

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/how-safe-are-americans-with-disabilities>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

While people with disabilities make up nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population, they remain largely invisible to society at large, and victim response systems in particular. And despite growing public awareness of violent victimization, it excludes the victimization of people with disabilities, who are at particular risk of serious violent crime, including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. As victims, people with disabilities face formidable barriers to getting related support. This brief provides basic information on disability in the United States. It explores what is known about violent victimization of people with disabilities and the factors that contribute to their higher risk of experiencing violent crime. It also explains the obstacles people with disabilities encounter when seeking access to the services and supports they need to heal. Finally, it stresses the limits of existing victim-service, human-service, and criminal justice systems, policies, and practices in responding to violence against people with disabilities.

To prevent, address, and end the violent victimization of people with disabilities, they themselves must be central in this effort. Policies and laws that don't include the voices, experiences, and expertise of those most directly affected by violence will result in further harm and negative consequences to the detriment of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are among those most at risk of being victims of serious violent crime, including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Many people lack knowledge and training about how to identify and respond to the unique dynamics and contexts that arise when disability and violence intersect.

Victims with disabilities face overwhelming accessibility barriers and systemic obstacles to getting help. While they are three times more likely than people without disabilities to experience violent victimization, only 13 percent received non-police victim services, according to the 2010-2014 National Crime Victimization Survey.

PUBLICATION

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