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KENTUCKY  
CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE



STATISTICAL ACQUISITIONS  
ANALYSIS  
CENTER

DAVID L. ARMSTRONG  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 1986

URBAN STUDIES CENTER  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

# 1986 VICTIMIZATION STUDY

## Background

One of the major projects initiated by the Kentucky Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) during 1985 assessed statewide crime victimization patterns and examined the lives of people who have been victims of crime.

Respondents to the 1985 victimization survey were interviewed again in 1986 about their crime experiences since the time of the first study. The second survey serves two complementary purposes. First, as a 1986 survey, it provides information about crime and its aftereffects for a year. Second, as a follow up interview to the 1985 survey, it provides information about post victimization experiences over a longer range of time than is typically studied.

The SAC study went beyond traditional victimization studies by focusing not only on the extent and nature of crime, as reported by victims, but also on the aftereffects of both violent and nonviolent criminal victimization.

This bulletin focuses on the results from the 1986 survey. Three major questions are addressed:

Do past crime victims have a higher rate of subsequent victimization than other persons? What are the immediate and long term "psychological costs" of crime?

Have victims' levels of depression and fear changed from 1985 to 1986, and if so, how?

## Sample

Initially, 557 respondents were interviewed between May and July 1985 about the crime experiences of their households during the previous twelve months. A telephone interview was conducted with citizens across the Commonwealth. One year later, between May and July of 1986, 445 of these same respondents were interviewed again about the crime experiences of their households for the twelve-month period beginning after their first interview.

## Repeated Victimization

The 1986 crime rate in Kentucky was 20.5%. The rate was more than twice as high among households that experienced a crime in 1985 (40.8%) as among those households that did not experience a crime in 1985 (15.5%). For households reporting violence in 1985, 70.5 percent reported some type of incident in 1986. They were seven times more likely than all others to experience a violent crime in 1986 (17.7% vs. 2.5% of the general population). They were also more likely than all others to experience a property crime in 1986 (52.8% vs. 19.4% of the general population).

Theories about the causes of victimization certainly would suggest some degree in consistency for being at risk, whether that risk is due to the victim's lifestyle (e.g., exposure to high risk time, places, and people) remaining the same over time, residential stability, the victim's tendency to be negligent or to precipitate the incidents, or the victim's continuing attractiveness to offenders (e.g., wealth). Whatever the

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## MESSAGE FROM ATTORNEY GENERAL DAVID L. ARMSTRONG

As we begin 1987, it is time to reflect on the past, look forward, and make ambitious plans for the future. 1987 promises to be an exciting year for SAC.

In October we terminate the federal funding that got us started and begin operating on the state general fund dollars that will sustain us.

A new victimization/crime estimation survey will make its first report this spring. We anticipate learning more about crime in Kentucky, and about the problems experienced by its victims.

Our first two studies on child abuse and neglect have made important contributions to the field of victimization. The studies highlight the problems we still have in reporting this crime. We are eager to begin the third part of this project which will focus on the cost of intervention in responding to reports of abuse and/or neglect.

This time of year is also a time to reflect on the past. SAC has played an important role in the policy debates on matters such as persistent felons and the issue of crime victims' rights. We wanted to produce research that would be discussed and debated. We have.

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cause, however, these results suggest that victims of crime, particularly victims of violence, need preventive interventions.

### Victimization Aftereffects

One issue addressed by the study was the short-term consequences of victimization, specifically whether psychological distress would be higher among victims than among nonvictims. Two aspects of distress, depressive symptoms and fear of crime, were studied.

A question included in this year's study concerned long-term effects. Would psychological distress continue to be higher among 1985 victims than among nonvictims more than a year later?

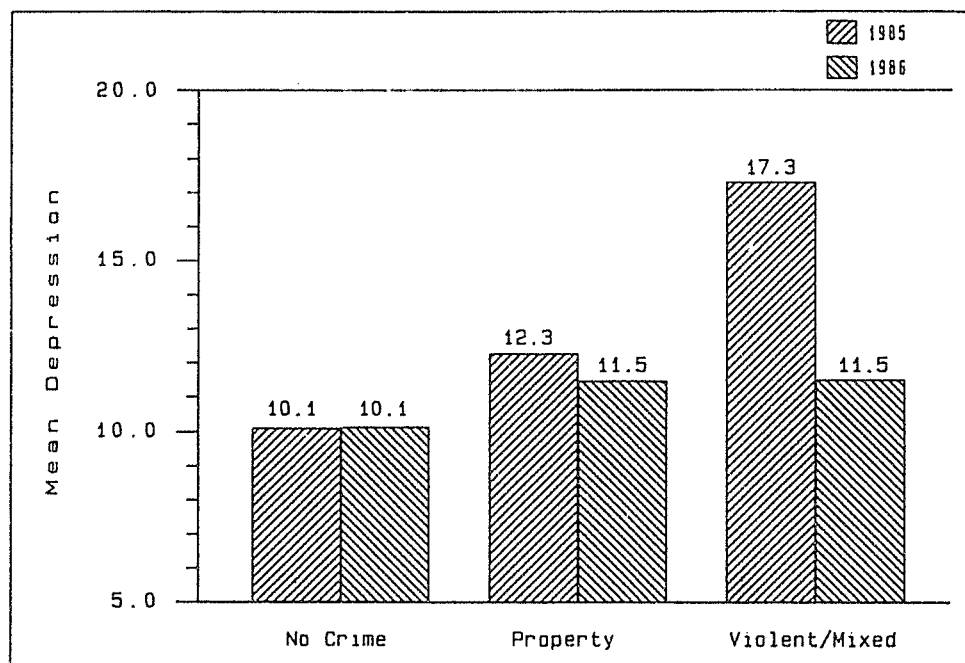
The sample was divided into groups according to victimization type in 1985. For these groups, post victimization interviews were administered in 1985 and 1986.

Figure 1 shows the adjusted means for depressive symptoms for each victim type in 1985 and 1986. These means have been adjusted to preclude being influenced by sex, race, education, and subsequent victimization of the victim group.

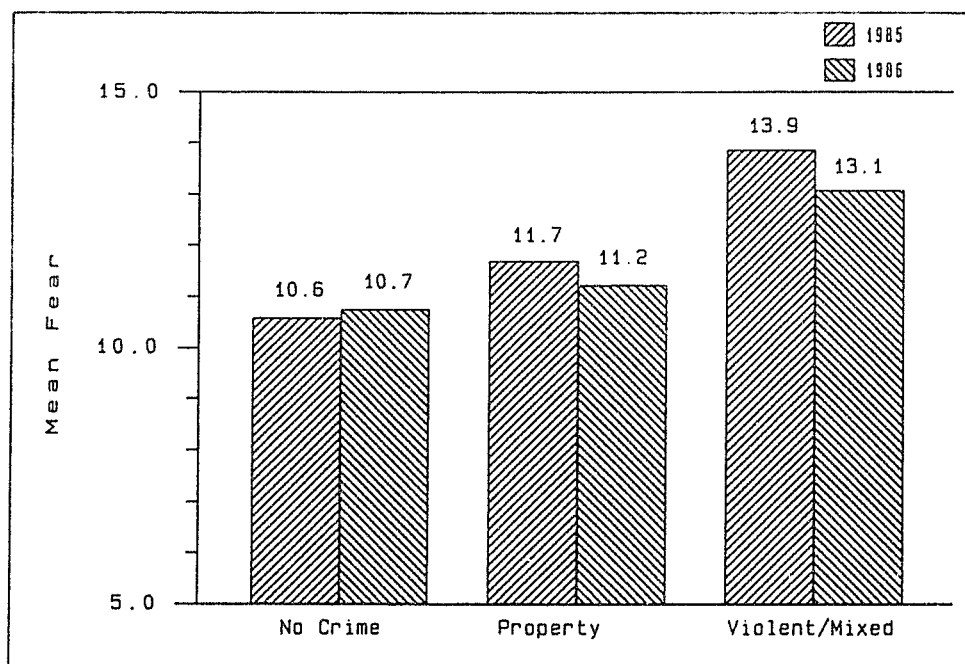
Consistent with the findings for this year's victims, last year's property crime victims initially showed considerably higher levels of symptoms than nonvictims. As before, violent/mixed (violent and property) crime victims were more depressed than property crime victims. Figure 1 also shows, however, that over the ensuing year, the symptoms of the two victim groups decreased.

A somewhat different pattern emerges when long term effects on fear are examined, as shown in Figure 2. For this more specific measure of distress, not only are the adjusted means initially different, but they continue to be different at the end of the following year.

Nonvictims had the least fear. Violent/mixed crime victims had the most fear and property crime victims were somewhere in between. Although the level of fear that victims feel decreases somewhat, fear remains higher among property crime victims than among



**FIGURE 1** Long-term effects of criminal victimization: Mean depression by type of incident.



**FIGURE 2** Long-term effects of criminal victimization: Mean fear by type of incident.

nonvictims and victims of violence continue to have higher levels of fear than victims of property crime.

In sum, the generalized feelings of depression that victims experience appear to dissipate over time. Nonethe-

less, because of their fear, the lives of victims continue to remain somewhat disrupted for quite some time after the incident. Certainly, providing assistance directed at reducing victims' fears should be a priority for programs designed to aid victims.



## **Crime Prevention**

Most citizens in Kentucky take at least some precautions against crime. The single most commonly practiced precaution was keeping an eye out on one another's homes. However, very few did this through official neighborhood watch programs (program associated measures).

The next most common precautions are having mail and newspaper deliveries stopped (or picked up) when leaving town; and leaving lights, radio, or television on when no one is at home. About three out of four Kentucky households use each of these practices.

A substantial number of people use deadbolt locks, although very few have had burglar alarms installed. About a third have had valuables engraved.

Most respondents also reported that they practice auto-related safety. Most lock vehicles parked away from home and keep keys in hand when returning to a parked car. Over half lock their vehicles when parked at home.

"Program associated" crime prevention measures were not as common but have been used by a considerable number of Kentuckians.

Ten percent of Kentucky households who watch out for each other's homes do it in association with police sponsored programs, such as Neighborhood Watch. An additional 80 percent do this informally.

Twenty-one percent of Kentucky households have had valuables engraved in association with Operation Identification, and another 14 percent have had it done through some other means.

One of the more striking findings concerns child fingerprinting. Although this is a relatively new program, it has caught on with a high percentage of the population. Nearly 45 percent of respondents living with someone under 18 reported that they have had children fingerprinted through the Child Identification Program.

The importance of crime prevention should be considered in the context of findings about the aftereffects of victimization, particularly the lasting fear

that victims experience and the high risk that they will be victimized again. Taken together, these findings point to the importance of providing crime prevention services to victims. Such programs might reduce their risk of again being victimized. In addition, by learning concrete precautions to take against crime, victims may come to feel more in control of what happens to them, and consequently, less vulnerable. In turn, this may lead to reduced levels of depression and fear.

## **Use and Application of Findings**

This longitudinal study addresses a variety of policy questions concerning crime and its impact over time on citizens of Kentucky. Results of the study may be used to (1) justify allocation of funds to control and prevent crime and to increase support and services for victims of crime; (2) influence criminal justice officials to examine existing policies and practices relating to potential problems concerning victims of crime; (3) suggest a program or service modification that would benefit crime victims; (4) lead to development of new programs directly relating to victims; and (5) suggest additional policy questions to be addressed in future research.

For example:

Results show that household victims, particularly respondents in households impacted by violence, are much more likely to be victimized again. Crime prevention services offered in the state should be custom made to reduce recurring victimization. Victims themselves might play a significant role in these crime prevention services.

Criminal victimization, especially violence, has a significant short-term effect on depression and fear of crime among victim households and a lasting effect on fear of crime. Victim programs should recognize and attempt to alleviate the different forms of psychological distress experienced by victims, i.e., both depression and fear. With regard to fear of crime, programs should be designed to alleviate the long-term effects resulting from criminal victimization.

Copies of the full report may be ordered at a cost of \$3.00 from the SAC office at the Urban Studies Center.

## **SAC Publications**

**Persistent Felony Offenders in Kentucky: A Profile of the Institutional Population,**  
by Dr. Deborah Wilson

**Child Abuse and Neglect in Kentucky: 1978-1984,**  
by Dr. Gordon Bonham

**The Aftermath of Criminal Victimization: A Statewide Survey,**  
by Dr. Knowlton Johnson, Dr. Gary Sykes and Ned Snow

**An Offender-based Tracking System Study of Three Judicial Districts in The Commonwealth of Kentucky,**  
by Dr. Gennaro Vito and Jack Ellis

**A Data Inventory of Kentucky's Criminal Justice Agencies,**  
by Jack Ellis

**Strengthening Kentucky's Capacity to Produce Criminal Justice Statistical Information: A Needs-Use Assessment,**  
by Dr. Knowlton Johnson, Dr. Michael Price, Jack Ellis and Barbara Meredith

**Persistent Felony Offenders in Kentucky: A Comparison of Incarcerated Felons,**  
by Dr. Deborah Wilson and Dr. Gennaro Vito

**Child Abuse and Neglect: Reports, Children and the Agency,**  
by Dr. Gordon Bonham

**Criminal Victimization in Kentucky: A Longitudinal Study,**  
by Dr. Knowlton Johnson, Dr. Fran Norris and Linda Burgess

**Back From the Dead: Tracking the Progress of Kentucky's Furman-Commuted Death Row Population,**  
by Dr. Gennaro Vito

Executive summaries and/or complete copies of these reports are available at cost by contacting:

Jack Ellis  
Kentucky Criminal Justice SAC  
Urban Studies Center  
College of Urban & Public Affairs  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292  
(502) 588-6626

**Attorney General's Message**  
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SAC played a role in developing the beginnings of an offender-based tracking system in the Commonwealth, a system which will one day be an invaluable tool for criminal justice system professionals.

Recent events in state government indicate we will continue to have problems with revenue. The latest shortfall has put a real crimp in agencies' plans and programs. Such problems serve to reinforce the need for good data and research. To make wise funding decisions in this era of scarce funds demands good information.

The SAC staff and I look forward to working with you again this year. We hope you find our research relevant and beneficial to your daily work. Let us know what you need and how we can help.

Best wishes for a successful 1987!

**SAC Conference Survey Results**

During October, persons attending the first two SAC conferences were surveyed. A variety of questions were asked, ranging from the registration process to the location of future conferences.

Highlights of the survey responses show a need to include speakers and subjects with registration materials and reduce fees for students, one-day attendance, and one-person agencies. Small group discussions, or small group workshops, were suggested as part of the conference format. September and October were popular months for future conferences, with Thursday and Friday as best days for two-day conferences. Louisville was the preferred location. Of those surveyed, 75% plan to attend the 1987 conference; an additional 18% will come if they are able. Nearly one hundred people shared information/materials from the conference with a total of 895 co-workers and others.

One third of the topics suggested for future conferences concern various

elements of incarceration (i.e. the people involved, costs, present systems and alternatives); one fourth address administrative matters (i.e. data management, economics, legislation); and one fifth want additional in-depth studies on child and adult victimization.

We thank all of you who participated for your time and input.

**Update of 1985 Data Inventory**

During the next few months, state and local agencies will be contacted by the SAC staff to determine data and equipment uses of criminal justice agencies in the Commonwealth. The 1985 study, **A Data Inventory of Kentucky's Criminal Justice Agencies**, will be updated and additional local justice agencies will be surveyed by mail and/or personal contact. Please help us make the directory a success!

