

University of New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

Crimes Against Children Research Center

Research Institutes, Centers and Programs

12-2000

Juvenile Victims of Property Crimes.

David Finkelhor

University of New Hampshire - Main Campus, David.Finkelhor@unh.edu

Richard Ormrod

University of Northern Colorado

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/ccrc>



Part of the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Finkelhor, David and Ormrod, Richard. Juvenile victims of property crimes. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* - NCJ184740 (pgs. 1-12). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Research Institutes, Centers and Programs at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Crimes Against Children Research Center by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact Scholarly.Communication@unh.edu.



OJJDP

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator

December 2000

JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Juvenile Victims of Property Crimes



David Finkelhor and Richard Ormrod

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is committed to improving the justice system's response to crimes against children. OJJDP recognizes that children are at increased risk for crime victimization. Not only are children the victims of many of the same crimes that victimize adults, they are subject to other crimes, like child abuse and neglect, that are specific to childhood. The impact of these crimes on young victims can be devastating, and the violent or sexual victimization of children can often lead to an intergenerational cycle of violence and abuse. The purpose of OJJDP's Crimes Against Children Series is to improve and expand the Nation's efforts to better serve child victims by presenting the latest information about child victimization, including analyses of crime victimization statistics, studies of child victims and their special needs, and descriptions of programs and approaches that address these needs.

Property crime is the most frequent kind of criminal victimization and one with important economic and psychological consequences, although it has not received the same public attention as violent crime in recent years. Property crime victimization rates are much higher for juveniles than for adults, but very little attention has been paid to property crimes against juveniles or the particular features that characterize these crimes. This Bulletin tries to fill this gap by examining the characteristics of property crimes against juveniles. It uses crime information from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) for 1996-97 and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for 1997.

The following are among the highlights of this Bulletin:

- ◆ One out of every six juveniles ages 12-17 was the victim of a property crime each year (1996 and 1997), a rate 40 percent higher than the rate for adults.
- ◆ Property crime victimization rates are particularly high for African American juveniles and juveniles living in urban areas and the West.
- ◆ Higher income and residence in rural areas do not confer the same protection against property victimization for youth as they do for adults.
- ◆ Items most frequently taken from juveniles are electronic and photo gear and clothing and luggage (presumably backpacks).

From the Administrator

While property crimes may not command the same banner headlines as violent crimes, they constitute the most common type of crime victimizing the public and exact a considerable cost on society not only economically but psychologically.

As the data from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the National Incident-Based Reporting System presented in this Bulletin illustrate, juveniles are at a particularly high risk for victimization through property offenses. In 1997, one in six juveniles ages 12 to 17 was a victim of a property crime—a rate 40 percent higher than the rate for adults.

Part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Crimes Against Children Series, this Bulletin describes juveniles' risks for property victimization and the nature of such crimes. Unfortunately, property crimes against juveniles are seldom reported to the police. In fact, a larceny or theft perpetrated against a juvenile is three times less likely to be reported than one for which an adult is the victim.

As the Bulletin's authors conclude, justice demands that property crimes against juveniles be addressed. The information provided here should assist in that cause.

John J. Wilson
Acting Administrator

- ◆ The majority of juvenile property crimes (54 percent) occur at school, by far the most common location for these crimes.
- ◆ Property crimes against juveniles are rarely reported to police (for example, only 11 percent of all thefts against juveniles are reported, one-third the reporting rate for adults).
- ◆ Fifteen percent of juveniles recover stolen property, a higher recovery rate than that for adults.
- ◆ Making a police report is associated with a 76-percent greater likelihood that a youth will recover property, even controlling for a variety of other factors.
- ◆ Since 1993, juvenile property victimizations have declined 23 percent.
- ◆ Some of the distinctive features of juvenile property victimization (such as its occurrence in schools, the kinds of items taken, and its special demography) suggest that its prevention may require different policies than those addressing adult property crime.

Risks for Property Victimization

Juveniles are at high risk for property victimization (table 1). The rate of property

Table 1: Juvenile and Adult Property Crime Rates

Type of Crime	Property Crime Rate (per 1,000 persons)		Ratio (Juveniles/Adults)
	Juveniles*	Adults	
All property crimes	166	118	1.4
All larceny/theft	151	97	1.6
Motor-vehicle-related larceny†	4	28	0.1
Non-motor-vehicle-related larceny	147	69	2.1
Robbery	9	4	2.3
Burglary (with theft)	7	17	0.4

Note: Data presented in this table are based on crimes involving the respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12-17 years.

† Includes theft of automobiles and other motor vehicles, auto parts or accessories, and gasoline.

* Juvenile rates vs. adult rates for all types of crimes, $p < 0.05$.

