



Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bulletin

Criminal Victimization 1984

Criminal victimizations in the United States dropped by 1.5 million to about 35.5 million in 1984 for persons age 12 and older according to the National Crime Survey (NCS). This decline continued a trend that has now reduced criminal victimizations to their lowest level in the 12-year history of the NCS, about 14% below the 41.5 million victimizations recorded in the peak year of 1981 (table 1).¹

The victimization rate for crimes of personal theft dropped 7% during 1984 (table 2), to a rate about 26% below the

¹For definitions of crimes measured by the National Crime Survey and a description of NCS operations, see *Measuring Crime*, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, NCS-75710, February 1981.

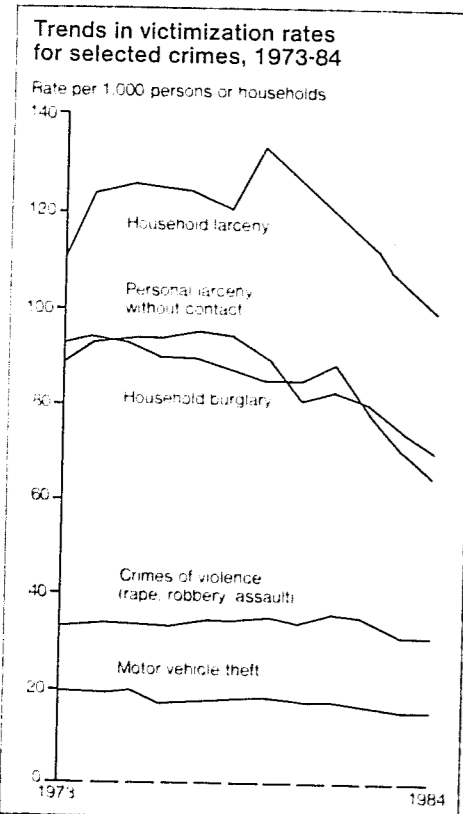


Figure 1

October 1985

The data in this bulletin update the preliminary estimates of victimization in 1984, which were released in April of this year. They confirm the earlier findings that overall crime decreased for the third year in a row, although violent crime leveled off after dropping in each of the two previous years.

The National Crime Survey

measures both crimes reported to the police and crimes not reported. Findings of the National Crime Survey that crime has declined for the last several years are supported by similar findings from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, which count crimes reported to the police.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

peak for these crimes, which occurred in 1977. Burglary rates, down 8% during the year, have been trending down since 1974 and are now 31% below the rate for that year. Household larceny fell 6% during the year and is now 26% below its peak year, 1979 (figure 1). Victimization rates for personal theft, household larceny, and burglary are all at new 12-year lows. Although violent crime rates remained basically unchanged between 1983 and 1984, they are 12% below their 1981 peak.

The National Crime Survey obtains information on criminal victimizations

whether or not the crime was reported to the police. Crimes were reported to the police in 1984 at a rate not measurably different from that of 1983. About one in three crimes measured by the NCS were reported to the police. The rate of police reporting has remained comparatively unchanged since measurement began in 1973.

Personal thefts at new low

The victimization rate for personal larceny without victim-offender contact continued a downtrend begun in 1978. The rate for 1984—69.1 victim-

Table 1. Victimization levels for selected crimes, 1973-84

	Number of victimizations (in 1,000s)			
	Total	Violent crimes	Personal theft	Household crimes
1973	35,661	5,350	14,970	15,340
1974	38,411	5,510	15,889	17,012
1975	39,266	5,573	16,294	17,400
1976	39,318	5,599	16,519	17,199
1977	40,314	5,902	16,933	17,480
1978	40,412	5,941	17,050	17,421
1979	41,249	6,159	16,382	18,708
1980	40,252	6,130	15,300	18,821
1981	41,454	6,582	15,863	19,009
1982	39,756	6,459	15,553	17,744
1983	37,001	5,903	14,657	16,440
1984	35,476	5,954	13,789	15,733
Percent change, 1981-84 ^b	-14.4 ^a	-9.5 ^a	-13.1 ^a	-17.2 ^a

^a The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. ^b Total victimizations peaked in 1981.

