

PROPERTY VICTIMIZATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

Matthew Johnson
Glen Kercher

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Crime Victims' Institute • Criminal Justice Center • Sam Houston State University

...from the Director

This report focuses on the victimization experiences of a sample of college students at seven Texas universities in 2007. Students were invited to complete an online survey about their property victimization during the previous two years. College students are an important group to study since research has shown that persons between 16 and 30 years of age are at the highest risk for victimization. This is the second report based on that dataset.

There has been little research on property victimization of young people and the contexts in which that occurs. Like the first report on personal victimization, this study analyzed property victimization and its relationship to engaging in illegal acts. It is our hope that this report will inform students, parents, and university officials about this kind of victimization and the steps that could be taken to prevent it.



**Glen Kercher, Director
Crime Victims' Institute**



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to

- conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- improve services to victims
- assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.

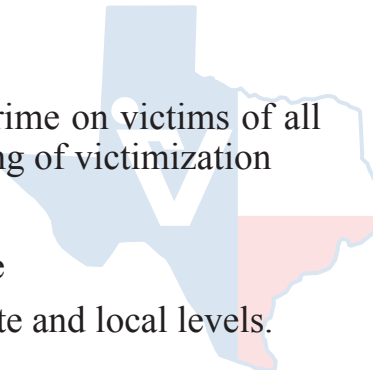


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Property Victimization of College Students

Executive Summary

This report focuses on property victimization of college students. It is designed to examine the prevalence and frequency of property victimization; and explore the contexts in which it is most likely to occur. College students were selected because, according to previous studies, persons in their mid teens to mid 20s have a higher victimization rate than do other age groups.

Non-violent property crimes including motor vehicle theft, theft of other items, burglary, and vandalism cost victims billions of dollars every year. Most of those property crime victimizations involve economic loss, most of which is never recovered. There has been little research on this kind of victimization among college students. Nevertheless, evidence shows that males and younger students are at greatest risk for experiencing some forms of property victimization, particularly theft.

Data was collected from on an online survey of college students from seven public universities spread across the state of Texas. The overall racial/ethnic composition of the sample was comparable to the overall composition of all college students in the state.

Sample Characteristics

- Gender: 65% Female; 35% male
- Race/ethnicity: Caucasian/non-Hispanic made up 78% of respondents
- Relationship Status: 83% were single/never married
- Academic Standing: 60% were juniors and seniors; 40% were freshmen and sophomores
- Employment Status: 10% were employed full-time
- Living Arrangements: 60% of respondents lived either in a dormitory or off-campus apartment

Victimization (during past 2 years)

- 53% reported having something stolen from a public place
- 43% had property deliberately damaged
- 30% had something stolen from a home, house, or apartment
- 28% had items stolen from a vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle

Relationship to Perpetrator

- Most respondents said the perpetrator was either a stranger to them, or they did not know who committed the crime

Reporting to the Police

- 42% of property crime victims reported the offense to the police

Differences Between Victims and Non-victims

- Males were more likely to report being a property crime victim than were females
- 70% of American Indian/Alaskan Native reported experiencing property victimization
- 50% of Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders reported this kind of victimization
- 37% of African American students reported property victimization
- Single/never married and cohabiting respondents reported higher percentages of victimization compared to married and divorced/separated students
- 56% of respondents who were employed full time reported a higher percentage of victimization than did unemployed or part-time students

Lifestyle

- Students living off campus reported higher percentages of property crime victimization than did those who lived on campus
- Respondents who were in a fraternity or sorority reported higher percentages of victimization than other students
- Respondents who partied during the week reported a higher percentage of victimization than did other students
- Students who were in the habit of carrying valuables in public reported a higher percentage of victimization than those who did not
- Respondents raised primarily by a single father were more likely to report being a property crime victim (72%) than were students raised by a single mother, or a parent and stepparent
- 54% of students who witnessed violence between their parents while growing up reported being victims of property crimes

Victimization among Students who Report Perpetrating Criminal Acts

- Among respondents who reported engaging in criminal acts, 62% also reported being a property crime victim

This study is one of only a few published reports on college student property victimization. The results are important in identifying who is at the highest risk and under what circumstances. This information has implications for college administrators, law enforcement, and victim services providers.

Property Victimization of College Students in Texas

Crimes against college and university students are often associated with personal offenses such as sexual assault, stalking, and robbery. Although such forms of victimization deserve attention, there is also a need to address property crimes against college students in Texas. The loss of money or other possessions can lead to a number of problems, particularly among young adults. This paper represents the research on the victimization of college students in Texas. The first report, (Johnson & Kercher, 2009) explored factors associated with personal crime victimization. The present study examines factors associated with property victimization.

The purpose of this report is to better understand the nature and extent of property crime victimization in Texas by: (1) Examining the prevalence and frequency of experiencing property victimization; and (2) exploring demographic and background differences in the likelihood of experiencing property victimization.

Overview and Review of the Literature

Property Victimization

Non-violent property crimes including motor vehicle theft, theft of other items, burglary, and vandalism cost victims billions of dollars every year (Cohen, 2000; Titus, Heinzelmann, & Boyle, 1995). As expected, more than 90% of property crime victimizations involve economic loss, and most do not recover the stolen property (Klaus, 1994; Marquart et al., 2004). Current trends estimate that about 15% of households experienced a property crime during 2005 (Catalano, 2006). The most commonly reported property crime is general theft, and the least commonly reported crime tends to be motor vehicle theft.¹

Based on the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), a property crime victim in the United States is more likely to have the following demographic features:²

- Male gender
- Single, never married
- Live in an urban area
- Live in a Black Household
- Live in a rental property

Although the national rate for property victimization has decreased steadily since the early 1990s, there is some evidence of leveling-off and even a slight increase in overall rates (Rand & Catalano, 2007).

Property Victimization of College Students

There has been relatively little research on differences among college students regarding risk for property victimization. However, evidence shows that males and younger students are at greatest risk for experiencing some forms of property victimization, particularly theft (Fisher, Sloan, Cullen, & Lu, 1998; Fisher & Wilkes, 2003).

Research Methodology

The present study represents the second paper in a series of reports on the criminal victimization of college students in Texas. The first report examined the nature of personal victimization experiences, which encompassed behaviors such as physical assault, robbery, sexual assault, and/or stalking (Johnson & Kercher, 2009). This report represents an examination of property victimization among college students at seven Texas universities.

Data Collection

Data was collected from an online survey of college students from seven public universities in Texas. Although the participating schools were not selected completely at random, they varied substantially on characteristics such as enrollment size, geographic location, and racial composition.

- Student enrollment figures ranged from a low of approximately 8,000, to a high of more than 40,000.
- The study involved schools located in northern, southern, western, eastern, and central Texas.
- The overall racial/ethnic composition of the sample was comparable to the overall composition of all college students in the state.

The same data source was used for the report on personal crime victimization (Johnson & Kercher, 2009). Our analysis was based on the same subset of respondents used for the personal victimization report, and the following description of the screening process is paraphrased from that report (Johnson & Kercher, 2009, p. 9-10).

After gaining permission from university officials, the Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) was provided the email addresses of current students from each school who elected to agree to the release of this information. A description of the study and a link to the survey were included in the email. Half of the students from each institution were solicited by email to participate in the survey.

