# Fear of Crime

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**Abstract**

A survey was conducted with a sample size of two hundred college students to evaluate their fear of crime. The population of the sample size was students that attend Longwood University. Research was conducted prior to the survey to gauge how society feels on the issue of crime and their fear towards it. Once the data was collected multiple mathematical tests were done to evaluate and analyze the data. This gave a better understanding of the data and if we could reject or accept our hypothesis' towards crime.

**Topic**

Fear of crime is prevalent across today's socal landscape. People make decisions on where they live, where they eat, where they hang out, and where they shop, based on where they feel safe. Statistics demonstrate that more than one third of the population in the United States continues to fear crime in areas within a mile of their home, despite a dramatic decline in violent crime since the 1990's. The risk of being the victim of a crime is felt acutely among American citizens. In today's age of anxiety, where there are movements to defund the police, violent protests across the country, and a general sense of uneasiness about what comes next, one of the most misleading fears is that of crime.

Crime rates fluctuate from year to year, but not to the extent that many Americans believe that they do. In 2019, around sixty-four percent believed there was more crime in America than there had been at that same point one year ago. In fact all crimes, including violent crimes against people, were down from previous years. This has been the case for violent crime over the

last thirty years (Koerth & Thomson-DeVeaux, 2020). Why then do Americans still feel violent crime is such a threat? It could be because certain areas are regularly portrayed as more dangerous than others. For example, college campuses are often seen as places where young adults are more likely to be sexually assaulted. The frequency of alcohol use on college campuses lowers inhibitions which can lead to these types of behaviors. Other factors such as age, gender, race, and environment can also play important roles.

**Research Question**

Violent crimes are crimes where the victim is harmed or threatened by violence. This includes rape and sexual assault, robbery, assault, and murder. Though rates of these crimes are down, there is still great fear amongst the public that they will experience a violent crime in their lifetime. There is evidence that fear is created and affected by many different factors. By looking broadly at fear of violent crime patterns evolve, but can these patterns then be superimposed onto college campuses? In my study, I investigate the prevalence of fear of violent crimes on a small-town college campus, specifically as related to police officers preventing crime and crime going up in the area. Additionally, I will explore community fears of the same crime and compare how the same environment is perceived by those on campus with regards to there age and sex I am interested to see if the perceptions of safety and danger of certain areas are consistent across community members and college students, or there are differences in these two groups. I am also interested in comparing demographic information of these two sample groups and seeing similarities and differences in their corresponding answers.

**Review of Literature**

Fear is a natural part of human nature. However, it can become dysfunctional when it is out of proportion to an objective risk. Warr (2000) investigated the physiological measures of fear that can be seen by natural processes. He also explored the fear of crime and perceived seriousness of offenses, fear and cues of danger, the rationality of fear, the selling of fear, and the consequences of fear. Through observation and the completion of regular surveys, he was able to conclude that the majority of United State Citizens do not have a scientific basis for their beliefs about crime. People are regularly confronted with stories regarding violent crime, whether they be from social groups, news media, social media, or other outlets, but rarely take the time to vet this information as credible before responding to it. Warr argues that in order for citizens to make more reliable decisions on crime, particularly in their area, they need to be provided with concrete information from criminal justice officials including information regarding actual risk of victimization as well as personal, social, and temporal/spatial characteristics that increase or reduce risk.

A study conducted by Chadee, Ali, Burke, and Young (2017), explored relationships between fear of crime and community concerns, which included perceived crime, incivilities, and infrastructure. Gender and ethnic differences were included in the investigation which included just over 3,000 participants. Self reported measures included risk of victimisation and fear of crime scales, a general (non-crime related) fear scale which measured pragmatic fear, and scale to measure community concern. Findings revealed that fear of crime could be predicted by perceived crime and incivilities. Females also reported higher fear of crime than males. The researchers suggest that further studies into community concern and its effect on fear of crime need to be conducted to garn er a better understanding of their relationship. It is important to

understand the individual and the complexities of their environment when exploring fear of crime.

