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2

MEASUREMENT OF JUVENILE CRIME

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

1. Explain the concept of the age–crime curve and the stages of juvenile offending.
2. Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile arrest statistics, as well as the limitations of the data collected.
3. Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile court statistics.
4. Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile correctional statistics.
5. Discuss the differences between self-report and victimization data.

INTRODUCTION

On August 27, 2021, a juvenile contacted Union Local High School in Ohio, and Wheeling Park High School in West Virginia. The juvenile made bomb threats that resulted in the evacuation of both schools. No one was hurt, but the juvenile was arrested the next day in Ohio and charged with a felony of inducing panic. The buildings remained empty until a drug sniffing dog cleared the premises. The local elementary school was given extra security until all threats were cleared.¹

In this case, the prankster was eventually caught, but not all offending individuals are identified or apprehended. This is especially true in cases of cybercrime (discussed later in this text), where victims sometimes don't even realize they have been victimized. Undiscovered victimization, unreported crimes, and offending individuals who remain anonymous and unidentified all contribute to inaccuracies in official crime statistics.

In the United States, a variety of strategies are used to try to piece together an accurate representation of the true crime rate—including crimes committed by juveniles. While we may never know the actual amount of crime that occurs, we can gather information from multiple sources to get a clearer picture of what is going on and where crime is occurring.

This chapter explores the various kinds of data used to understand juvenile crime rates. Law enforcement, the courts, and other government agencies collect data on direct interactions with justice-involved youth. However, higher levels of criminal activity are shown in data based on self-reports from offending juveniles and crime victims. No one type of data provides a complete picture of crime, but this chapter should help the reader gain a better understanding of juvenile crime rates.

AGE–CRIME CURVE AND STAGES OF DELINQUENCY

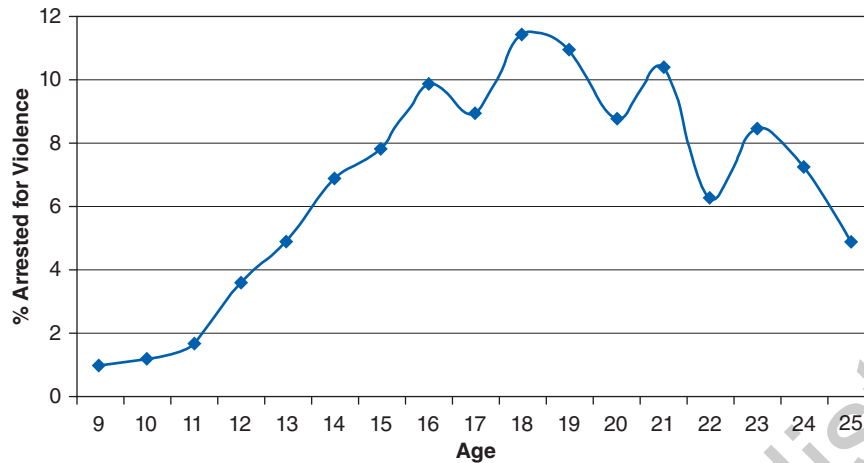
LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- 2.1 Explain the concept of the age–crime curve and the stages of juvenile offending.

Before exploring the various types of data that attempt to piece together the juvenile delinquency puzzle, it is important to understand patterns of juvenile offending. There is a universal trend in Western nations that shows an increase in the commission of delinquent acts during late childhood, generally peaking between the ages of 15 and 19 years old (Figure 2.1). For the majority of individuals, this offending behavior decreases in their early 20s. Otherwise known as the **age–crime curve**, this phenomenon indicates that as a child grows into the teenage years, they are more likely to take risks, be impulsive, and behave in ways that may seem irrational to a grown adult. However, as a person ages, they tend to mature out of such behaviors and move toward a more settled life without criminal involvement.² While this is not the case for every person (as many people commit crimes throughout their entire adult life), it is a well-identified trend among most justice-involved youth.

There are different versions of the age–crime curve, depending on the individuals involved and the type of criminal behavior. For instance, the property crime curve will peak earlier than a curve depicting violent crimes.³ Females are more likely to peak earlier than males.⁴ Last, the age–crime curve is more likely to be higher and wider for young males (often in a minority group) growing up in high-crime, disadvantaged neighborhoods.⁵

FIGURE 2.1 ■ The Age–Crime Curve



Source: National Institute of Justice.



