

Module 2: Crime and Victims of Crime

Time Required

1 hour

Purpose

The purpose of this module is to identify the issues impacting victims of crime and the specific issues impacting crime victims with disabilities.

Lessons

1. Crime in the U.S. (30 minutes)
2. Issues Impacting Victims of Crime (30 minutes)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the prevalence of crime in the U.S.
- Identify two major resources that are used as indicators of crime.
- Identify key issues impacting victims of crime and specifically issues impacting crime victims with disabilities.

Participant Worksheets

No worksheets are required.

Equipment and Materials

No special equipment or materials are required.

Preparation

- Review the video *End the Silence*.
- Prepare a tear sheet titled All Crime Victims.
- Prepare a tear sheet titled Crime Victims With Disabilities.



Show Visual 2-1.

Introduce Module 2 by **explaining** that the purpose of this module is to identify the issues impacting victims of crime and specifically issues impacting crime victims with disabilities.



Show Visual 2-2.

Review the learning objectives.

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the prevalence of crime in the U.S.
- Identify two major resources that are used as indicators of crime.
- Identify key issues impacting victims of crime and specifically issues impacting crime victims with disabilities.

1. Crime in the U.S. (30 minutes)



Show Visual 2-3.

Ask: Do you think crime – violent crime against all persons – has increased or decreased over the past year? How about hate crimes?



Show Visual 2-4.

Paraphrase:

There are two major resources that are usually consulted when discussing crime statistics:

- The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) – crimes reported by law enforcement.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistic's National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) – reported and unreported crime from the victim's perspective. Like many other indicators used to assess conditions in the United States, these two indicators of crime complement each other to produce a more comprehensive portrait of the Nation's crime problem.



Show Visual 2-5.

Some of the differences between UCR and NCVS are:

	UCR	NCVS
Geographic Coverage	National and state estimates, local agency reports.	National estimates.
Collection Method	Reports by law enforcement to the FBI on a monthly basis.	Survey of 42,093 households and 77,852 individuals age 12 or older were interviewed.
Measures	Index crimes (seven serious crimes) reported by law enforcement.	Reported and unreported crime; details about the crimes, victims, and offenders.

Refer participants to Appendix C – The Nation’s two crime measures, in the Participant Manual. **Explain** that this document details the differences between the data collection methods used by UCR and NCVS.



Show Visual 2-6.

Paraphrase:

You may want to compare the two sets of data later, but for now let’s take a closer look at the UCR report. According to 2010 figures compiled in the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report, the number of violent crimes – which include murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault – declined in 2010 for the fourth year in a row, 6 percent compared to 2009. Despite this decrease there were still an estimated 1,246,248 violent crimes in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011).

Refer participants to Appendix D in the Participant Manual.

Explain that this is a summary table of violent crime data as compiled by the 2010 FBI Uniform Crime Report.



Show Visual 2-7.

Explain that other than a spike in 2001 – which was probably related to 9/11 – the number of hate crimes has remained relatively consistent. This chart on the PowerPoint slide shows the victim trend from 2007 to 2010 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011).



Show Visual 2-8.

Paraphrase:

Hate crimes are defined as crimes motivated by bias because of a victim's race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity/national origin, or disability.

The UCR reported that there were 6,624 single-bias reported hate crimes in 2010. Of these:

- 3,949 stemmed from racial bias.
- 1,552 percent resulted from religious bias.
- 1,528 were biased by sexual orientation.
- 1,122 were motivated by bias against ethnicity or national origin.
- 48 resulted from biases against people with disabilities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011).



Show Visual 2-9.

Paraphrase:

The fact is people with disabilities are more likely to be victims of crime than people without disabilities.

In November 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics released its long-awaited *Crime Against People with Disabilities, 2008-2010* report. This report is based on data collected in the National Crime Victimization Study. According to the study, young and middle-aged people with disabilities experienced higher rates of violence than people of similar ages without disabilities.



Show Visual 2-10.

Discuss some of the findings in the study.

In 2010, people age 12 or older with disabilities experienced approximately 567,000 nonfatal violent crimes, including:

- Rape or sexual assault (34,750).
- Robbery (97,970).
- Aggravated assaults (149,730).

- Simple assaults (284,850).

Keep in mind that this data does *not* include crime victims who acquired a disability as a result of the crime.



Show Visual 2-11.