Table 2. Changes in victimization levels and rates for personal and household crimes, 1983-84

	Number of victimizations (1,000s)			Victimization rates		
	1983	1984	Percent change 1983-84	1983	1984	Percent change 1983-84
All crimes	37,001	35,476	-4.1% ^a
Personal crimes	20,561	19,743	-4.0 ^a	107.9	102.8	-4.7% ^a
Crimes of violence	5,903	5,954	0.9	31.0	31.0	0.1
Completed	2,120	2,193	3.4	11.1	11.4	2.6
Attempted	3,783	3,761	-0.6	19.9	19.6	-1.3
Rape ^b	154	180	16.7	0.8	0.9	15.8
Completed	50	61	22.2	0.3	0.3	21.5
Attempted	105	119	14.0	0.5	0.6	13.1
Robbery	1,149	1,117	-2.8	6.0	5.8	-3.6
Completed	710	749	5.5	3.7	3.9	4.7
With injury	252	313	23.9	1.3	1.6	22.9
From serious assault	128	160	24.8	0.7	0.8	23.8
From minor assault	124	153	22.9	0.7	0.8	21.9
Without injury	457	436	-4.7	2.4	2.3	-5.4
Attempted	440	368	-16.3	2.3	1.9	-16.9 ^c
With injury	125	106	-14.9	0.7	0.6	-15.5
From serious assault	59	54	-8.4	0.3	0.3	-9.4
From minor assault	66	52	-20.8	0.3	0.3	-21.4
Without injury	315	262	-16.8	1.7	1.4	-17.4 ^c
Assault	4,600	4,657	1.2	24.1	24.3	0.5
Aggravated	1,517	1,673	10.3 ^a	8.0	8.7	9.4
Completed with injury	537	596	11.0	2.8	3.1	10.1
Attempted assault with weapon	980	1,077	9.9 ^c	5.1	5.6	9.1
Simple	3,083	2,984	-3.2	16.2	15.5	-3.9
Completed with injury	824	788	-4.4	4.3	4.1	-5.2
Attempted assault without weapon	2,259	2,197	-2.8	11.9	11.4	-3.5
Crimes of theft	14,657	13,789	-5.9 ^a	76.9	71.8	-6.6 ^a
Completed	13,788	12,969	-5.9 ^a	72.4	67.6	-6.7 ^a
Attempted	869	820	-5.7	4.6	4.3	-6.4
Personal larceny with contact	563	530	-5.9	3.0	2.8	-6.6
Purse snatching	177	125	-29.0 ^a	0.9	0.7	-29.6 ^a
Completed	127	91	-28.1 ^a	0.7	0.5	-28.7 ^c
Attempted	50	34	-31.5	0.3	0.2	-32.2
Pocket picking	386	404	4.7	2.0	2.1	3.9
Personal larceny without contact	14,095	13,259	-5.9 ^a	74.0	69.1	-6.6 ^a
Completed	13,275	12,474	-6.0 ^a	69.7	65.0	-6.8 ^a
Less than \$50	6,699	6,145	-8.3 ^a	35.2	32.0	-9.0 ^a
\$50 or more	6,094	5,797	-4.9 ^a	32.0	30.2	-5.6 ^a
Amount not available	482	531	10.2	2.5	2.8	9.4
Attempted	819	786	-4.1	4.3	4.1	-4.8
Household crimes	16,440	15,733	-4.3% ^a	189.8	178.7	-5.8% ^a
Completed	13,858	13,324	-3.9 ^a	160.0	151.3	-5.4 ^a
Attempted	2,582	2,409	-6.7 ^a	29.3	27.4	-6.2 ^a
Burglary	6,063	5,643	-6.9 ^a	70.0	64.1	-8.4 ^a
Completed	4,510	4,322	-4.2	52.1	49.1	-5.7 ^c
Forcible entry	1,903	1,844	-3.1	22.0	20.9	-4.7
Unlawful entry without force	2,607	2,478	-5.0	30.1	28.1	-6.5 ^c
Attempted forcible entry	1,553	1,321	-14.9 ^a	17.9	15.0	-16.3 ^a
Household larceny	9,114	8,750	-4.0 ^a	105.2	99.4	-5.5 ^a
Completed	8,538	8,167	-4.3 ^a	98.5	92.8	-5.9 ^a
Less than \$50	4,429	3,982	-10.1 ^a	51.1	45.2	-11.5 ^a
\$50 or more	3,699	3,791	2.5	42.7	43.1	0.8
Amount not available	410	394	-3.9	4.7	4.5	-5.4
Attempted	576	583	1.3	6.6	6.6	-0.3
Motor vehicle theft	1,264	1,340	6.1	14.6	15.2	4.4
Completed	810	836	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.3
Attempted	454	505	11.3	5.2	5.7	9.5

