



Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

The Redesigned National Crime Survey: Selected New Data

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In July 1986 the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) implemented the first phase of a redesign of the National Crime Survey (NCS), which collects national data on personal and household criminal victimizations. Victims now give new information in three areas: victims' perception of drug and alcohol use by violent offenders; protective actions taken by victims and bystanders; and the response of police and other criminal justice authorities to reported crimes.

This report presents an overview of the responses given by crime victims living in a nationally representative sample of households, surveyed by the NCS from July 1986 through June 1987. BJS will publish more detailed analyses of the new NCS data in future reports.

Key findings include the following:

- Victims reported that they believed their assailants were under the influence of drugs or alcohol in about 36% of violent crime incidents (rapes, robberies, and assaults), including 46% of rapes. In 43% of violent crimes the victims reported that they did not know whether the offender was under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- Seventy-three percent of violent crime victims reported taking some self-protective measure. The most common measures were resisting or trying to capture the offender (32% of cases where at least one self-protective measure was taken), running away or hiding (26%), and persuading or appeasing the offender (26%).

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This BJS Special Report presents the first analysis of new National Crime Survey questions introduced in July 1986. These questions will help us to learn more about offenders' drug and alcohol use, about how victims attempt to protect themselves, and about the response to crime of the police and other criminal justice authorities.

The questions belong to the first phase of the redesign of the NCS, a 5-year effort involving BJS staff, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and numerous criminal justice professionals and experts in the study of victims of crime. Since its inception in 1972 the NCS, one of the Nation's largest ongoing social surveys, has been a vital source of information on crime and its consequences.

As various features of the redesigned NCS are phased in over the next several years, policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, and the public will benefit by more detailed and more accurate information on the dynamics of the criminal incident and how our criminal justice system responds.

Joseph M. Bessette
Acting Director

- About three-fifths of the victims who took self-protective measures stated that their actions had a positive effect on the outcome of the crime. About 7% of the victims taking self-protective measures reported that their actions hurt the situation, and 6% reported both positive and negative effects.

- When notified of a crime, the police came to see the victim in 76% of violent crimes, in 71% of household crimes (burglary, household theft, and motor vehicle theft), and in 54% of personal thefts.

- According to the crime victims, in about 56% of the violent crimes, 38% of personal thefts, and 35% of household crimes where the police came to see the victim, the police arrived within 10 minutes after being notified. Police arrived within an hour in 95% of violent crimes, 84% of personal thefts, and 85% of household crimes.

- Police had later contact with victims in 37% of the violent crimes reported to the police (including 62% of rapes), 35% of reported household crimes (including 58% of motor vehicle thefts), and 25% of reported personal thefts.

- In those cases where the crime was reported to the police, victims were aware that an arrest was made in 25% of violent crimes (including 34% of aggravated assaults and 15% of robberies), 7% of household crimes, and 4% of personal thefts.

- In about 1 in 9 violent crimes reported to the police, the victim received help or advice from a victim assistance office or agency other than the police.

NCS redesign

The Statistics Division of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the predecessor of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, inaugurated the National Crime Survey in July 1972 to collect national data on personal and

household criminal victimization. The original questionnaire remained essentially unchanged until July 1986, when BJS added and expanded questions on crime incident characteristics and outcomes. These revisions were the first results of the National Crime Survey Redesign Project.¹

This extensive research and development effort was undertaken in response to two earlier evaluations. The National Academy of Sciences conducted the first review and published its findings in 1976.² The LEAA Statistics Division completed a subsequent internal review of the NCS program in 1978.

A consortium of organizations headed by the Bureau of Social Science Research in Washington, D.C., was awarded a contract in 1979 to study all phases of the NCS program, including sample and questionnaire design, administration of the survey, and dissemination of NCS data. When the contract to redesign the NCS concluded in 1985, the consortium had developed new questionnaire items. BJS had also established a task force in 1983 to evaluate changes and to schedule revisions to the survey.

Those changes that had minimal potential to affect NCS victimization rates were introduced in July 1986. The questions reflect not only the work of the NCS Redesign Consortium but also the recommendations of other experienced NCS users.

Specifically, the new questions concerned drug and alcohol use by offenders, self-protective measures taken by victims, actions of the police in the investigation of reported crimes, and contacts between the victim and other persons or organizations in the criminal justice system.

New data, not presented in this report, are also now being obtained on the type of location where the crime occurred and the victim's activity at the time of the incident. Finally, new response categories have been added to several existing questions, such as the place of occurrence, type of weapons present, items taken in thefts, and reasons for reporting or not reporting crimes to the police.

BJS is currently testing additional changes to the NCS questionnaire. These changes include a substantially

¹For a more detailed discussion of the NCS redesign, see *Redesign of the National Crime Survey*, NCJ-111457, February 1989.

²*Surveying Crime*, Bettye K. Eldson Penick, ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1976).

revised screening procedure and new questions on factors that may increase or decrease an individual's likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. These revisions are scheduled to be phased in during 1989; all changes to the questionnaire will be completed in 1991.

