



# Idaho Crime Victim Survey

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The *Biennial Report on Victimization & Victim Services* is a series of papers on the state of victimization, response to victimization, impacts of crime on victims, and victim services in Idaho. The project is funded by the Idaho Council on Domestic Violence & Victim Assistance. For more information on the project, watch the introductory video at <https://www.boisestate.edu/sps-criminaljustice/victimization/> or contact Dr. Lisa Growette Bostaph at [lisabostaph@boisestate.edu](mailto:lisabostaph@boisestate.edu).



## Study Overview

As a part of the *Biennial Report on Victimization & Victim Services*, a series of reports produced by Boise State University researchers and funded by the Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance (ICDVVA), an online survey was constructed to gather information from crime victims in Idaho. Whereas the crime victim provider survey (King et al., 2020) gathered information from agencies that serve crime victims, this survey collected information directly from crime victims. The survey requested information about the crime(s) for which services were received, the services received including opinions about them and whether they had any unmet needs, any barriers experienced in obtaining services, treatment by service providers, experiences and opinions about reporting crime to police, knowledge of and ability to exercise crime victims' rights, and basic demographic information. This survey will be ongoing through 2022 and is maintained in Qualtrics, an online survey platform.

Prior to beginning this study, approval was obtained from Boise State University's Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research. After reviewing the informed consent (the first item on the survey), respondents who agree to participate click a button and proceed with the survey which is available in five languages: English, Spanish, French, Arabic, and Swahili. The survey was constructed in English by the research team and translated into the other languages by local translation experts from Boise State University and the surrounding community. A drop-down menu allows participants to easily change the survey language as needed. These languages were chosen based on the research team's consultation with victim service experts in Idaho.

In order to obtain survey respondents, all of the agencies that were invited to take the provider survey (n=103) were asked to distribute the survey to any crime victims who contacted their agency for services. Additionally, agencies that receive VOCA funding are required to distribute the survey as per the grant agreement. Links to the survey, including the QR code for smart phone access, were provided to agencies to share with potential respondents. The survey was deployed in May of 2020. Responses were sparse at the start, likely at least partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic which had started a few months earlier. In an effort to increase participation, the research team had small cards created (the size of a business card) which contained information about the survey and how to access it. Thousands of these cards, available in all five languages, have been requested and sent to agencies across the state. While responses remain somewhat slow, they have increased since distributing the victim survey cards.

For the purposes of this report, all of the survey data were downloaded from Qualtrics on December 1, 2020. As of that date, there were 97 submitted responses. Five more surveys were in progress, but were not downloaded for this analysis. After evaluating the submitted survey responses, it was determined that many of them were blank or were not complete enough for analysis (e.g., answered only one or two questions total). In the end, there were 19 surveys complete enough for analysis. This is unfortunately a small sample size and it is not possible to calculate the response rate since there is no way to determine how many victims were notified about the survey. Despite the small sample size, the data were analyzed to provide preliminary information about the opinions and experiences of crime victims in Idaho. Since this survey is ongoing, future reports will yield additional insights as responses continue to grow. Due to the small sample size for this particular report, the recommendations offered will focus on methodological considerations related to collecting survey data from crime victims.

# Results

The data were downloaded from Qualtrics and transferred into a statistical software program for analysis. The focus of the analysis was on describing the experiences and opinions of this sample of Idaho crime victims in regard to the crime(s) they experienced, the services they received, any unmet needs, their interactions with the criminal justice system, and basic demographics. The results are organized by topic and described below.

## Demographic and Crime Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the sample are displayed in Table 1. Of the respondents who answered these questions, all identified as female (n=18) with an average age of about 35 years. It is not surprising that the sample was overrepresented by females since females are more likely to seek assistance following criminal victimization (McCart et al., 2010), have been overrepresented in previous research on Idaho crime victims (Growette Bostaph et al., 2015), and are more likely to complete surveys (Dillman et al., 2009). Responses from male victims ideally will be obtained as data collection continues.