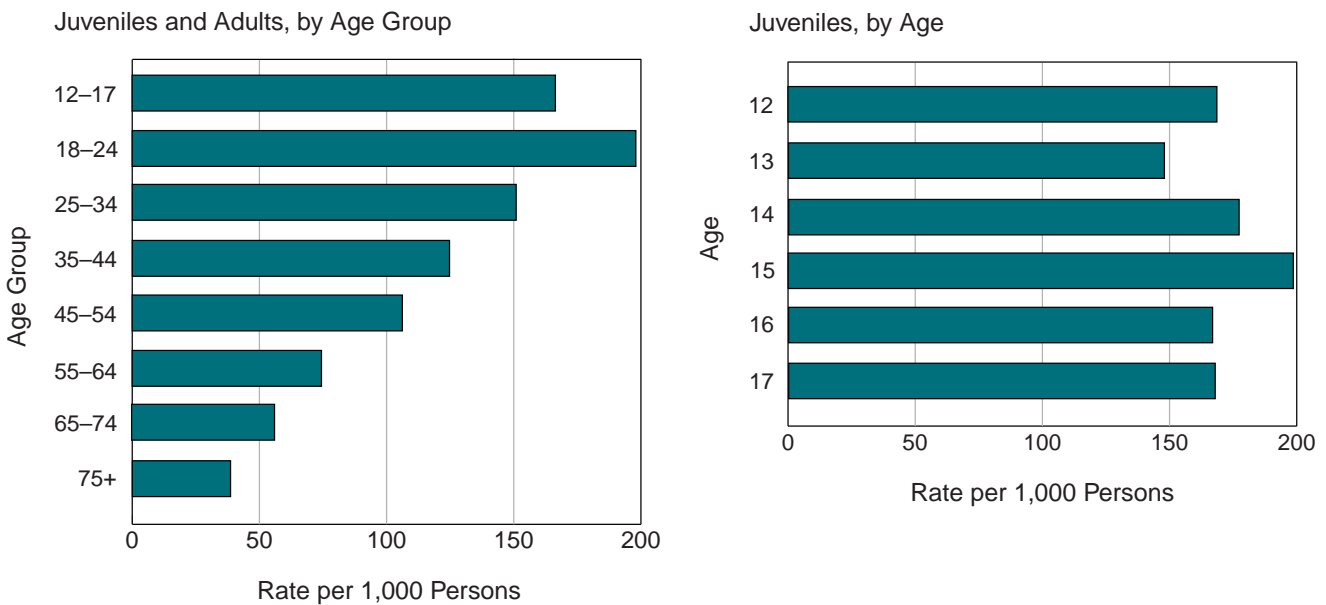
Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

crimes against juveniles ages 12-17 is 166 per 1,000 (or close to 1 out of every 6 juveniles per year), about 40 percent higher than the rate for all adults. Property victimization rates were higher for only one other age group: 18- to 24-year-olds (figure 1).

In spite of this overall disproportion, the relative risk of property crime victimization for juveniles and adults varies with the

specific offense. Larceny/theft constitutes most of the property crime victimizations recorded for both juveniles and adults, and juveniles are disproportionately the victims, at a rate similar to property crime as a whole (table 1). For types of thefts related to motor vehicles, however, victimization rates are much higher for adults than for juveniles. This is due to the fact that juveniles are less likely than adults to own cars and car paraphernalia, but this

Figure 1: Property Victimization Rates, by Victim Age and Age Group



Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Defining Property Crime and Its Various Subcategories

Crime Type	Description
Property crime	The illegal taking or damaging of property, including cash and personal belongings. Examples include burglary, theft, robbery, and vandalism. In many instances, the offender acts furtively, and the victim is often not present when the crime occurs.
Larceny	The theft or attempted theft of property or cash without using force or illegal entry. An alternate label for this crime is "theft." It is a property crime.
Personal larceny	Purse snatching and pocket picking. Personal larceny involves the theft or attempted theft of property or cash directly from the victim by stealth but without force or threat of force. It is both a property crime and a personal crime.
Robbery	The taking of property or cash directly from a person by force or threat of force. Robbery is both a property crime and a violent crime.
Burglary	The unlawful or forcible entry or attempted entry of a structure with the intent to commit an offense therein. This crime usually, but not always, involves theft. It is a property crime.
Vandalism	The willful or malicious destroying, defacing, or damaging of property without the consent of the owner. It is a property crime.
Violent crime	Rape, sexual assault, robbery, and assault, including both attempted and completed crimes. The defining element is the use of force or threat of force. Violent crimes involve contact between the victim and the offender.
Personal crime	A criminal act affecting a specific person. Crimes against persons, as defined by NCVS, include rape, sexual assault, robbery, assault, and purse snatching/pocket picking. The victimization is personal either through the direct experience of force or threat of force or by theft directly from one's person.

Data Sources

Data on the property victimizations of juveniles can be found in both the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). NCVS, conducted by the Bureau of the Census on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, provides a national picture of victimization patterns. It gathers a wide range of information from citizens on their property victimizations. This information includes the specific type of crime experienced, the location of the incident, whether the incident was reported to police or other officials, the type and value of the property involved, and the identity and personal characteristics of the owner of the property. The primary property crime categories are larceny, robbery, and burglary. In the context of this study, larceny consists of all completed thefts, personal larcenies (purse snatching and pocket picking), and motor vehicle thefts. Robbery and burglary include all completed robberies and burglaries.¹

The active NCVS sample contains about 55,000 households and approximately 100,000 individual respondents. Respondents are all household members in the sample who are 12 years of age and older. Response rates both for eligible households and for individuals are more than 90 percent. When data from 1996 and 1997 are combined, information on approximately 21,800 property victimizations is available, with about 2,800 reported by youth ages 12–17. Bureau of Justice Statistics guidelines were followed in calculating percentages and rates based on weights for the NCVS sample and in the statistical comparison of differences. Significance testing was conducted using complex survey design procedures for the calculation of variance.

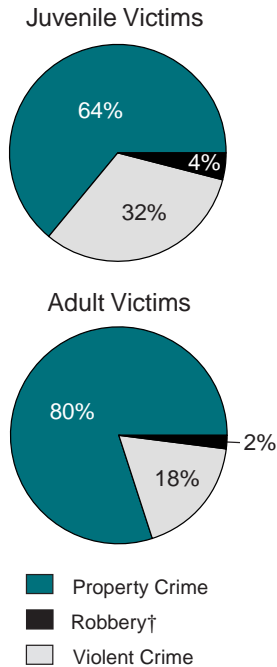
The NIBRS data used in this Bulletin consist of detailed information on property crime incidents reported to police agencies scattered throughout 12 States.² The more comprehensive NIBRS is supplanting the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) system but is still in development. By 1997, 12 States had police jurisdictions reporting, representing about 9 percent of the Nation's population and 6 percent of its crime. Only three States (Idaho, Iowa, South Carolina) have gained participation from all local jurisdictions, and only one city with a population greater than 500,000 (Austin, TX) is reporting, leaving the crime experiences of large urban areas particularly underrepresented.