A justice-involved youth. Why do justice-involved youth often feel hopeless and alone?

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It is important to understand the terms associated with the initiation, continuation, and ceasing of delinquent behavior, otherwise known as the stages of delinquent behavior. **Age of onset** is the age a juvenile first begins committing delinquent acts. For example, if a female commits her first act of shoplifting at age 13 by stealing a candy bar from a grocery store, 13 years old is her age of onset. Research has indicated that juveniles who begin offending at an earlier age are more likely to continue offending into their adult years.⁶ A juvenile who begins offending at age 14 is more likely to continue criminality as an adult, compared with an individual who begins at age 17. Age of onset can differ depending on the type of crime. The average age of onset for gang membership is 15.9 years old, followed by marijuana use at 16.5 years old and gun carrying at 17.3 years old.⁷

Persistence is the continuation of delinquent behaviors as a youth ages, often with an escalation of seriousness in the criminal offending.⁸ The previous example of the shoplifter would demonstrate persistence if she continued shoplifting, potentially moving on to bigger and more expensive items. She may begin stealing electronics, purses, or other expensive material items. Or she may begin stealing motor vehicles. Not all offense categories have the same rate of persistence. For instance, studies have shown drug dealing and weapons possession have one of the highest likelihoods of persistence into adulthood compared with other minor offenses.⁹

Last, **desistance** means quitting delinquent behavior. As indicated in the age–crime curve, the majority of juveniles will cease offending by their early 20s. Those juveniles who do persist and continue offending into adulthood will increase the severity of their offending and often have a higher likelihood for committing lethal violence.¹⁰ This violence is often directed at individuals of the same age.

JUVENILE ARREST STATISTICS

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- 2.2** Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile arrest statistics, as well as the limitations of the data collected.

Reports of criminal offending rates were erratic and unreliable for decades until jurisdictions began to formalize reporting procedures. Authorities in Maine, Massachusetts, and New York were the first to collect official crime statistics. Other states and localities attempted to publish crime rates, but the information was not valid enough to determine the actual crime level. In other words,



A justice-involved youth under arrest. How do most juveniles enter the system?

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the method of measuring and collecting the data did not allow for an accurate representation of the crime rate. Federal record keeping began in 1870, when Congress created the Department of Justice; however, many law enforcement agencies ignored the department's requests for data.

In the early 20th century, the International Association of Chiefs of Police formed the Committee on Uniform Crime Reports to improve data collection. Seeing the need for a regulated method of collecting data, the committee worked toward a uniform method of gathering and reporting data on criminal activity. In 1930, the U.S. Attorney General made the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) responsible for collecting and publishing data for the **Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**, an annual compilation of crime data from all law enforcement agencies in the United States. It listed all **clearances by arrest**, which are arrests made because an offending individual confessed to a crime or was implicated by other evidence or witnesses. While nonparticipation is not a punishable offense, the majority of law enforcement agencies regularly report to the UCR, making it one of the most used datasets to describe and explain crime rates. Since 2006, the UCR has been published electronically each year on the FBI website under the title *Crime in the United States* (CIUS).¹¹

CASE STUDY

MONTGOMERY V. LOUISIANA, 577 U.S. 503 (2016)

Henry Montgomery was 17 years old in 1963 when he killed Charles Hunt, a police officer in East Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A jury found him guilty and sentenced him to death, but that decision was overturned in 1966 by the Louisiana Supreme Court due to claims of public prejudice. Montgomery received a new trial and was again convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole. This decision was affirmed by the Louisiana Supreme Court. For decades, Montgomery was a model prisoner and was very active in mentoring other inmates. After the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Miller v. Alabama* (2012), which found it unconstitutional to sentence children to life without parole, Montgomery made a motion to have his sentence reduced. The Louisiana Supreme Court again weighed in, stating *Miller* could not be applied retroactively.

Montgomery's attorneys appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and in January 2016, the court ruled in favor of Montgomery. Written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, this decision said that the decision in *Miller* could be applied retroactively. Justice Kennedy wrote that "prisoners like Montgomery must be given the opportunity to show their crime did not reflect irreparable corruption; and if it did not, their hope for some years of life outside prison walls must be restored." As of August 2020, Montgomery's request for parole had been denied and he was still incarcerated in Angola Prison.

1. Do you agree with the ruling in *Montgomery v. Louisiana*?
2. Should a murder committed by a juvenile be deserving of a life sentence without any possibility of release from confinement?
3. In your opinion, would this ruling be the same today?

The UCR is divided into Part I and Part II offenses (see Table 2.1). Part I offenses include the following serious criminal behaviors: aggravated assault, arson, automobile theft, burglary, larceny, murder, rape, and robbery. Part II offenses include nonviolent offenses, such as buying and receiving stolen property, carrying and possessing weapons, counterfeiting, forgery, fraud, prostitution, and simple assault. It lists the age, sex, and race of offending individuals and each person's arrest charge or number of crimes committed. While the UCR is a very useful tool for

TABLE 2.1 ■ UCR Crime Classification

Part I Crimes	Part II Crimes
Aggravated assault	Buying and receiving stolen property
Arson	Carrying and possessing weapons
Auto theft	Counterfeiting
Burglary	Forgery
Larceny	Fraud
Murder	Prostitution
Rape	Simple assault
Robbery	

examining crime rates, it has some problems with validity and reliability. **Validity** is the degree to which a measure reflects what is really going on, but the UCR can report only crimes known to the police. It cannot show the **dark figure of crime**, the crime that is unknown to police. Also, because juveniles are usually arrested only for serious crimes, the other crimes juveniles have committed are usually not part of the UCR. Similarly, **reliability** indicates consistency of a measure. Since crimes are not reported in the same way in all jurisdictions, there will be under-reported crimes and overreported crimes.

The following findings were reported by the OJJDP in the year 2020:

- There were 424,300 juvenile arrests in 2020, a 38% decrease from the previous year.
- The highest number of arrests for juveniles was for simple assaults (16.7%), larceny-theft (11%), and drug abuse violations (10%).

Table 2.2 highlights types of juvenile arrests in 2020. As can be seen from the data, property crimes and drug offenses are higher than any other category.

TABLE 2.2 ■ UCR Data Showing Juvenile Arrests in 2020

Crime	Arrests of Individuals Under 18
Murder	930
Rape	N/A
Aggravated Assault	12,000
Burglary	19,140
Larceny-theft	15,130
Motor vehicle theft	46,700
Arson	11,600
Vandalism	1,200

Crime	Arrests of Individuals Under 18
Weapons offenses	23,130
Drug abuse violations	11,110
DUI	42,280
Curfew and loitering	5,870

Source: OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book. Online. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/qa05101.asp?qaDate=2020>. Released on July 08, 2022.

JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

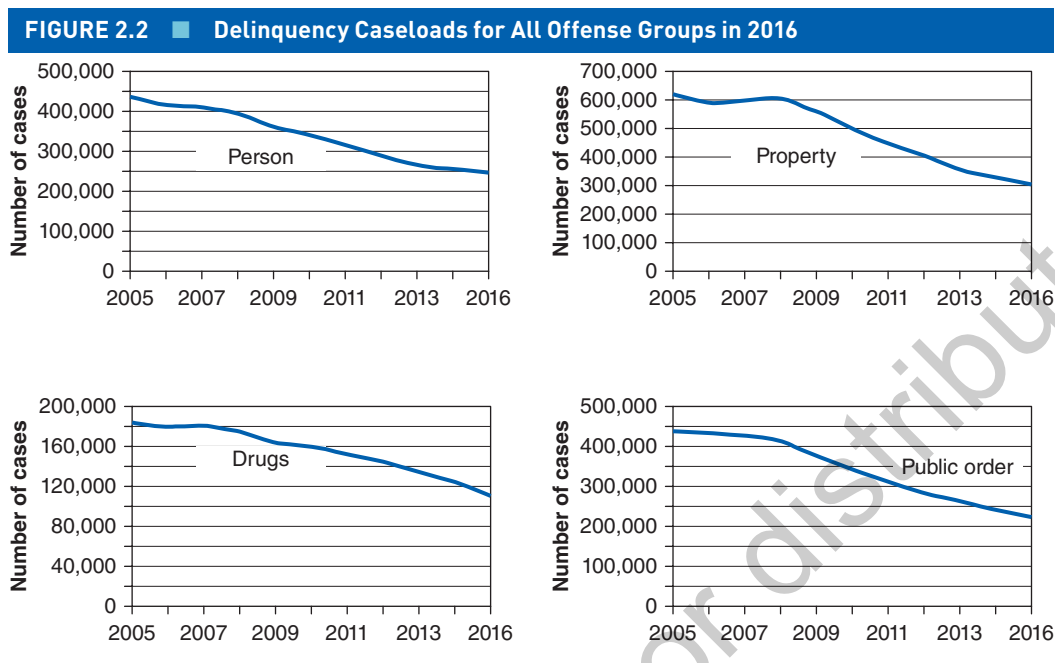
2.3 Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile court statistics.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, a branch of the Department of Justice, annually publishes the *Juvenile Court Statistics (JCS)*, which provides information on children who appear before juvenile courts. It was launched in 1929 by the Department of Labor, describing cases handled by 42 courts in 1927. For the next 10 years, the Children's Bureau would gather cards completed by the juvenile courts that showed each delinquency, dependency, and status offense, as well as the age, gender, and race of the juvenile, reason for the referral, and adjudication and disposition of each case. Due to the cost, the tabulation system ceased, and until the mid-1970s, JCS reports were based on simple counts reported by the courts. The method of data collection changed over the next few decades, to the point that now JCS has become a sound method of data collection and reporting.¹²

