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Victims of Violent Juvenile Crime

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) provides detailed information about crimes reported to law enforcement, including law enforcement's assessments of which crimes were committed by adult offenders and/or juvenile offenders.¹ Analysis of NIBRS data from 1997 and 1998² shows that 19% of the victims of nonfatal violent crimes were victimized by a juvenile offender—either a juvenile acting alone, multiple juveniles, or juvenile and adult offenders acting together. About two-thirds (62%) of the victims of nonfatal violence committed by juvenile offenders were themselves younger than 18, and about one-third (38%) were adults. Other findings include the following:

- ◆ Most (95%) of the victims of sexual assaults committed by juveniles were younger than 18, as were 43% of victims of robberies by juveniles, 53% of aggravated assaults, and 61% of simple assaults.
- ◆ Almost half (48%) of the victims of nonfatal violent crimes committed by

juveniles were other juveniles who were acquaintances of the offender.

- ◆ About 1 in 15 victims of nonfatal violent crimes by juveniles (7%) was an adult who was a stranger to the offender.
- ◆ Most (74%) of the victims who reported violent crimes by juveniles said the offender was a male.
- ◆ Many (42%) of the female victims of violent crimes by juveniles were victimized by other females.
- ◆ Among victims of simple assault by juveniles, more than half (52%) of those older than 30 were the offender's parent or stepparent.
- ◆ Among all victims of violent crimes involving juvenile offenders, 17% faced multiple juveniles acting together and 15% faced juveniles and adults acting together. Among victims of robberies involving juveniles, 61% faced multiple offenders.
- ◆ In sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults committed by juveniles, 40% of victims were injured, compared with 48% of the victims of the same offenses committed by adults.
- ◆ About 1 in 2 juvenile victims of violent crime (51%) faced a juvenile offender.
- ◆ About 1 in 10 adult victims of violent crime (9%) faced a juvenile offender.

A Message From OJJDP

Violent crime is always disturbing, but this is especially true when its perpetrators are youth.

About one in five nonfatal violent victimizations involves a juvenile offender, acting either alone or with others—adult or juvenile. Most victims of juvenile violence are juveniles, including 95% of the victims of sexual assaults. Nearly all victims of juvenile violence know the offender.

The authors of this Bulletin draw on these and other key findings derived from data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to develop a statistical profile of juvenile crime.

The tables, charts, and accompanying analysis offer useful perspectives on characteristics of offenders and victims such as age, gender, and relationship; types of offenses, including aggravated and simple assault, sexual assault, and robbery; the unlawful use of firearms; and injuries.

Although NIBRS is a relatively new tool whose data sources will expand with time, the experiences of more than 126,000 victims, analyzed in this Bulletin, provide beneficial information about the extent and nature of juvenile violence to those who share OJJDP's commitment to combat it.

¹Throughout this Bulletin, the term "juvenile" refers to persons younger than 18.

²The data analyzed in this Bulletin came from 17 states and are not nationally representative. For information about NIBRS and the analysis, see sidebar on page 4 and "Methods" on page 8.

Most victims of juvenile violence were juveniles

Law enforcement reports in the 1997 and 1998 NIBRS files show that juvenile offenders victimized 27% of the sexual assault victims, 20% of the robbery victims, 19% of the aggravated assault victims, and 18% of the simple assault victims in those years. The victims of juvenile offenders were most likely to be about the same age as the offender: 38% of the victims of juvenile violence were no more than 1 year older or younger than the offender, and the age difference was 2 years or less for 50% of victims, 5 years or less for 65% of victims. Thus, victims of juvenile crime tended to be preteens or teens.

Older juveniles were more likely than any other age group to be the victims of violence committed by juveniles. Among juvenile victims ages 12–17, 53% were victimized by other juveniles. In contrast, only 14% of infant victims (younger than age 1) were victimized by juvenile offenders. The proportion of juvenile offenders dropped slightly (to 13%) for 1-year-old victims, then rose steadily to 64% for 12-year-old victims. A juvenile offender was involved in fewer than 1 in 10 violent victimizations of adults.