Although not a national data set, NIBRS data provide large amounts of information (similar in detail to NCVS) about property crimes reported to police, including those against juveniles under 12 years of age whose victimizations are not explored by NCVS. For example, the 1997 NIBRS data file contains extensive information on about 618,000 property crimes (larceny, robbery, burglary, and vandalism) against individual victims, including nearly 4,900 against juveniles under 12 and 33,500 against juveniles ages 12–17.

¹ Another important property crime is vandalism, but this crime is reported in NCVS only as a household crime, with no specification of individual ownership of damaged or destroyed property items, and thus is not counted in the tabulations presented in this Bulletin.

² Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia.

Figure 2: Types of Crime Experienced, by Juvenile or Adult Victim



Note: Adult=18+ years; juveniles=12–17 years.

† Robbery is shown separately; it is both a property and a violent crime.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Juvenile and Adult Property Crime Rates

Group	Property Crime Rate (per 1,000 persons)		Ratio (Juveniles/Adults)
	Juveniles	Adults	
Victim race†			
White	162*	114	1.4
African American	194*	151	1.3
Other	155*	108	1.4
Place type			
Urban	190*	162	1.2
Suburban	165*	106	1.6
Rural	139*	85	1.6
Census region			
Northeast	152*	94	1.6
Midwest	154*	111	1.4
South	166*	119	1.4
West	193*	149	1.3
Household income			
Less than \$20,000	166*	140	1.2
\$20,000 to \$39,999	173*	123	1.4
\$40,000 or more	173*	110	1.6
Hispanic origin‡			
Yes	143	133	1.1
No	170*	117	1.5

Note: Data presented in this table are based on all property crimes involving the respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years.

† Includes Hispanics within race.

‡ Hispanics of any race.

* Juvenile rate vs. adult rate, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

disproportion is probably exacerbated by the fact that NCVS asks adult heads of households specific questions about motor vehicles that are not asked of most juveniles.¹ The robbery victimization rate for juveniles is more than twice the rate for adults (9 vs. 4 per 1,000). Burglary, however, which involves breaking into households where more of the valuable property is owned or claimed by adults, occurs at a higher rate for adults than for juveniles. As with motor vehicles, the higher adult victimization rate may be influenced by head-

¹ Because of the household orientation of the NCVS questionnaire, the person designated as head-of-household (principal person), most often an adult, is asked some special questions about burglary and thefts related to motor vehicles. This means that some adult respondents have been provided extra prompts to remember and report these events or, in the case of motor-vehicle-related thefts, claim ownership.

of-household screening questions that ask specifically about burglary.

Unfortunately, one very widespread property crime—vandalism—is not counted by NCVS in a way that allows the experiences of juveniles to be distinguished from those of adults. Vandalism makes up 30 percent of all property victimizations reported to police in NIBRS jurisdictions. The percentage of juvenile vandalism victims reflected in NIBRS reports suggests that vandalism falls midway between larceny and burglary in its distribution between juveniles and adults. So, vandalism rates for juveniles may be equal to or somewhat lower than those for adults.

Property crime constitutes the most frequent kind of crime victimization for juveniles, as it does for adults (figure 2). Sixty-eight percent of all juvenile victimizations are larcenies, robberies, or burglaries, while violent crimes (robbery also counts

in this category) make up 36 percent. For adults, property crimes constitute an even larger portion of the total crime burden, 82 percent. The lower proportion of property crime for juveniles reflects their even more disproportionately high rate of violent victimization (see Hashima and Finkelhor, 1999).

Higher Risk Subgroups

Property crime victimization rates are high and relatively constant across the full spectrum of adolescence from age 12 to 17 (figure 1). The situation with regard to younger children is unclear. Police data from NIBRS show relatively little property crime reported for victims younger than age 12, but this could primarily reflect social norms that deem it inappropriate to involve police in property offenses against children of elementary school age or younger.

Table 3: Types of Property Stolen From Juvenile and Adult Victims

Juveniles		Adults	
Property Stolen	Percentage of Items	Property Stolen	Percentage of Items
Rank		Rank	
1 Electronic, photo gear	18%	1 Motor vehicle or parts	19%
2 Clothing, luggage	17	2 Electronic, photo gear	10
3 Other personal objects	13	3 Other personal objects	10
4 Only cash	10	4 Tools, machines	9
5 Jewelry, watch, keys	9	5 Clothing, luggage	7
6 Bicycle or parts	9	6 Other items	6
7 Wallet	8	7 Only cash	6
8 Toys, recreation equipment	4	8 Jewelry, watch, keys	6
9 Other items	3	9 Credit cards	6
10 Purse	3	10 Wallet	6
11 Motor vehicle or parts	2	11 Bicycle or parts	3
12 Food, liquor	1	12 Purse	3
13 Credit cards	1	13 Television, stereo, appliances	3
14 Collections (stamps, coins, cards)	1	14 Toys, recreation equipment	3
15 Television, stereo, appliances	<0.5	15 Other household effects	2
16 Tools, machines	<0.5	16 Food, liquor	1
17 Animals (pet or livestock)	<0.5	17 Farm, garden produce	1
18 Other household effects	<0.5	18 Handgun	1
19 Farm, garden produce	<0.5	19 Animals (pet or livestock)	1
20 Firearm (other than handgun)	<0.1	20 Silver, china	<0.5
21 Silver, china	0	21 Firearm (other than handgun)	<0.5
22 Handgun	0	22 Collections (stamps, coins, cards)	<0.5

Note: Data in this table include all property crimes (larceny, robbery, burglary) exclusively involving a respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Boys are somewhat more likely than girls to suffer property crime (57 percent vs. 43 percent), but the disproportion is not as great as for violent crime (63 percent vs. 37 percent) (differences significant at $p=0.05$).