Table 1  
*Sample Demographics*

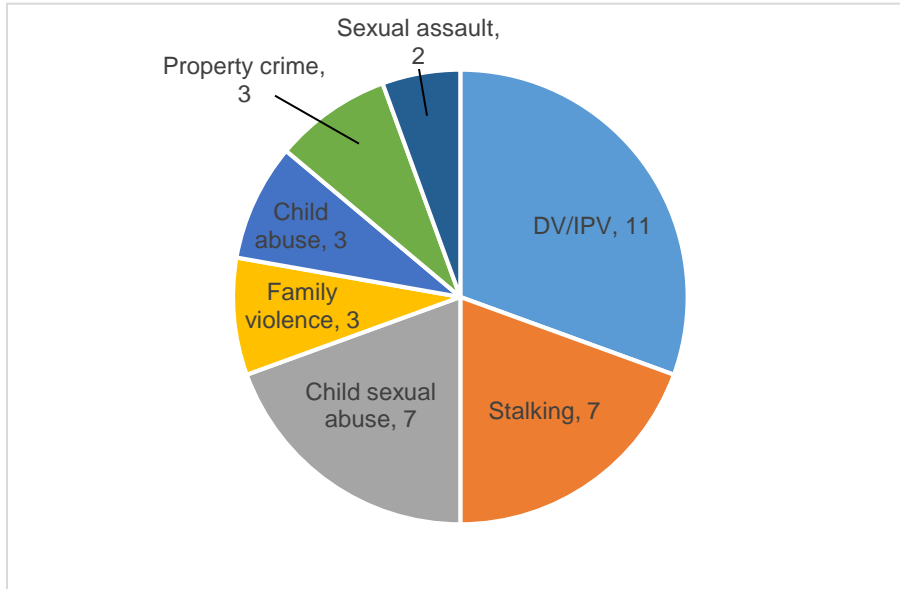
Variable/Category	Frequency (%)	Average	Range
Female	18 (100.0)		
Age		35.44	20-59
Race/Ethnicity			
Caucasian/White only	16 (88.9)		
Two or more	2 (11.1)		
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual/straight	14 (77.8)		
Bisexual	3 (16.7)		
Gay/lesbian	1 (5.6)		
Relationship Status			
Divorced	8 (47.1)		
Married	4 (23.5)		
Single	4 (23.5)		
Engaged	1 (5.9)		

In terms of race/ethnicity, the majority (n=16) identified as Caucasian/White. Two respondents identified as being from more than one racial/ethnic category: one as Caucasian/White and Hispanic/Latinx, and another as Caucasian/White and Native American. In regard to sexual orientation, 14

identified as heterosexual/straight while three identified as bisexual and one as gay/lesbian. Last, respondents were asked about their current relationships status. The most frequently selected response was divorced (n=8), followed by married (n=4) or single (n=4), and engaged (n=1).

The survey asked a number of questions about the crime(s) for which respondents received services in Idaho in the past year. Many of the crimes included a brief description (e.g., physical or emotional harm by a current or former romantic partner) to enhance the validity of the measure. Respondents were able to select all that apply. The results are displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1  
*Crimes for Which Services Received in the Last Year*

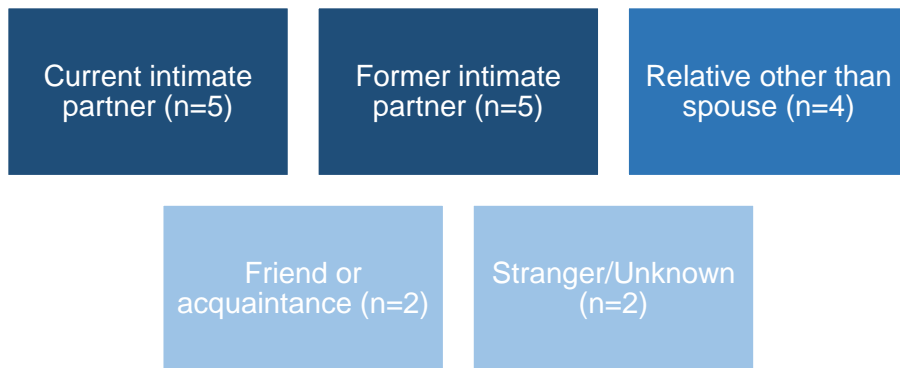


Respondents selected 1-6 crimes each (average=1.89). The most frequently reported crime was domestic/intimate partner violence which is in line with the findings of the provider survey and previous research on crime victims in Idaho (Growette Bostaph et al., 2015; King et al., 2020). The next two most common

categories included stalking and child sexual abuse. Three respondents each selected family violence (i.e., physical harm by a family member who is not a current or former romantic partner), child abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, and neglect), and property crime. Only two selected sexual assault and none selected the other categories of stranger violence, homicide survivor, DUI, or robbery. Participants were also asked to report which crime(s) they received services for most recently (not shown). These responses were almost identical to those reported in Figure 1 with the exception of stalking being selected by five and property crime by two.