The unit counted by the JCS is a case, which represents a juvenile processed by a juvenile court on a new referral, no matter the number of violations contained in a referral. For instance, a juvenile charged with four arsons in a single referral would represent one case. When a case is disposed, it means action has been taken on the referral, but it does not necessarily mean the case is closed.

JCS is prepared annually by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, which is the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The gathering and preparation of the data are supported by an annual grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. JCS caseload statistics for 2005–2016 are shown in Figure 2.2.

Another source for juvenile court statistics is the [National Juvenile Court Data Archives](#). In 1979, the National Center for Juvenile Justice began collecting data from 15 states or large jurisdictions with automated data systems, representing more than 80% of the juvenile population.¹³ According to the National Juvenile Court Data Archives, truancy cases accounted for 37% of the status offense petitioned cases in juvenile court in 2019, followed by liquor law violations (20%). In addition, for every 1,000 delinquency cases processed in 2019, 535 were petitioned for formal processing.¹⁴



Source: Hockenberry, Sarah, and Puzzanchera, Charles. 2019. *Juvenile Court Statistics 2016*. National Center for Juvenile Justice.

REPORTS OF JUVENILES IN CUSTODY

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

2.4 Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile correctional statistics.

Historically, data collected on juveniles under correctional control have been less accurate than court data. In the early 1970s, the U.S. Census Bureau launched the **Children in Custody Survey (CIC)**, a twice-yearly survey of public and private correctional facilities. While the Census Bureau survey has a response rate of almost 100% from the public juvenile facilities, the rate from private facilities is lower. In the past, it was difficult to make valid inferences from these numbers, due to growth of private corrections facilities, lack of standardized legal codes across jurisdictions, and aggregation of the data rather than reporting individual cases.¹⁵

To supplement the CIC survey, the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2000 launched a survey using a random sample of juveniles in secure facilities. This survey, the **National Survey of Youth in Custody**, is now conducted by Westat, a private professional services company. It collects more detailed data on the types of juveniles in facilities, personal factors that have influenced their behaviors, and conditions of confinement.¹⁶ Findings from the National Survey of Youth in Custody are reported in the Bureau of Justice Statistics' Prison Rape Elimination Act report. At the time of the publication of this text, the most recent data collection was from 2012. In 2012, about 9.5% of youths in state-run facilities reported one or more incidents of sexual victimization within 12 months of taking the survey. Those assaults were most likely to have been carried out by staff members at the facility. Of the 1,390 youths who reported victimization by staff, 89.1% were males who reported sexual activity with female staff. In addition, of those youths



The entrance to a social services agency. What kinds of services are available to juveniles and their families?

