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## The victimisation of young people: findings from the Crime and Justice Survey 2003

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The two main sources of national crime statistics in England and Wales do not provide much information about young people's experiences of crime: police recorded crime statistics held centrally do not include the age of victims (and in any case relate only to incidents reported to the police and recorded by them) and the British Crime Survey only interviews people aged 16 and over. The Crime and Justice Survey, set up in 2003 to improve understanding of the extent and nature of offending, interviewed people aged 10 to 65. This provided an opportunity to speak to young people about whether they had been victims of crime in the previous year. This report focuses on the experiences of personal crime among those aged 10 to 15.

### Key points

- Over a third (35%) of young people aged 10 to 15 had experienced at least one personal crime in the previous 12 months. This was about the same level as for those aged 16 to 25 (32%) and well above those aged 26 to 65 (14%).
- The types of crime that young people experienced changed with age. Robbery and thefts from the person were less common experiences, for instance, for 10- to 11-year-olds than for 16- to 17-year-olds but other thefts were more common. Differences in the proportion of young people experiencing assaults were not statistically significant but were higher than for those over 21 years.
- The degree of repeat victimisation for violent offences was particularly high for young people with 19% of 10- to 15-year-olds experiencing five or more incidents in the previous 12 months.
- Offending by young people was the factor most strongly associated with their being victims of personal crime. Other underlying risk factors were the presence of anti-social behaviour in their local area, being male and committing anti-social behaviour.
- There was no difference in the level of overall personal crime victimisation between young people in different ethnic groups. Within specific types of crime, white young people were more likely to have been victims of assault than black and minority ethnic young people but were less likely to have been victims of robbery.

### EXTENT OF VICTIMISATION

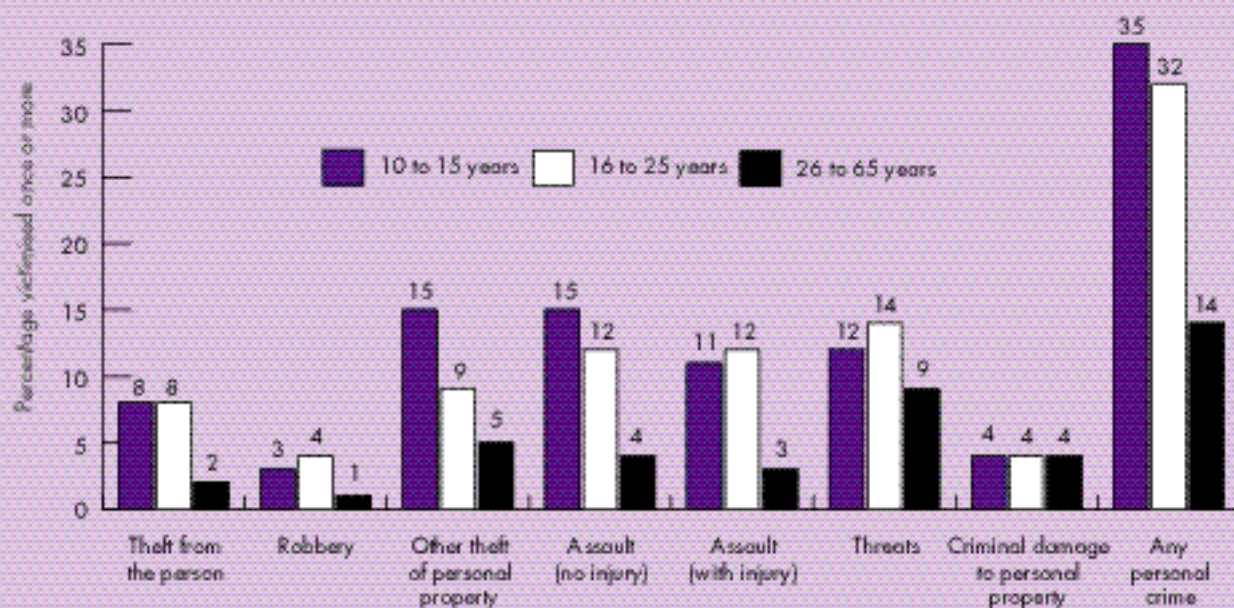
#### Personal crime

The 2003 Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS) found that those in the younger age groups were the most likely to have been the victims of personal crime (assault, robbery, theft from the person and other theft of personal property) in the previous 12 months. About a third of 10- to 15-year-olds and 16- to 25-year-olds had experienced one or

