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Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

Crime and the Nation's Households, 1992

By Michael R. Rand
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In 1992, 23% of U.S. households were victimized by a crime of violence or theft. This was a slight decline from the 24% of households that experienced a crime measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) in 1991. The 1992 percentage is the lowest recorded since 1975, the first year that the NCVS produced an estimate of households touched by crime. The marginal decrease between 1991 and 1992 was the result of slight decreases in the percentages of households victimized by theft and burglary.

Additional findings for 1992

The following was also found in 1992:

- Five percent of U.S. households had at least one member age 12 or older who was the victim of a violent crime.
- Black households were more likely to experience crime victimization than were white households.
- Hispanic households were more likely to experience crime victimization than were non-Hispanic households.
- Urban households were the most likely and rural households the least likely to sustain a crime in 1992.

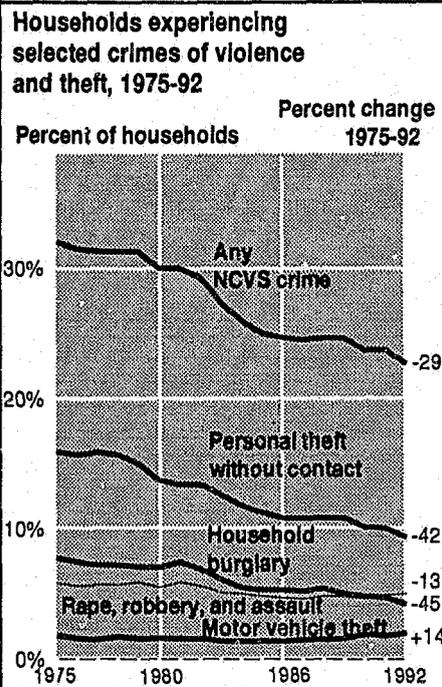


Figure 1

The National Crime Victimization Survey

The NCVS is an ongoing survey that obtains information about the victimization experience of members of a sample of U.S. households. The NCVS, which was first administered in 1972, measures the personal crimes of rape, robbery, assault and theft, as well as the household crimes of burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft. Since it is a survey of victims, the NCVS may obtain information on crimes reported to the police as well as those

August 1993

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), sponsored annually by BJS and the Department of Justice since 1972, provides policymakers with the only mechanism to gauge the extent to which the public is exposed to crime and the consequences of crime to victims. All of our citizens as well as those employed by agencies of the criminal justice system may use these data to evaluate each year whether the number and percentage of our Nation's households affected by crime is growing and which types of households are most affected by crime.

In 1992, our citizens reported that nearly 22.1 million U.S. households were directly affected by crime, just under 23% of all households nationwide. While criminal victimization is far too prevalent, this is both the lowest number of American households and the smallest percentage of households victimized by crime since this indicator was developed. In 1975, for example, an estimated 23.4 million households, about 32% of all households, were struck by crime.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the NCVS, a complement to crime data supplied by law enforcement agencies, and it will be celebrated with a special volume to be issued later this year focusing upon trends and patterns in crime.

Lawrence A. Greenfeld
Acting Director

that were not reported. Homicide and commercial crimes are excluded from the survey. Over the past 17 years this

indicator, which reports the proportion of households that experience an attempted or completed crime, has been calculated

to estimate the dispersion of crime (see *Methodology* on page 6 for further discussion of the indicator and of the NCVS). A household refers both to a dwelling unit, like a house or apartment, and to the people who live in it. A household was counted as having experienced a crime during the year if it met one of these criteria:

- It fell victim to a burglary, motor vehicle theft, or household theft.
- A household member age 12 or older was raped, robbed or assaulted.
- A household member age 12 or older experienced a personal theft.

