.4
Completed	744	801	7.7	3.7	3.9	6.7
With injury	300	286	-4.8	1.5	1.4	-5.6
Without injury	443	514	16.1	2.2	2.5	15.0
Attempted	348	349	.3	1.7	1.7	-.7
With injury	94	110	17.8	.5	.5	16.8
Without injury	255	239	-6.2	1.3	1.2	-7.1
Assault	4,634	4,729	2.1	23.0	23.3	1.1
Aggravated	1,665	1,601	-3.8	8.3	7.9	-4.8
Completed with injury	586	627	7.0	2.9	3.1	6.0
Attempted assault with weapon	1,079	974	-9.7 ^b	5.4	4.8	-10.6
Simple	2,969	3,128	5.4	14.7	15.4	4.4
Completed with injury	820	931	13.5 ^b	4.1	4.6	12.4
Attempted assault without weapon	2,149	2,197	2.2	10.7	10.8	1.3
Crimes of theft	13,829	12,975	-6.2 ^a	68.7	63.8	-7.1 ^a
Completed	12,996	12,155	-6.5 ^a	64.5	59.8	-7.4 ^a
Attempted	834	821	-1.5	4.1	4.0	-2.5
Personal larceny with contact	543	637	17.3 ^a	2.7	3.1	16.1
Purse snatching	162	165	2.5	.8	.8	1.5
Pocket picking	381	472	23.6 ^a	1.9	2.3	22.5
Personal larceny without contact	13,287	12,338	-7.1 ^a	66.0	60.7	-8.0 ^a
Completed	12,491	11,559	-7.5 ^a	62.0	56.9	-8.3 ^a
Less than \$50	5,126	4,592	-10.4 ^a	25.5	22.6	-11.3 ^a
\$50 or more	6,838	6,453	-5.6 ^a	34.0	31.7	-6.5 ^a
Amount not available	527	514	-2.5	2.6	2.5	-3.5
Attempted	795	779	-2.0	4.0	3.8	-2.9
Household crimes	16,128	15,419	-4.4% ^a	169.9	161.0	-5.3% ^a
Completed	13,619	13,072	-4.0 ^a	143.5	136.5	-4.9 ^a
Attempted	2,509	2,347	-6.5 ^b	26.4	24.5	-7.3
Household burglary	5,352	5,148	-3.8	56.4	53.8	-4.7
Completed	4,111	4,076	-.8	43.3	42.6	-1.7
Forcible entry	1,813	1,816	.2	19.1	19.0	-.7
Unlawful entry without force	2,298	2,260	-1.7	24.2	23.6	-2.6
Attempted forcible entry	1,241	1,072	-13.7 ^a	13.1	11.2	-14.5 ^a
Household larceny	8,955	8,304	-7.3 ^a	94.4	86.7	-8.1 ^a
Completed	8,327	7,769	-6.7 ^a	87.8	81.1	-7.5 ^a
Less than \$50	3,413	3,144	-7.9 ^a	36.0	32.8	-8.7 ^a
\$50 or more	4,482	4,206	-6.2 ^a	47.2	43.9	-7.0 ^a
Amount not available	432	419	-3.0	4.6	4.4	-4.0
Attempted	628	535	-14.8 ^b	6.6	5.6	-15.6 ^b
Motor vehicle theft	1,820	1,968	8.1	19.2	20.5	7.1
Completed	1,180	1,227	3.9	12.4	12.8	3.0
Attempted	640	741	15.8	6.7	7.7	14.7

Note: Detail may not add to totals shown because of rounding. Percent change is based on unrounded numbers. Victimization rates are calculated on the basis of the number of victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older or per 1,000 households. The population age 12 or older grew from 201,375,630 in 1989 to 203,273,870 in 1990, an increase of .9%. The number of households grew from 94,899,080 to 95,762,680 between 1989 and 1990, also an increase of .9%.

...Not applicable.

^aThe difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

^bThe difference is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

^cThere were 1.2 rapes per 1,000 women age 12 or older in 1989 and 1.0 in 1990.

