

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CRIME



Introduction: Why and How Is Crime Measured?

Why measure crime? Because doing so provides essential information. First, measuring crime reveals the extent and nature of crime, which serve as one measure of the well-being of the nation. High crime is indicative of serious societal problems, especially for vulnerable populations. Continued measurement may indicate that crime has declined, which offers information on improvements in society that affect everyone. Second, measuring crime can be used to determine the need for or to evaluate the benefits of policy. A policy may be implemented to improve some aspect of the criminal justice system or to reduce the risk of crime. Only through measurement can we identify if a policy is needed or if an existing policy was successful or unsuccessful. Better measurement can lead to programs that are more effective at reducing crime. Third, measuring crime helps identify groups in society that are suffering disproportionate amounts of victimization and allows efficient and targeted assistance in addition to addressing the needs of all victims. Fourth, measuring crime allows researchers to discover the root causes of crime, offending, and victimization. Better understanding of causes allows federal, state, and local policymakers to combat crime, reduce victimization, and ensure that encounters with the criminal justice system are efficient and evenhanded.

Researchers collect data to measure crime using a variety of methods. They can ask people if they or their homes have been crime victims. They can ask individuals if they have committed crimes. They can observe people in a natural setting to witness crimes being committed. Researchers can enter prisons and jails and ask individuals who are incarcerated about the crimes they committed. Or they can gather official reports from police or other authorities to make a determination about the extent and nature of crime. When it comes to measuring the extent and nature of crime for the nation, two of these methods are used: gathering data from official law enforcement records and asking people if they have been victims of crimes.

After finishing this chapter, you should be able to:

- 2.1 Identify how crime is measured in the United States.
- 2.2 Identify and criticize the FBI sources of national crime data in the United States.
- 2.3 Identify and criticize the Bureau of Justice Statistics national crime data in the United States.
- 2.4 Summarize the nature and extent of violent and property crime in the United States.
- 2.5 Identify the difficulties inherent in recognizing and measuring cybercrime, terrorism, and white-collar crime.
- 2.6 Distinguish how the fear of crime and actual risk of being victimized are often misinterpreted by the public.
- 2.7 Demonstrate an understanding of criminological theories used to explain crime and criminality.



The J. Edgar Hoover Building in Washington, D.C., more widely known as the FBI Headquarters, shortly after completion. While this is the headquarters, FBI work is done all over the world. A little-known but vitally important role of the FBI is to collect crime data. What type of crime data do you think the FBI should be gathering?

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Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program: This program, started by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and then moved under the umbrella of the FBI in 1929, is a compilation of crime data.

Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR): Supplemental reports to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program that gather details about homicides in the United States, including information about offenders, victims, and incidents.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): A large and complex national data collection system designed to gather incident-based crime information from law enforcement.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS): A nationally representative survey of victims of property and personal violence in the United States.

These approaches to measuring crime represent the efforts of the two bureaus in the Department of Justice (DOJ) charged with (among other things) gathering, analyzing, and archiving crime data. One DOJ bureau that collects a wide variety of crime data is the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).¹ Estimates of crime in the United States reported by the FBI are found in the **Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program**,² which provides data from several efforts including the Uniform Crime Reports, the **Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR)**,³ and the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**.⁴ Crime data gathered by the FBI are gathered directly from law enforcement agencies, which submit data to DOJ voluntarily.

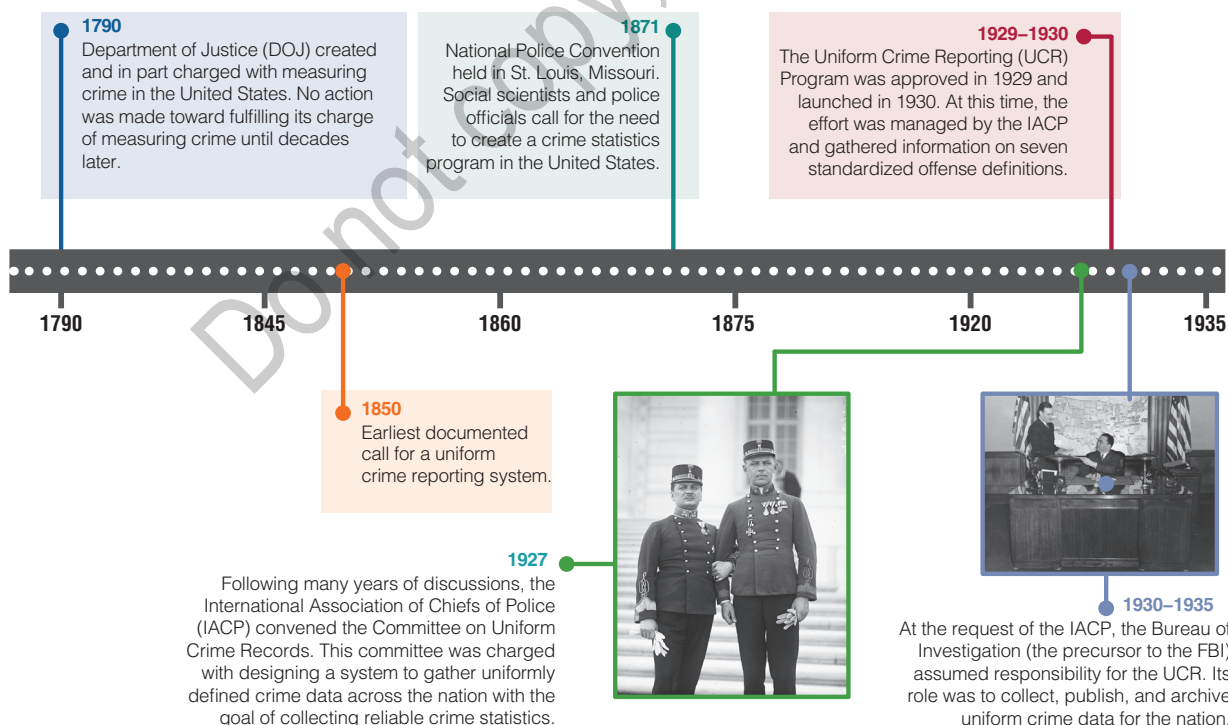
The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)⁵ is another DOJ bureau that gathers a wide variety of national crime data. Most notably for efforts related to estimating the nature and extent of violent and property victimization in the United States, BJS sponsors the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**.⁶ Data from the NCVS have enhanced our knowledge about who victims of crime are, the characteristics of crime, interactions with the criminal justice system, and the characteristics of offenders according to victims (among others).

FBI Measurement of Crime

Ask a member of the public about the role of the FBI, and the response will likely focus on the bureau's crime-fighting responsibilities. Others may comment on the FBI's relatively new (post-9/11) terrorist-fighting duties. A lesser known but valuable responsibility of the FBI is as the collector, analyzer, and archiver of crime data through the UCR Program, which represents the nation's oldest unified national crime data collection effort.⁷ Prior to this program, attempts to understand crime in the aggregate were impossible as jurisdictions used an assortment of definitions for a variety of crimes (see Figure 2.1). Gathering data in this fashion was problematic because neither jurisdictions nor states defined crimes or collected crime data in a standardized way. As a result, one could neither aggregate the existing crime data in any meaningful way nor make comparisons across jurisdictions or over time within one jurisdiction. What was needed was a *uniform* system to gather crime data using the same (i.e., uniform) definitions for a standardized set of crimes. This uniformity was necessary, as jurisdictions then and now differ in terms of statutory definitions and elements of crime.

▼ FIGURE 2.1

Timeline of Crime Reporting, 1790 to Present



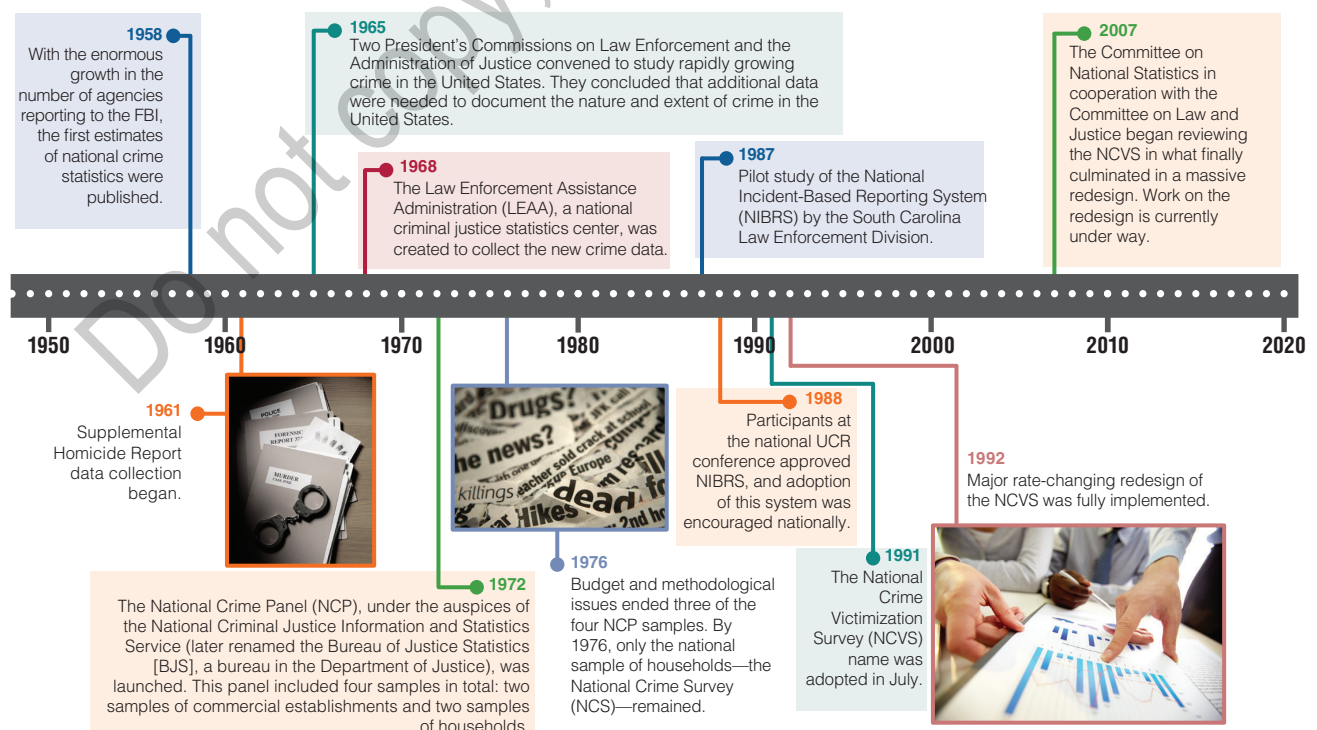
Sources (left to right): Library of Congress/Harris & Ewing Collection (1925), © Underwood & Underwood/Corbis, © iStockphoto.com/wragg, © iStockphoto.com/belterz, © iStockphoto.com/shironosov.

In 1790 when the DOJ was established, Congress mandated that it report on crime statistics. Though mandated in 1790, the actual act of uniformly reporting crime information took much longer and initially occurred outside the purview of the DOJ. In the mid-1800s, some of the first documented appeals for unified national crime data gathering were made. Widely cited are calls for this activity at the convention of the National Police Association (later known as the International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP])⁸ during a meeting in St. Louis. Approximately 50 years later, in 1927, after many years of discussion about this need, the IACP established the Committee on the Uniform Crime Records to develop a program and procedures for uniformly collecting information about crime across jurisdictions in the United States.

Uniform Crime Reporting

The work product of the committee was the UCR Program. Launched in 1929–1930, the UCR Program was designed to provide unified, reliable, and systematic information on a set of frequently committed serious crimes reported to law enforcement agencies across the country. Using these data gathered based on uniform definitions, police chiefs could accurately compare crime across jurisdictions and over time. Furthermore, data about these crimes could be aggregated in a meaningful fashion. The IACP managed the UCR Program for several years until the FBI was charged with oversight of the program (some sources place the FBI takeover of the UCR Program in 1935).

Since that time, the FBI has managed the UCR Program as it compiles crime reports submitted voluntarily by law enforcement agencies. Although the FBI does not mandate submission of crime data, some states mandate reporting to the FBI. The crime reports are submitted either directly from local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies or through centralized state agencies from across the nation. When launched, the UCR Program was based on reports from 400 law enforcement agencies in 43 states, describing crimes occurring in about 20% of the population. Currently, the program gathers crime reports from approximately 17,000 (of the more than 18,000) law enforcement agencies from all states, the District of Columbia, and some U.S. territories. Furthermore, the UCR Program describes crime occurring in almost the entire nation. The purpose of the UCR Program has always been to serve the needs of law enforcement agencies.



The UCR Program gathers information on a broad range of personal and property criminal offenses. These crimes may occur to a person of any age (e.g., a robbery of an 11-year-old) as well as to businesses (e.g., burglary of a business). UCR crimes are partitioned into **Part I and Part II crimes**. Part I crimes are the most serious and regularly occurring crimes. Part II crimes are less serious and less regularly occurring crimes (Table 2.1).

This traditional data collection effort (in more recent years this effort has been referred to as the **Summary Reporting System [SRS]**) primarily offers *counts* of each type of crime (see Form 2.1). In general, the UCR was not designed to gather information on characteristics of crime victims or offenders, though some exceptions existed. SRS data, for example, include whether a rape was completed or attempted, whether a burglary involved forcible entry, the type of motor vehicle stolen, and whether a robbery involved a weapon. While this information is valuable, the lack of additional detail for all SRS crimes limited understanding about crime. For example, one could not determine the victim–offender relationship in an assault, whether a weapon had been used during a rape, or myriad other characteristics of events, victims, and offenders. The historical time period in which the SRS was developed is important, given the unavailability of computing power and computer technology. Gathering aggregate counts of crime from a large geographic area was an impressive task in the beginning. Nonetheless, it was recognized that without a greater understanding of specific characteristics of crime, efforts to reduce it were greatly hindered.

