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Crime Against People with Disabilities, 2007

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National Crime Victimization Survey

Crime Against People with Disabilities, 2007

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Persons age 12 or older with disabilities experienced approximately 716,000 nonfatal violent crimes and 2.3 million property crimes in 2007 as measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Nonfatal violent crimes include rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Property crimes include household burglary, motor vehicle theft, and property theft.*

About one third (34%) of the crimes against persons with or without a disability in 2007 were serious violent crimes (rape/sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault). Persons with disabilities were victims of about 47,000 rapes, 79,000 robberies, 114,000 aggravated assaults, and 476,000 simple assaults.

Findings in this report are the first estimates of crime against people with disabilities measured by the NCVS, administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The NCVS adopted questions from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) to identify respondents who had a disability. Disability is defined as a long-lasting (six months or more) sensory, physical, mental, or emotional condition that makes it difficult for a person to perform daily living activities. The NCVS questions identified six types of disabilities: sensory, physical, cognitive functioning, self-care, go-outside-the-home, and employment (see box, page 3).

This report focuses on the victimization experiences of persons with disabilities, including comparisons to persons without disabilities, disability types, victim characteristics, and crime characteristics, such as reporting crime to the police and the presence of weapons during the crime.

*Estimates of property crimes against households with persons with disabilities may be an undercount due to the survey methodology (see box, page 7).

Findings from the NCVS include—

- Age-adjusted rate of nonfatal violent crime against persons with disabilities was 1.5 times higher than the rate for persons without disabilities.
- Persons with a disability had an age-adjusted rate of rape or sexual assault that was more than twice the rate for persons without a disability.
- Females with a disability had a higher victimization rate than males with a disability; males had a higher rate than females among those without a disability.
- Persons with a cognitive functioning disability had a higher risk of violent victimization than persons with any other type of disability.
- Persons with more than one type of disability accounted for about 56% of all violent crime victimizations against those with any disability.
- Nearly 1 in 5 violent crime victims with a disability believed that they became a victim because of their disability.
- Victims with a disability perceived offenders to be under the influence of either alcohol or drugs in about a third of all violent crimes against them.
- Violent crime victims with or without a disability were equally as likely to face an armed offender, report the crime to the police, or suffer an injury.

Table 1. Numbers and rates of violent victimization among persons with and without disabilities, by type of crime, 2007

Type of crime	Persons with disabilities				Persons without disabilities		
	Number	Percent	Rate per 1,000 ^a		Number	Percent	Rate per 1,000 ^a
			Age-adjusted ^b	Unadjusted			
Total violent crime	716,320	100.0%	32.4*	18.1	4,432,460	100.0%	21.3
Serious violent crime	240,070	33.5%	11.1*	6.1	1,460,450	32.9%	7.0
Rape/sexual assault	47,440	6.6	2.4*	1.2	185,600	4.2	0.9
Robbery	78,990	11.0	3.2**	2.0	516,000	11.6	2.5
Aggravated assault	113,640	15.9	5.5*	2.9	758,900	17.1	3.6
Simple assault	476,250	66.5%	21.3*	12.0	2,972,020	67.1%	14.3

Note: Rates are based on the noninstitutional U.S. resident population age 12 or older, in the American Community Survey, 2007, U.S. Census Bureau. In 2007 approximately 39,566,790 persons age 12 or older in the U.S. had a disability. See *Methodology*.

*Difference between the age-adjusted rate for persons with disabilities and the unadjusted rate for those without disabilities is significant at the 95%-confidence level.

**Difference between the age-adjusted rate for persons with disabilities and the unadjusted rate for those without disabilities is significant at the 90%-confidence level.

^aRates are per 1,000 persons age 12 or older.

^bThe age-adjusted victimization rate for persons with disabilities is calculated by multiplying the unadjusted rate for each age group with disabilities by the ratio of the number of people in that age group without disabilities, divided by the total population without disabilities. The sum of these weighted estimates represent the overall age-adjusted rate.

When adjusted for age variation, people with disabilities experienced higher rates of violence than people without a disability

The population with disabilities is generally older than those without disabilities. Also the victimization rate generally decreases as age increases. To compare crimes against people with disabilities to those without disabilities, the rates were adjusted to account for the differences in the age distribution between the two groups and the declining rates of violence against people as they age (see *Methodology* for more information on age-adjusted rates).