Table 3. Victimization rates for personal and household crimes

	Victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older or per 1,000 households											
	1973	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Personal crimes	123.6	116.3	120.5	116.8	107.9	103.2	99.4	95.6	98.0	100.1	97.8	93.4
Crimes of violence	32.6	33.3	35.3	34.3	31.0	31.4	30.0	28.1	29.3	29.6	29.1	29.6
Rape	1.0	.9	1.0	.8	.8	.9	.7	.7	.8	.6	.7	.6
Robbery	6.7	6.6	7.4	7.1	6.0	5.7	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.7
Assault	24.9	25.8	27.0	26.4	24.1	24.7	24.2	22.3	23.3	23.7	23.0	23.3
Aggravated	10.1	9.3	9.6	9.3	8.0	9.0	8.3	7.9	8.0	8.7	8.3	7.9
Simple	14.8	16.5	17.3	17.1	16.2	15.7	15.9	14.4	15.2	15.0	14.7	15.4
Crimes of theft	91.1	83.0	85.1	82.5	76.9	71.8	69.4	67.5	68.7	70.5	68.7	63.8
Personal larceny												
With contact	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.7	3.1
Without contact	88.0	80.0	81.9	79.5	74.0	69.1	66.7	64.7	66.1	68.0	66.0	60.7
Household crimes	217.8	227.4	226.0	208.2	189.8	178.7	174.4	170.0	173.9	169.6	169.9	161.0
Household burglary	91.7	84.3	87.9	78.2	70.0	64.1	62.7	61.5	62.1	61.9	56.4	53.8
Household larceny	107.0	126.5	121.0	113.9	105.2	99.4	97.5	93.5	95.7	90.2	94.4	86.7
Motor vehicle theft	19.1	16.7	17.1	16.2	14.6	15.2	14.2	15.0	16.0	17.5	19.2	20.5

Note: Detail may not add to total shown because of rounding. Table 4 identifies statistically significant differences between the rates for 1990 and preceding years.

Table 4. Comparison of changes in victimization rates for personal and household crimes

	1973-90	80-90	81-90	82-90	83-90	84-90	85-90	86-90	87-90	88-90	89-90
Personal crimes	-24.5%	-19.7%	-22.5%	-20.0%	-13.5%	-9.5%	-6.1%	-2.3%*	-4.7%	-6.7%	-4.5%
Crimes of violence	-9.2	-11.1	-16.3	-13.7	-4.6*	-5.8	-1.5*	5.1*	.9*	-.*	1.5*
Rape	-32.5	-31.8	-32.5	-20.9*	-20.9*	-31.8	-9.7*	-2.9*	-14.6*	-.*	-4.7*
Robbery	-16.1	-13.8	-23.7	-20.1	-6.2*	-.9*	11.6*	10.0*	6.9*	7.5*	4.4*
Assault	-6.5	-9.7	-13.7	-11.8	-3.7*	-5.9	-3.9*	4.3*	-.*	-2.0*	1.1*
Aggravated	-21.8	-15.0	-18.3	-15.4	-1.1*	-12.5	-4.8*	-.*	-1.9*	-9.8*	-4.8*
Simple	4.0*	-6.7*	-11.2	-9.9	-4.9*	-2.1*	-3.5*	6.6*	1.0*	2.5*	4.4*
Crimes of theft	-29.9	-23.1	-25.0	-22.6	-17.0	-11.1	-8.0	-5.4	-7.0	-9.4	-7.1
Personal larceny											
With contact	2.1*	3.4*	-3.6*	2.4*	6.2*	13.5*	16.5*	14.8*	21.9	27.9	16.1*
Without contact	-31.0	-24.1	-25.9	-23.6	-18.0	-12.1	-9.0	-6.2	-8.1	-10.8	-8.0
Household crimes	-26.1%	-29.2%	-28.8%	-22.7%	-15.2%	-9.9%	-7.7%	-5.3%	-7.4%	-5.0%	-5.3%
Household burglary	-41.4	-36.2	-38.9	-31.3	-23.2	-16.1	-14.2	-12.6	-13.5	-13.1	-4.7*
Household larceny	-19.0	-31.4	-28.3	-23.9	-17.6	-12.8	-11.1	-7.3	-9.4	-3.8*	-8.1
Motor vehicle theft	7.7*	23.1	20.1	27.1	40.8	35.0	44.4	37.0	28.1	17.4	7.1*

Note: Percent change was calculated using rates that were rounded to the nearest hundredth.
 *The difference is not statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.
 -. Less than 0.5%.

High crime rates in the West

The West continued to have the highest rates of any of the Nation's four regions, for most crimes. Rates of personal crime, personal theft, and household larceny, however, decreased significantly in 1990 (table 5).

In the Northeast the rate of personal larceny with contact increased dramatically between 1989 and 1990 from 3.9 thefts per 1,000 to 6.3 per 1,000, or 59.5%. At the same time, household larcenies decreased significantly.

For the Midwest there was some evidence of an increase in violent crimes because of a rise in assault rates. The rate of completed robberies that involved injury to the victim, however, dropped between 1989 and 1990.

Rates of personal theft, larceny without contact, and household crime, including burglary, decreased significantly in the South between 1989 and 1990. The rate of personal crime declined marginally.

Table 5. Victimization rates for personal and household crimes, by region, 1989-90

	Victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older or per 1,000 households											
	Northeast			Midwest			South			West		
	1989	1990	Percent change, 1989-90	1989	1990	Percent change, 1989-90	1989	1990	Percent change, 1989-90	1989	1990	Percent change, 1989-90
Personal crimes	74.7	72.1	-3.4%	95.7	97.7	2.0%	100.5	95.6	-4.9% ^b	120.0	107.8	-10.2% ^a
Crimes of violence	23.1	21.8	-5.8	28.8	30.5	14.7 ^b	30.3	31.1	2.8	36.4	34.2	-6.1
Robbery	6.7	7.3	8.5	3.8	4.5	18.1	5.7	5.3	-6.0	5.5	5.8	4.3
Assault	15.9	14.1	-11.2	21.8	25.5	16.6 ^b	24.0	25.1	4.5	30.2	27.5	-9.0
Aggravated	4.9	3.9	-20.4	7.1	8.3	16.7	9.4	9.4	-.*	11.1	9.0	-19.4 ^b
Simple	11.0	10.2	-7.2	14.7	17.1	16.4	14.6	15.7	7.5	19.1	18.5	-2.9
Crimes of theft	51.6	50.3	-2.4	69.1	67.1	-2.8	70.3	64.5	-8.2 ^a	83.6	73.6	-12.0 ^a
Personal larceny												
With contact	3.9	6.3	59.5 ^a	2.6	2.9	9.9	2.1	2.1	-1.0	2.6	1.9	-25.4
Without contact	47.6	44.1	-7.5	66.5	64.2	-3.4	68.2	62.5	-8.4 ^a	81.0	71.7	-11.6 ^a
Total population age 12 or older (in 1,000's)	42,687	44,202	3.5%	47,917	46,527	-2.9%	70,683	72,086	2.0%	40,089	40,459	.9%
Household crimes	126.3	119.3	-5.6%	150.5	148.0	-1.7%	184.0	173.2	-5.8% ^a	215.0	199.8	-7.0% ^a
Household burglary	39.1	36.9	-5.5	50.5	49.1	-2.8	68.5	60.6	-11.5 ^a	60.6	65.2	7.7
Household larceny	65.7	57.7	-12.2 ^a	87.9	83.8	-4.6	96.9	92.9	-4.1	128.1	110.6	-13.6 ^a
Motor vehicle theft	21.5	24.7	14.5	12.1	15.1	24.5	18.6	19.7	6.1	26.3	24.0	-8.8
Total number of households (in 1,000's)	19,877	20,507	3.2%	22,990	22,427	-2.4%	33,168	33,962	2.4%	18,864	18,866	-.*

Note: Detail may not add to total shown because of rounding. Percent change is based on unrounded numbers. Crimes of violence rates include rape.