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who were victimized by juvenile facility staff, over 20% had been given drugs or alcohol to coerce them into sexual activity.¹⁷

The **National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD)** field-tested a data collection method on juveniles annually admitted to state-operated commitment facilities. It covered individual information, allowing for better policy analysis.¹⁸ However, not all states provided data, short-term detention facilities did not report, and it mainly captured information on very serious offending individuals and others incarcerated for long periods. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has since stopped data collection through the CIC and NCCD. The Census Bureau was then recruited to complete an analysis of all juveniles in facilities originally covered by the CIC. In addition, the National Jail Survey provides periodic information on juveniles admitted to jails.¹⁹

SELF-REPORT STUDIES

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

2.5 Discuss the differences between self-report and victimization data.

As noted previously, official data reported by law enforcement and court systems do not accurately portray the amount of juvenile crime in the United States. One way to improve accuracy is using self-report studies, in which juveniles report their own delinquent acts. For about 50 years, the results of **self-report studies** have been challenging the assertions made by official report data. These studies indicated that juvenile crime was not carried out mainly by minority groups in lower class neighborhoods, as was supposed, but was more widely distributed.²⁰ Recent studies

also show that delinquency rates are much higher than previously assumed. Research on male juveniles shows that as much as 82% of total crime was self-reported delinquency, while only 35% of total crime came from official juvenile justice system reports (some self-report data overlaps and includes official data).²¹ Similarly, research on female juveniles between the ages of 12 and 17 found that there were on average three times as many self-reported offending individuals as those in official reports.²²

Many small-scale studies have gathered data on juvenile delinquency, but the most influential data have come from two nationwide studies. The **National Youth Survey**, conducted seven times from 1976 to 1987 by the National Institute of Mental Health, collected data about deviant behaviors from a representative sample of young people. The **Monitoring the Future Survey** is an ongoing project collecting data on the behaviors, attitudes, and values of about 50,000 eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade students, followed up by questionnaires mailed to a sample of each graduating class.²³ The Monitoring the Future Survey revealed in 2021 that there was a significant decrease in alcohol, marijuana and vaped tobacco use for eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders. The National Institute of Drug Abuse stated future investigation of this dramatic decrease and its potential relationship due to pandemic factors, such as access and parental supervision.²⁴

The validity of self-report studies has been questioned. The veracity of juveniles who commit many delinquent acts can be called into question, and different methodologies are used to gather the data.

While the results of self-report studies vary somewhat, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Delinquent rates are considerably lower in police reports and court data than in self-report studies.
2. Data from self-report studies show smaller differences in crime commission based on race, ethnic origin, and gender than do data from official reports.
3. Juveniles in the lower and middle classes have a high level of delinquency.
4. Juveniles commit a higher number of serious crimes than what is reported by law enforcement.²⁵

NAVIGATING THE FIELD 2.1

SELF-REPORT STUDIES

This chapter describes self-report studies as an alternative source of information about juvenile misbehavior. Self-report studies are especially important in documenting juvenile crime that has either not been detected by the authorities or not been reported by the public.

More studies are being done that focus on racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. One includes a 2020 study regarding cumulative disadvantage, the hypothesis that at each stage of the juvenile justice process there will be racial and ethnic disparities among African American and Hispanic youth resulting in a cumulative disadvantage. Researchers found little evidence of cumulative disadvantage. However, the study underscored the need for greater attention to be given to the front-end of the juvenile justice process. It was shown that during arrest and intake African American youth are twice as likely than that of their white counterparts to be given a referral for arrest.²⁶

Putting It Into Action

For this active learning exercise, make a list of activities in which you were involved as a teenager that might be considered delinquent. Describe those activities in some detail, but do not include your name or other personally identifiable information. Were those activities ever discovered by the authorities? By your parents? Were they known to your friends? If so, what role did your friends play? Did they encourage you or discourage you from involvement? Would you repeat those same activities today, given the chance?

When asked to do so, submit to your instructor a description of what you have learned from this exercise, but in that description do not include the details of your misbehavior.

Victimization Studies

Victimization studies, another way to better understand juvenile delinquency, collect data from individuals on their experiences with crime victimization, rather than offending behaviors. One of the most notable measures is the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**, an annual survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The U.S. Census Bureau began the NCVS in 1972 as a way to supplement official arrest data such as the UCR.

The NCVS surveys almost 135,000 households and 224,520 individuals ages 12 and older on their experiences with crime victimization, including rape, robbery, assault, and domestic violence (see Figure 2.3).²⁷ Each household was interviewed in 2019 and 2020. The study projected that this population experienced a decrease in violent victimization from 21.0 victimizations in 2019 to 16.4 victimizations in 2020 (per 1,000 persons). It is especially notable that the rate of violent victimization against persons under the age of 18 declined 51% between 2019 and



A parent hugs his child following a school shooting. Why is school violence so common today?

