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WASHINGTON – Disabled people are 1.5 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than nondisabled people, according to a government study.

The study on crime against people with disabilities, released Thursday by the Justice Department, found that people 12 or older with disabilities in 2007 experienced about 716,000 nonfatal violent crimes, including rape or sexual assault, robbery and assault. They were also victims in 2.3 million property crimes, such as burglaries, motor-vehicle or other thefts.

According to the study, the first of its kind, the violent crime rate was 32 per 1,000 for disabled people 12 or older. That's compared to 21 per 1,000 for the nondisabled for the same age group.

It is unclear to what extent disabled people were targeted because of their physical status. Nearly 1 in 5 of the violent-crime victims believed their disability was the motivating factor. In one-third of the cases, the victims perceived offenders to be under the influence of either alcohol or drugs.

Michael Rand, a co-author of the study who heads crime victim statistics at the Bureau of Justice Statistics, said it's likely the disabled are victimized more because they are seen as easier targets.

"It's clear that overall, people with disabilities are more vulnerable to being a victim of violent crime than others," he said.

Other findings:

- Young and middle-age disabled people were nearly twice as likely to be a victim than their nondisabled counterparts.
- Women with a disability were almost twice as likely to be a victim of a violent crime than their nondisabled counterparts. The rate was 35 per 1,000 people age 12 or older. Disabled men also experienced higher rates of violence.
- Sixteen percent of violent crimes against disabled women were committed by an intimate partner, such as a spouse or boyfriend, compared to 27 percent for nondisabled women. Five percent of violence against disabled men involved an intimate partner, compared to 3 percent for nondisabled men.

On the Net:

Justice Department:

Bureau of Justice Statistics: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>