The NCVS showed an unadjusted rate of violent crime against people with disabilities (18 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older) that was slightly lower than the rate against those without disabilities (21 per 1,000 persons) (table 1). When the rate was adjusted to account for the age differences between the two groups, the adjusted rate for people with disabilities was about 1.5 times higher than the unadjusted rate for those without disabilities. The age-adjusted rate of violence for persons with disabilities was 32 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, compared to 21 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older without disabilities.

The age-adjusted rate of serious violence against persons with disabilities was higher than the unadjusted rate for those without disabilities. For rape or sexual assault, the age-adjusted rate for persons with disabilities was more than twice the rate for persons without disabilities. Age-adjusted rates of robbery were slightly higher for those with disabilities than the rates for persons without disabilities. For aggravated and simple assault, the age-adjusted rate of violence against persons with disabilities was higher than the rate against persons without disabilities.

Youth ages 12 to 19 with a disability experienced violence at nearly twice the rate as those without a disability

In general youth experience the highest rates of violence and seniors experience the lowest rates. Using unadjusted rates of violence to compare age characteristics of victims with and without disabilities, youth ages 12 to 19 with a disability experienced violence at nearly twice the rate as those ages 12 to 19 without a disability (table 2). Additionally, persons ages 35 to 49 with disabilities experienced higher rates of violent crime than persons of this age group without disabilities. The risk of violent crime did not differ by disability status for persons ages 50 to 64. Persons age 65 or older experienced the lowest rates of violent crime, regardless of disability status.

Table 2. Violent victimization of persons with and without disabilities, by age, 2007

Victim characteristics	Unadjusted rate per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Age		
12-15	81.2*	40.0
16-19	82.7*	47.0
20-24	35.1	35.4
25-34	30.9	24.9
35-49	31.2*	16.1
50-64	12.2	11.6
65 or older	2.1	3.0

Note: Rates are based on the noninstitutional U.S. resident population age 12 or older, in the American Community Survey, 2007, U.S. Census Bureau. In 2007 approximately 39,566,790 persons age 12 or older in the U.S. had a disability. See *Methodology*.

*Difference is significant at the 95%-confidence level.

Table 3. Rate of violent victimization for persons with and without disabilities, by gender, race, and Hispanic origin, 2007

Victim characteristics	Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 or older		
	Persons with disabilities		Persons without disabilities
	Age-adjusted ^a	Unadjusted	
Total	32.4*	18.1	21.3
Gender			
Male	29.5*	18.5	23.7
Female	34.8*	17.8	18.9
Race^b			
White	34.1*	18.4	22.4
Black/African American	31.2	18.3	25.8
Other race ^c	2.3 [^]	3.5 [^]	12.3
Two or more races	91.0*	70.7	51.6
Hispanic origin^d			
Hispanic	19.0	12.2	19.1
Non-Hispanic	33.9*	18.8	21.6

Note: Rates are based on the noninstitutional U.S. resident population age 12 or older, in the American Community Survey, 2007, U.S. Census Bureau. In 2007 approximately 39,566,790 persons age 12 or older in the U.S. had a disability. See *Methodology*.

^aBased on 10 or fewer sample cases.

*Difference between the age-adjusted rate for persons with disabilities and the unadjusted rate for those without disabilities is significant at the 95%-confidence level.

^aThe age-adjusted victimization rate for people with disabilities is calculated by multiplying the unadjusted rate for each age group with disabilities by the ratio of the number of people in that age group without disabilities, divided by the total population without disabilities. The sum of these weighted estimates represent the overall age-adjusted rate.

^bIncludes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

^cIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

^dIncludes all races.

Females with a disability had a higher victimization rate than males with a disability

Among persons with disabilities, females had a higher risk of violence than males (table 3). Age-adjusted rates of violence for males and females with a disability were higher than the rates for males and females without a disability. The age-adjusted rate of violent crime against females with a disability (35 per 1,000 age 12 or older) was almost twice the unadjusted rate for females without a disability (19 per 1,000 age 12 or older).