Others at relatively high risk for property victimization are African American juveniles, juveniles in urban areas, and juveniles in the West, whose vulnerability mirrors the higher risk for adults in these categories (table 2). However, in some important respects, the risks for property victimization are different for juveniles and adults. For example, adults from higher income families have some insulation from property victimization compared with low-income adults. Yet youth from higher income families experience property victimization at rates that are higher (although not significantly so) than those of low-income youth. These high-income youth do not

seem to share the protection that their parents enjoy. In general, some of the categories with the lowest overall property crime rates (for example, higher income, rural residence, Northeast region) show the greatest disproportion between the experiences of youth and adults. That means that a number of statuses that confer protection to adults do not confer equal protection to youth.

The experience of affluent youth is also distinctive in that they bear substantially more of the property crime burden than of the violent crime burden. Juveniles from families with annual incomes of more than \$40,000 experience 47 percent of all property crime against juveniles, compared with 39 percent of the violent crime against juveniles. The property crime victimization of affluent juveniles is also greater than the portion of the property crime suffered by affluent adults, who experience only 38 percent of prop-

erty crime against all adults (differences significant at $p=0.05$).

In contrast to affluent youth, Hispanic juveniles apparently have some relative protection from property crime. Although property crime victimization among Hispanic adults tends to be higher than that of non-Hispanic adults (table 2), property victimization rates of Hispanic juveniles are lower than those of non-Hispanic juveniles (both differences significant at $p=0.05$).

The Property Taken

The items most frequently taken from juveniles in property crimes are electronic and photo gear and clothing and luggage (most likely backpacks) (table 3). Cash, jewelry, bicycles and bicycle parts, wallets, toys and recreation equipment, purses, and motor vehicles and parts are each involved in 2–10 percent of the episodes. The distribution of items contrasts considerably with

Table 4: Theft Rates for Property Items Stolen From Juvenile and Adult Victims

Type of Property Taken	Theft Rate (per 1,000 persons)		Ratio (Juveniles/Adults)
	Juveniles	Adults	
Bicycle or parts	15.3*	3.7	4.2
Clothing, luggage	29.7*	7.7	3.8
Collections (stamps, coins, cards)	1.1*	0.3	3.7
Electronic, photo gear	32.1*	11.7	2.7
Only cash	17.2*	6.4	2.7
Toys, recreation equipment	7.5*	3.0	2.5
Jewelry, watch, keys	16.0*	6.4	2.5
Other personal objects	22.8*	10.8	2.1
Wallet	13.1*	6.2	2.1
Purse	5.0*	3.5	1.4
Food, liquor	1.4	1.3	1.1
Other items	5.7	7.0	0.8
Animals (pet or livestock)	0.3	0.5	0.6
Credit cards	1.4*	6.2	0.2
Television, stereo, appliances	0.7*	3.1	0.2
Farm, garden produce	0.2*	0.8	0.2
Firearm (other than handgun)	0.1*	0.4	0.2
Motor vehicle or parts	3.1*	21.4	0.1
Other household effects	0.2*	1.8	0.1
Tools, machines	0.4*	9.7	0.04
Silver, china	0	0.4	—
Handgun	0	0.6	—

Note: Data presented in this table include all property crimes exclusively involving a respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years.

* Juvenile rates vs. adult rates, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Table 6: Location of Juvenile and Adult Property Crime Victimization

Location	Property Crimes		Violent Crimes	
	Juveniles	Adults	Juveniles	Adults
Own home/residence	12%	23%	6%	18%
Near own home/residence	9	31	10	14
At or near other's home/residence	6	4	9	10
Commercial place	4	8	4	16
Parking lot/garage	3	16	5	8
School	54	4	40	4
Open area, street, public transportation	6	7	21	21
Other place	6	7	5	9
Total	100	100	100	100

Note: Property crime data in this table are based on crimes involving respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Table 5: Value of Items and/or Cash Taken From Juvenile and Adult Property Crime Victims

Value	Percentage of Victimization*	
	Juveniles	Adults
Less than \$50	58%	36%
\$50 to \$249	34	33
\$250 to \$999	7	19
\$1,000 or more	1	12
Total	100	100

Note: Percentages presented in this table are based on crimes involving a respondent's own property where a value is reported; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years.

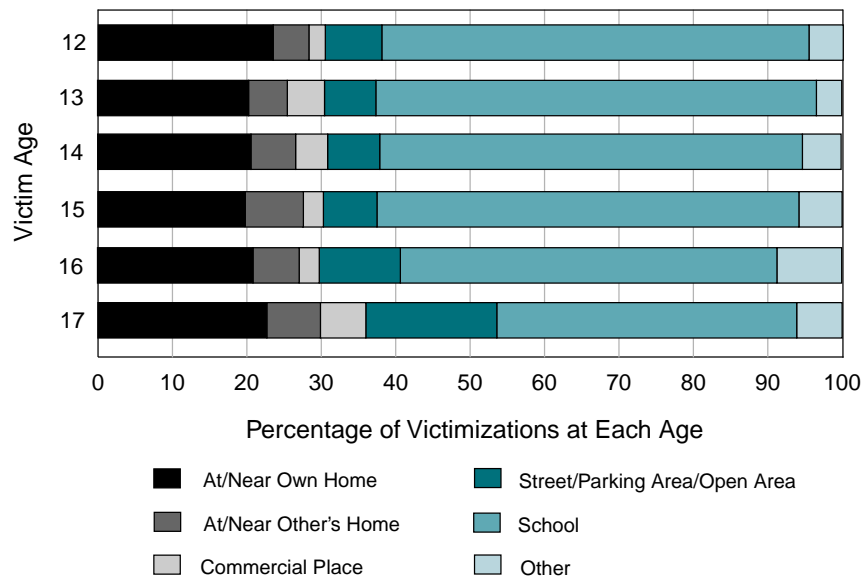
* Juvenile victims vs. adult victims, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

the distribution for adults. Juveniles dramatically outstrip adults in the rates of crimes involving bicycles and parts, clothing and luggage, stamp/coin/card collections, electronic and photo gear, cash, toys and recreation equipment, and even jewelry (table 4). Rates of adult victimization are much higher for other types of property, including tools, motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts, firearms, televisions and other appliances, and credit cards. Televisions and appliances, in particular, are usually taken during burglaries (73 percent), crimes most frequently reported in the NCVS by an adult head of household. The disproportionate appearance of collectively used property like televisions and cars in the adult ownership category reinforces the point that property ownership attributions probably understate the impact of property crimes on juveniles.

