

CRIME TRENDS

Trends in criminal victimization over time can provide useful insights by situating annual data into a broader context. To estimate these trends, criminologists rely on the two national sources of crime data: the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). These two measures vary in the way they collect crime data with the most significant difference being the source upon which each relies. The UCR measures crimes known to local and state law enforcement and includes victims of all ages as well as non-individual victims (such as commercial entities). The NCVS relies on victim reports and is based on a large, nationally representative household-based sample that gathers victimization information from individuals age 12 and older. The NCVS provides a complementary measure to the UCR and offers important insights into what criminologists call the "dark figure of crime," or crimes that go unreported. As both the UCR and NCVS have been collected for years, these two sources provide the necessary data to better understand crime trends in the United States. Trend data from both sources indicate that crime has decreased substantially, particularly in comparison to crime rates from the 1970s and 80s. UCR and NCVS data from the 2000s also continue to demonstrate a downward trend, although occasional fluctuations occur for some crimes, including a recent uptick in violent crime beginning in 2011 and continuing into 2012.¹

- The FBI's UCR data also indicate a decline over time. The rate of fatal and non-fatal violent crime known to law enforcement in 1993 was 747.1 per 100,000 persons. By 2012, rates had declined to a low of 386.9 per 100,000.³
- Historically, males have higher rates of violent victimization compared to females. For example, in 1993 the rate of violent victimization for males reported through the NCVS was 96.9 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, while the rate reported by females was 63.7 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older. In 2012, the rates of violent victimization were 29.1 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older for males and 23.3 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older for females.⁴
- The percentage of victims of violent crimes who reported through the NCVS that they suffered an injury remained relatively stable from 1993 to 2012, ranging from 26 percent in 1992 to 23 percent in 2012.⁵
- In 2012, 44.2 percent of all violent victimizations were reported to police according to the NCVS. Over the past 10 years, this percentage has remained fairly stable.⁶

Violent Crime

- In 1993, the rate of non-fatal violent crimes reported by victims through the NCVS was 7,980 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older. Rates continued to decline until 2010, reaching a low of 1,930 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older. However, data shows increases in both 2011 and 2012 from 2,250 in 2011 to 2,610 in 2012 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older.²

¹ This increase in violent and property crime continued in 2012. See Lynn Langton, Michael Planty, and Jennifer Truman, *Criminal Victimization, 2012*, (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 2013), accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4781>.

² "Reported by victims" means reported to interviewers for the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Crimes reported to NCVS interviewers were not necessarily reported to law enforcement. Non-fatal violent crimes include rape and sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. *Calculated from*

Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rates of Violent Victimization, 1993–2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

