



## Characteristics of violent crime victims, 1995-2000

### College students

On average annually between 1995 and 2000, about 7.7 million people age 18 to 24 were enrolled full or part time in a college or university. These college students experienced overall violent crime, robbery, aggravated assault, and serious violent crime at rates lower than those of nonstudents of similar ages (table 1). The rate of simple assault was somewhat lower for students than for nonstudents.

Simple assault accounted for about two-thirds of college student violent victimizations (63%), while rape/sexual assault accounted for an estimated 6%.

### Gender

The average annual rate of overall violent crime against female college students (47 per 1,000) was about half that of male college students (91 per 1,000). The average rate of overall violent crime against female nonstudents (78 per 1,000) was about 11% less than that of male nonstudents (87 per 1,000), 1995-2000.

Male college students and nonstudents of similar ages were victims of overall violent crime and aggravated assault at similar rates. The average annual rate of robbery against male college students (8 per 1,000) was lower than that of male nonstudents (14 per 1,000). Male college students were slightly more likely to be victims of simple assault (56 per 1,000) than were male nonstudents (48 per 1,000).

The average annual violent victimization rate for women college students was less than that for women nonstudents (47 and 78 per 1,000 persons, respectively).

In addition to overall violent crime, women college students were less likely than women nonstudents to be victims of robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, and serious violent crime.

## 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 the first NCVS estimates of crime against college students. Questions were added to the NCVS in 1995 to obtain information on college enrollment.

For the most current overall estimates of criminal victimization in the United States, see *Criminal Victimization, 2002*, <[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv02.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv02.htm)>.

Other findings from the NCVS are also on the BJS website.

**Table 1. Average annual violent victimization rates of college students and nonstudents, by gender, race, and ethnicity, 1995-2000**

Victims of violence	Population	Rates per 1,000 persons age 18-24					Serious violent crime
		Crimes of violence	Rape/sexual assault	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Simple assault	
<b>College students<sup>a</sup></b>	7,706,380	68.3	4.1	5.8	15.4	43.0	25.3
Gender							
Male	3,749,470	91.2	1.8*	8.4	25.0	55.9	35.2
Female	3,956,900	46.6	6.2	3.4	6.3	30.7	15.8
Race							
White	6,211,430	71.3	4.2	5.1	15.1	46.9	24.4
Black	915,490	65.8	3.7	11.3	19.0	31.8	33.9
Other	579,460	39.4	2.8*	5.3*	13.1	18.2	21.2
Ethnicity							
Hispanic	771,160	69.1	6.4*	3.9*	17.7	41.0	28.0
Non-Hispanic	6,809,090	67.6	3.8	5.9	15.1	42.8	24.8
<b>Non-students<sup>a</sup></b>	17,680,380	82.3	4.1	10.6	19.3	48.3	34.1
Gender							
Male	8,968,070	86.9	0.5*	13.7	24.5	48.3	38.6
Female	8,712,310	77.7	7.9	7.5	14.0	48.3	29.4
Race							
White	14,286,070	81.9	4.1	9.1	18.3	50.3	31.6
Black	2,710,710	93.2	4.5	19.3	25.1	44.3	48.9
Other	683,600	49.5	2.9*	7.8	17.0	21.8	27.7
Ethnicity							
Hispanic	3,161,600	64.1	1.3*	13.8	17.5	31.7	32.5
Non-Hispanic	14,300,880	85.6	4.7	10.0	19.8	51.2	34.5

Note: Serious violent crime includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Hispanic origin is defined independently of race; an individual may be described as Hispanic or non-Hispanic and be of any race.

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

<sup>a</sup>For definitions of students and nonstudents see page 7.

The apparent difference in rape/sexual assault rates between female students and nonstudents was not statistically significant.

### Race

Both white and black college students were victims of overall violent crime and simple assault at rates higher than college students of "other races" —

American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

Black college students were victims of robbery at a rate higher than that of white students. Among students, the rate of serious violent crime was somewhat higher for blacks than for whites. Black college students were victims of simple assault at a rate lower than that for white college students.

