

# Family Violence Prevention Fund

PICTURING A WORLD WITHOUT VIOLENCE

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## FEATURES

### New Violent Crime Report



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A new study from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics finds that the violent crime rate in the United States was largely unchanged from 2005 to 2007, but that there was a 25 percent increase in rape and sexual assault over those two years. However, because the methodology for the survey changed in 2006, and because the overall number of rapes and sexual assaults is low compared to other crimes such as burglary, theft and assault, statisticians at the Bureau caution that the increase is not statistically significant.

*Criminal Victimization, 2007* finds that there were 248,300 rapes/sexual assaults in the U.S. in 2007, up from 190,600 in 2005. Women were more likely than men to be victims, with those 20 to 24 at highest risk for rape/sexual assault, followed by those 16 to 19. In 2007, just 42 percent of rapes or sexual assaults were reported to police.

The increase means that the rape/sexual assault rate rose from 0.8 (per 1,000 persons age 12 or older) in 2005 to 1.0 in 2007. Both are much lower than the 1.5 rape/sexual assault rate reported in 1998.

The data are based on the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) – one of the government's primary crime data collection tools. It looks only at nonfatal crimes, so homicides are excluded. The study confirms a long-term reduction in violent crime (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault) in the nation. The overall violent crime rate in 2007 was 43 percent lower than the violent crime rate in 1998. The rate for rape, however, declined only marginally from 1998 to 2007.

### Crimes by Intimate Partners/Weapons

The new study finds that women are much more likely than men to be victimized by a current or former intimate partner. In 2007, about 623,000 violent crimes – 554,260 against females and 69,100 against males – were committed by intimate partners. There were 389,100 violent crimes committed against females by intimate partners in 2005, so the 2007 figure is a significant increase that may be due, in part, to the new methodology.

In 2007, nearly one in four female victims of violent crime (23 percent) was victimized by an intimate partner. Just three percent of male victims of violent crime were victimized by an intimate partner.

Sixty-four percent of rape/sexual assault victims said they were victimized by a non-stranger – 23 percent by an intimate partner, three percent by another relative, and 38 percent by a friend/acquaintance. The same percentage (23 percent) of female assault victims said the perpetrator was an intimate partner.

In 2007, about 20 percent of all violent crime incidents were committed by armed offenders, including one percent of rapes or sexual assaults, five percent of assaults, and 25 percent of robberies.

“We have more confidence in the trends reflected in these studies than the actual numbers, because rape, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence tend to be underreported,” said Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler. “The increase in rapes and sexual assaults, and in violent crimes committed by intimate partners, in 2007 concerns us. We will pay close attention to see if this results from new methodologies, or if it is a trend that signals the need for action. Regardless, it is clear that we’re not doing nearly enough to prevent violence against women and

children and help victims. We intend to press for more resources to stop this violence next year."

## Methodology Changes

A number of methodological changes were introduced to the NCVS in 2006 and 2007. The 2006 changes included introducing a new sample to account for shifts in population and location of households that occur over time, incorporating responses from households that were in the survey for the first time, and using computer-assisted personal interviewing.

In 2007, the Bureau reduced the overall sample by 14 percent, used first-time interviews in the production of estimates, and discontinued computer-assisted interviewing from centralized telephone centers.

Cell phone numbers are not included, which may result in underreporting of crimes against teens and young adults who are less likely to have landlines.

*Criminal Victimization, 2007 is available on the Bureau of Justice Statistics website, by clicking [here](#).*

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