

Crime and Victimization

“The victimization rates in 1996 are the lowest recorded by the National Crime Survey since its inception in 1973.” (Chaiken, Jan M., Director, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1997, November 15). From press release announcing the results of the 1996 National Crime Victimization Survey. Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.)

The nation’s violent crime rate fell 10 percent between 1995 and 1996 and was 16 percent lower than in 1993. Overall property crime was down more than 8 percent in 1996 and was 17 percent lower than in 1993. (Ibid.)

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ (BJS) *National Crime Victimization Survey* data released in November of 1997, U.S. residents age 12 or older experienced approximately 37 million crimes in 1996. Of these victimizations, 27.3 million involved property crimes against households; 9.1 million involved the violent crimes of rape, robbery, and assault; and 0.3 million involved personal thefts such as purse snatching. (Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1997, November). “Criminal Victimization 1996: Changes 1995-96 with Trends 1993-96,” NCJ-165812. *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.)

Translated into the number of violent and property crimes per 1,000 persons or households, crime rates for 1996 show 42 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons and 266 property crimes per 1,000 households. (Ibid.)

Certain types of personal crimes were down dramatically during the 1993-1996 period. For example, rape/attempted rape fell 44 percent, other sexual assaults dropped 37

percent, and aggravated assault declined 27 percent. (Ibid.)

Some property crimes also fell substantially during the 1993-96 period: household burglary decreased by 19 percent, motor vehicle theft decreased 29 percent, and personal theft (pocket picking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching) was down 35 percent. (Ibid.)

According to BJS, the total number of estimated personal and household victimizations has fallen in each year since 1992, except for 1993, despite increases in the U.S. population: (Ibid.)

1992	42,834,000	1995	38,446,000
1993	43,547,000	1996	36,796,000
1994	42,362,000		

Between 1994 and 1995 the violent crime rate -- rape, robbery, and assault -- dropped 12.4 percent. The decline was the largest since BJS conducted the first National Crime Victimization Survey in 1973. (Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1997, April 13). “Changes in Criminal Victimization 1994-95.” *BJS Press Release* Washington, DC: Department of Justice.)

It is important to note, that according to BJS, personal victimization rates for the oldest and youngest age groups declined *less* than for those in the intermediate ages. (Ibid.)

Urban areas have typically recorded the highest levels of violent victimizations and rural areas the lowest, but the broadest decline in violent offenses during 1995 was in the suburbs, where there were significant declines in all types of personal victimizations except rape and sexual assault. (Ibid.)