more personal crimes (at 35% and 32% respectively, the differences were not statistically significant). The prevalence of personal crime was considerably lower among the 26 to 65 age group at 14% (Figure 1).

A finer age split showed that the most victimised groups were 18- to 19-year-olds (with 38% experiencing one or more personal crimes) and 14- to 15-year-olds with 37% (Table 1).

Figure 1 Percentage of age groups victimised once or more in last 12 months



Note: The 'any personal crime' category does not include threats or criminal damage.

Table 1 Percentage of people who were victims once or more in last 12 months (prevalence risk)

	10 to 11	12 to 13	14 to 15	16 to 17	18 to 19	20 to 21	22 to 23	24 to 25	10 to 15	16 to 25	26 to 65	10 to 65
Personal crimes	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Theft from the person	6	8	9	10	12	7	6	7	8	8	2*	4
Robbery	2	4	4	6	6	3	2	2	3	4	1*	2
Other theft of personal property	16	14	14	10	11	9	8	8	15	9*	5*	7
Any violence <sup>1</sup>	23	21	23	24	26	21	19	16	22	21	7*	11
Any assault <sup>2</sup>	22	21	21	21	23	19	18	16	21	19	7*	11
Assault (no injury)	15	15	14	13	14	12	11	9	15	12*	4*	7
Assault (with injury)	11	10	12	13	14	13	9	9	11	12	3*	6
Any personal crime <sup>3</sup>	34	33	37	35	38	31	28	27	35	32	14*	19
Threats	12	11	14	12	14	16	14	14	12	14	9*	10
Criminal damage to personal property	3	6	4	3	6	2	3	5	4	4	4	4
Bullying	27	22	17	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	22	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unweighted base	626	745	664	668	501	447	493	430	2,035	2,539	5,505	10,079

Notes: Source: C&JS 2003. 1 Includes assault and robbery. 2 Includes assault with and without injury. 3 Includes theft from the person, robbery, other personal theft and assault. \* Significant differences at the 5% level displayed against the 10- to 15-year-old group.

Victimisation remained at around the same high level between the ages of 10 and 19 (between 33% and 38%) before declining, but there was variation within the types of crime experienced.

### Theft and robbery

The level of victimisation of theft from the person peaked among 18- to 19-year-olds (12%) and among 16- to 19-

year-olds for robbery (6%). This compared with 6% for theft from the person and 2% for robbery for 10- to 11-year-olds (still above the proportion of those aged 26 to 65 who were victims). Those aged 10 to 11 years were the most likely to have been victims of other thefts of personal property, such as thefts from changing rooms, with 16% reporting this during the previous 12 months.

Among 10- to 17-year-olds, money was most frequently the target of thefts (28% of victims). Mobile phones were the target for 25% of victims followed by stationery (20%) and bicycles (11%). There was considerable variation within the 10 to 17 age group in the items stolen (likely to be linked to different patterns of ownership). Those aged 10 to 11 years were significantly less likely to have mobile phones or bank cards stolen and more likely to have stationery stolen.

### Assault

The proportion of 10- to 15-year-olds experiencing assaults (21%) was slightly higher than that for 16- to 25-year-olds (19%) although this difference was not statistically significant. Older adults were far less likely to have been victims of assault (7%).

Assaults among younger age groups are often assumed to be more trivial. However, while the highest prevalence of more serious assaults (those that resulted in injury) was among 18- to 19-year-olds (14%), this was not significantly different from the proportion for 10- to 11-year-olds (11%). Prevalence was relatively similar up to the ages of 20 to 21 and fell away significantly above that age.

