

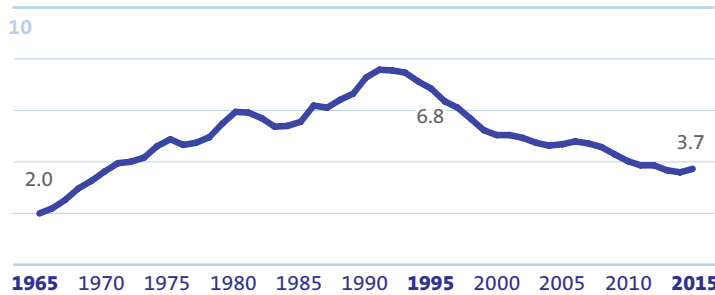


Crime Trends

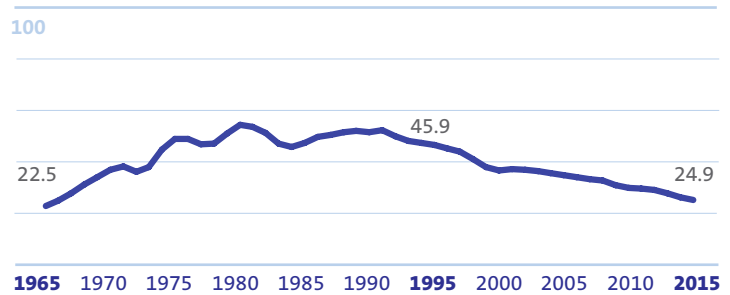
Criminal victimization trends provide useful insights by positioning annual data within a broader context. To estimate these trends at the national level, researchers rely primarily on two sources of crime data: the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s **Uniform Crime Reporting Program** (UCR) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics’s **National Crime Victimization Survey** (NCVS). Both the UCR and the NCVS have been collected for decades. While their methodologies and findings differ in some key ways, each provides critical information necessary to understand crime and victimization in the United States. *For more information, see the Crime and Victimization in the United States fact sheet in this series.*

While **the rate of criminal victimization has decreased dramatically over the past 50 years**, many in the general public believe crime rates have increased. According to Gallup polls conducted since the mid-to-late 1990s, more than half of Americans have consistently reported that they believe there is more crime in the United States today than there was a year ago.^A This misconception can be attributed to a variety of factors, but importantly, it demonstrates the necessity of monitoring crime and victimization trends long-term, and effectively communicating these trends to key stakeholders and the public at large. Crime and victimization trends provide researchers, victim service providers, policymakers, and the public with the information they need to accurately interpret, understand, and act on issues related to criminal victimization.

Violent Crime^B
rate per 1,000 people

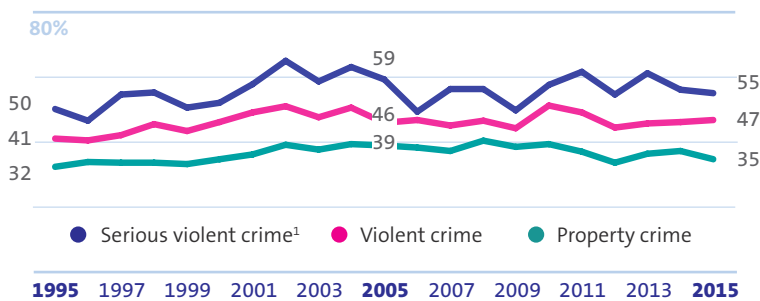


Property Crime^B
rate per 1,000 people



Without the context that long-term observation provides, year-to-year changes in crime and victimization numbers often seem more significant than they really are. Because changes in the prevalence and extent of victimization are always evaluated within the context of time, changing that context—i.e., selecting a different subset of years—may influence whether criminal victimization appears to be increasing or decreasing. For example, **violent crime is slightly higher now than it was in 1965 but is also significantly lower than it was in 1991.**^B Overall, other than a few localized exceptions demanding targeted attention, violent crime rates are lower today than at any point over the past four decades.

Percent of Victimization Reported to Law Enforcement^C



DID YOU KNOW?

The NCVS asks respondents if they reported victimizations to police:

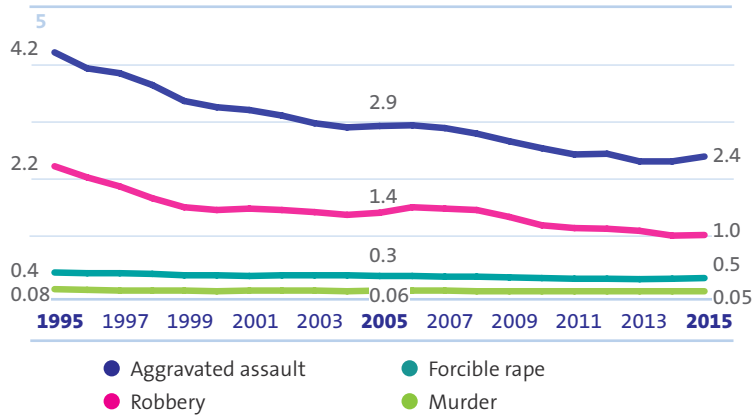
In 2015, an estimated **55% of serious violent victimizations were reported** to the authorities, compared to 47% of all violent victimizations and 35% of all property victimizations.^C