While imperfect, the traditional UCR SRS offers many benefits in our efforts to measure and better understand crime. First, it has been ongoing for almost a century, with remarkably stable methodology. This stability enables meaningful trend analysis. Second, UCR SRS data allow analyses at many levels of geography, including cities, regions, and the nation. Third, this system offers crime information on a broad range of offenses. Thus, rather than focusing only on street crimes (i.e., homicide, robbery, and assault), the UCR SRS offers information on crimes such as embezzlement, drunkenness, and vagrancy. Fourth, the system gathers information from a broad range of law enforcement agencies covering all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and some U.S. territories. Fifth, the UCR SRS collects crime information regardless of the age of the victim or offender. Sixth, it gathers information on crimes against people as well as those against businesses. If a vehicle was stolen from a business, for example, it would be recorded in the SRS if that theft was reported to the police.

Part I and Part II crimes:

Designation of crime types under the UCR’s Summary Reporting System. Part I crimes are common and serious, while Part II crimes are less common and less serious.

Summary Reporting System (SRS):

The original aggregated crime data collected under the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

▼ TABLE 2.1

FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Part I and Part II Crimes

Part I Crimes	Part II Crimes	
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	Other assaults (simple)	Driving under the influence
Rape (the term <i>forcible</i> was removed in 2013 following other definitional improvements)	Forgery and counterfeiting	Liquor law violations
Robbery	Fraud	Drunkenness
Aggravated assault	Embezzlement	Disorderly conduct
Burglary	Buying, receiving, and possessing stolen property	Vagrancy
Larceny/theft	Vandalism	All other violations of state or local laws not specified (except traffic violations)
Motor vehicle theft	Possession and carrying of a weapon	Suspicion (arrested and released without formal charges)
Arson (added in 1979)	Prostitution and commercialized vice	Curfew and loitering violations (persons under age 18)
Human trafficking—commercial sex acts (added in 2013)	Sex offenses (except rape and prostitution and commercialized vice)	Assisting and promoting prostitution
Human trafficking—involuntary servitude (added in 2013)	Drug abuse violations	Purchasing prostitution
	Gambling	
	Offenses against family and children	

Why is it necessary to separate crimes into Part I and Part II types? What advantages come from this distinction? What disadvantages?

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2013, June 20). Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program: Summary Reporting System (SRS) user manual. Retrieved from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hibrs/summary-reporting-system-srs-user-manual>.

SRS Reporting Form

RETURN A - MONTHLY RETURN OF OFFENSES KNOWN TO THE POLICE

1-720 (Rev. 02-22-13)
OMB No. 1110-0001
Expires 07-31-16

This report is authorized by law Title 28, Section 534, U.S. Code. Your cooperation in completing this form will assist the FBI, in compiling timely, comprehensive, and accurate data. Please submit this form monthly, by the seventh day after the close of the month, and any questions to the FBI, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, Attention: Uniform Crime Reports/Module E-3, 1000 Custer Hollow Road, Clarksburg, West Virginia 26306; telephone 304-625-4830, facsimile 304-625-3566. Under the Paperwork Reduction Act, you are not required to complete this form unless it contains a valid OMB control number. The form takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Instructions for preparing the form appear on the reverse side.

CLASSIFICATION OF OFFENSES	DATA ENTRY	2 OFFENSES REPORTED OR KNOWN TO POLICE (INCLUDE "UNFOUNDED" AND ATTEMPTS)	3 UNFOUNDED, I.E., FALSE OR BASELESS COMPLAINTS	4 NUMBER OF ACTUAL OFFENSES (COLUMN 2 MINUS COLUMN 3) (INCLUDE ATTEMPTS)	5 TOTAL OFFENSES CLEARED BY ARREST OR EXCEPTIONAL MEANS (INCLUDES COL. 6)	6 NUMBER OF CLEARANCES INVOLVING ONLY PERSONS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE
1. CRIMINAL HOMICIDE						
a. MURDER AND NONNEGLIGENT HOMICIDE (Score attempts as aggravated assault) If homicide reported, submit Supplementary Homicide Report	11					
b. MANSLAUGHTER BY NEGLIGENCE	12					
2. RAPE TOTAL	20					
a. Rape	21					
b. Attempts to Commit Rape	22					
Historical Rape (See Instruction #15 below)						
3. ROBBERY TOTAL	30					
a. Firearm	31					
b. Knife or Cutting Instrument	32					
c. Other Dangerous Weapon	33					
d. Strong-Arm (Hands, Fists, Feet, Etc.)	34					
4. ASSAULT TOTAL	40					
a. Firearm	41					
b. Knife or Cutting Instrument	42					
c. Other Dangerous Weapon	43					
d. Hands, Fists, Feet, Etc. - Aggravated injury	44					
e. Other Assaults - Simple, Not Aggravated	45					
5. BURGLARY TOTAL	50					
a. Forcible Entry	51					
b. Unlawful Entry - No Force	52					
c. Attempted Forcible Entry	53					
6. LARCENY - THEFT TOTAL (Except Motor Vehicle Theft)	60					
7. MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT TOTAL	70					
a. Autos	71					
b. Trucks and Buses	72					
c. Other Vehicles	73					
GRAND TOTAL	77					

CHECKING ANY OF THE APPROPRIATE BLOCKS BELOW WILL ELIMINATE YOUR NEED TO SUBMIT REPORTS WHEN THE VALUES ARE ZERO. THIS WILL ALSO AID THE NATIONAL PROGRAM IN ITS QUALITY CONTROL EFFORTS.		DO NOT USE THIS SPACE	
<input type="checkbox"/> NO SUPPLEMENTARY HOMICIDE REPORT SUBMITTED SINCE NO MURDERS, JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDES, OR MANSLAUGHTERS BY NEGLIGENCE OCCURRED IN THIS JURISDICTION DURING THE MONTH.	<input type="checkbox"/> NO AGE, SEX, AND RACE OF PERSONS ARRESTED UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE REPORT SINCE NO ARRESTS OF PERSONS WITHIN THIS AGE GROUP.		INITIALS
<input type="checkbox"/> NO SUPPLEMENT TO RETURN A REPORT SINCE NO CRIME OFFENSES OR RECOVERY OF PROPERTY REPORTED DURING THE MONTH.	<input type="checkbox"/> NO AGE, SEX, AND RACE OF PERSONS ARRESTED 18 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER REPORT SINCE NO ARREST OF PERSONS WITHIN THIS AGE GROUP.	RECORDED	
<input type="checkbox"/> NO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS KILLED OR ASSAULTED REPORT SINCE NONE OF THE OFFICERS WERE ASSAULTED OR KILLED DURING THE MONTH.	<input type="checkbox"/> NO MONTHLY RETURN OF ARSON OFFENSES KNOWN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT REPORT SINCE NO ARSONS OCCURRED.	EDITED	
		ENTERED	
		ADJUSTED	
		CORRES	

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Supplementary Homicide Reports

The 1960s marked the beginning of collecting crime details with the initiation of the Supplementary Homicide Reports, a part of the larger UCR Program. Data from the SRS have been archived since 1976. Using the SHR forms (see Form 2.2), the FBI began gathering detailed information on homicides, including the victim's age,



COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

BURGLARY VERSUS ROBBERY

It is common to hear someone exclaim that their house was robbed. But was it? No, houses are never robbed. Why? *Robbery* refers to a personal violent crime. Robbery involves an incident in which someone takes or attempts to take something of value directly from another person. *Burglary* refers to a property crime in which someone enters a dwelling without permission. Homes, trailers, sheds, apartments, hotel rooms, and offices are examples of dwellings that can be burglarized. This definition means that a house is never robbed; a house is burglarized—it is a person who is robbed. If you disagreed with the statement that “their house was robbed!” you are correct because burglary and robbery are not synonymous!

Think About It

1. Why does it matter if one uses *burglary* and *robbery* interchangeably?
2. Are there other types of crime for which people frequently use the wrong term to describe an act?
3. Does it make sense to you that crimes against a person and crimes against property are described differently? Why or why not?

sex, and race; the offender’s age, sex, and race; weapon type (if any); victim–offender relationship; and the circumstances that led to the homicide.⁹ The patterns uncovered by this information have been used in the development of policy recommendations focused on homicide.

National Incident-Based Reporting System

A part of the larger UCR Program is the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The important information gained by gathering details of homicide made clear the benefits of doing the same for nonfatal crimes. Following expert evaluations and recommendations made in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the *Blueprint for the Future of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program* (1985)¹⁰ outlined a set of new procedures that formed the basis for NIBRS. In addition, the increased availability of technology and computing power made NIBRS feasible. Introduced in the mid-1980s, NIBRS augments the SRS by gathering detailed incident information about crimes, including the nature and types of crimes committed during each incident, victim and offender characteristics, type and value of stolen and recovered property, and characteristics of arrested individuals. Furthermore, NIBRS included new crimes and adopted some contemporary definitions that were not used by the SRS. Initially in the traditional SRS, for example, forcible rape was by definition a crime experienced only by a girl or a woman. In contrast, NIBRS originally defined forcible rape as “the carnal knowledge of a *person*,”¹¹ counting boys and men as victims of these offenses when appropriate. In 2013, NIBRS (as well as the UCR) dropped *forcible* in the definition of rape. With the implementation of NIBRS, data on a new offense category of crime were included: “crimes against society.” Crimes against society consist of drug and narcotic offenses, trafficking in pornography or obscene material, prostitution, and gambling offenses. The modernization, enhancements, and improvements reflected in NIBRS over the SRS have resulted in data that better serve the needs of the system’s primary constituency—law enforcement. Furthermore, NIBRS offers greater information to policymakers and the public about victimization risk.

Like with the traditional UCR SRS, reporting data to NIBRS is voluntary. And like with the traditional SRS, NIBRS data reflect only crimes known to the police. Though similar, NIBRS differs from the traditional SRS in several important ways. One difference is that the SRS nomenclature of Part I and Part II crimes was replaced in NIBRS with **Group A and Group B crimes**.¹²

Multiple criteria were used to determine which crimes should be Group A and Group B offenses. For example, those placed in Group A are more serious and frequently occurring offenses, those most likely to come to the attention of law enforcement, with the greatest likelihood that law enforcement is the best channel for gathering data on the offenses. As of 2019, there were 24 Group A offense categories, that include 52 offenses:

- animal cruelty
- arson

Group A and Group B crimes: Two major clusters of crimes gathered by the FBI in NIBRS. Group A consists of 24 crimes covering 52 offenses, including homicide and robbery. Group B consists of 10 offenses such as loitering and drunkenness.

- assault offenses (aggravated, simple, intimidation)
- bribery
- burglary/breaking and entering
- counterfeiting/forgery
- destruction/damage/vandalism of property
- drug/narcotic offenses (drug/narcotic violations, drug equipment violations)
- embezzlement
- extortion/blackmail
- fraud offenses (false pretenses, swindle, confidence games, credit card/automated teller machine fraud, impersonation, welfare fraud, wire fraud, identify theft,^a hacking/computer invasion^a)
- gambling offenses (betting/wagering, operating/promoting/assisting gambling, gambling equipment violations, sports tampering)
- homicide offenses (murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, justifiable homicide [justifiable homicide, while collected here, is not included in the criminal offense statistics])
- human trafficking (commercial sex acts and involuntary servitude)
- kidnapping/abduction
- larceny/theft offenses (pocket-picking, purse-snatching, shoplifting, theft from building, theft from coin-operated machine or device, theft from motor vehicle, theft of motor vehicle parts or accessories, all other larceny)
- motor vehicle theft
- pornography/obscene material
- prostitution offenses (prostitution, assisting or promoting prostitution, purchasing prostitution)
- robbery
- sex offenses (rape, sodomy, sexual assault with an object, fondling; in 2013, the term *forcible* was removed from these offenses)
- sex offenses, consensual (incest, statutory rape)
- stolen property offenses
- weapon law violations

Group B offenses consist of 10 offenses (only arrest data are collected):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| • bad checks | • family offenses/nonviolent |
| • curfew/loitering/vagrancy violations | • liquor law violations |
| • disorderly conduct | • peeping Tom |
| • driving under the influence | • trespass of real property |
| • drunkenness | • all other offenses |

Note: Runaway was previously a Group B offense in NIBRS. The FBI discontinued the collection and publication of arrest data for runaways in January 2011.

^aThese cyber offenses took effect in 2016.

A second important difference in NIBRS compared with the SRS concerns the **hierarchy rule**.¹³ In the SRS, only data from the most serious crime committed during a criminal event are reported to the FBI. That is, if an incident included a rape and a homicide, only the homicide information was forwarded to the FBI in the SRS because it is the more serious crime. Some people erroneously report that the hierarchy rule has been completely suspended in NIBRS, but this is incorrect, as three exceptions remain: motor vehicle theft, arson, and justifiable homicide. First, if a motor vehicle is stolen (motor vehicle theft) and items in the car were stolen (property theft), only the motor vehicle theft is reported in NIBRS. Second, when an arson is part of a multiple-offense incident, two Part I offenses are reported: the arson and the additional Part I offense(s) committed with the arson. Finally, in the event of a justifiable homicide, two offenses are reported: the felonious act by the offender that led to the justifiable homicide and the actual justifiable homicide.¹⁴ Still, the near total abandonment of the hierarchy rule in NIBRS means that the FBI gathers far more crime information than is collected under the traditional SRS.

An important difference between NIBRS and the SRS is that the former distinguishes between an attempted and a completed crime for most incidents and the SRS does not. And unlike the SRS, NIBRS allows one to link victim, offender, and crime attributes to a particular offense. Previously, using the traditional SRS, with the exception of homicide, links among offender, victim, and incident information for a particular crime event were unavailable. NIBRS also allows linked data on victims, offenders, offenses, and arrestees.¹⁵ This change dramatically enhances the value of NIBRS data over SRS aggregate data.