### Threats and criminal damage

In addition to the offences included in the 'personal crime' category, threats and criminal damage to personal property were also covered in the survey. Respondents were asked whether they had been threatened 'in a way that actually frightened' them. The level of threats was higher among the younger age groups (12% for those aged 10 to 15 and 14% for those aged 16 to 25) than for those aged 26 to 65 (9%). There were no significant differences between the younger age groups, although the nature of threats may change.

Criminal damage to personal property was about the same level for all age groups (4%), although the target of the damage would be likely to change with patterns of ownership.

### Bullying

In addition to criminal victimisation, young people were also asked whether they had been 'bullied in a way that frightened or upset' them in the previous year and about the nature of these incidents (these may also have been recorded as crimes in the survey). Among 10- to 17-year-olds, 19% said they had been victims of bullying. Those aged 10 to 11 were significantly more likely to be victims within this group (27% compared with 9% of 16- to 17-year-olds). Females were also more likely to experience bullying (21%) than males (17%).

Just over half of those bullied (52%), said it had involved face-to-face abuse or verbal offensiveness. Around a third (32%) said it had involved a physical assault and a fifth (19%) threats. Some of these incidents were therefore technically criminal in nature (it was not clear whether they

were regarded as such by victims). It was not possible to calculate precisely the extent to which criminal incidents reported to the survey by young people were related to bullying. However, it is clear that only a proportion of criminal victimisation of young people is accounted for by bullying, as 59% of victims of violent crime said they were not the victims of bullying.

### Repeat victimisation

In addition to looking at the proportion of people who have been the victims of crime, the research also examined the extent to which individuals are repeatedly victimised. The highest level of repeat victimisation was within the violence categories (assault and robbery), and it was particularly high for the younger age group:

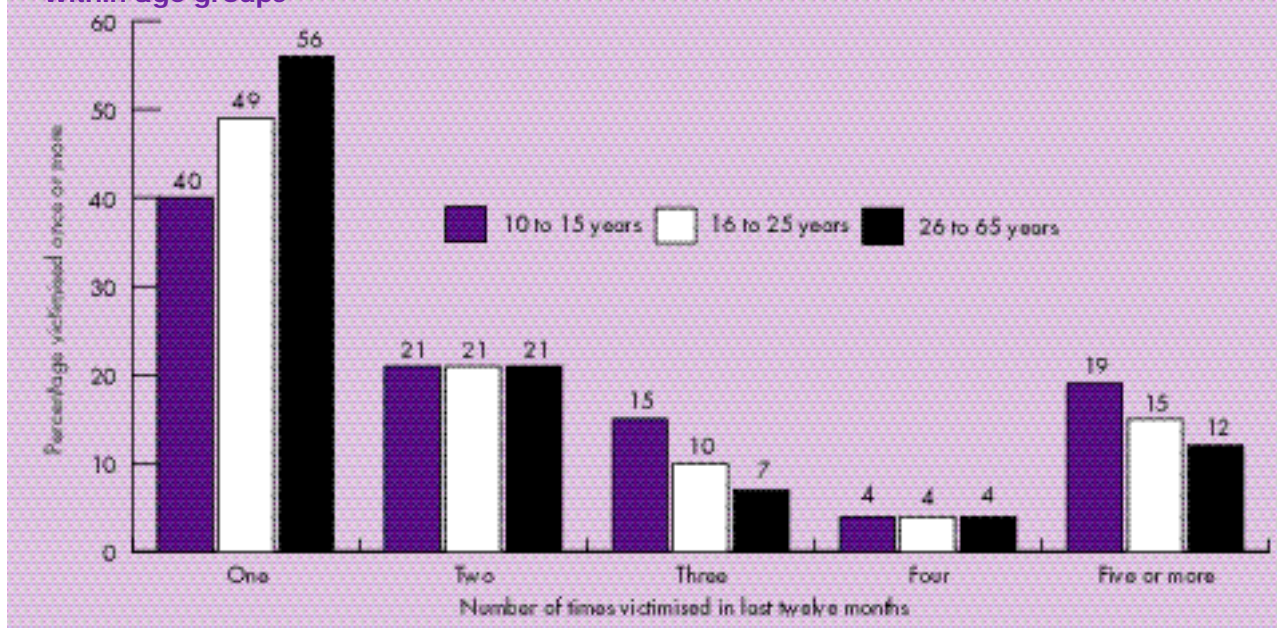
- 60% of 10- to 15-year-olds who experienced violence in the previous 12 months did so on more than one occasion. A fifth (19%) had experienced five or more violent incidents in the previous 12 months. Older age groups who had experienced violence were less likely to be repeat victims (Figure 2).
- Within the violence category, repeat victimisation was particularly common for assaults resulting in injury. Again, the youngest victims were most likely to experience more than one incident (43% of 10- to 15-year-old victims were victimised more than once, 40% of 16- to 25-year-olds and 30% of those aged 26 to 65).
- Around a fifth (19%) of victims aged 10 to 15 accounted for two-thirds (66%) of all violent incidents in that age group.

