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Who Experiences Violent Victimization and Who Accesses Services? Findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey for Expanding Our Reach

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CENTER for VICTIM RESEARCH

Who Experiences **Violent Victimization** and Who **Accesses Services?**

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National Crime Victimization Survey
for Expanding Our Reach

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Abstract

The purpose of this research[1] is to identify groups of persons at high risk for serious violent victimization to help inform how victim services and assistance can be targeted to victims of greatest need. Disparities in risk and use of victim services are examined using data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)—the nation's primary source of statistical information on criminal victimization. Group characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity, and low income status are considered, as are other factors that can help identify who is most likely to experience serious nonlethal violent victimization and who currently accesses victim services. The report describes trends in victimization and victim service use over time, as well as patterns for the most recent time period.

This information can inform the victim assistance, criminal justice, and broader public health community in key funding and policy decisions affecting the lives of crime victims and front line practitioners across the country, at a time when historic funding levels and increased flexibility in the use of victim assistance dollars make data-informed strategies as critical as ever.

[1] This paper accompanies and expands upon the research findings presented in a Center for Victim Research (CVR) Webinar, available for viewing on the CVR YouTube Channel at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bJ_xf_DR0k. The webinar content and paper were produced in part under grant number 2015-VF-GX-K022, awarded to Heather Warnken, J.D., LL.M. The webinar was produced by the CVR under grant number 2016-XV-GX-K006, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in the webinar and this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Introduction

There has never been a more important time to think critically about addressing long-standing gaps in the crime victim assistance field, given that from both a resource and policy perspective, the field is in a state of unprecedented growth and change. In 2015, Congress effectively quadrupled the amount of money available for victim services through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), removing a long-standing cap on these funds. Prior to this change, funding appropriations of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) were held at $745 million in FY 2014, jumping to $2.36 billion the following year.[2] With some fluctuation, this monumental increase has persisted, jumping yet again with the CVF limit set at $4.4 billion in FY 2018. The overwhelming majority of these funds are allocated through the VOCA Victim Assistance Formula Grant Program[3] supporting local government and community-based victim services through grants distributed from the federal government through the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to all states and territories. In FY 2018 these formula grants totaled $3.3 billion, 80% more than the previous year, and surpassing every other single-year grant amount in the 34-year history of this program.[4]

As feared by some in the field, the cap saw its first major decrease in FY 2019, falling to $3.35 billion. According to the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA), representing the 56 states, District of Columbia and U.S. territory agencies that receive and distribute these funds through the formula grant program, "[b]ased on certain assumptions about other CVF-funded programs, it is estimated that FY 2019 state VOCA assistance grants will be approximately $2.5 billion, which is 33 percent less than FY 2018 grants, but about the same as the average annual amount of state grants since 2015."[5] The current Administration is seeking "permanent structural reform" of the CVF by replacing the annual cap with a mandatory, annual appropriation of $2.3 billion, in order to eliminate the use of the CVF to offset discretionary spending, and provide more reliable funding for the program, more conducive to planning for the long-term.[6]

Which victims are these significant resources reaching, and through which types of programs nationwide? Within certain program parameters, the states retain wide discretion on both the types of victim services and providers they fund, under guidance that changed significantly in July 2016. During the same time frame as the historic monetary increases through VOCA, OVC issued a new rule interpreting the allowable uses of these funds, providing the field with much greater flexibility in a number of key areas.[7] This includes changes across a number of subtopics and stakeholder groups significant to reaching all victims and enhancing services. The rule makes permissive—not mandatory—a host of new tools for states in using the funds in areas not considered or invested in previously. These are

2 National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, *VOCA Funding*, http://www.navaa.org/budget/index.html

3 The VOCA Victim Assistance Formula Grant Program which funds government agencies, nonprofits and other entities providing direct victim services, is separate from the VOCA Victim Compensation Formula Grant Program, which provides funding to all 50 states and territories for the purpose of covering out of pocket financial expenses incurred by individuals as a result of being a victim of crime. Although these two formula grant programs are in some states administered by the same state agencies and cut across the same issue of support for crime victims, it is important to understand their differences, including purpose, funding sources, administration process, and guidelines. https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/intro.html#VictimComp

4 "Justice Department Announces $3.4 Billion in Grants to Aid Crime Victims Nationwide," https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-34-billion-grants-aid-crime-victims-nationwide

5 National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, *VOCA Funding*, http://www.navaa.org/budget/index.html

6 This proposal does not address how or whether a mandatory appropriation would be maintained if available CVF funds were to fall below $2.3 billion, a factor largely dependent on decisions to criminally prosecute the white collar offenses that have the capability of resulting in large enormous fines and fees levied against corporate defendants, the deposits which account for steep bottom lines and fluctuations within the fund. For example, payments from Volkswagen ($2.8 billion owed from an emissions cheating scandal) and six large banks (totaling $2.9 billion owed from cases brought to address manipulation of foreign exchange and global interest rates) accounted for the all-time high CVF balance, $13 billion in FY 2017. 'Shrinking Victims Fund Signals Tough Times for Appropriators' http://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/shrinking-victims-fund-signals-tough-times-appropriators

7 VOCA Formula Victim Assistance Grant Program Final Rule, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/07/08/2016-16085/victims-of-crime-act-victim-assistance-program

types of services that may not have been funded or recognized as standard areas of victim assistance in the past, but for which there is research demonstrating the value to victims as they seek safety, stability and healing following traumatic events.

Such forms of assistance may include civil legal services, restorative justice opportunities, transitional housing, relocation, mental health and substance use treatment, as well as multi-system, multi-disciplinary coordinated response to crime victims. The rule also removed a decades-long prohibition on using VOCA resources to serve victims who are incarcerated, speaking to a false dichotomy that has long influenced the field. While none of the changes are required uses of these funds, their totality and the invitation they provide to states to innovate and fill gaps in services represent an unprecedented opportunity for evidence-based decision-making, collaboration, and meeting a host of previously unmet victim needs.

Just prior to these historic developments, OVC released a groundbreaking report, Vision 21, the culmination of a years-long effort to engage a diversity of victim assistance stakeholders across the country (OVC, 2013). Vision 21 was the first major assessment of the field in over 15 years, providing an in-depth look into the substantial progress since its early milestones and the passage of VOCA in 1984; while also identifying and detailing the substantial gaps in services that persist today. Through Vision 21, OVC issued a series of findings and recommendations; first among them the recognition of the dearth of research and analysis on critical topics related to victim services, and the need to support the development of a body of evidence-based knowledge, including quantitative and qualitative data on victimization, trends, services and behaviors to guide the field.[8] It both forecasted and aspired that "evidence-based, research-informed victim service programs will become the standard of excellence in providing assistance and support to victims of all types of crime" (OVC, 2013:vii, 1).

Vision 21 also recognized the need to "bridge the longstanding and seemingly intractable translation gap" between researchers, practitioners and policymakers in the field, noting the importance of moving beyond supportive language in favor of taking concrete action to create better linkages for victims across the country too often unseen and unserved (OVC, 2013:39).

This report is designed to do just that. Every year the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) publishes an annual report of the NCVS data, as well as intermittent Special Reports on specific topics.[9] Though these reports themselves are helpful guideposts, the high level, national statistics presented are often limited in their practical application across the country and field. Furthermore, though the NCVS data is publicly available, it is often challenging for those without the requisite training, skillset and funding to do their own analysis. This includes the pursuit of information not easily answered through annual NCVS reports, for example - looking at victims and their related needs and challenges through an intersectional lens that considers multiple characteristics at once.

