



Crime Victims Fact Sheet

Federal Offenses Involving Vulnerable Victims

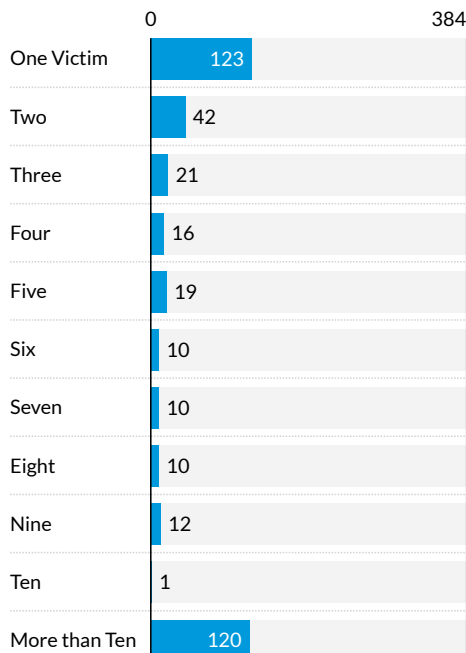
Federal Offenses Involving Vulnerable Victims

Chapter Three, Part A of the federal sentencing guidelines covers offenses involving victim-related adjustments. Section 3A1.1(b) covers an adjustment for an offense involving a vulnerable victim.¹ In fiscal year 2023, 421 cases involved these guidelines, and each had an identifiable victim. In 391 of the 421 cases, at least one victim was a person.² Victim information was available for a total of 384 of these cases based on court documents submitted to the U.S. Sentencing Commission.³

Number of Victims

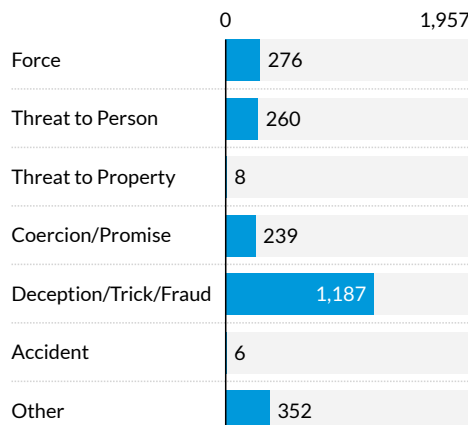
In fiscal year 2023, 384 cases had information about persons victimized in offenses where a vulnerable victim adjustment was applied. The Commission identified 243,845 persons as victims in these offenses, and information about 1,957 persons was collected.⁴

Multiple victims were identified in 68% of these cases. The number of victims ranged from one to 100,001 in a single case.



Means of the Offense

In cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment, deception, trick, or fraud was used against almost two-thirds (61%) of the 1,957 victims. This was followed by some other means of the offense (18%) and use of force (14%). Some cases involved multiple means of committing the offense.

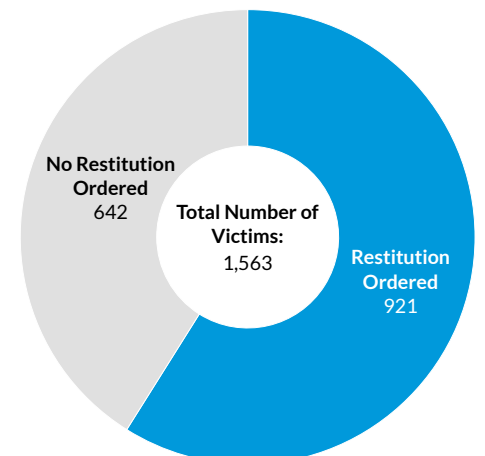
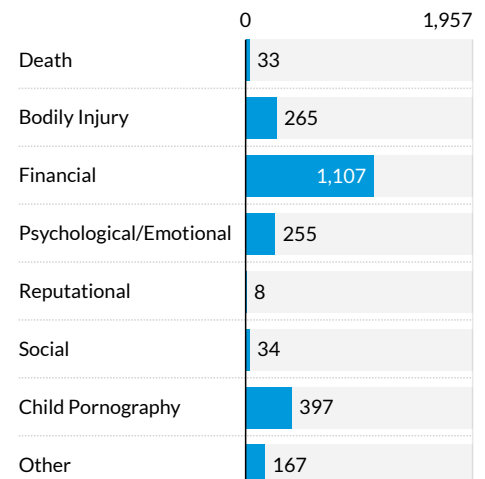


Restitution

In fiscal year 2023, restitution was ordered to be paid to 59% of victims in cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment.

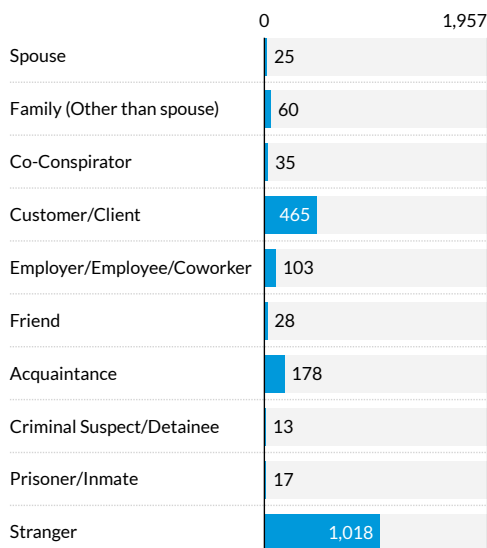
Type of Harm

Financial harm was the most common type of harm sustained by victims in cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment (57%), followed by child pornography (20%). Some cases involved multiple types of harm.