NOTE: Detail may not add to total shown because of rounding. Percent change based on unrounded figures. Victimization rates are calculated on the basis of the number of victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 and older or 1,000 households. The population age 12 and older grew from 190,504,000 in 1983 to 191,962,000 in 1984, an increase of 0.8%. The number of households grew from 86,635,000 to 88,039,000 between 1983 and 1984, an increase of 1.6%.

^aThe difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

^bThe victimization rate for female rape (the number of rapes per 1,000 women age 12 and over) was 1.4 in 1983 and 1.6 in 1984.

^cThe difference is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

...Represents not applicable.

izations per 1,000 persons—was 27% lower than its high point in 1977 and the lowest in NCS history (tables 3 and 4).

Personal larcenies with victim-offender contact—purse snatchings and pocket pickings—occur far less often than the noncontact larcenies. Consequently actual changes in the level or rate of personal larceny with contact are much more difficult to measure. The overall rate for larceny with contact in 1984 was not measurably different from the 1983 rate or the rates for most earlier years.

One component of personal larceny with contact, purse snatching, did decline significantly, from a rate of 0.9 per 1,000 persons in 1983 to 0.7 per 1,000 persons in 1984. Rates for the other component, pocket picking, remained basically unchanged.

The decline in personal larceny without contact brought the overall 1984 rate for personal crimes of theft to 71.8 victimizations per 1,000 persons, the lowest rate to date for this grouping of crimes.

Residential crimes decline

The NCS measures three residential property crimes—burglary, household larceny, and motor vehicle theft. Together they accounted for about 700,000 fewer victimizations in 1984 than they did in 1983, a decline of roughly 4%.

For the third year in a row, the burglary rate set a new record low, declining from 70.0 burglaries per 1,000 households to 64.1 per 1,000. The 1984 burglary rate was about 30% below the burglary rates of the 1973-75 period. Declines in the rates for unlawful entry without force and attempted forcible entry were largely responsible for the decrease in the overall burglary rate.² The rate for forcible entries did not decline measurably.

Household larceny continued the downward trend begun in 1980, declining by 6% between 1983 and 1984 to a 12-year low of 99.4 per 1,000 households. This decline primarily results from the drop in the number of household larcenies with losses valued at less than \$50. Rates for larcenies with

²The difference between the 1983 and 1984 rates for unlawful entry without force is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level; the difference in levels was not statistically significant. It should be noted that because rates take into account changes in the number of households between years, they are the preferred measure of change.

Table 3. Victimization rates for personal and household crimes, 1973-84

	Victimization rates per 1,000 population age 12 and over or per 1,000 households											
	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Personal crimes												
Crimes of violence	32.6	33.0	32.8	32.6	33.9	33.7	34.5	33.3	35.3	34.3	31.0	31.0
Rape	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.9
Robbery	6.7	7.2	6.8	6.5	6.2	5.9	6.3	6.6	7.4	7.1	6.0	5.3
Assault	24.9	24.8	25.2	25.3	26.8	26.9	27.2	25.8	27.0	26.4	24.1	24.3
Aggravated assault	10.1	10.4	9.6	9.9	10.0	9.7	9.9	9.3	9.6	9.3	8.0	8.7
Simple assault	14.8	14.4	15.6	15.4	16.8	17.2	17.3	16.5	17.3	17.1	16.2	15.5
Crimes of theft	91.1	95.1	96.0	96.1	97.3	96.8	91.9	83.0	85.1	82.5	76.9	71.8
Personal larceny with contact	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.1	2.9	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.8
Personal larceny without contact	88.0	92.0	92.9	93.2	94.6	93.6	89.0	80.0	81.9	79.5	74.0	69.1
Household crimes												
Household burglary	91.7	93.1	91.7	88.9	88.5	86.0	84.1	84.3	87.9	78.2	70.0	64.1
Household larceny	107.0	123.8	125.4	124.1	123.3	119.9	133.7	126.5	121.0	113.9	105.2	99.4
Motor vehicle theft	19.1	18.8	19.5	16.5	17.0	17.5	16.7	17.1	16.2	14.6	14.6	15.2