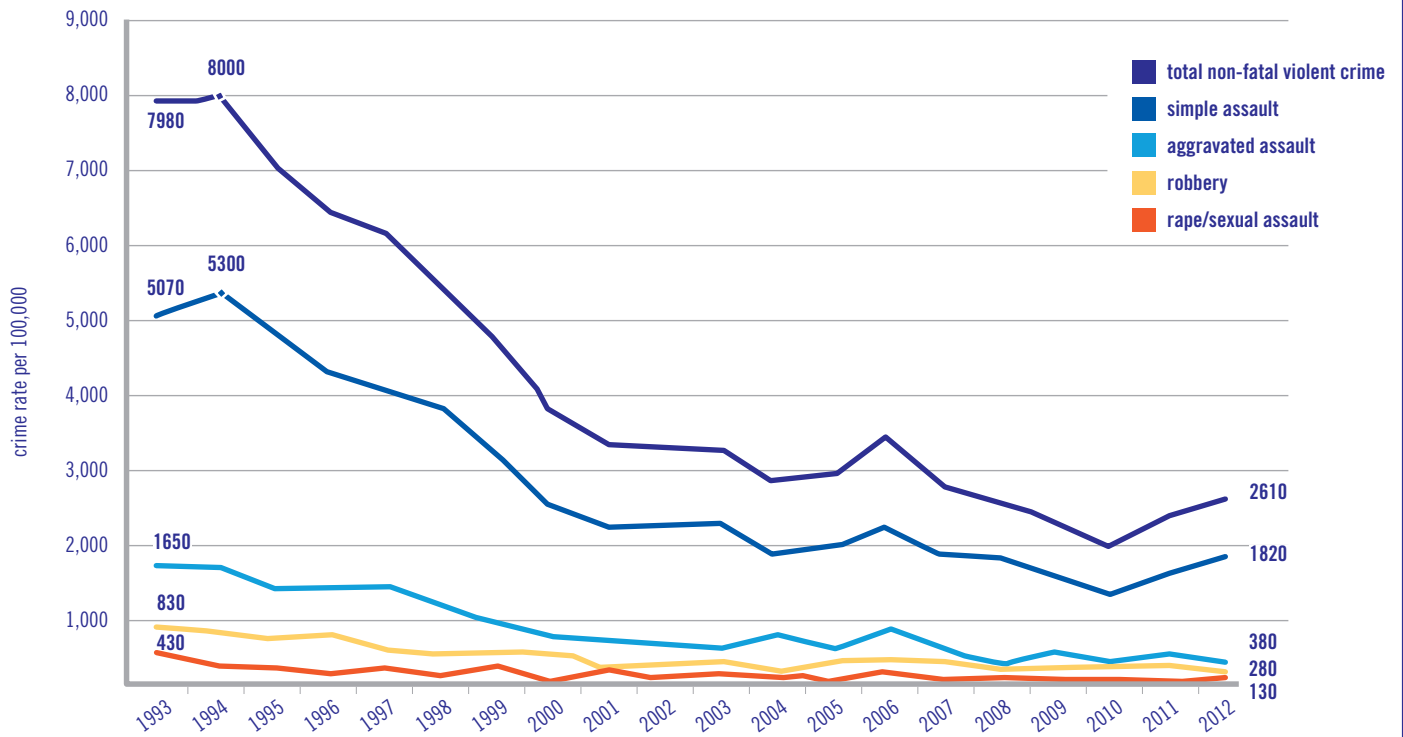
³ Fatal and non-fatal violent crimes include murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Crime—National or State Level Data with One Variable," *Uniform Reporting Statistics*, (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010), retrieved through tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://bjs.gov/ucrdata/Search/Crime/State/TrendsInOneVar.cfm>.

⁴ *Calculated from* Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rates of Violent Victimization, 1993–2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

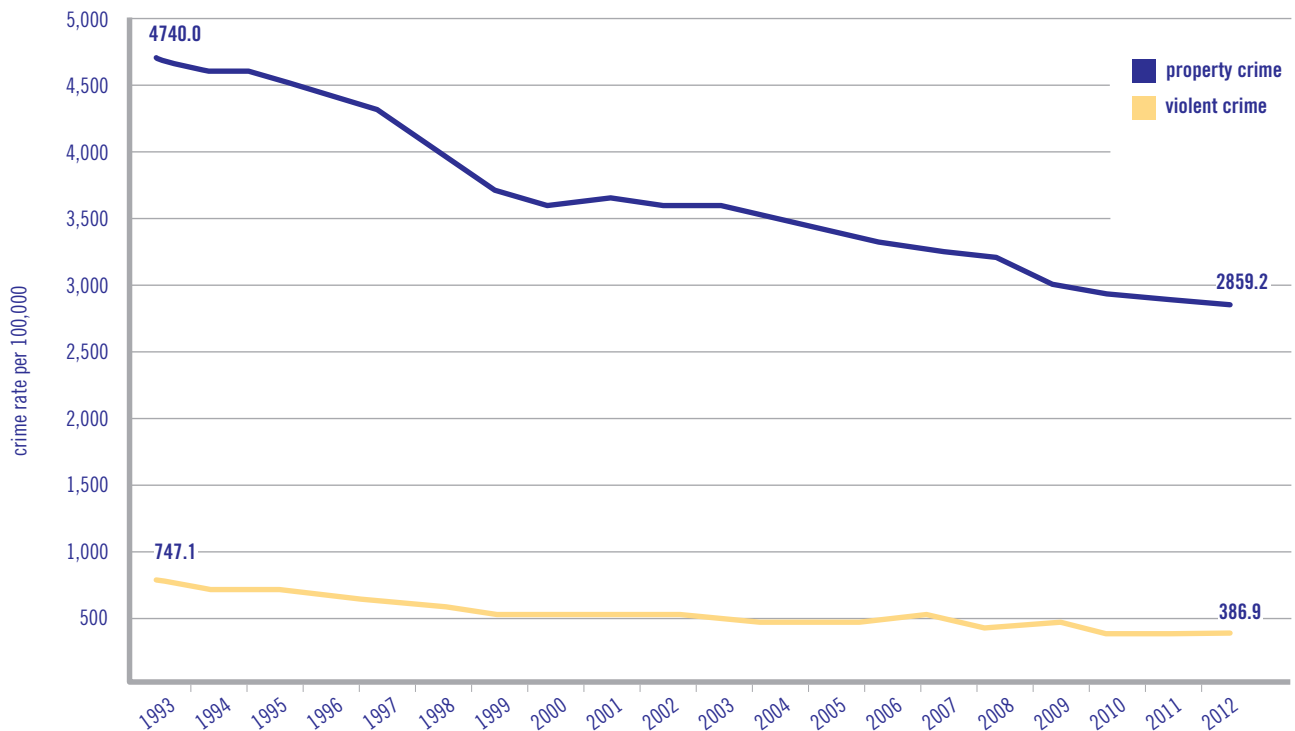
⁵ *Calculated from* Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Percent of Violent Victimization by Injury, 1993–2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