-. Less than 0.5%.
^aThe difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

^bThe difference is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

Reporting of violent crime increases

The proportion of violent crimes that were reported to law enforcement authorities increased somewhat between 1989 and 1990, from a low of 45% to 48% (table 6 and figure 4). This change is largely attributable to a significant increase in the proportion of assaults that were reported

to the police. In 1989, 43% of assaults were reported; in 1990, 47%. There was some evidence that the reporting of aggravated assaults increased. Overall, 38% of all crimes committed in 1990 were reported to the police, which was not significantly different from the reporting rate of 37% in 1989. Of personal larcenies without contact, 28% were

reported, the lowest level for any of the crimes covered in the NCVS. Reporting rates for the household crimes did not vary significantly between 1989 and 1990. Motor vehicle theft continues to be the crime reported at the highest rate, with three-fourths of these thefts brought to the attention of the police by victims.

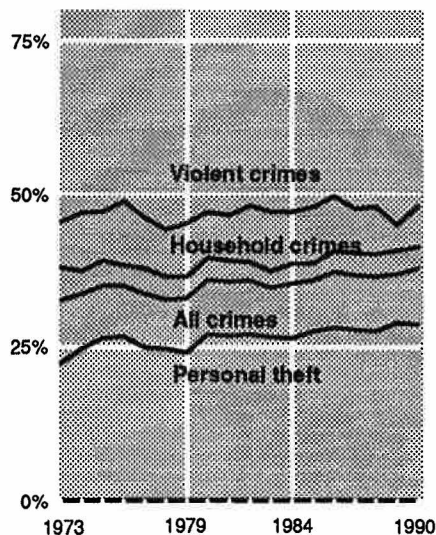
Table 6. Reporting victimizations to the police, 1973-90

	Percent of victimizations reported to the police																	
	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
All crimes	32%	33%	35%	35%	34%	33%	33%	36%	35%	36%	35%	35%	36%	37%	37%	36%	37%	38%
Personal crimes	28%	30%	32%	32%	30%	30%	30%	33%	33%	33%	32%	33%	34%	34%	34%	34%	34%	35%
Crimes of violence	46	47	47	49	46	44	45	47	47	48	47	47	48	50	48	48	45	48
Rape	49	52	56	53	58	49	51	41	56	53	47	56	61	48	52	45	51	54
Robbery	52	54	53	53	56	51	55	57	56	56	53	54	54	58	55	57	51	50
Assault	44	45	45	48	44	43	42	45	44	46	46	45	46	48	46	46	43	47
Aggravated	52	53	55	58	51	53	51	54	52	58	56	55	58	59	60	54	52	59
Simple	38	39	39	41	39	37	37	40	39	40	41	40	40	41	38	41	38	42
Crimes of theft	22	25	26	27	25	25	24	27	27	27	26	26	27	28	28	27	29	29
Personal larceny																		
With contact	33	34	35	36	37	34	36	36	40	33	36	31	33	38	36	35	30	37
Without contact	22	24	26	26	24	24	24	27	26	27	26	26	27	28	27	27	29	28
Household crimes	38%	37%	39%	38%	38%	36%	36%	39%	39%	39%	37%	38%	39%	41%	40%	40%	41%	41%
Household burglary	47	48	49	48	49	47	48	51	51	49	49	49	50	52	52	51	50	51
Household larceny	25	25	27	27	25	24	25	28	26	27	25	27	27	28	27	26	28	27
Motor vehicle theft	68	67	71	69	68	66	68	69	67	72	69	69	71	73	75	73	76	75