The majority (58 percent) of property crimes against juveniles involve items with a total value of less than \$50 (table 5). This contrasts with adult victims, 64 percent of whose property loss is valued at more than \$50. Reflecting the fact that losses of cars, other vehicles, and televisions are almost exclusively assigned to adult ownership, 12 percent of adult victims claimed a loss of more than \$1,000, compared with 1 percent of juvenile victims. Lower valuation certainly plays a role in the lower reporting rates for juvenile property victimizations and also the lesser seriousness

Figure 3: Location of Property Victimization Against Juveniles, by Victim Age*



* Location vs. victim age, $p < 0.05$.

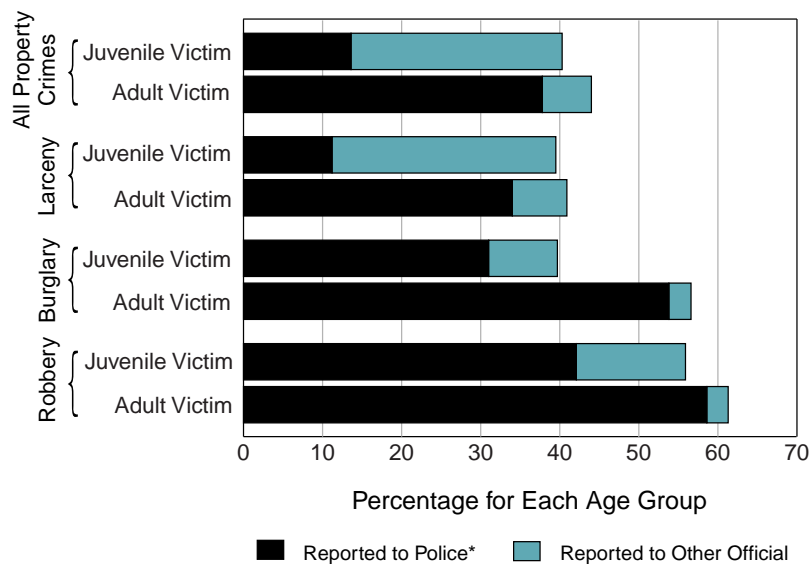
Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

with which it is viewed (Finkelhor and Ormrod, 1999). It is important to recognize, however, that from a subjective point of view, relatively less expensive items may be more of a loss for a juvenile than an expensive item is for an adult. This is because the less expensive item may constitute a larger share of a juvenile's total assets and, in the absence of cash assets or income, be harder to replace.

Crime Locale

Fifty-four percent of juvenile property crimes occur at school, by far the most common location for these crimes (table 6). Another 21 percent occur at or near the victim's home or residence. By contrast, most adult property victimization occurs at or near home, while adult workplace victimization is quite minor (offices, stores, and factories are coded in the category "commercial place"). The high percentage of juvenile property crimes that occur at school also contrasts to some degree with the distribution of juvenile violent victimizations, only 40 percent of which occur at school. This suggests that schools are better at controlling or limiting opportunities for violent victimization than property victimization on their premises, perhaps because they make greater efforts in combating violence (e.g., Arnett and Walsleben, 1998; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Beginning at age 16 and most markedly at age 17, the predominance of school victimizations declines, and property victimization in streets and open areas, parking lots and garages, and commercial places expands, very likely reflecting the acquisition of drivers' licenses and employment by these older juveniles (figure 3).

Figure 4: Property Crime Reporting, by Juvenile or Adult Victim



Note: Adult=18+ years; juvenile=12-17 years.

* Juvenile victims vs. adult victims, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Reporting Property Crimes

Property crimes against juveniles are rarely reported to the police (figure 4), and this is especially true for larceny/thefts, only 11 percent of which are so reported (less than one-third the reporting level for adult larceny/thefts). Police reporting for burglary and robbery against juveniles is more common, but less than 50 percent of these crimes are reported to police, well below the levels for adult victimization. However, a considerable number of juvenile property crimes are reported to other authorities, presumably mostly school officials. Thus, for larceny/theft, total reporting rates to all sources, including school

Victim Identity in Juvenile Property Crime

One of the problems in discussing property crimes, as opposed to violent crimes, is in defining the victim. Property crime, with the exception of robbery and personal larceny, is treated as a household crime in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), an approach that considers the entire household to be victimized, obscuring individual characteristics. The analysis in this Bulletin takes a different approach and treats all property crimes as personal crimes, distinguishing juvenile victims from adult victims even within the same household. At least two features of juvenile property crimes support doing this. First, most larcenies—the most common property crime reported to NCVS, a major data source for this analysis—actually occur away from home. Second, most larcenies reported to NCVS involve only the respondent's property.

The approach used in this Bulletin is to treat all property crimes as personal crimes, using property ownership information to identify specific individual victims. In the case of NCVS data, incidents that involve a respondent's own property are treated as personal crimes against the respondent. Ownership attributions made to NCVS by respondents do not necessarily conform to a strict legal definition of ownership but reflect their personal views. However, such opinions about ownership probably represent the best picture of the links between persons and property that prevail within a household.

