

## Crime Safety and the Older Adult

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the estimated number of violent criminal offenses declined by 6% from 2009 to 2010.

2010 Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) report, rates of violent and property crime in America declined to their lowest level since 1973. Between 2000 and 2010, the violent victimization rate fell by approximately 13%.<sup>1</sup> Older adults continued to experience fewer violent and property crimes than any other age groups.

Despite the decline, 2.4 of every 1,000 adults age 65 and older fell victim to violent crime in 2010. The rate for adults age 50 to 64 was 10.9 per 1,000. With more than 92,000 reported cases of violent victimization and approximately 2 million total crimes committed against people age 65 and older, serious issues remain. Furthermore, numbers do not reveal the full scope of the problem; the BJS estimates that more than half of all violent crimes go unreported.

### Home Safety

Crime can take place at any time. In 2009, 55% of all violent acts occurred during the day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.). More than half (55%) of sexual assaults occurred at night (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.). Nearly half (46%) of household burglaries occurred during the day.

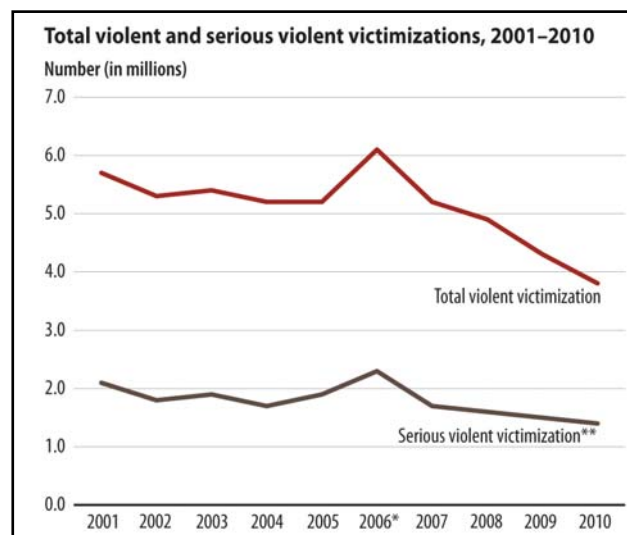
58% of violent crimes occurred within a mile of the victim's home, including 21% in the home and 18% near the home. Only 3% of violent crimes occurred more than 50 miles from home.

In 2010, 17.2% of reported robberies occurred at the victim's residence.

Statistically, property crimes make up the highest percentage of offenses against older people. In 2009, 57 per every 1,000 households of persons ages 65 or older experienced property crime.

72.6 percent of all burglaries took place on residential properties. (FBI, *Crime in the United States: 2009*)

Victims knew their offenders in 65% of burglaries reported between 2003 and 2007. (BJS, *Victimization During Household Burglary*, September 2010)



\*\*Includes rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Source: *National Crime Victimization Survey, 1993-2010*

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, statistical data referenced in this alert are from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2010*.

### Public Safety

Of victims of violent crime in 2009, 22% were involved in leisure activity away from home at the time of the incident.

42.8% of all robberies occurred on a public street or highway. (FBI, *Crime in the United States: 2009*)

Purse-snatchings and pick-pocketing typically occur away from home. The most common places include restaurants, bars, and other commercial buildings (39.1%) and open areas such as streets or public transportation (28.2%)

### Parking Facilities and Elevators

Parking garages, lobbies, and elevators are at high risk for personal crime incidents due to their constrained and isolated nature, low activity level, and poor lighting. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, parking facilities are more likely settings for crime—both violent and property—than all other real estate except residential.

Between 2004 and 2008, 7.3% of all violent crimes occurred in parking lots or garages.

In 2009, 6% of purse snatchings and pick-pocketings took place in parking lots or garages.

### Public Transportation Safety

Less than 1% of all reported violent and property crimes happened on public transportation in 2009. However, 7.9% of purse snatching/pick-pocketing incidents took place on public transportation.

### Protecting Yourself

- ★ **At Home:** Lock doors and windows, and never hide keys outside. Keep your home's exterior well lit. When away, use timers for lights, radios, and TVs to give the appearance you are at home. Trim foliage bordering your home to eliminate criminal "hiding places." Report suspicious activity to law enforcement. Become involved in or organize a Neighborhood Watch.
- ★ **On the Street:** Watch for loiterers. Do not carry large sums of money. Travel with others and on busy, well-lit streets. Be aware of your surroundings. If followed, go into the nearest business or occupied house. Carry a mobile phone to use in case of emergency.
- ★ **On Public Transportation:** While waiting, stand near others who are also waiting. If the area is deserted, stand near an occupied, well-lit building. Be aware of those around you on public transport. If there are no other passengers, sit near the driver. At your destination, be aware of those who exit with you. After dark, attempt to exit in well-lit areas. Have someone meet you.
- ★ **In the Elevator:** Observe the elevator interior before entering. Wait until the next elevator if you are uncertain of an occupant. Stand near the control panel—if accosted, press ALL buttons. If a suspicious person enters the elevator, exit before the door closes. Before exiting, observe the corridor for suspicious activity. Be aware of your surroundings.

- ★ **Banking:** Use automated teller machines during daylight hours only. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, most robberies at ATMs occur between midnight and 4 a.m. Robberies are somewhat more likely to occur at walk-up ATMs than at drive-through ATMs.
  
- ★ **Guarding Against Purse/Wallet Snatchers:** Remove the opportunity. Do not carry a purse or wallet, but opt for a belt-pack, fanny pack, or other inconspicuous means. Never let anyone see how much money you are carrying. Shop with a friend. Do not sit your purse or wallet on a counter while shopping. Walk confidently with your head up and show a sense of purpose. Carry only essential items. Photocopy identification, credit cards, and medical cards for replacement purposes and keep copies in a safe place. If a criminal wants your money, purse, or valuables, cooperate and give them up.

**Resources**

**Bureau of Justice Statistics**

[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/)

***Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Parking Facilities***

**U.S. Department of Justice**

Office of Justice Programs  
National Institute of Justice  
Washington, DC 20531

[www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/cptedpkg.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/cptedpkg.pdf)

**Crime Prevention Tips**

[www.crimepreventiontips.org/](http://www.crimepreventiontips.org/)

**Criminal Victimization in the United States**

**U.S. Department of Justice**

Office of Justice Programs  
Bureau of Justice Statistics  
<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbse&sid=6>

**National Crime Prevention Council**

2001 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 901  
Arlington, VA 22202  
(202) 466-6272  
[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)

**National Criminal Justice Reference Service**

PO Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
[askncjrs@ncjrs.aspensys.com](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.aspensys.com)  
(800) 851-3420  
[www.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ncjrs.gov)

**National Neighborhood Watch Program/  
USAonWatch**

**National Sheriffs' Association**

1450 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3490  
(703) 836-7827  
[nw@sheriffs.org](mailto:nw@sheriffs.org)  
[www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org)

**Physical Environment and Crime  
Research Report, 1995, NCJ 157311**

Taylor, Ralph B., and Adele V. Harrell  
[www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/physenv.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/physenv.pdf)