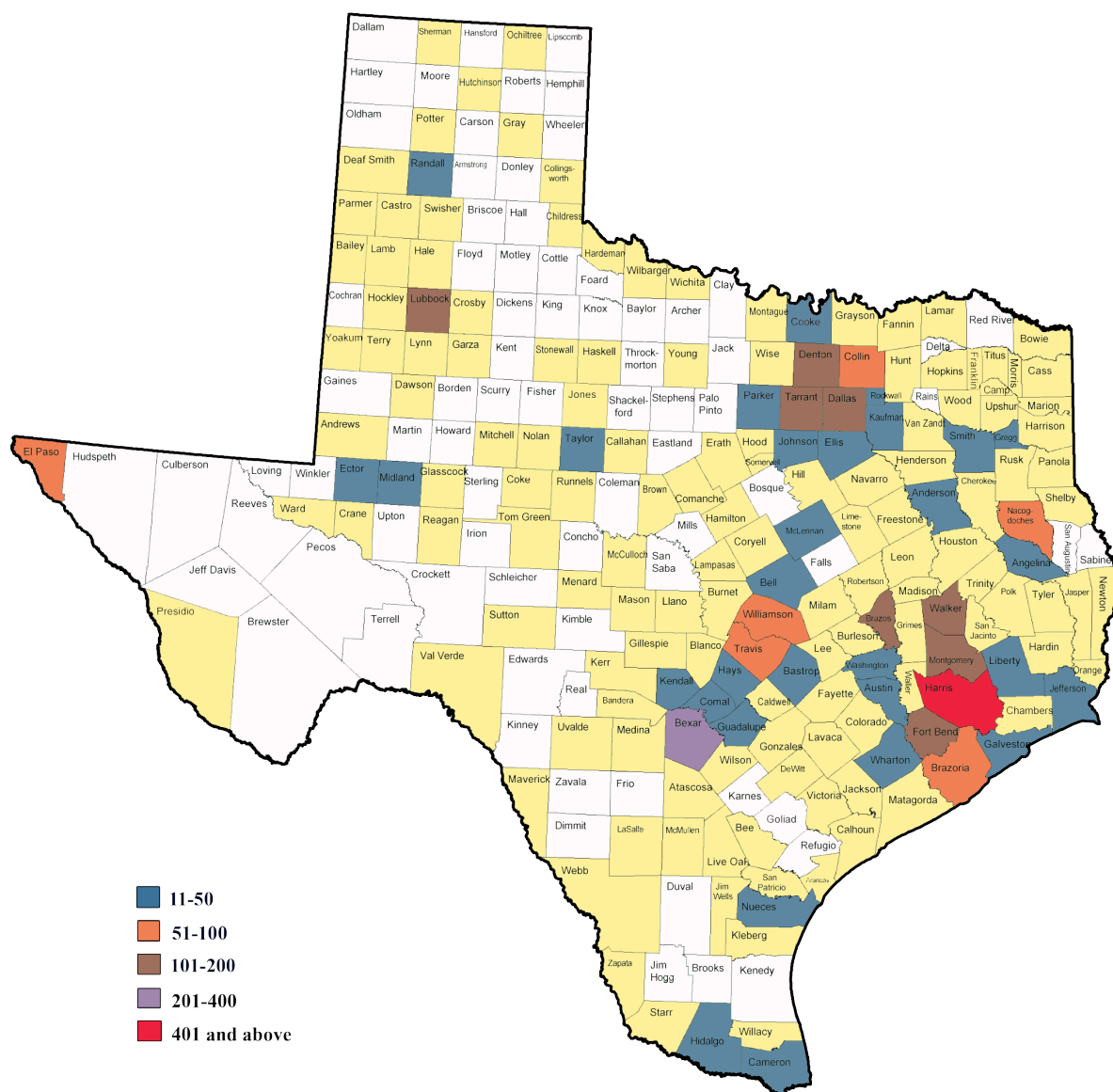


Figure 1. Distribution of College Student Respondents

Respondents were asked several screening questions before they could begin the survey to maximize validity of the data. In a series of questions, respondents were asked to confirm the following:

- That they were at least 18 years old.
- That they were current students at a Texas university.
- That they had not already taken the survey.

Respondents were also required to acknowledge that the survey included questions of a personal nature, as well as give informed consent before beginning. Those not meeting the criteria or failing to give consent were exited from the survey. The initial sample contained 4,669 cases, but this was reduced to 3,894 after deletions were made based on the following:

- Missing values for all measures (105)
- Extensive missing values (277)
- Highly improbable responses (1)

Finally, for the majority of this study, we limit our analysis to undergraduate students, which reduces the sample size to 3,894.

Measures

The measures used for the present study involve the same factors applied to the personal victimization report, with the following exceptions:

- Measures of personal crime and victimization were replaced with measures of property crime and victimization.
- Lifestyle measures associated with property victimization, but not personal victimization were added.
- Items used in the personal crime report were excluded if they did not apply to property crime victimization.

Thus, the following description of measures used here was adapted from the personal victimization report. The study incorporated several types of variables, including:

- Property victimization experiences
- Issues associated with victimization experiences
- Lifestyle measures
- Participation in property crime
- Demographic measures

Property victimization. Most victimization items were adapted from the National Youth Survey (NYS: Elliott, Huizinga, & Menard, 1989). Respondents were asked about property victimization experiences in two ways. First, they were asked if they ever experienced the following:

- Had something of theirs stolen from a public place
- Had something stolen from their home, house, or apartment
- Had their property damaged on purpose
- Had their vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle stolen
- Had things stolen from their vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle

If respondents reported ever experiencing a particular victimization, they were asked to indicate the number of times that particular type of victimization occurred over the past 24 months.

Issues associated with victimization experiences. Respondents who reported being victimized during the past 24 months were asked two follow-up questions pertaining to the most recent victimization incident. First, they were asked to identify the perpetrator for the most recent incident (e.g., stranger, family member, friend, etc.). Second, they were asked if they reported the incident to the police.

Participation in property crime acts. The Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) also used a measure of involvement in property criminal acts over the past 24 months. As with the victimization items, the property crime measures were adapted from the NYS (Elliott et al., 1989). Respondents were separated based on whether or not they reported involvement in any of the following behaviors:

- Stole or tried to steal a motor vehicle
- Stole or tried to steal something worth between \$5 and \$50
- Stole or tried to steal something worth more than \$50
- Broke into a building
- Knowingly bought, sold, or held stolen goods
- Sold marijuana
- Sold hard drugs

Lifestyle measures. All lifestyle factors used in the personal victimization report were included here, as well as two additional measures not incorporated in the first study. Although the literature linking lifestyle factors to property victimization lags behind work connecting lifestyles and personal victimization, daily patterns of life are expected to affect risk for property victimization (e.g., Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998).³ The following lifestyle measures were incorporated in this study:

- Type of housing while at school (dorm, on campus apartment, off campus apartment, off campus house, or off campus with family)
- Coed dorm or single-sex (if applicable)
- Whether or not respondents live with a roommate or roommates
- Number of days spent shopping each week (This item was not used in the personal victimization report).
- Times in past month carrying more than \$50 cash or wearing more than \$100 worth of jewelry (This item was not used in the personal victimization report).
- Sorority or fraternity membership
- Time spent partying per week
- Safety precautions: "Respondents were asked to indicate how often (never, sometimes, frequently, or always) they took the following safety precautions."
 - ◇ Carried a firearm
 - ◇ Carried mace
 - ◇ Carried keys defensively
 - ◇ Asked someone to walk you to your destination
 - ◇ Asked someone to watch your property
 - ◇ Attended a campus crime awareness program
 - ◇ Used any campus-sponsored crime prevention service

- ◊ Avoided specific areas of campus during the day for fear of being victimized
- ◊ Avoided specific areas of campus at night
- ◊ Locked your doors when you leave your room, but not your building
- ◊ Locked your vehicle doors when you park on or near campus
- Fear of crime: “Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of zero to five (zero being not afraid at all and five being very afraid) the level of fear they have of being victimized for the following types of criminal acts.”
 - ◊ Being assaulted
 - ◊ Having your car stolen
 - ◊ Being robbed
 - ◊ Having your home burglarized
 - ◊ Having your property damaged by vandals
 - ◊ Being sexually assaulted

Family history. Respondents’ family history may be associated with some risk for property victimization, and the following family background measures were included in the study:⁴

- The composition of respondents’ parental unit during childhood:
 - ◊ Both biological parents
 - ◊ One biological parent and one step-parent
 - ◊ Only the biological mother
 - ◊ Only the biological father
 - ◊ Grandparent or Grandparents
 - ◊ Other
- Whether or not violence between respondents’ parents took place in the household

Demographic variables. Several demographic factors are associated with differences in risk for property victimization. The following socio-demographic variables were incorporated in the present study as well as the personal victimization report:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
 - ◊ White/Caucasian
 - ◊ Hispanic
 - ◊ African American
 - ◊ American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - ◊ Asian/Pacific Islander
 - ◊ Mixed
 - ◊ Other

- Relationship status
 - ◊ Married
 - ◊ Cohabiting
 - ◊ Single, never married
 - ◊ Divorced/separated
 - ◊ Widowed
- Employment status
 - ◊ Employed full-time
 - ◊ Employed part-time
 - ◊ Not employed
- Academic standing
 - ◊ Freshman
 - ◊ Sophomore
 - ◊ Junior
 - ◊ Senior

Results

Descriptive Information

The descriptive information below is based on the same sample used for the personal victimization report, which means that the percentages and average values are identical for measures used in both studies. Thus, much of the descriptive information is adapted from Johnson and Kercher (2009),

Demographic information. The demographic characteristics are shown in Figures 2-6 for gender, race/ethnicity, relationship status, employment status, and academic standing. Gender, race, and relationship status were over-represented by females, Whites, and single (never married) respondents respectively. Males, African Americans, and Hispanics were underrepresented when compared with enrollment statistics for the schools involved in this study. Concerning employment status, most respondents reported being employed part-time (47.6%) or not employed at all (42.7%). The breakdown for academic standing did not deviate much from population information for the schools, though the percentage in each classification increased from lowest (freshman) to highest (senior). Finally, the average age of respondents was 21.7.