### Comparisons with other surveys

Several other surveys have examined the prevalence of victimisation among young people. However, direct comparisons are difficult to make due to differences in research design, wording of questions, contexts and time periods. The prevalence of assaults found by the MORI Youth Survey 2004 was considerably lower than that found by the C&JS at 13% in the previous year, although this figure related to 11- to 16-year-olds attending school (the figure was 23% for excluded young people). Question wording between the surveys was quite different here. The 1992 British Crime Survey (BCS) ran a module for those aged 12 to 15 and this found a level of assault above that of the C&JS (Aye Maung, 1995). The level of assault found in the general population by the 2002/03 BCS had returned to the level of the 1992 BCS, so this is perhaps not an unreasonable comparison to make. Bullying and the overall level of thefts reported to the MORI Youth Survey 2004 were at similar levels to those found on the C&JS, whilst threats and criminal damage were higher.

Levels of victimisation found in the C&JS are higher than those found in the BCS for equivalent age groups (16- to 65-year-olds). Some of this can be accounted for by differences between the surveys and their questions, and

**Figure 2 Number of times respondents were victims of violence in last 12 months within age groups**



the more sophisticated approach to measuring victimisation of the BCS means it remains the preferred source of data for the ages it covers.

### PATTERNS AND RISK FACTORS

The variation described above in the prevalence of different types of crime between the younger age groups is likely to be driven by their fast-changing situation as Finkelhor and Hashima (2001) point out. Changes in physical size will play a part in changing the nature of incidents they experience or do not experience. As they grow, young people become progressively less dependent and are less likely to experience the particular types of crime that are related to dependency (in particular, crimes of maltreatment). In parallel with this change there is usually a reduction in guardianship and an increasing exposure to lifestyles that will put young people at higher risk of other types of crime (for instance robbery). In addition, the changing value and status of personal belongings is also likely to play a part.

In addition to the differences between age groups, the C&JS also examines other factors that are related to the risks for young people of being victims of crime. Table 2 shows the characteristics associated with a heightened risk of personal victimisation among 10- to 15-year-olds. The higher risk groups identified here are consistent with those of other studies of victimisation among young people (Aye Maung, 1995; Smith et al., 2001; Youth Justice Board, 2004). Personal characteristics, the type of area that people live in, aspects of their lifestyle and their upbringing all interact to produce different levels of risk. Differences in lifestyle may expose individuals in the same area and with the same demographic profile to different levels of risk through, for instance, bringing them into contact more frequently with offenders or situations where offending is

