When national crime statistics are reported, they may mask important differences among geographic areas. The FBI’s annual Crime in the United States reports statistics for geographic areas by county type (rural, suburban, and urban), city population size, or a combination of both. The annual National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and its related publication, Criminal Victimization, from the Bureau of Justice Statistics report statistics for geographic areas by rural, suburban, and urban, using a different set of definitions. While the FBI’s statistics provide information about where crimes occurred and crimes known to law enforcement, the Bureau of Justice Statistics provides information about where victims of crime live and also includes information about crimes not reported to law enforcement. The different place definitions and data criteria result in different and often incomparable crime statistics. This section provides crime statistics from both data sources. In general, statistics show that crime rates in metropolitan or urban areas, as well as the criminal justice response, differ from those in suburban areas, cities outside metropolitan areas, and non-metropolitan or rural areas. The uneven distribution of crime has implications for responding to crime, supporting victims, and allocating criminal justice system resources. As Americans become more mobile, it becomes increasingly important to understand the impact of geographic differences on crime rates and the ability of local criminal justice systems to protect citizens.

- The FBI reports the 2011 rate of violent crime known to law enforcement within metropolitan areas was 410.3 per 100,000 persons. The rate of violent crime per 100,000 persons in cities outside metropolitan areas was 382.1, and for non-metropolitan counties it was 186.1.\(^1\)
- In 2011, the rate of violent victimizations reported by victims to the NCVS was 2,740 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in urban areas, 2,020 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in suburban areas, and 2,010 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in rural areas.\(^2\)
- The FBI reports metropolitan cities had a murder and nonnegligent manslaughter rate known to law enforcement of 4.9 per 100,000 persons in 2011. Cities outside metropolitan areas had a murder and nonnegligent manslaughter rate of 4.4 per 100,000 persons while non-metropolitan counties had a rate of 3.1 per 100,000 persons.\(^3\)

---


\(^2\) "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. As defined by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the urban, suburban, and rural definitions are based on the Office of Management and Budget Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) designations. Urban is the largest city/grouping of cities in a MSA; suburban is a county/county containing a central city plus any contiguous counties that are linked socially and economically to the central city (i.e., those portions of MSAs outside of “central cities”); rural ranges from sparsely population areas to cities with populations of less than 50,000 residents (i.e., a place not located in an MSA). Calculated from Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rates of Violent Victimization by Urbanicity, 2011, generated using the NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool, accessed October 21, 2013, http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=ncvs.

• The FBI reports the rate of forcible rape known to law enforcement within metropolitan areas was 26.4 per 100,000 persons. The rate of forcible rape in cities outside metropolitan areas was 40.7 per 100,000. Non-metropolitan counties had a rate of 20.7 per 100,000 persons.5

• The 2011 rate of rapes and sexual assaults reported by victims to the NCVS was 110 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in urban areas, 70 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in suburban areas, and 130 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in rural areas.6

• The FBI reports the 2011 rate of arrest for forcible rape was 6.3 per 100,000 inhabitants. In cities under 10,000, the rate was 6.3 per 100,000; in suburban areas, the rate was 4.9 per 100,000; and in large cities (populations 250,000 and over), the rate was 9.2 per 100,000.7

• The FBI reports the 2011 aggravated assault rate known to law enforcement within metropolitan areas was 249.1 per 100,000 persons. The rate of aggravated assault in cities outside metropolitan areas was higher at 181.0 per 100,000 persons. The rate of aggravated assault in non-metropolitan counties was lowest at 146.8 per 100,000 persons.8

• The FBI reports the 2011 rate of aggravated assault reported by victims to the NCVS was 540 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in urban areas, 320 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in suburban areas, and 420 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in rural areas.9

• The FBI reports metropolitan areas had a 2011 robbery rate known to law enforcement of 129.9 per 100,000 persons, compared to a rate of 56.0 per 100,000 persons in cities outside metropolitan areas and 15.5 per 100,000 persons in non-metropolitan counties.10

• The 2011 rate of robberies reported by victims to the NCVS was 330 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in urban areas, 170 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in suburban areas, and 120 per 100,000 persons age 12 or older in rural areas.11

• The FBI reports a total of 5,086 bank robberies were reported to law enforcement in 2011. Of these, 46 percent occurred in metropolitan areas, 34 percent occurred in small cities or towns, 18 percent occurred in suburban areas, and 2 percent occurred in rural areas.12

• The FBI reports the national property crime rate known to law enforcement in the United States in 2011 was 2,908.7 per 100,000 persons.13

4 The FBI’s definition of forcible rape presented here is “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.” This definition was revised in 2012. For more information, see http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/recent-program-updates/new-rape-definition-frequently-asked-questions.
5 Ibid.
8 Ibid, table 2.
10 Ibid., table 2.
• Cities outside metropolitan areas had the highest property crime rate known to law enforcement in 2011 with a rate of 3,596.6 per 100,000 persons. Metropolitan areas had a property crime rate of 3,004.8 per 100,000 persons, and non-metropolitan counties had a property crime rate of 1,638.6 per 100,000.14

• The 2011 rate of property victimizations reported by victims to the NCVS was 166.0 per 1,000 households in urban areas, 128.7 per 1,000 households in suburban areas, and 112.1 per 1,000 households in rural areas.15

• The FBI reports the rate of burglaries known to law enforcement was highest in cities outside of metropolitan areas in 2011 with a rate of 821.7 per 100,000 persons. Burglaries in metropolitan areas occurred at a rate of 708.6 per 100,000 persons, and in non-metropolitan areas, they occurred at 568.4 per 100,000 persons.16

• The 2011 rate of household burglary reported by victims to the NCVS was 33.5 per 1,000 households in urban areas, 25.5 per 1,000 households in suburban areas, and 33 per 1,000 households in rural areas.17

• The FBI reports the rate of larceny-theft known to law enforcement was highest in cities outside metropolitan areas in 2011 with a rate of 2,638.5 per 100,000 persons. Metropolitan areas had the second highest rate at 2,043.5 per 100,000 persons, followed by non-metropolitan counties at a rate of 973.3 per 100,000 persons.18

• The 2011 rate of household theft reported by victims to the NCVS was 125.5 per 1,000 households in urban areas, 98.6 per 1,000 households in suburban areas, and 76.5 per 1,000 households in rural areas.19

• The FBI reports the rate of motor vehicle thefts known to law enforcement was highest in metropolitan areas in 2011 with a rate of 252.7 per 100,000 persons. Cities outside metropolitan areas had the second highest rate at 136.4 per 100,000 persons, and non-metropolitan counties had a rate of 96.9 per 100,000 persons.20

• The FBI reports cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants had 2.7 law enforcement officers per 1,000 persons in 2011, cities under 10,000 had 3.5 law enforcement officers per 1,000 persons, and suburban areas had 2.4 law enforcement officers per 1,000 persons.21

• In 2011—in cities larger than 250,000—72 percent of law enforcement officers were male and 28 percent were female. Cities under 10,000 people had 79.4 percent male officers and 20.6 percent female officers. The percentage of male and female officers in suburban areas was 72.9 percent and 27.1 percent, respectively.22 +