Since most crimes are committed by someone known to the victim (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2020), the survey asked about the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator.

Figure 2  
*Relationship of Victim to Perpetrator*



As expected, the majority of respondents reported that the perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner (see Figure 2). The next most common relationship was a relative (other than a spouse). Friend or acquaintance, and stranger/unknown were selected by two respondents each.

A number of questions were asked about reporting the crime(s) to authorities. The responses are displayed in Table 2. Twelve respondents indicated that the crime was reported to the police, six selected that it was not, and one left this question blank. Those who stated that the crime was not reported were asked why. A number of potential responses were provided based on the *National Crime Victimization Survey* (BJS, 2020) and previous research on crime victims in Idaho (Growette Bostaph et al., 2015), and there was space to write in any additional reasons.

Table 2  
*Crime Reporting*

Variable/Category	Frequency	Valid %
Reported to police		
Yes	12	66.7
No	6	33.3
Reasons why not reported <sup>1</sup>		
Didn't want offender to get in trouble	4	66.7
Afraid of offender	4	66.7
No confidence in the criminal justice system	3	50.0
Didn't consider it a crime	2	33.3
Didn't know how to report it	1	16.7
Police would not do anything to help	1	16.7
Afraid of people finding out	1	16.7
Didn't know I should report it	1	16.7
Would report to police if harmed again		
Yes	11	61.1
No	2	11.1
Not sure	5	27.8

The most commonly reported reason was that the respondent did not want to get the offender in trouble, followed by fear of the offender, a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, and the respondent not considering the incident a crime. One respondent each selected that they did not know how to report it,

police would not do anything to help, and they were afraid of people finding out. Last, one respondent wrote that they were a child when it happened so they did not know to report to anyone. The final question in this section asked respondents if they would report to police if they were harmed again. Eleven answered affirmatively, two indicated they would not report, and five were unsure.

## Services Received

The survey included a number of questions about the services respondents received. First, it was asked why services were received (not shown). The majority (n=12) indicated that they were the victim of a crime, four reported that someone close to them was, and two indicated that they were the victim of a crime and someone close to them was too. Respondents were asked how many times they received victim services in Idaho in the past year. Responses ranged from 1 time to 40 times, with some noting repeated intervals (e.g., once a week, since July, continual services over 10 years).

Next, respondents were provided with a list of services and accompanying descriptions and they were asked to indicate which services they received in the last year. As can be seen in

<sup>1</sup> Percentages do not total 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.

Table 3, the most frequently received services included emergency services; individual counseling; crisis response; assistance obtaining a protection order; safety planning; and help accessing employment, housing, or public benefit resources. Less frequently received services included explanation of crime victims' rights, transportation, hospital accompaniment, support through the criminal justice process, and bilingual services.

Table 3  
*Services Received*

Variable/Category	Frequency	Valid % <sup>2</sup>
Emergency services such as food, money, or clothing	10	52.6%
Individual counseling	9	47.4%
Crisis response	6	31.6%
Assistance obtaining a protection or no contact order	6	31.6%
Safety planning	6	31.6%
Help accessing a job, housing, or public benefits	6	31.6%
Medical services	5	26.3%
Child or parent/child counseling	5	26.3%
Support groups	5	26.3%
Referral to other services such as substance abuse treatment	5	26.3%
Assistance applying for victim compensation	4	21.1%
Legal services such as divorce, custody, or immigration assistance	4	21.1%
Child care	4	21.1%
Shelter/temporary housing	4	21.1%
Explanation of crime victims' rights	3	15.8%
Transportation	3	15.8%
Hospital accompaniment	2	10.5%
Support through the criminal justice process	2	10.5%
Bilingual services	1	5.3%

Table 4  
*Most Helpful Services*

Variable/Category	Frequency	Valid %
Named a specific agency	4	28.6
Counseling	3	21.4
Emergency services	3	21.4
Advocacy	1	7.1
Everything	1	7.1
Assistance filing for custody	1	7.1
Housing	1	7.1
Child care	1	7.1
Safety planning	1	7.1
Support group	1	7.1

In an effort to gather additional information about services received, respondents were asked, via an open-ended question, which services were most helpful (see Table 4).