RHONA WISE/AFP/Getty Images

FIGURE 2.3 ■ National Crime Victimization Survey: NCVS-1 Basic Screen Questionnaire

NCVS-1 Implementation Date: (07-01-2016) OMB No. 1121-0111: Approval Expires 08/31/2018

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY
NCVS-1 BASIC SCREEN QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: Questions are listed in the order asked. Skips in question numbering are due to questionnaire changes over time.

MOBILITY QUESTIONS

33a. TIMEATADDRESS 506 _____ Years (Round to nearest whole year)
Before we get to the crime questions, I have some questions that are helpful in studying where and why crimes occur.
If = 0 ASK 33b
If = DK or RF SKIP to 33c
Else SKIP to 33d
 Ask or verify -
How long have you lived at this address?
 (Enter 0 if less than 1 year.)

33b. MONTHSATADDRESS 505 _____ Months (1-11) - SKIP to 33e
How many months?

33c. TIMEATADDRESSPROBE 504
Have you lived here...
 Read categories 1-4:
 1 **More than 5 years** - If HHLD Respondent ASK 34, else SKIP to 36a.
 2 **Less than 5 years, but more than 1 year**
 3 **Less than 1 year, but more than 6 months** } SKIP to 33e
 4 **6 months or less**
 5 **Don't Know**

33d. CHECK ITEM A 503 How many years are entered in 33a?
 5 years or more - If HHLD Respondent SKIP to 34, else SKIP to 36a
 Less than 5 years - ASK 33e

33e. TIMEMOVEDIN5YEARS 508 _____ Number of times -
Altogether, how many times have you moved in the last 5 years, that is, since _____, 20__?
If HHLD Respondent ASK 34, Else SKIP to 36a
 Enter number of times.

BUSINESS OPERATED FROM SAMPLE

34. BUSINESS (Asked of Household Respondent Only) 530
Does anyone in this household operate a business from this address?
 1 Yes - ASK 35
 2 No - SKIP to 36a

35. BUSINESSSIGN (Asked of Household Respondent Only) 531
If this is a PERSONAL visit - Fill by observation.
If this is a TELEPHONE contact - Ask.
Is there a sign on the premises or some other indication to the general public that a business is operated from this address?
 1 Yes (Recognizable business)
 2 No (Unrecognizable business)

Page 1

RESPONDENT'S SCREEN QUESTIONS

36a. SQTHEFT

I'm going to read some examples that will give you an idea of the kinds of crimes this study covers.

As I go through them, tell me if any of these happened to you in the last 6 months, that is since _____, 20__.

Was something belonging to YOU stolen, such as -

Read each category.

- (a) Things that you carry, like luggage, a wallet, purse, briefcase book -
- (b) Clothing, jewelry, or cellphone -
- (c) Bicycle or sports equipment -
- (d) Things in your home - like a TV, stereo, or tools -
- (e) Things outside your home such as a garden hose or lawn furniture - (Asked of Household Respondent Only)
- (f) Things belonging to children in the household - (Asked of Household Respondent Only)
- (g) Things from a vehicle, such as a package, groceries, camera, or CDs -

OR

(h) Did anyone ATTEMPT to steal anything belonging to you?

Ask only if necessary

532

- 1 Yes - ASK 36b
- 2 No - If Household Respondent ASK to 37a; Else SKIP to 40a

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

36b. SQTHEFTTIMES

How many times?

533

Number of times (36b)

36c. SQTHEFTSPEC

What happened?

Briefly describe incident(s)

If Household Respondent ASK 37a; else SKIP to 40a

37a. SQBREAKIN (Asked of Household Respondent Only)

(Other than any incidents already mentioned,) has anyone -

Read each category.

- (a) Broken in or ATTEMPTED to break into your home by forcing a door or window, pushing past someone, jimmying a lock, cutting a screen, or entering through an open door or window?
 - (b) Has anyone illegally gotten in or tried to get into a garage, shed, or storage room?
- OR
- (c) Illegally gotten in or tried to get into a hotel or motel room or vacation home where you were staying?

Ask only if necessary

534

- 1 Yes - ASK 37b
- 2 No - SKIP to 38

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

37b. SQBREAKINTIMES (Asked of Household Respondent Only)

How many times?

