

# SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY FEBRUARY 2003

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released its annual report on criminal victimization in September of 2002<sup>3</sup>. Victimization rates in 2001 are the lowest recorded since 1973, when the NCVS began collecting data. In 2001, the violent crime<sup>4</sup> rate fell 10% from the previous year, and the property crime<sup>5</sup> rate fell 6% for the same period. There were 25 violent crime victimizations per 1,000 people in 2001, compared to 28 per 1,000 people in 2000. The rate of property crime fell to 167 per 1,000 households in 2001. In 2000 the property crime rate was 178 per 1,000 households.

## **Violent Crime**

The rate of violent crime has been decreasing since 1994. The drop in the violent crime rate in 2001 was due primarily to a significant decrease in the rate of *simple* assault. Rape showed no change from 2000 to 2001. The decrease in robbery was 12.5%, but was not statistically significant. Robberies with injury were up 7%. Robbery is at the lowest rate (2.8 robberies per 1,000 people) since 1973. [AUTHORS' NOTE: Measure of rape is the least reliable based on small sample size.] Table 1

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<sup>3</sup> The Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Victimization report can be found on-line at:  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv00.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> In the NCVS, "violent crime" includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and assault (both aggravated and simple). This survey is based on interviews with victims, and therefore cannot measure murder.

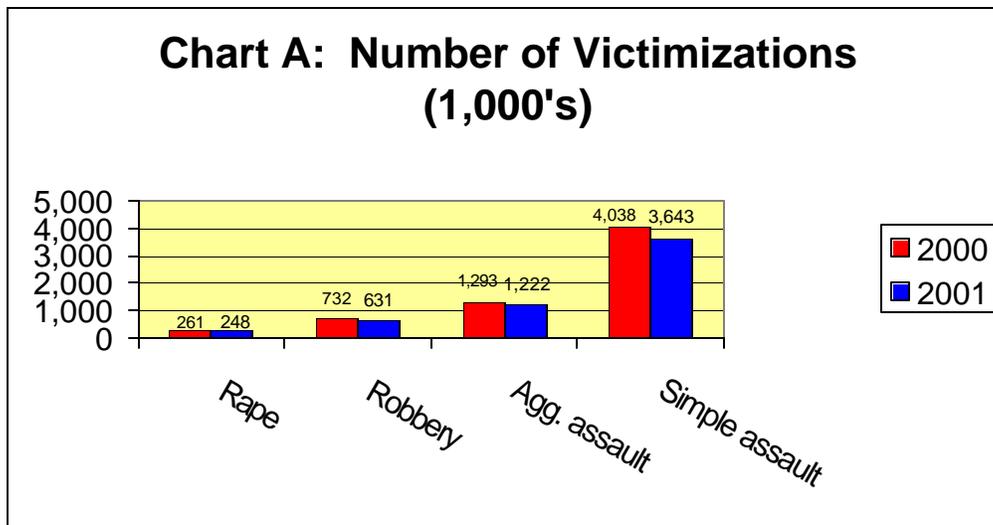
<sup>5</sup> In the NCVS, "property crime" includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, and theft.

below shows the volume of victimizations in the major categories of violent crime. All numbers are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES**

Crime	2000	2001	Percent Change
<b>Rape/Sexual Assault</b>	<b>261,000</b>	<b>248,000</b>	<b>-4.9%</b>
Rape	147,000	146,000	-0.6%
Sexual Assault	114,000	102,000	-10.5%
<b>Robbery<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>732,000</b>	<b>631,000</b>	<b>-13.8%</b>
With injury	226,000	242,000	+7%
Without injury	506,000	389,000	-22%
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>1,293,000</b>	<b>1,222,000</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>
With injury	346,000	392,000	+13.3%
Threatened with weapon	946,000	831,000	-12.2%
<b>Simple Assault</b>	<b>4,038,000</b>	<b>3,643,000</b>	<b>-9.8%</b>
With minor injury	989,000	845,000	-14.6%
Without injury	3,048,000	2,798,000	-8.2%

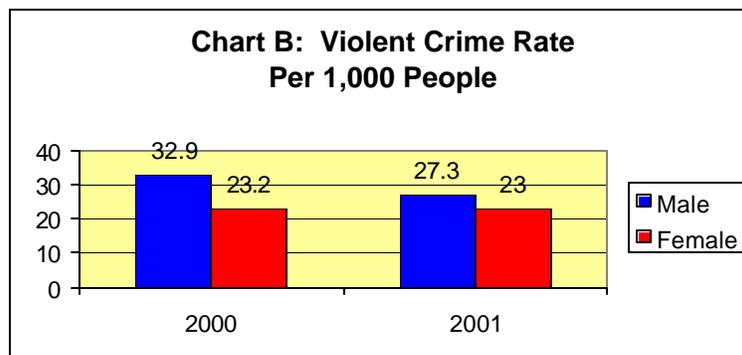
Chart A below shows number of victimizations in the four major violent crime categories in 1999 and 2000:



<sup>6</sup> Combines completed and attempted robbery.

