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Crimes against Persons Age 65 or Older, 1993-2002

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According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), persons age 65 or older generally experienced victimizations at much lower rates than younger groups of people from 1993 through 2002.

For the period 1993-2002 the elderly experienced nonfatal violent crime at a rate 1/20th that of young persons (4 per 1,000 age 65 or older versus 82 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12-24). Violent crimes include rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated and simple assaults.

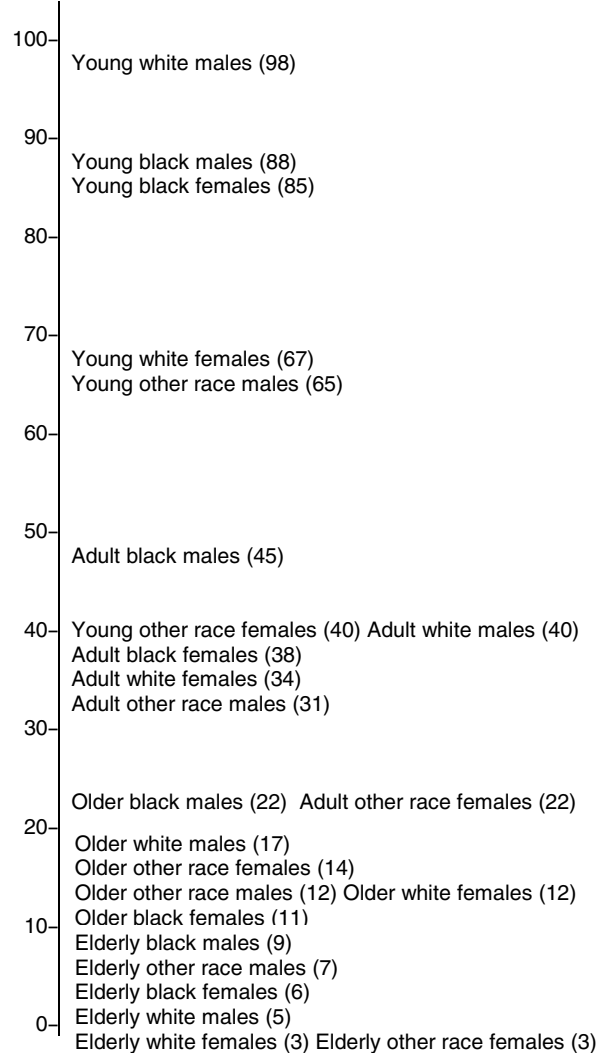
Households headed by persons age 65 or older experienced property crimes at a rate about a fourth of that for households headed by persons under age 25 (93 per 1,000 households versus 406 per 1,000).

Purse snatching/pocket picking (personal larceny) was the only measured crime for which the elderly were victimized at about the same rates as most other age groups. Persons age 12-24 were the only group with higher rates of personal larceny than the elderly.

Although persons age 65 or older generally experienced lower victimization rates, when they were victimized they were most often the victims of

The elderly, age 65 or older, had lower violent victimization rates than other age groups, when comparing race and gender

Average annual rate violent victimization
per 1,000 persons, 1993-2002



Note: The four age categories used throughout the report are referred to in this chart as "young," ages 12-24, "adult," ages 25-49, "older," ages 50-64, and "elderly," age 65 or older. Hispanics do not appear in a separate category but are included in the racial categories shown.

property crimes, which include household burglary, motor vehicle theft and theft (table 1, figure 1). Property crimes accounted for 92% of victimizations affecting persons or households headed by someone 65 or older and 88% of victimizations against persons or households headed by persons age 50-64. In comparison, violent crimes comprised more than half the victimizations experienced by persons age 12-24.

Compared to younger victims of personal crimes (rape/sexual assault, robbery, assault, and purse snatching/pocket picking), elderly victims were disproportionately victimized by thefts of their purses or wallets (figure 2). About 1 in 5 of personal crimes against the elderly were thefts compared to about 1 in 33 for persons age 12-49.

Trends in violent and property crimes, 1993-2002

Nonfatal violence generally declined for most age groups between 1993 and 2002 (figure 3). The elderly had the lowest rates of any age group for nonfatal violence during this period. In recent years all rates have remained stable, after declining in earlier years. Rates for persons age 50-64 were stable during some of the years in which there were declines for younger age groups.

Murder, which is measured by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports, declined slightly for the elderly between 1993 and 1998 (figure 4). Since 1998 murder rates have remained stable for this age group. Persons age 65 or older had lower rates of murder than other age groups every year between 1993 and 2002.

Property crime victimizations declined for households headed by all age groups between 1993 and 2002 (figure 5). For persons age 65 or older, property crime rates in 2002 were less than half that of the rates in 1993 (63 per 1,000 households versus 133 per 1,000).