535

Number of times (37b)

37c. SQBREAKINSPEC (Asked of Household Respondent Only)

What happened?

Briefly describe incident(s)

2020. The rate of property crime also decreased from 101.4 victimizations per 1,000 households in 2019 to 94.5 victimizations per 1,000 households in 2020, especially due to the decreased rates of burglary and trespassing.

One notable finding of the NCVS was that individuals ages 12 to 24 years had the highest rate of violent victimization of any other group (see Table 2.3). Males, Black Americans, and people in lower income levels were more likely to be victimized than females, other races, or people in higher income levels.

TABLE 2.3 ■ Rate of Violent Victimization Based on Demographic Characteristics in 2020

Victim Demographic	Rate of Violent Crime per 1,000 Persons Age 12 or Older
Total	21.0
Sex	
Male	16.6
Female	16.2
Race	
White	16.2
Black	17.5
Hispanic	15.9
Age	
12–17	17.4
18–24	29.6
25–34	21.4
35–49	18.3
50–64	14.6
65+	4.5
Marital Status	
Never Married	23.9
Married	9.3
Widowed	6.8
Divorced	24.1
Separated	42.1
Household Income	
Less than \$25,000	27.4
\$25,000–\$49,999	17.2

Victim Demographic	Rate of Violent Crime per 1,000 Persons Age 12 or Older
\$50,000–\$99,999	14.4
\$100,000–\$199,999	11.8
\$200,000 or more	13.3

Source: National Crime Victimization Survey.

Based on official arrest data and victimization data, the following conclusions can be made:

1. The crime rate reported in victimization surveys is higher than that reported by law enforcement.
2. Though the NCVS and the UCR report very different numbers for categories of offenses, these categories maintain basically the same rank order.
3. Juveniles and young adults are more likely to commit property crimes than are other age groups, but they have a higher rate of victimization in both property and personal crimes than do other age groups.
4. Racial minorities are overrepresented both as offending individuals and victims compared with their share of the general population.

The NCVS has issues with validity and reliability, much like the other measures of crime. Respondents may define victimization differently, such as what constitutes the act of rape. For instance, although incorrect, some respondents may consider only rape that occurs between a male offending individual and female victim. In addition, respondents who are questioned more than once sometimes provide different answers based on the ability to recall events accurately.

IN THE MEDIA 2.1

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TOGETHER (FAST)

Media reports often describe crimes committed by juveniles, but sometimes they also highlight delinquency prevention programs, especially when those programs have been shown to be successful. Families and Schools Together (FAST) is one such program. FAST targets at-risk youths in urban areas who have been exposed to violence. It is a multifamily group intervention program that provides parents the tools needed to help protect their children and to build supportive parent peer groups. After 8 weeks of training, follow-up meetings are initiated and run by the families for 2 years with juvenile involvement. Youths involved in FAST have scored lower on the teacher aggressive behavior scale compared with other students who have not been exposed to the program. Recently, news outlets reported that the state of Wisconsin had received funding from multiple sources to implement FAST in the Madison area. The intention was to increase student success for adolescents in high-crime areas.

Putting It Into Action

Using your internet search engine, research the FAST program to better understand its implementation. Explain why you feel this program would or would not be successful in reducing future violent behavior among youths in Madison, as well as other high-crime areas.

SUMMARY

LO 2.1 Explain the concept of the age–crime curve and the stages of juvenile offending.

The age–crime curve is a universal trend showing that the prevalence of committing delinquent acts will increase during late childhood, generally peaking between the ages of 15 and 19 years, then decrease into the early 20s. There are three stages of juvenile offending: (1) age of onset, or the age at which juveniles first commit offenses; (2) persistence, or juvenile offending that continues as a youth ages, most likely with increasing severity; and (3) desistance, or the cessation of criminal offending.

LO 2.2 Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile arrest statistics, as well as the limitations of the data collected.

The Uniform Crime Report (UCR), created by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, is the most prevalent source of offending arrest data. All U.S. law enforcement agencies are expected to report arrest data annually. Offenses are divided into two categories based on seriousness. However, since not all crime is reported to law enforcement, the validity of the data is under question. And since not all agencies report data, or report it inconsistently, the reliability of the measurement is of concern.

LO 2.3 Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile court statistics.

The Department of Labor has been collecting juvenile court data since 1929. Data measurement has changed over the years, and the current method involves examining each case in the system. The department's National Juvenile Court Data Archives provide a robust source of past and current juvenile delinquency trends.