⁶ *Calculated from* Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Percent of Violent Victimization by Reporting to the Police, 1993–2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

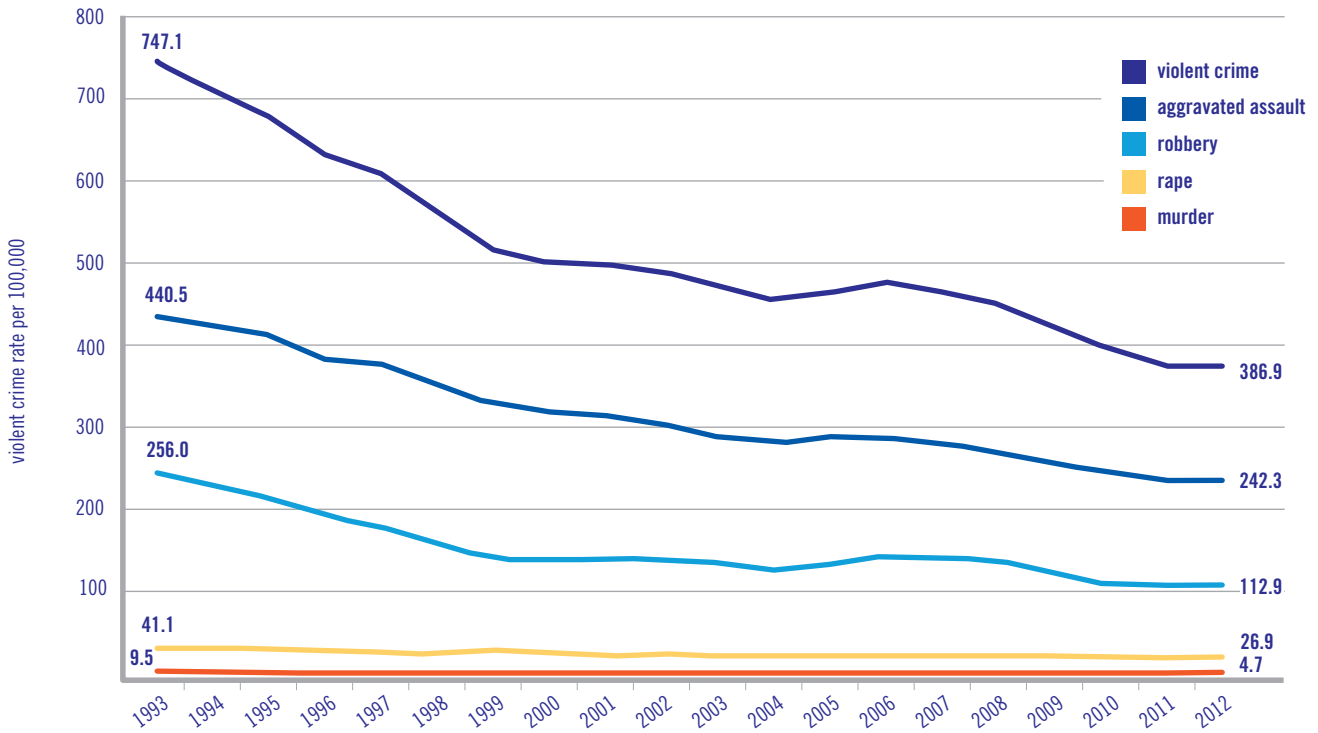
CRIME RATES REPORTED BY VICTIMS, NCVS 1993 – 2012



