



Research Bulletin

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State survey results quantify crime victimization patterns

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Results of the first statewide survey of adult resident victims of crime, completed in 2005 by the Authority, offer criminal justice practitioners an additional tool by which to measure the extent and nature of crime in Illinois.

The Illinois Crime Victimization Survey attempted to gauge the extent and nature of crime victimization experienced by residents 18 years and older. Specific goals of the survey included estimating the rate of personal and property crime victimization statewide and regionally, providing details about the nature of crime victimization in Illinois, and assessing public knowledge and utilization of crime victim services in Illinois.

Before undertaking the survey the most common way of measuring crime in Illinois was using official crime

statistics from the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. The program is a compilation of crime data reported by about 1,200 law enforcement agencies in the state.

UCR data include only crimes known to the police, who estimate that police reports account for less than half of all crimes committed. Additionally, most UCR data are limited to aggregate numbers of crimes reported to law enforcement. Virtually nothing is known about the nature of reported crimes, such as who committed them, how and why they were committed, where and when they occurred, who was victimized, and why they were reported to the police.

Other tools used to understand the extent of crime victimization include the Monitoring the Future Survey and the National Crime Victimization Survey. The Monitoring the Future Survey, administered annually to high school students, has the students self-report their personal drug use and delinquency. The National Crime Victimization Survey is administered to more than 40,000 households annually by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. While these national studies are useful, they do not flush out crime victimization patterns within Illinois.

Methodology

The Authority selected Bronner Group, LLC, to design a sampling plan and administer the survey. The random sample included 7,498 non-institutionalized Illinois adults whose names were drawn from the Secretary of State driver's license database and the state identification card database. The sample included 1,915 Chicago residents, 1,594 suburban Cook County residents, 1,781

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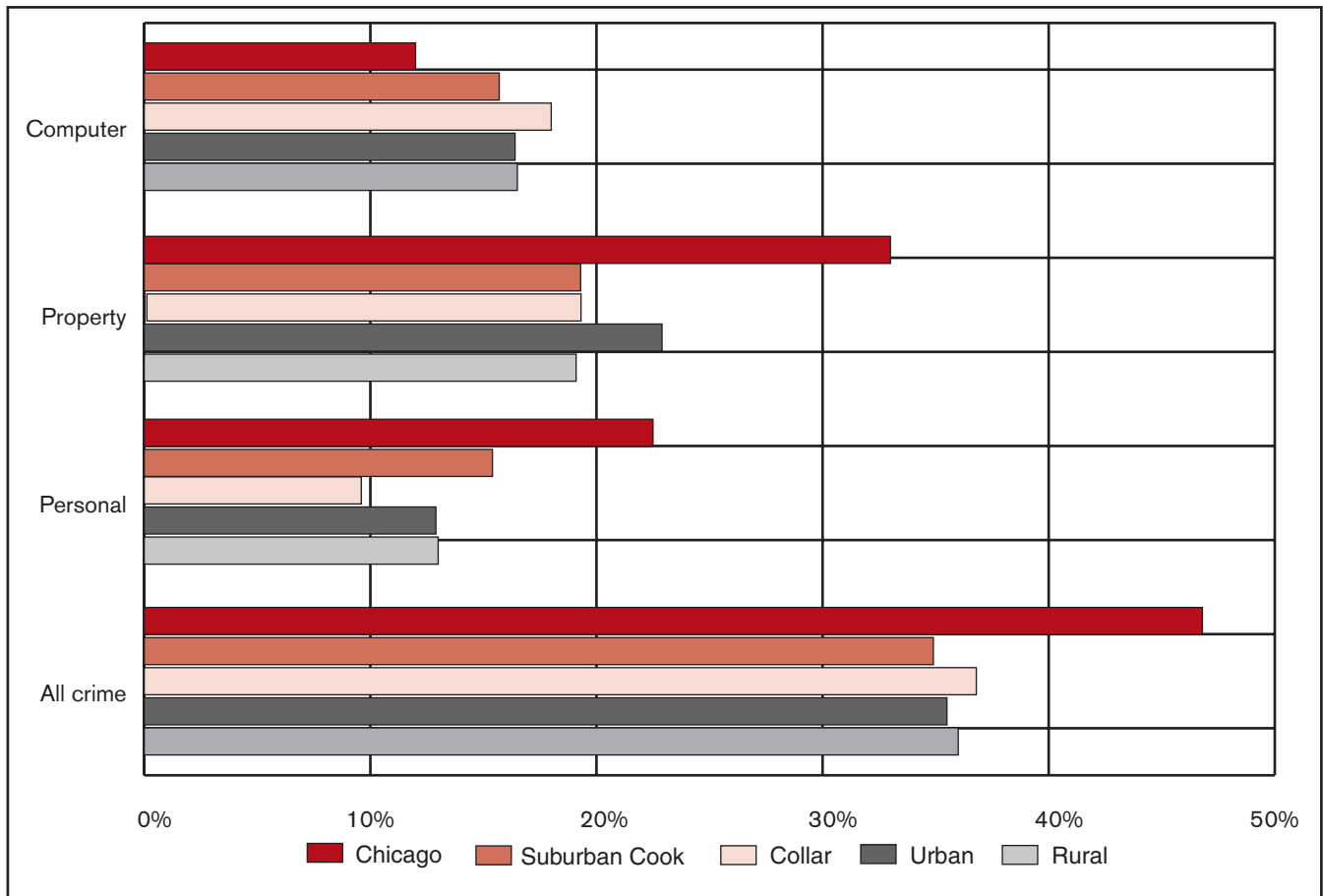
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Figure 1
 Estimated crime victimization among Illinois residents by crime type and region in 2002