Table 1. Households experiencing crime in 1992, and relative percent change since 1991

Households	1991		1992		Relative percent change, 1991-92*
	Number of households	Percent	Number of households	Percent	
Total	96,561,000	100.0%	97,613,000	100.0%	
Victimized by:					
Any NCVS crime	22,855,000	23.7%	22,093,000	22.6%	-4.4%*
Violent crime	4,711,000	4.9	4,888,000	5.0	2.7
Rape	161,000	.2	149,000	.2	-8.4
Robbery	951,000	1.0	998,000	1.0	3.9
Assault	3,852,000	4.0	3,975,000	4.1	2.1
Aggravated	1,367,000	1.4	1,436,000	1.5	4.0
Simple	2,752,000	2.9	2,807,000	2.9	.9
Total theft	16,069,000	16.6%	15,343,000	15.7%	-5.5*
Personal	10,029,000	10.4	9,451,000	9.7	-6.8*
With contact	463,000	.5	484,000	.5	3.5
Without contact	9,655,000	10.0	9,029,000	9.3	-7.5*
Household	7,421,000	7.7	7,036,000	7.2	-6.2
Burglary	4,554,000	4.7	4,116,000	4.2	-10.8*
Motor vehicle theft	1,755,000	1.8	1,947,000	2.0	9.8
Crimes of high concern (a rape, robbery, or assault by a stranger or a burglary)	6,964,000	7.2%	6,654,000	6.8%	-5.5%

Note: Detail does not add to total or crime subtotals because of overlap in households experiencing various crimes. Relative percent change is based on unrounded figures.
*Change was statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. No other change was statistically significant at or above that level. See Methodology section for discussion of sample size effects on 1992 estimates.
*Relative percent change in percentage of households experiencing crime 1991-92.

Trends

Since the inception of the households-touched-by-crime indicator in 1975, the proportion of U.S. households experiencing a crime of any type has never shown a significant year-to-year increase (table 2; figure 1). The proportion of households touched by crime declined by 22% between 1975 and 1985, with 32% of all households reporting at least one victimization in 1975 compared to 25% in 1985 (table 2). After a period of stability between 1985 and 1989, the proportion of households affected by crime decreased to 24% in 1990 and to 23% in 1992.

Table 2. Households experiencing crime, by type of crime, 1975-92

	Any NCVS crime	Percent of U.S. households							Households touched by crime (in millions)	Households in U.S. (in millions)	
		Total	Violent crime			Personal theft	Household theft	Burglary			Motor vehicle theft
Percent of households experiencing crime			Rape	Robbery	Assault						
1975	32.1%	5.8%	.2%	1.4%	4.5%	16.4%	10.2%	7.7%	1.8%	23.377	73.123
1976	31.5	5.6	.2	1.2	4.4	16.2	10.3	7.4	1.6	23.540	74.528
1977	31.3	5.7	.2	1.2	4.7	16.3	10.2	7.2	1.5	23.741	75.904
1978	31.3	5.7	.2	1.1	4.6	16.2	9.9	7.2	1.7	24.277	77.578
1979	31.3	5.9	.2	1.2	4.8	15.4	10.8	7.1	1.6	24.730	78.964
1980	30.0	5.5	.2	1.2	4.4	14.2	10.4	7.0	1.6	24.222	80.622
1981	30.0	5.9	.2	1.3	4.7	13.9	10.2	7.4	1.6	24.863	82.797
1982	29.3	5.6	.2	1.4	4.5	13.9	9.6	6.9	1.6	24.989	85.178
1983	27.4	5.1	.1	1.1	4.2	13.0	8.9	6.1	1.4	23.621	86.146
1984	26.0	5.0	.2	1.0	4.1	12.3	8.5	5.5	1.4	22.806	87.791
1985	25.0	4.8	.1	.9	4.0	11.5	8.1	5.3	1.4	22.191	88.852
1986	24.7	4.7	.1	.9	3.8	11.2	8.0	5.3	1.4	22.201	90.014
1987	24.5	4.6	.1	.1	3.8	11.1	8.0	5.2	1.5	22.404	91.391
1988	24.6	4.8	.2	.9	4.0	11.2	7.7	5.4	1.5	22.844	92.892
1989*	24.6	4.8	.1	1.0	3.9	11.2	8.0	5.0	1.6	23.221	94.553
1990	23.7	4.7	.1	1.0	3.8	10.5	7.5	4.8	1.9	22.652	95.461
1991	23.7	4.9	.2	1.0	4.0	10.4	7.7	4.7	1.8	22.855	96.561
1992	22.6	5.0	.2	1.0	4.1	9.7	7.2	4.2	2.0	22.093	97.614

*Estimates for 1989 differ from those published in *Crime and the Nation's Households, 1989*. See Methodology.