Both whites and blacks with a disability experienced higher rates of violence than persons of other races with a disability. Whites with a disability experienced violence at a higher age-adjusted rate than whites without disabilities. No statistically significant difference emerged between the age-adjusted rate of violence for blacks with a disability and the rate for blacks without a disability.

After adjusting for age, non-Hispanic persons with disabilities (34 per 1,000) had a higher risk of violence than Hispanics with disabilities (19 per 1,000). The risk of being victimized did not vary by Hispanic origin among persons without disabilities.

Adopting questions from the ACS helped identify victims with disabilities in the NCVS

The NCVS collects information on crimes of violence and theft, reported and not reported to the police, against persons age 12 or older and their household. In 2007 the NCVS adopted questions from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) to measure the rate of victimization against people with disabilities.

The ACS defines disability as a long-lasting (six months or more) sensory, physical, mental, or emotional condition that makes it difficult to perform activities of daily living, such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering. NCVS respondents were asked whether they had any health conditions, impairments, or disabilities. Using the limitations defined by the ACS, the NCVS survey identified six types of disabilities:

- *Cognitive functioning limitation* is a physical, mental, or emotional condition that makes learning, remembering, or concentrating difficult.
- *Sensory limitation* is a long-lasting condition, such as blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment.
- *Physical limitation* is a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.
- *Self-care limitation* is a condition that makes dressing, bathing, or getting around the home difficult.
- *Going-outside-home limitation* is a condition that makes going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office difficult.
- *Employment limitation* is a physical, mental, or emotional condition that makes it difficult to work at a job or business.

For more detailed definitions of the types of disabilities measured, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2005 Subject Definitions*. Retrieved August 10, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2005/usedata/Subject_Definitions.pdf#page=32>.

Comparison of persons with and without disabilities using unadjusted estimates

While age-adjusted rates account for variations in age and risk of victimization among those with and without disabilities, unadjusted rates are used to compare the two groups throughout the remainder of the report. Unadjusted victimization estimates are presented by victim and crime characteristics, including type of disability, victim and offender relationship, offender weapon use, victim injuries, and crimes reported to the police.

More than half of violent crimes against people with a disability were against those with multiple disabilities

The NCVS questions allowed victims to report more than one type of disability. Of the violent victimizations against people with disabilities, 56% were committed against people who reported having more than one disability. Across the types of violent crimes measured by the NCVS, victims who reported having more than one disability were 60% of rape or sexual assault victims, 45% of robbery victims, 61% of aggravated assault victims, and 56% of simple assault victims (not shown in table).

Persons with a cognitive disability experienced violent crime at a rate higher than persons with other types of disabilities

People who reported having a cognitive disability had a higher rate of total violent crime (about 28 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older) than people who reported having any other type of disability (table 4). Persons with a cognitive disability experienced higher rates of rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault than those with a sensory disability. They also had a somewhat higher rate of robbery than persons with a physical, self-care, or employment disability. For simple assault, persons with a cognitive disability had a higher victimization rate than those having any other type of disability. Few other differences emerged because the amount of data available for analysis by type of crime and type of disability were not sufficient to enable a full examination.

In evaluating the rate of violence by gender for persons with disabilities, males and females with a cognitive disability experienced higher or somewhat higher rates of violent crime than persons reporting other types of disabilities, with the following exception: no significant differences emerged between the victimization rates for males with a cognitive disability and males with a self-care disability (text table 1). The rate of violence against females with a cognitive disability was higher than the rates against females with other types of disabilities. Among those with a self-care disability, males were more vulnerable to violent crime victimization than females.

Text table 1. Violent victimization rate of persons with disabilities, by type of disability and gender, 2007

Disability type	Rate of violent victimization per 1,000 persons age 12 or older with disabilities	
	Male	Female
Sensory	13.4	9.8
Physical	15.3	12.2
Cognitive	24.1	31.3
Self-care	17.1	6.0 [^]
Go-outside-home	13.9	10.5
Employment	16.0	15.2

Note: Rates include victims with more than one disability. Definitions of the types of disabilities are available from the U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2005 Subject Definitions*. Retrieved August 10, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2005/usedata/Subject_Definitions.pdf#page=31>.