Drug and alcohol use by offenders

Responses to new NCS questions show that in about 36% of the violent crime incidents, the victim thought that the offender was under the influence of drugs or alcohol (table 1). In about 4 of every 10 incidents, the victim did not know whether or not the offender was under the influence at the time of the incident. Victims of rape and assault were more likely than robbery victims to report the offenders used drugs or alcohol; however, the proportion of incidents where the victim did not know if the offenders used drugs or alcohol was higher for robbery than for other categories of violent crimes.

For those victims who could report the offenders' use of drugs or alcohol, similar proportions of the victims of rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults believed that the offenders had been under the influence.

Except for the crime of robbery, violent crime victims indicated that offenders were more likely to be under the influence of alcohol than of drugs. Robbery offenders were about as likely to be using drugs as they were to be drinking. The proportion of victims who reported that the offenders were under the influence of both drugs and alcohol generally did not vary significantly by type of crime.

Violent crime victims indicated that male offenders were more likely than female offenders to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol (table 2). Also, a higher proportion of white offenders than of black offenders were thought to be under the influence. However, vic-

Table 1. Violent offenders under the influence of drugs or alcohol, as perceived by victims

Type of crime	Total	Not under the influence	Percent of violent crime incidents where victim perceived the offender to be:					Not known if under the influence
			Total	Under the influence			Not sure which substance	
				Alcohol only	Drugs only	Both		
Crimes of violence	100%	20%	38%	22%	6%	6%	2%	43%
Rape	100	15	46	23	13*	5*	5*	39
Robbery	100	12	27	10	10	5	1*	61
Aggravated assault	100	18	42	25	7	7	2	42
Simple assault	100	26	36	25	4	6	2	38

Notes: Percents may not total 100% because of rounding. For incidents with more than one offender, data show incidents in which at least one offender was under the influence.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.

Table 2. Characteristics of violent offenders under the influence of drugs or alcohol as reported by victims

Offender characteristics**	Total	Not under the influence	Percent of violent crime incidents where victim perceived the offender to be:					Not known if under the influence
			Total	Under the influence			Not sure which substance	
				Alcohol only	Drugs only	Both		
Sex								
Male	100%	19%	38%	23%	6%	6%	2%	43%
Female	100	34	27	17	6	3	1*	39
Both sexes	100	17	47	23	13	11	—*	37
Race								
White	100%	23%	42%	28%	5%	7%	2%	35%
Black	100	18	27	12	9	4	2	55
Other	100	18	39	20	8*	6*	4*	43
Age								
20 or younger	100%	29%	23%	14%	5%	3%	1%*	48%
21 or older	100	18	45	28	8	8	2	37
Mixed ages	100	11	44	27	4*	12	2*	44
Relationship to victim								
Nonstranger	100%	31%	40%	24%	6%	8%	1%	28%
Stranger	100	13	35	22	7	5	2	52

Notes: Percents may not total 100% because of rounding. For incidents with more than one offender, data show incidents in which at least one offender was under the influence. Crimes committed by mixed racial groups are not presented.
—Less than 0.5%.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Describes single and multiple offenders.

tims of black offenders were less likely than victims of whites to know whether or not the offenders were drinking or on drugs. When crimes where the victim did not know about the offenders' substance use are excluded, the proportions of black and white offenders reported under the influence did not differ significantly (64% vs. 60%).

According to victims, violent offenders age 21 or older were more likely than younger offenders to be drinking or on drugs (45% vs. 23%). The percentage of violent offenders of mixed age groups reported to be under the influence was similar to that of adult offenders.

Offenders who were strangers appear to be less likely than offenders who knew their victims to be drinking or using drugs (35% vs. 40%). However, victims of crimes committed by strangers were less likely than victims of nonstranger crimes to know whether or not the offender was drinking or on drugs. When crimes where the offenders' use of drugs or alcohol was unknown are excluded, strangers were more likely than nonstrangers to be drinking or using drugs during violent crimes (74% vs. 56%).

Victims generally felt that offenders were more likely to have been drinking than under the influence of drugs alone or of drugs and alcohol together. For black offenders there was no significant difference in the proportions of those who were drinking and those who were on drugs.

Self-protection

Seventy-three percent of violent crime victims reported taking some self-protective measure. New questions on the NCS obtain more detailed information on the types of protective actions taken and how victims judged the results.

When violent crime victims protected themselves, they were most likely to resist or try to capture the offender--about a third of the time when self-protective measures were used (table 3). About a fourth of the victims seeking self-protection ran away or hid, and a fourth of them tried to persuade or to appease the offender. In about 20% of the violent crimes involving self-protection, victims without a weapon attacked the offender. Victims could report more than one self-protective response for a single crime.

There is some evidence that when self-protection was taken, robbery victims were more likely than assault victims to take the more aggressive measures. Robbery victims without a weapon were somewhat more likely than assault victims to attack the offender (24% vs. 19%). Robbery victims were also somewhat more likely than aggravated assault victims to resist or try to capture the offenders. For crimes with self-protection, assault victims were more likely than robbery victims to take the less aggressive actions of persuading or appeasing the offender. Aggravated assault victims were more likely than robbery or simple assault victims to run away or hide. However, there were no significant differences in the proportions of robberies and simple assaults where the victim took this measure.

Rape victims taking self-protective measures were more likely than victims of other types of violent crimes to scare or warn the offender or to persuade or appease the offender.