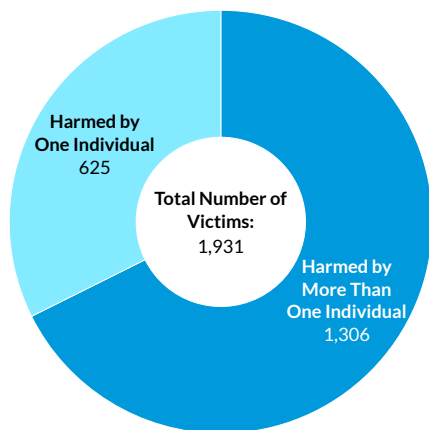


Relationships Between Victims and Individuals Who Caused Harm

In cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment, the most common association between victims and the individuals who caused them harm was as a stranger (52%). The next most common was as a customer or client (24%). Some cases involved multiple relationship types.

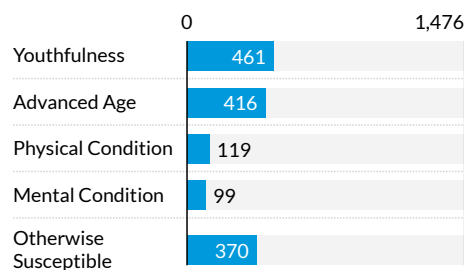
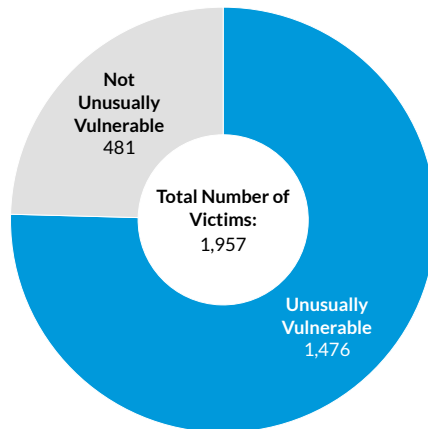


68% of victims in cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment were harmed by more than one individual.



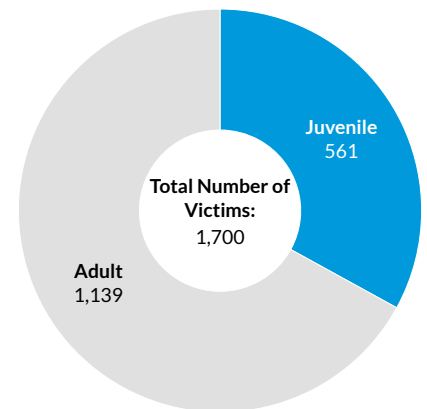
Vulnerability

Cases with a vulnerable victim adjustment involved victims who were unusually vulnerable due to age, physical or mental condition, or other factors.⁵ The Commission identified 75% of victims in these cases as unusually vulnerable for one of these reasons.⁶ Some cases involved multiple vulnerabilities.



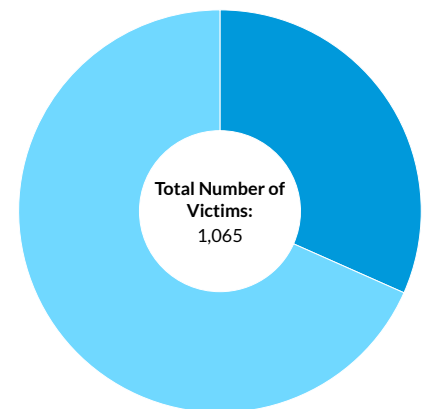
Victim Characteristics

One-third (33%) of victims in cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment were juveniles.



More than two-thirds (68%) of victims in cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment were female.

Male (337) Female (728)



Endnotes

¹ *Federal Offenses Involving Vulnerable Victims* include individuals sentenced in fiscal year 2023 in cases involving USSG §3A1.1 (Hate Crime Motivation or Vulnerable Victim), when the court applied the adjustment at USSG §3A1.1(b)(1) ("If the defendant knew or should have known that a victim of the offense was a vulnerable victim, increase by 2 levels"); and/or §3A1.1(b)(2) ("If (A) subdivision (1) applies; and (B) the offense involved a large number of vulnerable victims, increase the offense level determined under subdivision (1) by 2 additional levels"). The most common sentencing guideline for an offense involving a vulnerable victim adjustment was USSG §2B1.1 (Larceny, Embezzlement, and Other Forms of Theft; Offenses Involving Stolen Property; Property Damage or Destruction; Fraud and Deceit; Forgery; Offenses Involving Altered or Counterfeit Instruments Other than Counterfeit Bearer Obligations of the United States) at 36%.

² An identifiable victim can be a person, business, government, or other type. This series provides victim information on persons.

³ The Commission's Crime Victims Fact Sheets series relies on information collected and analyzed through a special coding project undertaken by the Commission to gather information beyond what is regularly collected and reported on by the Commission.

⁴ The sentencing documents received from the courts by the Commission are often focused on the sentencing event; therefore, some information regarding the victims of the offense was not provided in the documents available for staff review. For this reason, the total number of cases with complete information, and the corresponding number of victims in those cases, will vary by analysis. Victim information was collected for the first ten persons documented in the records.

⁵ In all of these cases the court applied the adjustment at USSG §3A1.1. Vulnerability due to advanced age or youthfulness was determined by the offense conduct stated in the presentence investigation report adopted by the court, and not based on any minimum or maximum age.

⁶ There are often multiple victims in cases involving a vulnerable victim adjustment. Not every victim in each case was determined to have been unusually vulnerable.

SOURCE: U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2023 Victim Datafile, VICFY23.



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