



# Victim Safety & Justice Practice Area

*Helping Survivors through Research and Data*

The Urban Institute (Urban) is a **leading nonprofit research organization** dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities.

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Urban's Justice Policy Center houses researchers with a **wide range of expertise** and vast depth of experience in different victimization topics and research and technical assistance approaches.

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The Victim Safety & Justice team conducts rigorous research and evaluation and offers technical assistance (TA) to the field. We have **years of experience with a variety of methods**, including community-based participatory research, mixed methods, and randomized controlled trial (RCT).

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We emphasize **victim-centered and trauma-informed** lenses for all victimization-focused research.

Contact Jennifer Yahner at [JYahner@urban.org](mailto:JYahner@urban.org) for more information.

**Who are victims?** Victims, or survivors, are people who have faced any of a range of crimes or abusive experiences, often with significant consequences to their lives.

**What is victim research?** Victim research seeks to understand the impacts of victimization on individuals' and communities' well-being, as well as victims' unique needs, experiences, and barriers to recovery. It also aims to document strategies that effectively prevent victimization and promote victims' healing, safety, and justice.

**Why do we study victims' experiences?** The best way to address a problem that affects millions of Americans is to understand the nuances of victimization and perpetration, and the ways victims can be helped, and then to communicate that knowledge widely to stakeholders at all levels so they can take appropriate action.

## Urban's Research and Technical Assistance (TA) Expertise

Urban has a proven team of experts who have directed and contributed to victim-focused projects for over 30 years. Urban's researchers and TA providers collaborate across disciplines to understand the causes and consequences of victimization and to inform actionable prevention and response strategies at the local, state, and national levels. Our victim research portfolio is rooted in four approaches:

- **Documenting the widespread causes and consequences of victimization**, including risk factors, victim needs, and survivor- and community-level impacts.
- **Evaluating promising programs and services** at the local and national level to assess their implementation and impact.
- **Providing training and technical assistance** to organizations and communities to improve their response to victimization in research-informed ways.
- **Developing resources and disseminating findings** to increase the utility of research for service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

## Incorporating Victim and Community Voices

Community-engaged research refers to the practice of explicitly including the input, participation, and reflections of the people and communities most affected by the issue studied—from the design stage of a project to the final recommendations developed from evidence. For Urban's victim-related research, this means including the perspectives of victims, those working with victims, and communities and stakeholders affected by victimization.

In recognition of the unique needs of these populations, our researchers also seek to increase knowledge while ensuring that our work is victim-centered and trauma-informed. Our research methods emphasize victim safety and transparency, provide resources and support, and consider contextual issues.

## KEY VICTIM RESEARCH EFFORTS

Urban's team has expertise studying a wide range of victimization experiences, ranging from intimate partner and sexual violence to gun violence and mass violence to financial crimes. Examples of topics of focus include:

**Intimate Partner and Dating Violence.** Intimate partner violence (IPV) may include physical violence, emotional abuse, economic abuse, and stalking by a current or former spouse or dating partner. Urban's research explores unique victimization experiences and informs programs to better serve all victims as well as people who do harm.

- National Scan and Case Studies of Abusive Partner Intervention Programs (current)
- Perceptions of Justice for Domestic Violence Survivors (current)
- Evaluation of Trauma-Informed Abusive Partner Intervention (current)
- Respect and Responsibility Demonstration Project Evaluation
- Evaluation of Barrier Free Living's Deaf Services Program

**Human Trafficking.** Our portfolio of work on human trafficking includes extensive research, evaluation, and technical assistance on labor trafficking, sex trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

- Preventing Labor Trafficking in Mexico through Intervention Development Research (current)
- Human Trafficking Screening Tool for Law Enforcement and Estimation of Prevalence (current)
- Evaluating the OHTS Tool and Assessing Outcomes for Human Trafficking Survivors (current)
- Evaluation of the Enhanced Collaborative Model Human Trafficking Task Forces
- Bending Towards Justice: Perceptions of Justice among Human Trafficking Survivors

**Victim Services, including for Community Violence.** Urban conducts evaluations of victim service programs and provides research-related technical assistance for service providers, including those focused on community violence survivors.

- Center for Victim Research (current)
- National Evaluation of State Crime Victim Compensation Programs (current)
- Community Violence Intervention Research and Evaluation Technical Assistance Center (current)
- Evaluation of the VictimConnect National Resource Center (current)

**Sexual Assault.** Research on sexual assault examines provisions of the Violence Against Women Act and the Prison Rape Elimination Act, as well as business responses to sexual harassment, misconduct, and assault.

- Development of State-Level Sexual Violence Indicators for Washington, DC (current)
- Promoting Adolescent Sexual Health and Safety Evaluation
- Sexual Assault Justice Initiative

**System-Involved Survivors.** Urban's work includes a focus on incarcerated survivors who have experienced trauma.

- National Service Line for Incarcerate Survivors of Sexual Abuse (current)
- Trauma-Informed Victim Services and Programs for Incarcerated Women

**Older Adult Abuse and Neglect.** Our research also examines what we know about mistreatment of older adults by family, friends, and caregivers, as well as promising approaches for prevention and response.

- EMPOWER Abuse Prevention and Randomized Controlled Pilot Study
- What Is Elder Abuse? A Taxonomy for Collecting Criminal Justice Research and Statistical Data

**Hate Crimes.** Urban's diverse research team is leading the first national evaluation of hate crime task forces.

- Implementation Evaluation of Hate Crime Task Forces (current)

## OUR TEAM

The Victim Safety & Justice team is co-led by [Jennifer Yahner, MA](#), and [Emily Wright, PhD](#). Additional members include:

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