

Explaining the High Rate of Violent Victimization for Multiracial Individuals

The NCVS over the past two years has shown that individuals who identify their race as “two or more races” experience substantially higher rates of violent victimization when compared to other groups. Why might this be? One possible explanation is bias. While we can not directly measure this from the NCVS, we could examine other factors likely to be associated with violent victimization and multiracial identification. Ideally, we would use the actual NCVS individual records for this analysis, but as these are not presently available, we could use a second-best population characteristics approach. In essence, the alternative hypothesis to the bias explanation is that individuals who self-identify as multiracial might share some characteristic that increases the rate of violent victimization.

Perhaps the most obvious (and innocuous?) explanation is age: It might be that individuals who are younger are more likely to identify / be identified as multiracial. Indeed, for the 2000 Census, a comparison of the two or more races age structure to the age structure of the population as a whole shows that this suspicion is true:

Age Group	Percent of “2 or More Races” Population in the Age Group	Percent of Total US Population in the Age Group
0 – 4	13.89%	6.77%
5 – 9	12.16%	7.32%
10 – 14	10.31%	7.33%
15 – 17	5.50%	4.22%
18 – 19	3.61%	2.86%
20 – 21	3.41%	2.8%
22 – 24	4.68%	3.96%
25 – 29	7.51%	6.83%
30 – 34	7.09%	7.24%
35 – 44	13.06%	16.31%
45 – 49	4.96%	7.17%
50 – 59	6.70%	10.94%
60 – 64	2.1%	3.83%
65+	5.04%	12.43%

Source: 2000 Census information available online

So, of the multiracial population, a greater proportion is younger (i.e., in the peak age for violent victimization). Given the average annual rates of violent victimization by age reported by the NCVS, which shows a higher victimization for younger groups, we might suspect a partial explanation.

Age Group	2003-04 Average Annual Rate of Violent Victimization
12 – 15	50.7
16 – 19	49.4
20 – 24	43.2
25 – 34	25.0
35 – 49	18.2
50 – 64	10.6

65+	2.0
-----	-----

Source: 2004 NCVS report

How much might this factor explain the difference? We need to make some simplifying assumptions to come up with quick calculations:

1. Assume that within 2000 Census age brackets that each year contributes an equal percentage to the age bracket. While this assumption is likely not true, it makes the following calculations easier.
2. Assume no significant increase in individuals beginning to identify as multiracial between 2000 and 2004.
3. Assume no shift in the relative proportion of the population that is multiracial between 2000 and 2004.
4. Assume even distribution of victimization within age categories for the NCVS. (That is, assume that the rates for 12, 13, 14, and 15 year olds are equal.)
5. Assume that NCVS response rates / sampling rates are proportional to age category size across all categories for both the total population and those who identify as multiracial.

With these assumptions, we can weight the victimization rates by age by (a) adding 4 years to the Census 2000 age groups and distributing them into 2004 NCVS age groups and (b) calculating a relative multiplier for the ratio of the proportion multiracial to the proportion of the total US population.

Age Range NCVS	Age Range 2000 Census	Proportion of Multiracial	Proportion of Total Population	Multiracial multiplier
12 – 15 yr	8- 11 yr	.114	.066	1.728
16 – 19	12 – 15	.101	.065	1.558
20 -24	16 – 20	.115	.080	1.431
25 – 34	21 – 30	.194	.153	1.266
35-49	31- 45	.250	.265	.945
50 – 64	46 – 60	.141	.196	.716
65+	61+	.085	.174	.489

Note: The proportions in the above table are the proportion of the population that is within the NCVS age categories (12 – 15), excluding from the denominator of the total population those who were less than 8 years old in 2000.

Next, we can use the above proportions multiplied by the NCVS victimization rates by age and sum the result to arrive at an estimated total victimization rate for groups. For the multiracial groups, we would also multiply by the multiracial multiplier to account for differences in the age composition.

Doing this, we get a violent victimization rate for the entire population of 21.1 (somewhat different, but reasonably close, to the 22.0 in the NCVS report). We get a violent victimization rate of 36.5 for multiracial individuals. The mean of the 2003 and 2004 rates of violent victimization is 59.7. Using just this information on age seems to account for about 40% of the gap in victimization rates ($36.5 - 21.1 / 59.7 - 21.1$)