Those living on or around a college campus may be more prone to experiencing a sexual assault because they are in the age range of those who experience such crimes, and becuase they engage more social activities than others in similar environments. A study conducted on a college campus by Lane, Gover, and Dahod (2009), explored the shadow of sexual assault hypothesis which suggests that women's fear of sexual assault mirrors that of their fears of other types of violent crimes. The group administered surveys to undergraduate students in seven classes in the college of liberal arts and sciences at a prominent University. Results indicated that fear of sexual assault may matter more to women, but it is not just an issue for them. For men, a cognitive assessment of risk is a strong indicator of of their fear of crime, which suggests that informational campaigns regarding violence and sexual assault may be more effective for men than women. Finally, not only does perceived risk predict female fear, female students are also much more affected by emotional states and do not respond to informational campaigns in the same way as males.

Those who most fear sexual assault could also be those who are most often the victims of these assaults on college campuses. A study by Roebuck and Murty (2016), examined specific objectives through a critical analyses of literature on rape and sxual assault on college campuses. They focussed on characteristics of victims and their perpetrators, noted societal reactions to these offenses, and assessed social class, race and age of those convicted of sxual assaults through campus tribunals. They found that many factors influence whether or not a student is found responsible for an assault on college campus, especially if the case is simply handled by the school and not by authorities. On campuses where proper legal authorities are not utilized to

investigate, it is more likely that those believed to have committed sexual assaults will not be found responsible, and those who view themselves as victims may feel less safe because the college system has not worked in their favor.

Steinmetz and Austin (2013) suggest fear of crime could be driven by the physical characteristics of a specific location. Additional factors include demographic factors such as race, gender, and class status may also play a role, as well as past experiences. In their study, they showed participants photographs of various college campus locations and asked that they assess their reaction to each location in regards to fear of crime. While results varied, a few patterns did emerge. Males living on campus were less likely to fear crime than those living off-campus, and full-time students were less likely to fear crime than part-time students. Involvement in campus activity reduced fears for women. The location on campus that produced the greatest amount of fear for all parties was an enclosed walkway from which there was no chance of escape in any direction. They concluded that the level of fear for each student is a result of adapting to spatial, social, and temporal situations.

Fisher and Sloan (2003) argue that sex is the most powerful predictor of when it comes to fearing criminal victimization. Rape and sexual assault are the crimes most feared by women across their lifespan. Younger women, especially those of college age, are at the highest risk of experiencing these violent crimes. For their study, a sample of just over three-thousand college students was used to explore whether college women's fear of rape can be seperated from fear of other offenses involving face to face contact between victims and offenders. Evidence showed that these are not separable fears, particularly on campus during the night time hours. There were strong relationships between perceived risk of rape and fear of rape amongst college women. Which could be significantly enhanced by constrained behavior.

**Data Method**

The type of data being collected is evaluation research  The survey that was given to 200 college students. The population was of college kids with a sample of Longwood university students. There were 64 questions asked about police behavior as the survey. The survey participants gave their opinions using scales of their opinion of police officers and crime. Our topic dealt with fear of crime in a person's area they lived in. With the questions we selected help see a person's opinion of the crime in the area and their concern of the crimes in the area.

**Procedure**

The survey was given out with a consent form to protect our participants by following the human subject protection using the international review board. The survey was given out to the participant by hand for them to fill out. Each different question either had a scale 1-5 or strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or don't know. There was also yes and no questions and question about age, race, sex , majour, year in school, socioeconmic and region. The survey was produced and handed out by students at Longwood University in 2019.

**Quantitative  data and methods**

The survey was 64 questions and we decided to take two of the questions for our topic of fear of crime. The two questions that would best fit the fear of crime from the study were. *" In general, in the last two years would you say that overall level of crime in your neighborhood at home has: Gone up, Gone down, Stayed about the same, Do not know . "The police in my neighborhood do a good job preventing crime: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't know"*  These two questions both helped gain an understanding of people opinion in a scale of there fear of crime in there area with dealing with police officers action and the amount of crime in there area.

**Quantitative Analysis**

The data was measured using spss which examined closed ended questions. The questions dealt with the opinion of police for the questionnaire.

**Quantitative Findings**

We took a look at sex and age for fear of crime. We used sex and age and compared them to the scores of preventing crime by police officers and the crime going up in the area.

The mean age was 20.71 for the participants with a standard deviation of 2 years. There was 212 participants with 59.9 percent female and 40.1 male. When doing a chi square test withe age and sex we found the most popular group was females that we twenty years of age. The Df was 9.

For prevent crime we found the mean to be 2.49 and 45 percent agreed. For the chi test we did sex and age with preventing crime with the sex being the expected count of 4.8 and for age the expected count came out to .06. For crime going up in the area the mean was 2.65 with the mode being 3 and the standard deviation being 1.071. For the chi squared test with up and sex the value came out to 1.6 and with the chi square test for up and age was .2 for there values.

FEAR OF CRIME

**Statistics**

age

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 212 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 20.71 |
| Median | | 20.00 |
| Mode | | 20 |
| Std. Deviation | | 2.070 |

**age**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 18 | 11 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 5.2 |
| | 19 | 26 | 12.3 | 12.3 | 17.5 |
| | 20 | 70 | 33.0 | 33.0 | 50.5 |
| | 21 | 61 | 28.8 | 28.8 | 79.2 |
| | 22 | 32 | 15.1 | 15.1 | 94.3 |
| | 23 | 8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 98.1 |
| | 25 | 1 | .5 | .5 | 98.6 |
| | 33 | 1 | .5 | .5 | 99.1 |
| | 34 | 1 | .5 | .5 | 99.5 |
| | 37 | 1 | .5 | .5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 212 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

# Frequencies

**Statistics**

sex

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 212 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 1.60 |
| Median | | 2.00 |
| Mode | | 2 |
| Std. Deviation | | .491 |

**sex**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Male | 85 | 40.1 | 40.1 | 40.1 |
| | Female | 127 | 59.9 | 59.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 212 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Crosstabs

**Case Processing Summary**

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| sex * age | 212 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 212 | 100.0% |

**sex * age Crosstabulation**

Count

| | | age | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 33 | 34 | 37 | Total |
| sex | Male | 4 | 13 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 85 |
| | Female | 7 | 13 | 45 | 40 | 15 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 127 |
| Total | | 11 | 26 | 70 | 61 | 32 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 212 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 9.112[a] | 9 | .427 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 10.441 | 9 | .316 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .108 | 1 | .742 |
| N of Valid Cases | 212 | | |

a. 11 cells (55.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .40.

FEAR OF CRIME

## Frequencies

**Statistics**

prevent crime

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 212 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 2.49 |
| Median | | 2.00 |
| Mode | | 2 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.271 |

**prevent crime**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 42 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 19.8 |
| | Agree | 96 | 45.3 | 45.3 | 65.1 |
| | Disagree | 32 | 15.1 | 15.1 | 80.2 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 12 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 85.8 |
| | Don't Know | 30 | 14.2 | 14.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 212 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

FEAR OF CRIME

## Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| sex * prevent crime | 212 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 212 | 100.0% |

## sex * prevent crime Crosstabulation

Count

| | | prevent crime | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know | Total |
| sex | Male | 16 | 38 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 85 |
| | Female | 26 | 58 | 20 | 5 | 18 | 127 |
| Total | | 42 | 96 | 32 | 12 | 30 | 212 |

## Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.832[a] | 4 | .767 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.790 | 4 | .774 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .225 | 1 | .635 |
| N of Valid Cases | 212 | | |

a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.81.

FEAR OF CRIME

## Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| age * prevent crime | 212 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 212 | 100.0% |

## age * prevent crime Crosstabulation

Count

| | | prevent crime | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know | Total |
| age | 18 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 |
| | 19 | 4 | 14 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| | 20 | 18 | 34 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 70 |
| | 21 | 14 | 23 | 12 | 3 | 9 | 61 |
| | 22 | 3 | 14 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 32 |
| | 23 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 8 |
| | 25 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 33 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | | 42 | 96 | 32 | 12 | 30 | 212 |

## Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 37.642[a] | 36 | .394 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 36.913 | 36 | .427 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 7.608 | 1 | .006 |
| N of Valid Cases | 212 | | |

a. 38 cells (76.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

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**Statistics**

up

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 212 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 2.65 |
| Median | | 3.00 |
| Mode | | 3 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.071 |

**up**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | gone up | 45 | 21.2 | 21.2 | 21.2 |
| | gone down | 32 | 15.1 | 15.1 | 36.3 |
| | the same | 91 | 42.9 | 42.9 | 79.2 |
| | don't know | 40 | 18.9 | 18.9 | 98.1 |
| | 5 | 4 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 212 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Case Processing Summary**