Proportion of all victims victimized by juvenile offenders:

Offense	Victim Age			
	<18	<12	12–17	18+
Total offenses	51%	47%	53%	9%
Sexual assault	36	44	30	5
Robbery	59	80	56	13
Aggravated assault	55	49	56	11
Simple assault	55	49	56	9

Adults constituted only 4% of the victims of sexual assault by juvenile offenders but more than half (57%) of the victims of juvenile robbers.

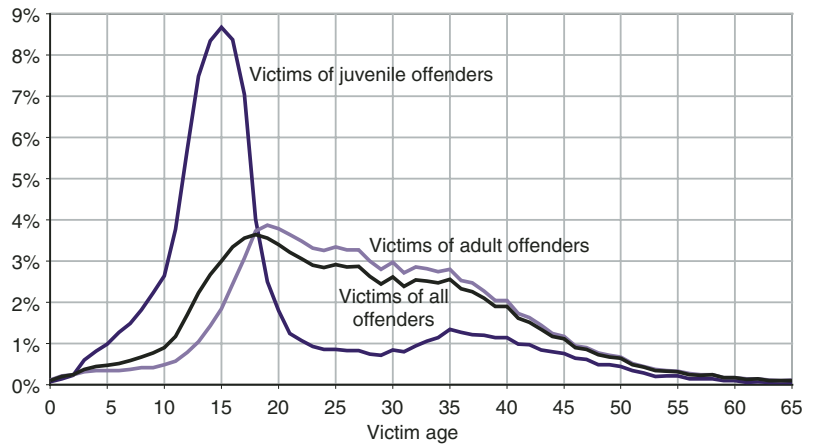
Age characteristics of victims of juvenile offenders:

Offense	Victim Age			
	<12	12–17	18–49	50+
Total offenses	16%	46%	35%	3%
Sexual assault	55	40	4	0
Robbery	7	36	48	9
Aggravated assault	12	42	43	3
Simple assault	13	48	36	3

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

The age profile for victims of juvenile offenders was skewed toward younger ages

Percent of victims by age, within offender category

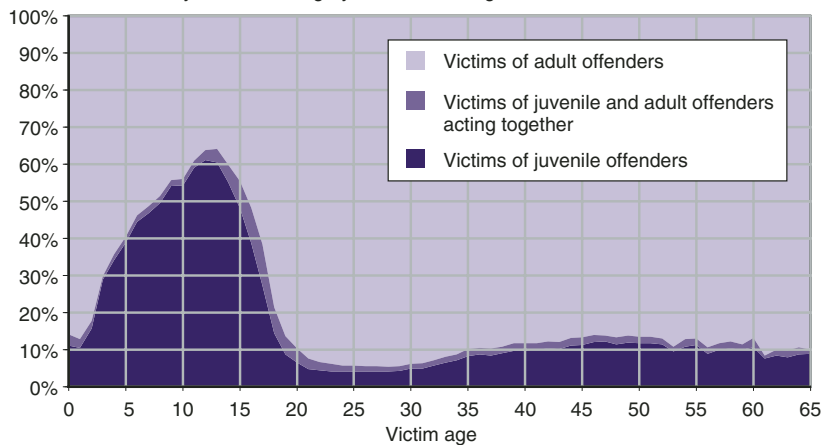


- ◆ Because 81% of all victims of violent crime were victimized by adult offenders, the age profiles for all victims and for victims of adult offenders were very similar.
- ◆ Among victims of violent crime committed by juvenile offenders, 62% were younger than 18, compared with 14% of the victims of adult offenders.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

Juveniles were the majority of offenders only among violent crime victims ages 8–15