**Table 2. Violent victimization of college students, by offender characteristics, 1995-2000**

Offender characteristics	College-student victims of violence age 18-24											
	Violent crime		Rape/sexual assault		Robbery		Aggravated assault		Simple assault		Serious violent crimes	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Relationship to victim</b>												
Total	526,020	100%	31,230	100%	44,980	100%	118,530	100%	331,270	100%	194,750	100%
Known	199,850	38	23,060	74	8,160	18	37,090	31	131,550	40	68,300	35
Stranger	311,820	59	7,150	23	35,820	80	76,230	64	192,620	58	119,200	61
Don't know	14,350	3	1,030*	3*	1,000*	2*	5,210*	4*	7,100	2	7,250*	4*
<b>Gang membership</b>												
Total	526,020	100%	31,230	100%	44,980	100%	118,530	100%	331,270	100%	194,750	100%
Gang member	29,810	6	530*	2*	2,530*	6*	11,370	10	15,390	5	14,430	7
Not a gang member	287,050	55	24,990	80	13,120	29	54,910	46	194,020	59	93,020	48
Don't know	209,160	40	5,720*	18*	29,340	65	52,250	44	121,860	37	87,300	45
<b>Drug and/or alcohol use</b>												
Total	526,020	100%	31,230	100%	44,980	100%	118,540	100%	331,270	100%	194,750	100%
Perceived using	213,850	41	12,760	41	10,490	23	51,910	44	138,690	42	75,160	39
Perceived not using	114,170	22	12,350	40	7,870	17	18,140	15	75,820	23	38,350	20
Don't know	198,000	38	6,120	20	26,620	59	48,490	41	116,760	35	81,240	42

Note: Calculations were based on unrounded numbers. Rounded numbers may not add to totals. Serious violent crime includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. "Don't know" categories include instances when the respondent was unsure of offender characteristics or chose not to respond. \*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Black college students were victims of overall violent crime, robbery, simple assault, and serious violent crime at rates lower than those of black nonstudents. Rape/sexual assault and aggravated assault rates for black college students were similar to those for black nonstudents, 1995-2000.

College students of other races were victims of violence at rates similar to those nonstudents of "other race."

*Hispanic origin*

Hispanic and non-Hispanic college students were victimized by violent crime at similar rates, 1995-2000.

Hispanic college students and nonstudents were victims of overall violence at similar rates.

**Characteristics of violent crime offenders, 1995-2000**

*Victim-offender relationship*

For overall violent crime, college students were more likely to be victimized by strangers than by people they knew, 1995-2000 (table 2).

Strangers committed 59% of all violent victimizations of college students. About 1 of 3 violent victimizations against college students was a simple assault committed by a stranger. The NCVS does not obtain information on whether the offenders were college students.

Rape/sexual assault was the only violent crime against college students more likely to be committed by a person the victim knew. Nonstrangers committed 74% of the rape/sexual assaults against college students. Rape/sexual assaults committed against a college student by a known offender accounted for 4% of all violent victimizations against college students.

*Gang membership*

A relatively small percentage of college student victims of violent crime believed that the offender was a gang

member. The percentage of victimizations for which the student victim identified the offender(s) as gang members ranged from 2% for rape/sexual assault to 10% for aggravated assault, 1995-2000.

While about 55% of college student victims of violent crimes reported that offender(s) were not gang members, about 40% could not discern whether the offender(s) belonged to a gang.

*Drug and alcohol use*

In 41% of all violent crime experienced by college students and in 38% of the violence against nonstudents, the offender was perceived to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, 1995-2000.

	Violent crimes in which the offender was perceived to have been using drugs or alcohol	
	Average annual number	Percent of all violent crimes
Students	213,850	41%
Nonstudents	556,420	38

Offenders perceived to be using drugs and/or alcohol committed about 2 in 5 rape/sexual assaults and about 1 in 4 robberies against college students.

