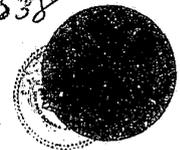


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Special Report

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# Robbery Victims

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From 1973 through 1984 approximately 14,681,100 robbery victimizations occurred in the United States—an average of about 1,223,400 per year—according to the National Crime Survey (NCS). Two-thirds of the victims of these robberies had property stolen, and a third were injured; nearly a fourth suffered both injury and property loss.

Other major findings include:

- About 1 in 12 robbery victims experienced serious injuries such as rape, knife or gunshot wounds, broken bones, or being knocked unconscious.
- About half of all completed robberies involved losses of \$82 or less; 10% involved losses of \$800 or more. Most theft losses were never recovered.
- Offenders displayed weapons in almost half of all robberies; they had guns in about 1 in 5. Offenders with weapons were more likely to threaten than attack their victims.
- In almost 9 out of 10 robbery victimizations, robbers were male; in about half, they were black or worked in groups of 2 or more.
- Blacks experienced robberies at 2 1/2 times the rate for whites; the rate for male victims was twice the rate for female victims.
- Over half of all robbery victims were attacked. Female robbery victims were more likely to be attacked than were male victims; victims 65 and older were more likely to be attacked than victims under 65.
- Victims who were attacked were more likely to be injured if they were female, if the incident occurred at night, if there was more than one offender, or if a weapon was present.

Robbery ranks among the most serious and feared criminal offenses because it involves both threatened or actual violence and loss of property to the victim. It also occurs much more frequently than either rape or homicide. Although many robberies do not result in physical harm to the victim or extensive loss, fully 1 in 3 involve actual injury, ranging from bruises and black eyes to life-threatening gunshot or knife wounds, and 1 in 8 involve thefts of \$250 or more.

This special report presents a detailed analysis of twelve years of National Crime Survey data on robbery. Along with our other BJS reports from this extremely rich data series, this study expands our knowledge of the extent and character of crime in the United States and its impact on victims.

Steven R. Schlesinger  
Director

- Robbery rates declined by 15% from 1973 to 1984, largely because of a decline in attempted robberies.
- Robbery victims were more likely than rape or assault victims to encounter multiple offenders, strangers, or offenders with weapons.

## Robbery: violent crime and property crime

Data for this report cover all personal robberies reported to the NCS from 1973 through 1984. Included are robberies committed during completed or attempted rapes, personal robberies occurring during commercial robberies, and series victimizations, that is, three

or more incidents of a similar nature about which the victim cannot provide separate details. (See Methodology for further details.)

In a robbery one or more offenders threaten or use force to take a person's property. Whether called a stickup, holdup, mugging, or robbery, this crime is feared for both its actual and possible violence. Among commonly measured crimes, only homicide and rape exceed it in severity.<sup>1</sup> Unlike many other violent crimes, however, robbery also shares the characteristics of a property crime since it involves an attempted or completed theft of personal property.

Robbery often occurs in conjunction with other crimes. From 1976 through 1984, for example, between 9.3% and 10.8% of all homicides were perpetrated with robbery as the circumstance or motive.<sup>2</sup> Three percent of robbery victims between 1973 and 1984 were also raped; 8% suffered a burglary; and 4%, a motor vehicle theft.

## Major incident characteristics

On average, 1,223,400 persons were robbed annually between 1973 and 1984—a rate of almost 7 robberies for every 1,000 persons 12 years of age and older in the United States (table 1).

Thirty-three percent of victims suffered injuries: 8% experienced such serious injuries as rape, attempted rape, knife or gunshot wounds, broken bones, being knocked unconscious, or other injuries requiring at least 2 days

<sup>1</sup>The Severity of Crime, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-92326, January 1984.

<sup>2</sup>FBI, Crime in the United States, contains annual statistics on homicides known to police. The FBI started publishing its table on murder circumstances and motives in 1976.

hospitalization; 25% incurred minor injuries such as bruises, black eyes, or cuts.

Just under two-thirds of robberies were completed; that is, offenders succeeded in taking cash, property, or both from their victims. The average theft loss was \$447. About half of all thefts, however, involved losses of about \$82 or less, and 44% were for less than \$50. The highest 10% of thefts were for \$800 or more.

Value of stolen property	Percent of completed robberies, 1973-84
Total	100%
Less than \$10	18
\$10-49	26
\$50-249	32
\$250-999	13
\$1000 and above	6
Don't know/not ascertained	5

The total value of stolen and damaged cash and property over the 12-year period amounted to \$4.4 billion in constant 1984 dollars, or \$3.2 billion in actual loss to the victim (table 2). About a fourth of this loss, \$1.1 billion, was recovered by the victims. When cash was stolen, relatively little was recovered (5%). On the other hand, 34% of the value of other property was recovered, excluding anything received from insurance. This high rate was due to recovering motor vehicles. Damages, only 6% of the total loss, resulted from forcible entry into homes and assaults on victims.

Offenders displayed weapons in almost half of all robberies; guns, generally considered the most frightening weapon, were displayed in a fifth of all robberies.

#### Weapon use in robbery victimizations

Weapon	Percent
Total	100%
No weapon	39%
Any weapon	49%
Gun	20
Knife	17
Other	13
Don't know/not ascertained	12%

Table 1. Type of robbery victimizations, 1973-84

Type of robbery	Robbery victimizations		
	Average annual number	Average annual rate*	Percent
Total	1,223,400	6.9	100%
Completed	775,200	4.4	63%
With injury	282,700	1.6	23
Serious	77,600	.4	6
Minor	205,100	1.2	17
Without injury	492,500	2.8	40
Attempted	448,300	2.5	37%
With injury	124,900	.7	10
Serious	23,900	.1	2
Minor	101,100	.6	8
Without injury	323,300	1.8	26

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding.  
\*Number of robbery victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 and older.

Table 2. Value of theft losses, damages, and recoveries in robbery victimizations, 1973-84

	Value	
	Constant 1984 dollars	Actual loss at time of robbery
Losses	\$4,426,627,000	\$3,201,259,600
Thefts		
Cash	933,244,200	659,158,100
Property	3,221,268,300	2,349,311,200
Damages	272,114,500	192,790,300
Recoveries	\$1,133,925,400	\$782,000,700
Cash	42,410,900	29,458,100
Property	1,091,517,500	752,542,600
Net loss	\$3,292,698,600	\$2,419,258,800

Note: Amounts may not add to total because of rounding.

#### Major offender and victim characteristics

In almost 9 out of 10 victimizations, the robbers were male; in about half they were black; and a higher proportion were 21 years old and over than were under 21 (table 3). In the majority of victimizations two or more offenders worked together. Typically, they were not known by their victims.

Robbery victims were primarily male and white—65% were male, and 75% were white (table 4). They included a disproportionate share of persons who had never married, those with low incomes, and residents of central cities.

Robbery rates for males were twice as high as those for females (9.3 vs. 4.6 per 1,000). Although three-quarters of all victims were white, robbery victimization rates were almost 2 1/2 times higher for blacks as for whites (14.2 vs. 5.9 per 1,000). As with blacks, robbery rates were higher for Hispanics than for

Table 3. Characteristics of robbery offenders, 1973-84

Perceived offender characteristics	Percent of robbery victimizations
Sex	100%
Male	89
Female	5
Both	4
Race	100%
White	36
Black	51
Other	4
Mixed races	4
Age	100%
20 and younger	41
21 and older	44
Mixed ages	9
Number of offenders	100%
Single	47
Multiple	51
Relationship to victim	100%
Stranger	75
Acquaintance	7
Relative	13

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.

non-Hispanics, although most victims were non-Hispanic.

Almost half of robbery victims were under 25 years of age. Victims in the three youngest age groups, 12-15, 16-19, and 20-24, had essentially the same robbery rate, which was substantially higher than rates for persons in older age groups. As people aged they were less likely to be victimized.

Persons separated or divorced and, to a lesser extent, those who had never married were disproportionately victimized. Married persons had the lowest robbery rates.

Robbery rates decreased as family income increased. Those with incomes under \$7,500 experienced both the high-

est rates and the greatest percentage of robberies. Those with incomes of \$25,000 and above had the lowest rates and the lowest percentage.

Residents of central cities had the highest robbery rates; those living in nonmetropolitan areas, the lowest.

Black males were robbed at twice the rate of black females and 2 1/2 times that of white males (table 5). Robbery rates were lowest for white women.

Rates for males and females of each race were related to their residential area as well as to their sex and race. Each group's rates were highest for those living in central cities, lower for those residing in the suburbs, and lowest for those in nonmetropolitan areas. Within each type of residential area, black males had the highest rates, followed by white males. White females experienced the lowest rates within each area, although white females were only somewhat less likely than black females residing in nonmetropolitan areas to be robbed.

#### Robbery and other violent crimes

Robbery differs significantly from other violent crimes in several ways. Robbery victims were much more likely than rape or assault victims to face two or more offenders (table 6). Robbery victims generally did not know their assailants or knew them only by sight, while victims of other violent crimes were victimized by strangers only about half the time.