This analysis is intended to use the NCVS data in ways that provide more detail than that which is available in the annual reports, and that speak to pertinent questions that victim assistance funders, policymakers and practitioners face. This report shares findings about who is at greatest risk for serious violence and who are most and least likely to access services, with special emphasis placed on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, age, income and place. Perhaps most importantly, it takes into account multiple risk factors simultaneously, more reflective of the many factors that can have an impact on an individual survivor's experience and life.

8 Vision 21. "Victims of crime will be served through a national commitment to support robust, ongoing research and program evaluation that informs the quality and practice of victim services throughout the Nation."

9 https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=9

The National Crime Victimization Survey

The NCVS is an ongoing survey conducted by the Census Bureau for BJS that measures the extent of personal and household victimization in the United States. Data from the NCVS, and its predecessor, the National Crime Survey (or NCS), have been used since 1973 to provide estimates of victimization, and beginning in 1993, the survey has also measured how often victims of violence report accessing victim assistance services in response to their victimization. These data are especially useful for providing information about the characteristics of victims and the nature of their experiences, for providing risk estimates for different groups in the population, and for learning more about the characteristics of victims who do and do not access help.

One of the reasons this source of information is so critical is that, unlike the Uniform Crime Reports and other sources of statistical data on crime and violence from law enforcement agencies, the NCVS includes victimizations that go unreported to police. Fifty-one percent of serious violent crimes were reported to the police in 2016 (Morgan and Kena, 2017) and though this percentage has fluctuated some over the past two decades, it remains similar to what it was in 1993 (Truman and Morgan, 2016). Because the data have been gathered for more than four decades, it can also be analyzed to show how rates of victimization have changed over time, and whether the group factors associated with risk for victimization may be different now compared to the past.

The NCVS sample is designed to be representative of persons ages 12 and older living in households in the United States. The survey uses plain language rather than legalistic terms, is conducted in English and Spanish (as well as other languages under some circumstances). The survey has a large sample size (for example, 220,000 interviews in 2016) which is necessary for ensuring that estimates of victimization are statistically reliable. Coupled with its high participation rate (85% currently), these factors help insure that the estimates are more reliable and cover a broader range of victims when compared to other surveys. The NCVS also uses a consistent methodology which is important for studying trends because it ensures that the changes in victimization rates and service use are not the result of changes in how the data is collected.

Like all data sources however, the NCVS have some limitations. Interviews are not conducted with persons under the age of 12, therefore victimization among young children cannot be studied with these data. Also relevant to issues of risk for victimization, sexual orientation and gender identity are important factors not currently available for analysis using the NCVS. More exploration of how the survey may have limitations for non-English-speaking persons or those with certain disabilities is also needed before drawing firm conclusions about the victimization experiences of these groups.

Additionally, because the NCVS is a household-based survey, interviews are not conducted with those who are homeless, or those living in institutional settings such as in prisons or jails, or in nursing homes. Practically speaking, this may also include limited participation by those who have transient residential situations, including individuals cycling in and out of the criminal justice system. These are important points to remember during the course of this report, given that such populations also experience victimization and may do so at higher rates – sometimes exponentially so - than others in the population. This is especially pertinent when translating the significance of these findings in policy, practice, and funding decisions designed to address gaps in services for the most vulnerable, many of whom may not be represented here.

Because the NCVS is a household-based survey, interviews are not conducted with those who are homeless or those living in institutional settings such as prisons and jails—populations that may experience victimization at exponentially high rates.

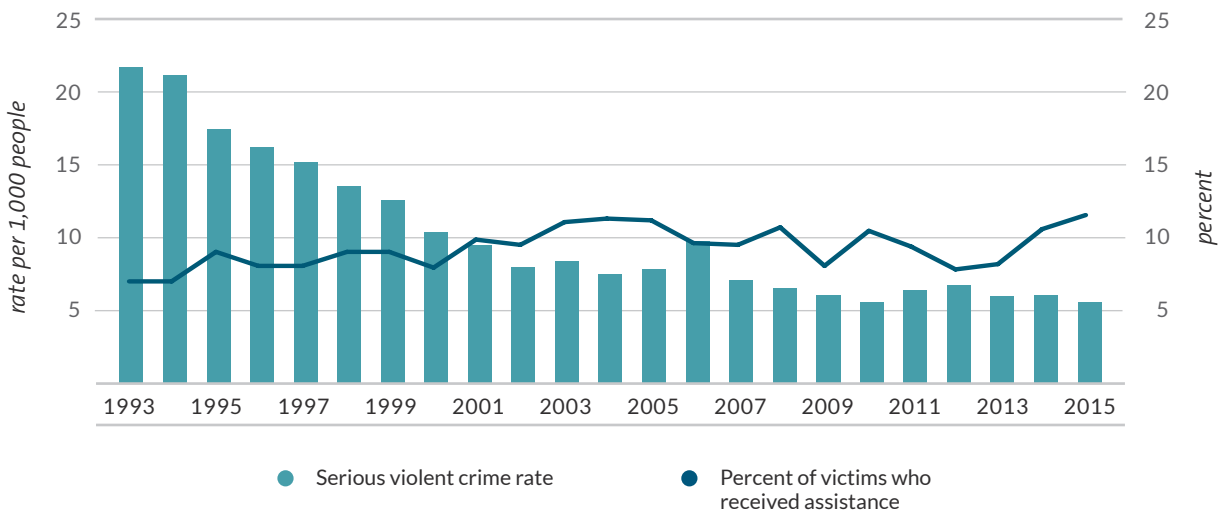
Relatedly, as a survey of victims, no data on homicide are provided and therefore the secondary victimization experienced by family members and other loved ones of these victims cannot be examined through this source. This is important to note related to the exact topics examined by this paper, given that people of color are disproportionately affected by homicide. Black people in the United States in particular accounted for 13 percent of the population yet 51 percent of all homicide victims in 2015.[10] For young black men, it is the first-leading cause of death (compared to third-leading for young men as a whole), causing more death than the entire other top nine causes.[11]

While the NCVS data are valid for many research purposes, there are also concerns that the estimated levels of some forms of victimization are too low—particularly for rape and sexual assault. These concerns are important and raise cautions about making generalizations about risk across some crime types. However, examinations of trends are less affected by these concerns because even if the estimates are too low, they are likely to be consistently low over time, thus not biasing the direction of the trends. Further details about the data and methodology used in this report can be found in Appendix A.

Trends in Serious Violence and Victim Service Access

This report focuses on patterns and trends for serious violent victimization and access of services by victims of these types of crimes. Serious violence is defined here as victimizations that include attempted and completed rape and sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated

Figure 1. Serious Violent Crime Rate (per 1,000 persons ages 12 and older) and Percent of Serious Violent Crime Victims Who Received Assistance from Victim Service Agencies, 1993-2015



10 Black Homicide Victimization in the United States: An Analysis of 2015 Homicide Data. http://www.vpc.org/studies/blackhomicide18.pdf

11 Leading Causes of Death (LCOD) by Age Group, Black Males – United States, 2015. https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/lcod/men/2015/black/index.htm

assault (which is an assault involving a weapon or resulting in serious bodily injury). Victimizations include those committed by strangers, intimate partners, as well known-nonintimates. Persons who report these victimizations are also asked "Did you receive any help or advice from any office or agency – other than the police – that deals with victims of crime?"