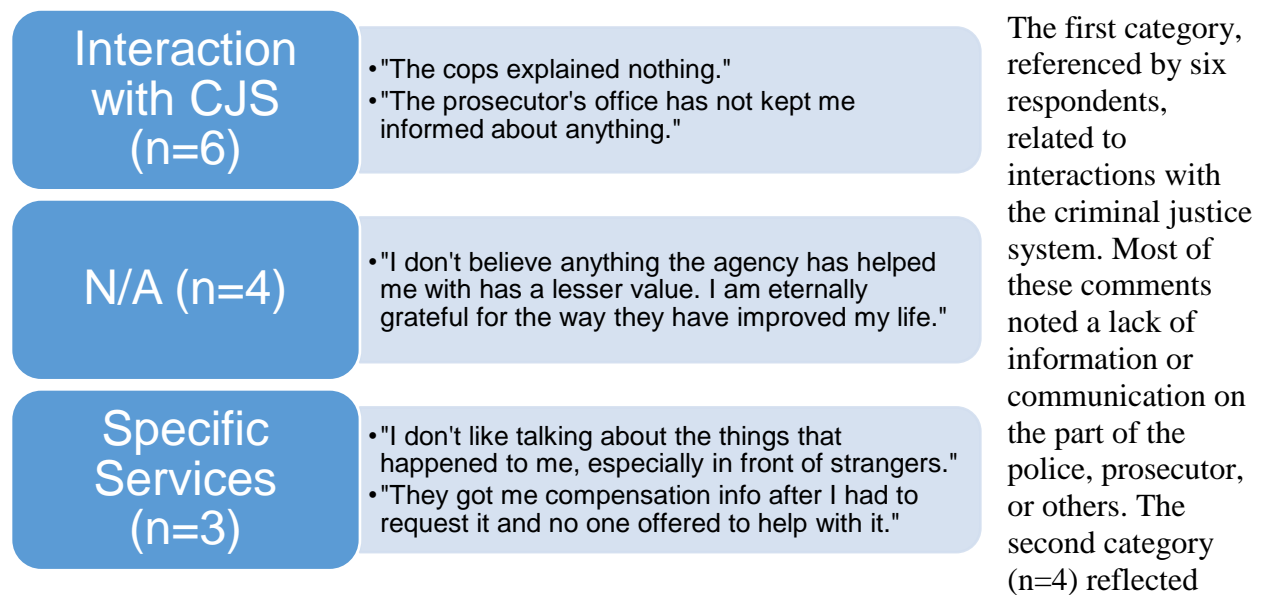
Of the 14 participants who answered this question, the most frequent response was naming a specific agency as being the most helpful. For example, one respondent stated that the victim service agency "has been fantastic with safety planning

<sup>2</sup> Percentages do not total 100% as respondents were able to select multiple answers.

and classes for how to be safe.” Counseling and emergency services, particularly financial assistance, were also very helpful. The remaining responses, some of which were broad (e.g., advocacy) and some of which were specific (e.g., housing) were reported by one respondent each. One participant noted that everything was helpful. However, another left a concerning response that read, “I didn’t receive any services until I begged, screamed, and cried.”

The next survey item asked participants to describe which services were least helpful. The responses were grouped into three main categories and are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3  
*Least Helpful Services*



responses of “not applicable.” These comments noted that all of the services they received were helpful. The final category related to specific services. Two noted support groups as being the least helpful and one described difficulties with victim compensation assistance.