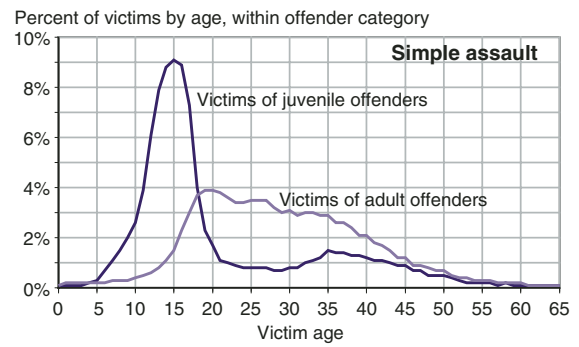
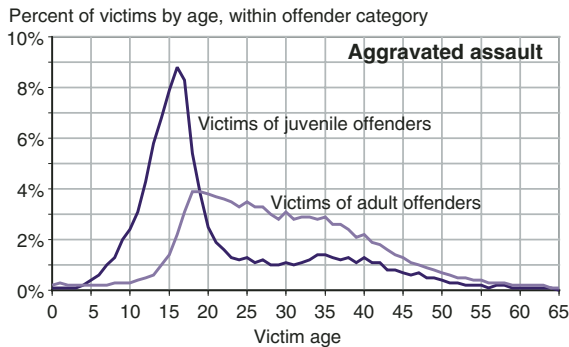
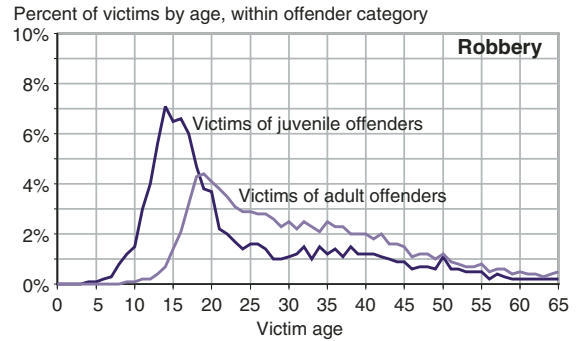
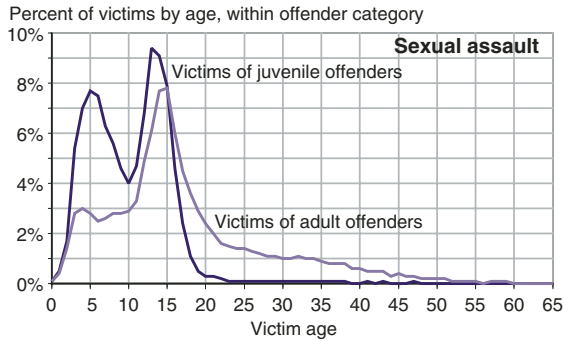
Percent of victims by offender category, within victim age



- ◆ No more than 1 in 7 violent crime victims (14%) in any age group above 18 was the victim of a juvenile offender.
- ◆ Juvenile offenders acting with adults victimized 3% of all violent crime victims, 3% of those younger than 15, 9% of those ages 15–17, and 2% of those ages 18 and older.

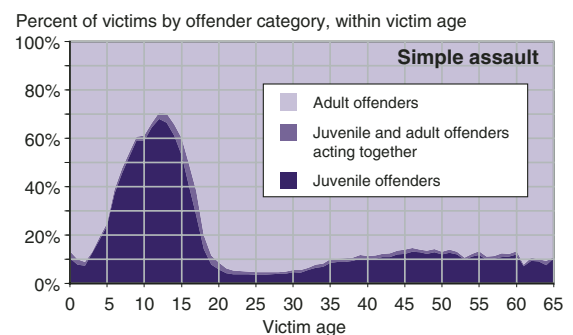
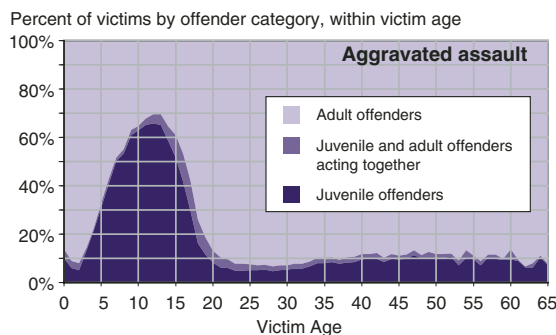
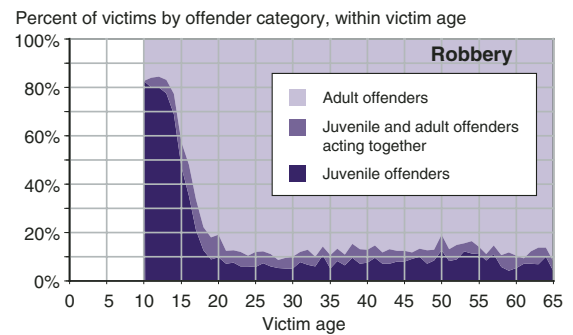
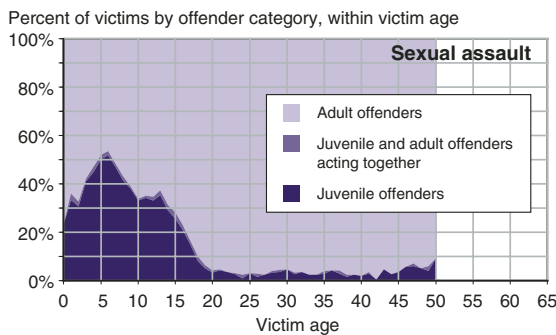
Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