LO 2.4 Identify the primary methods used to gather juvenile correctional statistics.

Juvenile correctional data have been somewhat unreliable for decades due to their limited origins. For instance, the Children in Custody Survey has had robust response rates from public juvenile facilities but not from private juvenile facilities. More recent collection efforts have used random sampling of institutions along with more detailed data on juveniles under correctional control.

LO 2.5 Discuss the differences between self-report and victimization data.

In addition to official data, other methods of gathering information on juveniles' offending behaviors provide a clearer picture of actual crime rates. Self-report studies are based on individuals' own reports on their offending behaviors. Victimization studies are based on the experiences of crime victims. These reports have consistently shown a much higher juvenile offending rate than data from law enforcement.

ALEJANDRO'S STORY—AGE 14 YEARS AND 3 MONTHS

Alejandro recently met a new friend, Evan, who hangs around the convenience store with his friends near Falling Water Middle School. Evan is biracial, having a Black father and Latinx mother. He's 18 years old and involved in a gang known for selling cocaine and methamphetamine in the neighborhood. Evan has been in and out of foster care, finding the gang to be a place of security and support at a time when he felt alone and isolated. Evan's first delinquent act was shoplifting, with the *age of onset** for this crime occurring at 13 years old.

Evan has become a regular in juvenile court due to frequent *status offenses*** and has a long record of truancy. He later moved into drug use and started selling to others when he began to spend more time with the gang once he turned 16. Evan has adopted a big brother mentality toward Alejandro, and has invited him to hang out with him and his friends at the store. While Alejandro learned about Evan's delinquent involvement, Evan has not asked him to participate in any law-breaking activities, and has been kind to Alejandro. He also identifies with Alejandro's experiences with racism. Evan told Alejandro that he saw white kids who had received more lenient adjudications in juvenile court than youth who were Black or Latinx. At some point, Evan taught Alejandro a few of the fundamental principles of *Critical Race Theory****—and said that he wouldn't have to sell drugs if he hadn't been discriminated against by white people wanting to hold on to power, and trying to keep the institutions of slavery alive so that they can get richer on the backs of people like him.

There are a number of risk factors that children face as they are growing up and some of them (but certainly not all) are associated with race. (Learn more about healthy childhoods by reading the OJJDP-sponsored online publication *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*.)

What are the risk factors associated with Alejandro and Evan's relationship?

* *Age of onset* is the age at which a juvenile first begins committing offending behaviors.

** *Status offenses* are acts that are in violation of the law only when committed by a person under a certain age—for example, running away, being truant from school, buying cigarettes.

*** *Critical race theory (CRT)* is a much-debated and somewhat loosely organized framework of progressive legal analysis based on the idea that race is a socially constructed cultural category used to oppress and exploit people of color. CRT emphasizes the role that discrimination—intentional or otherwise—plays in producing and perpetuating social inequalities, especially those based on race.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why might law enforcement agencies overreport or underreport arrest rates?
2. Are there better ways of more accurately reporting crimes not collected by law enforcement, known as the dark figure of crime?

EXPLORING JUVENILE JUSTICE FURTHER

1. Investigate the juvenile crime rates in your state, and compare them with a different state in another region of the country. For example, if you live in the Southeast, choose a state in the Northwest. What differences and similarities do you see in regard to personal versus property crime? Male versus female crime?
2. Create a self-report survey to gather data on offending behaviors of students at your university, specifically focusing on their offending behaviors as high school students and then college undergraduates. Administer the survey to your classmates. What do you expect to find?
3. Read through the report in Appendix A “Girls in the Juvenile Justice System.” What important trends do you notice? Why do you think girls account for less than one third of all juvenile arrests? What is the one crime where they have a higher proportion of arrests than boys? What conclusions can you draw from this about the dynamics of female juvenile delinquency?

KEY TERMS

age of onset	National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
age–crime curve	National Juvenile Court Data Archives
Children in Custody Survey (CIC)	National Survey of Youth in Custody
clearances by arrest	National Youth Survey
dark figure of crime	persistence
desistance	reliability
<i>Juvenile Court Statistics</i> (JCS)	self-report studies
Monitoring the Future Survey	Uniform Crime Report (UCR)
National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD)	validity
	victimization studies