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Stalking crime trends in Maine, 2007-2011

Amy Geren

University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service

George Shaler MPH

University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service, Maine Statistical Analysis Center

Prashant Mittal MS, MSc

University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service

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Introduction

In 2007, the Maine Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) opted to conduct a Maine Crime Victimization Survey (MCVS) because findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) could not be analyzed at the state level, particularly because of Maine's predominantly rural geographic area and its aging population. With support from several statewide governmental agencies, the Maine SAC developed its own crime victimization survey to better understand the nature of criminal victimization in Maine, and to update crime trends and perceptions of crime in Maine. The Muskie School of Public Service (MSPS) staffs the Maine SAC and, as one of the largest public policy centers in the U.S., conducts extensive research activities under state and national partnerships, and has projects in every state in the nation.

The MCVS was patterned after the work of the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice and covers topics that include overall impressions of safety and satisfaction with local law enforcement. It asks respondents if they were victims of several types of crime in the past 12 months, including sexual, violent, stalking, property and identity theft crimes, and whether or not they reported these crimes to the police. Demographic determiners include household income, age, gender, marital status, education, race, and whether the respondent had children living with them or not.

In 2011, the MSPS repeated the MCVS to update data from the previous survey. As in 2007, the Maine SAC and the Muskie School's Survey Research Center obtained over 800 complete surveys from eligible Maine residents and weighted the results based on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey for Maine and county population distributions from the 2010 census to ensure a representative sample of the statewide population. Data produced from the surveys are assessable by governmental agencies and statewide organizations to advocate for new laws, reduce victimization, and to provide services for victims of crime. This brief provides some in-depth analyses of data collected during the 2007 and 2011 surveys and focuses on stalking crimes. Analyses in the brief represent data with the weights removed and percentages may vary slightly from the full victimization reports.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS)¹ on stalking related crimes, victims of stalking experience at least one of the following behaviors on more than one occasion (see text box at right) during the 12 months prior to being interviewed, and they indicate they are fearful for themselves or a family member as a result of the stalking

¹Go to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Stalking Victims in the United States September 2012 special report at: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/svus_rev.pdf

Authors:

Amy Geren
George Shaler, MPH
Prashant Mittal, MS, MSc

For more information about this study, contact:

George Shaler
SAC Director
207-228-8344
gshaler@usm.maine.edu

Maine Statistical Analysis Center

The Maine SAC serves as a clearinghouse for data collection and statistical analysis for the Maine criminal justice system, promotes a research-based approach and conducts research that support its identified priorities and objectives.

Stalking Crimes Include:

- *Making unwanted phone calls*
- *Sending unsolicited or unwanted letters or emails*
- *Following or spying on the victim*
- *Showing up at places without legitimate reason*
- *Waiting in places for the victim*
- *Leaving unwanted items and/or*
- *Posting information or spreading rumors online, in a public place or by word of mouth*

behavior or they may have experienced another crime committed by the offender. The SVS included approximately 65,270 participants in 2006 and 83% of eligible individuals responded to the survey.

The 2007 and 2011 Maine Crime Victimization Reports included responses to seven survey questions that encompassed all of the prerequisite behaviors on the SVS for stalking related crimes except posting information or spreading rumors about the victim on the internet or in a public place.² The reports determined stalking crime victimization with positive responses to any of the seven questions related to stalking. The term 'stalking' was not used on either the national or state survey to avoid biasing the results.

The term 'stalking' was not used on either the NCVS or the MCVS to avoid biasing the results

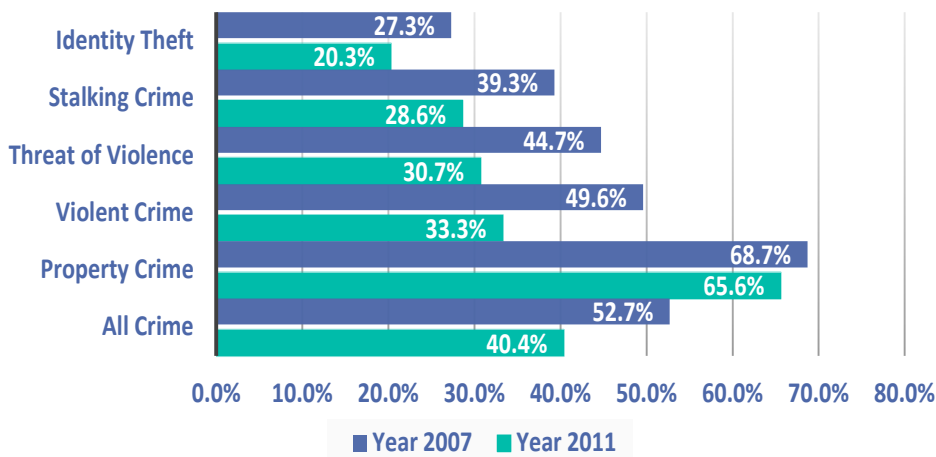
Stalking Analysis

In 2011, 10.67% of respondents had been a victim of a stalking crime, up insignificantly from 10.66% in the 2007 MCVS.

Despite stabilization of the stalking victimization rate, stalking victims underreport the crime with only 28.6% of victims reporting in 2011 compared to 39.3% of victims in 2007. All crime types were underreported based on the 2011 report compared to the 2007 report.

Stalking was one of two crime types, with identity theft, that showed increases in frequency from the 2007 to the 2011 MCVS.

**Crime Reporting Percent Change 2007-2011
by Type of Crime**



Stalking crimes in Maine were increasingly underreported with only 28.6% of victims reporting stalking crimes in 2011 compared to 39.3% of victims reporting the crime in 2007.

²Go to Maine SAC's Maine Crime Victimization Report for 2011 at: http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justiceresearch/Publications/Adult/ME_Crime_Victimization_Survey_2011.pdf

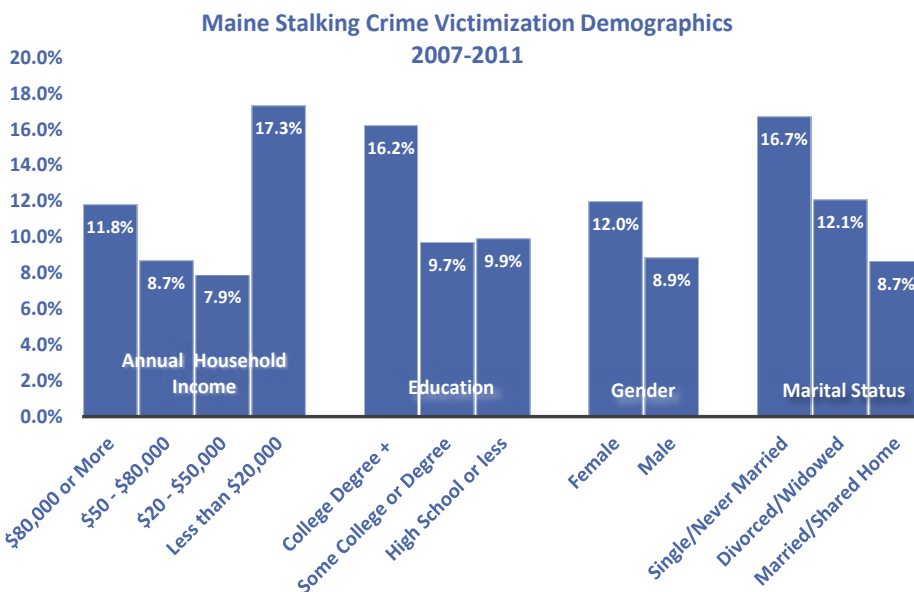
Findings from the MCVS results show that stalking victims in Maine are likely to be single, younger than the population as a whole, female, and have a four-year college degree or more. They are also likely to have a smaller household income than non-victims, predictably since they are more likely to have a single household income.

Female MCVS respondents indicate they are victims of stalking 12.0% compared to male stalking victims at 8.9%. Nationally, female stalking victims outnumber male stalking victims nearly three to one and, although underreported, both female and male stalking victims are equally likely to report the crime to the police at 41% and 37%.

Victims indicating they are stalking victims in Maine are more likely to have a four year college degree or more at 16.2%, versus 9.9% with high school or less, and 9.7% with some college or a college degree. Stalking victims are also more likely to have a smaller household income. With household incomes of 17.3% of those less than \$20,000 are victims compared to 7.9% for those \$20-\$50K, 8.7% for those with household incomes of \$50-\$80K, and 11.8% for those with \$80,000 or more in household income. With all single respondents, including separated, divorced and widowed individuals, making up 77% of those indicating they are a victim of stalking, the household income would be lower than that of a married couple. National survey results show individuals with lower household incomes are more likely to be victims of stalking as well.

Stalking victims in Maine are likely to be single, younger than the average population, female, and have a four-year college degree or more.

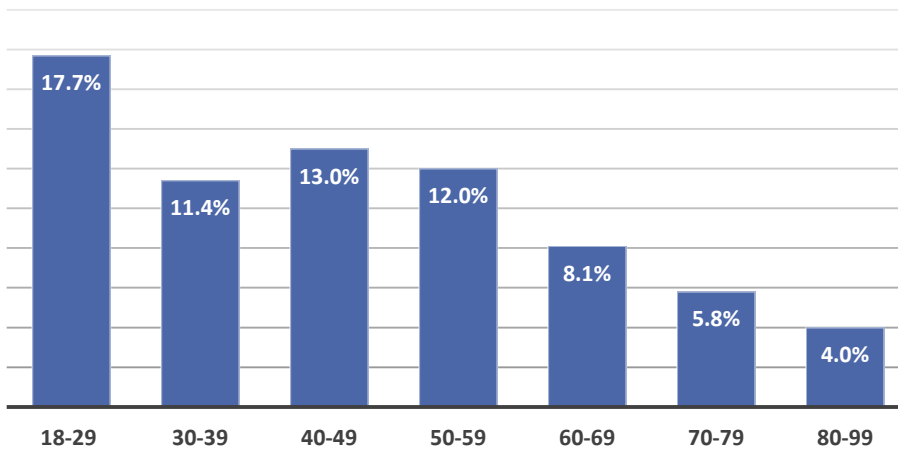
In Maine, 12.0% of women indicate they have been a stalking victim, outnumbering male stalking victims at 8.9%.



The majority of stalking victims in Maine are younger than the state’s average population. 10.7% of all survey respondents indicate they are stalking victims, while 17.7% of 18-29 year-olds indicate they are stalking victims. 30-59 year-olds indicate they are stalking victims 11.4%-13.0%, and then victimization drops much lower for victims 60 years and older. Nationally, younger individuals are most likely to be stalking victims as well.

Nationally, female stalking victims outnumbered male stalking victims nearly three to one and, although underreported, both female and male stalking victims were equally likely to report the crime to the police.

Stalking Victimization in Maine by Age 2007-2011 (n=1612)



Stalking victims, both in Maine and nationally, tend to be younger than the population as a whole with 17.7% of 18-29 year-olds in Maine indicating they have experienced stalking crime behavior.

Implications

Stalking crime in Maine is one of only two crime types that showed any type of increase in occurrence during a time period when all other crime types decreased in occurrence. Stalking crimes show they are still underreported, with 10.7% less victims reporting the crime between the 2007 and 2011 survey years. Women show they are victims of stalking crimes more than men, and single women are much more likely than married women to be victims of stalking in Maine.

Differences in the Maine and the National Surveys' determiners for stalking crime victimization, as well as differences in the surveys to Maine and national stalking laws, point to the potential problem victims have with reporting this type of crime. While the Maine survey asks participants if they have experienced and felt threatened by a number of stalking behaviors, the national survey results depend on the victim experiencing one or more of the stalking behaviors on more than one occasion. Maine and national laws, however, identify stalking by a slightly varied set of determiners, including feeling fearful or otherwise annoyed by the actor of the crime to predetermine stalking victimization.³ (Maine: 17-A - § 210-A. Stalking. 1995. Effective 2003; U.S.: 18 USCS § 2261A. Stalking. 2013.)⁴ Public awareness of stalking behavior and what constitutes a stalking crime in Maine could increase victim reporting.

Differences in the Maine and the National Surveys' determiners for stalking crime victimization, as well as differences in the surveys to Maine and national stalking laws, point to the potential problem victims have with reporting this type of crime.

³Go to Maine Revised Statutes, Title 17-A: Maine Criminal Code:
<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/17-a/title17-asec210-a.html>

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