Robbery offenders used weapons proportionately more often than those who committed rapes and assaults. Robbery victims took measures to protect themselves less frequently than rape and assault victims, and they experienced some type of economic loss more frequently. Compared with assault, robbery and rape were relatively rare events, but they were reported to the police more often when they happened.

**Table 4. Characteristics of robbery victims, 1973-84**

Victim characteristics	Robbery victimizations		
	Average annual number	Average annual rate*	Percent
<b>Sex</b>			100%
Male	794,200	9.3	65
Female	429,200	4.6	35
<b>Race</b>			100%
White	921,800	5.9	75
Black	279,300	14.2	23
Other	22,400	7.2	2
<b>Ethnicity</b>			100%
Hispanic	98,200	10.4	8
Non-Hispanic	1,125,200	6.7	92
<b>Age</b>			100%
12-15 years old	175,000	11.3	14
16-19	180,800	11.3	15
20-24	230,300	11.7	19
25-34	249,900	7.2	20
35-49	181,900	5.0	15
50-64	127,700	4.0	10
65 and older	77,700	3.3	6
<b>Marital status</b>			100%
Married	338,700	3.4	28
Widowed	56,300	4.6	5
Divorced or separated	202,300	16.0	17
Never married	622,200	11.9	51
<b>Family income</b>			100%
Less than \$7,500	419,800	10.8	34
\$7,500-14,999	317,300	6.7	26
\$15,000-24,999	211,100	5.1	17
\$25,000 and above	154,500	4.7	13
<b>Residence</b>			100%
Central city	661,300	12.9	54
Suburb	398,400	5.7	33
Nonmetropolitan area	163,800	2.9	13

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.  
\*Number of robbery victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 and older.

**Table 5. Average annual robbery victimization rates by sex, race, and place of residence of victims, 1973-84**

Victim race and sex	Average annual rate for those residing in:*			
	Total	Central cities	Suburbs	Nonmetropolitan areas
<b>White</b>				
Male	2.0	14.6	7.3	3.9
Female	4.0	7.7	3.7	1.7
<b>Black</b>				
Male	21.0	29.2	13.7	5.6
Female	9.0	12.7	5.8	2.5

\*Number of robbery victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 and older.

**Table 6. Comparison of robbery with other violent crimes, 1984**

Crime characteristics	Percent of victimizations		
	Robbery	Rape	Assault
Multiple offenders	50%	15%	23%
Victimizations by strangers	75	54	51
Offender used weapon	49	23	34
Victim took self-protective measures	66	86	80
Victim suffered economic loss	71	19	16
Incident was reported to police	55	56	44
Victimization rate*	5.8	.9	24.3

\*Number of victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 and older.  
Source: Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1984, BJS National Crime Survey Report, NCJ-100435, May 1986.

## Trends

Robbery rates declined by 15% from 1973 to 1984 (figure 1). The downward trend was due to a 29% decrease in the rate for attempted robberies. The rates for attempted robberies both with and without injured victims declined during this period.

The rates for completed robberies at the beginning and end of the period remained the same. Despite this, they rose 23% between 1980 and 1981 and fell 22% between 1982 and 1983, causing overall robbery rates to fluctuate as well.

## Time and place of occurrence

A common view of robbery—that it occurs after dark and on the street—is supported by NCS data (table 7). Just over half of robberies occurred at night. If robberies perpetrated during twilight hours are added to those occurring at night, 55% took place in full or partial darkness. Moreover, robberies in which victims were injured took place more frequently in the dark. Those with uninjured victims happened equally in daylight and darkness.

More than 4 out of 10 robberies occurred on the street. Another 2 out of 10 robberies occurred either at or inside the victim's home or near it. Two-thirds of the robberies occurring at or inside the victim's home were committed by someone with no right to be there; the other third were committed by offenders with the right to be there such as family members or guests.

Relatively few robberies occurred on public transportation or in places such as commercial establishments, offices, schools, or parks. In general, victims were as likely to be injured as not, regardless of the location of the robbery. Victims were less likely to be injured, however, in robberies occurring in a restaurant, commercial building, office, or factory.

Victims were less likely to have something stolen if the robbery happened on the street, in a parking lot or garage, or in school or on school property. They were more likely to lose property when the incident occurred at home.