The age profile for victims of sexual assault by juvenile offenders differed from the age profiles for victims of other violent crimes



- ◆ In contrast to victim profiles for other violent crimes by juvenile offenders, a disproportionate number of sexual assault victims were younger than 10, and relatively large numbers were ages 3–5.

Among adult victims of violent crime, especially victims of sexual assault, only a small percentage of victimizations involved juvenile offenders



Note: There were too few cases to obtain reliable offender proportions for sexual assault victims older than 50 or robbery victims younger than 10.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

Almost half (48%) of the victims of juvenile crime were juveniles who were acquaintances of the offender

Offender Category and Offense	Victim Category and Relationship to Offender						All
	Juvenile			Adult			
	Family	Acquaintance	Stranger	Family	Acquaintance	Stranger	
Juvenile							
Total	8%	48%	5%	15%	17%	7%	100%
Sexual assault	27	66	3	1	3	1	100
Robbery	0	22	21	1	13	43	100
Aggravated assault	6	42	6	13	23	10	100
Simple assault	7	49	4	18	18	4	100
Adult							
Total	6	7	1	29	45	11	100
Sexual assault	25	36	3	5	24	6	100
Robbery	0	3	5	1	23	68	100
Aggravated assault	4	6	2	23	51	14	100
Simple assault	5	6	1	34	46	7	100

- ◆ About 1 in 8 violent crime victims of juvenile offenders (5% + 7%) and adult offenders (1% + 11%) was a stranger.
- ◆ Adult victims of juvenile sex offenders were much less likely to be strangers than were adult victims of adult sex offenders (1% versus 6%).
- ◆ More than 1 in 4 victims of a juvenile or adult sex offender was a family member (27% + 1% for juvenile offenders, 25% + 5% for adults).
- ◆ Two-thirds (68%) of the victims of adult robbers were adult strangers, compared with less than half (43%) of the adult victims of juvenile robbers.

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

The National Incident-Based Reporting System

The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), administered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is intended to replace the current Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system with one that collects a wide range of data on a variety of crimes. NIBRS includes information on victims, offenders, and incident circumstances (e.g., multiple victims, offenders, and/or crimes that may be part of the same episode). Data originate with local law enforcement personnel, who record information on crimes that come to their attention. To be counted, an incident need only be reported and investigated. The incident does not have to be cleared or result in an arrest.

Implementation of NIBRS began in 1988, and participation by states and local agencies, which is voluntary, has grown gradually. In 1997 and 1998, the years covered by the data used in this Bulletin, 17 states contributed data; however, 98% of victim records came from 11 of these states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. Because only three states (Idaho, Iowa, and South Carolina) had full participation by all local jurisdictions, and only three cities with populations greater than 500,000 (Austin, TX; Memphis, TN; and Nashville, TN) participated, victimization in large urban areas is particularly underrepresented.