Table 1. Personal and household victimizations, by type of crime and age, 1993-2002

Rates by type of crime 1993-2002	Total	Age of victim			
		12-24	25-49	50-64	65 or older
All crimes					
Personal crimes total	39.9	84.5	38.4	15.5	5.4
Violent crime total	38.5	82.2	37.1	14.5	4.3
Rape/sexual assault	1.6	4.0	1.4	0.2	0.1
Robbery	4.3	8.4	4.2	1.9	1.0
Assault, total	32.7	69.8	31.6	12.4	3.2
Aggravated assault	8.1	17.5	7.8	2.9	0.9
Simple assault	24.6	52.3	23.8	9.5	2.4
Personal larceny	1.4	2.3	1.2	0.9	1.1
Property crimes total	231.5	406.3	282.2	188.5	93.1
Household burglary	41.1	82.1	46.4	33.6	22.8
Motor vehicle theft	12.5	22.4	15.4	10.2	4.5
Theft	177.9	301.8	220.4	144.7	65.8
Average annual					
Persons	221,841,700	49,465,940	102,193,620	38,048,660	32,133,480
Households	105,328,990	6,830,400	54,494,930	22,420,790	21,582,870

Percent of violent and property crimes, by age of victim, 1993-2002

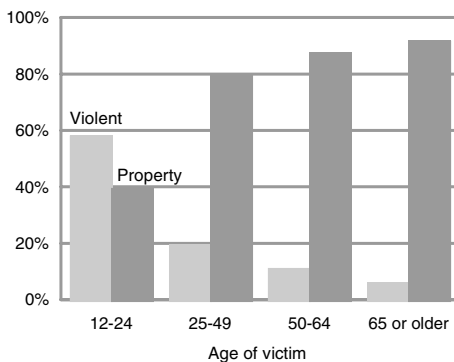


Figure 1

Purse snatching and pocket picking, as a percentage of all crimes against persons, by age of victim, 1993-2002

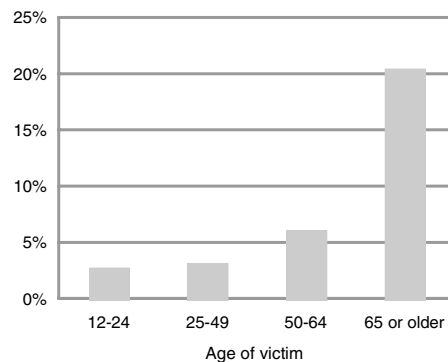


Figure 2

Rates of violent crime victimization per 1,000 persons, by age of victim, 1993-2002

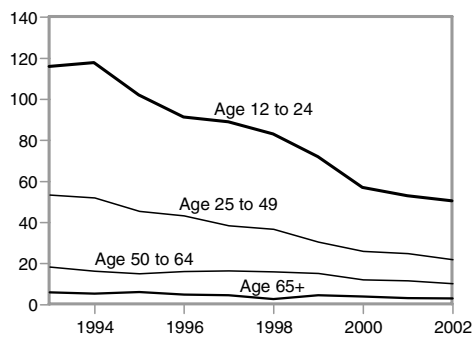


Figure 3

Murder rates per 10,000 persons, by age of victim, 1993-2002

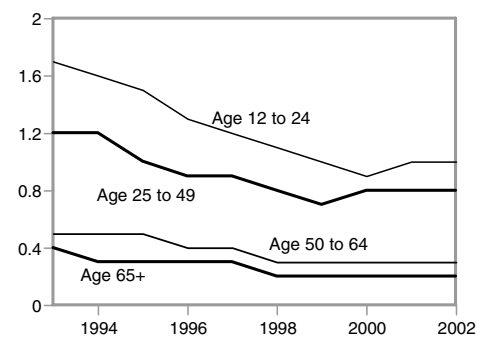


Figure 4

Table 2. Nonfatal violent victimizations, 1993-2002

Total	Age of victim	
	12-64	65 or older
Percent facing weapons	25.7%	30.2%
Firearm	9.4	12.7
Knife	6.3	6.4
Other type	8.7	9.3
Don't know type	1.2	1.8
Percent resisting	71.0%	55.5%
Threatened/attacked with weapon	2.2	2.5
Threatened/attacked without weapon	27.9	15.3
Nonconfrontational resistance	29.5	24.9
Other or unknown type	11.3	12.9
Percent not resisting	29.0%	44.5%
Percent injured	25.9%	21.8%
Types of injury		
Serious	3.3	2.8
Minor	21.2	18.7
Rape without other injury	1.2	0.3*
Don't know type	0.1	0.0*

*Based on 10 or fewer cases.

Violent victimization characteristics, 1993-2002

Compared to younger persons, the elderly are less likely to be victims of violence, but when victimized, persons age 65 or older —

- were equally likely to face offenders with weapons (30% versus 26%)
- were more likely to offer no resistance (45% versus 29%)
- were equally likely to receive serious injuries (3% for both groups) (table 2).