About three-fifths of the violent crime victims who took self-protective measures stated that their actions had a positive effect on the outcome of the crime (table 4). About 7% of the victims felt that their actions hurt the situation, and 6% reported that taking

Table 3. Types of measures taken by violent crime victims attempting to protect themselves

Type of crime	When self-protective measures were taken, the percent of victims who:										
	Attacked offender		Threatened offender		Resisted or captured offender	Scared or warned offender	Persuaded or appeased offender	Ran away or hid	Got help or gave alarm	Screamed from pain or fear	Took other measures
	With weapon	Without weapon	With weapon	Without weapon							
Violent crimes	3%	20%	4%	5%	32%	15%	26%	26%	18%	4%	12%
Rape	—*	23	—*	7*	43	35	54	37	26	23	7*
Robbery	3*	24	3*	4	36	18	19	24	20	5	11
Aggravated assault	4	19	7	5	29	13	23	32	18	2	14
Simple assault	2	19	2	5	32	14	28	24	17	4	12

Note: Percents do not total 100% because victims may have taken more than one self-protective measure. See Appendix for detailed definitions of measures taken. —Less than 0.5%.

*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.

Table 4. Perceived outcomes of self-protective measures taken by violent crime victims

Type of crime	Total	Percent of victims taking self-protective measures who perceived that their actions:				Outcome not known
		Helped	Hurt	Both helped and hurt	Neither helped nor hurt	
Crimes of violence	100%	63%	7%	6%	13%	11%
Rape	100	55	5*	10*	13*	16*
Robbery	100	54	9	7	16	14
Aggravated assault	100	70	6	4	11	10
Simple assault	100	63	8	6	12	10

Note: Percents may not total 100% because of rounding. Excludes cases where the victim did not report the outcome of self-protective measures; see Methodology.

*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.

self-protective measures had both positive and negative results. Almost 1 in 8 victims indicated that their actions had neither helped nor hurt the outcome of the crime.

Assault victims were more likely than robbery victims to feel that self-protective measures had a positive influence on the outcome of the crime (65% vs. 54%). The proportions of victims of these two crimes who perceived that their actions hurt the situation did not differ significantly. Robbery victims were somewhat more likely than aggravated assault victims to state that the measures they took neither helped nor hurt the situation.

About three-fifths of the violent crime victims who felt that self-protection helped the situation indicated that their actions helped them avoid injury or greater injury (table 5). A lower proportion felt that their self-protective measures helped to scare off the offender (31%). About 1 in 5 victims reporting positive outcomes stated that their actions helped them to escape from the offender.

When victims felt that self-protection helped, robbery victims were less likely than other violent crime victims to state that they avoided injury or greater injury. Similar proportions of robbery victims reported that self-protection helped them scare away the offender and avoid injury.

In a higher proportion of robberies than of assaults, the victims stated that the actions they took helped by protecting their property (25% vs. 5%). Although assault does not involve theft or attempted theft, a small proportion of assault victims reported that their actions protected their property. These victims may have felt that self-protection prevented the attack or threat from escalating into a robbery.

About 1 in 10 violent crime victims felt that self-protective actions helped by protecting other people present during the incident. Aggravated assault victims were more likely than simple assault victims to report this outcome.

About three-fourths of those who reported that the self-protective measures they took hurt the situation indicated that their actions made the offender angrier or more aggressive; and about 1 in 6 such victims felt their actions made the situation worse by causing injury or greater injury (table 6).

Other persons, such as additional victims, family members, or bystanders, were present in about 69% of violent crimes. In 36% of the violent crimes where others were present, the victim reported that actions taken by other persons helped the situation (table 7). Assault victims were more likely than robbery victims to report that the actions of others helped. In about half of the violent crimes where others were present, their actions neither helped nor hurt the situation, according to the victims.

The information currently available on the outcomes of self-protection should not be used to recommend whether or not victims should defend themselves or to determine the measures that are most effective. The aggregate data from the National Crime Survey do not capture the detailed nature and sequence of events in violent incidents and therefore do not reveal the precise circumstances surrounding any use of self-protective measures. Moreover, victims may reach incorrect or inconsistent conclusions as to whether an offender intended to commit harm, theft, or both at the outset of the incident or whether the

Table 5. Violent crime victims' perception of how self-protective measures helped

Type of crime	Percent of victims taking helpful self-protective measures who believed their actions helped by:					
	Avoiding injury or greater injury	Scaring off offender	Letting victim escape	Protecting property	Protecting other people	Helping in other ways
Crimes of violence	60%	31%	19%	8%	10%	7%
Rape	62	46	35	5*	—*	10*
Robbery	43	42	21	24	4 ^u	8
Aggravated assault	64	29	19	6	15	6
Simple assault	62	27	18	4	10	7

Note: Percents do not total 100% because victims may have reported more than one way that actions were helpful. Includes crimes where victim reported self-protective measures both helped and hurt situation.

Excludes crimes where victim did not report type of outcome.
—Less than 0.5%.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.