NOTE: Detail may not add to total shown because of rounding. Statistically significant differences between the rates for 1984 and each preceding year are identified in table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of changes in victimization rates for personal and household crimes, 1973-84

	Percent change in victimization rates										
	1973-84	1974-84	1975-84	1976-84	1977-84	1978-84	1979-84	1980-84	1981-84	1982-84	1983-84
Personal crimes											
Crimes of violence	-4.7% ^b	-5.9% ^a	-5.5% ^a	-4.8% ^b	-8.5% ^a	-8.0% ^a	-10.2% ^a	-6.7% ^a	-12.2% ^a	-9.5% ^a	0.1%
Rape	-1.1	-4.1	3.3	11.9	5.6	-3.1	-13.0	0	-1.1	16.0	15.8
Robbery	-13.6 ^a	-18.9 ^a	-13.9 ^a	-9.9	-6.4	-1.2	-7.0	-11.3 ^b	-21.5 ^a	-17.8 ^a	-3.6
Assault	-2.5	-2.3	-3.7	-4.0	-9.4 ^a	-9.6 ^a	-10.8 ^a	-5.8 ^b	-10.0 ^a	-8.0 ^a	0.5
Aggravated assault	-13.4 ^a	-16.1 ^a	-9.3 ^b	-11.6 ^a	-12.6 ^a	-10.0 ^b	-12.1 ^a	-5.8	-9.5 ^b	-6.3	9.4
Simple assault	5.1	7.7 ^b	-0.1	0.9	-7.5 ^a	-9.4 ^a	-10.1 ^a	-5.7	-10.2 ^a	-9.0 ^a	-3.9
Crimes of theft	-21.1 ^a	-24.5 ^a	-25.2 ^a	-25.3 ^a	-26.1 ^a	-25.8 ^a	-21.8 ^a	-13.5 ^a	-15.6 ^a	-12.9 ^a	-6.6 ^a
Personal larceny with contact	-10.1	-11.3	-10.7	-4.5	4.2	-11.5	-3.8	-8.9	-15.1 ^b	-9.8	-6.6
Personal larceny without contact	-21.5 ^a	-24.9 ^a	-25.7 ^a	-25.9 ^a	-27.0 ^a	-26.2 ^a	-22.4 ^a	-13.6 ^a	-15.6 ^a	-13.1 ^a	-6.6 ^a
Household crimes											
Household burglary	-30.1 ^a	-31.2 ^a	-30.1 ^a	-27.9 ^a	-27.6 ^a	-25.4 ^a	-23.8 ^a	-23.9 ^a	-27.1 ^a	-18.0 ^a	-8.4 ^a
Household larceny	-7.1 ^a	-19.7 ^a	-20.7 ^a	-19.9 ^a	-19.4 ^a	-17.1 ^a	-25.7 ^a	-21.4 ^a	-17.9 ^a	-12.7 ^a	-5.5 ^a
Motor vehicle theft	-20.2 ^a	-19.1 ^a	-21.9 ^a	-7.6	-10.3 ^b	-13.1 ^a	-13.1 ^a	-8.8	-11.0 ^b	-5.8	4.4

NOTE: Percent change is based on rates that were rounded to the nearest hundredth.

^aThe difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

^bThe difference is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

greater losses were constant between 1983 and 1984.