Some population segments have experienced trends that have differed from the national trend. The percentage of urban households sustaining a crime rose from 29% to 31% between 1986 and 1989. Rural households experienced a decline from 20% to 17% during this same period. Since 1989, the percentage of urban households experiencing a crime has increased, reaching 28% in 1992, while the percentage of rural households victimized by crime has remained unchanged from the 1989 level.

In 1992, the percentage of white households experiencing crime was at its lowest level ever.¹ By contrast, the proportion of black households touched by crime has not changed significantly since 1989.

The proportions of black and white households experiencing crime in 1992 were well below the proportions in 1975. However, the decrease for black households over this period was smaller than that for white households. Between 1975 and 1992 the proportion of victimized white households declined by 31%; for black households the decline was 17%.

In the NCVS the race of the household is considered to be that of the household head.

1991-92 comparisons

The percentage of households sustaining crime decreased slightly between 1991 and 1992, the result of slight decreases in the percentages of households experiencing personal thefts and burglary. All other crime categories remained unchanged between 1991 and 1992.²

Among most demographic groups examined, the overall households-victimized-by-crime indicator changed little between 1991 and 1992. White households were less victimized by crimes of personal theft in 1992 than in the previous year, causing the overall percentage of white households touched by crime to decrease. Black households and households of "other" races — those with members of Asian or Native American descent — remained as vulnerable to crime in 1992 as in the previous year.

Black households were somewhat more likely in 1992 than in 1991 to have a member victimized by an aggravated assault.

²In 1992 interviews from only half the NCVS sample were used to produce estimates for this report, because the other half sample was used to introduce a new crime screener. See *Methodology*.

Although Hispanic households experienced about the same vulnerability to crime in 1991 and 1992, non-Hispanic households were less likely to be victimized by crime in 1992 because of a lower percentage victimized by theft and a marginal decrease in the percentage burglarized.

The proportion of households with incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999 that were burglarized declined in 1992.

Households experiencing selected crimes, by race of household head, 1975-92

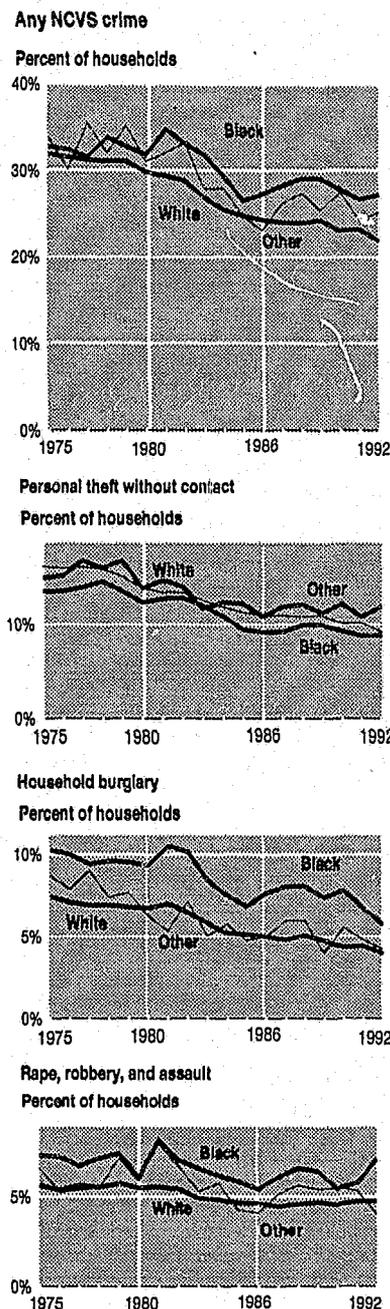


Figure 2

Table 3. Percent of households experiencing crime, by race and ethnicity of household head, 1992

Percent of households experiencing:	Race of household head			Ethnicity of household head	
	White	Black	Other	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
Any NCVS crime	21.9%	27.2%	25.2%	22.0%	30.7%
Violent crime	4.8%	7.1%	4.0%	4.8%	7.6%
Rape	.2	.1	.0	.1	.2
Robbery	.9	2.2	1.2	.9	2.4
Assault	4.0	5.1	3.1	4.0	5.4
Aggravated	1.3	2.6	.8	1.4	2.3
Simple	2.9	2.9	2.4	2.8	3.5
Total theft	15.5%	17.1%	17.8%	15.3%	21.1%
Personal	9.6	9.8	12.7	9.5	11.4
Household	7.1	8.6	6.1	6.9	11.6
Burglary	4.0	5.8	4.3	4.1	5.8
Motor vehicle theft	1.8	3.3	3.0	1.8	4.4
Serious violent crime ^a	2.3%	4.7%	2.0%	2.4%	4.5%
Crimes of high concern ^b	6.4%	9.7%	6.3%	6.6%	10.0%

Note: Detail does not add to total or crime subtotals because of overlap in households experiencing various crimes.

^aRape, robbery, or aggravated assault.

^bA rape, robbery, or assault by a stranger or a burglary.

While urban and rural households had similar overall crime experiences in 1991 and 1992, suburban households were slightly less vulnerable to crime in 1992, the result of a decreased vulnerability to crimes of theft. Urban households were less likely to be victimized by burglaries in 1992 than in the previous year.

Households in the Midwest were less susceptible to crime in 1992, largely because of a decrease in the percentage of households touched by household theft. The percentage of Northeast households that were victimized by household theft was slightly lower in 1992, but the overall percentage of Northeast households touched by any crime was unchanged from 1991.

Households with 2 to 3 members experienced slightly less crime in 1992 than in 1991, because of a marginally lower vulnerability to crimes of theft.

Race and ethnicity of household

Black households were generally more likely than white households to have been victimized in 1992 (table 3). Black households were more likely to be burglarized or have a motor vehicle stolen or to have members who were victims of robberies or aggravated assaults than were white households. However, black and white households had a similar susceptibility to crimes of theft.

Family income

Generally, households with higher incomes were more susceptible to crimes of personal theft than were households with lower incomes. Households with incomes of \$25,000 or more experienced such crimes to a greater degree than did households with lower incomes.

While vulnerability to personal theft increased for higher income households, households across all income levels had similar vulnerability to household theft and motor vehicle theft.

Households with incomes under \$7,500 were more likely than households with incomes of \$15,000 or more (and slightly more likely than households with incomes of \$7,500 to \$14,999) to have a member who had been a victim of a violent crime during 1992. Households with incomes under \$15,000 were more vulnerable to becoming victims of a household burglary than were households with higher incomes.

Place of residence

Urban households were the most vulnerable to crime, and rural households the least vulnerable. While households in suburban areas suffered relatively more robberies than did rural households, suburban households were not more likely

than rural households to experience an assault or a violent crime. In addition, suburban and rural households had an equivalent vulnerability to household burglary. In 1992, 1 in 55 urban households had a member who was the victim of a robbery, compared with 1 in 137 suburban households and 1 in 258 rural households.

Region

As in previous years, Northeastern households experienced some of the lowest and Western households some of the highest percentages of households victimized by crime (table 4). Households in the South (23%) were more vulnerable to crime than were households in the Midwest (21%).

For the overall measure and for most types of crime, the Northeast had the lowest proportion of households touched by crime, followed by the Midwest, South, and West in that order. However, the regional patterns differed for some types of crime. The percentage of Midwest households with members who were victims of violent crime did not differ significantly from Northeastern or Southern households. Midwestern, Southern, and Western households were victimized by burglaries to a similar degree, higher than that experienced by Northeastern households. Northeastern households were as likely as Western households,

Table 4. Percent of households experiencing crime, by selected characteristics, 1992