Table 6. Violent crime victims' perception of how self-protective measures made the situation worse

Type of crime	Percent of victims taking measures perceived to have been harmful who believed that their actions made the situation worse by causing:					
	Offender to be angrier, more aggressive	Injury or greater injury	Greater property loss or damage	Others to get hurt	Offender to get away	Situation to get worse in other ways
Crimes of violence**	76%	17%	4%	2%*	1%*	12%
Robbery	67	22	4*	2*	3*	17*
Aggravated assault	72	20	12*	—*	—*	10*
Simple assault	80	13	2*	4*	1*	11

Note: Percents do not total 100% because victims may have reported more than one way that actions hurt. Includes crimes where victim reported self-protection both helped and hurt. Excludes crimes where the victim did not report type of outcome.

—Less than 0.5%.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

Table 7. How victims perceived outcomes of actions taken by others during violent crimes

Type of crime	In cases where others were present, percent of victims who perceived that the actions taken by others:					
	Total	Helped	Hurt	Both helped and hurt	Neither helped nor hurt	Outcome not known
Crimes of violence**	100%	36%	11%	2%	46%	5%
Robbery	100	28	13	1*	54	5
Aggravated assault	100	37	12	3	42	5
Simple assault	100	37	10	2	46	5

Note: Percents may not total 100% because of rounding. Excludes cases where the victim did not report the outcome of actions taken by others.

*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

measures taken helped or hurt the situation. For example, one victim injured in a robbery may conclude that self-protection prevented even more serious injury, but another victim with similar injuries and economic loss may feel that self-protection led to greater injury and failed to prevent the theft. Finally, it should be noted that the National Crime Survey does not collect information on homicides and therefore misses any cases of self-protection that may have resulted in the death of the victim.

Police response

Since its inception, the NCS has measured the proportion of crimes reported to the police. In 1987 the police were notified in about half of all violent crimes, two-fifths of all household crimes, and slightly more than a fourth of all crimes of personal theft.³

The NCS now obtains additional information on the nature and timeliness of police response. Results from the new NCS questionnaire show that the type of police response tended to vary by the severity of the crime. When more serious crimes were reported, the police were more likely to come to see the victim, to arrive within 10 minutes, and to have contact with the victim at a later date.

When notified of a crime, police were most likely to come to the victim when a violent crime was committed (76% of the cases), followed by household crimes (71%) and personal thefts (54%, table 8). The police came to see the victim in a somewhat higher proportion of robberies and aggravated assaults than of simple assaults. When a household crime was committed, police were most likely to come to the victim when the crime was a burglary and least likely when the crime was a household larceny. In an additional 8% of violent crimes and personal thefts reported to the police and in 3% of household crimes reported, the victim went to the police.

³Criminal Victimization, 1987, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-113587, October 1988, p. 5.

The police did not see the victim in about a third of the reported household larcenies and personal thefts, a fifth of the motor vehicle thefts, and about a seventh of the violent crimes and burglaries. Although the NCS does not collect information on the reasons the police did not meet with the victim, there are several possible explanations. Police may have obtained sufficient information from the victim by telephone or mail to investigate the incident; victims may have requested the police not contact them; and victims may have notified the police anonymously so that the police were unable to come to see them.

According to the crime victims, in 56% of violent crimes, 38% of personal thefts, and 35% of household crimes where the police came to see the victims, the police arrived within 10 minutes after being notified (table 9). Police arrived within an hour in 95% of violent crimes, 84% of personal thefts, and 85% of household crimes.⁴

⁴Subnational data on citizen reporting time and police response time are available in U.S. Dept. of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Calling the Police: Citizen Reporting of Serious Crime (1984) and U.S. Dept. of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Response Time Analysis, Volume II (1978).

Table 8. Initial personal contact by police with victims of reported crimes

Type of crime	Total	Percent of reported incidents where at the initial contact:			
		Police came to victim	Victim went to police	Police made no face-to-face contact**	Not known if police came
Personal crimes					
Crimes of violence	100%	76%	8%	14%	2%
Rape	100	75	18*	4*	4*
Robbery	100	79	7	12	2*
Aggravated assault	100	79	7	12	2*
Simple assault	100	72	8	17	3
Crimes of theft	100%	54%	8%	33%	4%
Personal larceny with contact	100	54	11*	31	4*
Personal larceny without contact	100	54	8	33	4
Household crimes					
Burglary	100	83	2	14	2
Household larceny	100	58	4	35	3
Motor vehicle theft	100	68	8	21	5

Note: Percents may not total 100% because of rounding. Incidents included are those reported by the victim, another household member, or an official. Cases where police were at the scene when the crime occurred are excluded.

*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Police may have communicated with victim by telephone or mail.

Table 9. Police response time for reported crimes

Type of crime	Cumulative percent of reported incidents in which the police came to see the victim:			
	Within 5 minutes	Within 10 minutes	Within an hour	Within a day
Personal crimes				
Crimes of violence	28%	56%	95%	99%
Rape	15	31	96	100
Robbery	26	51	95	99
Aggravated assault	30	58	96	99
Simple assault	29	59	94	99
Crimes of theft	14%	38%	84%	98%
Personal larceny with contact	25	46	93	95
Personal larceny without contact	13	37	84	98
Household crimes				
Burglary	14	36	85	99
Household larceny	11	32	82	98
Motor vehicle theft	14	35	90	100

Note: Excludes incidents in which the police did not come to see the victim or the victim either did not report the incident to the police or did not know the police response time. Data are incident weighted; see Methodology.