Trends in reporting crimes to the police, 1973-90

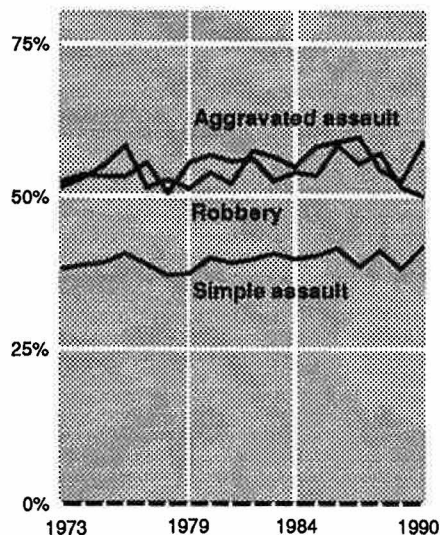
General trends

Percent of crimes reported



Violent crime trends

Percent of crimes reported



Household crime trends

Percent of crimes reported

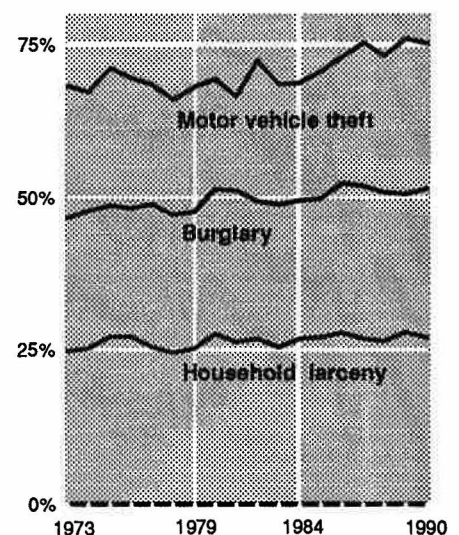


Figure 4

Characteristics of victims

Research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics has shown a relationship between certain demographic characteristics and the risk of crime victimization.⁴ Males, younger persons, blacks, Hispanics, residents of central cities, and the poor tend to have higher rates of victimization than persons who do not possess these characteristics (table 7).

In every personal crime category males sustained significantly higher victimization rates than did females. Males were more than twice as likely as females to experience an aggravated assault (11.5 assaults per 1,000 persons versus 4.5 per 1,000 persons).

Blacks were generally more likely than whites or persons of other races, such as Asians or Native Americans, to be victims of violent crime. In 1990 there were 13 robberies for every 1,000 black persons, 4.5 robberies for every 1,000 whites, and 8.4 for every 1,000 persons in other racial categories.

Persons under age 25 had higher victimization rates than older persons. Those 65 or older generally had the lowest victimization rates. The rate of assault was 63.5 per 1,000 persons ages 16 to 19 and 1.9 per 1,000 persons 65 or older.

Although rates for Hispanics and non-Hispanics were very similar, there were some differences. The most pronounced was for robbery; Hispanics sustained a robbery rate nearly three times that for non-Hispanics (13.9 versus 5.0). As a result, Hispanics had a higher rate of violent crime victimization, overall (37.3 versus 28.8).

In general, persons from households with low incomes experienced higher violent crime victimization rates than did persons from wealthier households. Persons from households with an income under \$7,500 had significantly higher rates of robbery and assault than persons in most other income groups, particularly those from households earning \$50,000 or more. For the crimes of theft, however, this pattern did not hold. Persons from

Table 7. Victimization rates for persons age 12 or older, by type of crime and sex, age, race, ethnicity, income, and locality of residence of victims, 1990

	Victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older						
	Crimes of violence						Crimes of theft
	Total	Total*	Robbery	Total	Assault Aggravated	Simple	
Sex							
Male	105.1	37.5	7.5	29.8	11.5	18.3	67.5
Female	82.6	22.2	3.9	17.2	4.5	12.7	60.4
Age							
12-15	160.3	68.8	13.6	53.3	13.9	39.4	91.5
16-19	187.8	74.4	9.5	63.5	26.2	37.2	113.4
20-24	174.8	63.1	12.3	48.9	16.8	32.1	111.6
25-34	114.0	36.4	7.6	28.2	9.9	18.3	77.5
35-49	76.6	19.2	3.2	15.6	4.7	10.9	57.5
50-64	44.0	7.5	2.2	5.3	1.4	3.9	36.5
65 or older	24.6	3.5	1.5	1.9	1.1	.8	21.2
Race							
White	91.9	28.2	4.5	23.0	7.4	15.7	63.6
Black	103.7	39.7	13.0	26.0	12.2	13.9	64.0
Other	96.7	28.1	8.4	18.9	5.3	13.6	68.6
Ethnicity							
Hispanic	97.2	37.3	13.9	23.1	10.1	13.0	59.9
Non-Hispanic	92.9	28.8	5.0	23.2	7.6	15.6	64.0
Family income							
Less than \$7,500	118.3	51.2	11.4	38.5	13.9	24.7	67.1
\$7,500-\$9,999	89.2	37.0	8.8	27.9	10.2	17.7	52.2
\$10,000-\$14,999	96.6	37.7	7.9	28.7	12.4	16.2	58.9
\$15,000-\$24,999	91.2	29.8	5.6	23.4	7.8	15.6	61.4
\$25,000-\$29,999	85.4	25.0	3.4	21.2	6.3	14.8	60.4
\$30,000-\$49,999	85.2	23.1	3.4	19.3	5.9	13.4	62.0
\$50,000 or more	94.5	20.9	3.2	17.2	4.2	13.0	73.6
Residence							
Central city	122.8	41.3	11.1	29.2	11.0	18.2	81.5
Suburban	89.1	25.2	3.9	20.8	6.3	14.5	64.0
Nonmetropolitan areas	66.6	23.2	2.2	20.5	6.8	13.7	43.4