UCR VS. NCVS CRIME VICTIMIZATION TRENDS

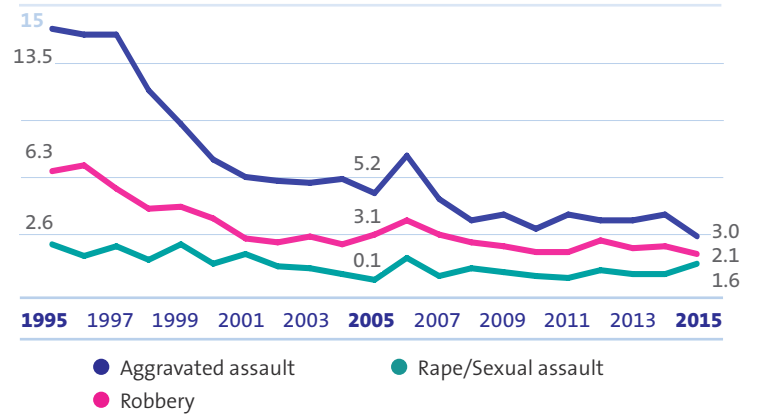
The UCR for 2015 showed a slight increase in serious violent crimes compared to 2014.¹ In 2015, the rate of aggravated assault was 2 per 1,000 people, while the rate of robbery was 1 per 1,000 people. **Less than 1 person in every 1,000 was a victim of forcible rape or murder.**²

The NCVS did not report an increase in serious violent victimization between 2014 and 2015. Roughly 3 in every 1,000 people age 12 or older were victims of aggravated assault and 2 in 1,000 people were victims of robbery in 2015. The rape/sexual assault rate did increase slightly, from 1.1 in 2014 to 1.6 in 2015.³

UCR Serious Violent Crime^{B2}
rate per 1,000 people

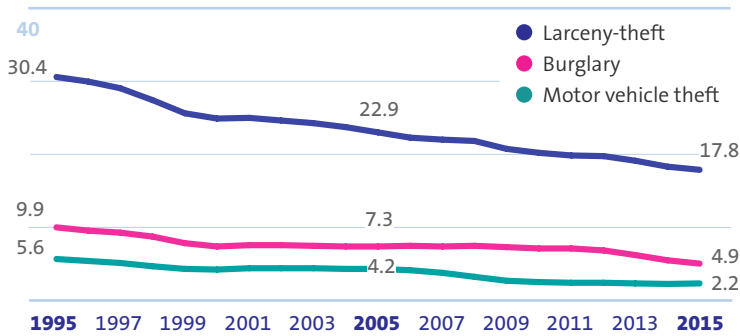


NCVS Violent Crime^C
rate per 1,000 people

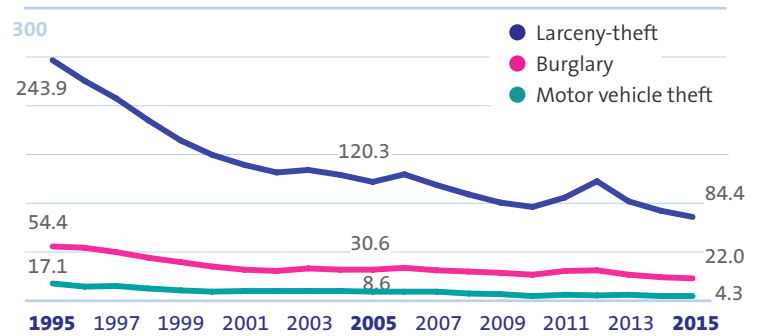


The UCR and the NCVS both reported a **downward trend in property crime** in 2015. However, the NCVS consistently reports higher levels of larceny-theft, burglary, and motor vehicle theft—which highlights an important distinction between the UCR and the NCVS: the UCR aggregates property victimizations reported by participating law enforcement agencies, while the NCVS collects information on property from a representative sample of U.S. households. As a result, the two figures cannot be compared directly. Furthermore, because the UCR is measured by the number of incidents reported to law enforcement, it also includes property victimizations occurring at commercial businesses.

UCR Property Crime^B
rate per 1,000 people



NCVS Property Crime^C
rate per 1,000 households



NOTES

- Violent victimization encompasses rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Serious violent victimization excludes simple assault.
- Graph uses UCR legacy definition of “forcible rape”: the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will.

SOURCES

A Justin McCarthy, “More Americans Say Crime Is Rising in U.S.,” (Gallup Poll, 2015), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/186308/americans-say-crime-rising.aspx>

B FBI, *Crime in the United States, 1995 - 2015*, (U.S. Department of Justice), <https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm>; Table 1, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/ucr-publications>

C Bureau of Justice Statistics, *National Crime Victimization Survey, Concatenated File, 1992-2015*, (U.S. Department of Justice)