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Almost a fifth of violent crime victims with disabilities believed that they had been victimized because of their disability

In 2007 about 19% of violent crime victims with a disability believed that they were victimized because of their disability. Seventy-nine percent of violent crime victims with a disability did not believe that being victimized was related to their disability, while about 2% did not know whether their victimization was related to their disability (not shown in table).

Table 4. Violent victimization rate, by type of disability and type of crime, 2007

Type of crime	Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 or older						
	Total	Sensory	Physical	Cognitive	Self-care	Go-outside-home	Employment
Total violent crime	18.1	11.8	13.5	27.8	10.5	11.8	15.6
Serious violent crime	6.1	1.5 [^]	5.0	9.6	3.8 [^]	5.0	5.1
Rape/sexual assault	1.2	0.4 [^]	1.2 [^]	2.0 [^]	0.6 [^]	0.7 [^]	0.8 [^]
Robbery	2.0	0.2 [^]	1.5	3.3	1.1 [^]	1.7 [^]	1.3 [^]
Aggravated assault	2.9	1.0 [^]	2.4	4.3	2.1 [^]	2.6 [^]	2.9
Simple assault	12.0	10.2	8.5	18.2	6.7	6.8	10.5

Note: Rates include victims with more than one disability. Definitions of the types of disabilities are available from the U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2005 Subject Definitions*. Retrieved August 10, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2005/usedata/Subject_Definitions.pdf#page=31>.

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Among victims of violent crime, females were more likely than males to have been victimized by an intimate partner, regardless of disability status

Overall, the percentage of violent crimes committed by an intimate partner against females was higher than that for males. While this pattern held true for persons with disabilities in 2007, differences between the percentages of intimate partner violence committed against males and females was greater for persons without disabilities. The NCVS defines intimate partner as a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend.

Intimate partners were responsible for 16% of nonfatal violence against females with disabilities, compared to 5% against males with disabilities (table 5). Among persons without disabilities, intimate partners were responsible for 27% of nonfatal violence against females and 3% of nonfatal violence against males. The percentage of violence by a non-intimate relative was higher for females than males, regardless of disability status. The NCVS defines other or non-intimate relatives as parents, siblings, or cousins.

Regardless of a victim's disability status, strangers were responsible for a higher percentage of violence against males than females. Victimization by a stranger made up a slightly higher percentage of crimes against females with a disability, compared to females without a disability.

Victims with disabilities perceived offenders to be under the influence of either alcohol or drugs in about a third of all violent crimes against them

In 2007 the victim perceived the offender to be under the influence of either alcohol or drugs in about 35% of all violence against people with disabilities (text table 2). This is similar to the percentage for victims without disabilities. An estimated 36% of violent crime victims with a disability said that they did not know if the offender was under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Text table 2. Percent of violence, by perceived offender alcohol or drug use and victim's disability status, 2007

Offender drug use	Percent of violent crime victims	
	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Victim perceived offender to be—		
Using alcohol or drugs	34.8%	29.4%
Not using alcohol or drugs	28.9	32.5
Victim did not know if offender was using alcohol or drugs	36.3%	38.0%

Taking action to resist the attacker did not vary by a victim's disability status

Similar percentages of victims of violent crime with disabilities (58%) and without disabilities (60%) resisted their attackers (table 6). Similar percentages of victims with or without a disability defended themselves by threatening or attacking an offender with a firearm or other weapon or by using nonconfrontational tactics, such as running, yelling, or arguing. Victims with disabilities were less likely to resist by threatening or attacking an offender without a weapon compared to victims without disabilities.

Table 5. Victim/offender relationship of violent crime victims with and without disabilities, by gender, 2007

Victim/offender relationship	Percent of violent victimization					
	Persons with disabilities			Persons without disabilities		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Intimate partner ^a	10.7	5.4 [^]	16.1	13.3	3.0	26.9
Other relatives ^b	7.8	3.0 [^]	12.5	6.1	5.0	8.7
Well known/casual acquaintance	33.2	39.1	31.6	30.8	34.1	34.1
Stranger	39.8	40.4	33.5	41.3	45.2	24.2
Did not know relationship	8.5 [^]	12.2 [^]	6.3 [^]	8.5	12.7	6.0

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

^aDefined as current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends.

^bDefined as parents, siblings, or cousins.