Percent of households experiencing:	Annual household income					Place of residence ^a			Region			
	Under \$7,500	\$7,500-\$14,999	\$15,000-\$24,999	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$50,000 or more	Urban	Suburban	Rural	North-east	Mid-west	South	West
Any NCVS crime	23.8%	21.0%	21.6%	23.6%	25.2%	28.1%	21.4%	16.9%	18.0%	20.9%	23.4%	28.5%
Violent crime	7.0%	5.3%	5.1%	4.8%	4.3%	6.4%	4.6%	3.8%	3.8%	4.4%	5.1%	6.9%
Rape	.2	.1	.2	.1	.1	.2	.1	.1	.2	.1	.1	.2
Robbery	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.0	.8	1.8	.7	.4	1.0	.7	1.0	1.4
Assault	5.7	4.2	4.2	3.9	3.5	4.7	3.9	3.5	2.9	3.7	4.1	5.8
Aggravated	2.5	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.0	1.9	1.2	1.3	.9	1.2	1.6	2.2
Simple	3.7	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.1	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.7	2.8	4.0
Total theft	14.8%	13.5%	14.9%	17.3%	18.5%	19.5%	15.0%	11.4%	11.8%	14.3%	16.2%	21.0%
Personal	8.6	7.3	8.5	10.8	13.1	11.4	9.8	6.9	7.7	9.1	9.6	12.7
Household	7.6	7.3	7.6	7.8	6.6	9.7	6.3	5.2	4.8	6.1	7.8	10.1
Burglary	6.1	5.5	3.9	3.4	3.8	5.0	3.8	3.7	2.6	4.2	4.7	5.0
Motor vehicle theft	1.5	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.2	3.2	1.8	.6	2.5	1.5	1.9	2.2
Serious violent crime ^b	3.9%	2.9%	2.6%	2.2%	1.9%	3.7%	2.0%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.7%	3.6%
Crimes of high concern ^c	9.3%	7.8%	6.5%	6.0%	6.4%	8.8%	6.1%	5.3%	4.7%	6.3%	7.2%	9.1%

Note: Detail does not add to total because of overlap in households experiencing various crimes.

^aThese estimates are not comparable to estimates for place of residence prior to 1986 because of changes in geographic classification (see footnote 3).

^bRape, robbery, or aggravated assault.

^cA rape, robbery, or assault by a stranger or a burglary.

and more likely than Midwestern households to suffer a completed or attempted motor vehicle theft.

Size of household

In general, the more people in a household, the greater its susceptibility to crime. (table 5). This tendency is more pronounced for personal crimes than for household crimes because larger households have more members at risk for personal crimes, but each household, regardless of size, is at risk for household crimes.

The likelihood of personal crime victimization generally does not increase at a rate proportional to increases in household size. For example, in 1992, as in previous years, the percentage of six-or-more-person households touched by personal theft was about 2 1/2 times that of one person households.

There are a number of various reasons why the rate of victimization by personal crime is not simply proportional to household size. Many households with two or more members have children under age 12. Crimes against young children are not included in the NCVS measurement of crime victimization.³ In addition, variations in demographic characteristics and lifestyles among different size households can affect their likelihood of criminal victimization.

The relationship between household size and susceptibility to crime shown in past years also held for 1992:

³Crimes against children under age 12 are excluded from the NCVS because asking sensitive questions about victimization might be stressful to the child or the parents, possibly discouraging adult participation in the survey.

Table 5. Percent of households touched by selected crimes, by size of household, 1992

Percent of households experiencing:	Number of persons in household			
	1	2-3	4-5	6+
Any NCVS crime	15.3%	21.7%	31.6%	36.8%
Violent crime	2.9%	4.4%	7.9%	12.0%
Total theft	9.9	15.1	22.5	26.9
Personal	6.0	9.2	14.3	16.9
Household	4.5	7.0	10.2	12.9
Burglary	3.8	4.0	4.8	6.4
Motor vehicle theft	0.9	2.1	2.9	2.8

- Fewer than 1 in 5 single-person households were touched by crime, compared to 2 in 5 households with six or more members.

- Households with six or more members were about 4 times more likely than single-person households to have had at least one member who was victimized by violent crime (12% versus 3%) and 2 1/2 times more likely to have sustained a personal or household theft (27% versus 10%).