Table 10. Police activity during initial contact with crime victims

Type of crime	Percent of face-to-face contacts between police and victims where the police:								
	Took report	Questioned witnesses/suspects	Searched, looked around	Made arrest	Took evidence	Promised to investigate	Promised surveillance	Took other actions	Actions not known/not ascertained
Personal crimes									
Crimes of violence**	71%	31%	19%	13%	8%	13%	5%	19%	3%
Robbery	79	25	26	8	8	20	4	12	2*
Aggravated assault	72	34	23	17	7	11	4	16	3
Simple assault	64	33	11	15	3	11	5	25	4
Crimes of theft	88%	12%	28%	2%	10%	11%	2%	7%	4%
Personal larceny with contact	84	18	26	1*	2*	2*	—*	9*	5*
without contact	88	12	28	2	10	11	2	7	4
Household crimes	87%	11%	42%	3%	18%	13%	5%	6%	3%
Burglary	86	12	54	3	27	14	6	5	3
Household larceny	89	11	33	2	8	11	5	5	2
Motor vehicle theft	86	7	19	5	7	15	2	6	4

Note: Percents do not total 100% because more than one police action can occur during the initial contact with the victim. Percents are based on the number of incidents where police were on the scene or came to see the victim after being notified or where the victim went to the police to report the crime. Data are incident weighted; see Methodology. --Less than 0.5%.

*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

During the initial contact with the victim, police were most likely to take a report (table 10). Other police actions tended to vary by the type of crime. Police questioned witnesses or suspects in a higher proportion of violent crimes than of household crimes or personal thefts. Police were more likely to make an arrest during the initial investigation in violent crimes than in other types of crime and were more likely to make arrests in assaults than in robberies. The police were most likely to take evidence or look around in household crimes and least likely to perform these actions in crimes of violence. Looking around or taking evidence was more common in burglary than in household larceny or motor vehicle theft.

The circumstances of different types of crime may explain some of the variations of police investigations. Police may be more likely to question witnesses in violent crime because bystanders may be present if the crime occurs in a public place. The police may also interrupt the crime in progress or be notified shortly thereafter, increasing the likelihood that they can question witnesses or suspects in their initial investigation or make an arrest. Victims may not discover household crimes or personal thefts until some time after the occurrence, decreasing the likelihood that witnesses or suspects will be available.

For those incidents reported to police, victims of violent or household crimes were more likely than personal theft victims to have later contact with the police, including telephone conversations, correspondence, and personal visits (table 11). In 6 of 10 reported

Table 11. Type of later contact with police for reported crime

Type of crime	Percent of reported crimes with later police contact					
	No contact	Any contact	Police contacted victim	Victim contacted police	Both types of contact	Other contacts**
Personal crimes						
Crimes of violence	62%	37%	17%	15%	4%	2%
Rape	38	62	49	9*	4*	—*
Robbery	59	41	20	16	4	1*
Aggravated assault	60	40	18	16	4	2*
Simple assault	67	31	12	14	3	3
Crimes of theft	74%	25%	11%	12%	1%	1%
Personal larceny with contact	65	35	18	14	1*	1*
without contact	74	25	11	12	1	1
Household crimes	63%	35%	17%	15%	2%	1%
Burglary	62	36	17	16	3	1
Household larceny	75	23	9	12	1	1*
Motor vehicle theft	40	58	33	19	5	1*

Note: Percents do not total 100% because of rounding and the exclusion from the table of percents where later police contact was not ascertained. Later contact includes telephone conversations and correspondence. Data are incident weighted; see Methodology. --Less than 0.5%.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes later contacts where type of contact was not known.

rapes there was later contact with police. This proportion was somewhat higher than the proportion of robberies and higher than the proportion of assaults with later contact. (In some cases, later police contact may have occurred after the NCS interview was conducted.)

For reported household crimes, the proportion of later contacts with the police was highest for motor vehicle theft (58%), followed by burglary (36%) and household larceny (23%). The apparent difference in the proportions of contacts for personal larceny with and without contact is not statistically significant.

In general the police were equally as likely as victims to initiate later contacts. However, for incidents of rape and motor vehicle theft, the police were more likely than victims to initiate later contact.

In the case of motor vehicle theft, the proportion of later contacts with police is due in part to recovering the stolen automobile (table 12). In about half of the motor vehicle thefts with later police contact, the victim reported the recovery of property. Recovering property was more common in motor vehicle thefts than in any other type of crime. Making an arrest was a more common followup action in crimes of violence than in either household crimes or personal thefts. Arrests during

Table 12. Police followup activities where victims had later contact with police

Type of crime	Percent of later contacts between victims and police where the police:								
	Took report	Questioned witnesses/suspects	Made arrest	Recovered property	Did or promised surveillance	Stayed in touch with victim/household	Did other followup activities	Did nothing to victim's knowledge	Actions not known/not ascertained
Crimes of violence**	24%	13%	19%	2%	12%	18%	23%	22%	5%
Robbery	18	13	10	9*	14	23	14	24	8*
Aggravated assault	24	14	30	—*	12	14	21	19	4*
Simple assault	26	12	15	—*	8	17	31	23	4*
Crimes of theft	25%	8%	7%	12%	8%	9%	10%	35%	11%
Household crimes	20%	10%	7%	21%	11%	14%	12%	20%	10%
Burglary	17	13	8	8	13	17	13	29	11
Household larceny	24	12	6	10	13	16	12	30	8
Motor vehicle theft	19	3*	7	54	4	6	10	16	9

Note: Percents may not total 100% because police may have taken more than one followup action. Percents are based on the number of incidents where victims had later contact with police. Followup actions included those made over the phone or by mail. Data are incident weighted; see Methodology. —Less than 0.5%.