Although the NIBRS data for 1997 and 1998 are not nationally representative, they reflect the experiences of a large number of the victims of juvenile violence. The participating states reported that 667,679 persons were victims of violent crime and that 126,462 (19%) of those victims faced at least one juvenile offender. Despite their limitations, the NIBRS data provide valuable information about the extent and nature of violent crimes committed by juveniles.

Nearly all victims of juveniles knew their offender

The relationships of victims to offenders can be divided into three broad categories: acquaintance, family, and stranger. In those incidents where the relationship was known, the majority (65%) of the victims of juvenile violence were acquaintances of the offender, 23% were family members, and 12% were strangers. Victims who did not know the juvenile offender were about evenly divided between adults (7%) and juveniles (5%). Thus, about 1 in 15 victims of juvenile violence was an adult who was a stranger to the offender.

Victim relationship to offender varies by victim age

Younger victims of violent crimes committed by juvenile offenders tended to be acquaintances of the offender, whereas older victims of these crimes tended to be family members. The juvenile offender was an acquaintance for 78% of juvenile victims and 63% of victims ages 18–30 but a family member for more than half (55%) of victims older than 30.

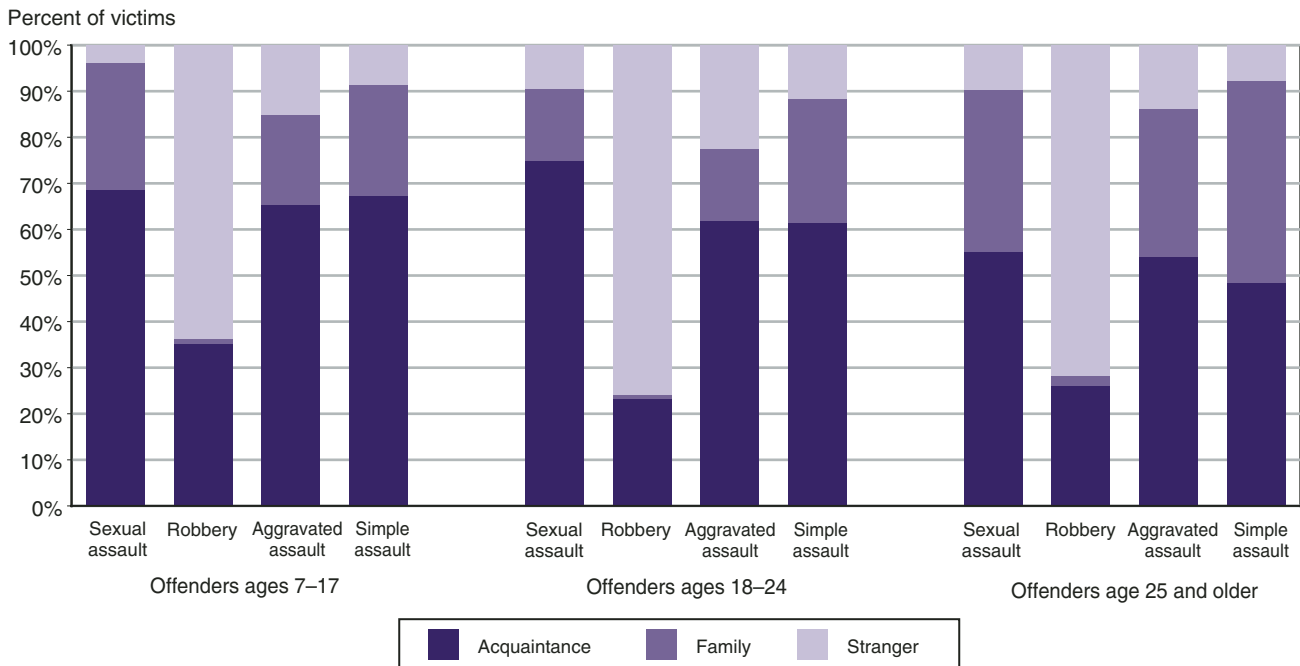
Of all victims of juvenile violence who were acquainted with the offender, 74% were younger than 18. Of all victims of juvenile violence who were strangers to the offender, more than half (56%) were age 18 or older. Family victims were the oldest group: although 36% of family victims of juvenile offenders were younger than 18, more than half (51%) were ages 30–60.