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| sex * up | 212 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 212 | 100.0% |

**sex * up Crosstabulation**

Count

| | | up | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | gone up | gone down | the same | don't know | 5 | Total |
| sex | Male | 12 | 18 | 38 | 16 | 1 | 85 |
| | Female | 33 | 14 | 53 | 24 | 3 | 127 |
| Total | | 45 | 32 | 91 | 40 | 4 | 212 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.340[a] | 4 | .119 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 7.457 | 4 | .114 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .550 | 1 | .458 |
| N of Valid Cases | 212 | | |

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.60.

## Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| age * up | 212 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 212 | 100.0% |

## age * up Crosstabulation

Count

| | | up | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | gone up | gone down | the same | don't know | 5 | Total |
| age | 18 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 11 |
| | 19 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 26 |
| | 20 | 11 | 15 | 23 | 18 | 3 | 70 |
| | 21 | 20 | 4 | 30 | 6 | 1 | 61 |
| | 22 | 3 | 5 | 16 | 8 | 0 | 32 |
| | 23 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | 34 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 37 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 45 | 32 | 91 | 40 | 4 | 212 |

## Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 43.826[a] | 36 | .174 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 46.525 | 36 | .112 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.897 | 1 | .168 |
| N of Valid Cases | 212 | | |

a. 37 cells (74.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

**One-Sample Statistics**

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| up | 212 | 2.65 | 1.071 | .074 |
| age | 212 | 20.71 | 2.070 | .142 |
| sex | 212 | 1.60 | .491 | .034 |

**One-Sample Test**

| | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower | Upper |
| up | 36.029 | 211 | .000 | 2.651 | 2.51 | 2.80 |
| age | 145.675 | 211 | .000 | 20.708 | 20.43 | 20.99 |
| sex | 47.395 | 211 | .000 | 1.599 | 1.53 | 1.67 |

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| age | Between Groups | 23.157 | 4 | 5.789 | 1.361 | .249 |
| | Within Groups | 880.711 | 207 | 4.255 | | |
| | Total | 903.868 | 211 | | | |
| sex | Between Groups | 1.763 | 4 | .441 | 1.856 | .120 |
| | Within Groups | 49.157 | 207 | .237 | | |
| | Total | 50.920 | 211 | | | |

**One-Sample Statistics**

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| prevent crime | 212 | 2.49 | 1.271 | .087 |
| age | 212 | 20.71 | 2.070 | .142 |
| sex | 212 | 1.60 | .491 | .034 |

**One-Sample Test**

| | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower | Upper |
| prevent crime | 28.526 | 211 | .000 | 2.491 | 2.32 | 2.66 |
| age | 145.675 | 211 | .000 | 20.708 | 20.43 | 20.99 |
| sex | 47.395 | 211 | .000 | 1.599 | 1.53 | 1.67 |

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| sex | Between Groups | .440 | 4 | .110 | .451 | .772 |
| | Within Groups | 50.480 | 207 | .244 | | |
| | Total | 50.920 | 211 | | | |
| age | Between Groups | 42.717 | 4 | 10.679 | 2.567 | .039 |
| | Within Groups | 861.151 | 207 | 4.160 | | |
| | Total | 903.868 | 211 | | | |

preformed a t test with age sex and crime going up  and t test for age sex and prevent crime for the confidence interval. The differnce in the t test would be the mean variety from it being in years of age so the standard deviation would be large then sex or the scale.

## Conclusion

For the f test for age we would reject for crime going up with age being .249 since > .05. We would also for crime going up sex with it being .120 > .05. We also would prevent crimes with age with it being .039 > .05. We would also reject sex with it being .722 > .05. For all we

would reject the hypothesis. There is not enough data to prove one or another and with it being split down the middle with crime going up and preventing crime our hyphotits of fear of crime can not be proven. In the research dealing with police officers handling of crime there was not enough evidence that the subjects appeared to be alarmed by crime in the area. Since most of their scores stayed around the middle of the scale. There also was no significant difference between male and female for response to fear of crime. There also was no significant difference in age in the research for fear of crime.

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