*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

Table 13. Arrests or charges known by victims of reported crimes

Type of crime	Percent of reported incidents where the victim knew of an arrest or charge
Personal crimes	
Crimes of violence**	25%
Robbery	15
Aggravated assault	34
Simple assault	24
Crimes of theft	4%
Personal larceny with contact	4*
without contact	4
Household crimes	7%
Burglary	7
Household larceny	4
Motor vehicle theft	11

Note: Data are incident weighted; see Methodology.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

followup activities occurred in a higher proportion of aggravated assaults than in robberies or simple assaults.

In those cases where the crime was reported to the police, victims were aware that an arrest was made in 25% of violent crimes, 7% of household crimes, and 4% of personal thefts (table 13).⁵ For crimes of violence, victims knew of an arrest in about a third of reported aggravated assaults, a fourth of reported simple assaults, and a seventh of reported robberies. For household crimes reported to law enforcement authorities, the proportion of arrests for motor vehicle theft was higher than for household larceny and

⁵The total number of arrests is computed by adding arrests that occurred at the initial contact with police, arrests that occurred during followup contacts, and all other arrests, even if no contact took place between the police and the victim.

Table 14. Contact between the victim and authorities other than the police for reported crimes

Type of crime	Of crimes with no arrest, percent where victims had contact with any authority	Of crimes with an arrest, percent where victims had contact with:			
		Any authority	Prosecutor/district attorney	Court	Other authorities
Personal crimes					
Crimes of violence**	9%	47%	24%	20%	17%
Robbery	6*	43	25	13*	11*
Aggravated assault	10	46	24	19	19
Simple assault	9	48	23	24	17
Crimes of theft	1%	21%	10%*	11%*	6%*
Household crimes	1%	26%	10%	11%	10%

Note: Detail may not add to "Any authority" because victims could have had contact with more than one type. Other authorities include magistrates; juvenile, probation, and parole officers; and persons specified by the victims.

Data are incident weighted; see Methodology.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

somewhat higher than the proportion for burglary. (In some cases an arrest may have occurred after the NCS interview was conducted.)

Contact with authorities other than the police, such as with a district attorney or court officer, was more common for violent crime victims than for victims of personal thefts or household crimes (table 14). In about 47% of reported violent crime incidents where an arrest was made, the victim had contact with other authorities; the corresponding percents were 21% for personal thefts and 26% for household crimes. Contact with authorities other than the police was less common in reported crimes without an arrest than in those with an arrest. As in the case with arrests, contacts were those that occurred before the NCS interview.

About 11% of victims of violent crimes reported to the police received help or advice from a victim assistance office or agency other than the police (table 15). For reported household crimes and personal thefts, the figure was 2%.

Table 15. Reported crimes where victim assistance offices or agencies helped or advised

Type of crime	Percent of incidents where victims received help or advice
Personal crimes	
Crimes of violence**	11%
Robbery	13
Aggravated assault	11
Simple assault	10
Crimes of theft	2%
Personal larceny with contact	7*
without contact	2
Household crimes	2%
Burglary	3
Household larceny	2
Motor vehicle theft	3

Note: Some victims may reside in areas without victim assistance organizations. Data are incident weighted; see Methodology.
*Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases; see Methodology.
**Includes data on rape, not shown as a separate category.

Methodology

The NCS obtains information about crimes, including incidents not reported to the police, from a nationally representative sample of households. In 1986 about 100,000 persons 12 years old or older in 49,000 households took part in the survey. When a household is selected for the survey, household members age 12 or older are interviewed every 6 months for 3 years. At each interview, information is obtained about crimes experienced during the previous 6 months. The NCS measures attempted and completed incidents of rape, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, personal larceny with and without contact, burglary, household larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

The tables in this report are based on data collected in interviews conducted from July 1986 through June 1987. Because respondents report crimes experienced during the previous 6 months, these interviews will provide data on incidents that occurred from January 1986 through June 1987. However, all the incidents that occurred during this time period are not included; the tables contain information on a proportion of incidents that occurred from January through May 1986 and January through May 1987 and all incidents that occurred from June through December 1986. The tables of this report differ from information in other NCS publications where information is presented on crimes that occurred in a certain year or over a period of years.

Estimation procedures

The data presented in this report are based on national estimates obtained from the usual NCS weighting procedures. In this report the data on police activities and the offenders' use of drugs and alcohol are incident-weighted while the data on self-protection are based on the number of victimizations. An incident is a specific occurrence of a crime that involves one or more victims; victimization refers to the number of victims of these occurrences. For personal thefts and violent crimes there will be more victimizations than incidents; however, this difference does not exist for household crimes because for each household crime the affected household is the sole victim.