Victim relationship to offender varies by offense

In crimes committed by juveniles, acquaintances were the majority of victims of sexual assault (69%), aggravated assault (65%), and simple assault (67%). Family members were 28% of the victims of sexual assault, 19% of the victims of aggravated assault, and 24% of the victims of simple assault. Strangers made up a small proportion of the victims of these crimes (sexual assault, 4%; aggravated assault, 16%; and simple assault, 9%).

In sharp contrast, strangers constituted about two-thirds (65%) and acquaintances about one-third (34%) of the victims of juvenile robbers. Robbery victims were very unlikely (1%) to be members of the juvenile offender's family.

The victim's relationship to the offender varied with the type of crime and the offender's age



- ◆ Victims of aggravated and simple assault by juvenile offenders were more likely to be acquaintances than were the victims of older offenders.
- ◆ Victims of robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault by offenders ages 18-24 were more likely to be strangers than were the victims of younger or older offenders.
- ◆ Victims of sexual assault by offenders age 25 and older were more likely to be family members than were the victims of younger offenders.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

Many adult victims of juvenile assault were family members

Parents and stepparents accounted for 9% of all victims of aggravated assaults committed by juveniles and 13% of all simple assaults by juveniles. However, among assault victims older than 30, parents and stepparents accounted for much larger shares: 37% for aggravated assault and 52% for simple assault.

Aggravated assault by juveniles—percentage of victims who were family members:

Victim Age	Total Family	Parents	Other Family
20-24	12%	0%	12%
25-29	12	4	8
30-34	34	25	9
35-39	49	41	8
40-44	51	44	7
45-49	49	43	6
50-54	40	31	8

Simple assault by juveniles—percentage of victims who were family members:

Victim Age	Total Family	Parents	Other Family
20-24	21%	0%	21%
25-29	20	7	13
30-34	50	41	10
35-39	67	60	8
40-44	66	60	7
45-49	58	51	6
50-54	48	37	11

Most young victims of juvenile sexual assault knew the offender

Acquaintances or family members younger than 12 constituted 54% of the victims of sexual assaults committed by juvenile offenders. Of all family victims of sexual assaults by juveniles, 36% were younger

than 6 and most (84%) were younger than 12. Most victims who were either acquaintances or strangers were 12 or older.

Sexual assault by juveniles—victim's relationship to offender:

Victim Age	Family	Acquaintance	Stranger
5 and younger	36%	17%	13%
6-11	48	28	19
12-17	15	50	46
18 and older	2	4	23
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

The majority of violent juvenile offenders were male

For 74% of the victims of juvenile violent crime, the offender was male, specifically, 92% of the sexual assault victims, 94% of the robbery victims, 78% of the aggravated assault victims, and 70% of the simple assault victims.

Among children younger than 2 who were victims of juvenile violent crime, more than one-third (34%) were victimized by female offenders. The proportion of victims of female offenders was lower for other age groups: 17% for victims ages 2–11, 27% for those ages 12–17, and 28% for adult victims. Juveniles accounted for 63% of the victims of male juvenile offenders and 58% of the victims of female juvenile offenders.

About half of the victims of juvenile violence were female

A majority (60%) of victims of violent crime committed by adult offenders were female. In contrast, 46% of the victims of juvenile violence were female. Three-fourths of the victims of juvenile sexual assault were female. Victims of juvenile robberies were the least likely (26%) to be female.