As in previous years, burglary varied the least among households of different sizes. In 1992, 4% of single-person households were burglarized, compared to 6% of households with six or more members.

Crimes of high concern

Of the crimes measured by the NCVS, many people find burglaries and violent crimes committed by strangers to be especially threatening. Crimes by strangers are often unpredictable and can be difficult to protect against. Household burglaries are felt by many to be invasions of personal domain. For this report, these crimes have been termed crimes of high concern. Last year 1 in 15 households in the Nation were touched by a crime of high concern, compared with 1 in 14 households in 1991.

The kinds of households most vulnerable to crime in general were the most likely to be victims of crimes of high concern: higher percentages of black households than white households, Hispanic households than non-Hispanic households, urban households than suburban or rural households sustained such crimes in 1992. Households with incomes under \$7,500 were more likely than households with incomes of \$15,000 or more to experience a crime of high concern. Households in the Northeast were least likely, and those in the West most likely, to sustain at least one of these crimes, while similar proportions of Midwestern and Southern households were victimized by a crime of high concern.

Between 1981 and 1984, the percentage of households victimized by a crime of high concern decreased from 11% to 8%. This percentage remained constant until declining again in 1989 to 7%. Since 1989, the proportion of households

Households experiencing crimes of high concern, by race of household head, 1981-92

(A rape, robbery, or assault by a stranger or a burglary)

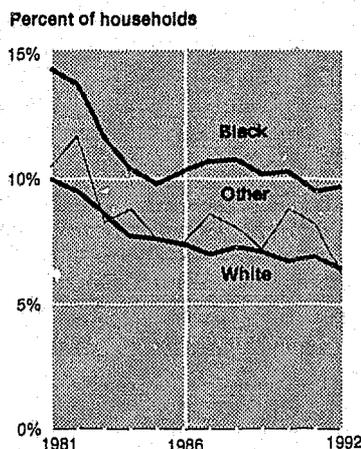


Figure 3

touched by a crime of high concern has remained at this 7% level.

Race and crime seriousness

In 1992, black households were not only more vulnerable to crime than white households, but were also more likely, if victimized, to be victimized by a serious violent crime and slightly more likely, if victimized, to suffer a crime of high concern. In 1992, 17% of the black households experiencing any crime had a member victimized by a rape, robbery, or aggravated assault, while 10% of victimized white households had a member who suffered one of these crimes. Similarly, among those households that fell victim to a crime in 1992, 36% of black households and 29% of white households were victimized by a crime of high concern.

Factors affecting trends

Over time, population shifts and changes in household composition have affected the overall downward trend that the households-touched-by-crime indicator has shown since 1975.

American society is extremely mobile. For some time the population has been moving away from the Northeast and Midwest into the South and West. Urban residents have been moving to suburban and rural areas. In 1975, 50% of the U.S. population lived in the Northeast or

Midwest, compared to 44% in 1992. Between 1975 and 1985 the percentage of households located in urban areas fell from 32% to 29% of all households, while suburban and rural households increased from 68% to 71%. Between 1986 and 1988, urban households continued to account for a declining percentage of all households, and suburban households, an increasing one. Since 1988, the urban, suburban, and rural distribution of households has remained substantially unchanged.⁴

As people are constantly moving into and out of different households, creating new households and merging existing households, the average household size has decreased over the recent past. One-person households represented 21% of all households in 1975, but 26% in 1992. The percentage of households consisting of six or more persons fell from 7% to 3%.

Two population movements outlined above, changing household size and household location, have shifted population from types of households more likely to experience crime — larger ones and those in urban areas — to those less likely — smaller ones and those in suburban or rural areas. Another movement has shifted the population in the opposite direction, from the Northeast, a region with a lower likelihood of crime, to the West, where a higher proportion of households experience crime.

While current data do not permit measurement of the degree to which all population movements have affected the indicator, estimates can be made for the effect of changes in household size. If the size distribution of American households were the same in 1992 as in 1975, the estimate of households experiencing crime would have been 23.7% rather than 22.6%.⁵ This adjusted estimate, however, is still significantly below the 1975 estimate of 32% of households victimized by crime.

⁴Places of residence for 1986 through 1992 are based on 1980 Census definitions, and earlier years are based on 1970 definitions. Hence, the places of residence and population distributions identified in the two periods 1975-1985 and 1986-1992 were not directly comparable.

⁵This analysis assumes that in each category of household size the percentage of households victimized by crime in 1992 would be unchanged, given the size distribution for all households that existed in 1975.

Methodology

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) developed the households-touched-by-crime indicator in 1981 to improve our understanding of the impact of crime on our society.⁶ The household was chosen as the unit of analysis because crimes such as burglary are crimes against an entire household and crimes against persons affect members of the victims' household.

Crimes not included in the NCVS

Households-touched-by-crime estimates are derived from NCVS statistics on rape, personal robbery, assault, household burglary, personal and household theft, and motor vehicle theft.⁷ Because the NCVS counts only crimes for which the victim can be interviewed, homicide is not counted. Its exclusion does not noticeably affect the estimates. If each of the homicides during 1992 had occurred in a different household and if these households had been victimized by no other crime (the largest possible effect), then the inclusion of homicides in these findings would not have raised the overall percent of households victimized by crime (22.6) by as much as 0.05%.⁸

Other crimes against persons or their households, such as fraud, confidence games, kidnaping, and arson are not included in this analysis because they are not measured by the NCVS. Commercial crimes, drug trafficking, and drug possession crimes also are not included.

Rates of crime — number of crimes per 1,000 persons or households.

Traditional measures of crime are in the form of volumes or rates. Data on the volume of crime have limited usefulness because the size of the population is not taken into account. Rates — expressed in the NCVS as crimes per 1,000 house-

⁶*The Prevalence of Crime*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-75905, April 1981.

⁷These crimes are defined in *Measuring Crime*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-75710, February 1981. As used in this report, the term "theft" is synonymous with the term "larceny" used in previous reports. The NCVS was formerly named the National Crime Survey (NCS).

⁸Preliminary estimates for 1992 indicate that homicides increased by 6% from the 24,703 reported in 1991 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 1992).

holds or per 1,000 persons — automatically correct for different population sizes. Rates based on the individual person and household, however, give only one measure of how common a crime is. Because crimes against individuals are likely to affect everyone with whom they reside, another estimate of whether crime is widely spread or highly concentrated is to measure its occurrence in households with different characteristics.

Households-victimized-by-crime measure

For each type of crime examined, a household is counted only once, regardless of how many times that household is victimized. For example, if a household were burglarized twice and one of its members was robbed once during the year, it is counted once for households sustaining burglary even though it was victimized twice by burglary. It is also counted once for households victimized by robbery. Finally it is counted once in the overall measure, households victimized by crime.

Consequently, the households-touched-by-crime estimate for 1992 (22.6%) is less than the sum of the estimates for households victimized by personal crimes (13.5%) and those victimized by household crimes (12.3%) because 3.2% of U.S. households were victims of both personal and household crimes. Similarly, because about 1.2% of U.S. households experienced both personal theft and violence, the sum of households victimized by personal theft (9.7%) and those victimized by violence (5.0%) exceeds the estimate of those victimized by personal crime (13.5%).

All data in this Bulletin are from the NCVS except those specifically attributed to other sources. The NCVS is an ongoing survey conducted for BJS by the Bureau of the Census. Interviews are conducted at 6-month intervals with all occupants age 12 or older in about 49,000 housing units (99,000 persons). Because the NCVS does not obtain information about crimes against persons under age 12, households experiencing only such crimes are not included in the estimate of households touched by crime.

Estimates of standard errors

The estimates in this Bulletin are derived from sample survey data and are subject to sampling variation.⁹ Because the procedure used to produce estimates of households sustaining crime differs from that for victimization rates, the households-touched-by-crime data have standard errors about 8% higher than those for victimization rates with the same population bases, even though they are derived from the same sample survey.