Series crimes, which are three or more similar incidents that the victim cannot describe separately in detail, are included in this report. Because victims report the characteristics of the most recent event in the series, series crimes have been counted as one incident or victimization.

Self-protection questions

In table 4 of this report, cases where victims reported their actions helped but did not know if their actions hurt the situation are listed under "Outcome not known." In a small percentage of cases, victims reported their actions helped, but it was not ascertained if their actions hurt the situation. These cases are excluded from table 4. Both types of cases, however, are included in table 5. Cases where victims reported their actions hurt the situation, but it was not known or ascertained if their actions helped the situation, were handled similarly in tables 4 and 6. Cases where both the positive and the negative outcomes of self-protection were not ascertained were excluded from tables 4-6. Identical coding procedures were used in table 7 when the outcome of actions taken by others was not known or not ascertained.

Reliability of comparisons

All comparisons presented in this report were tested to determine if the differences were statistically significant. Most comparisons passed a hypothesis test at the .05 level of statistical significance (or the "95% confidence level"), meaning that the estimated difference between comparisons was greater than twice the standard error of this difference. Statements qualified by the phrase "somewhat" or "some evidence" were significant at the 90% level.

The data tables note when estimates are based on 10 or fewer sample cases. It is not possible to compute standard errors accurately for such estimates. Therefore, it is inadvisable to compare estimates based upon 10 or fewer sample cases to other small estimates.

More information on NCS sample design and estimation procedures can be obtained from Appendix III of Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1986. (NCJ-111456).

Appendix

Comparing data on offenders' use of drugs or alcohol reported by victims and by State prison inmates

The information in this report on offenders under the influence of drugs or alcohol is based on information collected in NCS interviews with victims. BJS has also collected similar information from State prison inmates on their drug and alcohol use at the time of the offense for which they were incarcerated. The most recent Survey of Inmates of State Correctional Facilities was conducted in 1986.

This section compares NCS findings with State prison inmate data on drug and alcohol use, previously reported in Drug Use and Crime (NCJ-111940) and Profile of State Prison Inmates (NCJ-109926). Although the two surveys differ somewhat in the definitions of crimes measured, the NCS offenses of robbery and aggravated assault can be compared with inmate data. In the inmate survey, unlike the NCS, robbery includes commercial crimes. Since persons rarely go to prison for simple assault, the prison inmate data on assault is generally comparable with the NCS crime of aggravated assault. The NCS data presented here also exclude those victims who did not know if the offender was under the influence.

The proportion of victims reporting that the offender was on drugs alone is similar to the percentage of State prison inmates who said that they were under the influence of drugs at the time of the offense. NCS victims were more likely than State prison inmates to report that the offenders were under the influence of alcohol alone, but the victims were less likely than inmates to report that the offenders were under the influence of both drugs and alcohol.

	Percent of offenders under the influence of:		
	Drugs	Alcohol	Both
Robbery			
Victims	27%	26%	13%
Inmates	21	13	21
Aggravated assault			
Victims	12%	43%	13%
Inmates	11	25	18

SELECTED NEW NCS QUESTIONS

This section presents the wording of the new NCS questions and response categories that were used to develop the tables presented in this report. Some of the instructions and skip patterns have been changed for clarity; response categories for some questions that are repetitive have been omitted. Complete copies of the NCS questionnaire are available from BJS upon request.

Drinking and Drugs

(Separate questions for single and multiple offenders)

- 32a.
42a. Was the offender (any of the offenders) drinking or on drugs, or don't you know?
● Yes (drinking or on drugs) — Ask 32b, 42b
● No (not drinking/not on drugs) SKIP
● Don't know (if drinking or on drugs)
- 32b.
42b. Which was it? (drinking or on drugs)
● Drinking
● On drugs
● Both (drinking and on drugs)
● Drinking or on drugs — could not tell which

Self-protection

- 19a. Was there anything you did or tried to do about the incident while it was going on?
● Yes — Ask 19b
● No/took no action/kept still — SKIP to 19c
- 19b. What did you do? Anything else?
Mark all that apply. Then ask 19c.
- Used physical force toward offender
● Attacked offender with gun; fired gun
● Attacked with other weapon
● Attacked without weapon (hit, kicked, etc.)
● Threatened offender with gun
● Threatened offender with other weapon
● Threatened to injure, no weapon
- Resisted or captured offender
● Defended self or property (struggled, ducked, blocked blows, held onto property)
● Chased, tried to catch or hold offender
- Scared or warned off offender
● Yelled at offender, turned on lights, threatened to call police, etc.
- Persuaded or appeased offender
● Cooperated, or pretended to (stalled, did what they asked)
● Argued, reasoned, pleaded, bargained, etc.
- Escaped or got away
● Ran or drove away, or tried; hid, locked door
- Got help or gave alarm
● Called police or guard
● Tried to attract attention or help, warn others (cried out for help, called children inside)
- Reacted to pain or emotion
● Screamed from pain or fear
- Other
● Other (Specify)
- 19c. Did you do anything (else) with the idea of protecting yourself or your property while the incident was going on?
● Yes — Ask 19d
● No/took no action/kept still (if 19a is "Yes," SKIP to 20a) (if 19a is "No," SKIP to 22)
- 19d. What did you do? Anything else?
Mark all that apply. Then ask 19c. (Same response categories as question 19b)
- 20a. Did (any of) your action(s) help the situation in any way — such as by avoiding injury or greater injury to you or by scaring or chasing off the offender — or were they helpful in some other way?
● Yes — Ask 20b
● No SKIP
● Don't know to 21a