In collecting information about property crimes, NCVS also asks individuals about thefts occurring to other people within the household. In order to clearly distinguish among individual victims, only cases where respondents said their own property was involved (including cases where their own and other people's property were involved in the same episode) are counted and compared in this analysis. For tallies of the characteristics of individual stolen items (rather than crime

incidents)—as provided, for example, in tables 3, 4, and 8—the analysis needed even greater specificity and relied strictly on incidents involving the respondent's property alone. Also, use of ownership attributions limits the comparison of burglaries to only those incidents that included theft in addition to illegal entry.

Of course, for some items, like a television or car, the identified owner may not be the only person affected or the person most seriously affected by the loss or destruction of the property—for example, when the stolen property was used primarily by a juvenile. Because much property that is used extensively or even exclusively by juveniles (including homes, vehicles, and electronic and play equipment) is legally owned by adults, victimization data based on ownership attributions as opposed to usage patterns probably understate the impact of property victimization on juveniles.

Data on property crimes included in the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the other major data source used in this analysis, are organized differently. Incidents are those reported to police, and their descriptions reflect both the nature of police reports and NIBRS protocols. For example, property crimes are classified by type of victim, which can be an individual, a business, a financial institution, the Government, a religious organization, or society. For this study, only crimes against individuals are included because in these incidents the police have identified and described specific persons as victims. Once again, to avoid attributions to multiple owners, tallies of the characteristics of stolen or vandalized items are based only on incidents that involve a single victim. This is because property items in NIBRS are reported collectively by incident, not by each individual victim involved.

Estimated Juvenile Property Victimitizations Known to Police

Both NCVS and NIBRS suggest that the total number of juvenile (ages 12–17) property victimizations known to police is between 400,000 and 500,000. To allow a comparison of the data sets, juvenile victimizations are limited to the major property crimes of larceny, robbery, and burglary, which are defined and recorded similarly by both systems (vandalism, which is not, is excluded). Furthermore, to confine the comparison to incidents clearly affecting specific individuals, property victimizations tallied from NCVS include only those that exclusively involved a juvenile respondent's own property.

Given these limiting conditions, the combined 1996 and 1997 NCVS sample provides a 1-year average weighted estimate of 491,249 juvenile property victimizations known to police.

The 1997 NIBRS data set, representing police reports from jurisdictions in 12 States, identifies 26,900 equivalent juvenile property victimizations. SEARCH, the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, which assists the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in its planning and implementation of NIBRS, estimates that its 1997 records represented

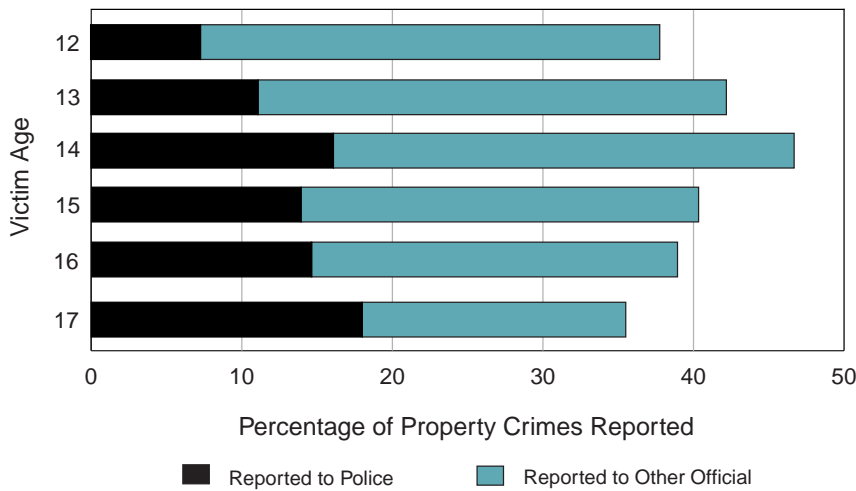
about 6 percent of the Nation's crime. If offenses reported to NIBRS are somewhat representative of crimes occurring in nonreporting jurisdictions, then the NIBRS count just noted suggests that nationally a total of about 448,300 juvenile property victimizations were reported to police in 1997.

Estimates for more detailed offense categories show overall similarities, with the greatest difference appearing for robberies:

	NCVS	NIBRS
Larceny estimates	370,685	379,000
Burglary estimates	41,004	38,700
Robbery estimates	79,560	30,600

The underrepresentation of robbery in the NIBRS data may reflect the lack of large urban centers among the reporting jurisdictions. Although NIBRS data do not reflect a national sample of police reports, NIBRS tallies of juvenile property victimizations are generally congruent with those of NCVS, which is a national statistical sample.

Figure 5: Reporting Property Crimes Against Juveniles, by Victim Age*



* Reporting vs. victim age, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Table 7: Reporting of Juvenile Property Victimization to Police

Characteristic	Incidents Reported to Police (%)
Region*	
Northeast	12%
Midwest	16
South	15
West	10
Value of Stolen Property*	
Less than \$50	5%
\$50 to \$249	19
\$250 to \$999	47
\$1,000 or more	63

Note: Data in this table are based on crimes involving the respondent's own property; juvenile=12–17 years.

* Reporting vs. nonreporting among categories, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Table 8: Juvenile Property Victimization Reported to Police, by Type of Item Stolen

Item Stolen†	Incidents Reported to Police (%)	Reporting Level, All Other Items (%)	<i>p</i> (difference)
Bicycle or parts	43%	10%	0.000
Part of motor vehicle	41	13	0.000
Clothing, luggage	8	15	0.000
Other personal objects	9	14	0.005
Other items	4	14	0.007
Cash	9	14	0.045
Electronic, photo gear	12	14	0.185
Toys, recreation equipment	17	13	0.348
Purse	17	13	0.395
Wallet	11	14	0.511
Jewelry, watch, keys	12	13	0.664

Note: Data presented in this table are based on crimes involving the respondent's own property; juvenile=12–17 years.

