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National Institute of Justice
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20531
The Severity of Crime

January 1986

This bulletin presents, for the first time, the seriousness scores for the full set of offenses measured in the National Survey of Crime Severity (NSCS), conducted in 1977 as a supplement to the National Crime Survey. The NSCS was designed, developed, and conducted by the Center for Studies in Criminology and Criminal Law, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. It was directed by Dr. Martin I. Tischler and supervised by Dr. Robert J. Figlio.

A detailed report on the NSCS and its methodology is forthcoming. It will be in two volumes and will be more than 1,100 pages in length. In addition, the Bureau will publish a series of special reports highlighting the severity scores of various population groups.

Unlike prior studies of severity, this project measured the severity of offenses with more accuracy and reliability than previous efforts. In particular, the project studied the consequences of offenses for the victim, the community, and the offender. The result is an empirical measure of the seriousness of criminal events, which can be used to compare the severity of different types of crimes and to assess the effectiveness of different sentencing policies.

The two basic sources of information on the national crime rate are the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and the National Crime Survey (NCS). The UCR is the product of a congressional mandate to study crimes, with a focus on the crimes known to police agencies. The NCS, in contrast, is a national household survey of crimes known to the public and crimes known to the victim.

In computing crime rates and victimization rates from one year to the next, Smith and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important. An increase of 100 percent in the crime rate just as much as an increase of 100 in the NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important. An increase of 100 percent in the crime rate just as much as an increase of 100 in the NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important. An increase of 100 percent in the crime rate just as much as an increase of 100 in the NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important. An increase of 100 percent in the crime rate just as much as an increase of 100 in the NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important.

Intentionally, sins in this not a complete right, All mentions of information in the total number of offenses, arrests, and serious injuries are made for the purposes of this report. The NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important. An increase of 100 percent in the crime rate just as much as an increase of 100 in the NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important. An increase of 100 percent in the crime rate just as much as an increase of 100 in the NCVS and the NCVS trend over the type of crime as equally important.
How do people rank the severity of crime?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Description</th>
<th>Severity Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Minor</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
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The severity of crime is determined by the number of people injured or affected by the crime. A crime that causes injury to multiple people is considered more severe than a crime that causes injury to a single person. The severity of crime is also affected by the number of people involved and the nature of the injuries caused.

For example, a crime that results in the injury of multiple people is considered more severe than a crime that results in the injury of a single person. The severity of crime is also affected by the number of people involved and the nature of the injuries caused.

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A person thefts a victim unless the victim gives him money.

Two persons willingly engage in a homosexual act.

A person uses a home to break up by a police officer.

A person, under 16 years old illegally has a bottle of wine.

A person, under 16 years old is reported to police by his parents as an offender because they are unable to control him.

A person runs away from home.

A person knowingly trespasses in a railroad yard.

A person is issued in a railroad yard.

A person, under 16 years old runs away from home.

A person, knowing trespasses in a railroad yard.

A person, in a railroad yard.

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The Hispanic victim, NCJ'69261, 11/81

The overall pattern of severity scores indicates that people clearly respond more seriously to offenses against property offenses. They also take white- collar crime and drug dealing quite seriously, rating two offenses of this type (14.1) more seriously than a handful of others. A similar pattern is more serious than a wife killing her husband (13.1).

In general, people tend to agree about the severity of specific crimes. A few differences appear, however, when the scores of different groups are examined. For example, blacks and members of other racial groups in general assign lower scores than whites. Older people placed the threat of large amounts to be more serious than young people in younger age groups. Men and women, however, did not differ in any significant way to their overall severity pattern. As might be expected, victims assign higher scores than nonvictims.

Methodology

The National Survey of Crime Severity was conducted as a supplement to the National Crime Survey over a 6-month period beginning in July 1973. A total of 65,000 persons participated in the survey, each rating the seriousness of 14 specified criminal events. Twelve different forms were used, each with a different set of items, so that the total of these scores was 316. Some items appeared on more than one form, and five items appeared on all of the forms:

- A person steals a bicycle parked on the street.
- A person robs a victim. The victim is injured but not hospitalized.
- A person robs a 16-year-old boy folding from school.
- A person prevents a 16-year-old boy folding from school.
- A person plants a bomb

Expenditure and employment...
END