- 20b. How were they helpful? Any other way? Mark all that apply.
● Helped avoid injury or greater injury to respondent
● Scared or chased offender off
● Helped respondent get away from offender
● Protected property
● Protected other people
● Other (Specify)
- 21a. Did (any of) your action(s) make the situation worse in any way?
● Yes — Ask 21b
● No SKIP
● Don't know to 22
- 21b. How did they make the situation worse? Any other way? Mark all that apply.
● Led to injury or greater injury to respondent
● Caused greater loss of property or damage to property
● Other people got hurt (worse)
● Offender got away
● Made offender angrier, more aggressive, etc.
● Other (Specify)
22. Was anyone present during the incident besides you and the offender(s)?
● Yes — Ask 23a
● No SKIP
● Don't know
- 23a. Did the actions of (this person/any of these people) help the situation in any way?
● Yes — Ask 23b
● No SKIP
● Don't know to 24a
- 23b. How did they help the situation? Any other way? Mark all that apply.
● Helped avoid injury or greater injury to respondent
● Scared or chased offender off
● Helped respondent get away from offender
● Protected property
● Protected other people
● Other (Specify)
- 24a. Did the actions of (this person/any of these people) make the situation worse in any way?
● Yes — Ask 24b
● No SKIP
● Don't know
- 24b. How did they make the situation worse? Any other way? Mark all that apply.
● Led to injury or greater injury to respondent
● Caused greater loss of property or damage to property
● Other people got hurt (worse)
● Offender got away
● Made offender angrier, more aggressive, etc.
● Other (Specify)

Police reporting

- 68a. Did the police come when they found out about the incident?
● Yes — Ask 68b
● No SKIP
● Don't know to 69a
● Respondent went to police — SKIP to 68c
- 68b. How soon after the police found out did they respond? Was it within 5 minutes, within 10 minutes, an hour, a day, or longer? (First category that respondent was sure of is marked.)
● Within 5 minutes
● Within 10 minutes
● Within an hour
● Within a day
● Longer than a day
● Don't know how soon

- 68c. What did they do while they were (there/here)? Anything else? Mark all that apply.
● Took report
● Searched/looked around
● Took evidence (fingerprints, inventory, etc.)
● Questioned witnesses or suspects
● Promised surveillance
● Promised to investigate
● Made arrest
● Other (Specify)
● Don't know
- 69a. Did you (or anyone in your household) have any later contact with the police about the incident?
● Yes — Ask 69b
● No SKIP
● Don't know
- 69b. Did the police get in touch with you or did you get in touch with them?
● Police contacted respondent or other household member
● Respondent (or other household member) contacted police
● Both
● Don't know
● Other (Specify)
- 69c. Was that in person or by phone, or some other way?
● In person
● Not in person (by phone, mail, etc.)
● Both in person and not in person
● Don't know
- 69d. What did the police do in following up this incident? Anything else? Mark all that apply.
● Took report
● Questioned witnesses or suspects
● Did or promised surveillance/investigation
● Recovered property
● Made arrest
● Stayed in touch with respondent/household
● Other (Specify)
● Nothing (to respondent's knowledge)
● Don't know
71. As far as you know, was anyone arrested or were charges brought against anyone in connection with this incident?
● Yes
● No
● Don't know
- 72a. Did you (or someone in your household) receive any help or advice from any office or agency — other than the police — that deals with victims of crime?
● Yes — Ask 72b
● No SKIP
● Don't know to 73a
- 72b. Was that a government or a private agency?
● Government
● Private
● Don't know
- 73a. Have you (or someone in your household) had contact with any other authorities about this incident (such as a prosecutor, court, or juvenile officer)?
● Yes — Ask 73b
● No SKIP
● Don't know
- 73b. Which authorities? Any others? Mark all that apply.
● Prosecutor, district attorney
● Magistrate
● Court
● Juvenile, probation, or parole officer
● Other (Specify)

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- Correctional populations in the U.S., 1986, NCJ-111611, 2/89
- Jail inmates 1987, NCJ-114319, 12/88
- Census of local jails, 1983: Data for individual jails in the—
Northeast, Vol. I, NCJ-112796, 11/88
Midwest, Vol. II, NCJ-112797, 11/88
South, Vol. III, NCJ-112798, 11/88
West, Vol. IV, NCJ-112799, 11/88
Vol. V. Selected findings, methodology, and summary tables, NCJ-112795, 11/88
- Open vs. confidential records: Proceedings of a BJS/SEARCH conference, NCJ-113560, 11/88
- Public access to criminal history record information: Criminal justice information policy, NCJ-111458, 11/88
- Juvenile records and recordkeeping systems: Criminal justice information policy, NCJ-112815, 11/88
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- Technical appendix, Report to the Nation on crime and justice, second edition, NCJ-112011, 8/88
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- 1984 (final report), NCJ-100435, 5/86
- 1983 (final report), NCJ-96459, 10/85

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