

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

147002



# Crime Data Brief

## National Crime Victimization Survey

# Carjacking

By Michael R. Rand, BJS Statistician

Carjacking, a type of robbery, is theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle by force or threat of force. Between 1987 and 1992, carjackings accounted for 2% of the 1.9 million vehicle thefts per year that occurred nationwide. This report analyzes data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to describe this crime. (See the NCVS box on page 2.)

- An average of 35,000 completed and attempted carjackings took place each year in the United States between 1987 and 1992. In 52% of the carjackings the offender succeeded in stealing the victim's motor vehicle.

- Each year on average between 1987 and 1992, .2 per 1,000 Americans age 12 or older (or 2 per 10,000) were victims of a completed or attempted carjacking.

- Men were more likely than women (.3 per 1,000 compared to .1 per 1,000) and blacks were more likely than whites (.4 and .2 respectively) to be victimized by carjacking. Persons age 35 or older were less likely than younger people to become carjacking victims.

### Carjackings, 1987-92: Aggregate annual average

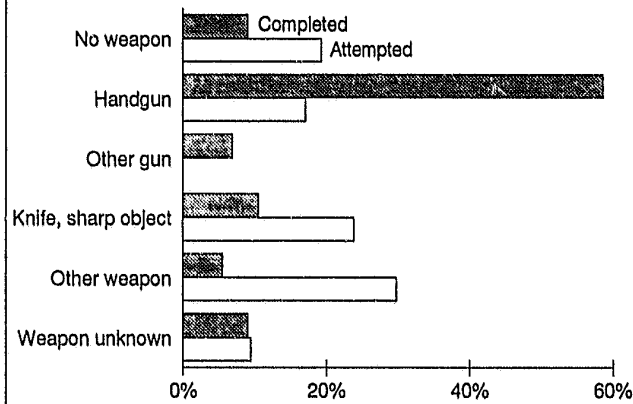
Total	35,500
Completed	18,600
Attempted	16,900

### Carjacking compared to risks of other life events

Events	Rate per 1,000 adults per year
Violent victimization	31
Assault (aggravated and simple)	25
Injury in motor vehicle accident	22
Victimization with injury	11
Serious (aggravated) assault	8
Robbery	6
Heart disease death	5
Rape (women only)	1
Motor vehicle accident death	.2
Carjacking	.2
Homicide/legal intervention	.1

Source: *Highlights from 20 Years of Surveying Crime Victims*, October 1993, NCJ-144525.

The offender carried a handgun in 60% of completed carjackings, 1987-92



- Nine in ten completed carjackings were reported to the police, compared to 6 in 10 attempts.

- Most carjacking victims escaped without injury. Victims were injured in 24% of the completed carjackings and 18% of attempted carjackings. Four percent of all victims of attempted or completed carjackings suffered a serious injury — gunshot or knife wounds, broken bones, loss of teeth, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, or undetermined injuries requiring 2 or more days of hospitalization.

- Offenders used a weapon in 77% of all attempted and completed carjackings. The offender was armed in 82% of completed carjackings and 71% of all attempted carjackings. Handguns were the most common weapon used in the completed offenses, but not in the attempts. Offenders were armed with handguns in 59% of completed carjackings and in 17% of attempted carjackings.

- Carjackings were more likely to occur in the evening or at night. About two-thirds of all carjackings occurred after dark. Fifty-eight percent of carjackings that occurred at night and 45% of those during the day were completed.

- Most carjackings occurred away from the victim's home. Twenty-nine percent took place in a parking lot or garage, and 45% occurred in an open area, such as on the street. Eighteen percent occurred at or near the victim's home.

- Offenders between ages 21 and 29 committed about half of all completed carjackings. An additional 12% were committed by offenders 18-20 years of age.

- Victims identified the offenders' race as white in 32% of all carjackings, black in 49%, and Asian or American Indian in 6%. Multiple offenders of more than one race committed 5% of all carjackings. In 8% of all carjackings the victim was unable to identify the offender's race.

- Men committed 87% of all carjackings. Six percent were committed by males and females together. Only 1% of all carjackings were committed by women alone. In 6%, the victim could not identify the offenders' sex.

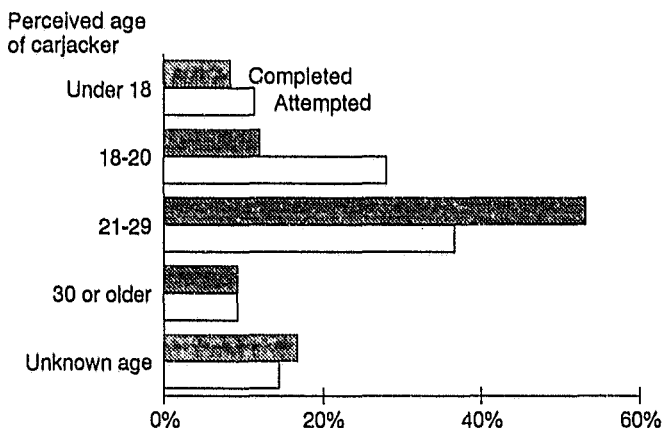
- The median value of automobiles stolen in carjackings was \$4,000. Forty-six percent were valued at over \$5,000; 13%, at \$2,500-\$4,999; and 41%, at \$2,499 or less.

- About half (54%) of all completed or attempted carjackings were committed by groups of two or more offenders. Forty-one percent were committed by lone offenders. In 5% of all carjackings, the number of offenders was not known. The number of offenders did not appear to affect the probability that the crime would be completed. About half of both lone-offender and multiple-offender carjackings were completed.

- The risks of carjacking were different in different types of residential areas, similar to the risks of robbery and motor vehicle theft. Suburbanites were less likely than residents of a central city and more likely than rural residents to be victims of a completed or attempted carjacking:

Area	Carjackings per 1,000 residents age 12 or older
Urban	.31
Suburban	.17
Rural	.03

### 53% of completed carjackings were committed by offenders in their 20's



Note: Offender characteristics are based on victim's perceptions. For carjackings involving more than one offender, the age used is that of the oldest offender.

- Completed and attempted carjackings accounted for 3% of all robberies. Carjackings involving property loss of at least \$1,000 represented 22% of robberies with losses of \$1,000 or more.

**The National Crime Victimization Survey**, from which the data for this data brief were drawn, has not previously been used to create an estimate of carjacking. This data brief does not provide individual year estimates of carjacking because many of the annual estimates fell below the statistical threshold for reliability maintained for the survey. By aggregating data for a number of years, and producing average annual estimates, more reliable estimates of this relatively rare crime are possible. For more information about the NCVS methodology, see *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1991*, December 1992, NCJ-139563.

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
DOJ/BJIS  
Permit No. G-9

Washington, D.C. 20531

147002

**U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice**

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this ~~copyrighted~~ material has been granted by

Public Domain/OJP/BJJ

U.S. Department of Justice

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the ~~copyright~~ owner.