

Fear of Crime

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Skill

- Using software to access and analyze census data
- Identifying independent and dependent variables
- Learning how to construct, read, and interpret bivariate tables displaying frequencies and percentages

Substance

- Students will learn about race, gender and violence in the United States

Every day we have specific routines we engage in. Many of these routines are tailored to preventing us from becoming victims of crime. We do things like lock our doors, watch where we walk at night, or avoid walking alone. We take these actions because at some level we are afraid of the possibility of being a victim of crime. Although we may not consciously think about it, these routines may be influenced by a variety of factors. What factors might make some individuals more afraid than others?

Let's look at two possibilities; gender and race and their relationship to fear of crime.

1. What do you think is the relationship between gender and fear of crime?
2. What do you think is the relationship between race and crime?

Write out the hypotheses for each of these and identify the independent and dependent variable. Remember that the independent variable is the causal variable and the dependent variable is the variable that is changed as a result of the independent variable.

3. (Gender) H1:
4. (Race) H2:

Now that you have stated the relationships you expect to find, let's test them.

This assignment requires that you use several different online resources. For the first part, please click on the following link. <http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website/Data+Analysis/>

We will be using the General Social Survey (GSS) for the first part of this assignment. The GSS is a national survey designed with a standard core of demographic and attitudinal variables, and special interest topic modules that are rotated into the survey. The purpose of this biannual survey is to gather data on contemporary American society and to provide easy access to high quality data.

Once you arrive at this screen you should use the menu bar on the left to explore the data set you will be using (The GSS Cumulative Data File). We will be using the Tabulation tool to conducting both univariate (single variable) and bivariate (two variables) analyses, specifically frequency distributions and crosstabulations (also known as contingency tables). At this point, the program wants to know what variables you are interested in analyzing. We will be using SEX and RACE as our independent variables and FEAR as our dependent variable for this analysis.

First let's find out how many people in the sample answered yes to the following question: "Is there any area right around here--that is, within a mile--where you would be afraid to walk alone?" This is the operational definition of the concept FEAR.

Using the left hand toolbar, select the variable Fear, and add it to a row.

5. What percentage of the sample answered yes to the question about fear?

To find out if there are gender differences in fear, we can conduct a contingency table (also known as crosstabulation). To do this, put the variable FEAR in the Row box and the variable SEX in the column box. The default for the percentaging option should be column. If it is not, select this option from the pull down menu. Do not check the box next to color coding. Click on the Run Table button.

6. What percentage of women said that they were fearful?
7. What percentage of men said that they were fearful?
8. Who is more fearful, men or women?
9. Why do think they are more fearful?

One explanation for fear of victimization is actual victimization. Open a new window on your internet browser. Go to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>) to look at actual victimization rates. On the left side of the page click on Victim Characteristics. Scroll down the page until you reach the chart titled "Trends in Violent Victimization by Gender". Click on the image and you will see a larger version of the chart.

10. Who was more likely to be a victim of a violent crime men or women?
11. Does this chart seem to support or refute the theory that fear of victimization is associated with actual victimization. Explain.

Go back to the GSS web page and run the same analysis looking at the relationship between race and fear.

12. What percentage of Whites said they were fearful?
13. What percentage of Blacks said they were fearful?
14. What percentage of individuals in the Other Category said they were fearful?

15. Who are more fearful, Whites, Blacks, or those individuals in the Other category?

Go back to the BJS web page and look at the chart titled "Trends in violent victimization by race".

16. Who was more likely to be a victim of violent crime blacks or whites?

17. Does this chart seem to support or refute the theory that fear of victimization is associated with actual victimization. Explain

18. What other factors besides gender and race do you think might be related to fear of victimization? Identify two and write out hypotheses that illustrate how these two factors would be associated with fear of crime.