Property crime rates per 1,000 households, by age, 1993-2002

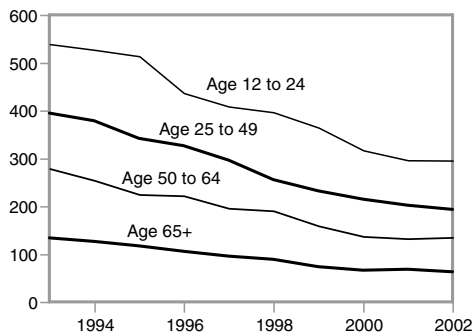


Figure 5

Offenders in violent crimes, 1993-2002

Persons age 65 or older, when compared with those age 12-64, —

- were somewhat more likely to face offenders who were strangers to them (53% versus 46%)
- were more likely to face offenders age 30 or older (48% versus 30%)
- were equally likely to face male offenders (about 79% versus 76%).

Characteristic of violent offender	Age of victim	
	12-64	65 or older
Total	100%	100%
Relationship to victim		
Known to victim	31.7	23.6
Spouse/exspouse	5.1	2.4
Boyfriend/girlfriend	5.9	0.6*
Own child	0.9	2.6
Other relatives	4.0	4.1
Well known person	15.8	13.9
Causal acquaintance	18.2	15.7
Stranger	46.3	52.5
Don't know relationship	3.7	8.2

Age 30 or older 30.2% 48.3%

Male 78.8% 75.6%

*Based on 10 or fewer cases.

When and where crimes occurred and reporting of crimes to police

Lower percentages of crimes against persons age 65 or older were committed at night compared to crimes against younger persons. About a fourth of violent crimes against the elderly were committed at night, compared to almost half of all violence against persons age 12-64. Similar differences existed for personal larceny (15% versus 34%) and property crime (21% versus 29%) (table 3).

About 46% of violent crimes and about 67% of property crimes against persons or households headed by persons age 65 or older occurred at or near their homes. The elderly were more likely than those age 12-64 to face these crimes while in or near their homes. Purse snatching/pocket picking rarely occurred near home for either persons age 65 or older or those under age 65 (5% versus 6%).

Compared to younger victims, persons age 65 or older were more likely to report violence (53% versus 44%) and purse snatching/pocket picking (42% versus 32%) to the police. Slightly over a third of all households, regardless of the age of the household head, reported property crimes.

Table 3. Characteristics of crimes, 1993-2002

	Age of victim	
	12-64	65 or older
Percent occurring at night		
Violence	45.8%	27.2%
Personal theft	34.4	14.8
Property crimes	29.2	20.9
Percent occurring at/near home		
Violence	27.0%	45.5%
Personal theft	5.4	5.8*
Property crimes	54.3	67.0
Percent reported to police		
Violence	43.9%	53.0%
Personal theft	32.1	42.3
Property crimes	34.7	35.5

Note: Some persons did not know when crimes occurred, especially property crimes.
*Based on 10 or fewer cases.

On average each year 1993-2002, of persons age 65 or older who reported being a victim of violence, 22% were injured and 1% were hospitalized overnight

Not injured	Injured					
	78.2%	21.8%				
	Not treated	Treated				
			10.9%			
			At scene	Doctor's office	Hospital	Elsewhere
			3.5%	1.9%*	5.3%	0.2%*
			Released from emergency room		Hospitalized	
			4.4%		0.9%*	

*Based on 10 or fewer cases.

Figure 6

Methodology

This report presents data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This survey obtains information about criminal victimizations and incidents from an ongoing, nationally representative sample of households in the United States.

Information about murder was obtained from the Uniform Crime Reports sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Data were obtained from Supplemental Homicide Reports covering the period of 1993 through 2002.

Some crimes of concern are not within the scope of the NCVS. The NCVS is a household-based survey. It does not interview persons living in institutions, so that it cannot measure victimization of the elderly who reside in such settings. The NCVS does not measure most types of fraud. Questions concerning identity theft were added to the questionnaire in July 2004 and will

be analyzed in future reports when data become available.

NCVS data are useful for providing a comprehensive overview of the entire elderly population within the United States. Within this population, however, there are people with particular vulnerabilities whose victimization may be under reported or outside of the scope of the crimes measured by this survey. Other types of studies targeted at specific groups, such as elderly people in nursing homes, are needed to complement the data available through NCVS.

Computation of standard errors

The comparisons made in this report were tested to determine whether the observed differences between groups were statistically significant. Except where otherwise noted comparisons mentioned in this report passed a hypothesis test at the .05 level of statistical significance (or the 95% confidence level).

One should use caution when comparing estimates not discussed in the text. Seemingly large differences may not be statistically significant at the 95% or even the 90% confidence level.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Lawrence A. Greenfeld is director.

Patsy Klaus of BJS wrote this report. Cathy Maston provided verification. Carolyn C. Williams produced and edited the report. Jayne Robinson administered final production.

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