Comparisons presented in this report were determined to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, meaning that the estimated difference is greater than twice the standard error. Statements of comparison qualified by language such as "slightly," "somewhat," or "marginal" indicate statistical significance at the 90% level (1.6 standard errors). The estimates are also subject to response errors, including crimes that are forgotten or withheld from the interviewer. Such response errors tend to cause understated counts of households touched by crime.¹⁰

Presented in the table on this page are the 95% confidence intervals around the levels and proportions of the major crimes measured by this indicator.

The standard errors for the estimated percentages used in these calculations are computed using the following formula:

$$s.e.(p) = \sqrt{\left(\frac{b}{y}\right)(p(1.0-p))}$$

where

p = percentage or rate expressed in decimal form

y = base population or total number of crimes

b = a constant equal to 8492

⁹Details of the NCVS sample design, the standard error computation, and the customary estimation procedure for victimization rates and counts may be found in *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1991*, NCJ-139583, December 1992, appendix III.

¹⁰A more detailed description of the procedures used to estimate households victimized by crime appears in an unpublished memorandum prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The memorandum is available from Michael Rand, c/o Bureau of Justice Statistics, 833 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20531 (202-616-3494).

Crime and the Nation's Households, 1992 95 percent confidence intervals

	Number	95% confidence interval	Percent	95% confidence interval
Any crime	22,093,068	21,346,338 — 22,839,798	22.6	21.9 — 23.4
Violent crime	4,888,127	4,498,924 — 5,277,330	5.1	4.6 — 5.4
Rape	149,086	79,400 — 218,772	.2	.1 — .2
Robbery	997,739	818,250 — 1,177,228	1.0	.8 — 1.2
Assault	3,974,993	3,622,297 — 4,327,689	4.1	3.7 — 4.4
Aggravated Simple	1,436,420	1,221,547 — 1,651,293	1.5	1.3 — 1.7
Simple	2,806,739	2,508,526 — 3,104,952	2.9	2.6 — 3.2
Personal theft	9,450,969	8,923,271 — 9,978,667	9.7	9.1 — 10.2
Burglary	4,115,678	3,757,064 — 4,474,292	4.2	3.8 — 4.6
Household theft	7,035,770	6,574,270 — 7,497,270	7.2	6.7 — 7.7
Motor vehicle theft	1,947,133	1,697,626 — 2,196,640	2.0	1.7 — 2.3

Estimates have been rounded to the nearest tenth.

The standard errors for the estimated levels used in these calculations are computed using the following formula:

$$s.e.(x) = \sqrt{ax^2 + bx}$$

where

x = estimated number of households victimized by crime

a = a constant equal to -0.00008700

b = a constant equal to 8492

NCVS survey redesign

Beginning in January 1992, the NCVS underwent the introduction of a revised crime screening procedure. In order to enable measurement of any differences between the current and new crime screening procedures, half of the NCVS sample was administered each crime screener. Beginning in July 1993, the entire NCVS sample will be interviewed using the revised crime screener.

The NCVS crime screening procedure was introduced as part of an overall survey redesign. Research has indicated that the new screener will improve recall

Comparison of findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the Uniform Crime Reports

The U.S. Department of Justice administers two programs to measure the magnitude, nature, and impact of crime in the United States: the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the source of this report, and the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR).

Because of differences in methodology and crime coverage, the two programs examine the Nation's crime problem

from somewhat different perspectives, and their results are not strictly comparable. The definitional and procedural differences can account for many of the apparent discrepancies in estimates from the two programs. The Department of Justice fact sheet *The Nation's Two Crime Measures* (NCJ-122705) contains a detailed description of the NCVS and UCR.

and reporting of crime incidents, especially for some underreported crimes such as family violence and sexual assault.¹¹

The estimates in this report were calculated using only the interviews conducted with the current crime screener, that used since the survey was introduced in 1972. Because the sample size used to produce estimates is so much smaller than in past years, the variances associated with the estimates are dramatically increased. For this reason, some apparent differences that might have been statistically significant in past years were not sufficient to pass tests for statistical significance in 1992.

¹¹For more information about the NCVS redesign, see *New Directions for the National Crime Survey*, BJS Technical Report NCJ-115571, March 1989, or *Redesign of the National Crime Survey*, NCJ-111457, February 1989.

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