Given that NIBRS is an augmentation of the traditional SRS data collection effort, it is no surprise that it is characterized by several of the same advantages as the SRS. In addition, NIBRS offers advantages not found in the SRS. An important benefit of NIBRS is that it offers incident-level details for every crime reported. NIBRS also provides information on all reported crimes occurring within an incident and not just the most serious crime committed during the incident (excepting the examples noted above). An additional advantage of NIBRS is the ability to disaggregate data by multiple victim, offender, and incident characteristics and to link these components of a criminal incident.¹⁶ These advantages also hint at the enormous amount of NIBRS data.

Like all data, the traditional SRS and NIBRS are imperfect. Easily forgotten is that both reflect only those crimes reported to the police. If the police fail to learn about a crime, it will not be measured in SRS or NIBRS. Research is clear that many crimes are not reported to the police. In fact, in 2016, only about 42% of nonfatal violent crimes and 36% of property crimes were reported to the police.¹⁷ A second potential issue with SRS and NIBRS data is that they can be manipulated for political and other purposes given that the data originate from law enforcement agencies. While data manipulation by law enforcement officials is uncommon, it can happen and has happened. Third, because the SRS and NIBRS are voluntary, they are subject to a lack of reporting, or incomplete reporting, by participating law enforcement agencies. When crime data are not submitted, or the submitted data fail to meet the FBI's guidelines for completeness and accuracy, the FBI imputes the missing crime data. Research suggests that the degree to which UCR data are imputed at the national level is sizable, varies by jurisdiction, and fluctuates year to year.¹⁸ Finally, when there are changes in crime rates year to year, it is impossible to know whether crime is increasing (or decreasing), reporting to police is increasing (or decreasing), or some combination of both.

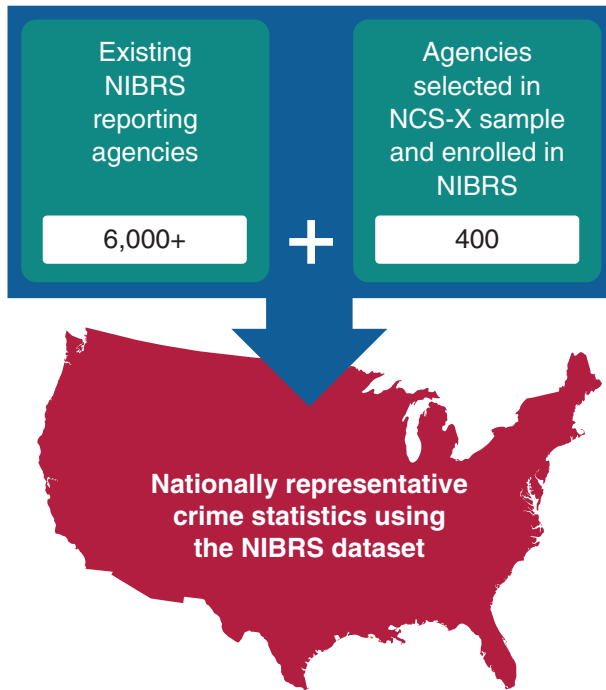
An additional disadvantage of NIBRS, not shared by the SRS, is its limited coverage.¹⁹ That is, while the SRS collects crime data from nearly all states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, NIBRS coverage is narrower. In 2018, 7,238 law enforcement agencies in 38 states submitted NIBRS data. This means that 43% or 44% of the 17,429 law enforcement agencies in the United States reported their crime and arrest data to NIBRS. As of early 2018, two agencies covering a population of more than 1 million provided data to NIBRS (Montgomery County Maryland Police Department and Fairfax County Virginia Police Department). Given sparse coverage of large agencies, NIBRS is characterized by "small agency bias" because it gathers most data from agencies covering smaller populations. Because of this, NIBRS crime data fail to constitute a representative sample of the population, law enforcement agencies, or states.

The coverage of NIBRS continues to grow as the FBI shifts its focus to NIBRS, rather than dividing attention and resources between NIBRS and the SRS. In fact, the UCR Program will officially sunset the SRS on January 1, 2021. In conjunction with the sunset of the SRS, the FBI reports that it has received

Hierarchy rule: Used to facilitate counting crime, this rule ranks crimes from least to most serious. In a criminal incident, only the most serious crime committed during the incident is counted.

▼ FIGURE 2.2

NIBRS and NCS-X Coverage



Source: National Crime Statistics Exchange, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

commitments from law enforcement agencies to be NIBRS-compliant by 2021. Currently, some states report only SRS data, others report only NIBRS data, and yet others report some of both. In addition, the development of a new data collection system is under way: the **National Crime Statistics Exchange (NCS-X)**. This collaborative effort between the BJS and FBI (and other organizations) will produce nationally representative incident-based statistics on crimes using both data reported to law enforcement agencies (NIBRS data) and a sample (see Figure 2.2). As noted by BJS,

NCS-X will leverage the FBI’s existing National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) by recruiting a sample of 400 law enforcement agencies to supplement the existing NIBRS data by providing their incident data to their state (or the federal) NIBRS data collection program. When data from these 400 agencies are combined with data from the more than 6,000 agencies that currently report NIBRS data to the FBI, NIBRS will be able to produce national estimates of crime that can be disaggregated by victim–offender characteristics, the circumstances of the event, victim–offender relationship, and other important elements of criminal events. When completed, nationally representative NIBRS data will increase our nation’s ability to monitor, respond to, and prevent crime by allowing NIBRS to produce timely, detailed, and accurate national measures of crime incidents.²⁰

Bureau of Justice Statistics Measurement of Crime

National Crime Panel

In 1965, the United States was experiencing high and increasing rates of crime. In response, President Lyndon Johnson convened two Commissions on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice²¹ to identify the causes and characteristics of crime as well as to recommend policies and programs. The commissions concluded that even with the UCR SRS, there were inadequate data available to develop needed policy recommendations. At the time of the commissions’ report, the only national data available were from the UCR SRS. The commissions identified four major limitations of the UCR, making fulfillment of their charge impossible. First, official crime data reflected only crime known to the police. Thus, an understanding of the nature and extent of the **dark figure of crime**—crime unknown to the police—remained a mystery. Without a better understanding of the dark figure, policy recommendations could not be developed. Second, the official crime data better reflected law enforcement activity, rather than actual changes in crime. Fluctuations seen in the UCR may have reflected changes in police activity and been divorced from actual changes in crime. Third, as noted above, these official crime data were vulnerable to manipulation and misrepresentation. And finally, at the time of the commissions, the available data failed to provide information on characteristics of the victim, offender, and incident. Recall that the commissions met prior to the advent of NIBRS. Clearly, an alternative but complementary measure of crime in the United States was needed to compensate for the limitations of the SRS. To collect these needed data, the commissions recommended the establishment of a national criminal justice statistics center. Thus in 1968, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration was established.²² This administration (later renamed the Office of Justice Programs) housed the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service (NCJISS), which later became the BJS, which was charged with conducting the first victimization survey in the United States. The mission of NCJISS and later BJS is to gather and analyze crime data, publish crime reports, and make available this information²³ to the public, policymakers, media, government officials, and researchers.

National Crime Statistics Exchange (NCS-X):

A collaborative effort between the BJS and FBI (and other organizations) that will produce nationally representative incident-based statistics on crimes using both data reported to law enforcement agencies and a sample.

Dark figure of crime:

Crimes that fail to come to the attention of the police, because they were unreported, it was unclear a crime occurred, or no one learned that a crime was committed.



MISREPORTING IN THE UCR

In 2009, the *Dallas Morning News* revealed that the Dallas Police Department had been purposefully recording attempted burglaries as acts of simple vandalism. The same news agency discovered that police also misreported violent crimes. In several instances, the police department recorded violent attacks as less serious crimes. Specifically, the police department reported 75 of 500 assaults as aggravated, while listing the remainder as simple assaults. Simple assaults—because they are not Part I crimes—are not used in the calculation of the official crime rate. An investigation indicated that 40 of the crimes reported as simple assaults should have been recorded as aggravated assaults because the incidents involved victims being attacked with various weapons, including bottles, pipes, bats, rocks, bricks, chairs, and bar stools. Others involved attempted strangling, serious injuries, and the brandishing of a knife as well as a rifle. The extent of this misreporting was large enough to make it appear that Dallas’s violent crime rate was decreasing. FBI experts and the Texas Department of Public Safety, which manages the UCR data collection effort, confirmed the findings of the news. With appropriate reporting, the violent crime rate may still have shown a decline, but not as dramatic.

Detroit has also been plagued with problematic reporting. The Detroit Police Department admitted in 2001 that it had misreported rape and murder numbers throughout the 1990s. With the erroneous reporting, the department appeared to

have one of the highest arrest rates, though the data were so flawed that it is unclear how many suspects were actually arrested. The errors were so large that Detroit’s homicide arrest figures skewed the FBI’s homicide arrest statistics for the entire nation. Detroit reported that it had been arresting murder suspects at three times the national rate and rape suspects at twice the national rate. The department maintains that the misreporting was not an effort to deceive, but rather honest errors.

Though it is not widespread, these examples highlight one potential problem with using data from the UCR or other official police records: deliberate misreporting.

Think About It

Pretend that you are the mayor of a city and discover that your police department has been misrepresenting crime data for your jurisdiction.

1. How would you ethically handle this in terms of informing the public and holding responsible parties accountable?
2. What if you are an analyst working in the city and your boss asked you to alter the data to make the city look safer? How would you ethically handle this?

Case Studies and FBI Data

How would these crime data collection systems account for the crimes highlighted in our case studies? Would the criminal acts committed by Joshua Paul Benjamin be reflected in any of the FBI data? And what of the case of Esther Lucero? How would the violence against Jennifer Schuett be reflected in the FBI data collection systems? Finally, would one find evidence of the offenses committed by Danny Madrid in the FBI data?

Let’s begin with Joshua Paul Benjamin. In Chapter 1, we learned that as a child, Joshua was hit by a car, resulting in serious injuries. Initially, he was unable to communicate and his left side was paralyzed. Doctors believed that this near-fatal accident also stunted Joshua’s cognitive and psychological development. Eventually, Joshua was again able to communicate, and he overcame his paralysis. One effect of the injuries sustained was Joshua’s preference to play with younger boys. Joshua found that he just did not get along with adults or boys his own age.

When Joshua was 14, his uncle began molesting him. However, the molestation was not the cause of Joshua’s introduction to the criminal justice system. Like many victims of molestation, he kept this abuse to himself. Rather, Joshua’s introduction to the criminal justice system began with a police investigation into Joshua’s alleged inappropriate interactions with two young boys. This criminal case remained open and unresolved for several years. During that time, Joshua moved and enrolled in college in another state. In 1992, when Joshua was a 22-year-old college student living in a midwestern city, his roommate came across some videotapes believed to be of television shows. Joshua had asked his roommate not to watch the tapes, but the roommate disregarded Joshua’s warning. In the middle of the show, personal videotaping by Joshua broke in abruptly. In it, Joshua is seen with a boy about age 7. The tape shows Joshua fondling the boy’s genitals and raping him while the boy protests and cries. The alarmed and shaken roommate took the evidence directly to the police.

CASE STUDY

Would Joshua's crimes be recorded in FBI crime data? We know that his crimes were reported to the police, which is the first necessary step for the FBI to include the offenses in its data. The second necessary step is that the police agency learning of these crimes must have forwarded the crime reports to the FBI. If that happened, Joshua's crimes would be reflected in the FBI data. But how? What types of crimes would the FBI record? The UCR SRS would have reflected Joshua's crimes as a Part I crime: aggravated assault. Recall that the UCR SRS would not have recorded Joshua's crimes as rape, because in 1992 the UCR SRS defined rape as a crime against a female victim only. The victims in Joshua's case were male. NIBRS was in place in 1992. It is unclear if the jurisdiction where Joshua committed his crimes participated in NIBRS. Assuming it did, Joshua's crime would have been recorded as the Group A crime of forcible rape. Since its inception, NIBRS has defined rape as a crime that can occur to a male or a female victim.

Esther Lucero's arrest occurred before the introduction of NIBRS. The crimes that the police officers encountered at the scene outside the bar potentially included trespassing, vandalism, property damage, disturbing the peace, or even, for example, resisting arrest. Many of these possible charges were caused by Esther throwing bricks at the vehicles in the parking lot. The most serious crime was assault with a deadly weapon. Esther had sliced the bar owner's hand with a box cutter that she kept in her pocket. The UCR data provided publicly would have reflected only the most serious crime (remember the hierarchy rule). If Esther's charges ultimately end in only aggravated assault, which are explored in upcoming chapters, this incident represents a Part I crime in the UCR.

The crimes against Jennifer Schuett, the 8-year-old who was brutally assaulted, also came to the attention of the police. After raping and nearly decapitating her, Jennifer's assailant left her for dead on a fire ant mound in an overgrown field in Dickinson, Texas. Neighborhood kids playing hide-and-seek the morning after the attack discovered Jennifer when one little girl tripped over her apparently lifeless body. Officers responded to the dispatch call by sending an ambulance and then a helicopter. At the time, no one was certain if Jennifer was alive or not. Were the crimes committed against Jennifer recorded in the FBI's crime data? Assuming that Dickinson, Texas, voluntarily reported crimes to the FBI at that time, Jennifer's victimization would have been captured in UCR SRS data. But what type of crime would have been reflected? It is likely that Jennifer's victimization would have been recorded as a forcible rape in the UCR data. Because of the hierarchy rule in the UCR SRS, no other criminal aspect of her victimization would have been reflected in these data. If Dickinson was a certified NIBRS reporting agency at the time of this attack, Jennifer's victimization would have been recorded differently. Because NIBRS does not operate with a hierarchy rule, the extreme violence against Jennifer may have been recorded as a forcible rape, aggravated assault, attempted homicide, kidnapping/abduction, and possibly other crimes (at the time of her victimization, the FBI used the term *forcible rape* rather than the contemporary term *rape*). These crimes are all Group A offenses in NIBRS.