Figure 1 updates information shown in a previous BJS report which studied the trends in serious violence and victim assistance from 1993 to 2009 (Langton 2011).[12] Additional information for the 2010 to 2015 period shows relatively little change in rates of serious violent victimization since 2009, and no statistically significant increases in the use of assistance by victims of serious violence in the most recent period. During 1993-2009 victims reported accessing services for only 8.9% of serious violent victimizations. In the more recent 2010 to 2015 period, victims reported accessing victim services for 9.6% of serious violent victimizations.[13]

Given the considerable rights and services intended for all victims that have been codified since the advent of the victims' rights movement in the 1970s and 80s, these percentages are strikingly low. Since the passage of VOCA in 1984, more than 32,000 laws on behalf of victims have been enacted at the state, federal, and local levels across the United States, including the incremental addition of constitutional protections for victims in 35 states and counting, and robust statutory protections in all 50 states.[14] The persistently low levels of self-reported access to support suggest a failure to deliver on the promises made to all victims. Keep in mind once again that this consistently low number only speaks to victims of serious violence (as opposed to all victims of violence), and excludes many of the most vulnerable, those potentially facing the greatest access challenges and needs.

Furthermore, though this low number is a reality that the crime victim assistance and to some extent public health fields have been grappling with for some time, the broader criminal justice field and public discourse around it seldom acknowledges or contextualizes these facts. Given the increased attention at all levels that criminal justice reform has received in the United States in recent years, including bipartisan attention in Congress and high profile passage of the 2018 First Step Act addressing the federal system, as well as state legislatures grappling with the need for smart, sensible, data-driven approaches that provide a return on investment of public safety funds, the statistical picture of the experience of those directly affected by crime and violence is often strikingly absent from the debate.

Given increased attention to criminal justice reform in the United States in recent years, the statistical picture of the experience of those directly affected by crime and violence is often strikingly absent from the debate.

Table 1 displays whether the stability in victim assistance use varies by type of violent crime. From 1993 to 2009, survivors of rape and sexual assault were more likely to access victim assistance services compared to survivors of other forms of violence, and this remains true in the more recent 2010-2015 period. Approximately 20% of rape and sexual assault victims, compared to 8.4% of robbery and 7.4% of aggravated assault victims, reported receiving services in 2010-2015, and these percentages were not significantly different from those found in 1993-2009.

12 At the time of this writing, the impact of sample changes on the 2016 NCVS data was not fully completed; therefore, our analyses use data through 2015. Future research will continue to monitor the data for any changes in the findings presented in this report.

13 The percentage of unique victims accessing services may differ some from the percentage of victimizations in which the victim reported accessing services because some victims of serious violence report experiencing more than one incident, especially over multiple interviews. The NCVS data do not contain victim service access information for each incident that may be reported among high frequency repeat victims as such questioning places an undue burden on victims. See the Methodology section of this report for additional information.

14 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *Model Policy for Response to Victims of Crime* (Alexandria, VA: IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, 2010); http://www.theiacp.org/model-policy/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/08/VictimsPolicy.pdf, National Crime Victim Law Institute, "Victims' Rights by State," 2013. https://law.lclark.edu/live/news/23544-victims-rights-law-by-state.

Table 1. Percent of Victims of Serious Violence Who Received Assistance from Victim Service Agencies, by Type of Violence

	1993-2009	2010-2015
All Serious Violence	**8.9**	**9.6**
Rape/Sexual Assault	18.9	20.1
Robbery	7.4	8.4
Aggravated Assault	7.6	7.4
Intimate Partner	22.1	21.2
Known/non-intimate	11.0	12.0
Stranger	5.2	4.7

There is also little change over time in receipt of victim assistance by survivors of serious violence according to victim-offender relationship. About 21% of intimate partner violence victims received assistance in 2010-2015, and the rates are lower if the offender was someone known to the victim but not an intimate partner (12%), or if the offender was a stranger (4.7%).

Overall, these basic patterns have not changed much over time, and the NCVS data indicates that the vast majority of violent crime survivors do not access victim assistance.

Who Is Most Likely to Become a Victim of Serious Violence?

This section examines how various characteristics are associated with a person's risks for serious violence, and considers whether some of those relationships may have changed over time. This is important in addressing where risk is greatest, and whether our understanding of who we might be missing may be based on facts that may have changed.

Gender, Race, and Ethnic Differences

One way to identify who is most likely to be a victim of serious violence is to compare the trends in the rates for specific groups, such as males and females, or different racial and ethnic groups. The advantage of examining group-specific trends is that they provide the necessary information for understanding whether disparities in risk are changing over time. The disparities associated with several key characteristics, such as victim sex, race and ethnicity, can be examined over several decades because NCVS data collection began in 1973.

Figure 2 shows the trends in male and female rates of serious violent victimization from 1973 to 2015. This figure also includes a trend line for the ratio of the group rates (or risk ratio) which represents the magnitude of the disparities in risk between the two groups. Figure 2 shows that both male and female rates of serious violent victimization declined substantially over time, particularly during the 1990s, and that males' risk declined more than females' risk for violence. Male rates of violence declined 82% from 1973 to 2015, while female rates declined by 65%. The upward trend in the risk ratio also indicates that the declines in victimization have been greater for males than for females. During the 1970s, females' risk for serious violence was about half (ratio = .53) of that for males, but in 2014 and 2015, there was no longer a notable difference between females' and males' rates of victimization (where the ratio is approximately 1.0). Thus the gender gap in serious violent victimization has closed, and the trends in the rates indicate that this has happened because the declines in male victimization have been greater than the declines in female victimization over time. Though the exact reasons for this are unknown, this considerable change may have implications for the victim assistance field.

Figure 2. Serious Violent Victimization Rates for Males and Females, 1973-2015

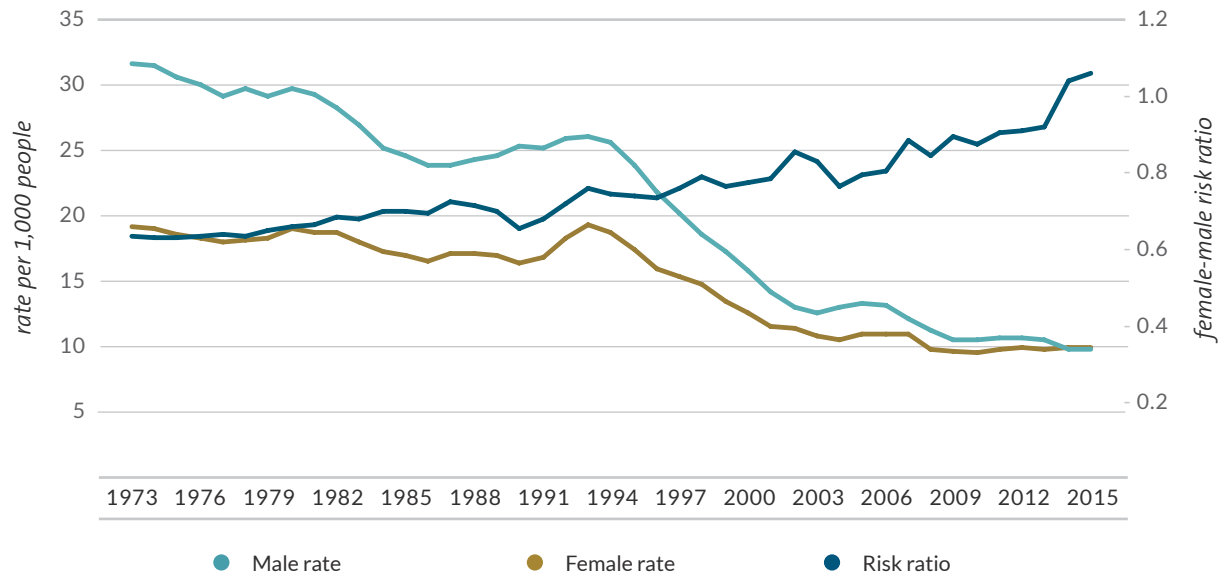
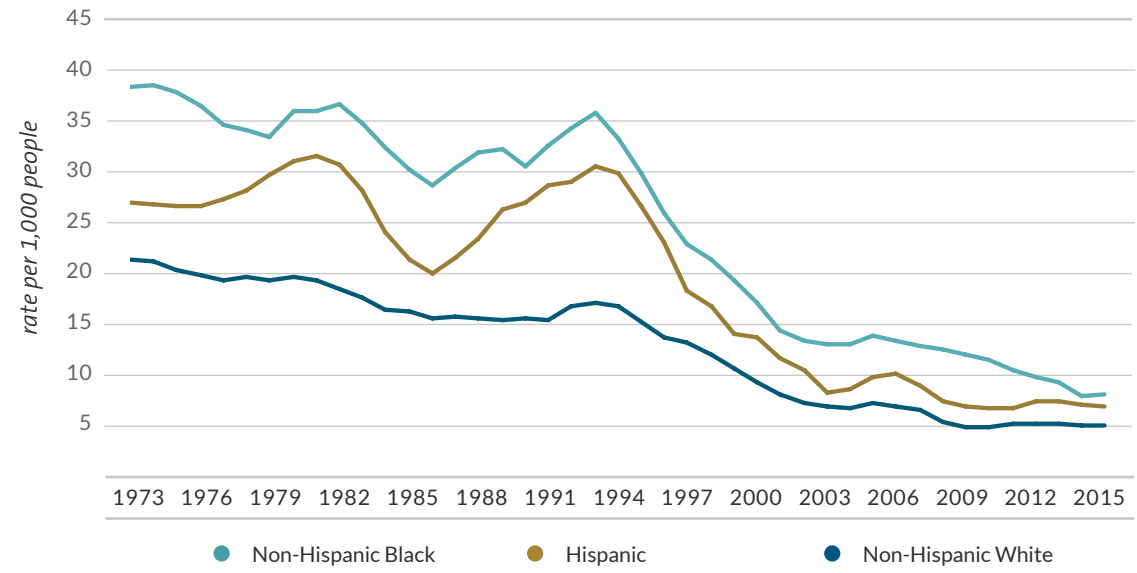


