



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

*National Crime Victimization Survey*

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# Violent Victimization of College Students, 1995-2002

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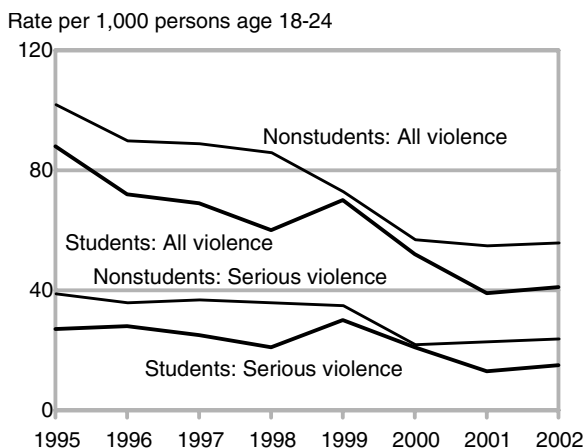
For the period 1995 to 2002, college students ages 18 to 24 experienced violence at average annual rates lower than those for nonstudents in the same age group (61 per 1,000 students versus 75 per 1,000 nonstudents). Except for rape/sexual assault, average annual rates were lower for students than for nonstudents for each type of violent crime measured (robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault). Rates of rape/sexual assault for the two groups did not differ statistically.

Between 1995 and 2002 rates of both overall and serious violence declined for college students and nonstudents. The violent crime rate for college students declined 54% (41 versus 88 per 1,000) and for nonstudents declined 45% (102 versus 56 per 1,000).

Findings about rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault victimization of college students and nonstudents come from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). In this report, college students are persons ages 18 to 24 who reported being enrolled full or part-time in a college or university. Nonstudents, in the

## Highlights

**From 1995 to 2002 violence against college students decreased 54%, while violence against nonstudents of similar ages fell 45%**



**On average, from 1995 to 2002, comparing persons ages 18-24 –**

- Male college students were twice as likely to be victims of overall violence than female students (80 versus 43 per 1,000).
- White college students had somewhat higher rates of violent victimization than blacks and higher rates than students of other races (65 versus 52 and 37 per 1,000, respectively).
- For females, nonstudents were over 1.5 times more likely than college students to be a victim of a violent crime (71 versus 43 per 1,000). For males, students and nonstudents were

equally likely to be the victim of a violent crime (about 80 per 1,000).

- For both whites and blacks, nonstudents had higher rates of violent victimization than college students (81 and 83 versus 65 and 52 per 1,000).
- Hispanic college students and nonstudents experience violence at similar rates.

### Characteristics of violent victimizations of college students:

- 58% were committed by strangers.
- 41% of offenders were perceived to be using alcohol or drugs.
- 93% of crimes occurred off campus, of which 72% occurred at night.

**Table 1. Violent victimization rates of college students and nonstudents, by type of crime, 1995-2002**

Year	Rates per 1,000 persons ages 18-24											
	Violent crime		Rape/sexual assault		Robbery		Aggravated assault		Simple assault		Serious violent crime <sup>a</sup>	
	College students	Non-students	College students	Non-students	College students	Non-students	College students	Non-students	College students	Non-students	College students	Non-students
1995	87.7	101.6	4.3	4.4	8.4	12.2	14.5	22.2	60.5	62.8	27.3	38.8
2002	40.6	56.1	3.3	4.1	2.9*	6.8	9.1	13.2	25.3	32.0	15.3	24.1
Average annual	60.7	75.3	3.8	4.1	5.0	9.5	13.5	17.7	38.4	44.1	22.3	31.3
Percent change, 1995-02	-53.7%**	-44.8%**	-23.3%	-7.0%	-65.7%**	-44.1%**	-37.1% <sup>‡</sup>	-40.5%**	-58.1%**	-49.1%**	-43.8%**	-37.9%**

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

\*\*The difference from 1995 to 2002 is at the 95%-significance level.

<sup>‡</sup>The difference from 1995 to 2002 is at the 90%-significance level.

<sup>a</sup>Serious violent crime includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

same age category, did not attend a college or university but may have attended another type of school.

**College student and nonstudent victimization trends, 1995-2002**

Declines in the rates of overall violent victimization for the period 1995-2002

were of similar magnitude for both students and nonstudents, down 54% and 45%, respectively (table 1). The rate of aggravated assault against college students declined marginally over the period, while the rate of rape/sexual assault was not significantly lower.