The 1984 rate for motor vehicle theft did not differ measurably from that of a year earlier, but it was below the rates that prevailed throughout most of the 1970s.

Violent crime rates stable

Victimization rates for rape, robbery, and assault—the three violent crimes measured by the NCS—remained basically unchanged between 1983 and 1984 (figure 2).

The overall rate for robbery—5.8 victimizations per 1,000 persons—was not measurably different from 1983. However, there was some evidence of a decline in the rate of attempted robberies without injury.

The rate of female rape, at 1.6 victimizations per 1,000 women in 1984,

Trends in victimization rates for violent crimes, 1973-84

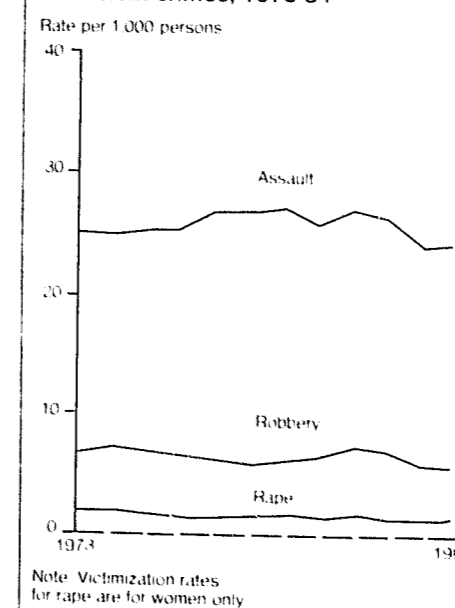


Figure 2

was not measurably different from that of the previous year.

Assaults occurred at a rate of 24.3 per 1,000 persons, which did not differ measurably from the 1983 rate. The number of aggravated assaults in 1984 increased by 10% over the 1983 level. The increase in the rate of aggravated assault, however, was not large enough to be statistically significant. Simple assault did not register a measurable change between 1983 and 1984.

Police reporting unchanged

In 1984, 35% of all NCS crimes were reported to the police, a rate of reporting that has remained basically unchanged throughout the 1980s (table 5 and figure 3).

The 1984 reporting rate did not change measurably for any major crime

³The aggregate rate of police reporting includes all the crime categories shown in table 5.

Table 5. Reporting victimizations to the police, 1973-84

	Percent of victimizations reported to the police											
	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Personal crimes												
Crimes of violence	46%	47%	47%	49%	46%	44%	45%	47%	47%	48%	47%	47%
Rape	49	52	56	53	58	49	51	41	56	53	47	56
Robbery	53	54	53	53	56	51	56	57	56	56	53	55
Assault	44	45	45	48	44	43	42	45	44	46	46	44
Aggravated assault	52	53	55	58	52	53	51	54	52	58	57	53
Simple assault	38	39	39	41	39	37	37	40	39	40	41	39
Crimes of theft	22	25	26	27	25	25	24	27	27	27	27	26
Personal larceny with contact	33	34	35	36	37	34	36	36	40	33	36	32
Personal larceny without contact	22	24	26	26	25	24	24	27	26	27	26	26
Household crimes												
Household burglary	47	48	49	48	49	47	48	51	51	49	49	49
Household larceny	25	25	27	27	25	25	25	28	26	27	25	27
Motor vehicle theft	68	67	71	70	68	66	68	69	67	72	69	69

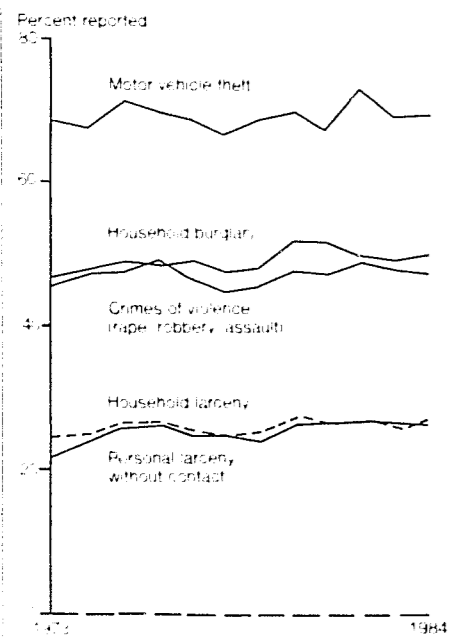
Table 6. Preliminary estimates and final results for 1984 victimization levels and rates