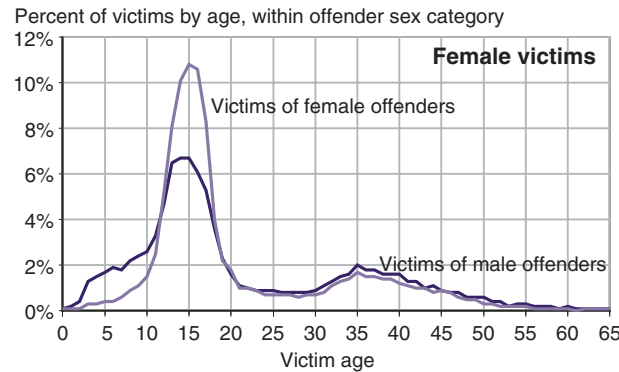
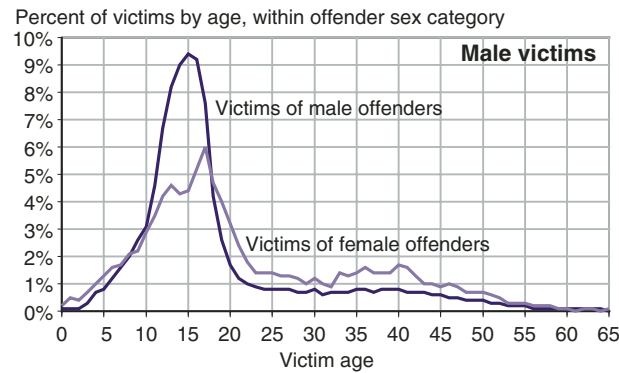
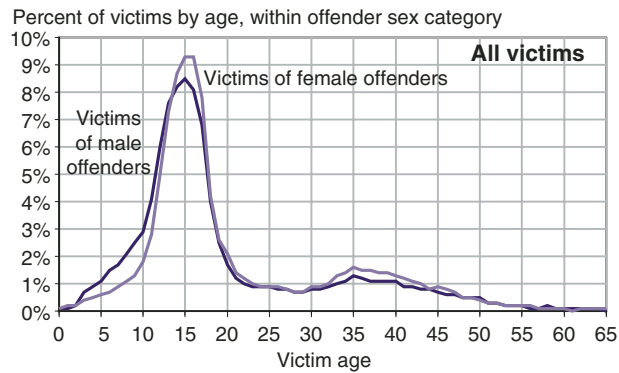
Sex of victims of juvenile offenders:

Offense	Male	Female
Total offenses	54%	46%
Sexual assault	24	76
Robbery	74	26
Aggravated assault	65	35
Simple assault	53	47

Most male victims of juvenile violent crime faced male offenders

For 89% of male victims of juvenile violent crime, and for 92% of male victims younger than 18, the offender was male. Among all female victims of juvenile crime, 42% were victimized by females; among female victims younger than 12, 24% were victimized by females. The proportion of female offenders rose to 52% for female victims ages 12–17, then declined to 39% for adult female victims.

The age profiles for the victims of violent crimes by male juveniles and female juveniles show small differences

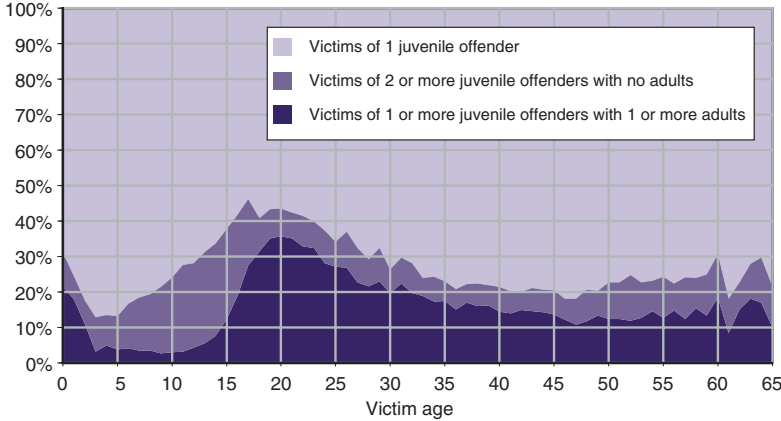


- ◆ Juveniles younger than 14 accounted for 32% of the victims of male offenders and 23% of the victims of female offenders.
- ◆ The ages of both male victims of male juvenile offenders and female victims of female juvenile offenders were concentrated in the teens.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

Among juvenile victims of violent crimes committed by juveniles, 33% were victimized by multiple juvenile offenders or by juveniles acting with adults