During the period 1995-2002 for nonstudents, the rates of all measured violent crimes declined except for rape/sexual assault.

Rates of serious violent crime (rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) declined from 1995 to 2002 for both students and nonstudents.

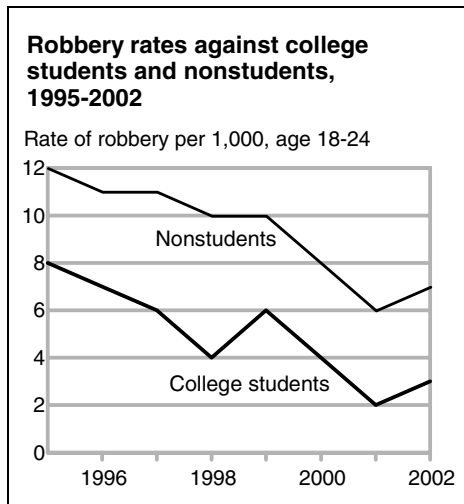


Figure 1

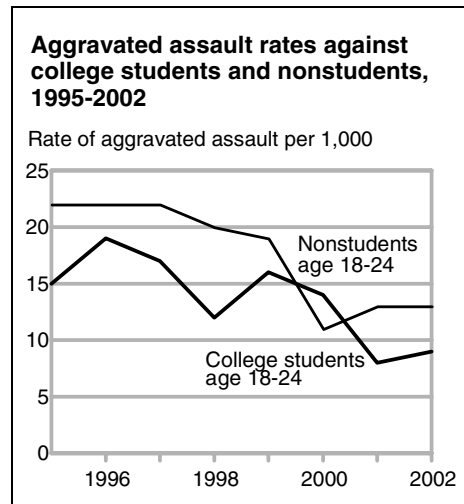


Figure 2

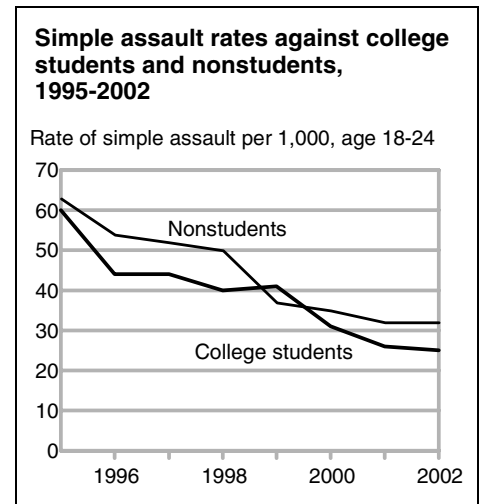


Figure 3

**The National Crime Victimization Survey**

The NCVS is the Nation's primary source of information on the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of criminal victimization. One of the largest continuous household surveys conducted by the Federal Government, the NCVS collects information about crimes both reported and not reported to police.

The survey provides the largest national forum for victims to describe their experiences of victimization, the impact of crime, and the characteristics of violent offenders.

This report presents estimates of crime against college students. Questions were added to the NCVS in 1995 to obtain information on college enrollment.

For the current overall estimates of criminal victimization in the United States, see *Criminal Victimization, 2003*, <[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv03.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv03.htm)>. Other findings from the NCVS are also on the BJS website.

## Characteristics of violent crime victims, 1995-2002

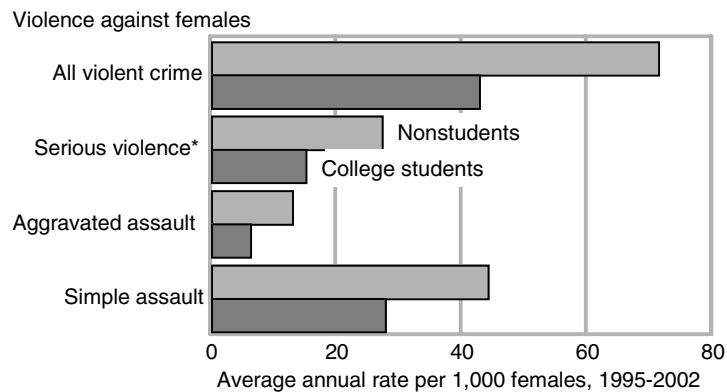
### College students

On average annually between 1995 and 2002, about 7.9 million people from ages 18 to 24 were enrolled full- or part-time in a college or university. These college students experienced robbery, overall violence, and serious violence at rates lower than those of nonstudents of similar ages (table 2). Simple assault accounted for 63% of violent victimizations against college students, while rape/sexual assault accounted for about 6%.