Table 6. Victim resistance during a violent crime, by victim's disability status and type of resistance, 2007

Type of resistance	Percent of violent crime victims	
	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Victim offered no resistance	41.3%	40.1%
Victim offered resistance by—	58.1%	59.8%
Threatening or attacking—		
With a firearm	2.0 [^]	1.4
With other weapon	0.5 [^]	1.2
Without a weapon	19.5	26.1
Using nonconfrontational tactics*	31.2	27.0
Other reaction	4.9	4.0
Unknown reaction	0.6% [^]	0.1% [^]

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

*Includes yelling, running, and arguing.

Victims faced an armed offender in nearly 1 in every 5 violent crimes in 2007

Persons with disabilities faced an armed offender in about 18% of violent crimes against them in 2007, and persons without disabilities faced an armed offender in about 22% of violent crimes (table 7). Victims with disabilities (4%) were less likely to face an offender armed with a firearm, compared to victims without disabilities (9%).

About a quarter of all victims of violent crime with disabilities were injured

About 26% of violent crime victims with disabilities sustained injuries during the crime, a percentage identical to that for victims without disabilities (table 8). No differences emerged by disability status in the percentage of violent crime victims who sought treatment or in the place where treatment was received.

About 13% of violent crime victims with a disability sought treatment for their injuries. Violent crime victims with or without a disability were most often treated at the crime scene, by a neighbor or friend, or at a hospital without being admitted. Regardless of a victim's disability status, less than 1% of violent crime victims were admitted to a hospital for an overnight stay because of their injuries.

Table 7. Violent crime, by offender weapon use against persons with and without disabilities, 2007

	Percent of violent crime victims	
	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Total	100.0%	100.0%
No weapon	72.5%	70.4%
Weapon	18.4	21.9
Firearm	4.2 [^]	8.5
Knife	5.7	7.0
Other	7.5	5.1
Unknown	1.0 [^]	1.2
Did not know if offender had weapon	9.1%	7.8%

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Violent crimes against persons with or without disabilities were equally likely to be reported to police

Violent crimes reported to the police did not vary by disability status. Violence against persons with a disability were reported in about 43% of violent crimes. Of these violent crimes, robbery was the most likely to be reported to the police.

Violence against persons without a disability were reported in about 47% of violent crimes (table 9). The percent of aggravated assault reported to the police was slightly lower for persons with a disability, compared to those without a disability. For rape or sexual assault, robbery, and simple assault, the percent reported to the police was similar for persons with or without a disability.

Table 8. Injury and medical treatment of victims of violent crime, by disability status, 2007

	Percent of violent crime victims	
	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Not injured	74.5%	74.3%
Injured	25.5%	25.7%
Not treated	12.4	15.1
Treated	13.0	10.6
At scene, home, neighbors, or friends	5.4	3.8 [^]
Medical doctor's office/clinic, health unit, stadium, park	1.8 [^]	1.8
Hospital, not admitted	5.4 [^]	4.6 [^]
Stayed overnight in hospital	0.5 [^]	0.4 [^]
Did not know if victim was injured or treated	--%	0.1% [^]

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

--No cases were present for this category.

Table 9. Percent of violent crime reported to police, by victim's disability status and type of crime, 2007

	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Total violent crime	43.0%	46.5%
Serious violent crime	51.7%	59.0%
Rape/sexual assault	43.0 [^]	43.1
Robbery	73.7	66.2
Aggravated assault	40.0	57.9
Simple assault	38.7%	40.4%

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Police responded to about three-quarters of reported violence against victims with a disability

The percentage of victims with a disability who said that the police responded to the reported crime was lower than the percentage for those without a disability. Seven in 10 victims with a disability, compared to 8 in 10 without a disability, said that the police responded to the reported crime. Police did not respond to about 23% of reported violent crimes against persons with disabilities, compared to about 10% of reported violent crimes against victims without disabilities (text table 3).

Text table 3. Percent of reported violent crime, by police response and victim's disability status, 2007

Police response	Victims with disabilities	Victims without disabilities
Police responded to reported violence		
Yes	74.1%	84.2%
No	22.9	9.8
Did not know	--	1.1 [^]
Respondent went to police	3.0% [^]	4.9%

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

--No cases were present for this category.