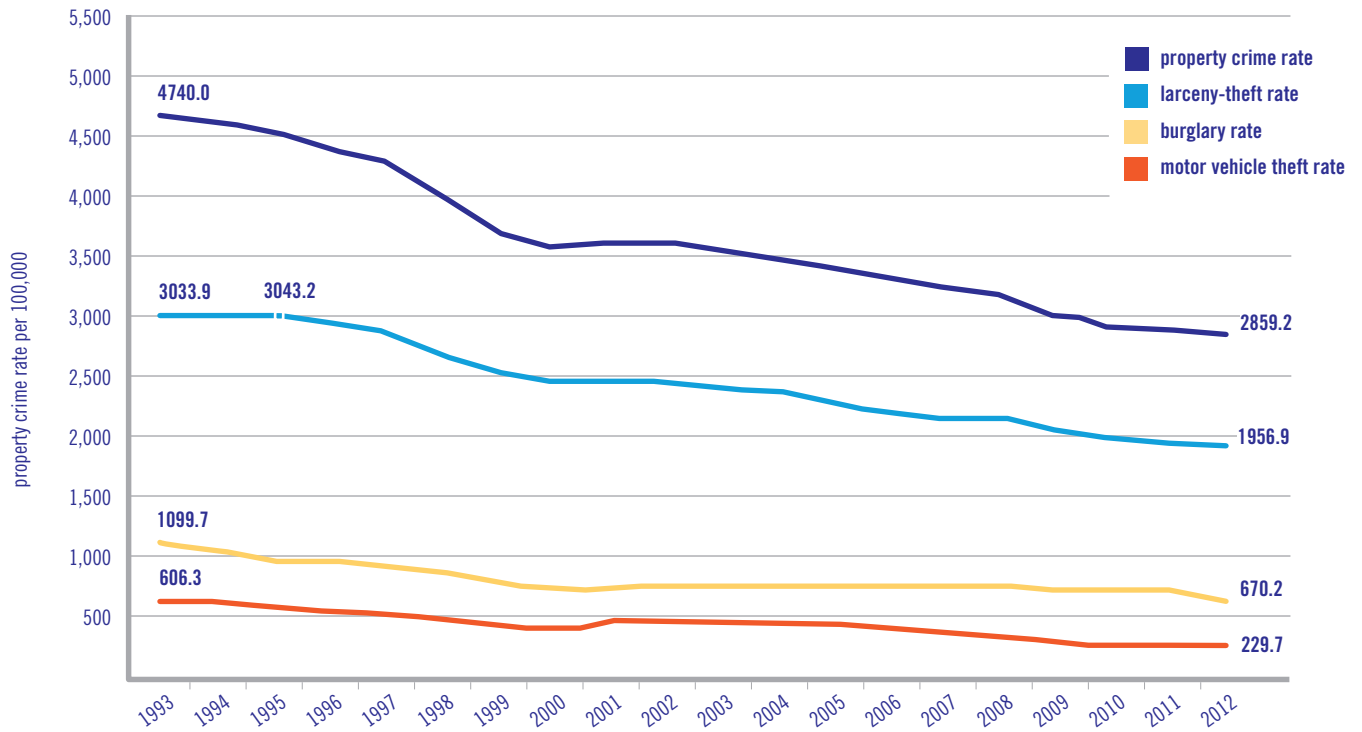
CRIME RATES KNOWN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, UCR 1993 – 2012



VIOLENT CRIME RATES KNOWN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, UCR 1993 – 2012