Figure 3. Serious Violent Crime Victimization Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 1973-2015



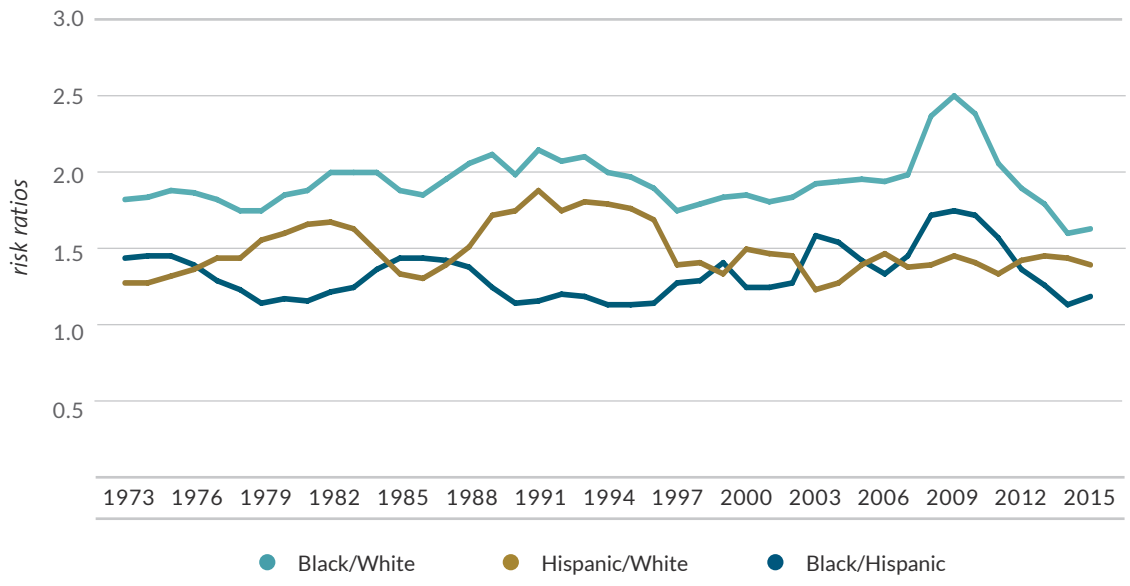
The gender gap in serious violent victimization has closed, and the trends indicate this has happened because declines in male victimization have been greater than declines in female victimization over time.

To examine changes over time in the risk for serious violence for racial and ethnic groups, Figure 3 displays the trends in victimization for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and Hispanics. These are the three largest population groups in the U.S., comprising approximately 94% of the total population. Although the NCVS gathers race and ethnicity information for other groups such as American Indian and Alaska Natives, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders, and persons of two of more races, the NCVS sample size is not large enough to provide similarly reliable long-term trends for these populations.

Figure 3 shows that the rates of serious violent victimization have declined since 1973 for each of the three groups. From 1973 to 2015, the decline in violence rates was 77% among whites, 79% among blacks, and 74% among Hispanics. Across the decades, the risks for serious violence were highest among blacks and lowest among whites.

Figure 3 may appear to suggest that the disparities or gaps in risk for serious violence across the three groups have declined over time, but Figure 4 reveals that this is not the case. As was the case for males and females, we must take a close look at the risk ratio trends across the groups before drawing conclusions. The risk ratios in Figure 4 show that the disparities between these three racial and ethnic populations exhibit no clear long-term trend similar to what was found for males and females. Instead, the risk ratios show that the size of the disparities in risk between whites, blacks, and Hispanics in recent years are generally similar to those found in earlier decades. ***Over the past four decades, blacks' risk for serious violence have remained roughly 1.5-2 times greater***

Figure 4. Serious Violent Victimization Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity, 1973-2015



than those of whites, and risks among Hispanics have been roughly 1.2-1.5 times greater than those of whites.

As noted above, similar trends are not produced for other race and ethnic groups because they constitute a relatively small proportion of the NCVS sample and their annual rates are less reliable. However, by combining multiple years of the data, these problems are minimized and it is possible to learn more about the risks for serious violence for several additional groups. Table 2 shows that during 2010-2015, ***non-Hispanic American Indians report rates of serious violence that are approximately 2.4 times (or 140%) greater than those of non-Hispanic whites, and that persons who report multiple race backgrounds have rates that are about 4.1 times (or 310%) greater.*** In contrast, non-Hispanic Asian Americans report rates of victimization that are .6 (or 60%) those of whites.

Table 2. Risk for Serious Violence for All Race/Ethnic Groups, 2010-2015

	% of Population	Rate	Relative Risk[a]
Non-Hispanic White	65.7	5.1	--
Non-Hispanic Black	12.1	9.2	1.8
Hispanic	15.2	7.0	1.4
Non-Hispanic American Indian	.5	12.1	2.4
Non-Hispanic Asian	4.9	2.8	.6
Non-Hispanic Multiple Races	1.2	20.9	4.1

[a] *Compared to non-Hispanic whites.*

We therefore see that non-Hispanic American Indians and persons indicating that they are mixed race experienced the highest risks for serious violence during 2010-2015, potentially indicating some of the greatest proportions of victim assistance need. Though a relatively small portion of the population, these disparities have important implications for the field, in both recognizing unique and disproportionate levels of risk, and also in the need for investment in appropriate and culturally relevant strategies to meet these needs.

In FY 2018, for the first time ever, 3 percent of the CVF obligations were designated by the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act to improve victim services to tribes, known as the Tribal Set-Aside Program.[15] Based on the CVF total, this amounted to $110 million available to federally-recognized American Indian Tribes, including Alaska Native villages or regional or village corporations as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, tribal consortia, and tribal designees in the FY18 grant period alone. Understanding the extent to which this approach to the allocation of these resources is able to support this high risk, underserved population should be an important part of the Tribal Set-Aside Program looking forward.