**Table 2 Groups at higher risk of personal crime (10- to 15-year-olds)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage victims of personal crime (10 to 15s)	%
<b>Personal demographics</b>	
Males	41
<b>Household characteristics</b>	
Household with financial difficulties	50
<b>Local area characteristics</b>	
Three or more types of anti-social behaviour common <sup>2</sup>	52
<b>School</b>	
Negative school environment <sup>3</sup>	48
Ever suspended/expelled/truanted	43
<b>Family and friends</b>	
Negative parental relationship <sup>4</sup>	48
Friends been in trouble with police	46
Not being brought up by both natural parents	40
<b>Lifestyle and behaviour</b>	
Taken any drug in last year	56
Offended in last year (criminal)	56
Felt drunk once a month or more	50
Offended in last year (anti-social behaviour)	46
<b>All 10- to 15-year-olds</b>	<b>35</b>

Notes: Source: C&JS 2003. <sup>1</sup> 'Personal crime' includes theft from the person, robbery, other theft and assault. <sup>2</sup> The types of behaviour listed were noisy neighbours, teenagers hanging around, people sleeping rough, people being harassed in the street, people using or selling drugs, people being drunk or rowdy in public. <sup>3</sup> Scale based on young person's view of whether school has clear rules, pupils hit teachers, teachers praise good work and how easy to truant. <sup>4</sup> Scale based on young person's view of whether parents praise, listen, treat fairly, want to know where young person is and whether parents often argue/fight with each other. All associations displayed are statistically significant at the 5% level compared with other categories. There may be other high risks that do not show significant associations simply due to small sample sizes.

more likely. Equally, people leading similar lifestyles may have different levels of risk due to their gender and how this affects (as a result of physiology or culture) the nature of their interactions with others. The interplay of factors will determine the risks for an individual.

### Underlying predictors of victimisation

The findings presented in Table 2 are useful for looking at the pattern of victimisation among 10- to 15-year-olds that has resulted from the interplay of risk factors. However, it is not clear to what extent the apparently strong associations with lifestyle characteristics actually reflect a direct link with victimisation. As an example, drug taking may only be associated with it because a third factor, such as the nature of a friendship circle, is driving both drug taking and victimisation. To understand more fully which factors are really important in victimisation, and therefore where interventions would be best directed, the risk factors need to be identified which are predictive of victimisation independently of other factors. Multivariate analysis was carried out with the aim of uncovering these underlying predictors, see Table 3.

### Offending behaviour and lifestyle

Committing a criminal offence in the previous year was the strongest predictor of personal crime victimisation among 10- to 15-year-olds, independently of the other variables considered (Table 3). The odds of being victimised for that group were 2.5 times higher than for those who had not offended, other things being equal. Those who had carried out at least one act of anti-social behaviour also had statistically significantly higher odds of being victims, although this was a less strong predictor.

This is consistent with the general findings from other studies (Aye Maung, 1995; Smith et al., 2001). There is

interest in the literature in the possibility that the victimisation of young people leads to offending and offending to victimisation through the 'developmental process' (Smith et al., 2001). However, rather than displaying this direct relationship, as the study reported here is cross-sectional and represents only one year, the association is likely to reflect shared risk factors between offending and victimisation. Analysis that excluded the variables relating to offending resulted in a model that replaced them with truancy and whether the young person's friends had been in trouble with the police. This further suggests that the prominence of offending in the original model is due to common factors relating to types of lifestyle and the risks they pose to young people for both offending and victimisation.

### Local area

The area, in terms of relative deprivation or whether urban or not, was not a significant predictor of personal crime victimisation. This is in line with findings elsewhere (Aye Maung, 1995). However, another measure of the local area, the perceived prevalence of anti-social behaviour, was the second strongest predictor in the model. Those who said three or more types of anti-social behaviour were common in their area had odds of being victims of personal crime that were three times those of young people who said none were (other things being equal). This is consistent with Smith et al. (2001) who point out that levels of victimisation and delinquency tend to vary between neighbourhoods in parallel with each other.

