

Demographic Patterns in Victimization

This one-page report focuses on victimization trends in Washington state from 2013 to 2023 using NIBRS data. Victimization patterns are dynamic and influenced by demographic variation, while also highlighting persistent disparities that complicate the interpretation of crime trends. This one-page report presents a longitudinal analysis to examine how victimization evolves over time.

Data Parameters

This one page report analyzes publicly available National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from 2013–2023 to examine victimization trends across demographic factors, using incident-level data compiled by the monthly reported incident-based offense statistics from participating law enforcement agencies and accessed via the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). NIBRS differs methodologically from the legacy Summary Reporting System and participation is voluntary, findings are not intended to be generalized, and comparisons should be made cautiously.

Incidents may contain multiple offenses, and classification is based on the primary offense as recorded in NIBRS reporting structure. Additionally, victim records represent victimization events rather than unique individuals and may include multiple records. The dataset includes over 4.6 million incidents:

- Due to the missing or incomplete demographic data, the final dataset varied depending on the missing or incomplete demographic data.
 - For the “sex” variable, the final dataset included 3,410,564 unique NIBRS offense events (73.9% of all unique NIBRS offense events) for victims.
 - For the “race” variable, the final dataset included 2,995,861 unique NIBRS offense events (64.9% of all unique NIBRS offense events) for victims.
 - For the “age” variable, the final dataset included 3,396,428 unique NIBRS offense events (73.6% of all unique NIBRS offense events) for victims.

Limitations

All data comes with its limitations. This report identifies a few major limitations, and there are likely more not listed that could impact work that utilizes this data. Limitations include:

- Analyses are descriptive and non-generalizable. Any inferences and implications are limited, and results are modest. Further analyses must be completed for causal relationships to be determined.
- Administrative data and the lack of detail or richness significantly limits any conclusions yielded from this work.
- Changes in NIBRS participation and reporting practices over time may influence observed trends, making it difficult to determine whether increases or decreases reflect actual changes in crime or differences in data collection.
- In terms of demographic assessment, these results must be interpreted with caution. As race data can be misclassified, any analysis of race across criminal justice decision-points is negatively impacted by true reliability and validity. Only records for individuals with clearly defined, unduplicated race, sex, and date of birth were utilized to ensure data quality, so results may be underreported. Additionally, this brief was limited to values collected by the NIBRS.
- NIBRS reporting variability (voluntary participation, updates over time, uneven county/jurisdiction coverage) creates inconsistencies and potentially skews the data.
- Due to the impacts of COVID-19, trends might be skewed and misreported.

Victimization and Demographic Composition

Table 1 depicts the demographics of victims in Washington from 2013 to 2023. Victimization patterns demonstrate a clear age-related trend, increasing substantially with age and peaking among individuals aged 46 and older (37.4%), followed by those aged 26–35 (23.4%) and 36–45 (19.3%), while younger groups such as those 18–25 (14.9%) and 17 and under (5.1%) are less represented, suggesting greater vulnerability among older adults that may be linked to factors such as physical vulnerability, financial targeting, or social isolation. The racial distribution of victims is predominantly White (83.6%), with smaller proportions of Black or African American (8.4%), Asian (6.4%), American Indian/Alaska Native (1.3%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.3%) individuals, which may reflect both underlying state population composition and differences in exposure to certain offenses or reporting patterns. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a slight male majority (52.9%) compared to females (47.1%), indicating that victimization is fairly evenly distributed across sex compared to other crime patterns that often show stronger disparities. When compared to Washington’s broader population estimates, victim demographics appear generally aligned with state demographics, with males slightly overrepresented and BIPOC groups represented in proportions broadly consistent with their population share, suggesting that while some variation exists, disparities in victimization across demographic groups are relatively modest and nuanced rather than strongly disproportionate.

Table 1. Victim Demographics in Washington (2013-2023)

	N	%
Sex		
Female	1,607,587	47.1
Male	1,802,977	52.9
Race		
White	2,505,798	83.6
Black/African American	251,394	8.4
AIAN	38,622	1.3
Asian	191,675	6.4
NHOPI	8,372	0.3
Age Category		
<= 17	171,613	5.1
18 to 25	504,950	14.9
26 to 35	793,963	23.4
36 to 45	654,006	19.3
>= 46	1,271,896	37.4

Notes: Percentages represent the distribution of victims within each category and may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Counts less than 10 are redacted to protect privacy and reduce the risk of reidentification. Race/ethnicity categories are based on standardized reporting classifications: American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN); Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI). Data reflects reported and recorded victims in Washington from 2013 to 2023 and may not include unreported incidents.

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Victimization Rises Despite Periodic Fluctuations

Figure 1 shows the victimization trends by year of offense. From 2013 to 2023, offense counts increased overall from 348,117 to 442,429—an approximate 27% rise—though growth was uneven, with notable fluctuations across years. The largest increase occurred between 2015 and 2016 (14.4%), while the most significant declines were seen in 2018–2019 (–6.4%) and 2022–2023 (–7.9%), alongside smaller dips in 2017–2018 and 2020–2021. Periods such as 2019–2020 and 2021–2022 showed strong rebounds, indicating a pattern of recovery following declines. Trends showed steady growth beginning after 2015, peaking in 2022, and followed by a slight decline in 2023, suggesting possible stabilization or short-term variation. The increase around 2020–2021 may reflect disruptions related to the COVID-19, and the findings point to long-term growth with periodic volatility rather than consistent year-to-year stability.

