



Fear of Crime

Everyday 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.

What do you think is the relationship between gender and fear of crime?

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.

(Gender) H_1 :

(Race) H_2 :

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.icpsr.umich.edu/GSS/index.html>

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 select Analyze from the top of the screen. On this page you will see the data file that you will be using (The GSS 1972-2000 Cumulative Data File) as well as options for analysis. For this exercise we will be conducting both univariate (single variable) and bivariate (two variables) analyses, specifically frequency distributions and crosstabulations (also known as contingency tables). Click on the radio button next to Frequencies or Crosstabulations, and then on the start button. 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.

1. Type in the variable name for the concept fear in the Row box. Check the box next to question text. Click on Run Table.

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

2. To find out if there are gender differences in fear, we can conduct a contingency table (also known as crosstabulation). To do this, type the variable name FEAR in the Row box and the variable name SEX in the column box. The default for the percentaging option should be column. If it is not, check the box next to column. Do not check the box next to color coding. Click on Run the Table. The box with the heading Frequency distribution represents the contingency table.

What percentage of women said that they were fearful?

What percentage of men said that they were fearful?

Who is more fearful, men or women?

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) (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.

Who was more likely to be a victim of a violent crime men or women?

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.

What percentage of Whites said they were fearful?

What percentage of Blacks said they were fearful?

What percentage of individuals in the Other Category said they were fearful?

Who is 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".

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

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

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.