### Gender

Reflecting patterns in older age groups, males aged 10 to 15 had higher odds than females of being the victims of personal crime (around 60% higher). Bivariate analysis showed the differences between males and females were particularly

**Table 3 Multivariate model of personal crime victimisation among 10- to 15-year-olds**

			Odds ratio*
Any type of criminal offending	Not in last year	(Reference category)	1.0
	Committed in last year		2.5
Number of types of ASB perceived to be common in local area	None	(Reference category)	1.0
	1 to 2 types		1.6
	3 to 6 types		2.9
Sex	Female	(Reference category)	1.0
	Male		1.6
Any type of ASB offending	Not in last year	(Reference category)	1.0
	Committed in last year		1.6
<i>Unweighted base</i>			1,612

Notes: Source: C&JS 2003. \* Odds ratios of greater than one indicate relatively higher odds of being a victim than the reference category in that variable. The odds of an event is the probability of it happening over it not happening. Analysis used a forward stepwise logistic regression. Variables are listed in order of strength of predictiveness of personal crime victimisation. All categories within variables displayed were significantly different to the reference category in the variable. The Nagelkerke R square statistic tells us the extent to which the variation in the outcome variable (personal crime victimisation) is explained by the model. The proportion of variance explained was 14% for this model. Variables included in the model but found not to be significantly associated with victimisation were: age, ethnicity, personal strengths and difficulties, household financial security, household working status, truancy, school environment, upbringing, parental attitudes, relationship with parents, friends' contact with police, GOR, ACORN, activities in area, drug taking in last year and frequency of being drunk.

large for assaults (27% and 15%), robbery (5% and 2%), theft from the person (10% and 5%) and thefts of personal property (17% and 13%). They were around the same level for threats and criminal damage to personal property.

### Modelling types of personal crime

A model constructed for violent crime (assault and robbery) victimisation produced very similar results to that for overall personal crime. The same four variables (criminal and anti-social behaviour offending, anti-social behaviour in the local area and being male) were significantly associated with this type of victimisation independently of other factors for 10- to 15-year-olds.

However, a model for theft from the person produced some different results. In that model, criminal offending was not found to be significant, whilst ethnicity, drunkenness and parental relationship were statistically significant though weak predictors (overall the model was less strongly predictive than that for all personal crime).

The place of ethnicity in the modelling (not significant for personal crime overall but weakly significant for theft from the person) echoed bivariate analysis results. These showed the differences in the proportions of white and black and minority ethnic 10- to 15-year-olds who had been victims of personal crime were not statistically significant (34% and 31% respectively). However, within personal crime, white groups were more likely than black and minority ethnic groups to be the victims of assaults (21% compared with 17%) and less likely to be the victims of robbery (3% and 6%). Findings from the BCS for the adult population also confirm this pattern (Clancy et al., 2001).

It should be noted that the amount of variation in victimisation in the sample that the models explained was relatively low (similar to models of personal crime produced using British Crime Survey data). It was lower than that produced for a model of anti-social behaviour offending (Hayward and Sharp, 2004) and a model for criminal offending, and this perhaps reflects the point that any particular incident may say relatively more about the offender's characteristics than about the victim's, with some risk factors relating to both parties.

## CONCLUSIONS

The 2003 C&JS found personal crime victimisation among 10- to 15-year-olds to be around the same level as that for 16- to 25-year-olds and considerably above that for 26- to 65-year-olds. There was variation in the nature of the specific types of crime young people of different ages experienced and this reflected changes in the interaction of risk factors.

The underlying factor most strongly predictive of victimisation among young people was criminal offending by the victim. While it is possible that there are causal links between victimisation and offending, it is likely that these would only be apparent over time. Strong associations in the short term are likely to reflect lifestyles that constitute risks for both offending and victimisation.

### Methodological note

The Crime and Justice Survey is a self-reporting offending and victimisation survey carried out in people's homes using a mixture of interviewer-administered and self-completion techniques. In 2003, a nationally representative sample of 10,079 people was interviewed in England and Wales, including 4,576 people aged 10 to 25. In addition to this core sample, 1,882 interviews were conducted as a boost with people in BME groups. Tests of statistical significance for findings were at the 5% level.

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