



Federal Efforts in Examining Racial and Ethnic Disparities among Victims of Violent Crime

Key Take Aways from U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Report

Crime victimization has wide-reaching consequences for victims, their families and friends, their communities, and society in general. The rate of violent crime victimization has decreased dramatically since its peak in the early 1990s. However, the nation recently experienced an increase in serious forms of violence. In 2020, homicide rates were 30 percent higher than the previous year. In the same period, aggravated assaults, including nonfatal shootings, also increased.

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While violent victimization rates started to decrease again after the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, violence remains a pressing concern for Americans. To gain an understanding of federal efforts to evaluate racial disparities in crime victimization, the Commission examined what crime data show about disparate impacts of violent victimization on minority communities.

When considering all forms of violent crime, aggregated at the national level, there are no differences in the risk of victimization for White, Black, and Latino people.

HOMICIDE RATES AND RACIAL DISPARITIES

There are, however, enduring racial differences in homicide rates.

- Black Americans are 12 times as likely as White Americans to die by firearm homicide.
- According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide is the leading cause of death for young, Black men.
- Racial disparities in homicide are especially pronounced in large, metropolitan areas, where violent crime rates are the highest.

Crime concentration in certain areas became associated with race because contemporary disadvantaged neighborhoods are predominately Black or Latino. Outdated government policies that created intentional residential racial segregation have had long-lasting consequences for where Americans still live. Ongoing racial segregation is associated with violent crime as the most segregated neighborhoods have elevated levels of violent crime.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES DO NOT EXIST IN OVERALL CRIME RATES

Homicides comprise a small share of all violent crimes; there are no racial disparities in the overall rate of violent crime victimization. There are, however, other social and demographic correlates of victimization.

- Data suggest that victims of violent crime are four times as likely to experience repeat victimization.
- People living in households that earn the lowest incomes are more likely to be victimized than their higher-income counterparts.
- Adolescents and young adults are also disproportionately likely to be victims of violent crime, regardless of geography.
- Regardless of the severity of the crime, most victims of violent crime know the offender.

ISSUES FACING VIOLENT CRIME PREVENTION

A major impediment to exploring crime victimization rates is that many crimes, even violent crimes, are not known to law enforcement. In 2020, only 40 percent of violent victimizations were reported to police.

Compensation and assistance programs are available to crime victims, but longstanding research shows that these programs are underutilized, mostly because victims are not aware of the programs and services available to them:

- In 2021, nine percent of violent crime survivors reported using victim services. Survivors are less likely to use services if they do not report their victimization to the police.
- There are several groups that have an elevated risk of victimization and yet are underserved by victim service organizations, such as immigrants; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals; people with disabilities; and young men of color.
- There is a substantial overlap between victims and offenders. Crime victims who have been involved in the justice system as offenders are very unlikely to access victim assistance or compensation programs.

Even when victims are aware of services, there are hurdles that make these services difficult to access, such as police reporting requirements.

Victims not reporting to police or accessing victim services is a potential contributing factor to continuing cycles of violence.