

Temporal Patterns of Victimization & Harm

This one-page report examines victimization patterns in Washington state from 2013 to 2023 using data from the NIBRS, with a focus on offense type, injury status, and weapon involvement from a victim-centered perspective. The analysis assesses differences across offense categories (violent vs. non-violent) and key incident characteristics, including whether a victim sustained an injury (injury vs. no injury) and whether a weapon was present (weapon vs. no weapon). Overall, the study highlights how harm and situational characteristics vary across offense classifications, providing a broader understanding of victimization within reported criminal events.

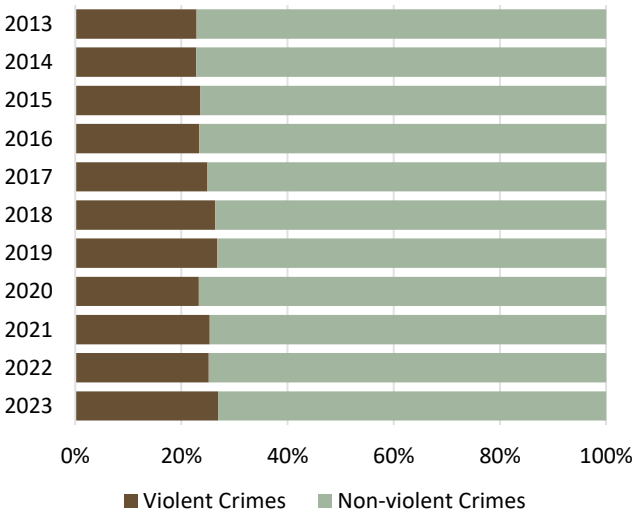
Data Parameters	Limitations
This one-page report analyzes publicly available National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from 2013–2023 to examine victimization trends across demographic factors, using incident-level data compiled by the monthly reported incident-based offense statistics from 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: - Offense type is categorized in this report as violent vs non-violent (i.e., involving vs not involving physical harm/threat) - Presence of injury is categorized in this report as binary “yes or no” - indicating whether a victim sustained physical harm during the incident - Presence of weapons is categorized in this report as binary “yes or no” reflecting whether a firearm, knife, or other weapon was present during the incident.	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. - The dataset includes exclusively NIBRS victim records and may be subject to underreporting, as it reflects only participating jurisdictions and does not represent all law enforcement agencies nationwide. - NIBRS reporting variability (i.e., voluntary participation, updates over time, or uneven county/jurisdiction coverage) creates inconsistencies and potentially skews the data. - Due to the impacts of COVID-19, trends might be skewed and misreported.

A substantial body of research using incident-based crime data such as the NIBRS has examined how offense type, severity, and situational context shape patterns of victimization over time. Prior studies consistently show that non-violent offenses account for the majority of reported incidents, even though violent crime often receives greater public and policy attention. This distinction between violent and non-violent offending is frequently used to interpret broader crime trends, with research suggesting that overall changes in crime levels are often driven more by shifts in non-violent offending than by changes in interpersonal violence. Related research on victimization outcomes emphasizes that injury and non-injury incidents tend to follow relatively stable distributions over time, reflecting persistent situational structures in offender–victim interactions. Studies also consistently find that weapon involvement is strongly associated with increased severity and perceived threat in victimization events.

Crime Growth Occurred Primarily Through Non-Violent Offenses

Figure 1 shows the average frequency distribution by year of offense and offense type (i.e., violent or non-violent). Findings indicate that non-violent crimes consistently occurred at substantially higher levels than violent crimes throughout the study period. Between 2013 and 2023, violent crimes increased from 67,424 to 103,531 incidents, while non-violent crimes rose from 227,783 to 281,719 incidents. Despite fluctuations across years, non-violent offenses accounted for the majority of reported crime, typically comprising approximately 73% to 77% of all incidents annually. Violent crime also demonstrated notable growth over the decade, increasing by more than 50%, although it remained a smaller share of overall criminal activity. Both categories experienced declines and rebounds during the period, with violent crime peaking in 2022 and remaining relatively stable in 2023, while non-violent crime reached its highest level in 2022 before declining modestly in 2023. Overall, these findings suggest that although violent offenses became more prevalent over time, the crime landscape remained dominated by non-violent offenses, indicating that increases in overall criminal activity were driven primarily by growth in non-violent crime volume.

Figure 1. Distribution by year of offense and offense type



For more information contact:

Vasiliki Georgoulas-Sherry, PhD | vasiliki.georgoulas-sherry@ofm.wa.gov | Hanna Hernandez, MA | hanna.hernandez@ofm.wa.gov

Victim Injury Rates Remained Stable Over Time

Figure 2 shows the average frequency distribution by year of offense and presence of injury. Findings indicate a substantial increase in victimizations between 2013 and 2023, with incidents involving injury rising from 28,465 to 42,267 and incidents involving no injury increasing from 28,183 to 40,172. Despite this overall growth, the proportion of victims who sustained injuries remained remarkably stable throughout the study period, generally accounting for about half of all victimizations each year. Injury rates fluctuated within a narrow range, from approximately 49% to 53%, suggesting that the severity profile of victimizations changed little over time even as the total number of incidents increased. A modest rise in the share of injury-related victimizations occurred between 2019 and 2020, when more than 52% of victims experienced an injury, but this increase was not sustained, as the proportion gradually returned to near-historical levels by 2023. Collectively, these findings suggest that while victimization became more common over the decade, the likelihood that a victim would suffer an injury remained relatively consistent, indicating a stable balance between injury-producing and non-injury-producing offenses.