Note: Standard errors for each crime type range from +/-0.6 to +/-4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level

collar county residents (counties bordering Cook), 1,398 urban county residents, and 810 rural county residents

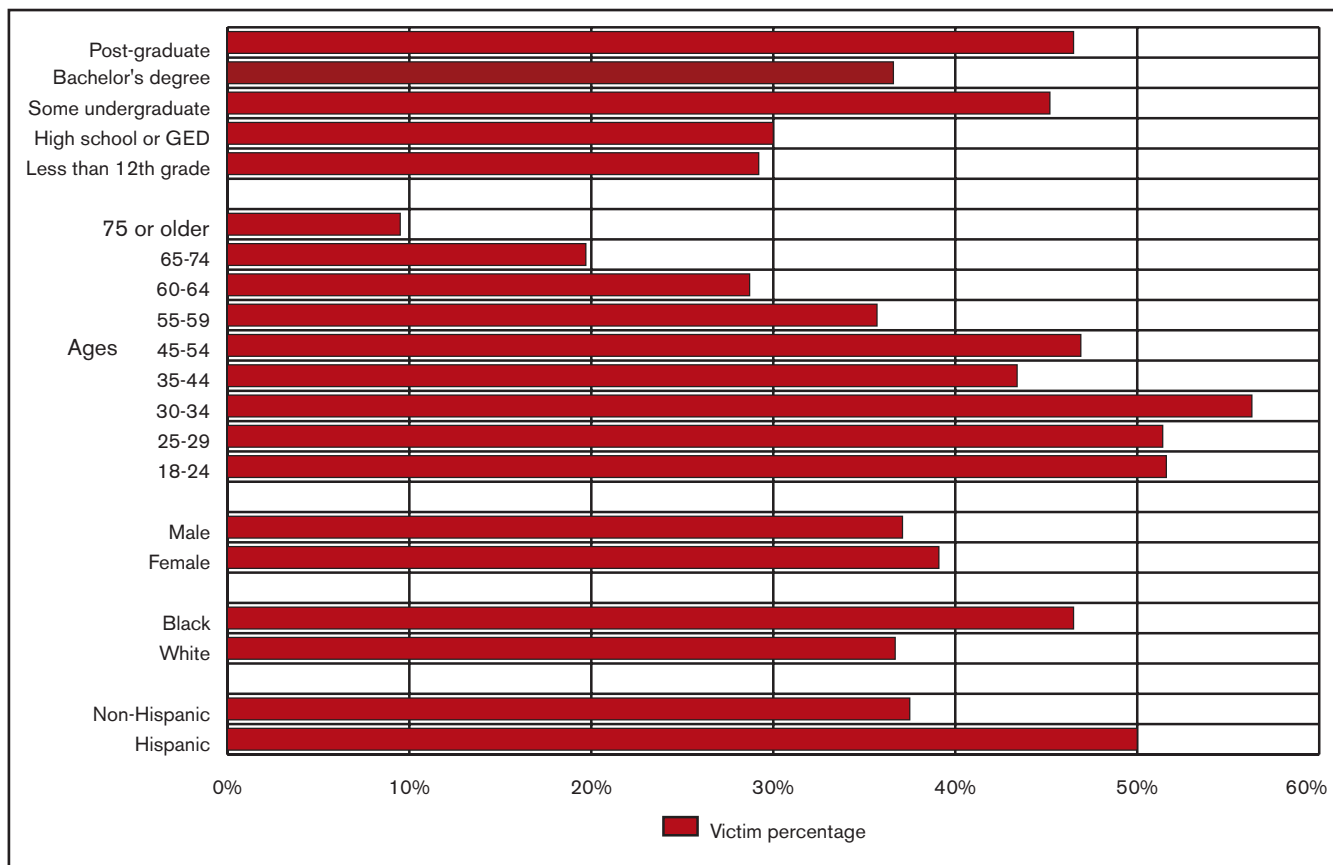
Mailing the survey was chosen as the most cost-effective method to reach Illinois crime victims. Modeled after similar surveys used in Hawaii and Minnesota, the survey followed the style set by the National Crime Victimization Survey, which has been conducted annually for over 30 years. About half the questions contained in the national survey were included in the state's, followed by screening questions to identify residents who had been victimized, incident-specific questions to be answered by respondents who reported victimization, and incident-specific questions modeled after those found in the national survey.

Also included in the state survey were questions aimed at collecting demographic information about respondents and their household, and at identifying respon-

dents who were victimized in 2002. Respondents who were victimized in 2002 were instructed to complete a series of detailed questions for up to four incidents of victimization. Other questions sought to determine public knowledge of crime victimization and usage of resources for crime victims.

The survey response rate was 28 percent, with 1,602 completed surveys returned to the Authority. The sample was large enough to be statistically sufficient for generating statewide and regional estimates, but due to the non-response error percentage (+/-3 percent standard error for statewide rates and +/- 6 percent for regional rates), findings may not be generalizable to the entire state's population. Though the sample's demographics were similar to those in the general population, the study's findings should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 2
 Estimated crime victimization among Illinois residents by ethnicity, race, gender, age group, and highest level of education in 2002



Note: Standard errors for each estimate range from +/-2.5 to +/-10.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Populations with certain characteristics were excluded when the standard error was larger than +/-10%.

Statewide estimates

During 2002, an estimated 39 percent of adult Illinois residents were victims of at least one type of crime one or more times. An estimated 47 percent of Chicago residents were victimized in 2002, a significantly higher statistic than the 35 to 37 percent range found in other regions of the state (Figure 1).

Twenty-three percent of study respondents were victims of property crime (motor vehicle theft, burglary, theft, or vandalism), and 13 percent were victims of personal crimes (robbery, assault, and sex crimes). Computer crimes can be included in personal or property crimes (i.e. fraud in purchasing something over the Internet), but for the purposes of this study each was categorized separately.