Danny Madrid was 13 years old when he joined the neighborhood gang, Clanton 14th Street. At the time, Clanton had a friendly relationship with Toonerville, a neighboring gang. Nonetheless, as a member of a gang, he experienced victimizations and committed crimes. About a year before being arrested for attempted murder, Danny was stabbed by a rival gang member from Rockwood Street. Danny retaliated for this stabbing and was sent to juvenile camp for 9 months. While Danny served time in juvenile camp, tension grew between Clanton and Toonerville. By the time Danny was released from camp, this feud was in full swing, and he was put on Toonerville's "hit list." Seven Toonerville members jumped Danny in the school locker room. Though he fought back, he ultimately was forced to flee. As a core member of Clanton, Danny began planning a response using even greater force—retaliation with a firearm.

Danny and a fellow gang member drove for hours throughout Toonerville's turf looking for members to harm. Danny initially carried the gun and at one point jumped out of the car to attack a rival gang member. He failed to see a woman in the target's car, who could have identified him. Fortunately, his partner stopped him and chastised him for being careless. It was then that Danny's partner took the gun while they looked for other targets. Finally, a rival was sighted. Danny's partner exited the vehicle and shot the rival gang member nine times before returning to the car. Danny drove away. Amazingly, the victim of the shooting survived, but he was paralyzed and remains in a wheelchair today. Although Danny did not pull the trigger, he was as culpable as the shooter. As a result, when he was apprehended, Danny was charged with attempted murder.

Because the UCR SRS fails to record information on attempts and completions, the attempted murder of the rival gang member by Danny and his partner would have been recorded as an aggravated assault. In the SRS, this is a Part I crime. In NIBRS, attempts and completions are generally recorded in the data. However, an exception is found with attempted murder in NIBRS, and as in the SRS, an attempted murder is recorded as aggravated assault. This is a Group A offense in NIBRS.

These actual criminal offenses and victimizations demonstrate how differently a crime measuring system—even several conducted by the same agency—may record the same offenses. Understanding the measurement of crime is important in order to fully appreciate the findings that come from these data.

After extensive discussions, pilot studies, and preliminary research, the National Crime Panel was fielded in July 1972 by the NCJISS. The National Crime Panel was composed of four distinct samples: two household samples (the **National Crime Survey [NCS]**) and two commercial establishment samples (the Commercial Victimization Survey [CVS]).²⁴ The CVS originally included a sample of 2,000 commercial establishments in 26 large cities and a sample of 15,000 businesses across the nation. The NCS initially included a central city household sample in 26 large cities and a national probability sample of 72,000 households. Almost immediately, budgetary and methodological issues constrained these efforts, and the CVS and the central cities sample were halted. By 1976, only the national probability household sample portion of the National Crime Panel remained: the NCS.²⁵



National Crime Survey

Although the other components of the National Crime Panel disappeared, the NCS continued collecting data focused on personal and property crimes from eligible respondents. The NCS provided two primary sets of crime statistics: those against persons (i.e., personal crimes) and those against households (i.e., property crimes). Unlike the UCR, which presents all crime rates based on the number of crimes per 100,000 persons, personal crime rates from the NCS were provided as the number of crimes per 1,000 persons. For property crimes, the rates provided by the NCS were given as the number of property crimes per 1,000 households. Because of the suspension of the business survey in the initial National Crime Panel, no business crimes were available in the NCS.

National Crime Victimization Survey

Shortly after fielding the NCS in mid-1972, work toward improving the survey began. In 1979, plans for a thorough redesign to improve the NCS's ability to measure victimization in general, and certain difficult-to-measure crimes, such as rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence, were started. In 1991, the NCS changed its name to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), and in 1992 the major redesign was implemented using a split sample design (i.e., during 1992, half of the victim surveys used the NCS methodology and instruments and half of the victim surveys used the NCVS methodology and instruments). Following the redesign, the NCVS measured an almost identical set of crimes as those gathered in the NCS. The only exception is that data on sexual assault started being collected following the redesign (data on rape were collected in the NCS). While a complete accounting of the changes between the methodology of the NCS and NCVS is beyond the scope of this book, interested readers are encouraged to review this report available from the BJS: www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ERVE.PDF.

As anticipated, given the improved measurement implemented in the new NCVS, the number of crimes counted increased following the redesign.²⁶ Increases in crime measured varied across crime types, however.

Gathering information directly from crime victims offers advantages not found in police administration data. What advantages might obtaining data directly from victims offer? What disadvantages?

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National Crime Survey (NCS): The predecessor of the National Crime Victimization Survey. The NCS was first implemented in 1972.



Reporting crime to the police is a vitally important task, yet for most crime, only a small percentage is reported by individuals. The police learn of crimes in other ways given technology. For example, in many cities, police are alerted to a possible crime involving a firearm through Shotspotter technology. Shotspotter uses highly sophisticated microphones to detect the sound of gunshots and sends a signal to dispatchers. RODGER BOSCH/Stringer/AFP/Getty Images

older and property victimization against U.S. households. Extant understanding of nonfatal crime in the United States comes from more than 40 years of data collected from the NCS and the NCVS. Researchers use these data to identify amounts of and trends of victimization in general and for particular groups of victims, such as women, African Americans, older adults, rural inhabitants, and the poor. Data from the surveys allow the identification of victim–offender relationships and how victimization differs across groups, over time, across characteristics, and by type of crime. The data provide an understanding of the extent of armed and unarmed violence, the rate of injuries resulting from violence, resistance used by victims, whether the resistance was helpful or harmful, the monetary value of items taken, service providers used following victimization, and interaction with the police and other elements of the criminal justice system, just to name a few.

NCVS crime data are gathered from surveys administered throughout the year in person and over the phone at a sample of housing units in the United States. Housing units are selected using a stratified, multi-stage, cluster sample. The NCVS also is characterized by a rotating panel design, in which persons are interviewed every 6 months for a total of seven interviews, and a very large sample size. For example, in 2014, 158,090 persons age 12 or older in 90,390 housing units were interviewed for the NCVS.²⁸ This methodology and proper use of the data mean that housing units in the sample are representative of all housing units in the nation, and the data provide a representative sample of noninstitutionalized individuals age 12 or older in the United States.

NCVS surveys are administered using two related instruments. The first instrument is the NCVS-1, which serves as a screening instrument.²⁹ This instrument asks questions to determine whether a respondent was a victim of a threatened, an attempted, or a completed crime during the preceding 6 months. If the screening instrument uncovers a possible victimization, a second incident-focused survey instrument is administered to gather detailed characteristics about each victimization revealed. These details include the victim characteristics, offender characteristics, and characteristics of each incident. Details include, for example, the outcome of the victimization (completed, attempted); the time and location of the incident; the numbers of victims, bystanders, and offenders; victim demographics; victim–offender relationship; offender demographics; offender drug and/or alcohol use; gang membership; weapon presence; injuries sustained; medical attention received; police contact; reasons for or against contacting the police; police response; victim retaliation; and success of retaliation.³⁰

Aside from providing important information on victimization, details gathered using the NCVS-2,³¹ the incident instrument (see Form 2.3 for an example), are used in two important ways. First, detailed incident information is used to determine *whether* the incident described by the respondent was a crime the survey was gathering information about (i.e., an in-scope crime). Second, if that incident was deemed an in-scope crime, the *type of crime* that occurred is established. Neither the field representative nor the survey respondent makes assessments about whether a crime occurred or about the type of crime. Rather, these determinations are made using incident details during data processing at the Census Bureau, the agency responsible for collecting the NCVS data on behalf of BJS. This methodology ensures consistency in identification of in-scope victimizations and the types of crimes across respondents and field representatives.

The number of crimes *not* reported to the police increased more than the number of crimes reported to the police. One reason for this occurrence is that improved cues for certain survey questions caused respondents to recall more of the less serious crimes—those that are also less likely to be reported to law enforcement officials. As a result of measuring additional, less serious crime, the percentage of crimes reported to police based on the redesigned survey is lower than the percentage calculated based on data collected with the previous survey design. This difference is particularly salient for crimes such as simple assault, which by definition does not involve an armed offender or result in serious injury to the victim.²⁷

Today, the NCVS is the nation's primary source of information about the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of violent victimization against persons age 12 and

Page 1 of the NCVS-2 Survey Instrument

OMB No. 1121-0111: Approval Expires 7/31/2006

NOTICE – We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Section 8. Section 9 of this law requires us to keep all information about you and your household strictly **confidential**. We may use this information only for statistical purposes. Also, Title 42, Section 3732, United States Code, authorizes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice, to collect information using this survey. Title 42, Sections 3789g and 3735, United States Code, also requires us to keep all information about you and your household strictly confidential. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB number.

FORM NCVS-2
(9-16-2004)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
ACTING AS COLLECTING AGENT FOR THE
BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

**CRIME INCIDENT REPORT
NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY**

Control number
PSU | Segment/Suffix | Sample designation/Suffix | Serial/Suffix | HH No. | Spinoff Indicator

Notes

1a. LINE NUMBER OF RESPONDENT → 601 [] [] Line number (ex., 01)

1b. SCREEN QUESTION NUMBER → 602 [] [] Screen question number (ex., 39)

1c. INCIDENT NUMBER → 603 [] [] Incident number (ex., 01)

CHECK ITEM A Has the respondent lived at this address for more than 6 months? (If not sure, refer to 33a on the NCVS-1 or ASK.)
 Yes (more than 6 months) – **SKIP to 3**
 No (6 months or less) – Ask 2

2. You said that during the last 6 months – (Refer to appropriate screen question for description of crime.) Did (this/the first) incident happen while you were living here or before you moved to this address?
605 1 While living at this address
2 Before moving to this address

3. You said that during the last 6 months – (Refer to appropriate screen question for description of crime.) In what month did (this/the first) incident happen? (Show calendar if necessary. Encourage respondent to give exact month.)
606 [] [] Month [] [] [] [] Year

4. If known, mark without asking. If not sure, ASK – Altogether, how many times did this type of incident happen during the last 6 months?
607 _____ Number of incidents

CHECK ITEM B How many incidents? (Refer to 4.)
608 1 1–5 incidents (not a "series") – **SKIP to 6**
2 6 or more incidents – Fill Check Item C

CHECK ITEM C Are these incidents similar to each other in detail, or are they for different types of crimes? (If not sure, ASK.)
609 1 Similar – Fill Check Item D
2 Different (not a "series") – **SKIP to 6**

CHECK ITEM D Can you (respondent) recall enough details of each incident to distinguish them from each other? (If not sure, ASK.)
610 1 Yes (not a "series") – **SKIP to 6**
2 No (is a "series") – Reduce entry in screen question if necessary – Read 5

5. The following questions refer only to the most recent incident. (ASK item 6.)

6. About what time did (this/the most recent) incident happen?
612 **During day**
1 After 6 a.m. – 12 noon
2 After 12 noon – 3 p.m.
3 After 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.
4 Don't know what time of day
At night
5 After 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.
6 After 9 p.m. – 12 midnight
7 After 12 midnight – 6 a.m.
8 Don't know what time of night
OR
9 Don't know whether day or night

NCVS 2 INCIDENT REPORT

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

The NCVS uses field representatives to administer the survey. Considering the complexity of the survey, do you think this is the best approach? Or should respondents be required to fill it out by themselves? Could respondents fill it out by themselves?

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Because one of the major purposes of the NCVS was to serve as a benchmark for UCR SRS, in order to provide statistics on the proportion of crime not reported to police (i.e., the dark figure of crime), the victimizations measured by the NCVS are almost analogous to the Part I crimes measured by the traditional SRS program in the early 1970s.³² Currently, NCVS criminal offenses measured include the following:

- rape
- sexual assault (added during the major 1992 redesign)
- robbery
- aggravated assault
- simple assault
- pocket-picking and purse-snatching
- burglary
- motor vehicle theft
- property theft

The NCVS benefits from continual scrutiny.³³ During 2007 and 2008, for example, the Committee on National Statistics, in cooperation with the Committee on Law and Justice, reviewed the NCVS to consider options for improvement.³⁴ This need for review grew based on evidence that the effectiveness of the NCVS recently had been undermined given the demands of conducting an expensive survey in a continued flat-line budgetary environment. Based on this long-term environment, BJS had been forced to implement many cost-saving strategies, including multiple sample cuts over time. The committee noted that the result of repeated deep sample cuts (in conjunction with falling crime rates) created a sample size in which only a year-to-year change of 8% or greater was considered statistically different. The panel concluded that the NCVS as it existed at the time it was reviewed by the committee was unable to achieve its legislatively mandated goal of collecting and analyzing crime victimization data.³⁵ In addition, as technology moved forward, the NCVS was left behind and was the last paper-and-pencil survey collected by the Census Bureau. This outdated mode made changing and updating difficult. The review panel provided multiple recommendations regarding a redesign of the NCVS that are currently being studied and implemented. It remains unclear what a redesign of the NCVS will entail and when it may occur.

Though imperfect, NCVS data are valuable. An advantage of the NCVS is that it provides data on reported and unreported crimes. The survey continues to provide estimates of the proportion of crime that is and is not reported to the police. Furthermore, it allows the assessment of variation in the degree to which crime is committed against particular groups of victims. A second advantage of the NCVS is that its data offer a wide range of criminal victimization details, including information about crime victims (e.g., age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, income, educational level), criminal offenders (e.g., gender, race, approximate age, drug and alcohol use, victim-offender relationship), and the context of the crime (e.g., time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, economic consequences). A third advantage of the NCVS is its high response rates. In 2016, NCVS response rates were 78% for households and 84% for persons. Obtaining high response rates is unusual and challenging. While the NCVS benefits from high response rates, even it has seen decreases in response rates over the years. The response rates for 2016 were the lowest the NCVS has measured. A fourth advantage of the NCVS is that it has been ongoing for decades, allowing meaningful long-term trend analysis and the ability to aggregate data in an effort to study difficult-to-measure crimes such as rape and violence against relatively small populations, such as American Indians.

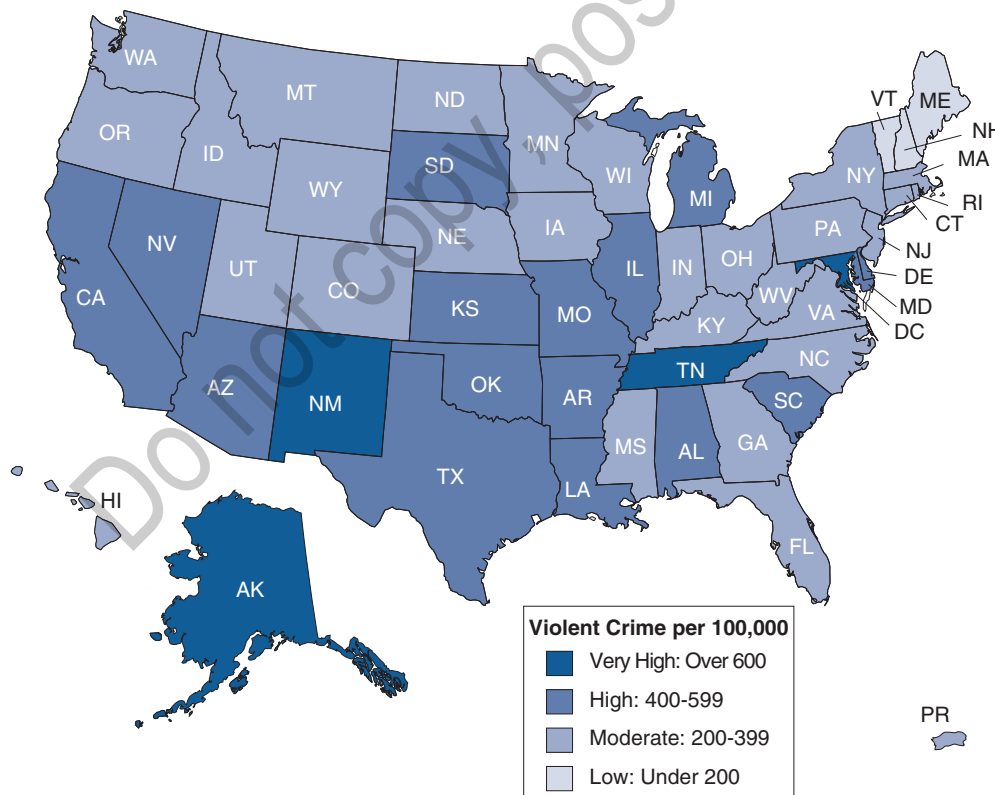
The NCVS performs well for the purposes for which it was designed; however, as with all data, there are limitations.³⁶ First, the NCVS is designed to generate *national* estimates of victimization. Because of this, the data cannot be used to estimate crime at the state, county, or local level. In 1996, a region variable was added to the NCVS data, enabling crime estimates for the Northeast, South, West, and Midwest. Furthermore, on rare occasions, special releases of NCVS data have provided insight into crime in major cities. Limited age coverage is a second limitation of the NCVS data, as eligible respondents must be age 12 or older. Because of this limitation, findings based on NCVS data are not generalizable to persons age 11 or younger. A third limitation relates to population coverage because those eligible to participate must live in a housing unit or group quarters. Persons who are crews of vessels, in institutions (e.g., prisons), members of the armed forces living in military barracks, and people who are homeless are excluded from the sample. This means that findings using NCVS data cannot be generalized to these populations.



People who are homeless are not represented in the NCVS. How might this limitation affect NCVS victimization rates? What is an efficient and cost-effective way to measure their level of victimization?
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▼ FIGURE 2.3

U.S. Violent Crime Rates, 2018, According to the FBI's Summary Reporting System



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics.



DIFFICULTIES IN COUNTING CRIME

A notoriously difficult aspect of counting crime is what is termed *series victimizations*. Most crimes are discrete events—that is, there is a clear beginning and end of the incident. A man comes into the store, pulls a gun on the clerk, demands money, and leaves. A robbery has just taken place. Identification and counting of a single robbery is easy. Other types of crime, however, are not as easily counted. Imagine a child who goes to school where every day she is ferociously bullied. The bullying begins while she is walking to school, it occurs in class, between classes, at lunch, and on her way home. The bullying is a daily occurrence that never seems to stop. Or imagine a woman who is savagely beaten every day and night by her intimate partner. She lives in a rural area, and her partner has taken her car, her money, and her phone. The offender also has isolated her from friends and family. She is a prisoner in her home, with no way to leave. Every day, all day, her tormentor abuses her.

If asked, “How many times in the past 6 months have you been a victim?” how should the bullied girl or the victimized woman respond? Is 1 the correct answer, as it reflects that each victimization has been part of one long, ongoing event?

Would then using 1 to calculate crime rates accurately reflect the amount of violent crime? Or should the girl and the woman answer 180, given that in a 6-month period (the NCVS reference period) there are about 180 days? Is capping the number of victimizations at 10 for each a better approach? Is this a more accurate count of the crimes that occurred? What if each beating was different in nature? Would this change your ideas how about to count them?

Series victimizations refer to those crimes that are difficult to quantify because they are ongoing in nature. Each of the possible ways to answer is not precise and, as such, crime estimates will lack some precision.

Think About It

1. How would you handle series victimizations if you were in charge of counting victimization?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the approach you suggest?

The fourth drawback is limited crime coverage. The NCVS collects data on the personal and property crimes listed above and excludes many other types of crimes. NCVS crimes tend to weigh heavily toward street crimes, excluding other crimes such as arson, crimes against businesses, stalking, vagrancy, embezzlement, and kidnapping.

NCVS data also are limited because of the sample. Like all surveys, the NCVS is subject to sampling and nonsampling error. Though every effort is taken to reduce error, some is inevitable. One source of nonsampling error stems from the inability of some respondents to recall in detail the crimes that occurred during the 6-month reference period. Some victims also may not report crimes committed by certain offenders (e.g., spouses). Others may simply forget about their victimizations. And still others may experience violence on a frequent basis and may not view each instance as important enough to report to an NCVS field representative. A final limitation—not of the data, but a challenge in counting crime—is associated with series victimizations.³⁷ **Series victimizations** are defined as six or more similar but separate victimizations that a victim is unable to recall individually or describe individually in detail. Without detailed information on each incident, crime classification cannot occur, and the crime cannot be counted given NCVS methodology. In the past, series victimizations—regardless of how many times the victim stated they occurred—were counted as one crime. Clearly, this series protocol underestimates the actual rate of victimization. In 2012, the protocol for addressing series victimizations changed.³⁸ Currently, it is standard to count as many crimes as the victim states occurred, up to a maximum of 10. The characteristics of the most recent crime are used to identify the nature of all of the crimes. This method may offer a better quantification of crimes, but it is unclear whether it reduces the accuracy of the qualitative nature of the crimes.

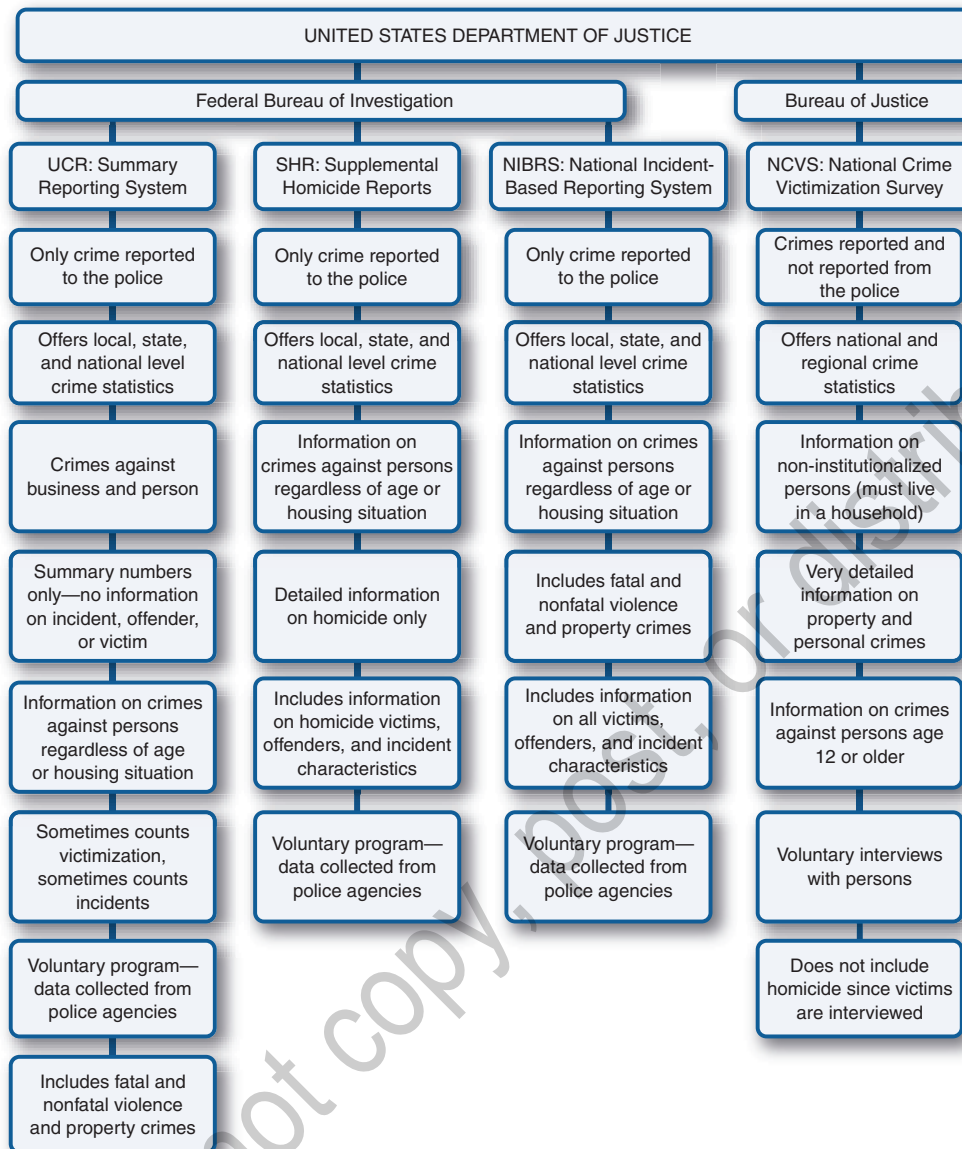
In the future, the NCVS may change dramatically. In 2008, a National Research Council panel recommended that the methodology be reviewed to identify changes that continue to provide cost-effective

Series victimizations:

Victimizations not discrete in nature, but ongoing with no defined starting and stopping point. Series victimizations present a conundrum in terms of the best way to count them. Common examples of series victimizations are intimate partner violence, bullying, and sex trafficking of minors.

▼ FIGURE 2.4

Summary of Major Sources of National Crime Data in the United States



and reliable estimates. Since that time, much research has been conducted, and some improvements have been made. For a list of what is being considered and what has been changed, see www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=91. One change that has been made is the inclusion of a citizenship and sexual orientation variable. Other changes being considered include better measuring crimes, with a long overdue improvement to questions focused on sexual violence, and addressing issues related to topics such as fear of crime, perceptions of neighborhood disorder, and police performance. Ongoing work is being done that will ultimately use modeling to provide state-level estimates of victimization. Further attention is focused on better measurement of crimes such as rape and sexual assault. Given the scope of methodological research currently under way, improvements and changes to the NCVS may exceed any seen in the past.

Case Studies and NCVS Data

Returning to our case studies, how would the NCVS record these criminal offenses and victimizations? Victimization resulting from Joshua Paul Benjamin's sexual assaults would not be recorded in the NCVS. Why? This is because his victims were younger than age 12, and the NCVS is restricted to victimizations against noninstitutionalized persons *age 12 or older*. Esther Lucero's fight with the bar owner might be reflected in the NCVS data—but given she was viewed as the offender, only information about her as an offender would be in the NCVS. Recall that the NCVS interviews persons about their experiences as crime victims, and more specifically, street crime victims. Ironically, if the police had arrested the owner and his employees for assault on Esther, she would have been considered a victim and information about attempted assault would be reflected in the NCVS. Jennifer Schuett's brutal attack and rape would not be reflected in the NCVS data either. She was 8 years old when the crimes occurred, so she would have been ineligible to be interviewed for the NCVS. Finally, Danny Madrid's retaliatory attempted murder of a rival gang member would have been recorded in the NCVS. The victim was older than age 12, and he resided in a housing unit. Given this situation, the shooting victim's assault would have been recorded as an aggravated assault (i.e., it involved a weapon and resulted in a serious injury) in the NCVS.

The UCR's SRS, SHR, NIBRS, and NCVS all gather data on a broad range of crimes, though none captures all offenses. Furthermore, the same criminal act may be measured differently across data collection systems, while some criminal acts may go unmeasured in some or all data collection systems. What was a rape in 2010 in one data collection system (i.e., NCVS) would have been an aggravated assault in another (i.e., SRS). Understanding the nuances, advantages, and disadvantages of each national data collection system is important. Together, information from all of the data sources is needed to make an informed judgment about crime in the United States (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4). Though different, each is a valuable tool in better understanding the nature and extent of crime in the United States.