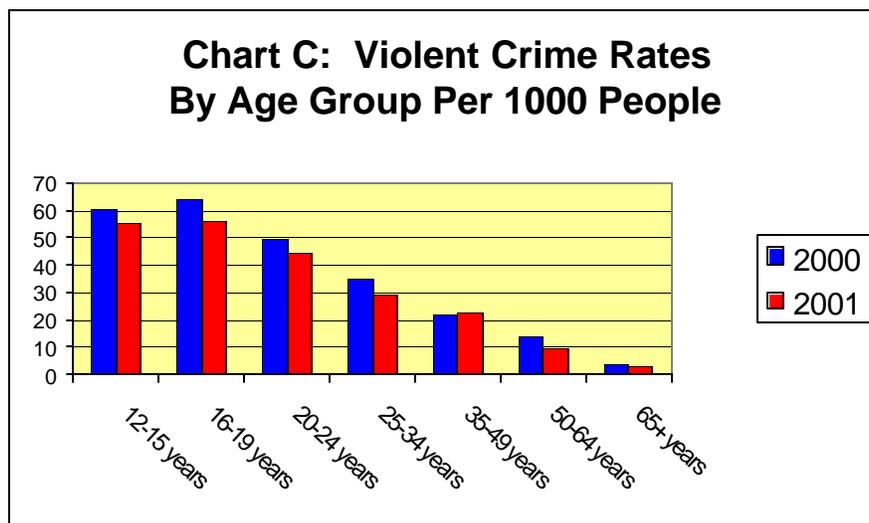
## Violent Crime by Gender

The violent crime rates fell for both genders from 2000 to 2001, as illustrated in Chart B below. For males, the violent crime rate per 1,000 was 32.9 in 2000 and 27.3 in 2001. For females, the violent crime rate was 23.2 in 2000 and 23.0 in 2001. Males experienced violent crimes at rates 15.7% greater than females. For the first year since 1992 males and females were victims of simple assault at similar rates.



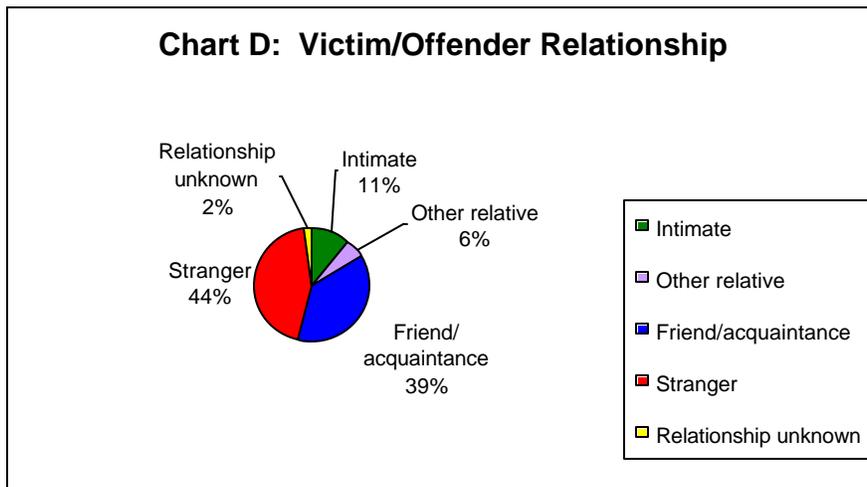
## Violent Crime by Age

Violent crime victimization rates fell among all of the age groups in the year 2000, except among 35-49 year olds where it went up by 5%. As illustrated in Chart C below, 16-19 year olds had the highest rate of violent crime victimization in 2001, followed closely by a very high rate for 12-15 year olds. The rate is lowest for those 50 and older.