PROPERTY CRIME RATES KNOWN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, UCR 1993 – 2012



Homicide

- Data from the UCR indicate the rate of murder and non-negligent manslaughter known to law enforcement in 1993 was 9.5 per 100,000 persons. This rate declined and then remained fairly steady through the 2000s before reaching a low rate of 4.7 per 100,000 persons in 2012. The rate of murder and non-negligent manslaughter remained stable between 2011 and 2012, at 4.7 per 100,000 persons for both years.⁷
- The number of incidents referred to, variously, as “Active Shooter Events,” “mass murder,” and “Active Shooter Cases” has increased in recent years. The inclusion of these fatalities in homicide statistics can significantly affect rates at the city level but not at the national level, because these rare events make up a small percentage of the national murder rate.⁸

Rape

- The rate of rape/sexual assault reported by victims through the NCVS has declined in the last 10 years, going from 150 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2002 to 90 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2011. A 44.4 percent increase between 2011 and 2012 is observed with 130 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older reporting rape/sexual assault to the NCVS in 2012.⁹

- Using a different definition, the FBI’s UCR data report the rate of forcible rapes known to law enforcement was 33.1 per 100,000 persons in 2002 and down to 26.9 per 100,000 persons in 2012.¹⁰
- Rape and sexual assault crimes are challenging to collect under both the NCVS and UCR because of the different methodologies and definitions utilized. Additionally, we know that rape and sexual assault are underreported because of the stigma associated with these types of victimization. According to the NCVS in 2012, only 28 percent of the respondents who were classified as victims of rape or sexual assault reported their victimization to the police.¹¹ Moreover, it is not possible to know the number of victims who are surveyed as part of the NCVS who choose not to identify as a victim of rape or sexual assault.¹²
- A 2013 National Research Council Report suggests that the incidence of rape and sexual assault has been significantly undercounted by the NCVS due in part to its role as an omnibus survey designed to provide annual estimates and trend data for a variety of violent and property crimes.¹³

⁷ “Crime—National or State Level Data with One Variable,” *Uniform Reporting Statistics*, (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010), *retrieved through tool*, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://bjs.gov/ucrdata/Search/Crime/State/TrendsInOneVar.cfm>.

⁸ For more information about “Active Shooter Event,” “mass murder,” and “Active Shooter Cases” definitions, see the section on [Mass Casualty Shootings](#). J. Pete Blair and M. Hunter Martaindale, “United States Active Shooter Events from 2000 to 2010: Training and Equipment Implications,” (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, Texas State University, 2013), 3, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://alerrt.org/files/research/ActiveShooterEvents.pdf>; Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2011*, table 1; Raymond W. Kelly, “Active Shooter: Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation, 2012 Edition,” (New York City Police Department, 2012), 4, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/courterterrorism/ActiveShooter.pdf>.

⁹ Rape/sexual assault is defined in the NCVS as forced sexual intercourse including psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). It 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 assault may or may not involve force and includes such things as grabbing and fondling. Sexual assault also includes verbal threats. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool*.

¹⁰ Forcible rape is defined here as “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Attempts or assaults to commit rape by force or threat of force are also included; however, statutory rape (without force) and other sex offenses are excluded.” Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2012*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2013), Table 1, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s./2012/crime-in-the-u.s.-2012>.

¹¹ *Criminal Victimization, 2012*, Table 4.

¹² Michael R. Rand and Callie Marie Rennison, “Bigger Is Not Better: An Analysis of Violence Against Women Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the National Violence Against Women Survey,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 21, no. 3 (2005): 267-91, accessed September 5, 2014. For additional information regarding the underreporting of rape victimization please also see James Lynch and Lynn Addington, *Understanding Crime Statistics: Revisiting the Divergence of the NCVS and UCR*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹³ National Research Council, *Estimating the Incidence of Rape and Sexual Assault*, (Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2013), accessed September 11, 2014, http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=18605&page=R5.

- Estimates of rape and sexual assault vary depending upon the definition used. Since its implementation in the 1930s, the UCR defined forcible rape as only involving female victims and requiring force.¹⁴ In early 2012, the FBI changed its definition of “forcible rape” to one of “rape,” which now includes victims of either gender and removes the force requirement.¹⁵ As this change did not go into effect until January 1, 2013, the FBI has not yet issued any national data using this new definition.