Paraphrase:

When compared to people *without* disabilities (age-adjusted), the *Crime Against People with Disabilities, 2008-2010* report also found that:

- Overall, the rate of violent crime against people with disabilities was nearly double the rate for people without disabilities.
- The rate of rapes or sexual assaults against people with disabilities was more than three times the rate for people without disabilities.
- Females with disabilities (29 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older) experienced double the rate of violence compared to females without disabilities.
- Males with disabilities also experienced higher rates of violence (26 per 1,000 compared to 16 per 1,000).



Show Visual 2-12.

Paraphrase:

According to a landmark 2001 study, people with developmental disabilities are 4 to 10 times more likely to be victims of crime than other people (Petersilia, 2001).

Although they also are more likely to be victimized again by the same person, it is estimated that more than 50 percent of victims never seek assistance from legal personnel or treatment service providers.



Show Visual 2-13.

Paraphrase:

In addition:

- More than half of violent crimes against people with disabilities were against those with more than one type of disability.

- Individuals with cognitive disabilities had a rate of nonfatal violent crime victimization higher than the rates for people with all other kinds of disabilities (about 30 per 1,000 persons aged 12 or older in 2010) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011).



Show Visual 2-14.

Paraphrase:

What does all this data show us? These crimes are greatly underreported, so the percentage is probably much larger. We can conclude that the data doesn't accurately reflect the true incidence of crime against people with disabilities. Why?



Show Visual 2-15.

Paraphrase:

Women with disabilities are less likely to report abuse because they may be dependent on an abusive partner or caregiver for financial independence, housing, or transportation. They may also be so isolated they lack the ability to contact the appropriate resources, especially if a caregiver or partner is responsible for the abuse.

In addition, because society often questions the ability of people with disabilities to parent effectively, women with disabilities may be afraid they will lose custody of their children if they report victimization (Nosek, Howland, & Hughes, 2001; Powers, Hughes, & Lund, 2009).



Show Visual 2-16.

Paraphrase:

Even if they *do* want to report a crime, women with disabilities face complications such as:

- Believability.
- Personal assistance needs.
- Questions about their ability to care for their children, either because of their disability or because of their victimization.
- Transportation.
- Difficulties accessing courtrooms or other facilities if the crime is prosecuted.
- Speech and cognition difficulties.

- Judged too rapidly (Powers & Oschwald, n.d.).

So it is important to remember that the data doesn't accurately reflect the true incidence of crime against people with disabilities.

Additionally, many of these acts are seen as abuse rather than crimes. "Crime" and "abuse" are very different. While acts that are abusive can be crimes, not all abusive behavior is a crime. Culture and language might reflect abuse as something *less* than a crime. When this is played out with a person with a disability, the culture has tended to overlook the criminal aspects.

Refer back to the slide and point out that the first item under "complications" is "believability."



Show Visual 2-17.

Remind participants about self-care by **paraphrasing**:

End the Silence addresses the topic of believability. This video contains interviews with people with disabilities who have been victims of crime. If you find the content too disturbing, feel free to leave the room temporarily or take other measures to ensure your own well-being, if necessary. The video is about 7 minutes long.

DVD **Show** the video *End the Silence* that is in the PowerPoint slide by clicking on the black box in the slide.

After the video ends, **ask**:

- The crime victims in the video ask, "Why won't they believe us?" What makes others doubt their words? Why does law enforcement, the legal system, even advocates sometimes not believe people with disabilities when they say they've been a victim of a crime?
- Why might an institution be hesitant to report crime?
- How can we, as crime victim service providers and advocates for people with disabilities, encourage victims to "end the silence"? What can we ourselves do to "end the silence"?

2. Issues Impacting Victims of Crime (30 minutes)



Show Visual 2-18.

Paraphrase:

Becoming a victim of a crime is almost always a stressful experience. And unfortunately, this stress can be exacerbated by events that follow the crime. Many times, the stresses associated with crime victimization can be so disruptive an individual cannot restore his or her own emotional equilibrium. Crime victim service providers understand that if the response to a crime is not handled appropriately, the short- and long-term effects on victims can be devastating.

Most issues that confront crime victims with disabilities are issues that affect *all* crime victims. Individuals respond to crime victimization in a variety of ways, and the system that responds to crime victimization influences how an individual experiences what has happened.



Show Visual 2-19.

Refer to the tear sheet titled All Crime Victims and ask participants to list some elements of crime victimization that shape the experience that individual crime victims might face. Identify whether these are individual issues, or issues perpetrated by the system. You may cover the following points if they are not brought up by participants.

- Individual issues:
 - ~ Perceived lack of credibility.
 - ~ Possible injury or disability.
 - ~ Psychological trauma from the crime:
 - ♦ Some crime victims continue to have high levels of fear, anxiety, and generalized distress in the months following the trauma.
 - ♦ They may become preoccupied with the crime (e.g., think about it a great deal of the time; talk about it; have flashbacks and bad dreams about it).
 - ♦ They may experience negative changes in their belief systems.

- ◆ If a crime victim's trauma is not identified or addressed, trauma reactions can exacerbate and turn into long-term trauma reactions including major depression, thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts, use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, ongoing problems with relationships, anxiety disorders, and increased risk of further victimization.

- ~ Loss of resources.

- ~ Loss of a sense of safety.

- System issues:
 - ~ Underreporting of crimes.

 - ~ Lack of responsiveness (by law enforcement, crime victim service organizations, social service agencies, the medical/health community, the legal system, etc.).

 - ~ A judicial process centered on the rights and needs of the offender.

 - ~ Lack of appropriate services such as counseling or sheltering.

 - ~ Lack of accessible services (to victim services, domestic violence shelters, etc.).

Ask crime victim advocates how they respond to, and how they are affected by, these issues.

Ask advocates for people with disabilities, or those who have disabilities themselves, how they respond to, and are impacted or influenced by, these issues.

Paraphrase:

These are important issues that crime victim advocates must take into consideration when providing support to crime victims with disabilities.

Refer to the tear sheet titled Crime Victims With Disabilities and ask participants to list some elements of crime victimization that shape the experience that a crime victim who has a disability might face. You may cover the following points if they are not brought up by participants.

- Increased risk (or perception of increased vulnerability).

- Lack of resources and support systems.

- Physical or social isolation.

- Repeated victimization.

- Lower rates of police follow-up, prosecution, and conviction.

- Communication difficulties with speech and language processing.
- A judicial system that is not totally physically accessible.
- A crime victim who acquires a disability due to crime may not have the support system yet to cope with the disability or the aftermath of the crime. For example, if a crime victim is paralyzed or acquires a head injury as a result of a crime, he or she will be adjusting to their recently acquired disability at the same time that he or she is interacting with the criminal justice system.
- The disability itself. If a disability interferes with the ability of a crime victim to resist the perpetrator of a crime, or to interact with law enforcement and support staff after the crime, a crime victim's stress and anxiety may be increased.



Show Visual 2-20.

Paraphrase:

People with disabilities often experience different types of abuse, and these are often overlooked by family members, friends, caregivers, or the authorities. These crimes may include:

- Withholding medication.
- Withholding personal care services.
- Withholding needed medical equipment like walkers, canes, wheelchairs.
- Causing physical pain during routines of daily living.
- Physically restraining the individual.
- Making the person lie in their own waste, or failing to wash or bathe them.
- Withholding benefits or money, or otherwise controlling the person's finances without authorization.
- Using personal items or property without permission (Powers & Oswald, n.d.).



Show Visual 2-21.

Paraphrase:

It's important to keep in mind that no two people are alike, no two people with disabilities are alike, and no two people with the *same* disability are alike. We can't simply say "people with disabilities need this or want that." Individuals with disabilities may or may not lack resources or support systems, be isolated, or be able to communicate in a traditional manner. There are many ways people can be impacted both by crime victimization and by disabilities, and these can fluctuate over time. To deliver the optimal services, you must learn from the crime victim. Listen for what they need, and what services would be most helpful to them in the law enforcement and criminal justice processes. Don't make assumptions!

There are a number of issues on which advocates from all disciplines can work together, such as offering appropriate resources and cross-system support, and/or providing safety plans to reduce the risk of repeated victimization. We'll talk more about these later in the training.



Show Visual 2-22.

Review the learning objectives and **ask** whether these were met.

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the prevalence of crime in the U.S.
- Identify two major resources that are used as indicators of crime.
- Identify key issues impacting victims of crime and specifically issues impacting crime victims with disabilities.



Show Visual 2-23.

Ask if there are any final questions before moving to the next module.

References

Nosek, M. A., Howland, C., & Hughes, R. B. (2001). The investigation of abuse and women with disabilities: Going beyond assumptions. *Violence Against Women*, 7 (4), 477-499.

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