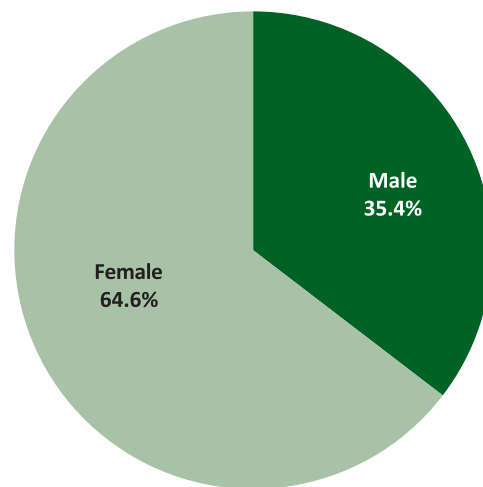


Figure 2. Gender of Respondents

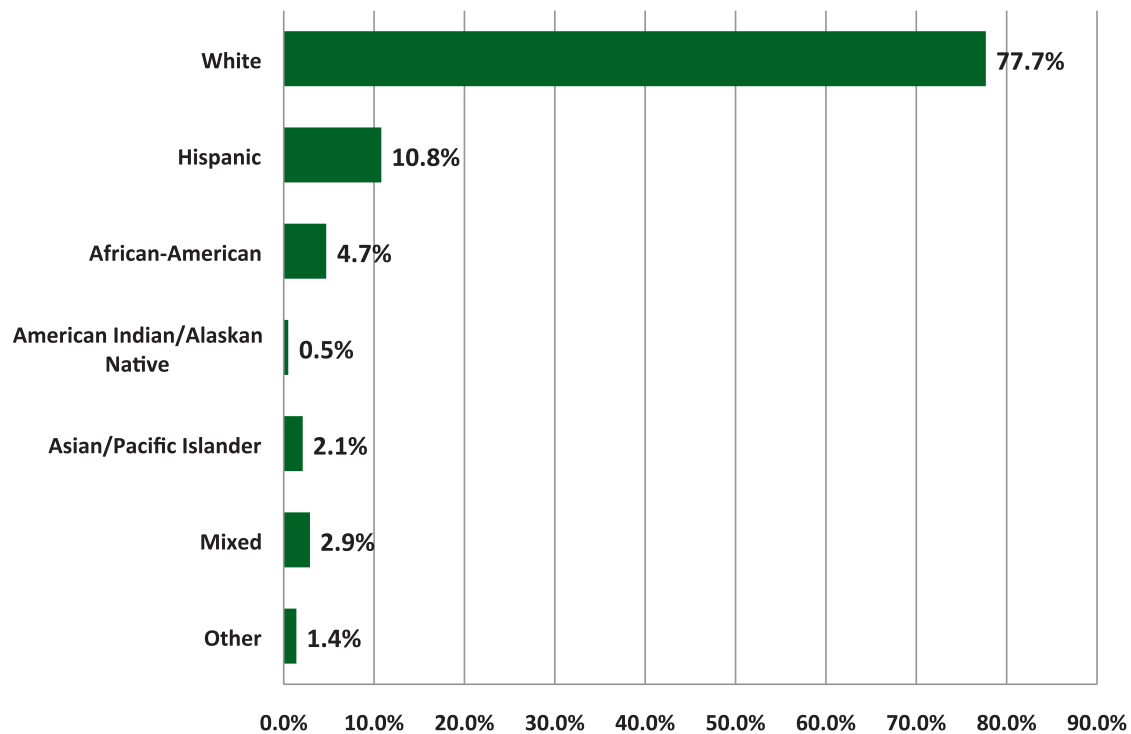


Figure 3. Ethnicity of Respondents

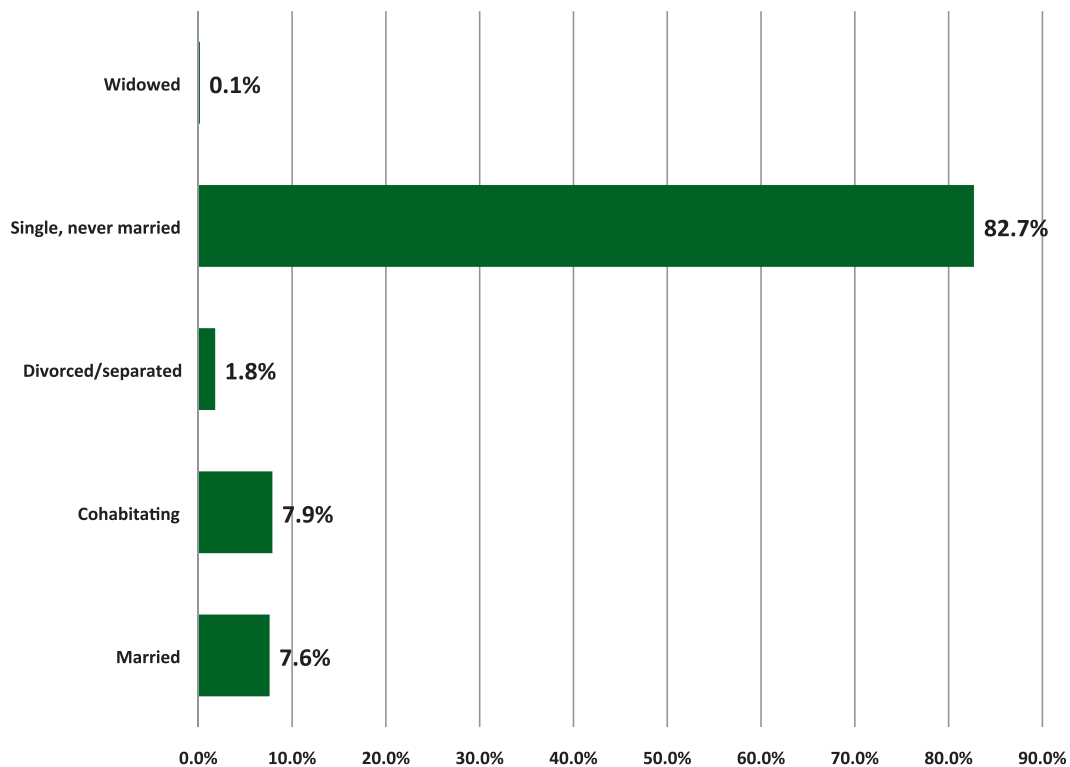


Figure 4. Relationship Status of Respondents

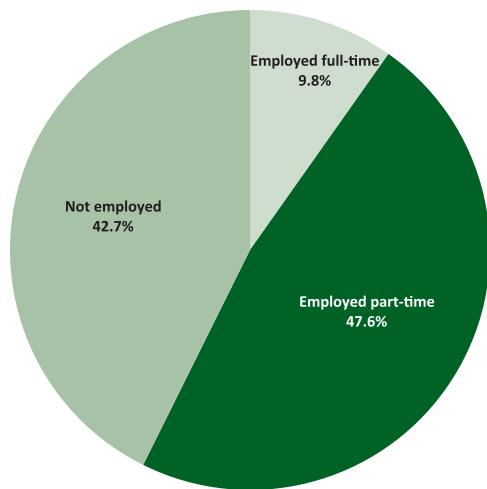


Figure 5. Employment Status of Respondents

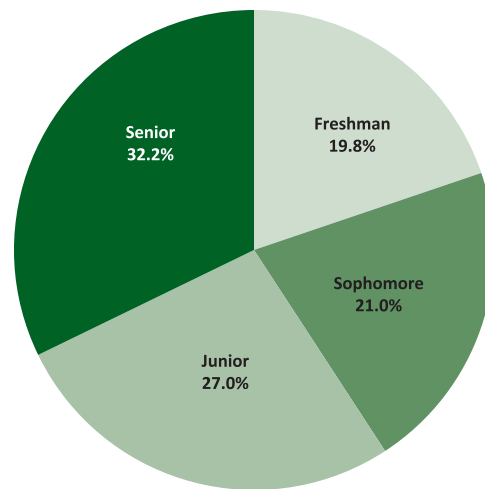


Figure 6. Academic Standing of Respondents

Lifestyle factors. Basic statistics on lifestyle factors are displayed in Figures 7-11, with frequencies and percentages on factors relating to living arrangements, and activities associated with campus life and leisure.⁵ With respect to living arrangements, respondents were more likely to report living in an off campus apartment (32.8%), dorm (27.2%), or off campus house (20.1%). Among those living in dorms, 63.2% reported living in a coed dorm. In addition, most respondents (69.4%) reported that they lived with at least one roommate, while a minority of participants (12.4%) stated that they were in a fraternity or sorority. The majority of respondents (77.9%) shopped once a week or less.

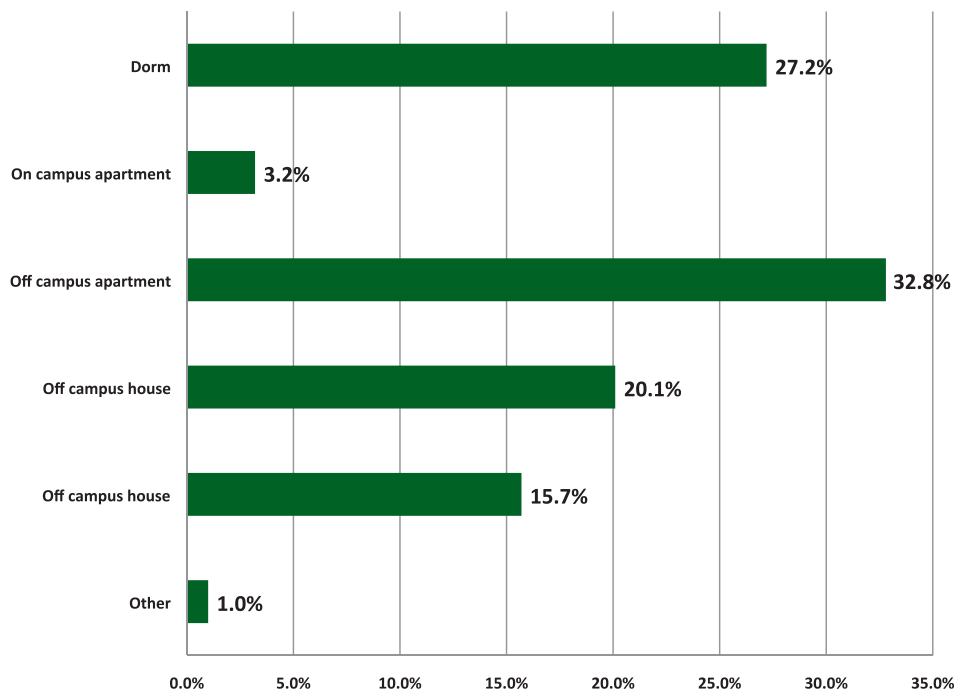


Figure 7. Living Arrangements While at School

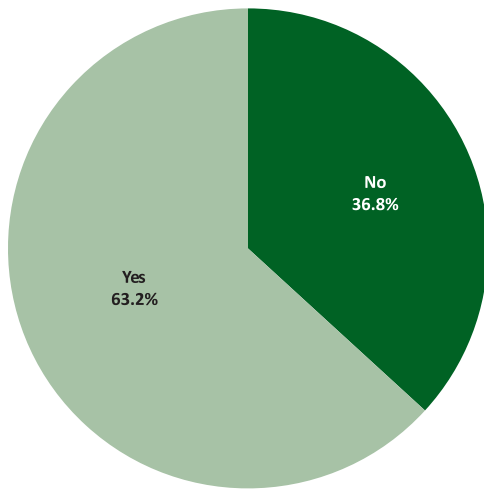


Figure 8. Respondents Living in Co-ed Dorm

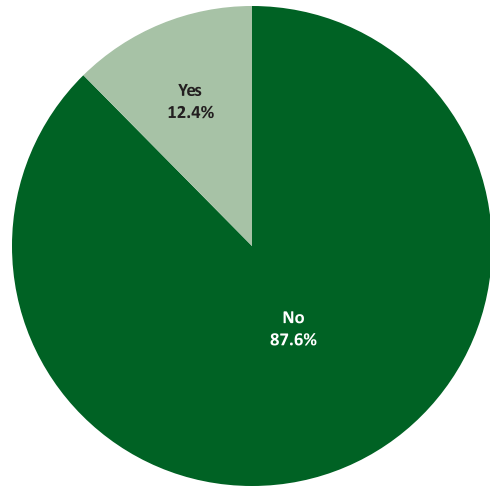


Figure 9. Respondents a Member of Fraternity or Sorority

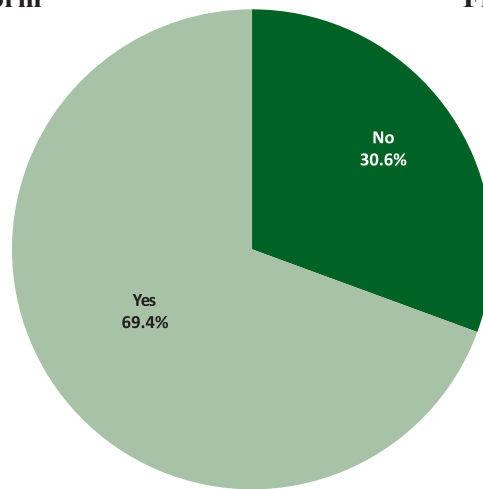


Figure 10. Respondents Living with Roommates

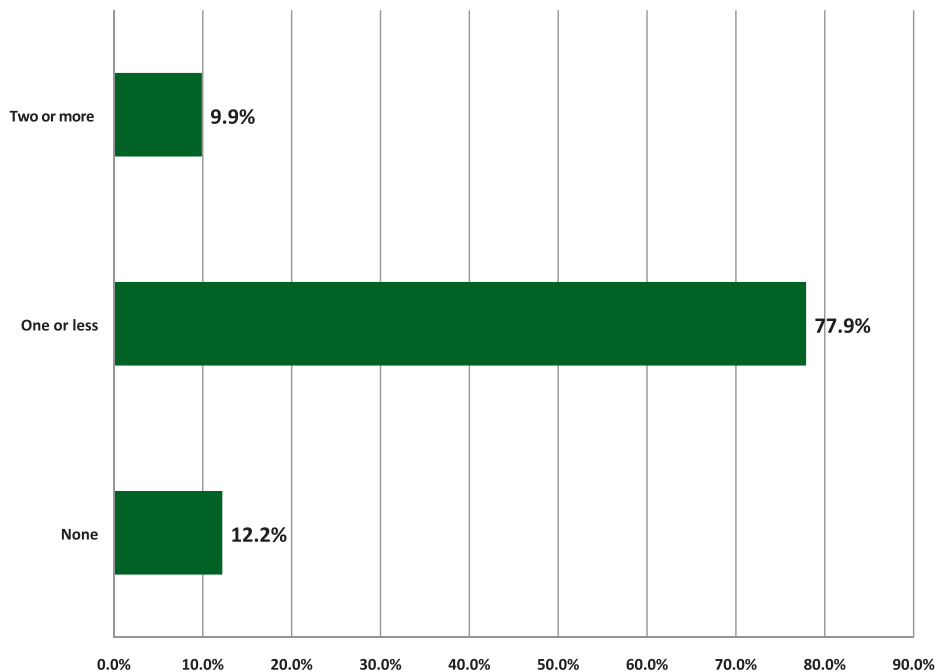


Figure 11. Weekly Shopping Habits of Respondents

Descriptive information for several family background items are also shown in Figures 12 and 13. Most respondents reported being raised primarily by both biological parents (76.7%), followed by 10.9% being raised by only their biological mother. Approximately 15% claimed they witnessed violence between their parents when they were growing up.

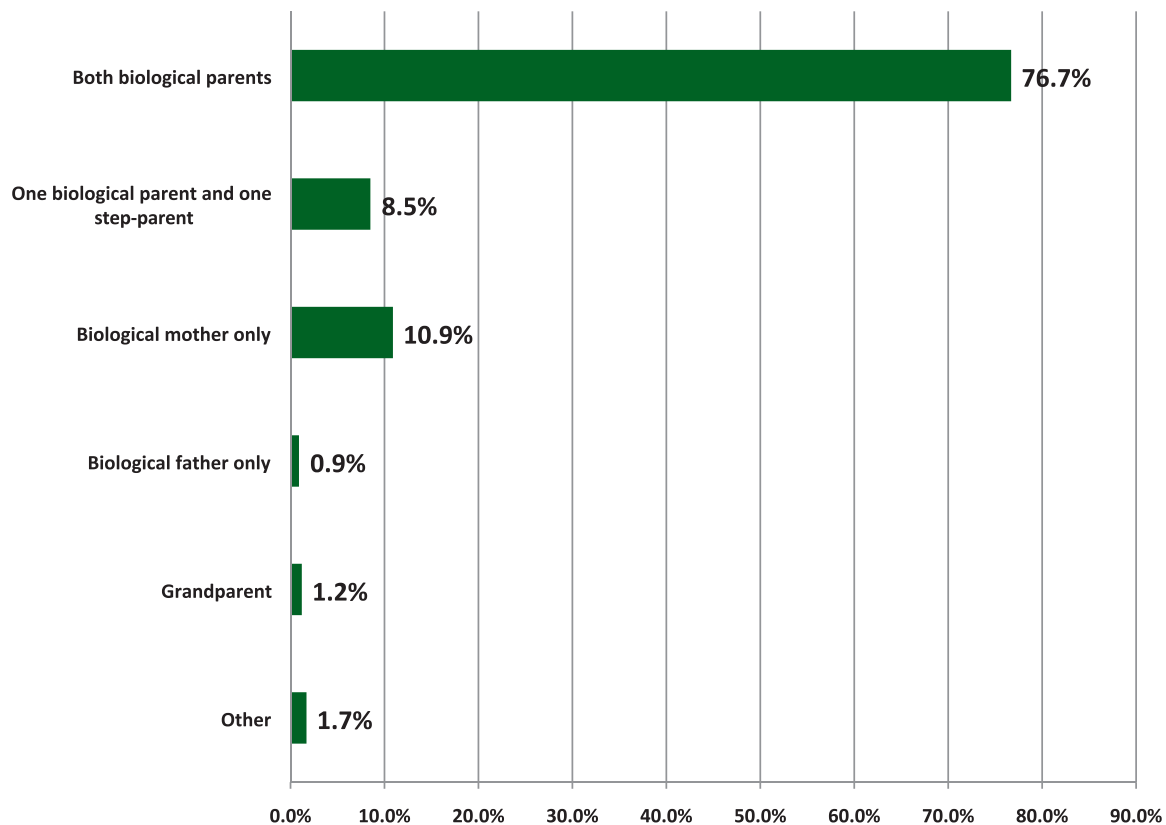


Figure 12. Primary Caregiver of Respondents

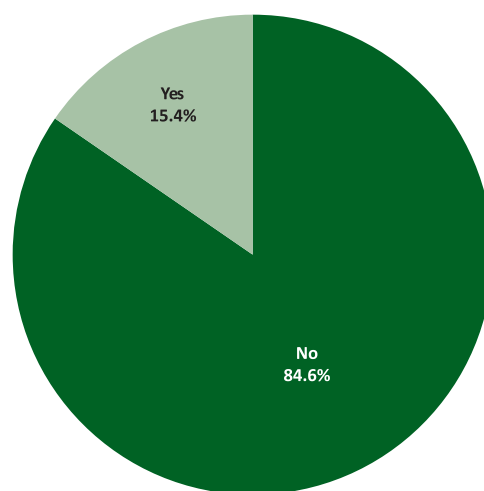


Figure 13. Respondents Witnessed Physical Violence Between Parents

Property victimization. Information on lifetime experiences and prevalence over the past 24 months for property victimization is shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Overall, 67.5% of respondents claimed to have been a property crime victim at least once in their lifetime, while 48.7% were victims at least once during the past 24 months. The most common victimization was having something stolen from a public place, followed by having their property damaged, and having something stolen from their home. The property victimization reported least was having a vehicle stolen. The rank order from the most common victimization to the least common is roughly parallel to the level of seriousness of the victimizations from least serious to most serious, and is consistent with findings from college students in the United States and England (Fisher et al., 1998; Fisher & Wilkes, 2003).

Table 1. Lifetime Prevalence of Property Victimization

| Type of Victimization | % of Respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Had something stolen from a public place | 58.3% |
| Had something stolen from a home, house, or apartment | 37.7% |
| Had property damaged on purpose | 44.8% |
| Had vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle stolen | 13.2% |
| Had item(s) stolen from vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle | 31.6% |

Table 2. Prevalence of Property Victimization over the Past Two Years

| Type of Victimization | % of Respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Had something stolen from a public place | 53.0% |
| Had something stolen from a home, house, or apartment | 30.1% |
| Had property damaged on purpose | 43.4% |
| Had vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle stolen | 10.0% |
| Had item(s) stolen from vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle | 28.2% |

Criminal behavior. Frequencies and percentages for respondents' involvement in property crime are shown in Table 3. Overall, 19% of respondents (N=736) reported involvement in a property crime over the past two years. The individual act with the highest percentage of respondents reporting involvement was stealing or attempting to steal something worth between \$5 and \$50 (51.2%) followed by selling marijuana (37.6%), and buying or holding stolen goods (30.0%). Only .8% of respondents reported stealing or attempting to steal a motor vehicle.

Table 3. Prevalence of Committing a Property Crime in the Past Two Years

| Type of Criminal Behavior | % of Respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle | 0.8% |
| Stolen or tried to steal something worth between \$5 and \$50 | 51.2% |
| Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than \$50 | 11.0% |
| Broken into a building | 11.4% |
| Knowingly bought, sold, or held stolen goods | 30.0% |
| Sold or helped to sell marijuana or hashish | 37.6% |
| Sold or helped to sell hard drugs (e.g. heroin, cocaine, LSD) | 10.3% |

Issues associated with victimization experiences. Respondents reporting victimization within the 24-month period were asked to identify the perpetrator for the most recent incident for four of the five types of victimization (Table 4). For each type of victimization, respondents were most likely to report a stranger as the perpetrator. Respondents were most likely to claim they did not know who committed the crime if they did not report that the perpetrator was a stranger. The finding that most victims of property crimes were not well acquainted with their offender is not surprising, as the offenses included in the study typically take place when the victim is away from the target.

Table 4. Victim / Offender Relationship by Type of Victimization

| Perpetrator | Type of Victimization | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | Things stolen from home | Property purposefully damaged | Vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle stolen | Item(s) stolen from vehicle, motorcycle, or bicycle |
| Family Member | 3.0% | 1.2% | 1.1% | 0.6% |
| Significant Other | 1.9% | 4.7% | 0.5% | 0.4% |
| Friend | 12.5% | 6.2% | 1.6% | 2.6% |
| Acquaintance | 14.0% | 8.7% | 1.1% | 2.4% |
| Stranger | 34.6% | 35.3% | 51.1% | 55.5% |
| Other | 3.3% | 1.9% | 0.5% | 1.1% |
| Don't Know | 30.7% | 41.9% | 44.1% | 37.4% |

Respondents experiencing property crime victimization in the past 24 months reported the incident to the police 41.7% of the time. This is relatively consistent with prior research, which often finds about one-third of property crimes are reported to law enforcement (e.g., Hart & Rennison, 2003).

Differentiating Victims and Non-victims

Comparisons between victims and non-victims based on demographic and lifestyle factors were explored using bivariate statistical analyses. Categorical predictors (e.g., gender and ethnicity) of victimization were assessed using chi-square analysis, and predictors not based on distinct categories (e.g., fear of crime scale) were assessed with t-tests. For all comparisons, respondents were considered victims if they reported a property crime victimization over the past 24 months.

Demographic differences. Comparisons between victims and non-victims based on gender, race/ethnicity, relationship status, employment status, academic standing, and age are shown in Figures 14 - 18. Analyses based on bivariate tests of statistical significance were used as guidelines to identify factors that are more likely to differentiate victims and non-victims. For all comparisons involving categorical predictor variables (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, living arrangement), comparisons were made using chi-square tests. For measures that are not categorical, statistical tests of mean differences (t-tests) were used.

The likelihood of being a property crime victim was statistically associated with several demographic measures including:

- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Relationship status
- Employment status

Gender. Males were more likely to report being a victim of property crime than females. Although the difference is not substantial (51.2% for males; 47.3% for females), it was statistically significant (Figure 14). The finding that males were more likely to report being a property crime victim is generally consistent with prior research, and such a finding was not a surprise (Fisher et al., 1998; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998; 2000; Schreck, 1999; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2000).

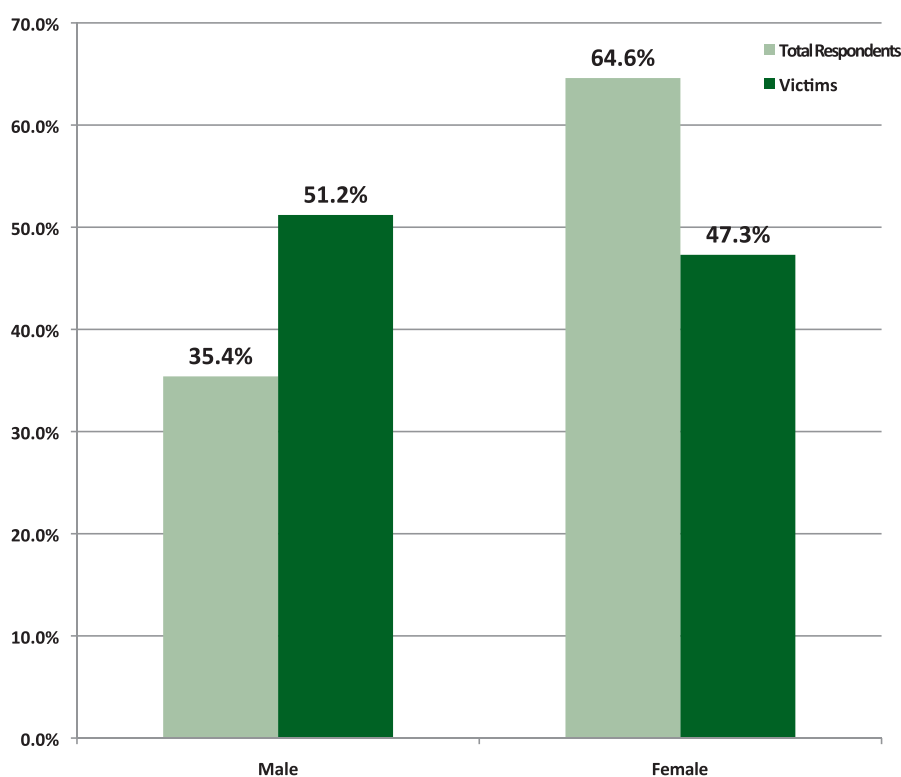


Figure 14. Comparison of Victimization by Gender

Race/ethnicity. Although the chi-square test evaluating race differences in property victimization was statistically significant, interpretation of the results is complicated when seven categories are used in a single analysis (Figure 15). Significant results from a test involving as many as seven categories can occur even if six of the seven groups have very similar percentages. Noting this potential problem, the racial/ethnic group with the highest percentage of victims was clearly American Indian/Alaskan Native, with 70% experiencing property victimization. Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders had the next two highest percentages of victims, with 50.5% and 50% respectively. African Americans had the lowest percentage of property victimizations, at 37.4%.

Although the large difference between the percentages of American Indians/Alaskan Natives who were victims compared to all other groups suggests that a factor unique to American Indians/Alaskan Natives leads to a much higher risk for property victimization, the total number of American Indians/Alaskan Natives is 20. This represents half of one percent of the sample. Not only does the small number preclude the opportunity for a thorough inquiry into reasons for the high rate of victimization, it calls into question the accuracy of the numbers with regard to the true extent of victimization within the broader population.

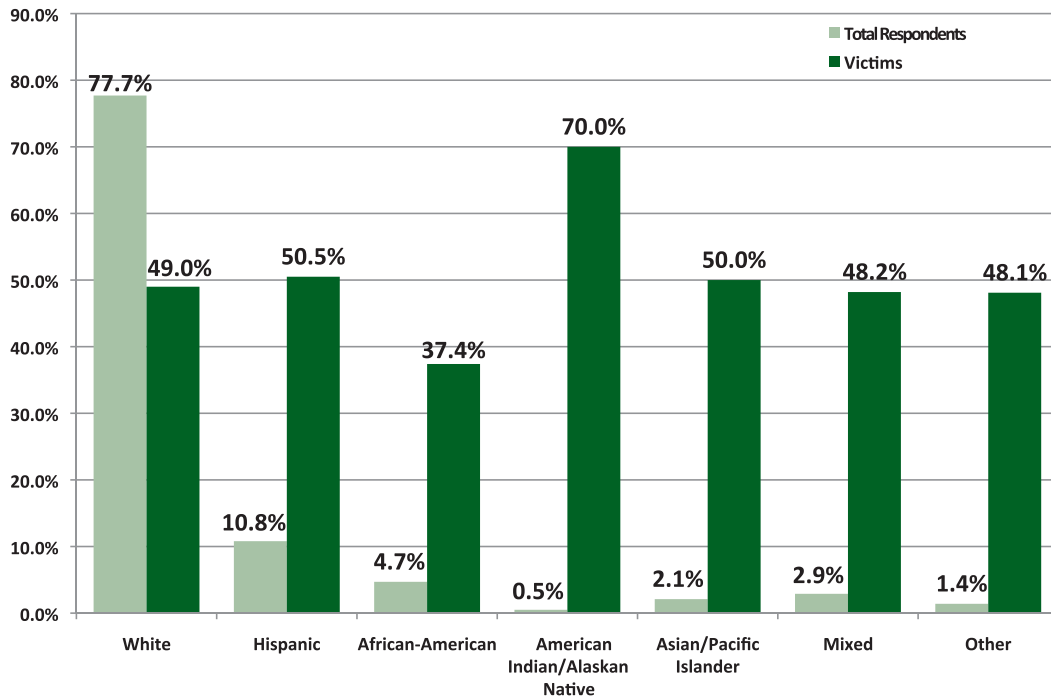


Figure 15. Comparison of Victimization by Ethnicity

On the other hand, the lower prevalence of victimization among African Americans appears meaningful. This finding was not expected, as African Americans regularly report higher rates of general victimization. However, there is little information in existing literature on African American rates of property victimization to judge against the findings here. Most studies of college student victimization simply compare Whites and Nonwhites without considering other racial differences (e.g., Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2000). Fisher et al. (1998) included a comparison of Black and Nonblack respondents regarding property victimization, but did not find a significant difference. Among the other race/ethnicities, the percentage of victims ranged from 48.1%-50.5%, indicating no differences among these five groups.

Relationship status. Among the four categories for relationship status, single, never married respondents and cohabitating respondents showed distinctly higher percentages of being victimized (56.5% and 55.6%, respectively) compared to married and divorce/separated respondents (47.3% and 47.9%, respectively) (Figure 16). Although prior research indicates that unmarried adults are more likely to be victims compared to those who are married, the vast majority of college students are single. The present findings are somewhat inconsistent with extant research on the general adult population, but more work is needed to understand the findings specific to college students.

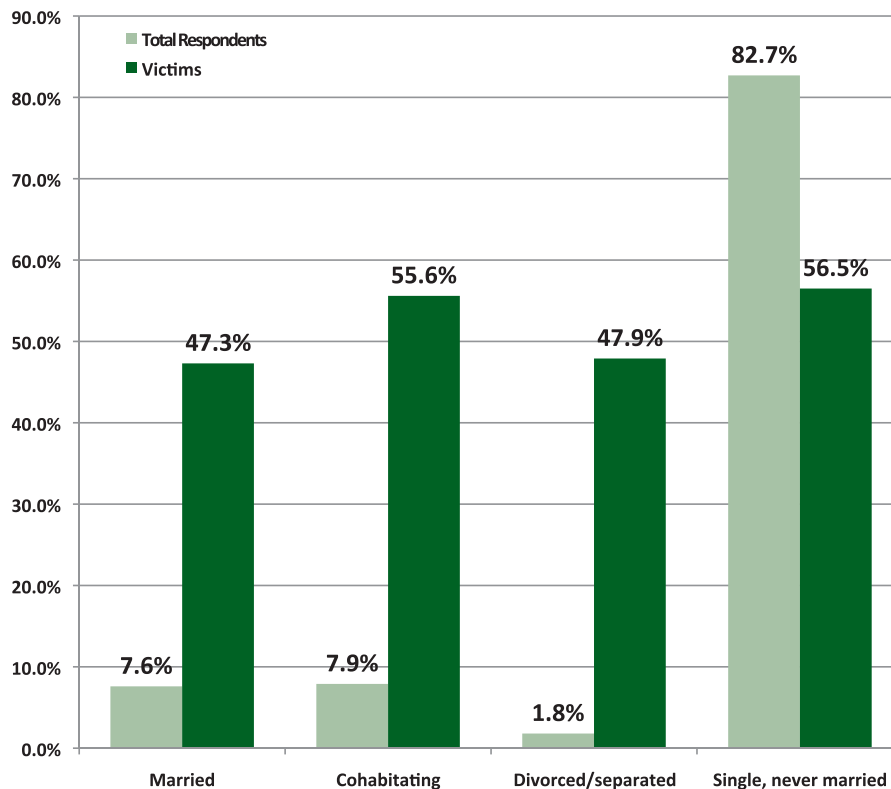


Figure 16. Comparison of Victimization by Relationship Status

Employment status. Finally, results indicate that respondents who were employed full-time were more likely to report victimization compared to those who worked part-time or did not have a job (Figure 17). Among full-time employees, 55.8% were property crime victims, while 48.8% of students not working and 47.4% of students working part-time were victims. Past research has shown that students who are unemployed have a greater risk for property victimization (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2000), but full-time and part-time employment were not considered separately.

Academic Standing. The comparison of academic standing was not significantly related to victimization (Figure 18).

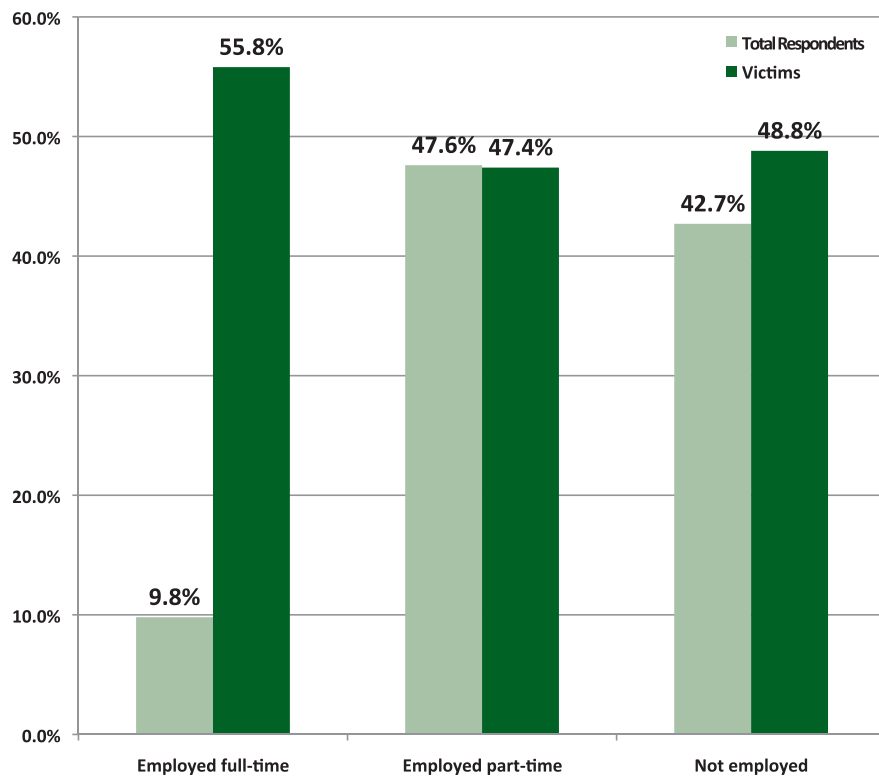


Figure 17. Comparison of Victimization by Employment Status

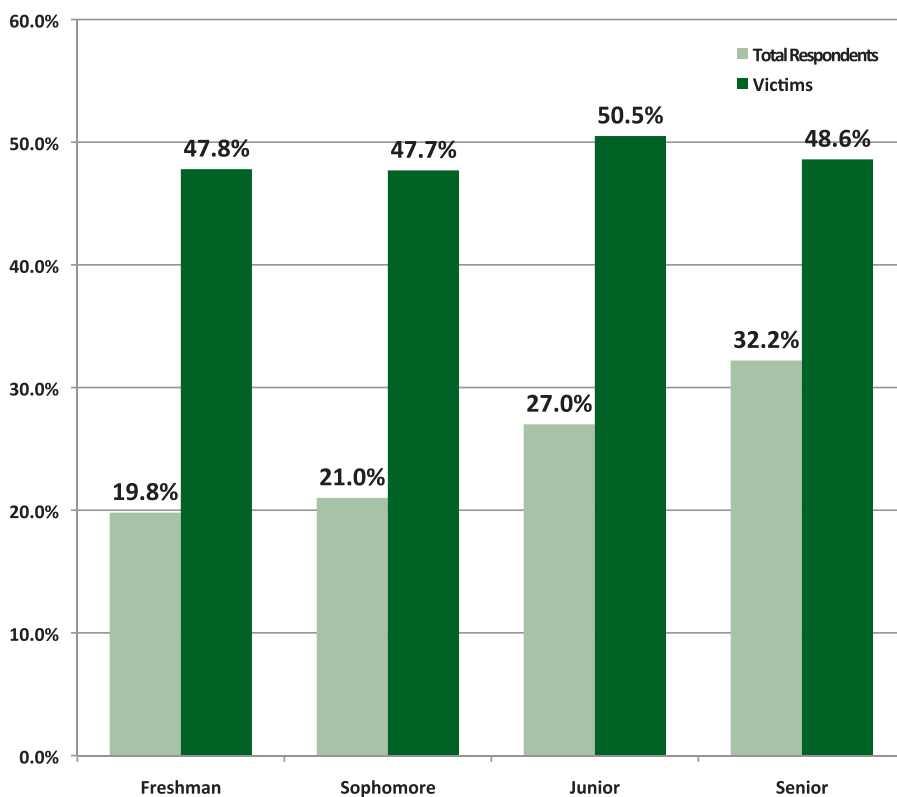


Figure 18. Comparison of Victimization by Academic Standing

Lifestyle/background factors. Comparisons between property crime victims and non-victims were made based on a number of lifestyle and family background characteristics. Results from bivariate analyses are shown in Figures 19-25, and significant differences were found for the following:

- Living arrangement
- Fraternity/sorority membership
- Time spent partying
- Frequency carrying valuables per month
- Extent of safety precautions against crime
- Fear of crime
- Involvement in criminal behavior
- Primary caregiver as child
- Witnessing violence between parents/guardians

Living arrangement. Although the group with the highest percentages of victims is the “Other” category (59.5%), this category is small and undefined (Figure 19). Among the other groups, students living in an off campus house without their family were most likely to report victimization (55.3%), followed by those living in an off campus apartment (49.1%), and students living with their family off campus (49.0%) (Figure 20). Students living on campus in dorms or on campus in apartments had the lowest percentage of victims (43.5% and 42.1%, respectively). The finding that students living on campus are less likely to experience property victimization was somewhat unexpected based on previous research suggesting that living off campus should reduce the risk of being victimized (Fisher et al., 1998; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998). Comparisons of co-ed dorm living or living with a roommate and victimization were not significant.

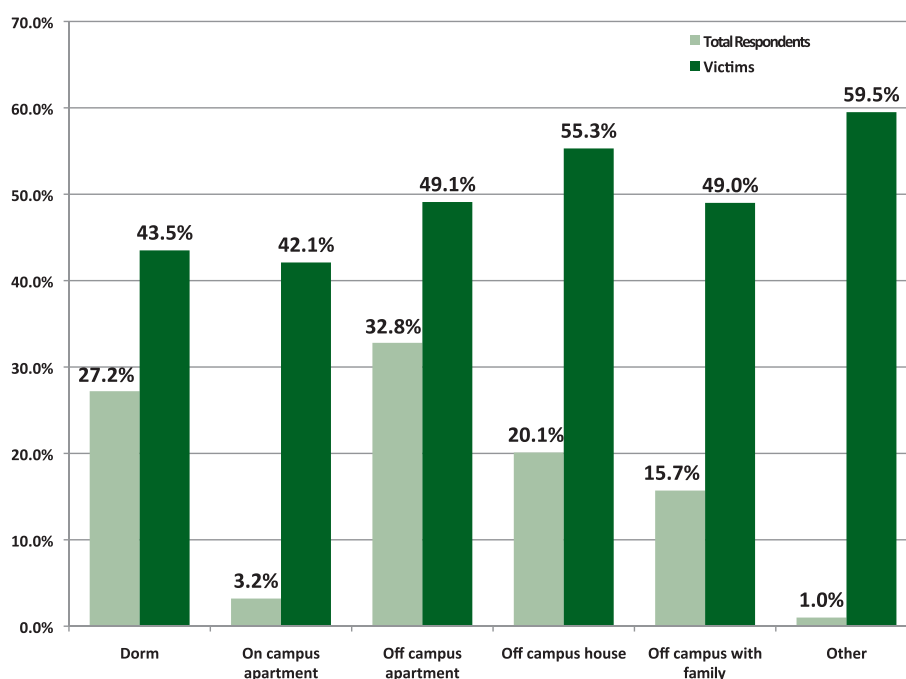


Figure 19. Comparison of Victimization by Living Arrangements

Fraternity/sorority. Not surprisingly, those who reported being in a sorority or fraternity were more likely to report property victimization (53.7%) (Figure 20). Being in a fraternity or sorority may increase exposure to situations conducive to crime, which has been found to increase the likelihood of theft victimization in certain settings (Fisher et al., 1998).

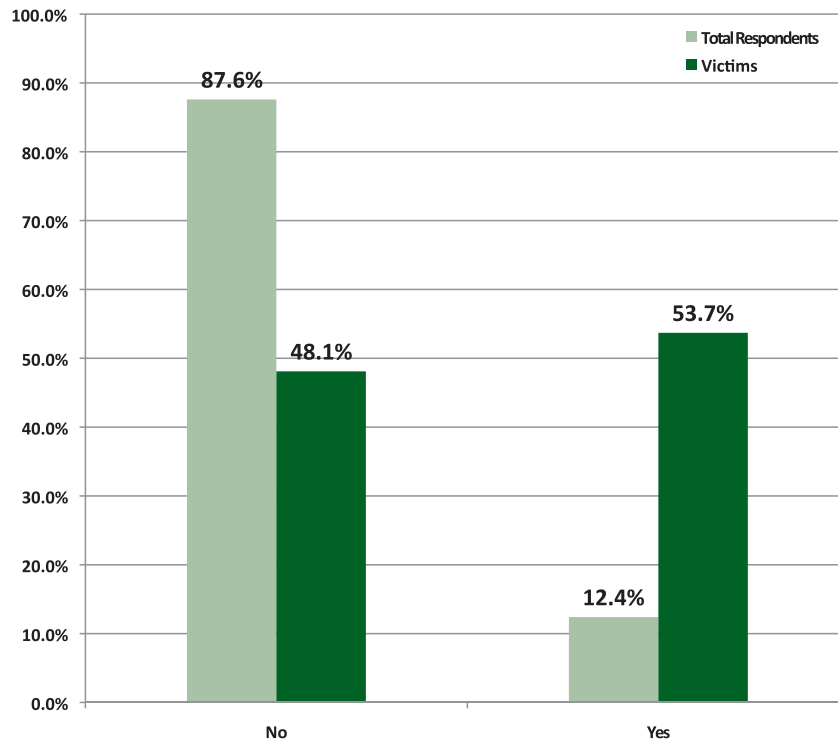


Figure 20. Comparison of Victimization by Membership in a Fraternity or Sorority

Partying. Respondents who spent more time partying during the week were more likely to be victimized. Being out more, particularly in situations where alcohol and drug use are prevalent, has been linked to greater victimization risk by others (Fisher et al., 1998; Fisher & Wilkes, 2003).

Carrying valuables. Similarly, respondents who reported carrying valuables in public were more likely to experience property victimization (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998). By having more items that are desirable to potential criminals, individuals place themselves at greater risk. This finding was expected, though the actual difference between victims and non-victims was small.

Safety precautions. Victims of property crime reported doing more to protect themselves compared to non-victims. Although it may be expected that non-victims do more for protection, the higher levels of precautionary actions among victims may be a reaction to the victimization reported.

Fear of crime. Not surprisingly, victims had higher levels of fear of crime compared to non-victims. Although fear is typically associated with violent crime, prior property victimization may lead to increased fear in general.

Criminal involvement. It was also not a surprise that those involved in criminal behavior were more likely to report victimization. Among students reporting involvement in criminal behavior, 62.5% reported being a property crime victim as well (compared to 45.6% of non-criminals). This is consistent with past research, which identifies criminal involvement as one of the strongest predictors of victimization (e.g., Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998).

Upbringing. Respondents who were raised primarily by a single father were most likely to report victimization (72.2%), followed by other (55.2%), raised by a single mother (52.0%), and raised by one biological parent and one step-parent (51.8%) (Figure 21). Once again, the group most different from the overall sample is the smallest group. A follow-up chi-square test was conducted, excluding the single father category to see if the results remained significant. Without the “biological father only” category, the results were non-significant, indicating that the other groups were only different from this category. It is possible that the significant result is an anomaly, but a similar family background measure has not been used in previous studies of college student victimization, property or violent.

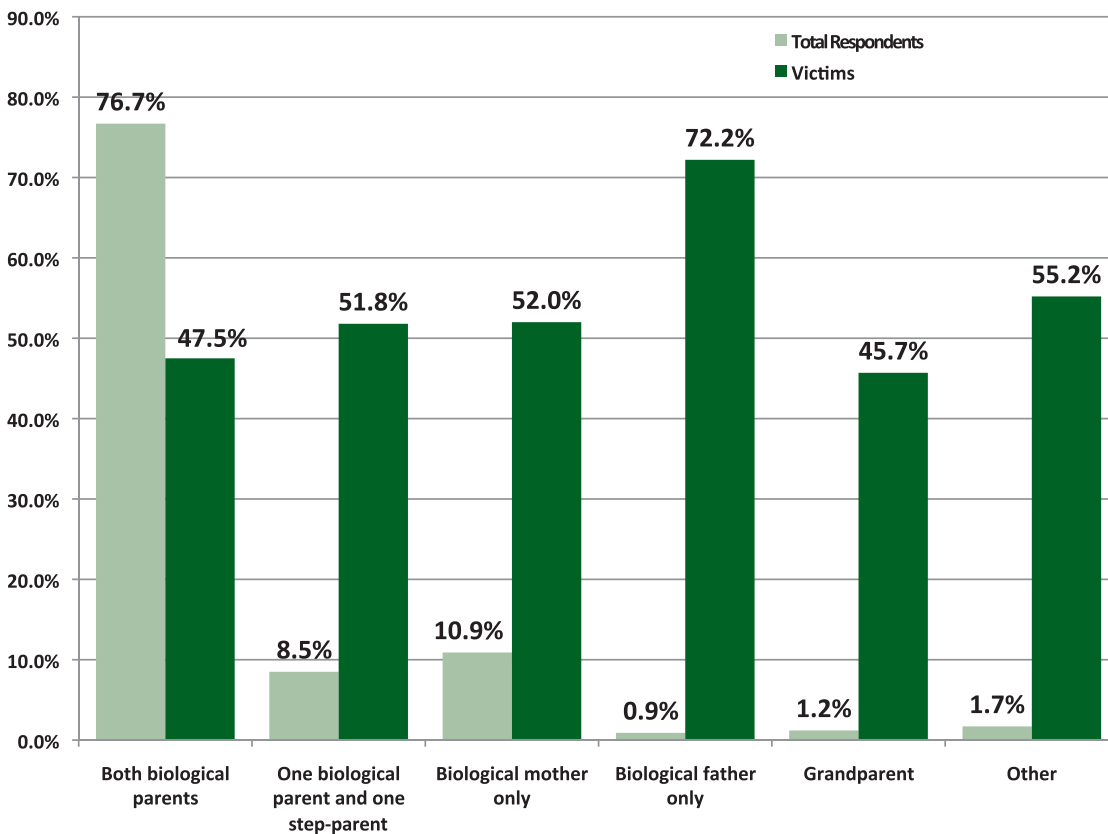


Figure 21. Comparison of Victimization by Primary Caregiver of Respondents

Witnessing violence as child. Finally, 54.5% of respondents who reported witnessing their parents/step-parents physically harm each other as a child were property victims (Figure 22) (compared to 47.4% of respondents not witnessing such violence). Though significant, the difference is not substantial, which reflects the difference between property crime and acts of violence.

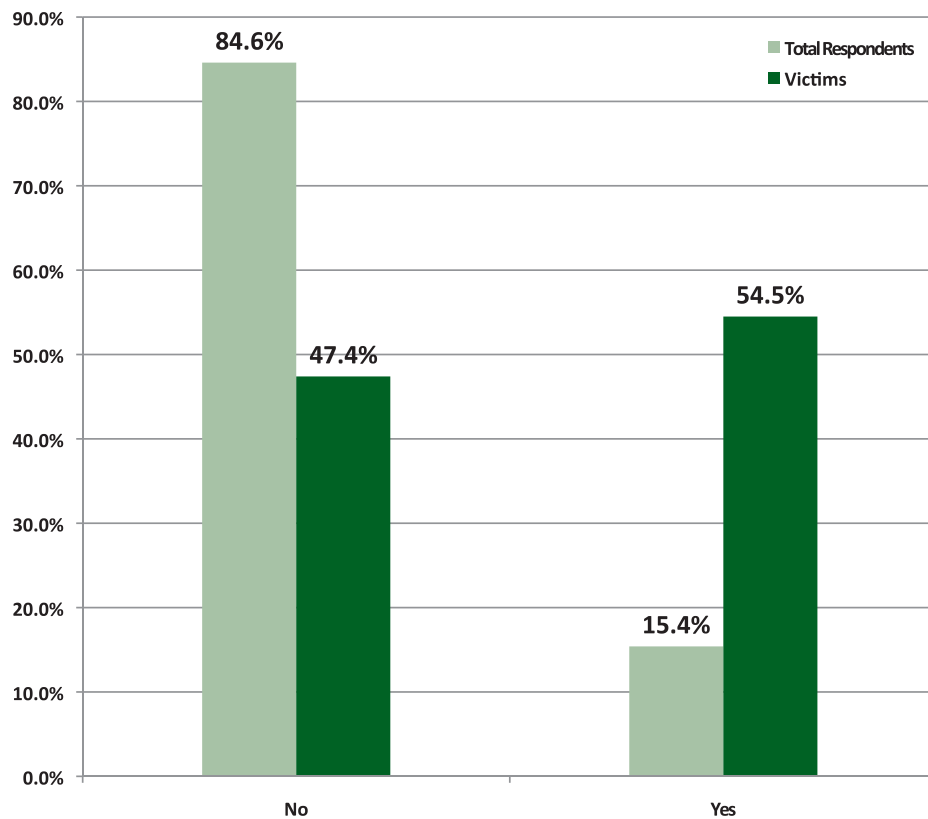


Figure 22. Comparison of Victimization by Respondents That Witnessed Physical Violence Between Parents

Discussion

The objective of this report was to explore the various factors associated with non-violent property victimization among individuals attending college in Texas. Being the second in a series of studies on college student victimization, it is patterned after the initial report on personal victimization. Thus, information is provided on the extent of property victimization, and noted respondent characteristics linked to a greater risk of property victimization.

The vast majority of research on college student victimization has dealt with violent and/or personal crimes, with little attention paid to property victimization. Consideration should be given to violent and personal crimes, as they tend to cause victims more serious and lasting harm. Nevertheless, property victimization should be studied among college students and within the general population as well. The research findings show that many of the characteristics associated with being a property crime victim and a personal crime victim were the same. Future projects should examine the nature of these similarities by exploring specific causal processes linking relevant factors to property and personal victimization. It is likely that

the connections between predictor variables (such as family background, living arrangement, fear of crime, and criminal offending) and personal victimization take a different form than the connections to property victimization.

It is important to educate students about the risks of victimization and precautionary methods to protect themselves and their property. Parents of students should also be made aware of potential risks so that they may reinforce awareness and protection methods for their children. From a policy perspective, university officials should have a role in adequately informing students about the risks of victimization and the resources available to assist them. For example, this information could be initially presented during freshman orientation and subsequently through student life programs. Presentations by campus police could be held in dormitories and fraternity/sorority houses. Posters could periodically be placed on campus alerting students to victimization risks. The student newspaper is another avenue to communicating with students about this issue. Non-violent crimes do not cause the same levels of pain and suffering as violent crimes, but they certainly have a sizeable negative impact on the lives of victims.

Conclusion

Although the Crime Victims' Institute has published reports on personal victimization and property victimization separately, the results suggest a stronger connection between the two categories than one might expect. As the CVI continues this series of research reports on college student victimization, we anticipate further examination of the connection between non-violent property victimization and violent/personal victimization. In addition, future additions to the series on college student victimization may involve reports on the following:

- Stalking victimization
- Factors associated with intimate partner violence
- A deeper look into the connection between offending and victimization
- Regional variations in victimization
- More sophisticated analysis attempting to uncover causal factors for victimization

Again, the ultimate goal of this project is to provide a series of reports providing sound research on a rich array of factors central to the understanding, prevention, and effective response to college student victimization.

Endnotes

¹Based on self-reported victimization experiences, not reports to the police.

²For example, See Catalano (2006) and Rand and Catalano (2007).

³As with the personal victimization report, lifestyle measures were adapted from various sources, particularly Fisher and Sloan (2003) and Fisher et al. (1998).

⁴Family background items were identical for the personal victimization study and the property victimization report.

⁵Statistical information that provided little value to the reader was omitted to save space. This included descriptive information for variables that did not contain simple categories, which preclude the use of graphics to depict frequencies. Descriptive statistics for omitted variables was limited to average scores, which give little insight to the reader.

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The Crime Victims' Institute
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