Extent of crime victimization among subpopulations

Victimization estimates were generated for subpopulations with specific demographic characteristics, features that statistically indicated they were more likely than the general population to experience crime (Figure 2). These included Hispanics, blacks, students, city dwellers, Chicago residents, apartment and/or home renters, employed residents, those who worked in a city, residents age 34 years old or younger, residents who had completed some undergraduate college or post graduate coursework, residents who were divorced or unmarried, residents living with at least one child under 18 years old in the household, residents with annual incomes of less than \$10,000 or more than \$100,000, and residents who had lived in their home for five years or less.

The only characteristics not affecting the odds of crime victimization were gender, disability status, and

English-speaking ability. Findings indicated a need for further research on Illinois subpopulations considered likely to experience crime victimization.

Characteristics of crime victimization incidents

The survey captured comprehensive details for only 22 percent of the reported victimization incidents, as several respondents did not answer some of the survey questions. Some respondents were unable to provide answers to specific survey questions regarding characteristics of the crime they reported. Such data limitations decreased the likelihood that survey findings are applicable to Illinois' general population, but they provided insight into crime victimization in the state and offered direction for further research. Although 56 percent of victimization incidents occurred at or near respondents' homes, 52 percent of personal crimes occurred more than one mile from their homes. More than half of reported incidents occurred during the day.

Eighty-three percent of respondents could not determine whether the offender who victimized them were under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Eight percent of reported incidents resulted in minor physical injury to victims.

Characteristics of offenders

Victims did not know their offenders in three-fourths of reported incidents. Percentages were higher for property crime (88 percent) and computer crime (93 percent) than for personal crime, where 56 percent of incidents involved offenders who were unknown to victims.

In 39 percent of crimes victims knew how many offenders were involved. Only one offender was reported to be involved in 74 percent of crimes, two were involved in 16 percent of crimes, three or more were involved in eight percent, and in the remaining crimes the number of offenders was unknown. In 59 percent of crime incidents, victims claimed not to know their offender's gender. In incidents where gender was reported, 79 percent involved males, 14 percent involved females, and the remaining 7 percent involved multiple male and female offenders.

In 44 percent of incidents, respondent estimated the age of offenders. Most offenders were 30 years old and older (35 percent), followed by offenders between 20 and 29 (29 percent), offenders between 18 and 20 (almost 14 percent), and offenders under the age of 18 (23

percent). In about 40 percent of incidents, respondents were able to report race and ethnicity characteristics. White offenders committed more than half (56 percent) of the offenses, blacks committed 31 percent of offenses, and Hispanics committed 14 percent of offenses.

Crime victimization reported to the police

Less than four in 10 crime victimization incidents were reported to the police, and a majority of them were reported by the victim. Other crime reports were made by an official (such as a security guard or manager), by another person (such as a household member), or by police themselves. Of the 225 incidents investigated by police, 15 percent resulted in an arrest. Respondents who reported crimes to police said they did so to prevent possible future crimes against others. Most respondents who did not make police reports said they felt their victimization incident was too minor.

Public knowledge and utilization of victim services

Most respondents indicated they were aware of community domestic violence and child abuse and neglect services. In 11 percent of the 225 incidents police investigated, respondents said they were informed of victim services. Of these, 16 percent were victims of personal crimes and 9 percent were victims of computer and property crimes, combined. Four percent of the 390 victims responding to the victim services queries reported receiving services, and 11 percent who were victims of personal crimes said they received services.

Recommendations for future surveys

Many findings in the Illinois survey were consistent with those obtained in the national survey. The full provides a comprehensive description of the study's findings, limitations, and recommendations for future victimization studies in Illinois. Recommendations for further research and future surveys included:

- Over-sample areas with higher population densities.
- Ensure that mailed surveys take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.
- Conduct formal, rigorous pre-testing.
- Develop additional questions to measure sex crime and domestic violence.
- Use methods other than mail surveys, such as telephone interviews.
- Improve methods for collecting data from non-English speaking populations.