Violent and Property Crime Rates and Trends

Fatal Violence

Regardless of the data source used, current estimates indicate that violent and property crime are relatively rare in the United States. This is not to say that there is no crime—there is. And this is not to say that crime is not concentrated in certain places and experienced more by some groups than others—it is. Overall, however, the United States has been enjoying a period of relatively low violent and property crime rates since they peaked in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, in recent years, some types of crime are seeing some slight movement upward. Consider, for example, murder and nonnegligent manslaughter. The public fears this type of violence most for obvious reasons. In 2018, the FBI's SHR estimated that 1,214 individuals in the United States were murdered.³⁹ In terms of a rate, 5.0 per 100,000 persons were murdered in the United States during 2018. This is less than the 5.3 murders per 100,000 recorded in 2017.⁴⁰

Gender, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Murder

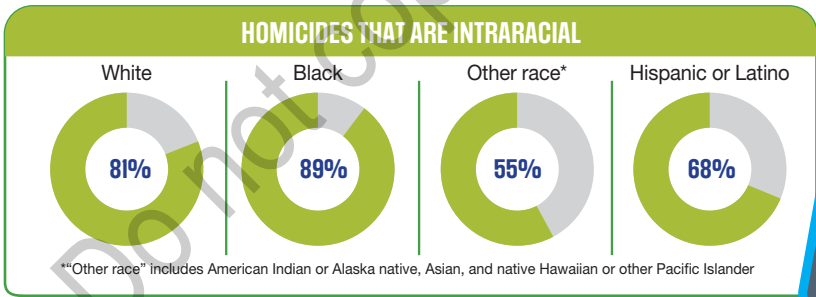
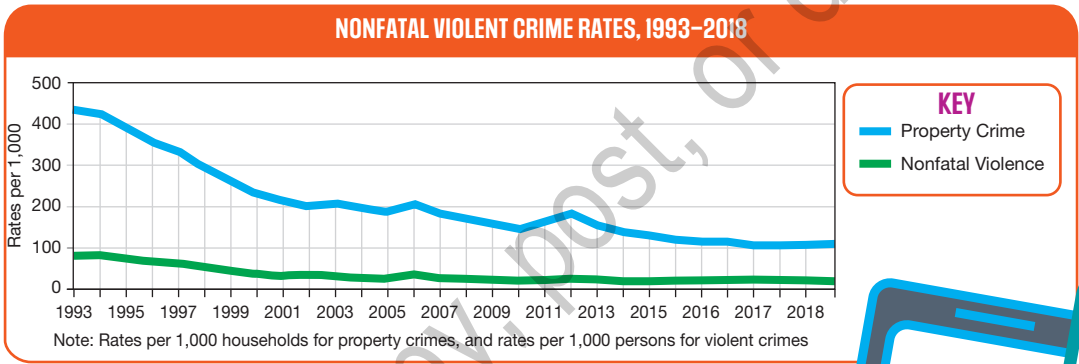
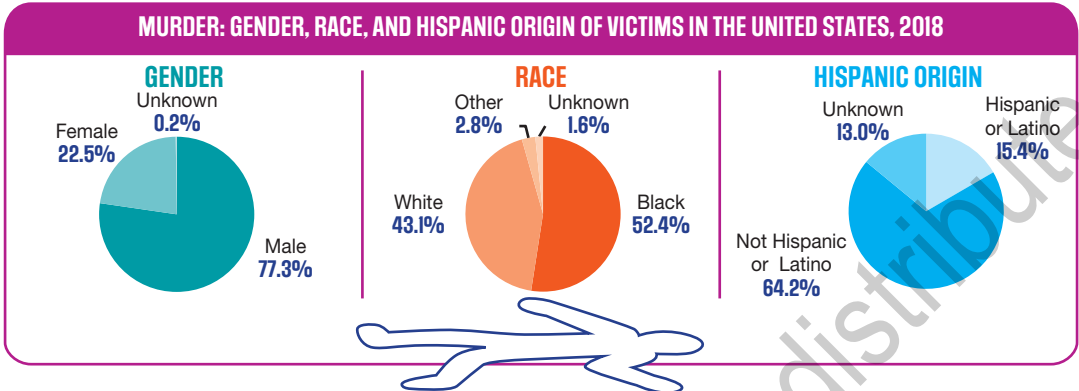
No crime, including murder, is distributed randomly throughout the population. Rather, it tends to be concentrated among particular populations. For example, some personal characteristics are associated with higher rates of murder. Boys and men are murdered at greater rates and in higher numbers than girls and women: In 2018, 77.3% of murder victims were male, and 22.5% were female. The sex of less than 1% of victims could not be identified (0.2%).⁴¹ Whites are murdered at lower rates, and in lower numbers, than Blacks. Less than half of all murder victims in 2018 (43.1%) were White, 52.4% were Black, and 2.8% were some other race. The race of a small percentage of murder victims was unknown (1.6%). In total, among those with known Hispanic origin, 15.4% of murder victims were Hispanic, and 64.2% were not (Infographic 2.1).⁴²

Murder tends to involve particular incident characteristics as well. FBI data for 2018 show that the majority of murders are committed by an acquaintance⁴³ and by offenders with firearms⁴⁴ (primarily handguns). Furthermore, an examination of victim and offender race indicates that murder is primarily intraracial.⁴⁵ In addition to being victims at higher rates, boys and men are also most frequently the offenders⁴⁶ (Infographic 2.1).

DATA MATTERS: THE STORY IN NUMBERS

TRENDS IN VIOLENT CRIME

Violence – whether fatal or nonfatal – is not randomly distributed throughout the population. Rather, specific victim characteristics are associated with higher and lower rates of violent victimization. In addition, the way that violence is distributed throughout the population is quite stable over time.



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. Why might some groups of people experience violence at greater or lower rates? What theory do you think might account for this variation?
2. If a group of people have a higher rate of violent victimization, does that mean that the same group also has the highest number of victims? How do rates and counts differ? Why is it important to be clear about rates versus counts?
3. The property and nonfatal violent crime rates have plummeted since the early 1990s. Why might that be? What policies do you think may have been responsible, if any, for this decrease?

Sources: FBI, adapted from "Expanded Homicide Data Table 11." Crime in the United States; FBI, adapted from "Expanded Homicide Data Table 6." Crime in the United States 2015; Morgan, R. E., & Kena, G. (2017, December). Criminal victimization, 2016. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf>; FBI. (2018). Table 1: Crime in the United States by volume and rate per 100,000 inhabitants, 1999–2018. In *Crime in the United States 2018*. Retrieved from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/topic-pages/tables/table-1>

Nonfatal Violence

The NCVS shows clearly that nonfatal violence continues to be low compared with its peak in the early 1990s (Infographic 2.1). This decline is found across crime types and victimization characteristics during that period. Less change is measured over the past several years. Estimates from NCVS data indicate that there were 23.2 nonfatal violent victimizations (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault) per 1,000 persons age 12 and older in 2018.⁴⁷ This rate represents a 12.6% increase from the 2017 rate of 20.6 victimizations per 1,000. Evidence shows that simple assault is the most common form of violent crime in the United States. Simple assaults are characterized by no or minor injuries and do not involve weapons. In 2018, 4.02 million simple assaults took place, which corresponds to a rate of 14.6 simple assaults per 1,000 persons.⁴⁸ This is in comparison to the 13.3 rate found in 2017.

In contrast, rape and sexual assault as currently measured in the NCVS is the least common form of nonfatal violence measured. Like other forms of violence, rates of rape and sexual assault have declined over the past decade. In 2018, the rate of rape and sexual assault was 2.7 per 1,000 persons. Compared to 2017, however, the rate of rape and sexual assault increased significantly from 1.4 to 2.7 per 1,000 people.

Historically, the NCVS estimated that robbery was slightly more common than rape and sexual assault in the United States. However, that relationship reversed in 2018 when there were 2.1 robberies per 1,000 people compared to 2.7 rapes and sexual assaults per 1,000 people. The 2.1 robberies per 1,000 persons in 2018 is lower than the 2017 rate of 2.3 per 1,000.⁴⁹ Finally, aggravated assault is the second most common form of nonfatal violence measured by the NCVS. More than 1 million aggravated assaults were measured in 2018. In 2018, the aggravated assault rate was 3.8 per 1,000,⁵⁰ which is similar to the 2017 rate of 3.6 per 1,000.⁵¹ Aggravated assault is characterized by an armed offender and/or a serious injury to the victim (e.g., gunshot wound, stabbing, broken bones, concussion).

Gender, Race, and Hispanic Origin: Characteristics of Nonfatal Violent Crime

Estimates from the NCVS show that violent crime characteristics differ by victim characteristics. The relationship between the victim and offender, for example, varies by the gender of the victim. In 2018, more than half (52.6%) of all nonfatal violent victimizations against boys and men were committed by strangers.⁵² In contrast, during the same period, 28.9%—or about one in three—of all nonfatal violent victimizations against girls and women were committed by strangers. Victim–offender relationship differs for male and female victims for the individual types of crime as well. In 2018, strangers committed 47.8% of robberies against male victims and 28.1% of robberies against female victims. During the same year, 17.4% of rapes and sexual assaults against female victims were committed by strangers, while 66.3% of rapes and sexual assaults against male victims were perpetrated by strangers. These findings show that while both males and females are victimized by strangers, boys and men face stranger offenders more so than girls and women. Conversely, girls and women are more likely to be violently victimized by someone they know.

In 2018, most people were victimized by someone they know. During that year, 41.6% of Whites, 36.6% of Blacks, 40.2% of Hispanics, and 28.9% of “others” were victimized by a stranger.⁵³ Differences are found when considering different types of victimization. During 2018, 59.3% of all robberies against Blacks were committed by strangers. In contrast, 54.3% of all robberies against Whites were perpetrated by strangers, and 24.1% of Hispanics who were robbed were robbed by strangers. The percentage of individuals experiencing simple assault by strangers was more similar across the groups. During 2018, variation when considering simple assault is clear: Simple assault by strangers was committed against 34.0% of Blacks, 44.8% of Whites, and 44.6% of Hispanics.

Estimates from NCVS data also show that most nonfatal violence is committed by unarmed offenders.⁵⁴ In 2018, 71.6% of all nonfatal violence involved unarmed offenders. In the same year, when considering only nonfatal violence, 7.5% of victimizations involved offenders armed with firearms, and 5.9% involved offenders armed with knives. The percentage of nonfatal violent crime involving armed offenders differs by type of crime examined. For instance, a relatively small percentage of rape and sexual assault involves armed offenders; in 2018, offenders with a firearm committed 5.0% of rape and sexual assault. Robbery involves armed offenders most frequently. In 2018, 36.6% of robberies were committed by an unarmed offender. During that same year, 18.5% of robberies involved a perpetrator armed with a firearm, and 14.8% were armed with a knife.

Contrary to popular perception, nonfatal violence results in a physically injured victim less often than a physically uninjured victim.⁵⁵ In 2018, 76.5% of all nonfatal violence resulted in an uninjured victims. Robbery results in a higher percentage of injuries. In 2018, 35.7% of nonfatal robberies resulted in injured victims. Almost 4 in 10 male (36.4%) and female (35.1%) victims of robbery were injured. During robberies in 2018, those ages 12 to 15 were injured in the highest percentage (51.0%). Non-Hispanic Blacks are more likely than Whites, others, or Hispanics to be injured during robberies (53.1%, 38.5%, 31.8%, and 20.9%, respectively). A little more than one third of all victims (41.7%) who were robbed by a stranger were injured.

In 2018, 42.6% of all nonfatal violent crime was reported to the police.⁵⁶ The police were notified regarding 24.6% of rape and sexual assault during that year.⁵⁷ Almost half of intimate partner violence (46.8%) was reported. Using data from the NCVS, variation in reporting of violence against victims based on characteristics is evident. During 2018, about 4 in 10 instances of nonfatal violence against female victims (40.9%) and male victims (44.6%) were reported to the police. Less than half of all nonfatal violence against Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and others was reported to the police (45.3%, 44.7%, 36.0%, and 36.1%).



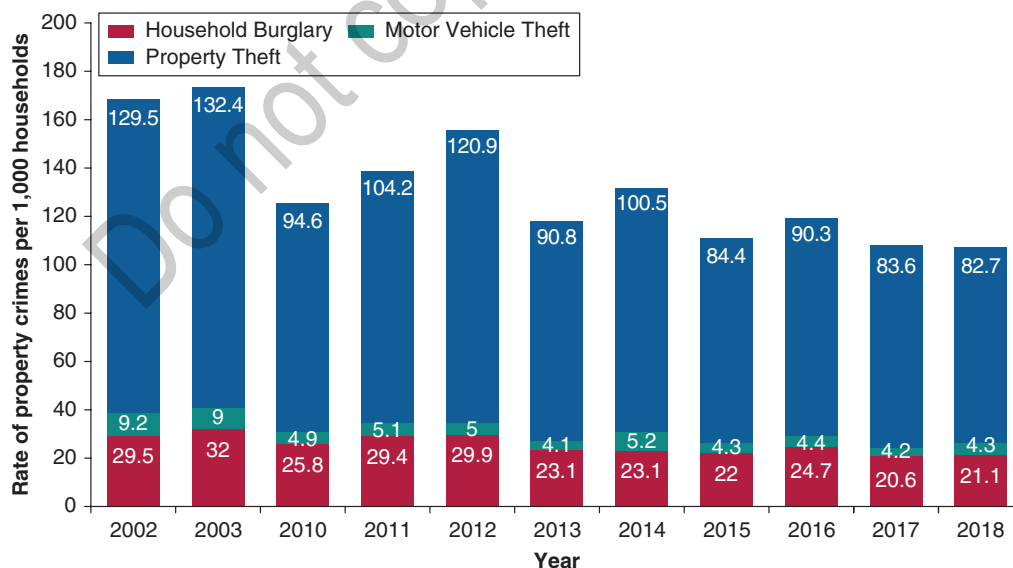
Burglary is the least common form of property crime measured by the NCVS. What may account for there being relatively little burglary? What might lead to an increase in burglary in the future?
Shutterstock | By Andrey_Popov

Property Crime Rates and Trends

The NCVS gathers information on three types of property crime: burglary, motor vehicle theft, and property theft (also known as larceny). NCVS-based rates of property crimes are expressed in terms of number of property crimes per 1,000 households (not persons). The overall property crime rate (i.e., burglary + motor vehicle theft + property crime) in 2018 was estimated at 108.2 per 1,000 households (Figure 2.5).⁵⁸ Like with personal crime, there have been dramatic declines in property offenses since the early 1990s. In recent years, property crimes rates have primarily decreased (with a few year-to-year increases). Consider that from 2014 to 2018, the property crime rate decreased 8.4%.⁵⁹ Furthermore, since 2003, the property crime rate has fallen 37.6%, from 173.4 to 108.2 property crimes per 1,000 households.⁶⁰