### Gender

The average annual rate of overall violent crime against female college students (43 per 1,000) was nearly half that of male college students (80 per 1,000). Among nonstudents, overall violence rates against females were

**Violent victimization of female college students and nonstudents ages 18-24, 1995-2002**



\*Serious violent crime includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Figure 4

lower than those for males but with a smaller difference than among students (71 versus 79 per 1,000).

Male college students and nonstudents of similar ages were victims of both overall violent crime and aggravated

assault at similar rates. For robbery and simple assault, male nonstudents were more likely than students to be victims.

The average annual violent victimization rate for female college students was lower than the rate for female nonstudents (43 and 71 per 1,000 persons, respectively) (table 2 and figure 4). Female college students were less likely than female nonstudents to be victims of aggravated assault, robbery, simple assault, and overall serious violence. Female college students were somewhat less likely than nonstudents to be the victim of a rape/sexual assault.

### Race/ethnicity

White students and students of other races— American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, and Pacific Islanders considered together — had lower average rates of overall violent victimization than nonstudents. The violent victimization rate of black students was somewhat lower than that of black nonstudents. For Hispanics the violent victimization rates of students and nonstudents were nearly identical.

**Table 2. Violent victimization of persons ages 18-24, by type of crime and victims' student status, gender, race, and ethnicity, 1995-2002**

Victims of violence	Population	Average annual rates per 1,000 persons ages 18-24					
		Violent crime	Rape/sexual assault	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Simple assault	Serious violent crime
<b>College students</b>	7,894,930	60.7	3.8	5.0	13.5	38.4	22.3
Gender							
Male	3,796,380	80.2	1.4	7.4	21.4	49.9	30.2
Female	4,098,550	42.7	6.0	2.7	6.2	27.7	15.0
Race/ethnicity <sup>a</sup>							
White	5,592,920	64.9	4.0	4.4	13.2	43.3	21.6
Black	934,160	52.4	3.2*	8.7	15.6	24.9	27.5
Other	580,700	37.2	2.1*	7.0	9.8	18.4	18.8
Hispanic	811,370	56.1	4.6*	2.8*	15.4	33.4	22.8
<b>Non-students</b>	17,947,440	75.3	4.1	9.5	17.7	44.1	31.3
Gender							
Male	9,143,340	79.2	0.4*	12.4	22.4	44.0	35.2
Female	8,804,110	71.3	7.9	6.4	12.9	44.1	27.2
Race/ethnicity <sup>a</sup>							
White	11,237,850	81.2	4.5	7.5	17.6	51.6	29.6
Black	2,656,380	83.2	4.9	16.7	22.5	39.1	44.1
Other	662,970	43.1	3.6*	7.5	12.1	20.0	23.1
Hispanic	3,390,240	55.9	1.9	10.8	15.7	27.5	28.4

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

<sup>a</sup>For this report, all racial categories do not include Hispanics. "Other" includes Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives, and American Indians considered together.

**Table 3. Violent victimization of college students, by offender characteristics and type of crime, 1995-2002**

Offender characteristics	Average annual victimization of college students									
	Violent crime		Rape/sexual assault		Robbery		Aggravated assault		Simple assault	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
<b>Relationship to victim</b>										
Known	185,250	38.7%	23,630	78.5%	6,120	15.6%	32,720	30.7%	122,780	40.5%
Stranger	278,030	58.0	5,700	18.9	31,870	81.2	67,080	62.9	173,370	57.2
Don't know	15,870	3.3	770*	2.6*	1,280*	3.3*	6,870	6.4	6,930	2.3
<b>Perceived use of drugs and/or alcohol</b>										
Using	196,560	41.0%	12,120	40.3%	9,790	24.9%	47,060	44.1%	127,580	42.1%
Not using	104,500	21.8	11,480	38.1	6,430	16.4	15,540	14.6	71,050	23.4
Don't know	178,090	37.2	6,500	21.6	23,060	58.7	44,070	41.3	104,450	34.5
<b>Gang membership</b>										
Gang member	26,560	5.5%	390*	1.3%*	1,900	4.8%	9,950	9.3%	14,320	4.7%
Not a member	264,700	55.2	22,640	75.2	10,990	28.0	52,130	48.9	178,940	59.0
Don't know	187,880	39.2	7,070	23.5	26,390	67.2	44,590	41.8	109,830	36.2

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

In a comparison of students alone, non-Hispanic whites were more likely than other races to be victims of overall violence or simple assault. Black students were somewhat more likely than white students to suffer a simple assault. For all other crimes measured for college students, no differences in victimization rates were detected between racial groups.

