
Most Maine crime victims don't go to the police

by **Callie Ferguson**

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A Brunswick police officer patrols the streets of Brunswick on April 6, 2011. Credit: Pat Wellenbach / AP

About a third of adult Mainers were the victims of a crime in 2021, but fewer than half of those victims came forward to law enforcement, according to a recent survey.

Researchers at the Maine Statistical Analysis Center at the University of Southern Maine surveyed more than 1,360 adult Mainers last year to better understand different kinds of victimization, how often victims go to police and who is more likely to be victimized.

Their recent report marks the fourth time the center has conducted the survey since 2007. Titled the “2022 Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing Public Policy for Safer Communities,” its aim is to help state agencies and organizations better understand and support victims.

The survey showed a 20 percent decrease in the rate of victimization since **the last time the center conducted the survey** in 2015, when 54 percent of respondents said they were the victims of a crime.

But researchers also changed some of the questions since then, so it’s difficult to make an exact comparison, said George Shaler, one of the report’s authors and the center’s director.

This recent version was also the first time researchers asked whether victims sought support services after experiencing a crime.

Respondents were surveyed in early 2022 about their experiences in 2021. Here are some of the survey’s takeaways:

— Slightly more than one-third, or 34 percent, of respondents reported having been the victim of at least one crime in 2021.

— Crime victims are more likely to be people of color and women. They are also more likely to be young, between the ages of 18 and 34.

— Respondents from lower-income households were more likely than respondents from higher-income households to experience crimes such as stalking, domestic violence, hate crimes, threatening and violent crimes. They were more likely to have experienced rape, attempted rape or human trafficking within their lifetime.

— Respondents from higher-income households were more likely to be the victims of identity crimes.

— One in five victims reported that at least one crime against them in 2021 was committed by a domestic partner or family member.

— Just over a fifth, or 22 percent, of reported victims believed they were the subject of a hate crime in the past year, meaning they suspected the crime was motivated by their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or sexual identity.

— Twenty-three percent of respondents said someone had raped or attempted to rape them at least once in their lifetime.

— More than two-thirds of people who said they were victims of crime — 68 percent of respondents — said they did not report the crime to law enforcement.

— Crimes reported to police were most often property crimes, crimes involving threats and violent crimes.

— Of the 34 percent of respondents, or 468 people, who said they'd been the victims of crime, only 13 percent sought support from a victim services organization. Those who sought services were most likely to have experienced a violent crime.

The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the state Office of Child and Family Services within the Maine Department of Health and Human Services funded the study.

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