† Includes only items whose count total allows statistical comparison.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

officials, is not that much lower for juveniles than for adults.

Police reporting does vary somewhat by age (figure 5), with younger adolescents even less likely than older adolescents to report property victimization to the police. By contrast, younger adolescents are

more likely than older adolescents to report these incidents to school authorities.

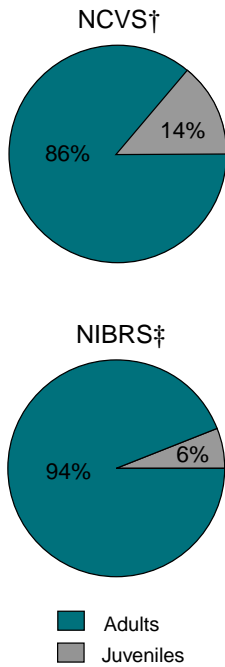
Boys are somewhat more likely to make police reports about property crimes than girls (15 percent vs. 10 percent). This difference is explained by two factors: boys are more likely than girls to report thefts

(difference significant at $p = 0.05$), and boys are more likely than girls to experience robberies and burglaries, crimes that are reported to a greater extent than thefts.

There are some regional differences in the reporting of juvenile property crime, with Midwesterners being most likely to report and Westerners least likely (table 7). The relation between the value of items and the likelihood of reporting is strong and obvious.

Bicycles and motor vehicle parts are the items juveniles are most likely to report to police, by a wide margin (table 8). Clothing and luggage are items for which the underreporting to police is greatest. Wallets, purses, toys and recreational equipment, electronic and photo gear, and jewelry, watches, and keys are reported to police about as frequently as anything else, which is not that frequently. Making police reports primarily for bicycles and motor vehicle parts seems only in part a function of their value or insurance concerns (electronic equipment is valuable and no less insured than bicycles). It may also result from the perception that the domain of police is the streets and highways, places where vehicles and vehicle parts are likely to be encountered. That is, police are perceived as being better able to aid in the recovery of these as opposed to other items. A multivariate analysis of the NCVS data shows that a bicycle was 457 percent

Figure 6: Self-Reports (NCVS) vs. Police Reports (NIBRS) of Property Crimes, by Victim Age Group



Note: Adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years; property crimes include larceny, robbery, and burglary.

† Crimes involving a respondent's own property.

‡ Excludes vandalism.

Sources: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). 1997 NIBRS data (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1997).

more likely to be reported to police than another item of similar value, but only among juveniles. Among adults, bicycle theft was just 31 percent more likely to be reported than other items.

The underreporting of juvenile victimizations to police means that police records show a substantially lower percentage of juvenile victims than is reflected in the self-report data from NCVS (figure 6). Thus, 12- to 17-year-old juveniles account for 14 percent of the property crimes reported to NCVS but 6 percent of the victimizations known to police in the NIBRS tabulations. Another 1 percent of property crime victimizations (excluding vandalism) in the NIBRS data is associated

Table 9: Recovery of Stolen Juvenile and Adult Property

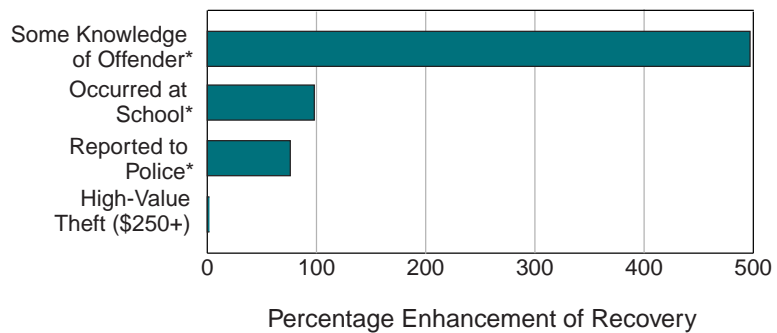
Group	Victimizations With Some or All Items Recovered* (%)	
	Juveniles	Adults
All property victimizations	15%	11%
Victimizations reported to police	24	19
Victimizations reported to other official	14	10
Victimizations not reported	13	6

Note: Data in this table are based on crimes involving the respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12–17 years.

* Juvenile percentage vs. adult percentage for all groups, $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Figure 7: Factors Contributing to Property Recovery for Juvenile Victims



Note: Juvenile=12–17 years.

* Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Source: 1996 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

with juveniles under age 12. Interestingly, 80 percent of the NIBRS reports for property crimes against juveniles under 12 are for bicycle thefts, additionally illustrating that juveniles perceive bicycle theft, unlike many other property crimes, as uniquely worth reporting to police.

Recovery of Property

Most of the property taken in property crime is not recovered, but juveniles, even with their higher rates of victimization, recover some or all of their property more frequently than adults (15 percent vs. 11 percent) (table 9). Juveniles are somewhat more likely than adults to have some idea about the offender's identity (35 percent vs. 28 percent), a factor that can help in recovery. Recovery for juveniles is more likely when the crime is reported to the

police (24 percent) than when it is reported to other authorities like school officials (14 percent) or not reported at all (13 percent). A multivariate analysis shows that making a police report increases the likelihood of recovery for a juvenile by 76 percent, even controlling for crimes that occur in school and having some idea of the offender's identity, two other factors that increase recovery (figure 7). Recovery for juveniles, curiously, is not any more likely for high-value items. The possibility that reporting to police actually increases the likelihood of recovery should perhaps be better publicized among juveniles as a way to increase their extremely low reporting rate.

Property Crime Trend

Property crime victimization has declined substantially for persons of all ages since

Table 10: Juvenile and Adult Property Crime Trends, 1993 to 1997

Victim Age Group	Property Crime Rate (per 1,000 persons)		Percent Change
	1993	1997	
Juveniles	205	158	-23%
Adults	143	114	-20

Note: Data in this table are based on crimes involving the respondent's own property; adult=18+ years; juvenile=12-17 years.