Table 5  
*Services Needed but not Received*

Variable/Category	Frequency	Valid %
None	4	30.8%
Legal services	2	15.4%
Counseling	1	7.7%
Crisis intervention	1	7.7%
Emergency shelter	1	7.7%
Help speaking to detective	1	7.7%
Sex trafficking support group	1	7.7%
Child care	1	7.7%

Participants were asked if there were any services they needed but did not receive. Four noted that there were not any additional services they needed (see Table 5). Two referenced legal services (i.e., assistance with divorce and custody, low cost legal services). The remaining responses, such as

counseling, crisis intervention, and emergency shelter, were left by one respondent each.



The next few survey items asked about the types of providers from which services were received, where the agencies were located, and how the respondent felt they were treated.

Table 6  
*Service Provider Type and Location*

Variable/Category	Frequency	Valid % <sup>3</sup>
<b>Service provider type</b>		
DV/SV program or other VSP	10	52.6
Counseling services	9	47.4
Police department	6	31.6
Prosecutor's office	5	26.3
Hospital or doctor	3	15.8
Legal Aid or private attorney	3	15.8
Not sure	3	15.8
Faith-based program	2	10.5
<b>Service provider location</b>		
Ada	10	58.8
Canyon	5	29.4
Bonner	3	17.6
Bannock	1	5.9
Bonneville	1	5.9
Cassia	1	5.9
Kootenai	1	5.9

In terms of provider type, the most frequently indicated was a domestic/sexual violence program or other victim service provider, followed by counseling services, police department, prosecutor's office, hospital or doctor, Legal Aid or private attorney, and faith-based program (see Table 6). Three respondents indicated they were not sure which type of agency it was and one listed Alcoholics Anonymous. Agency county locations included Ada, Canyon, Bonner, Bannock, Bonneville, Cassia, and Kootenai.

The final question in this section asked about how the participant was treated and whether their needs were met (see Table 7). Most indicated that they were treated with respect. However, one individual each (three different respondents) reported that they were not treated with respect by a police department, prosecutor's office, or Legal Aid or private attorney.

Table 7  
*Opinions about Service Providers*

	Treated me with respect	Did not treat me with respect	Met my needs	Did not meet my needs
DV/SV program or other VSP	15	0	5	1
Police department	6	1	5	1
Prosecutor's office	6	1	0	6
Hospital or doctor	4	0	2	1
Legal Aid or private attorney	3	1	1	3
Counseling services	13	0	5	1
Faith-based program	3	0	1	1

<sup>3</sup> Percentages do not total 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.

While the majority of needs were met for participants who visited a domestic/sexual violence program or other victim service provider, police department, or hospital/doctor, none of the respondents who received services from a prosecutor’s office reported having their needs met and only one of the four that went to Legal Aid or a private attorney had their needs met. It is important to note that the survey did not differentiate between personnel types within agencies (e.g., victim witness coordinator versus police officer) in an effort to keep the survey as short as possible and avoid confusing respondents who may not be aware of the terminology. Those who received services from a faith-based program were evenly split between having their needs met and not having their needs met.

## Barriers

It is not uncommon for victims of crime to experience barriers when seeking services. As such, respondents were provided a list of barriers and asked if they experienced any when attempting to access services (see Figure 4). The most commonly reported was fear of the perpetrator, followed by a variety of accessibility issues such as internet/phone access, delays in receiving services (e.g., two years to find appropriate counseling resources, COVID-related issues), restrictions to receiving certain services (e.g., required to determine exact income in order to receive financial assistance), and lack of services (e.g., shelter or temporary housing). Three respondents reported that the cost of services was a barrier and two each noted communication and transportation issues. Child care, immigration concerns, language/cultural barriers, and religious differences were reported by one participant each.

Figure 4  
*Barriers Experienced*

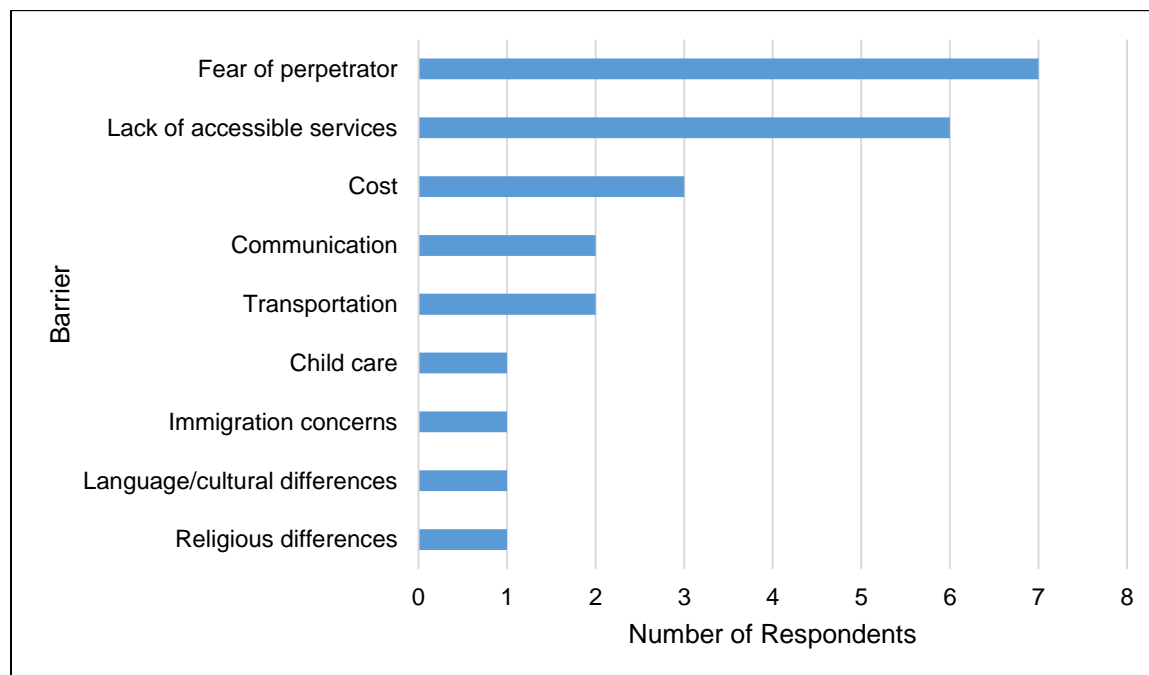


Table 8  
*Distance Traveled for Services*

Variable/Category	Frequency	Valid %
10 miles or less	8	42.1
11-20 miles	6	31.6
21-30 miles	2	10.5
More than 30 miles	2	10.5
Phone or online services only	1	5.3

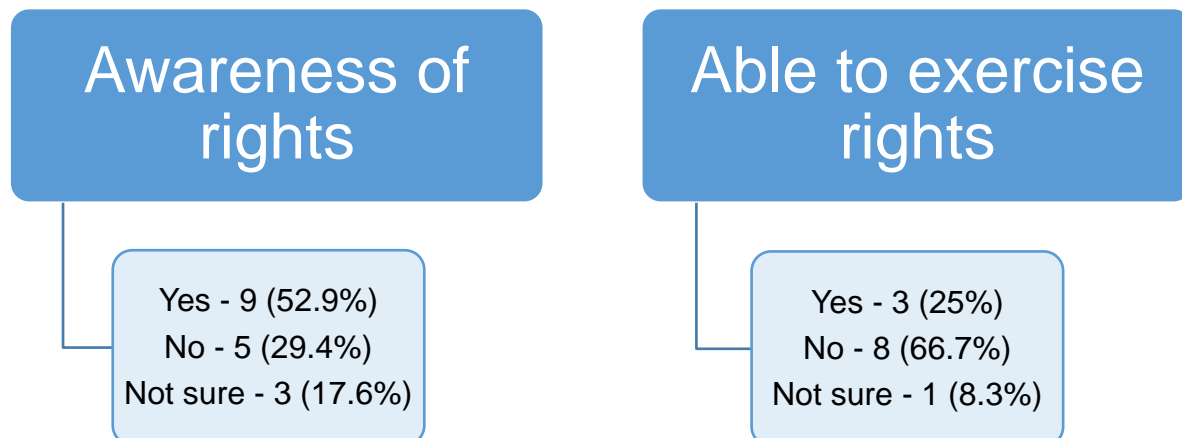
Given the high percentage of Idaho that is rural, and the findings of previous research on crime victims in Idaho (Growette Bostaph et

al., 2015), participants were asked how far they had to travel to receive services. Although the majority traveled 20 miles or less, several had to travel more than 20 miles to receive services, which can present a significant barrier for victims who do not have their own transportation or access to public transportation.

### Crime Victims' Rights

One of the goals of this survey was to gather information about participants' familiarity with crime victims' rights, as well as their ability to exercise those rights. The first question asked respondents, "Are you aware that crime victims have specific rights in Idaho?" As can be seen in Figure 5, nine answered this question affirmatively. Five reported that they did not know about these rights and three were not sure. The next question was addressed to those who had accessed the criminal justice system and asked if they were able to exercise their rights. A list of example rights were provided (i.e., being treated with respect, timely processing of your case, notification of updates regarding your case, the ability to be present at court and other proceedings, the opportunity to have your opinion heard, and restitution from the person who harmed you). The results were somewhat concerning. Of the 12 who responded to this item, only three felt as though they were able to exercise their rights. Eight reported that they were not able to exercise their rights and one was not sure.

Figure 5  
*Awareness and Exercise of Crime Victims' Rights*



The last question on the survey solicited open-ended feedback about crime victims' rights or services. Six participants provided their comments and noted a variety of frustrations in relation to interacting with the criminal justice system and receiving needed services. More specifically, one respondent described issues in regard to connecting victims with services in a more timely and appropriate manner:

“When I tried to get help, too much time had passed. I think the police department should have the victims unit dispatched to make contact with the victims through letters, emails, and phone calls to ensure they get the help they deserve instead of being left behind to pick up all the pieces.”

Another commented on difficulties with reporting:

“The process in which to try to report was ridiculous and I've never been contacted back. It's very untrusting. This is why not many people report.”

Three described frustrations with the court system:

“My opinion does not matter to the prosecutor or the judge and the prosecutor is not handling my case in a timely manner at all. I am also not receiving any updates at all about my case.”

“It was not beneficial to me when the offender went to court for trial and I was told that I did not need to be there as the offender pled to a less severe crime for the second time. The offender was able to seal his criminal domestic violence records and that created barriers to me obtaining immediate information on a protection order.”

“Prosecuting office needs to communicate with victims and their parents. It is horrible and frustrating. In 9 months I have received 3 correspondences – that's it!”

Lastly, one respondent noted the limitations of available services:

“The crime services for victims are not even close to enough for what the victim needs. After the victim turns 18 there's only \$2500 to help them with counseling services. That's nowhere near enough for the lifetime of hurt. It is a process for victims to go through every day for every waking moment and sometimes in their dreams too. There's not enough resources to help them stand against their attackers and make them truly understand the damage they inflicted.”

## Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to gather information from Idaho crime victims to learn more about their experiences with service providers and the criminal justice system. In order to reach this population, victim service agencies were asked to share the survey with crime victims who contacted them for services. The online survey is available in five languages and will be ongoing until 2022. This report focused on the survey data collected from May, 2020-December 2020. Data collection progressed slowly at first (likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic), but began to accelerate once information cards about the survey were created and sent to providers. The information cards offer a streamlined way for providers to share the survey with potential respondents. As of December 1, 2020, there were 19 surveys appropriate for analysis. While the findings summarized in this report provide initial insights into the experiences of crime victims in Idaho, the sample size is not large enough to lend itself to recommendations. Instead, these findings should be seen as preliminary in nature. As data collection continues over the next two years, the sample size will continue to increase and expand our understanding of the needs and experiences of Idaho crime victims. Thus, the recommendations discussed below focus on methodological considerations in regard to collecting data from Idaho crime victims.

### Ongoing Survey Sharing

As noted above, the crime victim survey will be ongoing until 2022. Continued advertisement and sharing of the survey is paramount to increasing responses and obtaining an appropriate sample size to inform specific recommendations. The importance of the findings of this survey cannot be understated. Learning from crime victims about their experiences with service providers is an important piece of information needed to inform policy and practice. The voices of those most impacted by crime must be considered. Thus, the following recommendations are offered in regard to bolstering responses for the ongoing crime victim survey:

**Recommendation #1:** Continue to require VOCA recipients, and encourage other crime victim service providers, to share the survey with crime victims. Providers can request the easily shareable victim survey information cards from the research team at any time.