Overall, three key insights can be drawn from these findings:

- It is important not to draw conclusions about possible changes in group disparities in violent victimization without also examining trends in the risk ratios. Disparities in the risk ratios reveal patterns that the rates themselves may not fully reveal.
- Racial and ethnic identities continue over time to differentiate who is most likely to become a victim of serious violence.
- The association between gender and the risk for violence has changed over time, and other risk factors may do so as well. It is therefore important to continuously examine the data to make more informed decisions about who is likely to be most in need of victim assistance services.

These findings and their complexity underscore why collaboration between researchers, practitioners and policymakers is key, representing an example of where a more detailed statistical analysis was necessary

15 https://www.ovc.gov/news/fy18-tribal-set-aside.html

to not only produce relevant, updated information, but to prevent inaccurate assumptions in its place. Collaboration across roles, perspectives, and skillsets allows diverse stakeholders to work together more efficiently in identifying and answering key questions for the field.

Furthermore, in order for statistics to have the greatest utility for policy and funding decisions, it is imperative that the statistical infrastructure keep pace. Though the consistency of the NCVS has been invaluable for purposes of tracking changes in victimization over time, survey questions and administration methods must be periodically revisited to ensure that to the extent possible victims are able to report on their identities and experiences comfortably and accurately, and in recognition that crime victims are not a monolithic group.

This is especially important for particularly complex factors highly relevant to victimization, such as self-report mixed race and disability status, the context of which may change over time, and where overly broad categories may fail to capture pertinent nuances across a vast array of experiences. For example, the nation's multiracial population has grown substantially since the year 2000 when the Census Bureau first started allowing people to choose more than one racial category to describe themselves,[16] which should be considered in concert with the finding that persons who report multiple race backgrounds have rates that are about 310% greater than those of non-Hispanic whites as reported above. And although outside the scope of this paper, the heightened risk of victimization demonstrated by the NCVS for people with disabilities has garnered national attention, yet not been able to differentiate across a wide range of publicly recognized and increasingly differentiated disability types.

16 http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/

The Impact of Multiple Risk Factors

While the above analysis provides important information about the long-term trends and disparities in risk for serious violence for gender, race, and ethnic groups, there are limitations to relying solely on this method for learning who is most likely to be victimized. The primary limitation occurs when groups that are being compared also differ in other characteristics that are known to be associated with the risk for victimization. In other words, an intersectional approach, allowing us to examine the impact of more than one factor at a time, is critical to understanding the meaning of these patterns. For example, when comparing victimization rates for different racial and ethnic groups, it is important to keep in mind that differences in the rates may reflect the fact that groups are composed of different proportions of young persons and poorer persons who also have been found to suffer violence at higher rates.

An intersectional approach, allowing us to examine the impact of more than one group characteristic at a time, is critical to understanding the meaning of victimization patterns. For example, differences in victimization rates for different racial and ethnic groups may reflect the fact that groups are composed of different proportions of young and poorer persons who also suffer violence at higher rates.

An alternative method for identifying groups at high risk for serious violence is to study multiple risk factors simultaneously, more reflective of the many facets affecting any person's experience. This allows us to consider additional factors playing a role in differences we observe (for example, between race

and ethnic groups) which may be due to the fact that the different groups also more frequently experience other conditions such as poverty that are themselves associated with risk.

Table 3 uses data from the recent 2010-1015 period to examine how much each of the different factors influences risk when others are taken into account, assessing how the risk for serious violent victimization is associated with a person's age, sex, race and ethnicity, household income, and whether they reside in an urban, suburban or rural community. The table presents odds ratios, which when greater than 1.0 and statistically significant, indicate that the characteristic is associated with a higher risk than the comparison group. Conversely, if the ratio is less than 1.0 and statistically significant, this indicates that the characteristic is associated with a lower risk.

The results in this table show that each of these factors contributes significantly and independently to the risk for serious violence. Among the added factors, we find:

- persons ages 35 and above have lower risks than those who are younger (12-17 and 18-34)
- persons living in households earning more than $25,000 annually have risks that are less than half that of those earning less than $25,000
- persons living in nonmetropolitan (or rural areas) and those living in suburbs (or places adjacent to cities) have risks for serious violence that are lower than those living in metropolitan cities

Therefore, economic and residential status are important, as are age, sex, race, and ethnicity. ***Overall risk is highest among persons who are younger, male, black, living in the poorest households, and living in urban areas.*** The findings in table 3 also indicate that ***age and household income*** have the strongest association with violence risk, followed by residential location, race and ethnicity, and sex.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Analysis of Victim Characteristics on the Likelihood of Experiencing Serious Violent Victimization, 2010-2015[a]

Victim Characteristic	Odds Ratio[b]
Age[c]	
18-34	1.04
35-54	.70*
55+	.25*
Sex[d]	
Male	1.18*
Race/Ethnicity[e]	
Non-Hispanic Black	1.15*
Hispanic	.85*
Non-Hispanic Other	.92
Income[f]	
$25,000 – 49,999	.50*
$50,000 – 74,999	.57*
$75,000 and above	.27*
Unknown	.40*
Type of Area[g]	
Suburban	.70*
Rural	.58*
Constant	.01*

[a] *Outcome is the prevalence of victimization during the six-month recall period based on pooled NCVS data.*
[b] *Odds ratios relative to comparison group.*
[c] *Compared to ages 12-17.*
[d] *Compared to females.*
[e] *Compared to non-Hispanic whites.*
[f] *Compared to households earning less than $25,000.*
[g] *Compared to metropolitan city areas.*
* *Statistically significant at p < .05.*

Table 4. Prevalence Comparison of Serious Violent Victimization in the Highest and Lowest Risk Groups, 2010-2015

Highest Risk Groups			Lowest Risk Groups		
Persons: less than 35 years, living in urban areas, with household incomes < $25,000			**Persons:** 55 and older, not living in urban areas, with household incomes > $74,999		
	Male	**Female**		**Male**	**Female**
White	13.5	11.5	**White**	1.2	1.1
Black	15.4	13.1	**Black**	1.6	1.3
Hispanic	11.4	9.7	**Hispanic**	1.2	1.0
Other	12.3	10.5	**Other**	1.3	1.1

To more easily compare the likelihood of victimization when all of these characteristics are taken into account, Table 4 shows the risks for serious violence among persons in the highest versus the lowest rate groups. This provides a more intuitive understanding of the results, with the comparison demonstrating where survivors of serious violence are most often to be found.

Taken from highest to lowest risk, black males under the age of 35 who live in urban areas and in households with annual incomes under $25,000 have a combined risk for serious violent victimization (15.4 per 1,000 during a six-month period) that is nearly 15 times greater than that of females who are 55 years of age or older and living in nonurban areas and in households with incomes $75,000 and over (rates ranging from 1.0 to 1.3 per 1,000).

Notwithstanding the disproportionate risk for violent victimization experienced by young men of color, particularly 18-34 year old, poor, urban black males, the VOCA Victim Assistance performance measurement data collected annually by OVC indicate that approximately 72% of VOCA dollars currently go to serving female victims, 53% to victims who are white, and by a wide margin to serving victims age 25-59 (the category determined by OVC)..[17]

Taken from highest to lowest risk, black males under age 35 who live in urban households with incomes under $25,000 have a risk for serious violent victimization that is nearly 15 times greater than that of females age 55 or older living in nonurban households with incomes $75,000 and over.