▼ FIGURE 2.5

Property Crime Rates—Trends, 2002–2018



Sources: Figure 4 from Truman, J., & Planty, M. (2012). *Criminal victimization, 2011*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Truman, J., Langton, L., & Planty, M. (2013). *Criminal victimization, 2012*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Truman, J., & Langton, L. (2015). *Criminal victimization, 2014*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Morgan, R. E., & Kena, G. (2017). *Criminal victimization, 2016*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Morgan, R. E., & Oudekerk, B. A. (2019). *Criminal victimization, 2018*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Property theft is the most common form of property crime measured by the NCVS. In 2018, the rate was estimated at 82.7 property thefts per 1,000 households.⁶¹ This figure represents a 37.5% decrease from the 2003 rate of 132.4 property thefts per 1,000 households.⁶² The second most common form of property crime is burglary. In 2018, there were an estimated 21.1 burglaries per 1,000 households, which is 51.7% lower than the 2003 rate of 32.0 per 1,000 households.⁶³ Finally, motor vehicle theft is the least common form of property crime measured by the NCVS. In 2018, the rate was 4.3 motor vehicle thefts per 1,000 households.⁶⁴ In contrast, in 2003, the rate was 9.0 per 1,000 households.⁶⁵ Over this time period, motor vehicle theft declined a whopping 52.2%.⁶⁶

Although the specific number of crimes and the percentage declines are not perfectly equivalent between the NCVS and UCR Program, the story regarding violent and property crime from the two data collection systems is similar. Still, when they differ, there are many good reasons to expect the NCVS and UCR statistics to differ.⁶⁷ The most obvious reason is that the NCVS includes crimes not reported to the police, and the UCR includes only those that are reported to the police. Another reason is that UCR SRS crime numbers fail to include simple assault, while the NCVS does, and it demonstrates that simple assault is the most common form of violence. Despite the different measurement approaches between the UCR Program and NCVS, the findings are robust: Violent and property crime have declined since the early 1990s.

In Esther Lucero's case, she first became involved in crime in the 1990s when crime rates were high. Esther and her family moved into a neighborhood known for high crime rates and gangs. She describes the move as a "major culture shock." In fact, this life change for Esther coincided with Denver's summer of violence. In 1993, the city experienced a massive increase of gang-related homicides. The 74 deaths that year, though lower than the previous year, resulted in public outrage fueled by the media. The perceived increase in random shootings and higher levels of gang activity resulted in the governor calling for a special legislative session. Incidents related to almost 200 crimes of gang violence including, for example, homicides, aggravated assaults, and robberies. Laws were quickly passed that banned handgun possession by anyone under the age of 18, increased funding for new jails, and established waivers to adult courts for violent crimes committed by 14- to 17-year-olds.

Measuring Cybercrime, Terrorism, and White-Collar Crime

Cybercrime

While technology brings with it many improvements in life, it also makes available new means for committing crime. This is the case with cybercrime, which is impossible without technology. Cybercrimes can be committed quickly and conveniently from anywhere in the world. No longer are criminals constrained to victims within close physical proximity. Interpol (the International Criminal Police Organization), an intergovernmental organization, notes that there is no universally agreed upon definition of cybercrime, but that it takes two major forms. First is advanced cybercrime or high-tech crime. These criminal acts are generally quite sophisticated and are focused on computer hardware and software. Second are cyber-enabled crimes, which are more traditional in nature. These types of victimizations were made possible with the introduction of the Internet and include acts such as crimes against children, financial crimes, and terrorist acts. Cybercrime victimization is considered by the FBI to be extremely serious because it can lead to severe personal damage, death, and unlawfully gained assets, including sensitive and classified military and intelligence documents, as well as widespread economic chaos. Cybercrime can destroy businesses, and on an individual level, cybercrimes can ruin lives when personal assets and identities are revealed or stolen.

Cybercrime takes many forms.⁶⁸ One relatively new form is creepware. Creepware is a malware program downloaded to a person's computer without their knowledge. The malware can be installed manually or remotely when the owner of the computer clicks on an innocuous link. Once installed, this software can be used to hijack computers remotely, turn on computer webcams and spy on victims at any time, access hard drives, and record keystrokes, making stealing passwords and account numbers possible. Using this information, hackers can hijack computers, raid banking accounts, extort victims by threatening to release video of them (often containing nudity and other personal acts), and/or blackmail victims into performing sexual acts on

Zoom, Skype, or similar platforms. Victims often learn that their computers have been taken over when messages appear on the screens stating demands. In 2013, the reigning Miss Teen USA received a message that demanded more nude photos and a live sexual performance or the hackers would release nude photos taken without her knowledge while she was in her bedroom. The hackers knew when she opened the demand e-mail and threatened release of these items, stating that her dream of becoming a model would be transformed into a career in pornography if she did not comply promptly. Ultimately, a former classmate of Miss Teen USA was arrested for installing this malware on her computer. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison following a guilty plea for extortion and unauthorized access of a computer.

Knowing how much cybercrime exists is challenging. The UCR SRS gathers data on some Part II crimes that may have been committed via cybercrime. For instance, corporate fraud, embezzlement, gambling, and prostitution may all be recorded in UCR SRS data; however, it is impossible to ascertain whether these crimes were committed with or without the primary tool of a computer or network. Similarly, NIBRS records several of the same crimes, though it may be unclear that they were cyber versions of classic crimes. As noted earlier in the chapter, the FBI expanded its fraud offenses in NIBRS in 2016 to include identity theft and hacking or computer invasion. The NCVS periodically offers supplemental questions designed to gather information on a limited number of cybercrimes. Only cybercrimes against persons age 12 or older who live in a household would be reflected in the NCVS data.

Another source of cybercrime data is available through an FBI program that focuses on Internet crimes. In order to estimate the nature and extent of a limited set of Internet crimes, the FBI uses data gathered via the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), founded in 2000. IC3 uses an online Internet crime complaint form. A victim of a cybercrime or a third party may file a complaint. The complaint form requests information on the victim's name, the victim's contact information, the offender and/or organization that committed the cybercrime, and specific details on how, why, and when the person was defrauded, as well as any additional important information about the incident.⁶⁹

Ironically, even the IC3 is not immune from cyber problems. In early 2018, the IC3 reported that cyber actors were impersonating the IC3 group and scamming individuals attempting to make complaints at the IC3 site. As noted by IC3, at least three scams have been perpetrated in which cyber actors prompt people to provide personal information and download malicious computer files. The cyber actors request recipients to provide additional information in order to be paid restitution. In addition, they attach a text document that contains malware. Every year, both the number of complaints filed to IC3 and the associated estimated losses from cyber incidents have increased. In 2019, IC3 received 467,361 complaints with an estimated total loss of more than \$3.5 billion among victims.⁷⁰ This change is a marked increase compared to all previous years. Consider that in 2016, ICS received 298,728 complaints, with an estimated total loss of more than \$1.3 billion among victims.⁷¹

Terrorism

Although terrorism has been a part of our lives for some time, attempts to measure it are relatively new. Like measuring crime in general, measuring terrorism is not as simple as it appears because the acts are multifaceted and complex. In addition, terrorism changes based on shifting goals, strategies, and schemes. Nonetheless, several options exist. The U.S. government's **Worldwide Incident Tracking System** (WITS) database was established to better understand terrorism. These data offered information on violent terrorism incidents against civilians and noncombatants from publicly available materials. Using these data, the FBI has published terrorism statistics since 1996.⁷² WITS was established in 2004 and gathered information on victims, offenders, and terrorist incidents that have been initiated and completed throughout the world. Failed or foiled terrorist incidents are not included in these data. Unfortunately, this data collection effort was discontinued in 2012. The data are still available because they were folded into the **Global Terrorism Database** (GTD), which is housed at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland.



Cybercrime is increasingly pervasive. What policies need to be implemented to stop this form of victimization?

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Worldwide Incident Tracking System:

An FBI database containing information on completed terrorist attacks since 1996.

Global Terrorism Database:

A database housed at the University of Maryland that contains a broad range of data on threatened, failed, and completed terrorist attacks since 1970.

The GTD includes data on terrorism from 1970 to the present.⁷³ This database was built on terrorism data originally gathered by Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services from wire services, government reports, and international newspapers. The GTD offers terrorism information on threatened, failed, and successful terrorist attacks.

While terrorist attacks occurring in the United States that resulted in the murder or nonfatal victimization of a person would be measured in the UCR, SHR, NIBRS, and NCVS, none of the national data collection efforts identifies an offender as a terrorist. That means it is virtually impossible to identify whether the victimization or death resulted from a terrorist attack. One exception exists. In 2001, the year of the September 11 terrorist attacks in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, the FBI released a special table in the UCR (i.e., special report, Section V) that reflects murder and nonnegligent homicides that occurred as a result of 9/11.⁷⁴ Those terrorism-related murders were not reflected in the standard annual tables. By producing two tables for this year, it was possible to compare murder trends over time with and without the presence of murders resulting from these terrorist attacks.

White-Collar Crime

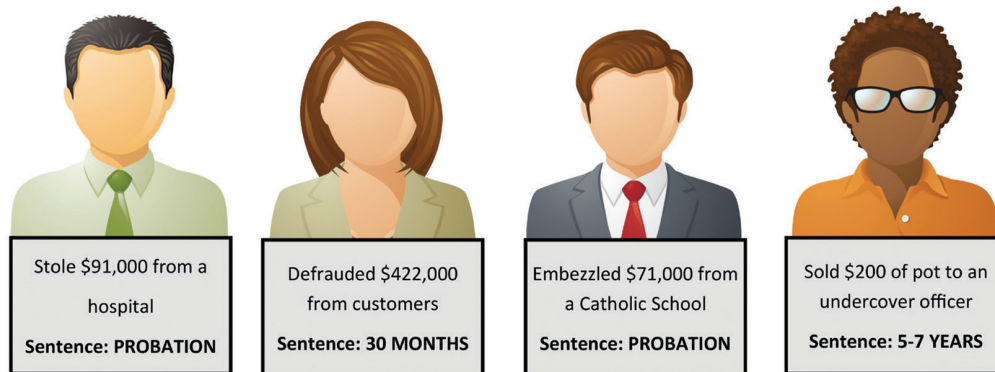
Data specific to corporate and occupational crime are rare. The lack of reliable data sources for white-collar crime has necessitated creative research approaches. Most scholars use field research to examine corporate regulatory violations, crime by pharmacists, and information on public attitudes.⁷⁵ Case studies of white-collar crime also have remained popular. The Wheeler, Weisburd, Bode, and Waring data set, which was established in 1982 and is now outdated, has been used by numerous scholars to examine sentencing and characteristics of white-collar criminal offenders. Wheeler and colleagues collected data on embezzlement, income tax fraud, postal fraud, credit fraud, false claims and statements, and bribery from seven federal district courts from 1976 to 1978. Other researchers have relied on secondary data from official agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to explore corporate, individual, and environmental crime.

Another source for white-collar crime data is the FBI's UCR SRS. Unfortunately, as noted above, the SRS offers little more than counts by types of crime, and it will be retired in 2021. White-collar crimes reported in the UCR SRS are fraud, forgery or counterfeiting, embezzlement, and all other offenses. NIBRS includes a wider variety of white-collar criminal behaviors, though each individual crime is placed in the general offense categories for fraud, bad checks, counterfeiting or forgery, embezzlement, and all other offenses. Fraud, for example, would include crimes such as academic crime, false advertising, insider trading, and Ponzi schemes, to name a few. White-collar crimes often fail to come to the attention of the FBI because in many cases regulatory agencies and professional groups investigate corporate and occupational crimes without including the police. While the UCR can offer some information about white-collar crime, not all researchers agree that it is an ideal source. Criminology researcher Darrell Steffensmeier long ago noted that the UCR offense categories are not appropriate indicators of white-collar crime.⁷⁶

The National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C), which was established in 1992 and funded by Congress, has become a nonprofit, membership organization. The NW3C no longer supports a research consortium that was instituted to assist scholars in the development of white-collar crime databases. The group now focuses on providing support and training to law enforcement involved in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of white-collar crimes.⁷⁷

In 1999, NW3C conducted the first national survey to measure public perceptions of white-collar crime, including victimization, reporting behaviors, and perceptions of crime seriousness. The survey was repeated in 2005 and 2010 and represents a significant source of secondary analysis. In the most recent survey, conducted in 2010 (a 2015 survey could not be located), researchers found that about 24.0% of households and 16.5% of people had experienced at least one type of victimization in the past 12 months. The most commonly reported type of victimization was credit card fraud. Among those households victimized, 54.7% reported the crimes to at least one outside entity in hopes of recourse.⁷⁸

Currently, a group of prominent white-collar crime scholars, spearheaded by Peter Cleary Yeager and Sally Simpson, is working with federal agencies to develop a white-collar crime database for research and policy purposes. Additionally, the National Research Council is collaborating with researchers to improve white-collar crime data collection and accessibility.⁷⁹ In 2020, the National Institute of Justice awarded a



What is white-collar crime? Why is it so difficult to define? Why does it appear to be dealt with so differently than street- or drug-related crimes? Should white-collar criminals be dealt with the same, more harshly, or more leniently than street- or drug-related offenders? Why?

Adapted from B. Toy, "White-collar crime," Erie Reader.

