



Criminal Victimization in the U.S.

Summary Findings of 1978-79 Changes in Crime and of Trends Since 1973

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Common household thefts were relatively more numerous in 1979 than a year earlier, but stability generally characterized both the incidence of crime and the rates at which offenses were reported to the police. According to latest results from the National Crime Survey (NCS), significant victimization rate changes were evident for the two most prevalent kinds of measured crime—household larceny and personal larceny without victim-offender contact—between 1978 and 1979. The changes were in opposite directions. An increase of 1.3 million residential larcenies brought about a 12-percent rise in the rate for that crime, while 630,000 fewer noncontact personal larcenies caused a 5-percent drop in the rate for that offense.¹ Rates for rape, personal robbery, assault, personal larceny with contact, household burglary, and motor vehicle theft did not change significantly between the 2 years (Table 1).

Detailed NCS results in a forthcoming report will show that the 1979 increase in household larceny was fairly widespread, significantly affecting homeowners and renters alike, as well as households at all income levels.² The rise in the rate for that crime also was significant among white households and those headed by persons between the ages of 20 and 64. Although seeming to move upward, the larceny rates for black and for Hispanic households did not change significantly.

The reduced incidence of personal larceny without contact was also found among a number of subgroups. Thus, whites and males had lower 1979 rates for that crime, and there was some indication that females also had a lower larceny rate; the rate among blacks did not change significantly. Although the downward direction in rates for noncontact personal larcenies seemed to apply to all of the age and income

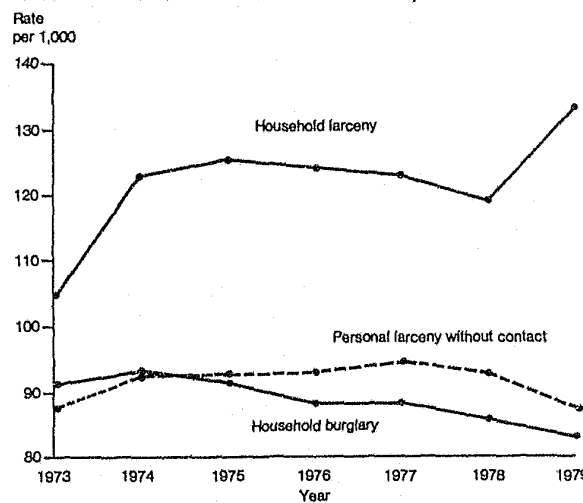
groups examined, the declines were only significant among persons age 25-34 and those earning \$15,000 or more annually. Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike experienced the crime at a lower rate.

Changes between 1978 and 1979 in the incidence of personal and household larcenies were not attended by variations in the rates at which those crimes were reported to the police. As in 1978, only about 1 in every 4 of each of those types of crime was made known to the authorities during 1979. For other crimes measured by the NCS, there also were no significant changes in the police reporting rates between 1978 and 1979 (Table 2).

Household larceny reached a peak in 1979—134 per 1,000—a figure that was 25-percent higher than that recorded in 1973, when NCS annual estimates first became available (see chart). With respect to personal larceny without contact, the 1979 drop placed the figure at a level not significantly different from its 1973 low.

Turning to post-1973 trends for other NCS-measured crimes, the 1979 rate for simple assault was higher than those for 1976 and earlier years, but the apparent increase in the 1979 rate over the 1977 and 1978 figures was not statistically significant; parallel results held for the overall assault rate, but no direction emerged for aggravated assault (Table 3). Similarly, no trends were evident in the rates for rape or personal larceny with victim-offender contact. The

Trends in victimization rates for selected crimes, 1973-79



¹All changes or differences discussed in this report are statistically significant at a confidence level of 95 percent, unless qualified by the phrase "some indication," which denotes significance at a 90-percent level. According to NCS classification, the two crimes for which there was significant change in 1979 differ from one another solely on the basis of their place of occurrence.

²The larceny rate was significantly higher for households with annual incomes ranging from \$7,500 to \$14,999, as well as for those in the \$15,000 and over bracket; there was some indication that it was also higher among those with incomes of less than \$7,500.

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rate for personal robbery, which had dropped 18 percent between 1974 and 1978, appeared to have halted its decline, although the most recent change was not statistically significant.

Although the 1978-79 change in the rate for residential burglary was not statistically significant, the latest figure—84 per 1,000 households—suggested a continuation of an overall decline that has taken place since 1974, when the rate was 93 per 1,000. The motor vehicle theft rate dropped sharply between 1975 and 1976, but there has been no other measurable year-to-year change in the incidence of that crime.

The 1979 rate, however, was significantly lower than that for 1975.

NCS data are collected by means of interviews with persons age 12 and over in a representative sample of approximately 60,000 households across the Nation. The survey is designed and carried out for the Bureau of Justice Statistics by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Data in this report, another in a series to examine trends in crime, are preliminary and subject to revision. Future reports will contain a description of the survey methodology, including a discussion of sampling error, as well as definitions and other technical information.