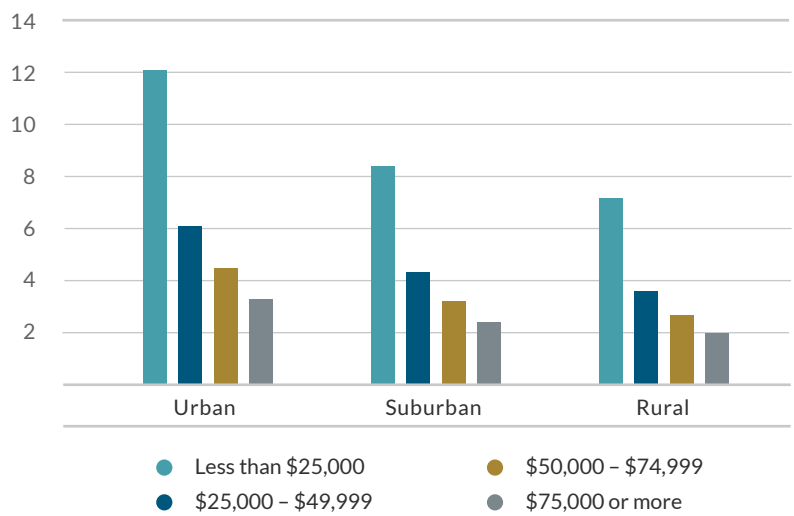
Table 4 also shows that race, ethnicity, and sex differences in risk are smaller than the differences associated with age, household income, and residential location. These findings suggest that the need for services is greatest among low income groups, particularly those in urban areas. And that within these poor, urban communities, even if the types of services that would be most effective may vary based on particular victim characteristics, we should expect to find fairly similar need for victim support services for persons of all genders, races, and ethnicities. The large disparities that exist at the two ends of the continuum underscore the importance of considering the multiple factors that simultaneously influence a victim's life.

17 https://ojp.gov/ovc/grants/vocanpr_va16.pdf

Race, ethnicity, and sex differences in victimization risk are smaller than the differences associated with age, household income, and residential location. These findings suggest that the need for services is greatest among low income groups, particularly those in urban areas.

Although risk for serious violence is greater in urban areas versus elsewhere, it should be emphasized that there are other types of areas with notably high proportions of survivors. Figure 5 shows that victimization rates are also disproportionately high among younger and poorer persons living in suburban and rural areas.[18] These patterns reinforce the finding that the need for victim services is greatest in communities where there are more low-income households, regardless of whether those communities are located in urban, suburban, or rural locations. The issue of proximity to services is particularly relevant for low income people who experience a disproportionate amount of victimization, given the barriers associated with lack of access to transportation these victims may face. Given these statistics, both physical location of services and transportation as a victim service itself where proximity is lacking are of high importance to the victim assistance field.

Figure 5. Prevalence Comparison of Serious Violence Among Persons Less than 35 Years of Age, by Household Income and Type of Residential Location, 2010-2015



18 Persons who did not report their income are not shown in this figure, though the results indicate that their risks are generally comparable to those living in households with annual incomes of $50,000 to $74,999.

Who Is Most Likely to Use Victim Services?

The NCVS data can also be used to provide a general description of how each of the above characteristics are associated with victim service use, and where the gaps are the greatest. However, because only about 10% of victims of violence access assistance services, the data do not have sufficient statistical power to provide a reliable picture of how all of these factors work in combination with one another to affect access. But we can use data to obtain a general view of where the gaps may be the greatest to help better target the underserved.

The NCVS reveals mostly small differences in victim assistance access across victim characteristics. Table 5 shows that the largest differences in victim service use are found between females and males. During 2010-2015, 14.4% of female victims of serious violence reported that they received assistance, compared to 5.2% of male victims. Other percentage differences are much smaller. For example, the 8.9% of victims in rural areas report receiving assistance compared to 10.1% of victims in urban areas. Somewhat larger, but still small percentage point differences are found for age, race and ethnicity, and household income.

With the exception of the differences found between males and females, the small percentage point differences in victim assistance access for other victim characteristics are not large enough to claim that they constitute a statistically significant pattern. Instead, these findings suggest that the vast majority of the survivors of serious violence do not access victim services, and that victim assistance agencies have had more success reaching female victims than male victims of violence.

Table 5. Percent of Serious Violence Victims Who Received Assistance from Victim Service Agencies, by Victim Characteristics, 2010-2015

Victim Characteristic	Percent
Age	
12-17	11.6
18-34	7.9
35-54	11.3
55+	9.8
Sex	
Female	14.4
Male	5.2
Race/Ethnicity	
White	9.6
Black	10.1
Hispanic	8.4
Other	11.5
Income	
Less than $25,000	9.5
$25,000 – 49,999	11.8
$50,000 – 74,999	8.2
$75,000 and above	8.7
Unknown	8.9
Type of Area	
Urban	10.1
Suburban	9.3
Rural	8.9

These findings suggest that the vast majority of the survivors of serious violence do not access victim services, and that victim assistance agencies have had more success reaching female victims than male victims of violence.

Males and females differ in the extent to which they are victims of different forms of violence, as females are much more likely than males to be victims of rape and sexual assault and to be victimized by intimate partners. However, as discussed above, when other factors are simultaneously considered such as race and poverty, some males are overwhelmingly more likely overall to experience serious violence than some females (e.g., young men of color in poor communities compared to more affluent white females). As described previously, it is also important to note the relevance of both sexual orientation and gender identity to issues of risk and victimization, though these factors are not currently available for analysis using the NCVS.

To assess whether sex differences in victim service use are related to the different types of victimization that males and females experience, additional details about patterns of service access are presented in Table 6. The percentages in this table show that female victims are more likely than male victims to receive assistance for each type of serious violence that they experience. Female victims reported use of victim services in 22% of rapes and sexual assaults, 13% of robberies, and 11% of aggravated assaults. Male victims reported use of victim services in 6% of robberies, and 5% of aggravated assaults, with an insufficient number of sample cases for reliable estimate on other forms of serious violence.

Female victims are more likely than male victims to receive assistance for each type of serious violence they experience. Female victims reported use of victim services in 22% of rapes and sexual assaults, 13% of robberies, and 11% of aggravated assaults. Male victims reported use of victim services in 6% of robberies, and 5% of aggravated assaults.

Table 6. Percent of Male and Female Victims of Serious Violence Who Received Assistance from Victim Service Agencies, by Type of Violence, 2010-2015

	Males	Females
All Serious Violence	**5**	**14**
Rape/Sexual Assault	!	22
Robbery	6	13
Aggravated Assault	5	11
Intimate Partner	!	26
Known/non-intimate	8	16
Stranger	4	6
Injured	8	18
Not injured	4	12

Note: ! indicates insufficient number of sample cases for reliable estimate.

Differences in victim service access also are found when violence is examined according to victim-offender relationship. Female victims of serious violence are most likely to receive assistance when the offender is an intimate partner (26%). In incidents involving a known/non-intimate partner, 16% of female victims receive assistance compared to 8% of males. When the offender is a stranger, few female (6%) or male (4%) victims report receiving victim assistance.

When we investigate whether differences in injuries help account for this, we learn that those who suffer bodily injuries from violence are more likely to receive assistance, but also that the gender patterns remain consistent. In incidents resulting in serious bodily injury, both males and females are more likely to access victim assistance (compared to when serious bodily injury does not occur), however females do so at a greater percentage. Therefore, regardless of the type of violence, male victims are less likely than female victims to access assistance. It is unclear exactly why this is the case, however the available body of research, based primarily on analyses of victims of intimate partner and sexual violence, suggests that societal perceptions of gender norms and the stigma associated with identifying as a victim and requesting assistance are likely to be associated with these patterns. In any case, they raise questions for the field surrounding outreach, accessibility and availability of support services appropriately tailored for males.

How Is Victim Service Access Related to Crime Reporting and Receipt of Medical Care?