## Robbery trends, 1973-84

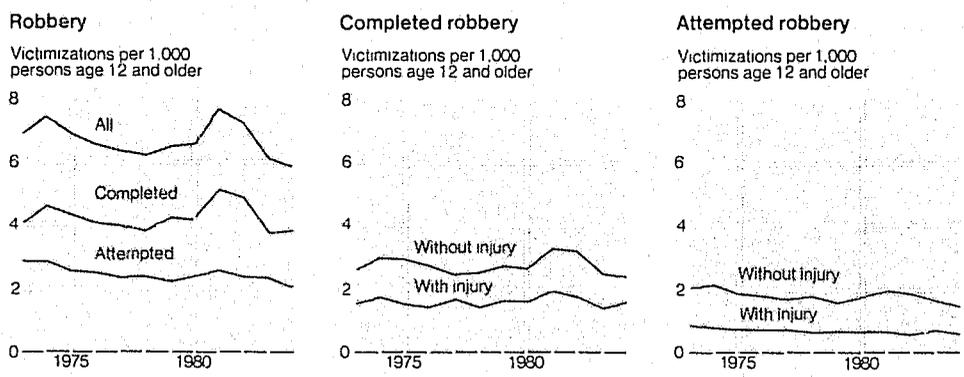


Figure 1

Table 7. Time and place of occurrence for robbery, 1982-84

Incident characteristics	Percent of robbery victimizations						
	Total	Completed		Attempted			
		Total	With injury	Without injury	Total	With injury	Without injury
<b>Time of occurrence</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Light	44	45	38	48	44	35	47
Dark	51	51	58	47	51	58	48
Dawn/Dusk	4	4	4	4	5	6	4
<b>Place of occurrence</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
On street	43	41	42	41	45	48	44
At or in home	12	14	15	13	8	11	7
Near home	10	10	9	10	10	8	10
Inside restaurant, commercial building, office, or factory	7	7	4	9	6	3	7
On public transportation or in station	3	3	3	3	4	—	4
At school	5	4	2	5	6	—	7
In park	3	2	3	2	3	—	2
In parking lot, garage	10	9	9	9	12	11	12
At vacation or friend's home, other	9	10	14	8	7	9	7

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.  
— Too few cases to obtain statistically reliable data.

### Detailed offender characteristics

In robbery, as in other violent crimes, offenders confront their victims. Who are the persons victims faced? Offenders both alone and in groups were overwhelmingly male (table 8). Single offenders were more likely than multiple offenders to be white; almost 60% of single offenders were 21 years of age or older. Offenders who worked in groups were generally black or under 21.

Single offenders under 21 and groups of offenders of either age group were black in over half of the robberies (table 9). Only in robberies committed by older single offenders did whites outnumber blacks.

Male offenders, whether alone or in groups, were more likely to be black than white with the exception of single male offenders 21 and older. There was no difference in the number of black and white males among this category of offenders.

Robbery victims faced combined male/female groups in 1 of every 10 victimizations with multiple offenders age 21 and older and in 1 of every 20 robberies with multiple offenders under 21.

In the typical robbery the victim is confronted by a stranger (table 10). Victims knew only by sight or had never seen their assailants in 8 in 10 robberies perpetrated by multiple offenders and in 7 in 10, by lone offenders.

Conversely, less than 1 in 10 victims of multiple offenders knew well or were related to at least one of the offenders. One in five victims of a single offender faced relatives or other well known persons.

Those robbed by lone strangers were less likely to be injured and lose property than those robbed by groups of strangers. On the other hand, victims robbed by lone offenders who were relatives or were otherwise well known were more likely to be injured and lose property than those robbed by multiple offenders they knew. In 62% of robberies perpetrated by a spouse or ex-spouse acting alone, the victim was injured; in 66%, the victim lost property.

**Table 8. Perceived characteristics for single and multiple robbery offenders, 1973-84**

Perceived offender characteristics	Percent of robbery victimizations with:	
	Single offender	Multiple offenders
Sex	100%	100%
Male	93	88
Female	6	4
Both		8
Race	100%	100%
White	45	29
Black	48	56
Other	5	4
Mixed races		8
Age	100%	100%
20 and younger	36	46
21 and older	59	31
Mixed ages		18

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.

**Table 9. Perceived sex and race of single and multiple robbery offenders by age group, 1973-84**

Perceived offender characteristics	Percent of robbery victimizations with:						
	Single offender			Multiple offenders			
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Both
<b>Age 20 and younger</b>							
Total	100%	92%	8%	100%	90%	4%	5%
White	42	37	4	28	23	2	2
Black	52	49	3	61	57	2	2
Other	4	4	—	4	3	—	—
Mixed races				7	6	*	1
<b>Age 21 and older</b>							
Total	100%	94%	6%	100%	86%	3%	10%
White	49	45	4	33	26	1	5
Black	45	43	2	52	47	2	4
Other	5	4	*	4	4	0	1
Mixed races				9	8	—	1

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.  
— Too few cases to obtain statistically reliable data.  
\*Less than 0.5%.

**Table 10. Victim/offender relationship for single and multiple robbery offenders, 1973-84**

Number of offenders and type of robbery	Victim/offender relationship					
	Total	Stranger	Casual acquaintance	Well known not relative	Spouse/ex-spouse	Other relative
<b>Single offender</b>						
Total	100%	69%	9%	12%	4%	2%
Completed	100	67	9	13	5	3
With injury	100	58	8	18	10	3
Without injury	100	71	9	11	3	3
Attempted	100	73	9	10	4	2
With injury	100	64	6	15	7	4
Without injury	100	77	10	9	2	2
<b>Multiple offenders</b>						
Total	100%	82%	7%	8%	*	1%
Completed	100	82	7	8	—	1
With injury	100	80	7	8	—	1
Without injury	100	83	7	7	—	1
Attempted	100	83	6	8	—	1
With injury	100	81	6	10	—	—
Without injury	100	84	5	8	—	1

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.  
— Too few cases to obtain statistically reliable data.  
\*Less than 0.5%.

## Theft

Factors associated with victims and offenders were related to an increased likelihood of completing the theft. Offenders were more successful in obtaining property from female victims and blacks (table 11). Older victims were also more likely to lose property. Those between the ages of 25 and 34 lost possessions more often than those under 25 years of age; those 35 and older, more often than those who were younger.

Robberies were also more likely to be completed if more than one offender committed the crime. Although male/female offender groups were relatively rare (9%), these groups were successful more often than males or females separately. Black offenders and racially mixed groups also completed thefts more often than white offenders, as did older offenders and groups with older offenders in them.

### Use of force

When robbers confront their victims they either threaten them or use force, and they often brandish a weapon to convince victims to surrender their possessions. Threats can take the form of surrounding or verbally threatening the victim or displaying a weapon; attacks can involve shooting, using a knife, hitting, grabbing, or knocking down the victim, even if an injury is not sustained.

### Threats and attacks

Offenders were more likely to attack than threaten. When they attacked their prey they were more likely to obtain the sought-after cash and other property (67%) than when they only threatened their victims (59%).

### Percent of robbery victimizations

Total	100%
Victim threatened	47%
Completed theft	28
Attempted theft	19
Victim attacked	53%
Completed theft	35
Attempted theft	17

Although offenders attacked a higher percentage of victims than they threatened, male victims were as likely to be threatened as attacked; females, however, were more likely to be attacked. Blacks and whites were equally likely to be attacked. The victim's age also had no effect upon

Table 11. Use of force and theft in robberies, 1973-84

Characteristics	Percent of all robbery victimizations with:			
	Theft completed	Victim attacked	Weapon used	
			No	Yes
<b>Victim characteristics</b>				
Sex				
Male	61%	50%	35%	54%
Female	68	58	47	40
Race				
White	61%	53%	42%	47%
Black	72	51	29	58
Other	61	45	37	43
Age				
12-15 years old	59%	53%	63%	30%
16-19	57	53	43	50
20-24	59	51	38	55
25-34	64	52	36	54
35-49	68	52	30	55
50-64	71	53	28	51
65 and older	71	59	35	40
<b>Perceived offender characteristics</b>				
Sex				
Male	62%	52%	38%	50%
Female	64	59	65	30
Both	72	54	39	48
Race				
White	59%	55%	51%	42%
Black	65	50	34	53
Other	59	50	35	57
Mixed races	67	55	33	55
Age				
20 and younger	58%	54%	49%	40%
21 and older	65	50	35	55
Mixed ages	69	54	27	60
Number of offenders				
Single	58%	51%	45%	45%
Multiple	67	54	35	53

Note: Percentages in "weapon used" category do not total to 100% because of omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.

whether offenders attacked except that persons 65 years of age and older were somewhat more likely to be attacked than victims in other age groups.

Victims were more likely to be attacked by female offenders, by offenders who were either white or in racially mixed groups, and by offenders 20 years of age or younger or groups including these younger offenders. In addition, they were more likely to be attacked if they faced multiple offenders.

## Weapons

Male victims were more likely to face a weapon than females. Weapons were also used more frequently against black victims. Victims under the age of 16 and those 65 years of age and over were less likely to be robbed by offenders with weapons than victims with ages falling between these two extremes.

Victims were more likely to see weapons if robbed by male offenders, either singly or in groups. Offenders using weapons were generally non-white or in racially mixed groups. In addition, they were older, 21 and over, or included older offenders in the group. When victims faced a group of offenders, there was a greater likelihood of an offender having a weapon.

When offenders threatened, they were more likely to have weapons, particularly guns or knives, than when they attacked (table 12). Conversely, when offenders had weapons, they were more likely to threaten their victims than attack them (table 13). Offenders without weapons were more likely to attack their victims.

Offenders used guns and knives most often to threaten and other weapons such as blunt objects to attack. When they had guns they threatened 74% of their victims; when they used knives, they threatened 60% of their victims.

Offenders using guns were successful in obtaining their victims' possessions in 4 out of 5 robberies, whether or not they attacked their victims. The second most successful strategy was attacking victims, either with a knife or other weapon or without a weapon—two-thirds were completed. Threatening without a weapon was the least successful—half were completed.

## Injury

Victims were injured in 33% of all robberies; 15% of the victims received medical care; 10% of robbery victims required emergency room or other hospital treatment; and 2% were hospitalized at least overnight (table 14).

As the violent aspects of a robbery escalated, the likelihood that the theft would be completed also increased. When offenders threatened their victims and when they attacked but did not injure their victims, roughly the same proportion, 6 in 10, resulted in property being taken. If the victim was injured and as the seriousness of the injury increased, so did the likelihood of

**Table 12. Use of weapons in robbery threats and attacks, 1973-84**

Weapon use	Percent of robbery victimizations		
	Total	Threats	Attacks
Total	100%	100%	100%
No weapon	39%	28%	49%
Any weapon	49%	62%	38%
Gun	20	31	10
Knife	17	21	13
Other	13	10	15
Don't know/not ascertained	12%	10%	13%

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding. For crimes in which offenders possessed more than one type of weapon, the victimization is classified by the most serious weapon present. "Other" includes crimes in which the victim did not know which kind of weapon was present.

**Table 13. Robbery threats and attacks by type of weapon, 1973-84**

Type of robbery	Percent of robbery victimizations involving:					
	No weapon	Any weapon	Gun	Knife	Other	Don't know/not ascertained
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Threats	34%	60%	74%	60%	37%	39%
Completed theft	16	40	59	34	17	18
Attempted theft	18	20	15	26	20	21
Attacks	66%	40%	26%	40%	63%	61%
Completed theft	42	28	21	27	42	43
Attempted theft	24	12	5	14	21	18

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding. For crimes in which offenders possessed more than one type of weapon, the victimization is classified by the most serious weapon present. "Other" includes crimes in which the victim did not know which kind of weapon was present.

**Table 14. Injuries and medical care in robbery victimizations, 1973-84**

Type of robbery	Percent of all robbery victimizations	Percent of each type of robbery that was:	
		Completed	Attempted
Was victim attacked?			
No	47%	59%	40%
Yes	53	67	33
If attacked, was victim injured?			
No	19	63	37
Yes	33	69	31
If injured, did victim receive medical care?			
No	18	66	34
Yes	15	73	27
If medical care was received, was it provided in either an emergency room or hospital?			
No	5	71	29
Yes	10	75	25
If emergency room or hospital care was received, did it involve an overnight stay?			
No	8	75	25
Yes	2	73	27

property loss. Sixty-six percent of robberies were completed when injured victims did not require medical care, 71% when they received medical care

in some place other than a hospital, and 75% when they needed hospital or emergency room treatment.

Males who were attacked were less likely to be injured than females (table 15). Victims of both sexes experienced the same proportion of serious injuries, but females suffered a higher proportion of minor injuries than did males.

Blacks and whites who were attacked by robbers were about equally likely to be injured; blacks, however, were more likely to receive serious injuries than were whites. Higher percentages of persons under the age of 16 escaped with no injuries, and a lower

percentage had serious injuries; victims in other age groups had about the same likelihood of being injured seriously.

Victims were more likely to be injured when attackers were white or over 21, when multiple offenders attacked, or when offenders used weapons.

Male offenders were more likely to inflict serious injuries than were female offenders. Black and white offenders were about equally likely to inflict

serious injuries, although white offenders inflicted minor injuries more often than blacks. Those attacked by older offenders or groups including older offenders were more likely to incur serious injuries than those attacked by younger offenders.

Victims were more likely to be seriously injured when offenders attacked with weapons. When offenders used objects other than guns or knives as weapons, victims were more likely to sustain minor injuries.

### Self-protection

In protecting themselves, victims of attempted robberies used a variety of self-protective measures at higher rates than did victims of completed robberies (table 16). These measures included brandishing weapons, using physical force, trying to get help, threatening or arguing with the offenders, or resisting without force.

Victims of attempted robberies with or without injury were most likely to have taken self-protective measures; victims who lost property but were not injured were least likely to have tried to protect themselves. Between these two extremes were victims who both lost property and were injured.

Victims who escaped both injury and theft were more likely to have taken either the most violent responses (brandishing or using a weapon) or non-violent measures such as reasoning or arguing with offenders or resisting without force. Those who escaped theft but were injured often used forcible measures other than bringing weapons into play. These included hitting, chasing, or throwing objects at the offenders, trying to get help, attracting attention, or scaring the offenders away.

Victims who suffered both injury and property loss were more likely to have tried to protect themselves, particularly by using physical force or trying to get help, than those who only lost property.

Table 15. Injuries from robbery attacks, by victim and offender characteristics, and weapon use, 1973-84

Characteristics	Total	Percent of robbery victimizations involving an attacked victim with:		
		No injuries	Minor injuries <sup>a</sup>	Serious injuries <sup>a</sup>
Total	100%	37%	47%	16%
<b>Victim characteristics</b>				
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	100%	38%	45%	17%
Female	100	35	51	14
<b>Race</b>				
White	100%	37%	49%	15%
Black	100	38	43	19
Other	100	32	46	22
<b>Age</b>				
12-15 years old	100%	55%	41%	4%
16-19	100	39	46	15
20-24	100	36	48	16
25-34	100	31	51	18
35-49	100	32	48	20
50-64	100	31	49	20
65 and older	100	35	48	17
<b>Perceived offender characteristics</b>				
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	100%	37%	47%	16%
Female	100	40	52	8
Both	100	40	46	14
<b>Race</b>				
White	100%	35%	50%	15%
Black	100	39	46	15
Other	100	45	42	12
Mixed races	100	32	53	15
<b>Age</b>				
20 and younger	100%	45%	46%	9%
21 and older	100	32	48	19
Mixed ages	100	28	52	20
<b>Number of offenders</b>				
Single	100%	39%	46%	14%
Multiple	100	35	49	16
<b>Weapon use<sup>b</sup></b>				
No weapon	100%	45%	46%	8%
Any weapon	100	25	49	26
Gun	100	31	43	26
Knife	100	32	41	27
Other	100	15	59	26
Don't know/not ascertained	100	38	47	14

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding and omission of "don't know" and "not ascertained" categories from table display.

<sup>a</sup>Minor injury includes bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, swelling, and undetermined injuries requiring less than 2 days hospitalization. Serious injury includes rape, attempted rape injuries, gunshot or knife wounds, broken bones, loss of teeth, internal

injuries, loss of consciousness, and undetermined injuries requiring 2 or more days hospitalization.

<sup>b</sup>For crimes in which offenders possessed more than one type of weapon, the victimization is classified by the most serious weapon present. "Other" includes crimes in which the victim did not know which kind of weapon was present.

**Table 16. Self-protection measures taken by robbery victims, 1973-84**

Self protection measure	Total	Percent of robbery victimizations					
		Completed			Attempted		
		Total	With injury	Without injury	Total	With injury	Without injury
Used at least one measure	59%	45%	60%	37%	84%	84%	84%
Used or brandished a weapon	2	1	1	1	4	2	5
Used or tried physical force	24	17	29	11	34	50	28
Tried to get help	17	16	25	11	18	27	15
Argued or reasoned with offender	13	10	12	9	18	11	20
Resisted without force	19	14	17	11	28	22	30
Other	6	4	4	4	9	6	10

Note: Types of self-protection add to more than total because victim may have used more than one measure.

**Reporting robbery to police**

Several factors increased the likelihood that a robbery was reported to police: whether anything was stolen; the value of the stolen property; whether the victim was injured; the degree of injury; and the presence of a weapon.

Robberies in which property was taken were more likely to be reported to police than those in which no property was stolen (table 17). The existence and degree of injury also influenced the probability that the police would be informed. Police were informed more often when victims were injured than when they were not injured. Robberies in which victims were seriously injured were more likely to be reported than those in which only minor injuries were sustained. When both property loss and injury occurred, higher reporting rates resulted than from the same extent of injury without theft.

A robbery was more likely to be reported to police if a weapon was present, especially a gun. The presence of a weapon in conjunction with property theft increased the likelihood that the police would be told of the offense.

**Table 18. Percent of robbery victimizations reported to police by value of the theft, 1973-84**

Value of theft	Percent of completed robberies reported to police		
	Total	With injury	Without injury
Less than \$10	45%	54%	41%
\$10-49	58	66	54
\$50-249	69	74	67
\$250-999	76	80	73
\$1,000 and above	87	87	87

The percentage of victimizations reported to police was directly related to the value of the stolen property. When the value of the loss was low, 45% of victimizations were reported (table 18). As the value increased, the proportion of reported crimes also increased. This relationship was evident for both thefts in which victims were injured and ones in which they were not. Injury to the victim and increasing the value of the theft resulted in higher proportions reported to police for thefts up to \$1,000. When the value of the loss reached \$1,000 or more, the police were informed overwhelmingly, irrespective of injury to the victim.

Why were robberies reported to police? NCS respondents frequently said that they reported the crime to keep it from happening again, either to themselves or to others, or to punish the offender (table 19). When property was not stolen, victims also mentioned reporting the crime to stop or prevent the incident from happening. When property was stolen, the crime was most frequently reported to police to recover the property.

**Table 19. Reasons given by respondent for reporting robbery to police, 1982-84**

Reason for reporting	Percent of robberies reported to police by respondent		
	Total	Completed	Attempted
To keep it from happening again or to others	41%	38%	49%
To recover property	36	46	—
To punish offender	36	37	31
To stop or prevent this incident from happening	24	22	31
Respondent's duty	22	21	24
Needed help because of injury	7	8	6
There was evidence or proof	6	6	5
Because it was a crime	6	5	7
To collect insurance	4	5	—
Other	11	11	12

Note: Reasons for reporting total to more than 100% because more than one reason may have been given.  
—Too few cases to obtain statistically reliable data.

**Table 17. Percent of robbery victimizations reported to police by victim injuries and weapon use, 1973-84**

Characteristics	Percent of robberies reported to police		
	Total	Completed	Attempted
Total	54%	64%	37%
Injuries <sup>a</sup>			
No injury	49%	60%	32%
Minor injury	61	67	49
Serious injury	76	79	65
Weapon use <sup>b</sup>			
No weapon	45%	54%	32%
Any weapon	62	70	45
Gun	73	76	59
Knife	54	64	38
Other	56	66	41
Don't know/not ascertained	50	61	33

<sup>a</sup>Minor injury includes bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, swelling, and undetermined injuries requiring less than 2 days hospitalization. Serious injury includes rape, attempted rape injuries, gunshot or knife wounds, broken bones, loss of teeth, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, and undetermined injuries requiring 2 or more days hospitalization.  
<sup>b</sup>For crimes in which offenders possessed more than one type of weapon, the victimization is classified by the most serious weapon present. "Other" includes crimes in which the victim did not know which kind of weapon was present.

When a robbery was not reported to police, respondents most frequently gave as their reason that there was a lack of proof or no way to find the offender, particularly if there was property loss (table 20). Victims of attempted robberies generally said that they did not report the incident because there was no need to call the police; for example, either the object was recovered, the offender was unsuccessful, or the victims considered the matter to be unimportant or personal or took care of it themselves.

### Methodology

Data for this report include all robbery victimizations reported to the NCS from 1973 through 1984, except for those tables in which variables were available only for robberies from 1982 through 1984. Robberies were weighted to represent victimizations.

Estimates in this report are slightly higher than those in annual NCS publications because robberies occurring during rapes and attempted rapes and robberies that are reported as series crimes are included.

Rape robberies are normally included under rape statistics in NCS publications; they account for about 2.5% of the 14,681,100 robberies reported here. Series victimizations are not normally included in annual NCS publications. They have been counted as one victimization each in this report and account for about 3.6% of all robberies.

Commercial robberies, such as bank holdups, are not reported in the NCS under robbery rates unless a sample respondent is robbed or assaulted during the incident. For this report, only commercial incidents in which a sample respondent either had something taken or an attempt to take something was made are included; these account for about 3.8% of robberies reported here.

All findings in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless modified by "somewhat" to indicate a 90% confidence level. For a description of significance testing see Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1984, Appendix III, pp. 117-122, NCJ-100435.

Table 20. Reasons for not reporting robbery to police, 1982-84

Reason for not reporting	Percent of robberies not reported to police		
	Total	Completed	Attempted
Lack of proof	21%	25%	16%
Private or personal matter	18	15	21
Respondent did not think it important enough	17	14	20
Object recovered or offender unsuccessful	13	4	24
Police would be inefficient, ineffective, insensitive	10	10	9
Police wouldn't think it important enough	9	11	7
Reported to someone else	9	10	8
Afraid of reprisal	5	7	3
Too inconvenient or time consuming	5	5	5
Lack of serial or ID number for property	3	6	*
Other	13	15	11

Note: Reasons for not reporting total to more than 100% because more than one reason may have been given.  
\*Less than 0.5%.

Bureau of Justice Statistics special reports are written principally by BJS staff under the direction of Joseph M. Bessette, deputy director of data analysis. This report was written by Caroline Wolf Harlow with statistical assistance from Gertrude Thomas. Richard W. Dodge provided statistical review. The report was edited by Frank D. Balog. Marianne Zawitz provided assistance in data presentation. Report production was administered by Marilyn Marbrook, publications unit chief, assisted by Tina Dorsey, Jeanne Harris, and Arlene F. James.

April 1987, NCJ-104638

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