About 4 in 10 college-student victims of violent crime could not discern whether the offender was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

### Characteristics of criminal events, 1995-2000

#### Presence of a weapon

In all categories of violent crime except robbery, college students were more likely to be victimized by unarmed than by armed offenders, 1995-2000 (table 3).

Weapons were present in 27% of all violent college-student victimizations. The percentage of crimes committed with weapons ranged from 5% for rape/sexual assault to 58% for robbery.

Firearms were present in 9% of all violent crimes against college students, including 30% of robberies and 7% of assaults.

Offenders were identified as being armed with a knife during 7% of all violent crimes, including 21% of robberies and 6% of assaults committed against college students.

#### Location and time

From 1995 to 2000 the majority of violent crimes against college students occurred off campus. The number of off-campus victimizations of college students was over 14 times greater than the number of on-campus victimizations (table 4). Seventy-four percent

of college students lived off campus, 19% lived on campus, and 7% did not indicate where they lived.

Among students with quarters in student housing, about 85% of violent victimizations occurred off campus. Among students living off campus, about 95% of victimizations also occurred off campus.

Living in student housing	Percent of violent incidents during 1995-2000	
	Off campus	On campus
Yes	85%	15%
No	95	5

Seventy-one percent of the off-campus violence against college students occurred at night (between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.).

Most on-campus violence (57%) against college students occurred during the day (between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.).

**Table 4. Violent victimization of college students, by location and time of incident, 1995-2000**

Location and time of incident	College-student victims of violence	
	Number	Percent
Total	526,020	100%
<b>Off campus</b>	491,890	100%
Day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.)	127,010	26
Night (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.)	350,690	71
Don't know	14,180*	3*
<b>On campus</b>	34,140	100%
Day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.)	19,450	57
Night (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.)	12,830	38
Don't know	1,860*	5*

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.  
\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

**Table 3. Weapons present in violent crimes against college students, by type of crime and type of weapon, 1995-2000**

Presence of weapon	Average annual student victimization							
	Violent crime		Rape/sexual assault		Robbery		Assault	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	526,020	100%	31,230	100%	44,980	100%	449,810	100%
No weapon	342,220	65%	27,820	89%	15,740	35%	298,660	66%
Weapon	141,790	27%	1,510*	5%*	26,210	58%	114,080	25%
Firearm	47,120	9	--*	--*	13,590	30	33,520	7
Knife	39,340	7	970*	3*	9,300	21	29,080	6
Other	50,120	10	--*	--*	3,320	7	46,810	10
Type unknown	5,210*	1*	540*	2*	--*	--*	4,670*	1*
Don't know	42,010	8%	1,900*	6%*	3,040*	7%*	37,070	8%

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

### Injuries and medical treatment

Most college students were not injured as a result of the violence against them, 1995-2000: 24% of college-student victims of violence reported being injured (table 5).

	Percent of victims of violence age 18-24	
	College students	Non-students
Uninjured	76%	69%
Injured	24	31
Average annual victimization	526,020	1,455,940

Most injuries to college-student victims were minor, including bruises, cuts, and scrapes. Sixty percent of injured college-student victims were not treated for their injuries.

Injured college-student victims who received treatment were more likely to receive treatment at the scene or home (16%) or at a hospital or emergency department (15%) than at a doctor's office or clinic (6%).

**Table 5. Percent of injuries and treatment as a result of violence against college students, 1995-2000**

Type of injury	Percent of college-student victims of violence
Not injured	76%
Injured	24%
Serious injury	3
Rape/sexual assault without additional injury	2
Minor injuries only	19
<b>Type of treatment</b>	100%
Injured, not treated	60
Injured, treated	40
At scene or home	16
Doctor's office or clinic	6
Hospital/ED	15
Not admitted	15
Admitted	--*
Other locale	2
<b>Average annual number</b>	
Violent victimizations	526,020
Not injured	397,910
Injured	128,120

Note: Serious injury includes gunshot wounds, knife wounds, broken bones, loss of consciousness, internal injuries, and "other" serious injuries.  
\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.  
--Represents or rounds to zero.

## College student and nonstudent victimization trends, 1995-2000

From 1995 to 2000 victimization trends among college students and nonstudents differed by crime type.

Overall violent crime against students fell from 88 to 52 victimizations per 1,000 college students while the rate among nonstudents dropped from 102 to 57 victimizations per 1,000 nonstudents (table 6).

Over the 6-year period, robbery and simple assault rates decreased for college students while nonstudents experienced declines in robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, and serious violent crime (figures 1, 2, and 3).

For each year from 1995 to 2000 college students were victims of robbery at rates at least somewhat lower than those of nonstudents.

For most years from 1995 to 2000, college students and nonstudents were victims of aggravated assault at similar

rates. In 1995 and 1998 college students were victims of aggravated assault at rates lower than those for nonstudents.

While the rates of overall violent crime and simple assault among students and nonstudents declined from 1995 to 2000, the declines were similar for both groups.

The apparent difference in trends from 1995 to 2000 of rape/sexual assault rates among college students was not statistically significant.

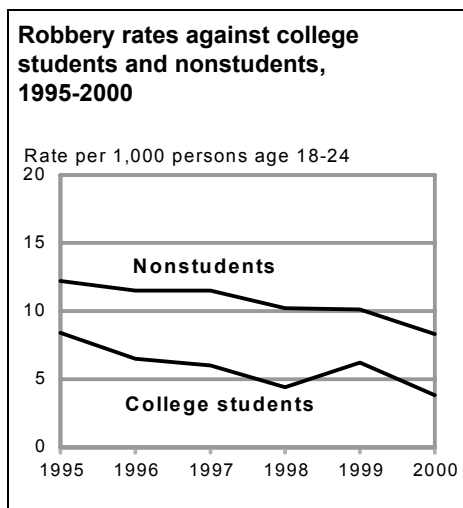


Figure 1

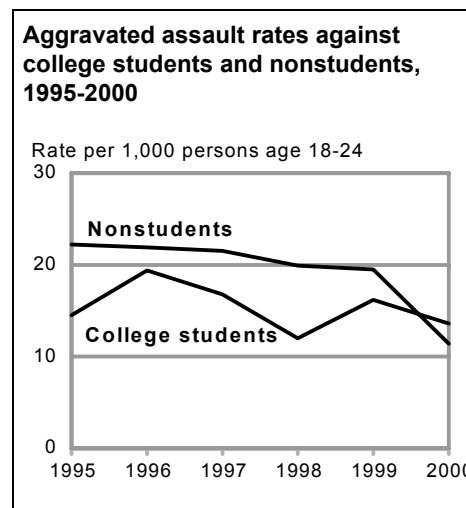


Figure 2

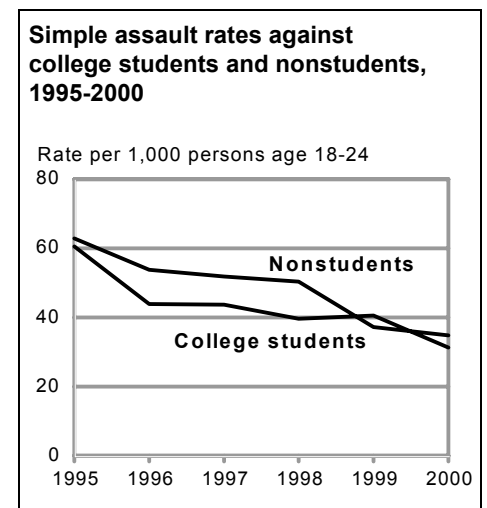


Figure 3

**Table 6. Violent victimization rates of college students and nonstudents, by type of crime, 1995-2000**

Year	Rates per 1,000 persons age 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
1996	72.3	90.3	2.4*	3.1	6.5	11.5	19.4	21.9	43.9	53.8	28.4	36.5
1997	68.7	89.1	2.2*	4.2	6.0	11.5	16.8	21.5	43.7	51.9	25.0	37.2
1998	60.1	86.0	4.2*	5.4	4.4*	10.2	12.0	19.9	39.6	50.4	20.5	35.6
1999	70.5	72.5	7.5	5.7	6.2	10.1	16.2	19.5	40.6	37.2	29.9	35.3
2000	52.3	56.7	3.5*	2.1	3.8	8.3	13.6	11.4	31.3	34.8	21.0	21.9
Percent change	-40.4%	-44.2%	-18.6%**	-52.3%	-54.8%	-32.0%	-6.2%**	-48.6%	-48.3%	-44.6%	-23.1%**	-43.6%
Average annual	526,020	1,455,940	31,230	72,850	44,980	187,700	118,540	341,680	331,270	853,700	194,750	602,230

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

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

\*\*The difference from 1995-2000 is not statistically significant.

**Table 7. Violent victimization of college students, by type of crime and whether reported to the police, 1995-2000**

Police notification	Average annual victimization of college students, 1995-2000											
	Violent crime		Rape/ sexual assault		Robbery		Aggravated assault		Simple assault		Serious violent crime	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	526,020	100%	31,230	100%	44,980	100%	118,540	100%	331,270	100%	194,750	100%
Reported to police	180,870	34	3,890*	12*	23,620	53	53,560	45	99,800	30	81,070	42
Not reported to police	337,790	64	26,910	86	21,360	47	62,070	52	227,450	69	110,340	57
Don't know	7,360*	1*	430*	1*	--*	--*	2,910*	2*	4,020*	1*	3,340*	2*
Who reported to police												
Total	180,870	100%	3,890	100%	23,620	100%	53,560	100%	99,800	100%	81,070	100%
Victim	89,850	50	2,830*	73*	14,490	61	26,200	49	46,330	46	43,520	54
Someone else <sup>a</sup>	89,520	49	1,060*	27*	9,130	39	26,800	50	52,530	53	36,990	46
Unknown	1,500*	1*	--*	--*	--*	--*	560*	1*	940*	1*	560*	1*

Note: Serious violent crime includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.  
<sup>a</sup>Includes other household members, an official other than the police (such as a security officer), police who were already at the scene, and anyone other than the victim.  
 \*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.  
 --Represents or rounds to zero.

**Reporting to the police**

In general most violence against college students was not reported to police, 1995-2000. Thirty-four percent of all violence against college students and 47% of violence against nonstudents were reported (table 7).

	Violent crimes reported to the police	Average annual number	Percent of all violent crimes
Students	180,870	180,870	34%
Nonstudents	677,190	677,190	47

Eighty-six percent of all rapes/sexual assaults committed against college students were not reported to police, compared to 12% that were reported, 1995-2000.

Fifty-two percent of aggravated assaults and 69% of simple assaults committed against college students were not reported to police. From 1995 to 2000 a majority of serious violent crime (57%) suffered by college students went unreported to police.

Except for rape/sexual assault and robbery, there was no difference in who reported incidents of victimization of college students to police, 1995-2000.

Rape/sexual assault (73%) and robbery (61%) were more likely to be reported by the college-student victim than by someone else. Other crimes were equally reported by the victim and someone else, such as a household member, an official other than the police, or the police at the scene.

**Table 8. Reasons violence was reported to the police, 1995-2000**

Reasons for reporting violence	Percent of reasons
Prevent future violence	20%
Stop the incident	19
Protect others	8
A duty to tell police	5
Punish offender	10%
Catch offender	5
Recover property	4
Improve police surveillance	3
Needed assistance	2%
Collect insurance	1*
Other reason	6
No other reason	17

\*Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

In general, college-student victims said that violent crime was reported to the police in an effort to “prevent future violence” (20%), to “stop the incident” (19%), or to “punish the offender” (10%), 1995-2000 (table 8).