Among nonstudents, non-Hispanic whites and blacks were equally likely to be victims of overall violence. Both whites and blacks had higher rates of overall violence than nonstudents of other races and Hispanics. Except for robbery among the specific types of crime experienced by nonstudents, there were no measurable differences between the races. Black nonstudents were twice as likely as whites to be the victim of a robbery.

**Characteristics of offenders in violent crime against college students, 1995-2002**

*Victim-offender relationship*

Except for rape/sexual assault, college students were most often violently victimized by people they did not know (table 3). Victims of rape/sexual assault were about 4 times more likely to be victimized by someone they knew than by a stranger.

Eight of ten robberies of college students were committed by strangers, compared to about 6 of 10 assaults and about 2 of 10 rapes/sexual assaults.

*Drug and alcohol use*

About 4 in 10 violent crimes against college students were committed by offenders who were perceived by victims to be using drugs or alcohol. A similar proportion (37%) was unsure whether the offenders were using drugs or alcohol. A higher percentage of college students victimized by aggravated assault or simple assault perceived their offenders as more likely to be using drugs or alcohol.

Among students who were robbed, about twice as many students did not know whether the offender was using drugs or alcohol (59%) compared to students who could say drugs or alcohol were either involved (25%) or not involved (16%). Among victims of rape/sexual assault, there was no difference in the percentages of victims of offenders perceived to be using drugs or alcohol and those who were not (40% versus 38%).

*Gang membership*

Overall, about 1 in 18 victims of violent crime believed the offender to be a member of a gang. Of the rest, 55% did not perceive the offenders to be involved in a gang, and 39% did not know. Gangs were less likely to be involved, according to students' perceptions, in overall violence (6%) or simple assault (5%) than they were in aggravated assault (9%). Students were equally likely to report gang members were involved in simple assault or robbery. Over two-thirds of student victims of robbery reported they did not know whether the offender was in a gang.

## Characteristics of criminal events against college students, 1995-2002

### Location and time

College students were more likely to be violently victimized off campus than on campus between 1995 and 2002. This was true for both students who lived on campus (85%) and those living off campus (95%). Overall, about 9 out of 10 students were victimized off campus.

Living in college dormitory	Percent of victimizations, 1995-2002	
	Off campus	On campus
Total	92.9%	7.1%
Yes	85.2	14.8
No	94.8	5.2

The most common locations for violent victimizations against college students were in an open area or street or on public transportation (24%), in a commercial place (18%) or in or near a friend's, neighbor's or relative's home (17%) (table 4). Violent crimes off campus were more likely to occur in the evening or at night (6 p.m.– 6 a.m.) than during the day (72% versus 25%). Among violent crimes that occurred on campus, 56% occurred during the day (6 a.m. – 6 p.m.).

### Presence of a weapon

About two-thirds of college students victimized by violence said that the offender(s) did not have a weapon

(table 5). Nine percent of violent victimizations involved offenders armed with firearms; 7% were committed with knives; and 10% were committed with other types of weapons, such as a blunt object. The remainder did not know the type of weapon or if a weapon was used.

For rape/sexual assault victimizations, 87% of students said there was no weapon involved, compared with 38% for robberies. The most common weapon type used in a robbery was a firearm (31%) followed by a knife (19%). About 1 out of 9 assaults were committed with some type of weapon other than a firearm or knife.

**Table 4. Violent victimization of college students, by location and time of crimes, 1995-2002**

Location characteristics	Average annual number	Percent of all crimes
<b>Location of incident</b>		
Open area/on street/public transportation	115,990	24.2%
Commercial place	87,420	18.2
In/at/near home of friend/relative/neighbor	81,940	17.1
Victim's home	51,580	10.8
Parking lot/garage	42,880	9.0
Near victim's home	38,270	8.0
School	32,750	6.8
Other	28,330	5.9
<b>Off campus</b>		
Day (6 a.m. - 6 p.m.)	112,930	25.5%
Night (6 p.m. - 6 a.m.)	319,260	72.0
<b>On campus</b>		
Day (6 a.m.-6 p.m.)	18,160	56.1%
Night (6 p.m.-6 a.m.)	12,480	38.5

