

# Race and crime in the united states criminology essay



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The relationship between race and crime in the United States has been a topic of public controversy and scholarly debate for more than a century.[1] Since the 1980s, the debate has centered around the causes of and contributing factors to the disproportional representation of racial minorities (particularly African Americans, hence “ Black crime”) at all stages of the criminal justice system, including arrests, prosecutions and incarcerations.[2] Many theories of causation have been proposed, the most prominent of which assume predominantly social and/or environmental causes, though notable exceptions argue for a reconsideration of the role of biology.[3] Sociologist Orlando Patterson has summarized the controversy as a dispute between liberal and conservative criminologists in which both parties focus on a single aspect of the causal net, with liberals focusing on factors external to the groups in question and conservatives focusing on internal cultural and behavioral factors.[4]

## History

Further information: Anthropological criminology

[http://upload.wikimedia.](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/12/WEB_DuBois_1918.jpg/150px-WEB_DuBois_1918.jpg)

[org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/12/WEB\\_DuBois\\_1918.jpg/150px-WEB\\_DuBois\\_1918.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/12/WEB_DuBois_1918.jpg/150px-WEB_DuBois_1918.jpg)

<http://bits.wikimedia.org/skins-1.17/common/images/magnify-clip.png>

W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the pioneers in the study of race and crime in the United States.

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The relationship between race and crime has been an area of study for criminologists since the emergence of anthropological criminology in the late 19th century.[5] Cesare Lombroso, founder of the Italian school of criminology, argued that criminal behavior was the product of biological factors, including race. This biological perspective was criticized by early 20th century scholars, including Frances Kellor, Johan Thorsten Sellin and William Du Bois, who argued that other circumstances, such as social and economic conditions, were the central factors which led to criminal behavior, regardless of race. Du Bois traced the causes of the disproportional representation of Blacks in the criminal justice system back to the improperly handled emancipation of Black slaves in general and the convict leasing program in particular. In 1901, he wrote:

There are no reliable statistics to which one can safely appeal to measure exactly the growth of crime among the emancipated slaves. About seventy per cent of all prisoners in the South are black; this, however, is in part explained by the fact that accused Negroes are still easily convicted and get long sentences, while whites still continue to escape the penalty of many crimes even among themselves. And yet allowing for all this, there can be no reasonable doubt but that there has arisen in the South since the [civil] war a class of black criminals, loafers, and ne'er-do-wells who are a menace to their fellows, both black and white.[6]

The debate that ensued remained largely academic until the late 20th century, when the relationship between race and crime became a recognized field of specialized study in criminology. As Helen T. Greene and Shaun L. Gabbidon, professor of criminal justice at Pennsylvania State University, note <https://assignbuster.com/race-and-crime-in-the-united-states-criminology-essay/>

in their recently published Encyclopedia of Race and Crime (2009), many criminology and criminal justice programs now either require or offer elective courses on the topic of the relationship between race and crime.[7]

Crime rate statistics

## **Murder and non-negligent homicide**

There were 14, 180 victims and 16, 277 perpetrators of murder and non-negligent homicide reported by law enforcement agencies to the FBI in 2008.

[25] The following table presents the racial demographics of murder in the United States for 2008 (with ' other' including Asian American, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American):[26]

â†“

**Offendersâ†“**

**Victimsâ†“**

**White victimsâ†“**

**Black victimsâ†“**

**Other victimsâ†“**

**Unknown victimsâ†“**

White

32. 8%

48. 2%

83. 3%

7.6%

30.0%

37.0%

Black

36.5%

47.8%

13.8%

90.0%

16.7%

29.0%

Other

1.7%

2.3%

1.2%

0.3%

52.0%

3.0%

Unknown

29.0%

1.7%

1.6%

2.1%

1.2%

31.0%

African Americans, constituting approximately 12% of the general population, were significantly overrepresented in the total arrests made. African Americans were also significantly overrepresented in victimization, representing 47% of all murder victims. White Americans and individuals of Other race were significantly underrepresented in cases of murder and non-negligible homicide in 2008. Murder in White American and African American populations were overwhelmingly intraracial, with 83% of all White victims and 90% of all Black victims having been murdered by individuals of the same race. The same was true, though to a lesser degree, for individuals of Other race, with 52% having been murdered by individuals also of Other race.

### **[edit] Non-lethal violent crime**

Law enforcement agencies made 2, 487 arrests for forcible rape, 27, 476 arrests for robbery and 42, 779 arrests for aggravated assault in 2008.[27]

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The following table presents the racial demographics of these non-lethal violent crimes in the United States for 2008:

“

**Total**“

**Rape**“

**Robbery**“

**Aggravated assault**“

White

58.3%

65.2%

41.7%

63.3%

Black

39.4%

32.2%

56.7%

34.2%

Native

1.2%

1. 2%

0. 7%

1. 4%

Asian/Pacific Islander

1. 1%

1. 4%

0. 9%

1. 2%

White Americans were arrested more than any other race for non-lethal violent crimes in 2008, making up 58% of all arrests. White Americans, constituted approximately 79% of the total population. This survey does not make a distinction between non hispanic whites and hispanic whites. Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans, constituted approximately 4% of the total population made up only 1% of total arrests. African Americans contituted approximately 12% of the population, and made up 39% of all arrests for non-lethal violent crimes in 2008.

The following table presents the racial and ethnic demographics of non-lethal violent crime victimization per 1000 persons age 12 or older in 2008 (with 'other' including Asian American, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American):[28]



â†“

**Totalâ†“**

**Rapeâ†“**

**Robberyâ†“**

**Aggravated assaultâ†“**

**Simple assaultâ†“**

White

18. 1

0. 6

1. 6

3. 0

12. 8

Black

25. 9

1. 9

5. 5

5. 3

13. 3

Hispanic

16. 4

0. 6

3. 4

3. 5

8. 9

Other

15. 2

0. 9

3. 0

2. 8

8. 5

Multi

51. 6

1. 9

6. 8

6. 8

36. 1

Multiracial Americans reported being victimized by non-lethal violent crime at rates 2 to 3 times higher than White Americans, African Americans, and individuals of Other race. Hispanic Americans reported being victimized by non-lethal violent crime at rates lower than that of non-Hispanic White Americans and African Americans. With the exception of simple assault, African Americans reported being victimized by non-lethal violent crime at rates significantly higher than those of White Americans, Hispanic Americans, and individuals of Other race.

### **[edit] Property crime**

Law enforcement agencies made 235, 407 arrests for burglary, 979, 145 arrests for larceny/theft, 74, 881 arrests for motor vehicle theft and 10, 734 arrests for arson in 2008.[27] The following table presents the racial demographics of these property crimes in the United States for 2008:

â†“

**Total**â†“

**Burglary**â†“

**Larceny-theft**â†“

**Motor vehicle theft**â†“

**Arson**â†“

White

67. 4%

66. 8%

68.1%

59.7%

78.8%

Black

30.1%

31.4%

29.3%

38.1%

21.7%

Native

1.2%

0.9%

1.3%

1.1%

1.2%

Asian/Pacific Islander

1.3%

0.9%

1.4%

1.2%

1.2%

White Americans (including hispanics and non hispanics) were arrested more than any other race for property crimes in 2008, making up 67% of all arrests. With the exception of arson, White Americans were significantly underrepresented in all property crimes, as were Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans. African Americans were significantly overrepresented in all forms of property crime, making up 30% of all arrests.

### **[edit] Racially motivated hate crime**

There were 3,870 incidents of racially motivated hate crime reported in 2007, with 4,724 individual offenses, 4,956 victims and 3,707 known offenders.[29] The following table presents the racial demographics of these hate crimes in the United States for 2007:[30]

“

**Offenders**“

**Victims**“

**Anti-White**“

**Anti-Black**“

**Anti-Native**“

**Anti-Asian/Pac. Isl.** “

**Anti-Multi**“

White

45.9%

18.3%

18.5%

54.1%

58.6%

41.5%

36.6%

Black

10.6%

69.2%

45.2%

2.4%

4.0%

8.2%

2.1%

Native

1.5%

1.1%

2.5%

0.6%

9.3%

0.5%

1.4%

Asian/Pacific Islander

0.4%

4.7%

0.7%

0.3%

0.0%

1.4%

0.0%

Multi

2.5%

6.1%

2.4%

2.0%

0.0%

5.0%

6.7%

Unknown race/Other

6.7%

0.5%

5.4%

7.1%



5. 3%

6. 0%

6. 3%

Unknown offender

32. 7%

—

25. 2%

33. 4%

22. 7%

37. 4%

46. 8%

White Americans were identified as having committed the most racially motivated hate crimes in 2007, making up nearly 46% of all reported offenders. Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans were identified as having committed the least racially motivated hate crimes, making up less than 1% of all reported offenders. African Americans reported being victimized by racially motivated hate crime more frequently than any other race, making up 69% of all victims.

**[edit] White-collar crime**

Law enforcement agencies made 68, 586 arrests for forgery and counterfeiting, 173, 567 arrests for fraud and 16, 314 arrests for embezzlement in 2008.[27] The following table presents the racial demographics of these white-collar crimes in the United States for 2008:

â†“

**Total**â†“

**Forgery-counterfeiting**â†“

**Fraud**â†“

**Embezzlement**â†“

White

67. 4%

67. 7%

67. 5%

64. 5%

Black

30. 9%

30. 7%

30. 8%

33. 4%

## Native

0.7%

0.5%

0.8%

0.6%

## Asian/Pacific Islander

0.9%

1.1%

0.8%

1.5%

White Americans (including hispanics and non hispanics) were arrested more than any other race for these white-collar crimes in 2008, making up 67% of all arrests. White Americans, constituting approximately 79% of the total population, were significantly underrepresented in the total arrests made, as were Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans. African Americans were significantly overrepresented in forgery/counterfeiting, fraud and embezzlement, making up nearly 31% of all arrests.