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large grant to assist researchers in exploring big data related to nonclinical physician fraud. Until data are more readily available, research depends on case studies, court cases, regulatory actions, prosecutions, federal sentencing data, and media accounts. The dearth of official statistics continues to hinder attempts to study white-collar offenders and victims.⁸⁰

Fear and Risk of Victimization

Something you may have realized after reading the information in this chapter is that fear of crime exceeds the actual likelihood of being victimized. A large body of research exists that examines the paradox between actual risk and fear of victimization. Kenneth Ferraro is credited with being the first person to demonstrate the differences between fear and risk of victimization.⁸¹ Findings from this literature indicate that, in general, women are more fearful of victimization than are men. However, data show that risk of victimization is higher for men than women. Research also shows differences in fear and risk based on income (people living in poverty are more fearful) and age (older persons are more fearful), among other characteristics. The disjunction between actual risk and fear extends beyond street crime. Research findings indicate that individual fear of crime increased following the 9/11 attacks, although these were hardly the first case of domestic terrorism in the United States. The attacks took place almost 20 years ago, but the fear of additional terrorist attacks remains elevated.

What influences one's fear of crime? Research points to several culprits. One is an individual's assessment of the size of the crime problem. Generally, when a person is asked how bad crime is, their answer indicates that it is worse than it ever has been before. Usually a comment is thrown in discussing the "good old days," when it was safer. As the previous sections indicate, some of the good old days were not so good regarding crime. Where does this notion of crime today being such a problem come from? A likely culprit is the media. Research indicates a strong relationship between the media and fear of crime. In fact, some argue that the media (and in general hearing about crime) acts as a **crime multiplier**. Fear is especially exacerbated when one watches the news—particularly the local news. What viewers fail to recognize is that the news fails to offer a balanced presentation of crimes, victims, or offenders. Rather, the news (and other forms of media) presents stories in such a way as to encourage continued watching. Crime has been declining for almost two decades, yet the media display a disproportionate amount of violent crime, with distortions of offenders and victims. Presenting the most heinous and unusual crime stories is an effective means to this end. A sad by-product of this is an exaggerated fear of victimization among many viewers.

Theory in Criminal Justice

Theory is intimately tied to data. Researchers use data to test theory, and researchers gather data to build theory. Theory is fundamental in understanding criminal justice. Most broadly, theory provides an explanation of why crime occurs more often in some settings, by certain individuals, to specific people. Theory in the sciences is more than an explanation, however; it must be quantifiable and testable. Ideally, researchers use data to test theories, and by doing so support or fail to support the tested theories. By better understanding the nature and causes of crime, we can help enact policies and changes to reduce offending and victimization.

Crime multiplier:

The saturated media presentation of crime that leads to a public that believes there is more crime than there is. In addition, this disproportionate and repetitive coverage leads to enhanced fear of crime among the public.



CRIME OR STATISTICAL ANALYST

Many people spend their careers gathering, analyzing, and publishing crime statistics that inform the public and policymakers. Are you detail oriented and well organized? Do you value precision? Do you have an understanding of research methodology and statistics? If so, becoming a crime or statistical analyst is a career you should consider.

In the federal government, social science statisticians are important to many bureaus, such as the BJS, FBI, Bureau of Labor, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, and Census Bureau. State governments also have multiple agencies that need individuals with these skills. In this role, analysts or statisticians produce national or state criminal justice

numbers (or numbers for other important fields). Once hired, a statistician works with data collection agencies; conducts research on the measurement of concepts such as race, education, intimate partner violence, recidivism, imprisonment, and stalking; and uses the data to compute statistics, write reports, and see them through the editing and dissemination process.

Once these reports are published, policymakers, advocates, and researchers use this work to better understand crime and justice issues in the United States. For more information, simply Google “social science analyst” to see the myriad career possibilities in both the public and private sectors.

Most criminological theories focus on questions such as the following: Why do some people commit crimes and others obey the law? Why does crime happen most often in some geographical areas and rarely in others? Why are some individuals victimized? Why are some people repeatedly victimized? A broad array of theories exist that include biological, psychological, sociological, and criminology aspects—far more than can be covered in this text. This section represents some of the more prominent theories.

Many theories are biologically and psychologically based. These maintain that biological or psychological forces beyond a person’s control drive individual offending. Criminal offending may be caused by neurological or psychological abnormalities. Serial killers, for example, often are diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder. In addition, these biological and psychological propensities to commit crime are exacerbated by influences such as alcoholism, poor education, allergies, hormones, environmental contaminants, and even imitation of well-publicized offenses. Genetic markers, neurotransmitters, and central nervous system disorders are being studied as the interest and technology to further research in biological factors and causes in crime increases. Brain scans of adults and juveniles, for example, show distinct differences in maturation. In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a mandatory life sentence without parole is unconstitutional, perhaps partly because of the results of biological and sociological research.⁸²

Most criminological theories are based in sociological perspectives and are less likely to focus on individual traits. They emphasize the influence of elements outside a person’s nature. Criminal behavior is an adaptive response to societal pressures such as social structures, culture, social institutions, and processes such as learning. Sociological theories hold that criminals are no different from noncriminals, but they experience different pressures, strains, and limited opportunities. Social disorganization proposes that deteriorating communities cause crime. Differential association theory posits that criminal behavior is learned primarily from parents and peer groups. Social bond theory argues that a person’s lack of attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement results in crime. Social bond theory, unlike other perspectives, asks why people do not commit crime. Rational choice theories view temptation and opportunity as key to understanding why people sometimes commit crimes. These theories view criminals as goal-oriented individuals who offend (or choose not to offend) based on the expected effort and reward of committing a crime compared with the chances of being caught and the severity of punishment should they be caught. The general theory of crime proposes that a lack of individual self-control, which is caused from bad parenting, results in criminal behavior. Life-course theories and general theories of crime are becoming more popular as data-gathering techniques and statistical testing become increasingly sophisticated. One popular life-course theory explores transitions, trajectories, and turning points that increase or decrease social capital, which may result in legal or illegal behavior.

In Esther Lucero's case, for example, numerous variables may have accounted for her involvement in the criminal justice system. Esther's teenage years were spent in an environment of social disorder. Despite her increased exposure to a world far removed from her middle-class upbringing, Esther continued to excel in school and was a frequent honor roll student. Her life course, however, shows several trajectories and turning points. After her parents' divorce, she lived with her biological mother, her grandmother, and later with her father. Her older brother joined the GKI gang and revolved in and out of prison. Esther graduated from high school in June 1999 and celebrated her 18th birthday in July. She then moved to Las Vegas to enroll in massage therapy training, but within a week moved back to Denver. Once she reestablished her life in Denver, she began hanging out with the wrong crowd and started drinking. She described herself as "young and dumb"; according to Esther, "I was still naïve." Attachments to delinquent peers and her first serious relationship with an abusive partner changed the course of her life.

This section only scratches the surface of a long and rich history of important theoretical work. Such a short treatment fails to offer details on numerous criminological theories, respective research support, or limitations associated with each. Furthermore, this brief description suggests that theories are tucked away neatly into discrete classes, whereas many dynamic integrated theories combine elements of rational choice, biological or psychological, and sociological theories. Table 2.2 offers the names and basic theses of many theories in criminology. Students interested in finding out more are encouraged to enroll in a theory course.

▼ TABLE 2.2

Theories of Crime Summary

Theory	Brief Description
Classical	Crime occurs when the benefits outweigh the cost; crime is a free-willed choice.
Positivist	Crime is caused or determined.
Individual trait	Criminals differ from noncriminals on a number of biological and psychological traits.
Social disorganization	Crime occurs in the city zone (zone of transition) that has high levels of poverty, heterogeneity, and residential mobility (related to the Chicago School).
Differential association, social learning/subcultural	Crime is learned through associations with criminal definitions that approve of criminal conduct or neutralizations that justify criminal conduct.
Anomie/institutional anomie	The gap between the American dream's goal of economic success and the opportunity to obtain this goal creates structural strain.
Strain/general strain	When individuals cannot obtain success goals such as money or status, they experience strain or pressure. People under strain adapt accordingly by either accepting or rejecting the goals and means to obtain what society values. A society that lacks common goals and means may experience anomie (normlessness).
Control	The key factor in crime causation is the presence or absence of social control that emphasizes relationships.
Rational choice/deterrence	Crime is seen as a choice that is influenced by its costs and benefits; crime is a rational choice.
Routine activity	People's daily routine activities affect the likelihood they will be attractive targets who encounter offenders in situations in which no effective guardianship is present.
Labeling/shaming	People become stabilized in criminal roles when they are labeled as criminals, develop criminal identities, are sent to prison, and are excluded from conventional roles.
Critical/Marxist	Inequality in power and material well-being create conditions that lead to street crime and corporate crime. The ruling class exploits the working class through labor and laws.
Peacemaking	Crime is caused by suffering that is linked to injustice rooted in inequality and daily personal acts of harm.
Feminist	Crime cannot be understood without considering gender. Crime is shaped by the different social experiences of and power exercised by men and women.
Developmental/life course	Crime causation is a developmental process that starts before birth and continues through the life course.
Integrated	Crime is caused by components described in a variety of theories.

Source: Adapted from Table 1 in Cullen, F. T., Agnew, R., & Wilcox, P. (2014). *Criminological theory: Past to present* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.

Chapter Wrap-Up

With the information presented in this chapter, you have learned where to go to get the best information on offending and victimization for a wide variety of crimes in the United States. You now know where to turn to identify the risk of victimization based on a person's characteristics or the characteristics of violent and property crime. Information presented shows how all of the nation's crime measures are imperfect, but they still offer important material and statistics that help guide policymakers and represent one measure of the health of the nation. The chapter highlighted the attention given the victim in terms of measuring the nature and extent of crime. Furthermore, evidence presented demonstrates that crime affects persons of differing characteristics differently. The chapter discussed the improvements in efforts to measure crime and how technology has assisted with greater computing power and ability to gather enormous amounts of information. While the measurement of crime in the United States is considered the best in the world, evidence presented here shows that it is imperfect. Consider how the case studies we focus on are or are not represented in these data. In the next chapter, we turn to the important topic of criminal justice and the law, tackling the rule, goals, sources, and types of law.

KEY POINTS

- The call for a uniform crime reporting system dates back to the 1800s in the United States. The IACP was instrumental in the creation of the UCR.
- The NCS and later NCVS were designed to deal with shortcomings of the UCR. This includes the dark figure of crime. The NCVS and FBI data collection efforts are considered complementary and together offer multiple measures of street crime in the United States.
- The NCS was the first national crime victimization survey in the world.
- Violent and property crime are relatively rare in the United States. Property crimes occur in greater numbers than violent crimes. Violent and property crime have been declining dramatically since the early 1990s.
- Measuring crime is difficult. This is especially the case for nationally representative data on cybercrime, terrorism, and white-collar crime. Though no data are perfect, options for data on these crimes are available.
- In general, about half of all violent crime is reported to the police, and the percentage reported varies by type of crime and characteristics of the victim.
- Men and boys are more likely to be victims of violence than women and girls, with the exception of rape and sexual assault. Women and girls have greater fear of victimization than do men and boys.
- In general, those with the highest risk of violence fear it least, and those with the lowest risk fear it most. Women and girls fear violence more than men and boys, but the latter are victims of violence at higher rates than women and girls.
- The media act as a crime multiplier in that they enhance one's fear of victimization given the exposure they give crime.
- With advanced technology, new crimes have emerged (e.g., cybercrime, some forms of terrorism). With advanced technology and increased computing capabilities, our ability to measure crime has been enhanced.

KEY TERMS

Crime multiplier 61	National Crime Survey (NCS) 47	Summary Reporting System (SRS) 38
Dark figure of crime 44	National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) 36	Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) 36
Global Terrorism Database 59	National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) 36	Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program 36
Group A and Group B crimes 40	Part I and Part II crimes 38	Worldwide Incident Tracking System 59
Hierarchy rule 43	Series victimizations 52	
National Crime Statistics Exchange (NCS-X) 44		

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What role did the IACP play in the measurement of crime?
2. What is the dark figure of crime?
3. Why is there a paradox regarding the fear and risk of crime? What victim characteristics are associated with this paradox?
4. What are series victimizations and why are they an issue with measuring the nature and extent of street crime, terrorism, cybercrime, and white-collar crime?
5. Why has crime declined dramatically in recent years?
6. What groups of people are at the greatest risk of violent victimization in the nation?
7. Is a stranger or a known offender most likely to violently victimize a woman? A man? How is stranger violence associated with race and Hispanic origin of victims? What may account for this difference?
8. What is more important: gathering crime data on victims, incidents, offenders, or losses from crime?
9. Why would a police agency misreport—either increases or decreases—its crime data to the UCR?

CRITICAL THINKING MATTERS

1. **Ethics and Crime Measurement.** Some researchers and advocates suggest that asking victims about their experiences is unethical, as it revictimizes them. That is, by asking about a traumatic event, the victim experiences trauma again. For example, a rape victim questioned by the police may be retraumatized. Some now find that victims are willing to convey information about their victimization. Do you believe that victimization surveys like the NCS and NCVS revictimize individuals? Is it an ethical way to proceed? If not, how would you go about getting information about traumatic events such as rape, robbery, or witnessing a homicide?
2. **Including Case Studies in Data Collection.** As the chapter showed, the degree to which Jennifer Schuett's victimization would be found in national sources of crime data varies by data collection system. The violence committed by Danny Madrid would have been recorded in all systems as an aggravated assault. In contrast, the chapter indicated that the crimes of Joshua Paul Benjamin and Esther Lucero vary in terms of which sources they would be recorded in and how. What sort of changes to national data collection efforts do you suggest to better capture crimes like those found in our case studies?
3. **Crime Measurement and Crimes Against Children.** Many argue for more information about violence against juveniles, such as that experienced by Jennifer Schuett or the young victims of Joshua Paul Benjamin. Gathering more detailed information for use by researchers and ultimately policymakers will provide greater insight into crimes against children. Furthermore, this enhanced understanding may ultimately lead to superior policies that prevent future violence against children. Is this need for more details on violence against children more important than consideration of questions about juveniles like Jennifer? Or is this no different than investigators gathering information to solve the crime? Do the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few? Why or why not? Does it matter that these victims are young people? Or do concerns extend to all victims regardless of age?