Equal percentages of violent crime victims with and without disabilities made use of victim assistance agencies

When violent crime victims were asked whether they or someone in their household received any help or advice from any office or agency (other than the police) that works with crime victims, about 9% of those with a disability said they received assistance. An equal percentage of violent crime victims without a disability said they used the services of a victim assistance agency other than the police (text table 4).

Text table 4. Percent of violent crime victims that used a victim assistance agency other than the police, by victim disability status and agency type, 2007

Type of agency	Victims with disabilities	Victims without disabilities
Used victim agency	9.4%	8.6%
Government agency	5.7	5.4
Private agency	2.8 [^]	2.5
Did not know type of agency	0.9 [^]	0.6 [^]

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding.

[^]Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Theft accounted for over 70% of all property crime against people with or without disabilities

People age 12 or over with a disability reported to the NCVS that their households experienced approximately 2.3 million property crimes in 2007 (table 10). Property crimes include household burglary, motor vehicle theft, and property theft.

The NCVS measure of property crime is a household-based measure. As described in the *Methodology* on page 9, the NCVS questions used to identify whether a person had a disability were asked only of those respondents who reported that they had been victimized. If the person who reported the property crime was a household member with a disability, then the NCVS identified the property crime as one against a household with a person with a disability. If a household member without a disability reported the

property crime during the survey, the NCVS did not ask whether any other household member had a disability. For this reason the estimate of property crime against people with disabilities may be an undercount of such crimes.

Theft accounted for over 70% of property crimes against all households, regardless of disability status. Burglary accounted for about 23% of all property crimes against households with a person with a disability, compared to 18% against households without a person with a disability. Motor vehicle theft accounted for about 5% of property crimes against households with a person with a disability.

Table 10. Household property victimization for persons with and without disabilities, by type of crime, 2007

Type of crime	Persons with disabilities		Persons without disabilities	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total property crime	2,320,360	100.0%	14,739,140	100.0%
Household burglary	527,040	22.7	2,619,960	17.8
Motor vehicle theft	107,260	4.6	845,060	5.7
Theft	1,686,070	72.7	11,274,120	76.5

Note: In 2007 about 29,977,270 households in the U.S. included a person age 12 or older with a disability as measured by the American Community Survey, 2007. See *Methodology*.

The Crime Victims with Disabilities Awareness Act mandated that the NCVS include statistics on crimes against people with disabilities and the characteristics of the victims of those crimes

The Crime Victims with Disabilities Awareness Act (Public Law 105-301), 1998, mandated that the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) measure the victimization of people with disabilities. Section 5 of the Act directed the Department of Justice to include statistics relating to “the nature of crimes against people with developmental disabilities; and the specific characteristics of the victims of those crimes” in the NCVS.

In partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) initiated a number of activities that would lay the foundation for incorporating disability-related questions into the ongoing NCVS. In October 1999 BJS and the Census Bureau convened a workshop on crime and disabilities, bringing together researchers, advocates, and representatives from other federal agencies to assist with identifying and measuring crime victimization of people with disabilities.

The complex and subjective concepts used in defining disability made it difficult to develop disability-related survey questions. As codified by 42 U.S. Code 6001, a developmental disability consists of many elements, including age of onset, duration, types of functional limitation, and evaluation of the severity and duration of the disability. Health-related surveys, such as the Health Interview Survey* conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, use a lengthy, comprehensive set of questions to determine whether

*For more information on the Health Interview Survey, see <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>>. (Last accessed August 27, 2009).

a person has a disability and to identify the nature of the disability. A long battery of questions was deemed too burdensome for the NCVS, a crime victimization survey that measures the characteristics of crime.

BJS and the Census Bureau tested a number of questionnaire modules between 2000 and 2004. Each set of questions proved problematic, either because the modules were too long and burdensome or because the questions did not adequately distinguish health conditions from disabling conditions according to the federal definitions.

In 2007 BJS incorporated the disability-related questions developed for the American Community Survey (ACS) with the crime incident reporting section of the NCVS. The questions produced reliable estimates and allowed BJS to use population estimates from the ACS to calculate rates of victimization for people with disabilities. This report presents findings based on the analysis of the responses to the disability-related questions in the NCVS.

For a more detailed discussion of the initial work undertaken by BJS, see *Developing the Capability to Measure Crime Victimization of People with Disabilities*, pp. 24-37, in Sirken, M.G. *Integrating Measurements of Disability in Federal Surveys: Seminar Proceedings*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 4(32). 2002. Retrieved August 26, 2009, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_04/sr04_032.pdf>.

Methodology

Data sources

Crime Against People with Disabilities, 2007, presents data on violent and property crimes against people with disabilities age 12 or older as measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Violent crimes include rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Property crimes include household burglary, motor vehicle theft, and theft.

The NCVS collects information 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 survey provides information on victims (age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, income, and educational level), offenders (gender, race, approximate age, and victim-offender relationship), and the nature of the crime (time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, and economic consequences).

To identify people with disabilities in the NCVS, BJS adopted questions from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is conducted in all U.S. counties and Puerto Rico. It provides economic, social, demographic, and housing information that was previously available only when the Census Bureau conducted its population census every 10 years. Included in the information collected by the ACS are disability status, income, age, housing, race, and Hispanic origin.

The American Community Survey Subcommittee on Disability Questions developed the 2007 ACS disability questions based on questions used in the 2000 Decennial Census and earlier versions of the ACS. The questions identify persons who may require assistance to maintain their independence, be at risk for discrimination, or lack opportunities available to the general population because of limitations due to a long-lasting sensory, physical, mental, or emotional condition. The questions were designed to address six specific disability domains: sensory, physical, cognitive functioning, self-care, go-outside-the-home, and employment. For more information about the ACS and the disability questions, see <<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>>. (Last accessed August 27, 2009).

Calculation of rates using the NCVS and the ACS

The disability-related questions were not administered to each person in the NCVS sample in 2007. Questions were administered as part of the crime incident report to people who reported being a victim of one of the measured offenses. To calculate rates of victimization for people with and without disabilities, BJS obtained data from the Census

Bureau's 2007 report of the ACS. Because the NCVS questions are the same as those in the ACS, the NCVS estimates of crime victims with disabilities is, by definition, identical to the population estimates of people with disabilities from the ACS.

Age-adjusted violent victimization rates

In general the population with disabilities is older than the population without disabilities. For that reason, many comparisons between the victimization experiences of people with and without disabilities use age-adjusted victimization rates. Age-adjusted rates account for differences in the age distributions between both populations. Without this adjustment, the differences between the rates for people with disabilities and those without disabilities would be confounded by differences that may be attributed to the age distributions rather than disability status.

Direct standardization of populations was used to calculate the age-adjusted violent victimization rates. Other federal agencies use similar methods to calculate the age-adjusted rates of diseases and mortality.

First, the population with disabilities was taken from the ACS and divided into seven age categories: 12 to 15, 16 to 19, 20 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 or older. For each age category, the original unadjusted rate of violent crime was calculated by dividing the number of violent victimizations for people in that age group in the NCVS by the number of people in the same age group from the ACS.

Next, a weight for each age group was computed by dividing the number of all persons in an age group without disabilities by the total number of persons without a disability. The weight computed for a particular age group was multiplied by the original unadjusted violent victimization rate for the same age group. This procedure was done for each age group.

Results were summed across all age groups to obtain the age-adjusted rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities. This procedure was used to produce the age-adjusted rates of violent victimization of persons with disabilities by gender, race, Hispanic origin, and type of violent crime.

For more information on direct standardization of populations, see Curtin, Ph.D. and R.J. Klein, M.P.H., *Direct Standardization (Age-adjusted Death Rates)*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. No. 6 (March 1995). Retrieved August 27, 2009, from <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statnt/statnt06rv.pdf>>.

Limitations of the estimates

While a large national sample and the ongoing nature of the NCVS enhance its ability to produce estimates of people with disabilities, some attributes in the survey's design limit the estimates it can produce. The survey was designed to measure the incidence of crime against the U.S. civilian noninstitutional population. A significant number of people with disabilities, especially those with the most profound and severe conditions, live in institutional settings. The measures of crime against persons with disabilities as measured by the NCVS covers only those people with disabilities living among the general population in household settings.