Percent of victims of juvenile offenders by offender category, within victim age

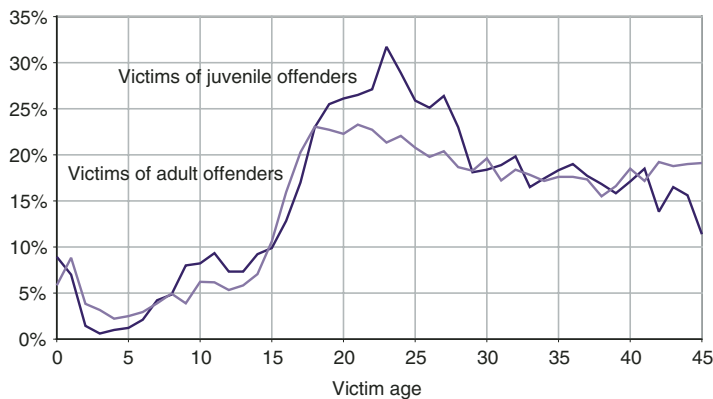


- ◆ Among juvenile victims of violent crimes committed by juveniles, 22% faced multiple juvenile offenders.
- ◆ Among adult victims of violent crimes committed by juveniles, 22% faced juvenile offenders acting with adults.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

In sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults, young adult victims were the most likely to face armed juvenile offenders

Percent of victims of armed offenders, within offender category



- ◆ Among 23-year-old victims of violent crimes, 32% of those victimized by juveniles faced an armed offender, compared with 21% of those victimized by adults.
- ◆ Gun crimes involving juvenile offenders constituted 20% of all gun crime.

Data source: Analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 1997 and 1998. [See data source note on page 8 for details.]

The risk of injury during juvenile crimes was greatest for older teens and young adults

In sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults committed by juveniles, 40% of the victims were injured, compared with 48% of the victims of such crimes committed by adults. By age group, the percentage of victims injured by juveniles in the commission of these crimes was 34% of victims age 15 and younger, 49% of those ages 16–24, and 43% of those age 25 and older.

Multiple offenders were more likely in juvenile robbery than in other crimes

About a third (32%) of the victims of juvenile violent crimes faced multiple offenders; 17% were victimized by two or more juveniles and 15% were victimized by juveniles acting with adults. In juvenile robberies, the share of victims who faced multiple offenders increased to 61%.

Violent victimizations by juveniles:

Offense	Lone Juvenile	Multiple Offenders	
	Offender	Juveniles	Adults and Juveniles
Total offenses	69%	17%	15%
Sexual assault	85	9	5
Robbery	39	31	30
Aggravated assault	65	15	20
Simple assault	69	17	14

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Guns were more likely with multiple offenders than lone offenders

By definition, guns are not present in simple assaults, but they may be present in sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults. An armed offender was encountered by 13% of the victims of juveniles committing these crimes, compared with 18% of the victims of adult offenders. Most (59%) of the victims of juvenile gun crime were age 18 or older.

In crimes committed by juveniles with a gun present, 23% of victims were injured. In contrast, 43% of victims were injured

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in crimes committed by juveniles with no gun present.

Victims of multiple offenders were more likely than victims of lone offenders to encounter firearms. Guns were involved in 9% of sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault victimizations by juvenile offenders acting alone, 17% of victimizations by two or more juveniles, and 26% of victimizations by juveniles acting with adults. In comparison, a gun was present in 16% of such victimizations committed by an adult offender acting alone and 27% of victimizations by two or more adult offenders.

Methods

This Bulletin uses NIBRS data for 1997 and 1998 (see sidebar on page 4). The incidents included for analysis were those

for which the most serious offense was forcible rape, forcible sodomy, sexual assault with an object, forcible fondling, robbery, aggravated assault, or simple assault. The unit of count is the victim. Victims were selected for analysis if any offender was age 7 or older. Among those victimized in violent crimes committed by juvenile offenders, approximately 9% were victims of sexual assault, 4% were victims of robbery, 21% were victims of aggravated assault, and 67% were victims of simple assault.

Data source note

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2000. *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for the years 1997 and 1998 [machine-readable data files]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Acknowledgments

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