Figure 2. Distribution by year of offense and presence of injury

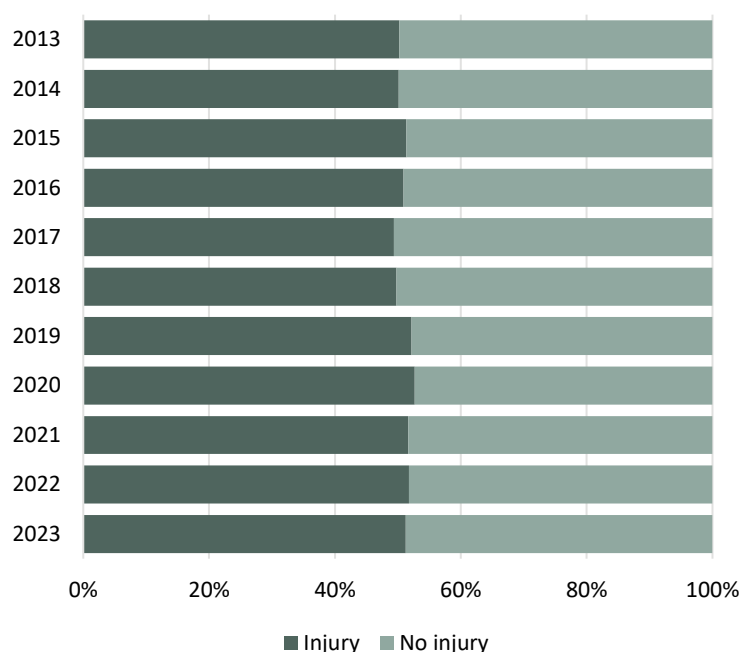
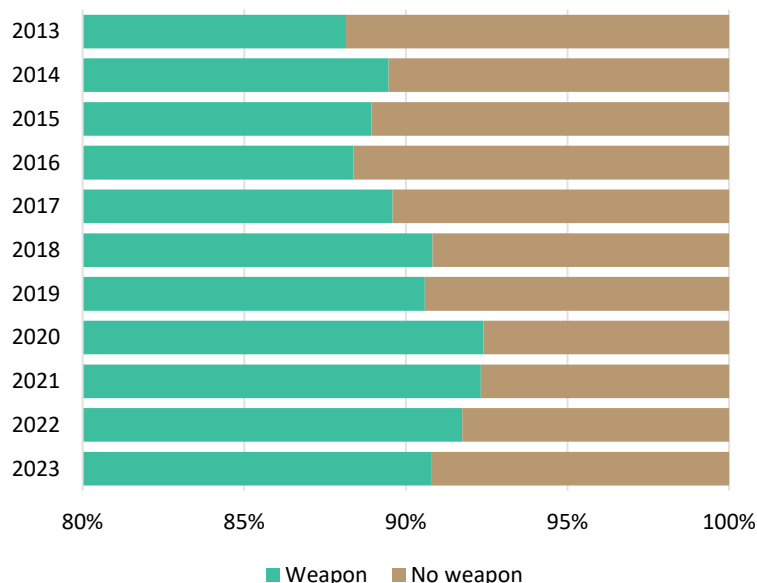


Figure 3. Distribution by year of offense and presence of weapons



Weapons Remained Central to Reported Criminal Activity

Figure 3 shows the average frequency distribution by year of offense and presence of weapons. Findings showed that offenses involving a weapon consistently accounted for the overwhelming majority of incidents throughout the study period. Between 2013 and 2023, incidents involving weapons increased from 54,097 to 83,982, representing substantial growth over the decade, while incidents involving no weapon rose more modestly from 7,272 to 8,501. As a result, weapon-related offenses comprised approximately 88% to 92% of all incidents each year, indicating a persistent and dominant presence of weapons in reported offenses. Although both categories experienced fluctuations, weapon-involved incidents generally increased over time, reaching their highest levels in 2022 and remaining elevated in 2023. In contrast, no-weapon incidents remained comparatively stable, with only minor year-to-year variation. Findings suggest that the growth in reported offenses during the study period was driven primarily by incidents involving weapons, reinforcing the central role of weapon use or possession in NIBRS-reported criminal activity.

Research continues to emphasize the value of distinguishing between shifts in crime volume and shifts in crime composition. Findings highlight consistent structural patterns in victimization captured in NIBRS data from 2013 to 2023. Crime growth over the period was driven primarily by non-violent offenses, which consistently accounted for the majority of reported incidents despite increases in both violent and non-violent crime. At the same time, the distribution of victim outcomes remained relatively stable, with injury and non-injury victimizations increasing in parallel and injury rates fluctuating only within a narrow range over time. Similarly, weapon involvement remained highly prevalent across incidents and constituted the dominant feature of reported offenses throughout the study period. Findings suggest that while the volume of victimization increased over time, the underlying composition of offenses and key situational characteristics—particularly injury outcomes and weapon presence—remained broadly stable, indicating continuity in the structure of reported criminal events rather than fundamental shifts in their nature.

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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