Assault

- The rate of aggravated assault reported by victims through the NCVS has declined in the last 10 years, going from 580 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2002 to 380 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2012.¹⁶
- The FBI’s UCR data also indicated a decline with the rate of aggravated assault known to law enforcement, going from 309.5 per 100,000 persons in 2002 down to 242.3 per 100,000 persons in 2012.¹⁷
- Rates of simple assaults reported by victims to the NCVS follow a similar trend, going from 2,210 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2002 to 1,810 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2012.¹⁸

Robbery

- The rate of robbery reported by victims through the NCVS has increased slightly in the last 10 years, going from 270 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2002 to 280 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in 2012.¹⁹
- Data from the UCR, however, reflected a decline in the rate of robbery known to law enforcement in 2002, going from 146.1 per 100,000 persons to 112.9 per 100,000 persons in 2012.²⁰

Weapon-Related Violent Crime

- As reported by victims through the NCVS, from 2002 to 2012 the rate of serious violent crimes involving weapons declined from 6.9 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older to 5.4 persons age 12 or older.²¹
- Between 2002 and 2012, the percentage of all violent victimizations reported by victims through the NCVS that were committed with firearms remained stable between 7 and 8 percent.²²

Property Crime

- The FBI’s UCR data show the rate of property crime known to law enforcement was 4,740.0 per 100,000 persons in 1993. The rate decreased through the 1990s and 2000s, reaching a low rate of 2,859.2 per 100,000 persons in 2012.²³

14 Ibid.

15 Specifically the definition states, “Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.” Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Frequently Asked Questions about the Change in the UCR Definition of Rape*, (2013), accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/recent-program-updates/new-rape-definition-frequently-asked-questions>.

16 Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Aggravated Assaults, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

17 Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Crime—National or State Level Data with One Variable.”

18 Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Simple Assaults, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

19 Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Robberies, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

20 Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Crime—National or State Level Data with One Variable.”

21 Serious violent victimization are defined as rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Serious Violent Victimization by Weapon Use, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

22 Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Serious Violent Victimization by Weapon Category, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

23 Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2012*, Table 1.

- As reported by victims through the NCVS, between 2002 and 2012 the property crime victimization rate declined 7.4 percent (from 168.2 per 1,000 households to 155.8 per 1,000 households).²⁴
- In 2012, the NCVS indicated that 34 percent of property crimes were reported to the police. Over the past 10 years, this percentage has remained fairly stable.²⁵
- The personal theft rate reported by victims to the NCVS decreased between 2002 and 2011 by 19 percent, going from 129.5 per 1,000 households to 120.9 per 1,000 households.³⁰ ★

Burglary, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Theft

- The rate of household burglary reported by victims through the NCVS has remained fairly constant in the last 10 years with the 2002 and 2011 rates being approximately 29.9 per 1,000 households.²⁶
- Data from the UCR report the rate of burglary known to law enforcement has decreased in the last 10 years, going from 747.0 per 100,000 persons in 2002 to 670.2 per 100,000 persons in 2012.²⁷
- Data from the UCR indicate the rate of motor vehicle theft known to law enforcement in 1993 was 606.3 per 100,000 persons. This rate has declined, reaching a low of 229.7 per 100,000 persons in 2012.²⁸
- The FBI's UCR data report the rate of larceny-theft known to law enforcement has decreased in the last 10 years, going from 2,450.7 per 100,000 persons in 2002 to 1,959.3 per 100,000 persons in 2012.²⁹

²⁴ Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Property Victimization, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

²⁵ Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Property Victimization by Reporting to the Police, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

²⁶ Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Household Burglaries, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.

²⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Crime—National or State Level Data with One Variable."

²⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2012*, Table 1.

²⁹ Ibid. Larceny-theft is defined by the UCR as the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. Examples are thefts of bicycles, thefts of motor vehicle parts and accessories, shoplifting, pocket-picking, or the stealing of any property or article that is not taken by force and violence or by fraud.



³⁰ Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Rate of Thefts, 1993-2012*, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat>.