	Number of victimizations (in 1,000s)			Victimization rates		
	Preliminary	Final	Percent change	Preliminary	Final	Percent change
Personal crimes						
Crimes of violence	5,951	5,954	0.1%	31.0	31.0	0.2%
Rape	186	180	-3.6	1.0	0.9	-3.4
Robbery	1,129	1,117	-1.1	5.9	5.8	-0.9
Assault	4,636	4,657	0.5	24.1	24.3	0.6
Aggravated assault	1,611	1,673	3.8	8.4	8.7	4.0
Simple assault	3,022	2,984	-1.3	15.7	15.5	-1.1
Crimes of theft	13,992	13,789	-1.5	72.8	71.8	-1.3
Personal larceny with contact	561	530	-5.6	2.9	2.8	-5.4
Personal larceny without contact	13,432	13,259	-1.3	69.9	69.1	-1.1
Household crimes						
Household burglary	5,473	5,643	3.1	62.1	64.1	3.3
Household larceny	8,621	8,750	1.5	97.8	99.4	1.7
Motor vehicle theft	1,283	1,340	4.4	14.6	15.2	4.6

NOTE: Numbers and rates may not add to total shown because of rounding. Percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

category. As in the past, motor vehicle theft, with roughly 7 in every 10 incidents reported to the police, had the

Trends in reporting to the police for selected crimes, 1973-84



highest rate of reporting; personal larceny without contact and household larceny, with only 1 in every 4 cases reported, had the lowest police reporting rates.

The National Crime Survey

The NCS measures selected personal and household offenses, including crimes not reported to the police, through interviews at 6-month intervals with the occupants of housing units that make up a representative national sample. During 1984, some 128,000 persons—occupants of about 60,000 housing units—participated in the survey. Field interviews are administered monthly to one-sixth of the sample, according to a rotation schedule. Information pertaining to the previous 6 months is gathered at each interview.

Preliminary estimates and sampling error

In April 1985, the Bureau of Justice Statistics issued a release of preliminary NCS victimization levels and rates, as well as police reporting data for 1984. When levels and rates of vic-

timization for the early 1984 estimates are compared to the final 1984 results, the procedure used in calculating the preliminary estimates appears to have yielded reliable indicators of both magnitude and change in criminal victimization during 1984 (table 6). For example, the preliminary 1984 rate for crimes of theft was 72.8 per 1,000 persons; the final rate was 71.8.⁴

Data collected in the National Crime Survey are obtained from a sample and not from a complete enumeration. Consequently, a sampling error (standard error) is associated with each number in this report, including the numbers measuring change. In general, if the difference between two numbers is greater than twice the standard error for that difference, we can say that we are 95% confident that the two numbers are in fact different—that is, the apparent difference is not simply the result of surveying a sample rather than the entire population. If the difference is greater than 1.6

⁴For a complete discussion of preliminary estimation procedures, see BJS Bulletin *Criminal Victimization, 1983*, NCS-93869, June 1984.

standard errors, we are 90% confident that the two numbers are different. All comparisons made in the text are at or above the 95% confidence level except where footnoted or when the phrase "some evidence" is used. These

exceptions are at or above the 90% confidence level. Where differences between two numbers are below the 90% confidence level, the two numbers are described in the text as "not measurably different."

Bureau of Justice Statistics reports

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National Crime Survey

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The risk of violent crime, NCJ-97119, 5/85
The economic cost of crime to victims, NCJ-93450, 4/84
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BJS bulletins:

Households touched by crime, 1984, NCJ-97689, 6/85
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The Hispanic victim, NCJ-69261, 11/81

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Restitution to victims of personal and household crimes, NCJ-72770, 5/81

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Criminal victimization in urban schools, NCJ-56396, 8/79

Crime against persons in urban, suburban, and rural areas, NCJ-53551, 7/79

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