*Includes data on rape not shown separately.

households earning less than \$7,500 had personal theft rates that were not significantly different from the rates of persons with a household income of \$50,000 or more.

Residents of central cities had higher rates for all personal crimes than did suburbanites or residents of nonmetropolitan areas.

Certain demographic groups also had higher household victimization rates than others (table 8). Blacks had a significantly higher rate of household crime than whites. Compared to non-Hispanics, Hispanics had a higher rate for each of the household crimes, except burglary.

As for the personal crimes, place of residence was related to a household's risk of victimization. For each type of household crime, central city residents had consistently higher rates than suburban or nonmetropolitan residents.

Households that rented their residence had significantly higher rates than households that owned. Households that rented sustained motor vehicle thefts at almost twice the rate of households that owned their residence, with 29.3 thefts per 1,000 households versus 15.6.

⁴The Risk of Violent Crime, BJS Special Report, NCJ-97119, May 1985.

Survey methodology and sampling error

The National Crime Victimization Survey measures personal and household offenses, including crimes not reported to the police, by interviewing all the occupants of housing units, which have been selected to comprise a representative sample. Each housing unit is interviewed at 6-month intervals; interviews for the complete sample of households are spread out over the entire year. In 1990, approximately 95,000 people in 47,000 housing units were interviewed about the crimes they had experienced in the previous 6 months. These numbers reflect a 97% response rate.

Each person interviewed is asked about the crimes he or she may have experienced over the previous 6 months. Because responses to questions may be erroneously recorded, questions may not be answered correctly, or some people may forget to mention crimes, a certain amount of error is inherent to the data.

The NCVS was designed to eliminate as many of these errors as possible.

Another source of error comes from taking a sample instead of a complete census. Since the NCVS cannot question everyone, a sampling error (standard error) is associated with every number in this report. In general, if the difference between two numbers is greater than twice the standard error of that difference, then the two numbers can be declared significantly different at the 95% confidence level. This means that about 95% of the time the two numbers are truly different, and roughly 5% of the time the sample will be imprecise enough that it detects a difference which does not actually exist. Similarly, if the difference is greater than 1.6 standard errors, the results are significant at the 90% confidence level. Everything described in the text as significantly different is at or above the 90% confidence level. If the difference between two numbers is less than 1.6 standard errors, then the two numbers are described as not measurably different.

Preliminary estimates

In March 1990 the Bureau of Justice Statistics released preliminary NCVS victimization levels, rates, and police reporting data for 1990. For most crimes the preliminary rate estimates were close to the final ones. For example, the rate for aggravated assault increased 1.2% from 7.8 victimizations per 1,000 persons in the preliminary estimate to 7.9 in the final estimate (table 9).⁵

Preliminary numbers indicated that the level and rate of personal crime had decreased somewhat between 1989 and 1990. This apparent change was primarily due to a significant drop in the level and rate of personal larceny without contact between victim and offender. Final estimates for 1990 confirm these preliminary findings and, in addition, show a significant increase in the level of personal larceny with contact.

⁵For a complete discussion of preliminary estimation procedures, see *Criminal Victimization, 1983*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-93869, June 1984.

