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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS**

Press Releases

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Crime Victimization in U.S. Households Remains at Lowest Levels – 15 Percent Affected in 2003 Compared to 25 Percent in 1994

WASHINGTON – The percentage of U.S. households victimized by violent crime or thefts during 2003 remained at the lowest levels since the Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) re-introduced this crime indicator in 1994. Victimization fell from 25 percent of all households in 1994 to 15 percent of households in 2003.

In 2003, about 3 percent of all households had one or more members victimized by violent crime; in 1994, about 7 percent of U.S. households had a member who suffered a rape, sexual assault, robbery, or assault during the year, BJS reported.

Other forms of crime also showed declines over the period from 1994 to 2003:

- Property crimes – burglary, larceny, or motor vehicle theft – affected 21 percent of U.S. households in 1994 and about 13 percent in 2003;
- Violence by a stranger or burglary affected 8 percent of households in 1994 and 4 percent in 2003;
- Violence between intimate partners – boyfriends, girlfriends, spouses, and ex-spouses – affected nearly 1 percent of households in 1994 and about a third of 1 percent of households in 2003.

Household size was a major determinant of the rate of household victimization, with larger numbers of members associated with higher rates of prevalence. About 28 percent of households with six or more members had at least one member victimized during 2003 compared to 9 percent of single-member households.

During 2003, about 18 percent of Hispanic households were victimized by crime compared to 16 percent of households headed by a black member and 14 percent of white households. Households in urban areas were more vulnerable to crime (19 percent) than suburban (13 percent) or rural (12 percent) households. Households located in the West (18 percent) were more likely to experience a crime than households in other regions of the country.

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Apart from the exposure to the property and violent crimes measured by BJS, data were also obtained on the exposure to vandalism among U.S. households. In 2003, just over 5 percent of U.S. households experienced at least one incident of vandalism during the year.

BJS estimates that in 2003 about 16.7 million households had at least one member who suffered a violent or property victimization. In 1994, when the nation had about 14 million fewer households, about 25.1 million households suffered a criminal victimization. As for violence, in 2003 about 3.5 million households suffered a violent victimization. During 1994, more than 7 million U.S. households had a member who had experienced a violent victimization.

The household crime measure is a component of the National Crime Victimization Survey, conducted for BJS by the Bureau of the Census. Interviews are conducted at six-month intervals with approximately 75,000 occupants age 12 or older in about 43,000 households.

The bulletin, “Crime and the Nation’s Households, 2003” (NCJ-206348), was written by BJS statistician Patsy A. Klaus. After release, this document can be accessed at:
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cnh03.htm

BJS is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which provides federal leadership in developing the nation’s capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist crime victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and two offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Office of the Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education and the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed program and OJP’s American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov.