

How Safe are Americans with Disabilities?

The facts about violent crime and their implications

April 2017

Fact Sheet

Summary

According to the most recent U.S. census data, people with disabilities make up nearly 19 percent of the population. Yet the issues they face, including disproportionate rates of victimization and disparities in victim services and criminal justice system use and satisfaction, remain largely invisible. For example, while domestic and sexual violence are receiving increased attention in public discourse, people with disabilities who experience such violence are missing altogether.

This silence is particularly alarming because people with disabilities are among those most at risk of experiencing serious violent crime, which includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. They also face overwhelming barriers to getting help: While they are over three times more likely than people without disabilities to experience

these crimes, only 13 percent received victim services between 2010 and 2014.

As long as people with disabilities, individually and collectively, are hidden, efforts to address the violence in their lives remain inadequate at best. Increasing awareness of people with disabilities, the violent crimes they suffer, and the barriers that impede their access to victim services are important first steps toward including them within the national discourse on public safety, while promoting their wellbeing.

Tools for change

To raise awareness of these problems, the Vera Institute of Justice's Center on Victimization and Safety has produced a foundational issue brief providing basic information on disability in the United States and exploring what is known about the prevalence of violent crime against people with disabilities.

Key Statistics:

- > The presence of a disability greatly increases the risk of violent victimization whether a victim identifies as male or female.
- > The presence of a disability greatly increases the risk of violent victimization among studied racial and ethnic groups.
- > The 2010–2014 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) found that people with disabilities were more than three times as likely to experience serious violent crime, which includes rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and robbery than are people without disabilities.
- > The NCVS survey also found that intimate partners committed 14 percent of violence against people with disabilities; other relatives committed 11 percent; and people the survivor knew well or who were casual acquaintances committed over 40 percent of violence against them.
- > In 2010–2014, only 13 percent of violent crime victims with disabilities received assistance from non-police victim services agencies.
- > Physical, programmatic, communication, and attitudinal accessibility barriers for people with disabilities further impede full use of the support and services that crime victims may receive from justice, victim services, and medical systems.

For more information

The Vera Institute of Justice is a justice reform change agent. Vera produces ideas, analysis, and research that inspire change in the systems people rely upon for safety and justice, and works in close partnership with government and civic leaders to implement it. Vera is currently pursuing core priorities of ending the misuse of jails, transforming conditions of confinement, and ensuring that justice

systems more effectively serve America's increasingly diverse communities. For more information, visit www.vera.org.

To read this report, visit www.vera.org/how-safe.

For information about justice for people with disabilities from Vera's Center on Victimization and Safety, contact Ram Subramanian, editorial director, at rsubramanian@vera.org.