There have been many efforts by victim assistance organizations to better engage the police and medical community in the treatment and support of victims, recognizing the unique role and importance of these venues as both gateways and providers of victim support. Table 7 examines whether crime reporting is associated with higher levels of victim assistance. Levels of reporting serious violent crime to the police were similar in 2000-2009 and 2010-2015, and during both of these periods, a greater percentage of victims received assistance when the crime was reported to the police. During 2010-2015, 13% of victims received assistance when the incident was reported to the police, while only 5% of victims received services when the police were not notified of the crime. However, the data also indicates that there has been no notable improvement in access over time when the police have been notified, with 13% in the recent period compared to 14% during the 2000's.

Table 7. Percent of Victims of Serious Violence Who Received Assistance from Victim Service Agencies, by Whether the Victimization Was Reported to the Police

	2000-2009	2010-2015
Reported to Police	14	13
Not Reported to Police	4	5

Note: Excludes victims who did not know whether the crime was reported. From 2000-2009, 58% of serious violence was reported to the police, and from 2010-2015, the percentage was the same (58%).

This difference among those who report victimization to the police versus those who do not has implications for the structure and affiliation of available services, that is, whether they are found within the justice system or associated with criminal justice entities, versus found within the community. ***Especially given the high percentage of victims who chose not to report to the police, policymakers and funders must think critically about the importance of investment and expansion of services in venues unaffiliated with the justice system, including a diversity of community-based organizations, hospitals, universities, and schools.***

This also has implications for the 18,000 police agencies nationally, particularly those committed to improving their response to victims. It is unknown what became of the 87 percent of serious violent crime victims who reported the crimes to police, yet did not receive services. Clearly, however, opportunities for connecting victims with the help they need are being missed.[19] The NCVS data also reveals that victims who choose not to report their victimization to the police cite a range of reasons, one being that they did not think police could do anything to help. The percentage of violent victimizations that were not reported for this reason

19 Heather Warnken, "What Does the Data Tell Us About Law Enforcement Based Victim Services." April 2018 http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/what-does-the-data-tell-us/

doubled from 10 percent in 1994 to 20 percent in 2010.[20]

This statistical connection between reporting crime to the police and accessing help is especially relevant in communities and among groups that may have particularly strained or distrusting relationships with law enforcement. There are many factors potentially influencing this connection, including the nature of the relationship and level of trust between diverse victims and police in their community. But the findings certainly have implications for pursuit of a better understanding of a range of victim perceptions about whether law enforcement agencies are both willing and equipped to meet their needs. They also suggest that the current focus on police-community relations in criminal justice and other research and policy forums should include discussions of victim service access as relevant to improving upon these societal and public safety goals.

Table 8. Percent of Injured Victims of Serious Violence Who Received Assistance from Victim Service Agencies, by Whether the Victim Received Medical Care

	2000-2009	2010-2015
Received Medical Care	18	16
Did Not Receive Medical Care	12	11

Note: In 2000-2009, 37% of victims of serious violence reported bodily injuries, and of those reporting injuries, 54% received medical care. In 2010-2015, 36% of victims reported bodily injuries, and of those reporting injuries, 56% received medical care.

Similarly, we see that there have been no notable improvements over time in victim assistance use when injured victims receive medical care. The findings in Table 8 show that during 2010-2015, 36% of serious violent crime victims suffered bodily injuries – a percentage that is similar to that found for 2000-2009 (37%). In addition, there was little change in the percentage of injured victims who report receiving medical care for those injuries – 54% in 2000-2009, versus 56% in 2010-2015. Victims are more likely to access victim assistance services when they receive medical care for their injuries, however even in these instances, only 16% of these victims did so in the recent period compared to 18% in the 2000-2009 period. Victim engagement with medical care institutions has not led to increases over time in victim service access.

This finding has implications for the field in its consideration of potentially missed opportunities in hospitals and other public health venues likely to come into contact with victims in need of services beyond those related exclusively to their injuries or physical health. The National Network of Hospital Based Violence Intervention Programs and other leading voices have made important strides in developing and supporting this highly successful model[21], however, the total number of programs offering a more holistic approach to trauma-informed services remains low. Further bridge-building and investment of victim assistance resources in these venues could yield considerable promise in connecting victims and families with much-needed support beyond medical care, bringing the availability of services in health settings from the exception to the rule.

20 Lynn Langton et al., Victimizations Not Reported to the Police, 2006–2010 (Washington, DC: DOJ, OJP, 2012). https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4393

21 http://nnhvip.org

Conclusions

Understanding data on who is at highest risk for victimization and who is receiving services in comparison to that need is critical for policy and funding decisions in the victim assistance field and beyond. This is especially true for ensuring a return on investment in strategies designed to address the needs of those most likely to be victimized, and to fill gaps in services and responses that the data has long-revealed.

Overall, the patterns discussed in this report reinforce the view that ***the vast majority of survivors do not access the services intended for them***, and that ***the need for victim services is greatest in the poorest communities***, regardless of whether those communities are located in urban, suburban, or rural locations. But the findings also suggest the need for more nuance to this conversation, and a critical examination of why the characteristics of those most likely to experience certain types of serious violent victimization do not align with those most likely to access services, or current expenditures in the field.

As discussed earlier, females and males differ in the extent to which they are victims of different forms of violence, ***and females are much more likely than males to be victims of rape and sexual assault and to be victimized by intimate partners***. The findings reveal that current expenditures may heavily favor services targeted to these crime types, unsurprising given the historical roots of the field, as well as the cultural progress in recognizing and supporting the need for these categories of response. ***Though services tailored for these crime types remain essential and rife with their own persistent gaps that the field must continue to address, the full picture leaves opportunity for developing additional services and strategies tailored to meeting the needs of a wider range of victimization types and characteristics, such as nonfatal shootings and other forms of community violence, and those designed and intended to meet the needs of male youth of color. And perhaps most importantly, it leaves opportunity for approaching these issues with an intersectional framework, recognizing the dignity of survivors through better awareness of the range of experiences, victimization types, service and healing needs that unique individuals may have***. At a time when the total allocation of funding for victim assistance remains at historic levels, in totality these findings present an opportunity to more closely examine whether existing services are actually effective for reaching those that need them most.[22]

Changes to VOCA as discussed above have also presented ways in which VOCA administrators can use designated portions of their funding to invest simultaneously in meaningful analysis to better understand and improve upon their ability to provide services which meet victims' needs. This includes for example the hiring of dedicated staff, engagement in research-practitioner partnerships, and otherwise establishing collaboration between their funding agencies and state statistical analysis centers, as some jurisdictions have done through an innovative OVC-funded Center for Victim Research program established in 2017.[23]

Filling gaps for those impacted by violence requires filling gaps in knowledge. In the near future, new data collected directly from thousands of providers and allied professionals across the country will be available to complement this picture, through BJS' groundbreaking Victim Services Statistical Research Program. Discussed in more depth in Appendix B, this effort includes the first-ever National Survey of Victim Service Providers (NSVSP), launching in April 2019. Using a representative sample of 11,877 eligible entities

22 Although it is outside the scope of this report, these findings also represent a tool for the VOCA funding administrator community responsible for allocating the vast majority of the billions in Victim Assistance dollars nationally for utilizing their performance measurement data (PMT) to more closely examine investments in their states. Administrators and their subgrantees are required annually as part of this formula grant program to submit PMT data tracking aspects of these expenditures. And although NCVS findings are currently national in scope, this unparalleled data source can provide a helpful basis of comparison when complemented with local level sources such as the PMT. See the following reference for more information: https://ojp.gov/ovc/grants/vocanpr_va16.pdf

23 https://victimresearch.org/research/collaborations/t ; https://www.ovc.gov/VOCA-Administrators/faqs.html

in the frame, the NSVSP will collect detailed information from diverse VSPs in the categories of victims served, services provided, human resources issues, and other relevant topics such as VSP-noted barriers and gaps. These data can be used by a range of criminal justice and public health stakeholders to further explore the current findings and related issues, which each have implications for more effectively addressing disparities and inequities in the current responses to violence, barriers to service access, and in diversifying the venue and structure of available healing services and supports.