Source: 1993 and 1997 NCVS data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

1993, joining the trend for violent crime. The decline has been shared by juveniles (down 23 percent) and adults (down 20 percent) (table 10). The decline may be attributable to improved economic conditions, increased community prevention efforts, or some difficult-to-characterize shifts in norms and values.

Impact of Property Crime

It is unfortunate that property crime, particularly when it happens to juveniles, is so frequently considered relatively inconsequential. Although NCVS itself contains little information to test this assumption, other non-NCVS crime impact studies call it into question (Kilpatrick et al., 1987; Maguire, 1980; Skogan, 1986). Property crime victims are not necessarily as traumatized as violent crime victims, but research has found them to have elevated fear, depression, hostility, and somatic symptoms that persist over an extended time (Norris and Kaniasty, 1994). Victims of multiple property crimes are particularly vulnerable to pronounced psychological effects. Although no research has specifically measured the impact of property crimes on children and youth, nothing in the available literature on property crime or crime in general suggests that youth are immune to the effects of these crimes. The high rate of property crime victimization among youth and the possibility that early encounters with issues of justice and victimization may be particularly influential on a youth's development should mobilize more interest in the effects of property crime on this segment of the population.

Conclusion

With one out of six teens experiencing property crime every year, this type of

victimization imposes a substantial burden on the lives and lifestyles of the young. For that reason alone, it deserves increased public policy attention. Moreover, juvenile property victimization has distinctive features that suggest its prevention and the recovery of property taken in these crimes may require different kinds of policies than those necessitated by adult property crime. Central among the distinctive features of juvenile property victimization is its frequent occurrence in and around schools. That schools are high-risk environments may help account in part for the fact that youth from higher income families and rural communities do not benefit from the same insulation against property victimization that similarly situated adults do. In fact, more affluent students have higher rates of victimization at school and lower rates away from school, while students from lower income families experience the reverse pattern (Kaufman et al., 1999).

Adult property crime is much more a problem of the home than of the workplace, and home is where much community property crime prevention is targeted. Attention to juvenile victimization will need to involve greater participation of school authorities. Schools need help in evaluating whether solutions like more secure or more available individual lockers, surveillance equipment, theft awareness campaigns, or more investigative personnel are effective in reducing property victimization at school and increasing recovery of stolen items. Schools also need to consider whether the greater involvement of police can be useful.

The extremely low level of reporting property crimes against juveniles to police should be a high-priority issue for policy consideration. The NCVS data suggest that reporting these crimes to the police is associated with an enhanced likelihood of

Vandalism

Vandalism is a significant property crime, but individual ownership information on vandalized property is available only through NIBRS, not NCVS. NIBRS shows that vandalism constitutes 30 percent of all property victimizations and 21 percent of property crimes against juveniles known in NIBRS jurisdictions. Four percent of vandalism occurs to juveniles under the age of 18, and 96 percent of vandalism occurs to adults 18 and older. The juvenile property most frequently vandalized and reported to police consists of automobiles and motor vehicle parts or accessories, which make up 50 percent and 31 percent of all vandalized items reported, respectively. The main differences between vandalism reports from juveniles and vandalism reports from adults is a greater representation of bicycles and a lesser representation of boats, tools, and buildings among juveniles.

property recovery, even controlling for other factors that might increase chances of recovery. The association may be spurious, but it also may be that property is truly more likely to be found or returned as a result of police investigative actions and the alarm that a police report can create among offenders and their friends. This possibility should encourage school authorities, law enforcement authorities, parents, and youth themselves to work closely in reporting property crimes. The data suggest that much property crime currently reported to school authorities is not being passed on to police. Barriers to such reporting may change with the widespread employment, currently under way, of school resource officers.

Property crime may not be the most dangerous peril in the lives of juveniles in America, but it is one of the most frequent. Before this society can be considered safe and just, it will certainly have to confront such a widespread condition. Property crime against juveniles deserves a place on the agenda of those concerned about the crime problem and those concerned about children and their welfare.

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300



NCJ 184740

References

Arnett, J., and Walsleben, M. 1998. *Combating Fear and Restoring Safety in Schools*. Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1998. *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Computer file. 5th ed. Survey conducted by U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 1997. *National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)*. 12 States only. Computer file. Tabulations undertaken by Crimes against Children Research Center. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Finkelhor, D., and Ormrod, R. 1999. *Reporting Crimes Against Juveniles*. Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Hashima, P., and Finkelhor, D. 1999. Violent victimization of youth versus adults in the National Crime Victimization Survey. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 14(8):799-820.

Kaufman, P., Chen, X., Choy, S., Ruddy, S., Miller, A., Chandler, K., Chapman, C., Rand, M., and Klaus, P. 1999. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1999*. Report. Washington, DC: U.S.

Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Kilpatrick, D.G., Saunders, B.E., Veronen, L.J., Best, C.L., and Von, J.M. 1987. Criminal victimization: Lifetime prevalence, reporting to police, and psychological impact. *Crime and Delinquency* 33(4):479-489.

Maguire, M. 1980. The impact of burglary upon victims. *British Journal of Criminology* 20(3): 261-275.

Norris, F.H., and Kaniasty, K. 1994. Psychological distress following criminal victimization in the general population: Cross-sectional, longitudinal, and prospective analyses. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 62(1):111-123.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and U.S. Department of Education. 1996. *Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department

of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Skogan, W.G. 1986. The impact of victimization on fear. *Crime and Delinquency* 33(1):135-154.

This Bulletin was prepared under grant number 98-JN-FX-0012 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

Acknowledgments

This Bulletin was written by David Finkelhor, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, and Director, Crimes against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire; and Richard Ormrod, Ph.D., Research Scientist, Crimes against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire.