

## Crime characteristics and trends

### About this Topic

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) asks a series of screening questions of all household members to determine if they had any crime incidents. The household respondent, an adult household member with knowledge about the household, is asked about both personal and property crimes. Other household members are asked about personal crimes. If a respondent indicates that an incident(s) occurred, an incident form(s) is administered to obtain detailed information about the characteristics of each incident. Neither victims nor interviewers classify crimes. Classification is based on the information provided on the incident form. If an event can be classified as more than one type of crime, a hierarchy is used that classifies the crime according to the most serious event that occurred. The hierarchy from highest to lowest is rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and theft. All data from the incident form are retained on public use data tapes. It is possible to analyze incidents that include more than one crime, such as a violent crime that included a burglary.

### The two measures of crime

The U.S. Department of Justice administers two statistical programs to measure the magnitude, nature, and impact of crime in the nation: the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Each of these programs produces valuable information about aspects of the nation's crime problem. Because the UCR and NCVS programs are conducted for different purposes, use different methods, and focus on somewhat different aspects of crime, the information they produce together provides a more comprehensive panorama of the nation's crime problem than either could produce alone. See [The Nation's Two Crime Measures](#).

### Violent crime

- Homicide
- Rape - Forced sexual intercourse, including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category also includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object, such as a bottle. Includes attempted rapes, male and female victims, and both heterosexual and same sex rape. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape.
- Robbery - Completed or attempted theft, directly from a person, of property or cash, by force or threat of force, with or without a weapon, and with or without injury.
- Assault
  - Aggravated assault - Attack or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether or not an injury occurred and attack without a weapon when serious injury resulted.
  - Simple assault - Attack without a weapon resulting either in no injury, minor injury (e.g., bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, or swelling), or an undetermined injury requiring fewer than two days of hospitalization. Also includes attempted assault without a weapon.
- Purse snatching and pocket picking - Theft or attempted theft of property or cash directly from the victim by stealth, without force or threat of force.

### Property crime

- Burglary - Unlawful or forcible entry or attempted entry of a residence. This crime usually, but not always, involves theft. The illegal entry may be by force (e.g., breaking a window or slashing a screen) or may be without force (e.g., entering through an unlocked door or an open window). As long as the person entering has no legal right to be present in the structure a burglary has occurred. Furthermore, the structure need not be the house itself for a burglary to take place; illegal entry of a garage, shed, or any other structure on the premises constitutes household burglary. If breaking and entering occurs in a hotel or vacation residence, it is classified as a burglary for the household whose member or members were staying there at the time the entry occurred.
- Theft - Completed or attempted theft of property or cash without personal contact. Incidents involving theft of property from within the sample household are classified as theft if the offender has a legal right to be in the house (e.g., a maid, delivery person, or guest). If the offender has no legal right to be in the house, the incident is classified as a burglary.
- Motor vehicle theft - Stealing or unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, including attempted thefts.

### Data Collections & Surveys

- National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

### Publications & Products

**Criminal Victimization, 2016** Presents national data on criminal victimization reported and not reported to police in 2016, including the characteristics of crimes and victims and outcomes of victimization.

[Press Release](#) | [Summary](#) (PDF 212K) | [Full report](#) (PDF 750K) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format 30K)

Part of the [Criminal Victimization Series](#)

**Repeat Violent Victimization, 2005-14** Presents national data on the prevalence of repeat violent victimization and the characteristics of repeat violence.

[Press Release](#) | [Summary](#) (PDF 182K) | [PDF](#) (556K) | [ASCII file](#) (26K) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format 29K)

Part of the [Criminal Victimization: National Crime Victimization Survey Series](#)

**Hate Crime Victimization, 2004-2015** Presents National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data on hate crime victimization from 2004 to 2015.

[Press Release](#) | [Summary](#) (PDF 189K) | [PDF](#) (773K) | [ASCII file](#) (32K) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format 307K)

Part of the [Hate Crime Series](#)

**Criminal Victimization, 2015** Presents national rates and levels of criminal victimization in 2015 and annual change from 2014.

[Press Release](#) | [Summary](#) (PDF 203K) | [PDF](#) (818K) | [ASCII file](#) (47K) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format 13K)

Part of the [Criminal Victimization Series](#)

**Victims of Identity Theft, 2014** Presents findings on the prevalence and nature of identity theft from the 2014 Identity Theft Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.