Figure 1. Victimization trends by year of offense

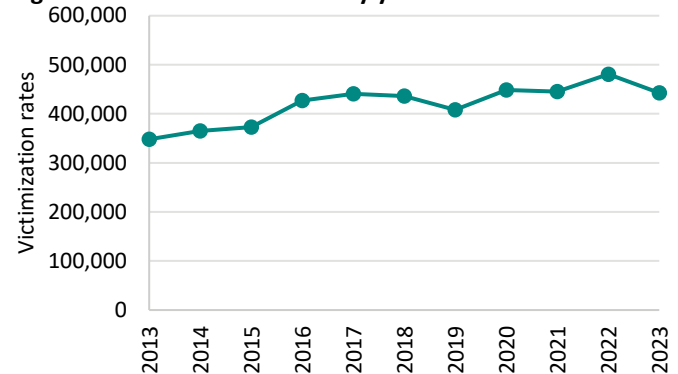
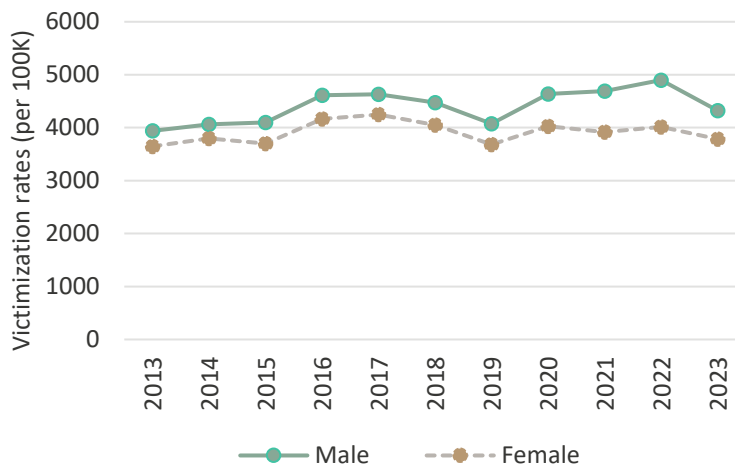


Figure 2. Victimization rates (per 100K) by year of offense and by sex



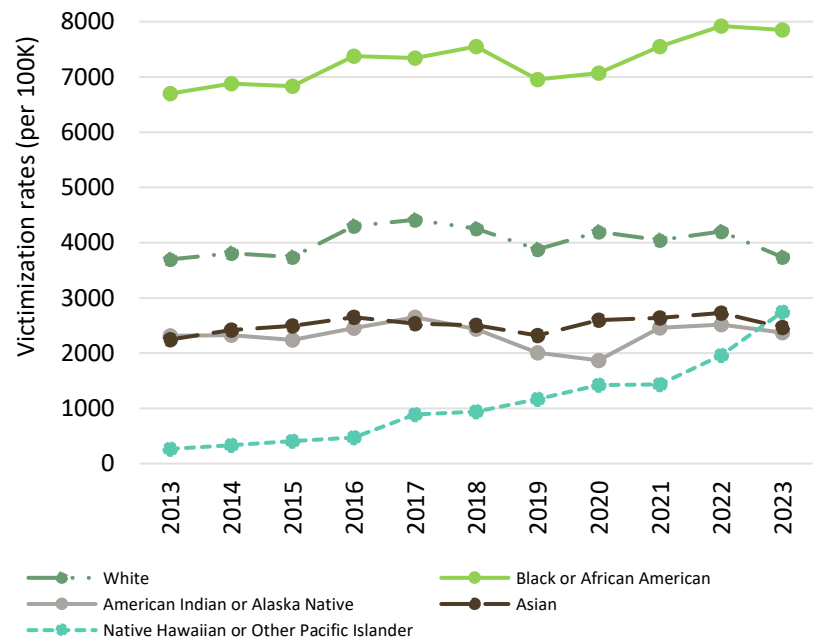
Sex Shapes Victimization Rates

Figure 2 shows the victimization rates (per 100K population) by year of offense and by sex. Temporal variation in victimization was observed across years and between sexes, with similar overall trends for males and females over time and a relatively stable gender distribution. Results showed victimization increasing overall from 2013 to 2023 but fluctuating across years, reflecting the influence of external or cyclical factors rather than steady growth. Both male and female victim counts rose over time, with males consistently accounting for slightly higher counts, though the gender distribution remained relatively stable. Trends showed a sharp rise around 2016–2017, a dip in 2019, and a rebound into the early 2020s, where victimization reached some of its highest levels. Rate-based findings mirrored this pattern, with males experiencing consistently higher victimization rates than females each year, indicating a persistent gender gap that did not narrow over time despite parallel trends.

Racial Disparities Persist in Victimization

Figure 3 shows the victimization rates (per 100K population) by year of offense and by race. Temporal variation in victimization was observed across racial groups, with overall victimization increasing from 2013 to 2023 alongside shared fluctuations, including growth in the mid-2010s, a dip around 2019, and a rebound in the early 2020s. White victims consistently made up the majority of cases, though their proportional dominance slightly declined as other groups—particularly Black or African American and Asian populations—experienced faster relative growth, indicating modest diversification over time. Disparities remained pronounced, as Black individuals consistently experienced the highest victimization rates each year, while other groups generally had lower and more stable rates. Smaller populations showed some variability, and findings highlight persistent racial disparities. These patterns suggest that while overall victimization trends were influenced by broader temporal factors, underlying structural differences between racial groups remained consistent. Results indicate that changes over time occurred within a stable hierarchy of group-level disparities rather than a convergence across race.

Figure 3. Victimization rates (per 100K) by year of offense and by race



This one-page report is part of a series intended to provide a concise summary of victimization patterns in Washington State; for a more detailed analysis, please refer to *Utilizing the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): Tracking Temporal Trends in Victimization, 2013–2023*.

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