Table 1. Personal and household crimes: Number of victimizations and victimization rates, by type of crime, 1973-79

(Rate per 1,000)

Sector and type of crime	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Personal sector							
Crimes of violence							
Number	5,351,000	5,510,000	5,573,000	5,599,000	5,902,000	5,941,000	6,159,000
Rate	32.6	33.0	32.8	32.6	33.9	33.7	34.5
Rape							
Number	156,000	163,000	154,000	145,000	154,000	171,000	192,000
Rate	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1
Robbery							
Number	1,108,000	1,199,000	1,147,000	1,111,000	1,083,000	1,038,000	1,116,000
Rate	6.7	7.2	6.8	6.5	6.2	5.9	6.3
Assault							
Number	4,087,000	4,148,000	4,272,000	4,344,000	4,664,000	4,732,000	4,851,000
Rate	24.9	24.8	25.2	25.3	26.8	26.9	27.2
Aggravated assault							
Number	1,655,000	1,735,000	1,631,000	1,695,000	1,738,000	1,708,000	1,769,000
Rate	10.1	10.4	9.6	9.9	10.0	9.7	9.9
Simple assault							
Number	2,432,000	2,413,000	2,641,000	2,648,000	2,926,000	3,024,000	3,082,000
Rate	14.8	14.4	15.6	15.4	16.8	17.2	17.3
Crimes of theft							
Number	14,971,000	15,889,000	16,294,000	16,519,000	16,933,000	17,050,000	16,382,000
Rate	91.1	95.1	96.0	96.1	97.3	96.8	91.9
Personal larceny with contact							
Number	504,000	520,000	524,000	497,000	461,000	549,000	511,000
Rate	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.1	2.9
Personal larceny without contact							
Number	14,466,000	15,369,000	15,770,000	16,022,000	16,472,000	16,501,000	15,871,000
Rate	88.0	92.0	92.9	93.2	94.6	93.6	89.0
Total population age 12 and over	164,363,000	167,058,000	169,671,000	171,901,000	174,093,000	176,215,000	178,284,000
Household sector							
Household burglary							
Number	6,458,700	6,720,600	6,743,700	6,663,400	6,764,900	6,704,000	6,685,400
Rate	91.7	93.1	91.7	88.9	88.5	86.0	84.1
Household larceny							
Number	7,537,300	8,933,100	9,223,000	9,300,900	9,418,300	9,351,900	10,630,100
Rate	107.0	123.8	125.4	124.1	123.3	119.9	133.7
Motor vehicle theft							
Number	1,343,900	1,358,400	1,433,000	1,234,600	1,296,800	1,365,100	1,392,800
Rate	19.1	18.8	19.5	16.5	17.0	17.5	17.5
Total number of households	70,442,400	72,162,900	73,559,600	74,956,100	76,412,300	77,980,400	79,498,600

NOTE: Detail may not add to total shown because of rounding.

Table 2. Personal and household crimes: Change in police reporting rates, by type of crime, 1978-79

Sector and type of crime	Percent of victimizations reported to the police		Percent change ¹
	1978	1979	
Personal sector			
Crimes of violence	44.2	45.1	+1.9
Rape	48.8	50.5	+3.6
Robbery	50.5	55.5	+9.8
Assault	42.7	42.4	-0.5
Aggravated assault	52.7	51.3	-2.8
Simple assault	37.0	37.4	+1.1
Crimes of theft	24.6	24.0	-2.5
Personal larceny with contact	33.7	35.6	+5.6
Personal larceny without contact	24.3	23.6	-2.9
Household sector			
Household burglary	47.1	47.6	+1.0
Household larceny	24.5	25.1	+2.8
Motor vehicle theft	66.1	68.2	+3.3

¹None of the changes was statistically significant at minimum confidence level of 90 percent.

Table 3. Personal and household crimes: Comparison of changes in victimization rates, by type of crime, 1973-79

Sector and type of crime	Percent change in victimization rate					
	1973-79	1974-79	1975-79	1976-79	1977-79	1978-79
Personal sector						
Crimes of violence	*+6.1	**+4.7	**+5.2	*+6.0	+1.9	+2.4
Rape	+13.7	+10.2	+18.7	+28.6	+21.3	+11.3
Robbery	-7.1	*-12.8	-7.4	-3.1	+0.6	+6.3
Assault	*+9.4	*+9.6	*+8.1	*+7.7	+1.6	+1.3
Aggravated assault	-1.5	-4.5	+3.2	+0.6	-0.6	+2.4
Simple assault	*+16.8	*+19.7	*+11.1	*+12.2	+2.9	+0.8
Crimes of theft	+0.9	*-3.4	*-4.3	*-4.4	*-5.5	*-5.0
Personal larceny with contact	-6.5	-7.7	-7.1	-0.7	+8.3	-8.0
Personal larceny without contact	+1.1	*-3.2	*-4.2	*-4.5	*-5.9	*-4.9
Household sector						
Household burglary	*-8.3	*-9.7	*-8.3	*-5.4	*-5.0	-2.2
Household larceny	*+25.0	*+8.0	*+6.6	*+7.8	*+8.5	*+11.5
Motor vehicle theft	-8.2	-6.9	*-10.1	+6.4	+3.2	+0.1

*Statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

**Statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.