1999 PENNSYLVANIA CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

PENNSYLVANIA CRIME VICTIMIZATION RATES

- The aggregate crime victimization rate for Pennsylvania is 26, 113 victimizations per 100,000 residents-about 26 of every 100 Pennsylvanians report a victimization. This figure includes any and all types of crimes. Using the narrower UCR Index Crime definition¹, the rate is lower. It is 19,472 victimizations per 100,00-about 19 of every 100 Pennsylvanians report a UCR Index crime. Still lower is the rate for violent crimes. It is 1120 victimizations per 100,00—about one of every 100 Pennsylvanians report a violent crime victimization.
- Only a few crimes generate most victimizations. In fact, major types of crime vary enormously in the proportion of overall crime that they comprise. The category of theft and larceny alone includes more than half (53%) of all victims. Burglary accounts for another one in eight crimes (13%) and motor vehicle thefts account for about one in twelve (8%). These three combined account for three of every four victimizations. By contrast, violent crimes like rape, robbery, and arson are relatively rare. Each account for about one percent of all crime.

CRIME AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- In Pennsylvania the prototypical crime victim is (mean) 36 years old, white (80%) with an (median) income of 40 to 50 thousand annually. This prototypical victim is more likely to be female (59%) and probably (69%) a homeowner. Less than half of victims (44%) are married and over half (56%) work full time. Victims are about as likely to come from an urban area (29%) as a suburban area (30%). A plurality comes from small towns (24%) and rural areas (17%).
- The prototypical victim has lived an average of (mean) eleven years in their neighborhood. A large majority of victims (75%) rate their neighborhoods as good or excellent places to live. Few plan to move. Most (66%) say it is very likely that they will still be living in their current neighborhoods a year from now.
- Age is associated with some crime victimizations. Overall, older Pennsylvanians (ages 55 and older) make up the smallest proportion of crime victims. In general, victimizations increase with age up to age 25, stay level or increase somewhat through age 45, then decrease slowly through age 65 and up. There are some exceptions. Robbery and rape victimizations peak earlier (age 25-34) and decline sooner than others. Arson, also an exception, peaks at age 45-54.
- Both gender and race are important attributes of crime victimization. Women account for almost 60% of victims overall—and are the victims of more crimes then men across every crime classification except assault. They account for 77% of rapes, 60% of burglaries and 60% of larceny/thefts. Non-whites represent about 20% of all victims, but account for nearly half (44%) of all robbery victims.

¹ Homicide, Forcible Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny-Theft, and Motor Vehicle Theft. Victimization surveys, exclude homicide. Homicide accounts for roughly one-half of one percent of violent crime.

• Different types of living areas differ somewhat in the type of crime victimizations that are most common. For example, residents of urban areas account for a majority of robberies (63%) and a plurality of burglaries (38%), motor vehicle thefts (33%), and rapes (31%). On the other hand, suburban residents account for a plurality of larceny/thefts (30%), assaults (37%), arsons (39%), and other crimes (30%). In contrast, residents of small town and rural residents account for 40% of theft, 40% of motor vehicle theft, 45% of other crime, and 46% of rape victims.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OFFENDER AND OF THE CRIME

- Most crime victims (69%) are unable to describe their offenders. Most of those able to describe their offender said the offender was male and well known to them. (This proportion saying the offender was well known to them equals 11% of all crime victims). About one in four victims able to describe the offender said he was drinking or on drugs at the time (equal to 8% of all crime victims).
- More than 8 of 10 (82%) victimizations occurred in the town or city in which the victim lived, and almost 6 of 10 (59%) victims reported that the crime happened in or near their home. Almost 19 of every 20 victims (93%) report being able bodied at the time of the incident.
- Just under half of victims (47%) were present at the time of the incident, and about half of them (26%) reported seeing the offender. About 6% of victims say the offender had a weapon and about 2% report the weapon was a gun.
- About two percent of victims required medical care as a result of their victimization. Very few (about one-tenth of one percent) victims suffered a gun or knife wound.

POLICE RESPONSE

- Half (52%) of all crime victimizations were not reported to the police. Most commonly, people did not report their crimes because they "dealt with it in another way" or because it "wasn't important enough to report."
- When crimes are reported, typically (76%) the victim themselves make the call. The most common police response is to take evidence or make a report (48%). Usually (66%) there is no subsequent contact with police after the initial report, and victims report that to their knowledge, only infrequently (15%) is anyone ever arrested for the offense.
- Motor vehicle thefts (67%) and burglaries (62%) were the crimes most likely to be reported by victims. Only about half of all robberies (56%) and assaults (55%) were reported. Just over one in three rapes (37%) and thefts (36%) were reported to police.

VICTIM SERVICES

• Less than one percent of all victims ever used any victim services. Just one in ten victims (10%) reported that they were notified about the victim services available in their areas. Those who experienced a violent crime were more likely to have been notified about victim services than those who experienced other crimes (22% to 10%).

PROPERTY CRIMES

- Larceny/theft was experienced by 53% of all crime victims. Most larceny/theft victims are white (83%) and a majority (61%) are female. Central PA (27%), Philadelphia (18%) and southeast PA (16%) together account for six of every ten thefts. The fewest (15%) occur in rural areas while the most occur in urban areas and suburban areas. The median age for theft victimization is 35-44. Only one in ten theft victims are age 55 or older.
- Burglary was experienced by 13% of all crime victims. Most burglary victims are white (84%) and a majority (61%) are female. Central PA (27%) and Philadelphia (21%) together account for almost half of all burglaries, while all of western PA accounts for just a quarter (27%) of it. The fewest number of burglaries (14%) occur in rural areas while the most occur in urban areas (34%). The median age for a victim is 35-44. Only one burglary victim in nine is age 55 or older.
- Motor vehicle thefts involved 8% of all crime victims. Most victims are white (80%) and a majority (59%) are female. Philadelphia alone accounts for almost a third (30%) of motor vehicle thefts. Central PA (22%) and southeast PA (21%), along with Philadelphia, account for almost three of every four (73%) of these victimizations. Fewer than one in five motor vehicle thefts (18%) reported are from western PA. The largest number of motor vehicle thefts occurs in urban areas (40%), and the fewest occur in rural areas (8%). Suburbs and small towns each account for about one in four motor vehicle thefts. The median age for victimization is 35-44; however, this crime hits younger people heavily. More than one in four victims (27%) are age 24 or younger.
- Arson was experienced by one percent of all crime victims.

VIOLENT CRIMES

- Assaults were experienced by two percent of all crime victims—a total of 49 victimizations were reported. Three of four victims were white, and half were female. Philadelphia alone accounted for about one quarter of them. Including Philadelphia, eastern PA accounts for more than two of three assaults. Urban and suburban areas taken together include three of every four-assault victims. The median age for victims is 25-34. One in seven victims are age 12-17—while fewer than 1% are 55 and older.
- Robberies were experienced by one percent of all crime victims—a total of 18 robberies were reported.
- Sexual assaults were experienced by about one percent of all crime victims—a total of 20 rapes were reported.