

Violent Victimization in the United States: Major Issues and Trends

Arthur J. Lurigio, Ph.D.
Professor and Faculty Scholar
Senior Associate Dean
College of Arts and Sciences
Loyola University Chicago

National Institute of Justice
December 3, 2014



Backdrop

- **Criminal victimization is common in the United States.**
- **Crime touches the lives of most residents of the country directly or indirectly.**
- **Violent victimization rates consistently reflect an over-representation among victims and offenders of youth, minorities, and the most impoverished residents of urban areas.**



Current Presentation

- **Measurement of Crime**
- **Crime Trends**
- **Victim Characteristics**
- **Cost of Crime**
- **Crime Victims' Movement**
- **Crime Victims' Services and Programs**



Measuring Violent Victimization

- **Primarily measured and reported through the Uniform Crime Report program (UCR) and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**
- **Sources of data on violent victimizations also can be found in other databases:**
 - **National Vital Statistics System, Fatal Injury Reports**
 - **National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey**
 - **National Violent Death Reporting System**



Uniform Crime Report (UCR)

Crimes reported to or discovered by the police

• Violent Offenses: Murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault

➤ Murder: The willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another

➤ Forcible Rape: Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim



UCR (cont.)

- **Robbery**: The taking of anything of value from a person or persons by force or threat of force
- **Aggravated Assault**: The unlawful attack by a person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury



Limitations of UCR

- **Only “official” crime data**
- **Only the most serious crime in a multiple-crime incident (hierarchy rule)**
- **Purposeful downgrading of crime**
- **Sometimes less than a full-year’s worth of data is available from a jurisdiction (under-submission)**



National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

Offenses that do and do not come to the attention of the police

- **Approximately 90,000 household and 160,000 individual interviews (aged 12 and older)**
- **The impact of crime and the characteristics of offenders**



NCVS (cont.)

- **Useful in understanding why victims fail to report crimes to the police**
- **Sheds light on the interactions and relationships between victims and offenders as well as differences over time and place (e.g., rural, suburban, urban settings).**



Limitations of NCVS

- **Relies on a national sample of households**
- **Respondent errors:**
 - **Memory Decay**
 - **“Telescoping”**
 - **Fear of Retaliation (non-reporting)**
 - **Defining incident as a “non-crime”**



Victimization 2012: UCR

- **1,214,462 violent crimes were reported/recorded (387 violent crimes per 100,000 residents)**
 - **Aggravated Assault (63%)**
 - **Robbery (29%)**
 - **Forcible Rape (7%)**
 - **Murder (1%)**



Victimization Trends: UCR

- **Violent crime rate has consistently declined for the past 20 years.**
- **From 1993 to 2002, declined 34%**
- **From 2003 to 2012, declined 19%**
- **From 1993 to 2012, declined 48%**



Victimization 2012: NCVS

- **6,842,590 violent victimizations (2,610 violent victimizations per 100,000 residents)**
 - **Sexual Assault**
 - **Robbery**
 - **Non-Sexual Assault (Simple and Aggravated)**



Victimization Trends: NCVS

- **The violent victimization rate peaked in 1981 and again in 1993.**
- **From 1994 to 2001, the violent crime rate declined 48%.**
- **From 2004 to 2013, the violent crime rate declined 16%.**
- **From 1993 to 2012, the violent crime rate declined 49%.**



Victim Characteristics

- **Violent victimization rate much higher among:**
 - **young people**
 - **blacks (double the rate among whites [1973 to 2006])**
 - **men (except for rape and intimate partner violence)**
 - **people in lower income brackets**



Cost of Crime

- **Cost to Victims**: From 1987 to 1990, crime cost an estimated \$450B annually.

Violent crime in 2000 alone cost \$37B.

- **Criminal Justice Expenditures**: The expense of operating the correctional system (federal, state, local) cost \$80B in 2010, growing 350% since 1980.



Cost of Crime (cont.)

- **Emotional Burden: Feelings of vulnerability, dread, chronic anxiety, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**
- **The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967) asserted: "The most damaging of the effects of violent crime is fear, and that fear must not be belittled."**



Crime Victim Movement

- **Victimology**
- **Women's Movement**
- **System Failure**
- **Grassroots Efforts**



Legislative Initiatives

- **President's Task Force on Victims of Crime (1981)**
- **Omnibus Victim and Witness Protection Act (1982)**
- **Victims of Crime Act (1984)**
- **Justice for All Act (2004)**



Assistance for Crime Victims

- **Victim Compensation**
- **Victim Notification and Information**
- **Victim/Witness Protection**
- **Victim Services**
- **Victim Advocacy and Rights**



Take Away Points

- **Violent victimization is common but not ubiquitous.**
- **National measures of crime and victimization are highly useful and complementary but have shortcomings.**
- **Violent victimization has been declining for 20 years.**
- **The likelihood of violent victimization varies with demographic characteristics.**
- **Victimization is quite burdensome in terms of direct costs to victims and criminal justice expenditures.**
- **Legislation and programming have attempted to address crime victims' needs since the 1980s.**