In addition, the instruments, modes of interview, and interviewing protocols used in the NCVS may not be suited for interviewing people with difficulty communicating, especially by telephone. Currently, about 70% of the interviews conducted for the NCVS are by telephone. Some people have disabilities that limit their verbal communication and use technology to enhance their ability to communicate, but many people do not have access to such technology. Additionally, the survey questionnaire, while avoiding legal terminology, incorporates some complex concepts and language that may not be easily understood by people with cognitive disabilities.

The survey also requires direct interviews with eligible respondents and allows the use of proxy interviews in a limited set of circumstances. One circumstance under which proxy interviews are allowed is if the respondent is physically or mentally incapable of responding. The survey restrictions on proxy interviews were instituted because someone else may not know about the victimization experiences of the respondent and because the person providing the information via proxy may be the perpetrator of the abuse or violence experienced by the respondent.

At a national level, the effects on the estimates due to proxy responses are probably small. When measuring victimization of people with disabilities, the use of proxies could be a larger issue. About 1% of the crimes reported to

the NCVS in 2007 were obtained from proxy interviews. Of the crimes reported against persons with disabilities, about 2% were obtained from proxy interviews. Since proxy respondents may be more likely to omit crime incidents or may not know some details about reported crime incidents, the number of crimes against persons with disabilities may have been undercounted.

While the NCVS and ACS disability questions are identical, other factors associated with the programs may impact either the NCVS or ACS estimates and the comparison of those estimates. In turn, this would effect the calculation of victimization rates of people with and without disabilities. Some possible factors include the effects of non-interview biases and interview modes. The NCVS is conducted by personal visit and telephone interviews, while the ACS is a self-administered survey. These possible effects have not been studied.

For most variables used in this report, there was very low item non-response and no imputation of data.

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 0.05 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 BJS 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 estimates. Estimates based on 10 or fewer sample cases have high relative standard errors. Care should be taken when comparing such estimates to other estimates when both are based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Disability-related questions included in the National Crime Victimization Survey in 2007

168. Research has shown that people with disabilities may be more vulnerable to crime victimization. The next questions ask about any health conditions, impairments, or disabilities you may have.
169. Do you have any of the following long-lasting conditions:
- (a) Blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment?
 - (b) A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying?
170. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, do you have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities:
- (a) Learning, remembering, or concentrating?
 - (b) Dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home?
 - (c) Going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office?
 - (d) Working at a job or business?
171. Is "Yes" marked in any of 169a-170d? (That is, has the respondent indicated that he/she has a health condition or disability?)
172. During the incident you just told me about, do you have reason to suspect you were victimized because of your health condition(s), impairment(s), or disability(ies)? (If yes, ask 173).
173. Which of your health conditions, impairments, or disabilities do you believe caused you to be targeted for this incident?

The full NCVS questionnaire and additional methodology are available at the BJS Website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict.htm#ncvs>.

Appendix table 1. U.S. population by disability status, by gender, race, Hispanic origin, and age, 2007

Characteristics	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Total	39,566,790	208,393,120
Gender		
Male	18,263,970	102,024,330
Female	21,302,820	106,368,790
Race^{a,b}		
White	30,316,700	156,737,160
Black/African American	5,406,650	23,695,680
Other race ^c	1,464,200	11,608,000
Two or more races	770,690	3,339,540
Hispanic origin^d		
Hispanic	3,970,500	30,152,410
Non-Hispanic	35,596,300	178,240,710
Age^d		
12-15	1,125,600	15,547,100
16-19	1,182,790	16,117,890
20-24	1,333,440	18,930,460
25-34	2,720,770	36,233,590
35-49	7,346,740	57,853,950
50-64	11,122,480	42,178,430
65 or older	14,734,980	21,531,710

Note: Rates are based on the noninstitutional U.S. resident population age 12 or older, in the American Community Survey, 2007, U.S. Census Bureau.

^aIncludes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

^bAbout 1.6 million persons with disabilities and about 13 million persons without disabilities did not report information on race to the ACS that matched one of the NCVS racial categories. Persons whose race could not be matched by racial categories in the NCVS were excluded from the analyses by racial groups.

^cIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

^dDetail may not sum to total due to rounding.



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This report in portable document format and in ASCII and its related statistical data are available at the BJS World Wide Web Internet site: <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/capd07>>.

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