**Table 5. Weapons present in violent crimes against college students, by type of crime and type of weapon, 1995-2002**

Presence of weapon	Average annual victimization of college students							
	Violent crime		Rape/sexual assault		Robbery		Assault	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	479,140	100%	30,110	100%	39,280	100%	409,760	100%
No weapon	315,680	65.9	26,180	87.0	15,000	38.2	274,510	67.0
Weapon								
Firearm	42,890	9.0	--	--	12,180	31.0	30,710	7.5
Knife	32,100	6.7	1,220*	4.1*	7,340	18.7	23,540	5.7
Other	46,640	9.7	--	--	2,490*	6.3*	44,160	10.8
Type unknown	4,440*	0.9*	400*	1.3*	--	--	4,040*	1.0*
Don't know	37,380	7.8	2,300*	7.6*	2,280*	5.8*	32,800	8.0

--Represents or rounds to zero.  
\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

**Table 6. Violent crime injuries and their treatment, by student status of victims, 1995-2002**

	Percent of all violence	
	College students	Non-students
<b>Type of injury</b>		
Not injured	75.2%	68.8%
Injured		
Serious injury	3.0	3.9
Rape/sexual assault without additional injury	2.2	1.6
Minor injuries only	19.6	25.5
<b>Type of treatment</b>		
Injured, not treated	59.2%	58.2%
Injured, treated		
At scene or home	15.4	14.7
Doctor's office or clinic	6.2	4.7
Hospital/ED		
Not admitted	15.2	18.5
Admitted	1.4*	2.5
Other locale	2.6*	0.9*
Don't know	--	0.3*

Note: Percentages for types of treatment are based on injured victims only.

--Less than .05%.

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

#### *Injuries and medical treatment*

About 25% of college student victims of violence and 31% of nonstudent victims were injured during the victimization (table 6). Minor injuries were the most common type of injury for both groups, but 3% of student victims and 4% of nonstudent victims suffered a serious injury.

In 60% of the violent victimizations of college students that resulted in an injury, the victim did not receive treatment. Among injured college students, 15% received treatment at the scene or at home, and 15% were treated in a hospital or emergency room but were not admitted.

Among nonstudents, 58% of the victimizations resulting in an injury were not treated. The most common type of treatment among nonstudents who were injured was in a hospital or emergency room without being admitted (19%). Fifteen percent of injured nonstudents were treated at the scene or home, and 3% were admitted to a hospital for treatment.

**Table 7. Reasons for not reporting violent victimization to police, by student status of victims, 1995-2002**

Reasons for not reporting	Percent of all violence	
	College students	Non-students
<b>Reported</b>	35.2%	46.9%
<b>Not reported</b>		
Private or personal matter	30.7	26.8
Minor crime/no loss	24.7	19.1
Reported to another official	8.5	9.3
Fear of reprisal	2.5	5.1
Protect offender	3.1	4.0
Not clear a crime occurred	4.2	2.3
Lack of proof	4.5	3.7
Inconvenient	2.5	2.9
Police will not bother	2.4	4.0
Child offender	0.6	0.5
Police inefficient	0.5	2.2
Police bias	0.2	1.1
Property unrecoverable	--	0.8
Other reason given	15.7	18.3

--Less than .05%.

#### *Reporting to the police*

The police were informed in about 35% of violent victimizations against college students. Victimizations of nonstudents (47%) were more likely to be reported than those of college students (table 7). The most common reasons given by college students for not reporting to the police were that the violence was a private or personal matter (31%) and that the crime was minor or resulted in no loss (25%). Among nonstudents about 1 of 4 crimes were not reported to police because they were a private or personal matter.

#### **Activity at time of victimization, 1995-2002**

##### *Daytime*

Working was the most common activity in which students were engaged at the time they were victimized during the day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Student victims were somewhat more likely than nonstudent victims to report they were working when victimized. Seven percent of the college students were victimized while going to or from school.

**Table 8. Activity at time of violent victimization, by time of day and student status of victims, 1995-2002**

Activity at time of victimization	Percent of all violence	
	College students	Non-students
<b>Day (6 a.m. - 6 p.m.)</b>	100%	100%
Working	21.4	16.7
To/from work	2.4	3.9
To/from school	7.2	2.5
To/from other place	10.0	9.4
Shopping/errands	5.4	4.8
Attending school	6.2	5.0
Leisure activity		
away from home	15.5	18.6
Sleeping	0.5*	1.3
Other activities at home	15.5	22.5
Other	7.7	7.5
Do not know activity	0.6*	0.4*
<b>Night (6 p.m. - 6 a.m.)</b>	100%	100%
Working	7.6	8.9
To/from work	3.1	4.1
To/from school	1.1*	0.5*
To/from other place	11.8	8.7
Shopping/errands	2.3	3.0
Attending school	0.7*	0.1*
Leisure activity		
away from home	48.7	37.4
Sleeping	2.3	3.5
Other activities at home	9.5	19.3
Other	6.4	7.0
Do not know activity	0.1*	0.3*

Note: Excludes those who did not know the time when the violent victimization occurred.

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Nonstudent victims were more likely than students to have been involved in other activities at home when they were violently victimized during the day. College students were most likely to be the victim of a violent crime during the day while working, while engaged in leisure activities away from home, or while at home.

##### *Nighttime*

The most common activity at night associated with victimization among both college students and nonstudents was involvement in a leisure activity away from home. Forty-nine percent of the victimized college students, compared to 37% of the nonstudent victims, were involved in leisure activities at the time of the crime.

## Survey methodology

This report presents data on rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and simple assault against college age persons (18-24 years old) from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The NCVS gathers data on crimes against persons age 12 or older, reported and not reported to the police, from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households. The NCVS provides information about victims (age, gender, race, ethnicity, marital status, income, and educational level), offenders (gender, race, approximate age, and victim-offender relations) and the nature of the crime (time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, and economic consequences).

The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 mandated the study of campus victimization. Beginning in 1995 BJS added new items to the NCVS to ascertain the student status of victims of crime.

This report compares violent victimization experienced by self-identified, full- or part-time college or university students who are ages 18-24 to violent victimization of nonstudents of similar ages. Nonstudents did not attend a college or university but may have attended a secondary school, trade school, or other type of school. Data are limited in this report to respondents in this age group who indicated whether or not they were enrolled in school during prior six months. Persons in this age group who did not indicate whether or not they were enrolled in college were omitted from the analysis.

Between 1995 and 2002, 1,294,130 individuals age 12 or older were interviewed for the NCVS. For the overall population, for the years measured, response rates varied between 89% and 91% of eligible individuals. Response rates for the total number of college students (36,881) and nonstudents (83,870) ranged between 80% and 88%.

The NCVS crimes are measured when they meet characteristics as follows:

**Rape/sexual assault** This category includes forced sexual intercourse including psychological coercion as well as physical force.

Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category also includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object. It includes attempted rapes, male as well as female victims and both heterosexual and homosexual rape. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape.

Sexual assault is also included in this category which includes a wide range of victimizations, separate from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include attacks or attempted attacks generally involving unwanted sexual contact between victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force and include such things as grabbing or fondling. Sexual assault also includes verbal threats.

**Robbery** Completed or attempted theft, directly from a person, of property or cash by force or threat of force, with or without a weapon, and with or without injury.

**Aggravated assault** Attack or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether or not an injury occurred and attack without a weapon when serious injury results.

**Simple assault** Attack without a weapon resulting either no injury, minor injury (for example, bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches or swelling) or in undetermined injury requiring less than 2 days of hospitalization.

## Standard error computations

Comparisons of percentages and rates made in this report were tested to determine if observed differences were statistically significant. Differences described as higher, lower, or different passed a hypothesis test at the .05 level of statistical significance (95% confidence level). The tested difference was greater than twice the standard error of that difference. For comparisons that were statistically significant at the 0.10 level (90% confidence level), "somewhat," "slightly," or "marginally" is used to note the nature of the difference.

Significance testing calculations were conducted at the Bureau of Justice Statistics using statistical programs developed specifically for the NCVS by the U.S. Census Bureau. These programs take into consideration many aspects of the complex NCVS sample design when calculating generalized variance estimates.

Asterisks mark estimates based on 10 or fewer sample cases in the report tables. Estimates based on 10 or fewer sample cases have high relative standard errors. Care should be taken when comparing such estimates to other estimates also based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Lawrence A. Greenfeld is director.

Katrina Baum and Patsy Klaus wrote the report under the supervision of Michael Rand. Cathy Maston provided statistical assistance and verification. Tom Hester edited the report.

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