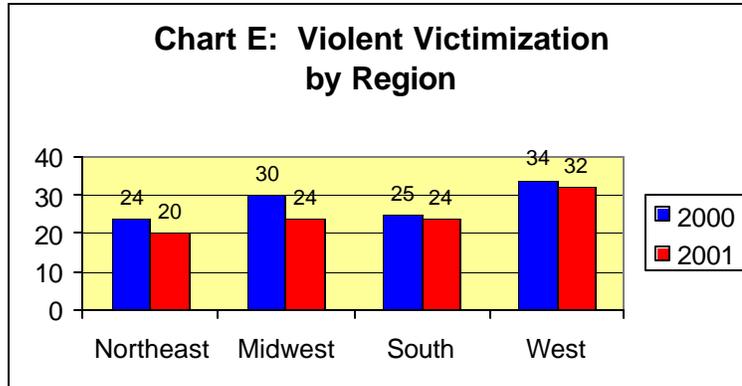
## Violent Crime – Victim-Offender Relationship

In 2001, over half (54%) of violent crime victims knew their offenders, up slightly from 53% in 2000. Forty-four percent of the offenders were strangers, and 2% were unknown. Rape or sexual assault victims were most likely to know the offender (166%), and robbery victims were the least likely (29%). Males experienced violence at the hands of strangers in higher percentages—55% of violent crimes against males was perpetrated by strangers compared with 32% of violent crimes against females. Chart D below shows the relationship between the victim and offender for all violent crimes in 2001.



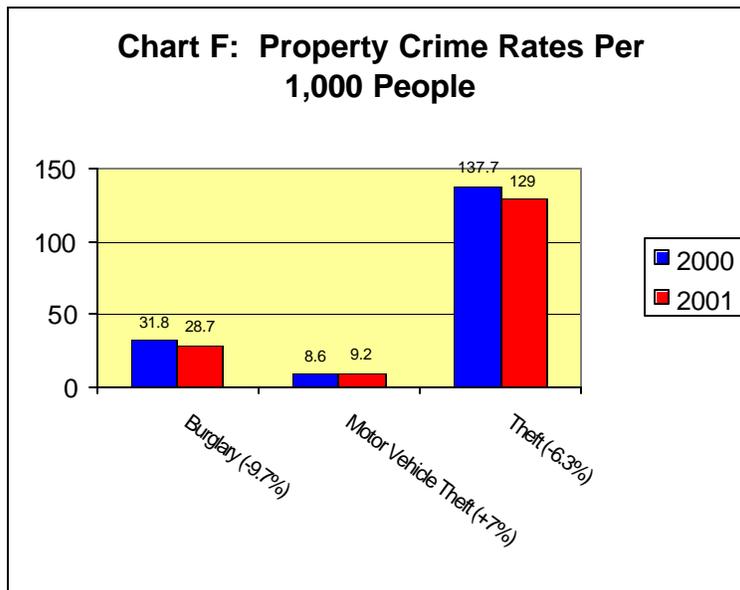
## Violent Crime – By Region

Residents of the West were the most likely to be violent crime victims in 2001, with a rate of 32.3 per 1000. Midwesterners followed with a rate of 24.4 per 1000. Northeastern and Southern residents were significantly less likely to be violent crime victims, with rates of 20.2 and 23.8 per 1000, respectively. Rates fell for all regions from 2000 to 2001, as shown below in Chart E:



### Property Crime

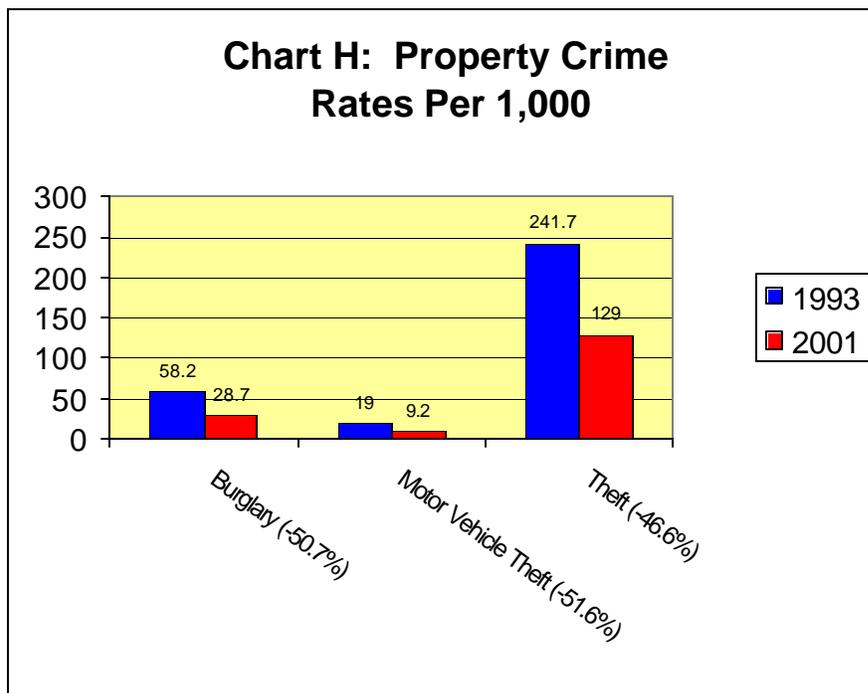
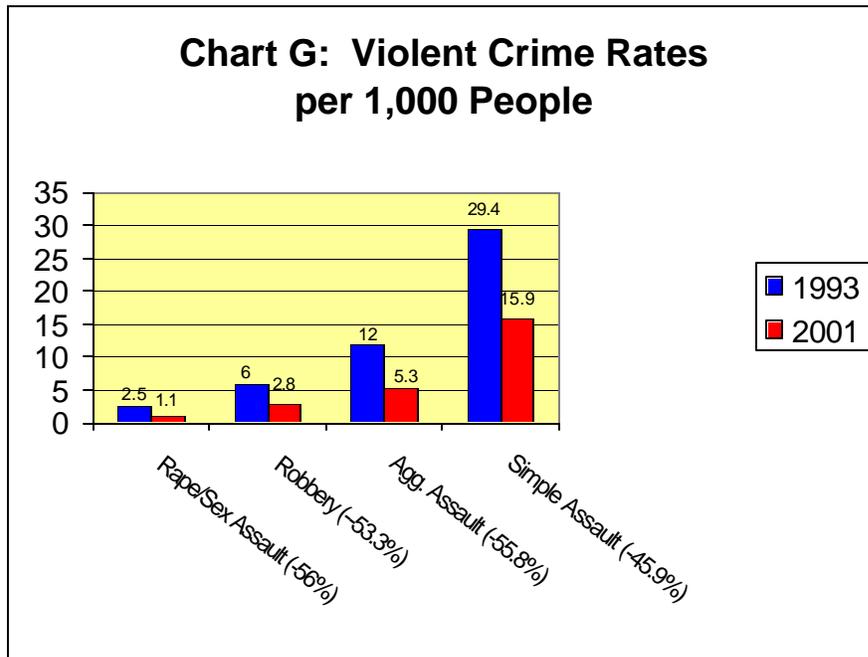
Property crime rates decreased 6.3% from 2000 to 2001 with an overall incidence rate of 167 per 1,000 households, down from 178 in 2000. Burglary rates fell 9.7%, motor vehicle theft rates increased 7%, and theft rates decreased 6.3%, as shown in Chart F below:



### Trends 1993 – 2001

Every major type of personal and property crime measured decreased from 1993 to 2001. Violent crimes decreased 50%, and property crimes decreased 48%. Chart G below shows the decrease for each of the major types of violent crime for the years

1993 through 2001, and Chart H shows the decrease for each of the major types of property crime for the same period of time – 1993 through 2001:



## Reporting to Police

The rate at which crimes were reported to the police was higher in 2001 than in 2000. In 2001, 49.4% of all violent crimes were reported, up from 47.9% in 2000.

Property crimes were reported 37% of the time in 2001, whereas 35.7% were reported in 2000. Females reported violent crimes more frequently (53.3%) than did males (45.9%) in 2001.

### **The NCVS and the FBI's UCR**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Preliminary Uniform Crime Report (UCR) for the year 2001 was released six weeks after the NCVS, on October 28, 2002. The two reports paint a different picture of crime in the year 2001. Usually the two reports mirror each other, but the reports for 2001 are somewhat different. The UCR shows violent crime *up* 0.08%. The NCVS shows violent crime *down* 10%.

The methodology for data collection is very different for the UCR and NCVS. The FBI collects information from law enforcement agencies throughout the United States and uses offenses known to law enforcement for the UCR. The BJS conducts a survey each year of households and individuals 12 and older to obtain information about crimes, both reported and unreported. In 2001, approximately 80,000 individuals were interviewed. The BJS then estimates actual crime occurrences based on the sample. Because they interview victims, homicide is not included.

The FBI and BJS use different definitions for their crime categories. "Violent crime" by the FBI's definition includes murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. The BJS defines it as rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.

### **Authors' Conclusion**

We have been predicting that crime would increase, beginning in 2000, and the FBI data support that in 2001. The NCVS uses a different reporting method than the FBI. For example, they include simple assault as a violent crime, whereas the FBI includes *aggravated* assault only. Also, the NCVS does not include homicide. Beyond that, it is not clear why the NCVS would continue to show *decreases*, while the FBI has shown *increases*.