From 1995 to 2000 a variety of reasons accounted for why college-student victimizations were not reported to police. In general, victims said that college-student victimizations were not reported to police because it was a “private or personal matter” (24%) or because the violence was considered “small/no loss” (20%) (table 9).

**Table 9. Reasons violence was not reported to the police, 1995-2000**

Reasons for not reporting violence	Percent of reasons
Private or personal matter	24%
Small/no loss	20
Reported to another official	8
Fear of reprisal	5
Protect offender	4
Not clear a crime occurred	4
Lack of proof	4
Inconvenient	4%
Police will not bother	5
Police inefficiency	3
Police bias	1
Child offender	1
Property unrecoverable	1
Other reason given	18

From 1995 to 2000, 8% of violence against college students was not reported to police because it was “reported to another official,” while 5% was not reported to police because of “fear of reprisal,” or because of police apathy.

Concerns about the police did not prevent college-student victimizations from being reported. Police inefficiency was cited as a reason for not reporting violence 3% of the time, and “police would be biased” was cited 1% of the time as a reason violence was not reported to police, 1995-2000.

## Survey methodology

This report presents data on rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault against college age (18-24 years old) persons 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 age 18-24 to violent victimization of nonstudents of similar age. Characteristics of offenders and the criminal event involving student victims are examined.

Between 1995 and 2000, 549,090 individuals age 12 or older were interviewed. For the overall population, for the years measured, response rates varied between 89% and 91% of eligible individuals.

### 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.

### Definitions

Violent acts covered in this report include rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Overall violent crime is a combination of each type of crime. Serious violent crime includes all types except simple assault: rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Definitions are as follows:

*Rape* is forced sexual intercourse, including both psychological coercion and physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category includes incidents in which the penetration is by a foreign object, attempted rapes, male and female victims, and heterosexual and homosexual rape.

*Sexual assault* covers a wide range of victimizations distinct from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include completed or attempted attacks generally involving unwanted sexual contact between the 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* is a completed or attempted theft directly from a person, of property or cash by force or threat of force, with or without a weapons, and with or without an injury.

*Aggravated assault* is defined as a completed or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether or not an injury occurred, and an attack without a weapon in which the victim is seriously injured.

## Examining NCVS data on college students

The NCVS does not differentiate between full-time or part-time students, between students attending private or public institutions, and between students who are enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program. The NCVS asks all household members 12 or older if they are currently attending or enrolled either full- or part-time in a college or university.

For this report, in order to best compare the experience of college students to a similar population of non-college students, the analysis was restricted to persons age 18-24.

## School crime against younger students and their safety

For more information about school crime against younger students, see *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2002*, a National Center for Education Statistics and BJS report, October 2002, <[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/iscs02.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/iscs02.htm)>. Highlights of this report include the following:

- Students age 12 through 18 were victims of about 1.9 million crimes of violence or theft at school in 2000, including about 128,000 serious violent crimes.
- Between 1995 and 2000, the percentage of students who reported being victims of crime at school decreased from 10% to 6%.
- The percentage of students age 12 through 18 who reported avoiding one or more places at school for their own safety decreased from 9% to 5% between 1995 and 2001.

*Simple assault* is an attack without a weapon resulting either in no injury, minor injury (such as bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, or swelling) or an undetermined injury requiring less than 2 days of hospitalization. Simple assaults also include attempted assaults without a weapon.

---

The BJS website <[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs)> offers this report and the data that it analyzes.

Get immediate e-mail notification of BJS releases from **JUSTSTATS**.  
Subscribe at <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/juststats.htm>>.

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

Timothy Hart wrote this report under the supervision of Michael Rand. Callie Rennison and Patsy Klaus provided statistical assistance and verification. Tom Hester and Tina Dorsey edited the report. Jayne Robinson prepared the report for publication.

December 2003, NCJ 196143 H