Table 8. Household victimization rates, by type of crime and race, ethnicity, income, residence, and form of tenure of head of household, 1990

	Victimizations per 1,000 households			
	Total	Burglary	Household larceny	Motor vehicle theft
Race				
White	152.2	49.1	84.7	18.3
Black	222.9	85.4	101.1	36.4
Other	182.5	67.7	90.4	24.3
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	247.6	71.8	127.4	48.4
Non-Hispanic	154.5	52.4	83.8	18.4
Family income				
Less than \$7,500	178.5	81.5	84.0	13.0
\$7,500-\$9,999	146.1	60.5	71.8	13.8
\$10,000-\$14,999	155.2	56.2	77.6	21.3
\$15,000-\$24,999	160.4	51.8	89.0	19.6
\$25,000-\$29,999	157.3	50.7	84.9	21.8
\$30,000-\$49,999	155.5	43.2	90.4	21.9
\$50,000 or more	156.2	46.3	87.8	22.1
Residence				
Central city	222.3	74.1	115.7	32.5
Suburban	141.8	44.3	78.0	19.5
Nonmetropolitan areas	117.4	44.1	65.6	7.7
Form of tenure				
Home owned	134.1	42.4	76.0	15.6
Home rented	208.9	73.9	105.7	29.3

Table 9. Preliminary and final estimates for victimization levels and rates, 1990

	Number of victimizations (in 1,000's)			Victimization rates		
	Preliminary	Final	Percent change	Preliminary	Final	Percent change
Personal crimes	18,877	18,984	.6%	92.8	93.4	.6%
Crimes of violence	5,893	6,009	2.0	29.0	29.6	2.0
Rape	111	130	17.7	.5	.6	18.7
Robbery	1,115	1,150	3.1	5.6	5.7	3.0
Assault	4,666	4,729	1.3	23.0	23.3	1.4
Aggravated	1,583	1,601	1.1	7.8	7.9	1.2
Simple	3,083	3,128	1.5	15.2	15.4	1.5
Crimes of theft	12,983	12,975	--	63.8	63.8	--
Personal larceny						
With contact	619	637	2.8	3.1	3.1	2.7
Without contact	12,365	12,338	--	60.9	60.7	--
Household crimes	15,905	15,419	-3.1%	166.0	161.0	-3.0%
Household burglary	5,239	5,148	-1.7	54.7	53.8	-1.7
Household larceny	8,518	8,304	-2.5	88.9	86.7	-2.5
Motor vehicle theft	2,173	1,968	-9.5	22.6	20.5	-9.4

Note: Detail may not add to totals shown because of rounding. Victimization rates are calculated on the basis of the number of victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older or per 1,000 households. Percent change is based on unrounded numbers. --Less than 0.5%.

For household crimes, the preliminary estimates indicated that motor vehicle theft was the only crime to differ measurably between 1989 and 1990. According to preliminary figures, motor vehicle thefts increased significantly, reaching the highest level recorded since the inception of the NCVS. However, final estimates reveal an increase in the level and rate for this crime which is not significantly different from 1989 figures. Further, final data also show that household crime, overall, decreased from 1989 to 1990, as did the level and rate of household larceny.

The Assistant Attorney General is responsible for matters of administration and management with respect to the Office of Justice Program agencies: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Bureau of Justice Assistance, National Institute of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Office for Victims of Crime. The Assistant Attorney General further establishes policies and priorities consistent with the statutory purposes of the OJP agencies and the priorities of the Department of Justice.

Comparison of findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the Uniform Crime Reports

The U.S. Department of Justice administers two programs to measure the magnitude, nature, and impact of crime in the United States: the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the source of this report, and the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR).

Because of differences in methodology and crime coverage, the two programs

examine the Nation's crime problem from somewhat different perspectives, and their results are not strictly comparable. The definitional and procedural differences can account for many of the apparent discrepancies in estimates from the two programs. The Department of Justice fact sheet *The Nation's Two Crime Measures* (NCJ-122705) contains a detailed description of the NCVS and UCR.

This Bulletin was written by Lisa D. Bastian with assistance from Marshall M. DeBerry, Jr. and Rhonda Keith. Lisa D. Bastian designed the layout of the report. Review, editorial, and post-production assistance was provided by Thomas Hester, Joan Johnson, Marilyn Marbrook, and Jayne Pugh.

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