Though it is clear that the need and work ahead for the victim assistance and allied fields is great, it is unclear how long these significantly increased levels of funding will last. While centering the voices of directly impacted communities, there is an important role to play shared by funders, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike in seizing this moment, ensuring a return on investment felt in the lives of the victims who need it most.

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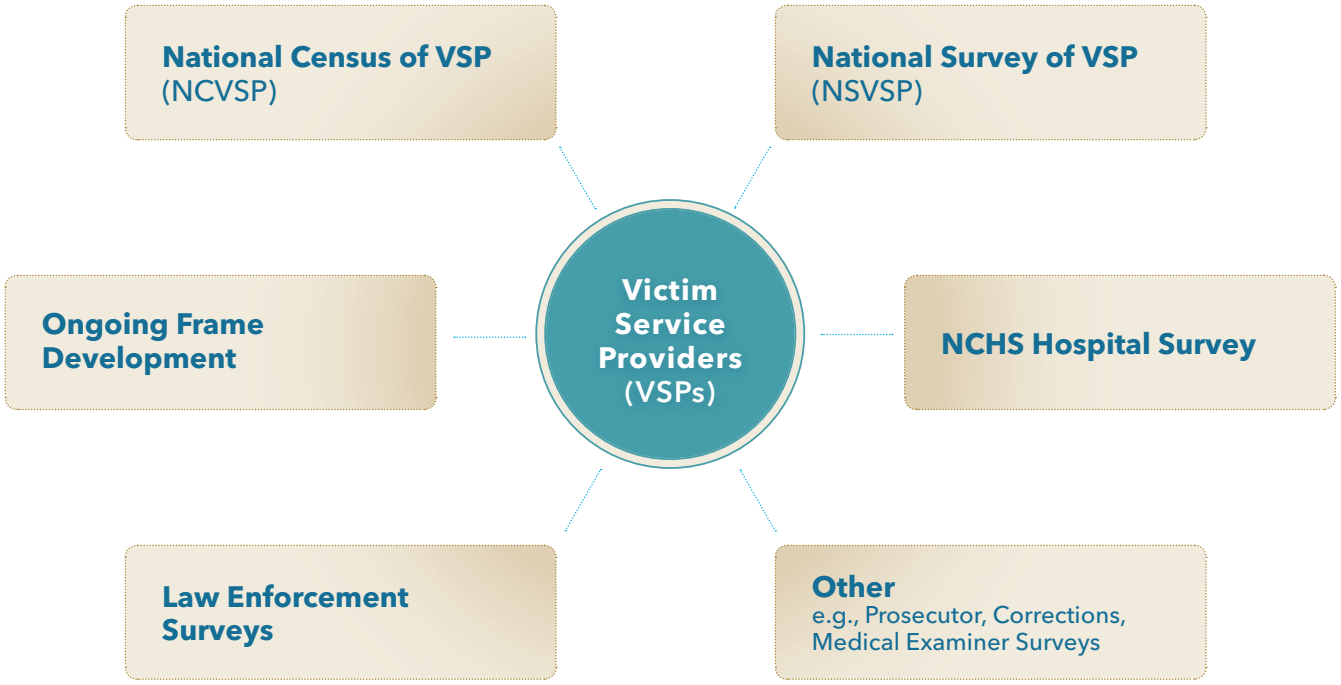
Appendix A. Methodology

The methodology used in this report varies depending on the research question and corresponding type of analysis. In analyses that update the previous BJS report entitled "Use of Victim Service Agencies by Victims of Serious Violence, 1993-2009," the same methods were used here as in that report (see Langton 2011, p. 6). This methodology covers the findings presented in Figure 1, and Tables 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8. In both Langton (2011) and this report, the analysis focuses on the extent to which persons experiencing serious violent victimizations report accessing victim services for a particular victimization. The NCVS data do not allow for a fully unique count of victims receiving services following a victimization because this information is gathered among high frequency victims only for the last incident that they experienced. The 2010 to 2015 data used in this report indicate that approximately 88% of persons experiencing serious violence during a six-month recall period reported one incident, while 12% reported more than one incident.

The methodology used in developing the long-term trends in serious violence by sex, race, and ethnicity (Figures 2-4) is described in Lauritsen and Heimer (2009). The trends presented in these figures were smoothed using 3-year moving averages for the serious violence rates to minimize year-to-year variation and better depict the long-term changes in the rates and ratios.

The logistic regression analyses presented in Table 3 is based on pooled interviews from the 2010 to 2015 NCVS data. A total of 1,070,102 interviews with respondents were used in these analyses. Respondents were coded "1" if they reported experiencing any form of serious violent victimization during the six-month recall period and "0" if they did not. Survey-weighted logistic analysis (available in Stata software) was used to perform the multivariate analyses. The software routines take into account sampling weights as well as the clustered sampling design to ensure that standard errors are properly estimated. The predicted probabilities shown in Table 4 and Figure 5 are based on the results of the logistic regression model shown in Table 3 and reflect the likelihood or prevalence of serious violent victimization (per 1,000) in a six-month period during these years.

Appendix B. Additional Data Forthcoming: The Victim Services Statistical Research Program



Complementing the data available directly from victims, in 2017 BJS fielded the first-ever National Census of Victim Service Providers (NCVSP), as part of a groundbreaking new Victim Services Statistical Research Program.[24] The NCVSP will provide for the first time a quantitative picture of victim service providers throughout the country, including information on the types of services provided, types of victims served, and other important factors such as structure and funding sources, providing the most comprehensive quantitative snapshot on these issues to date.

Using a representative sample of VSPs from the 11,877 eligible entities in the NCVSP frame, in April 2019 BJS will field the National Survey of Victim Service Providers (NSVSP). Following the necessary initial step of establishing a national VSP statistical frame, the NSVSP will provide an opportunity to go deeper, collecting more detailed information from diverse entities in the categories of victims served (including demographics and other relevant characteristics), services provided, human resources issues, and other relevant topics such as VSP-noted barriers and gaps. With funding-driven hiring increases across the field, human resources-related topics are an especially timely contribution to the knowledge base, coinciding with growing conversations throughout the field regarding whether the VSP community is representative or otherwise culturally attuned to the victims it serves.

Though the NCVSP and NSVSP represent the core of these new data, the VSSRP also includes other research and development efforts to further complement this picture. This includes a partnership between BJS and

24 https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=98

the National Center for Health Statistics to look at hospital-based victim services specifically, recognizing that even though these entities are included in the core collections, they represent a unique opportunity for enhanced understanding as described above. This also includes a pilot survey looking at victim services in homeless shelters, with a particular focus on victims with disabilities, given prevalence among this population and possible exclusion from the NCVS sampling frame. The research and development efforts also entail a pilot project Victim Offender Overlap Survey, addressing victimization and service needs for currently incarcerated survivors, beginning with the jail population, another important yet missing population from the NCVS.

Lastly, the VSSRP approach entails looking across to other existing BJS collections for data that is already collected relevant to these issues, and future opportunities to add questions addressing victimization responses and service needs. Law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, courts, and even other entities that BJS surveys such as the medical examiners/coroners' offices all represent venues and stakeholders not just relevant but often critical to these issues. They therefore present not just peripheral but arguably essential opportunities to yield findings that can help inform a range of criminal justice and public health stakeholders in strategic victim assistance funding, policymaking, and more.

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