**Recommendation #2:** Highlight and advertise the goals and importance of the survey: (1) gather information from crime victims across the state in an effort to improve services, (2) enable the use of one consistent measure to assess victim satisfaction and experiences, and (3) remove the responsibility of data collection and analysis from providers.

**Recommendation #3:** Expand the advertisement of the crime victim survey to media outlets and social media platforms to reach more Idaho residents who have received crime victim services.

### Survey Design

While it is unfortunate that the crime victim survey has not yet received more responses, it is not unexpected. When individuals seek services for crime victimization, they have often recently endured some type of physical or emotional harm. They may be experiencing fear, stress, and confusion, among other difficulties. Asking them to complete a survey about their experiences at such a time is not ideal. Trauma can have short- and long-term impacts on physical and emotional health. The hormones released by the human body during a traumatic

event have been shown to affect behavior, cognitive processing, and even alter brain chemistry (Campbell, 2012; Wilson et al., 2020).

A more evidence-based approach would be to attempt to reach crime victims after they have had the chance to begin healing and are more comfortable with sharing their experiences. This is essentially what national surveys, such as the *National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)* administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, seek to do. The *NCVS* is a nationally representative survey of U.S. crime victims age 12 and older. The survey has been ongoing since the early 1970s (it was originally referred to as the *National Crime Survey*) and is arguably the most important source of data on criminal victimization in the U.S. The *NCVS* employs a complex sampling design in order to gather a representative sample of respondents. In doing so, there are fewer respondents representing areas with smaller populations. For example, states like California, Texas, and Florida are more heavily represented whereas smaller states like Wyoming, Delaware, and Idaho are not. This is because the sample is intended to be representative of the U.S. population as a whole. While state-level *NCVS* data for states with larger populations can be obtained, they are not available for states like Idaho with smaller populations. As such, there is a need to conduct a statewide survey in Idaho in order to more accurately assess crime victimization across the state.

A statewide victimization survey in Idaho, following the design of the *NCVS*, would offer a number of benefits. First, it would enable the collection of a representative, random sample of Idaho residents which allows for the findings to be generalized to the entire state. Second, it would reduce the likelihood of asking people to complete a survey during, or shortly following, a traumatic event. Third, it would allow for data collection from a wider range of individuals. More specifically, data could be collected from people who reported their victimization to police and those who have not, as well as people who have received crime victim services and those who have not. In fact, the most recent results of the *NCVS* indicate that only 40.9% of violent crimes and 32.5% of property crimes were reported to police, and a mere 8% of crime victims received assistance from victim service agencies in 2019 (BJS, 2020). Thus, only surveying individuals who have reported to police or received services leaves out a significant portion of the population. Fourth, it would allow for the most reliable estimates of crime victimization in the state due to the inclusion of individuals who have reported to police and those who have not. Based on all of these reasons, a statewide victimization survey would offer the most complete picture of crime victimization in Idaho. While a statewide victimization survey was conducted in Idaho several years ago (Idaho State Police, 2014), the response rate was low (31.2% compared to a 71% response rate for the 2019 *NCVS*) and the data are now approximately eight years old. As such, the following recommendations are offered:

**Recommendation #4:** Fund the administration of a statewide victimization survey in Idaho using the reliable and successful design of the *National Crime Victimization Survey*.

**Recommendation #5:** Continue to administer the statewide victimization survey in Idaho on an ongoing basis to provide the most current information.

**Recommendation #6:** Use the findings of the statewide victimization survey to inform policy and practice and improve the experiences and treatment of crime victims across the state.

## Conclusion

Millions of Americans experience criminal victimization each year (BJS, 2020). The costs of crime are substantial, impacting the well-being of victims and their families, as well as society as a whole. Learning from crime victims about their experiences with service providers is an important means of assessing what changes are needed to ensure they are receiving the services and support they need to recover. To that end, this survey was conducted in order to learn more about the experiences of Idaho crime victims. Although only a small number of responses have been received thus far, they provide preliminary feedback about service provision in Idaho. As the survey continues into 2022, further insight will lead to specific recommendations about ways to improve the treatment and experiences of crime victims. In the meantime, the recommendations offered point to a number of ways to enhance research on crime victimization in Idaho.

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