[Press Release](#) | [Summary](#) (PDF) | [PDF](#) (697KB) | [ASCII file](#) (41KB) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format)

Part of the [Identity Theft Series](#)

**Victims of Identity Theft, 2014** 17.6 MILLION U.S. RESIDENTS EXPERIENCED IDENTITY THEFT IN 2014

[Press Release](#)

Part of the [Identity Theft Series](#)

**Criminal Victimization, 2014** Presents 2014 estimates of rates and levels of criminal victimization in the United States.

[Press Release](#) | [PDF](#) (745KB) | [ASCII file](#) (42KB) | [Comma Separated Values \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format)

Part of the [Criminal Victimization Series](#)

**Crimes Against the Elderly, 2003-2013** Presents estimates on property and fatal and nonfatal violent victimization against persons age 65 or older from 2003 to

2013.

[Press Release](#) | [PDF](#) (2.2M) | [ASCII file](#) (44K) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format 42K)Part of the [Crimes against Persons Age 65 or Older Series](#)

**Socio-emotional Impact of Violent Crime** Examines victims' socio-emotional problems resulting from violent crime, including moderate to severe distress, problems with family or friend relationships, or problems at work or school.

[Press Release](#) | [PDF](#) (1.5M) | [ASCII file](#) (56K) | [Comma-delimited format \(CSV\)](#) (Zip format 42K)

**Criminal Victimization, 2013** IN 2013 VIOLENT AND PROPERTY CRIME RATES DECLINED AFTER TWO YEARS OF INCREASES

Part of the [Criminal Victimization Series](#)

## Terms & Definitions

<b>Aggravated assault</b>	<p>An attack or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether an injury occurred, and an attack without a weapon when serious injury results.</p> <p><i>With injury</i> - An attack without a weapon when serious injury results or an attack with a weapon involving any injury. Serious injury includes broken bones, lost teeth, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, and any unspecified injury requiring two or more days of hospitalization.</p> <p><i>Threatened with a weapon</i> - Threat or attempted attack by an offender armed with a gun, knife, or other object used as a weapon that does not result in victim injury.</p>
<b>Assault</b>	<p>An unlawful physical attack or threat of attack. Assaults may be classified as aggravated or simple. Rape, attempted rape, and sexual assaults are excluded from this category, as well as robbery and attempted robbery. The severity of assaults ranges from minor threats to nearly fatal incidents.</p>
<b>Burglary</b>	<p>Unlawful or forcible entry or attempted entry of a residence. This crime usually, but not always, involves theft. The illegal entry may be by force (e.g., breaking a window or slashing a screen) or may be without force (e.g., entering through an unlocked door or an open window). As long as the person entering has no legal right to be present in the structure, a burglary has occurred. Furthermore, the structure need not be the house itself for a burglary to take place; illegal entry of a garage, shed, or any other structure on the premises also constitutes household burglary. If breaking and entering occurs in a hotel or vacation residence, it is classified as a burglary for the household whose member or members were staying there at the time the entry occurred.</p> <p><i>Attempted forcible entry</i> - A form of burglary in which force is used in an attempt to gain entry.</p> <p><i>Completed burglary</i> - A form of burglary in which a person who has no legal right to be present in the structure successfully gains entry to a residence, by use of force or without force.</p> <p><i>Forcible entry</i> - A form of completed burglary in which force is used to gain entry to a residence. Some examples include breaking a window or slashing a screen.</p> <p><i>Unlawful entry without force</i> - A form of completed burglary committed by someone having no legal right to be on the premises, even though no force is used.</p>
<b>Hate crime victimization</b>	<p>Refers to a single victim or household that experienced a criminal incident believed by the victim to be motivated by prejudice based on race, gender or gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. BJS's National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) Hate Crime Statistics Program are the principal sources of annual information on hate crime in the United States and use the definition of hate crime provided in the Hate Crime Statistics Act (28 U.S.C. § 534).</p>
<b>Larceny</b>	<p>The unlawful taking of property other than a motor vehicle from the possession of another, by stealth, without force or deceit. Includes pocket picking, nonforcible purse snatching, shoplifting, and thefts from motor vehicles. Excludes receiving and/or reselling stolen property (fencing) and thefts through fraud or deceit.</p>