



# Bureau of Justice Statistics

## Selected Findings

September 2009, NCJ 228356

# Female Victims of Violence

Shannan Catalano, Ph.D., Erica Smith,  
Howard Snyder, Ph.D., and Michael Rand  
*BJS Statisticians*

This report provides the current findings on nonfatal and fatal violent crimes committed against females. Data are from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 1993 to 2008, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting Program's (UCR) Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR), 1993 to 2007 (the most recent data available). The report focuses on nonfatal intimate partner violence (IPV), fatal IPV, rape and sexual assault, and stalking. It includes estimates of the extent of crimes against females and the characteristics of crimes and victims. Crime trends are also presented, along with comparative estimates of crimes against males.

### Nonfatal intimate partner violence

- Intimate partner violence includes victimization committed by spouses or ex-spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, and ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends.
- In 2008 females age 12 or older experienced about 552,000 nonfatal violent victimizations (rape/sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated or simple assault) by an intimate partner (a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend) (table 1).
- In the same year, men experienced 101,000 nonfatal violent victimizations by an intimate partner.
- The rate of intimate partner victimizations for females was 4.3 victimizations per 1,000 females age 12 or older. The equivalent rate of intimate partner violence against males was 0.8 victimizations per 1,000 males age 12 or older.

**Table 1. Violence by intimate partners, by type of crime and gender of the victims, 2008**

	Total		Female		Male	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
<b>Overall violent crime</b>	652,660	2.6	551,590	4.3	101,050	0.8
Rape/sexual assault	44,000	0.2	35,690	0.3 <sup>^</sup>	8,310	0.1 <sup>^</sup>
Robbery	38,820	0.2 <sup>^</sup>	38,820	0.3 <sup>^</sup>	--	--
Aggravated assault	111,530	0.4	70,550	0.5	40,970	0.3 <sup>^</sup>
Simple assault	458,310	1.8	406,530	3.1	51,770	0.4

Note: Victimization rates are per 1,000 persons age 12 or older. The difference in male and female intimate partner victimization rates is significant at the 95% confidence level for overall violent crime, robbery, and simple assault. There is no significant difference in the rate of male and female intimate partner victimization for aggravated assault.

<sup>^</sup>Based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

--No cases were present for this category.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2008.

- Females age 18 or older experienced higher rates of intimate partner violence than females age 12 to 17 (4.5 per 1,000 compared to 1.7 per 1,000, respectively).
- Black females historically have experienced intimate partner violence at rates higher than white females.
- In 2008, Hispanic and non-Hispanic females experienced intimate partner violence at about the same rates (4.1 per 1,000 females age 12 or older versus 4.3 per 1,000, respectively).
- In 2008, 72% of the intimate partner violence against males and 49% of the intimate partner violence against females was reported to police.
- About 99% of the intimate partner violence against females in 2008 was committed by male offenders. About 83% of the intimate partner violence against males was committed by female offenders in 2008.

### Trends in nonfatal intimate partner violence

- Intimate partner violence against both males and females declined at a similar rate between 1993 and 2008 (figure 1).
- The rate of intimate partner violence against females declined 53% between 1993 and 2008, from 9.4 victimizations per 1,000 females age 12 or older to 4.3 per 1,000. Against males, the rate declined 54%, from 1.8 victimizations per 1,000 males age 12 or older to 0.8 per 1,000.

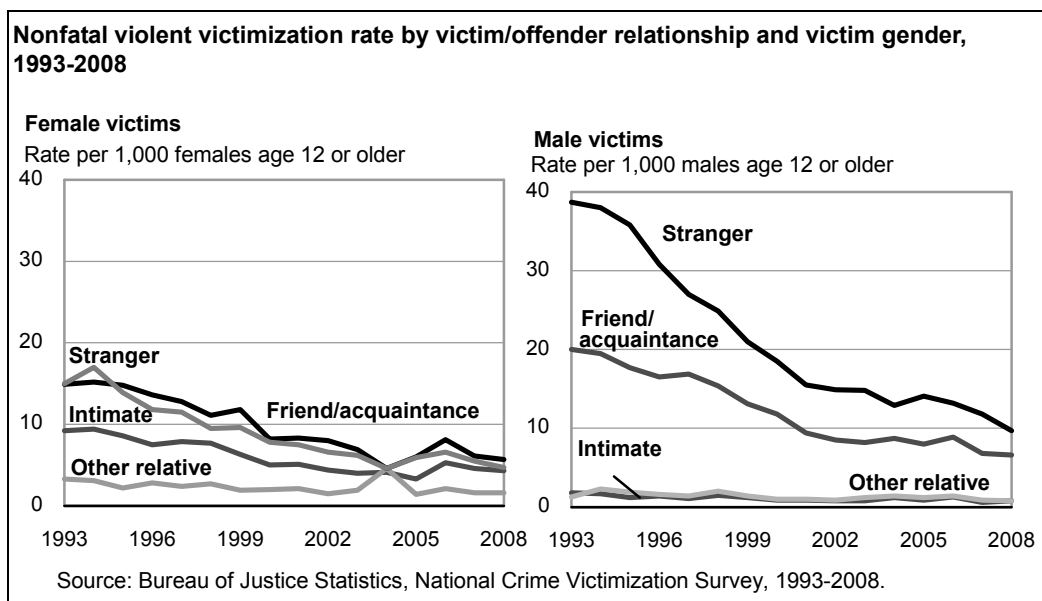


Figure 1

### Fatal intimate partner violence

- Fatal intimate partner violence includes homicide or murder and non-negligent manslaughter, defined as the willful killing of one human being by another.
- In 2007 intimate partners committed 14% of all homicides in the U.S. The total estimated number of intimate partner homicide victims in 2007 was 2,340, including 1,640 females and 700 males.
- Females made up 70% of victims killed by an intimate partner in 2007, a proportion that has changed very little since 1993.
- Females were killed by intimate partners at twice the rate of males. In 2007 the rate of intimate partner homicide for females was 1.07 per 100,000 female residents compared to 0.47 per 100,000 male residents.

- Females are generally murdered by people they know. In 64% of female homicide cases in 2007, females were killed by a family member or intimate partner. In 2007, 24% of female homicide victims were killed by a spouse or ex-spouse; 21% were killed by a boyfriend or girlfriend; and 19% by another family member.
- In an additional 25% of cases in 2007, females were killed by others they knew. An estimated 10% of female murder victims were killed by a stranger.
- In 2007 black female victims of intimate partner homicide were twice as likely as white female homicide victims to be killed by a spouse (0.96 and 0.50 per 100,000, respectively).
- Black females were four times more likely than white females to be murdered by a boyfriend or girlfriend (1.44 and 0.34 per 100,000, respectively).
- Men were more likely than women to be killed by strangers. Among male homicide victims in 2007, 16% were murdered by a family member or intimate partner. Of male homicide victims, 2% were killed by a spouse or ex-spouse and 3% were killed by a girlfriend or boyfriend. Over half (54%) were killed by others they knew, and 29% were killed by strangers.

### Trends in fatal intimate partner violence

- Between 1993 and 2007 the total number of homicide victims in the U.S. fell 31%, with a somewhat greater decline for females (-34%) than males (-30%). Homicide victims killed by intimate partners fell 29%, with a greater decline for males (-36%) than females (-26%) (figure 2).
- Homicide victims killed by an intimate partner declined from an estimated 3,300 in 1993 to an estimated 2,340 in 2007.
- Between 1993 and 2007, female victims killed by an intimate partner declined from 2,200 to 1,640 victims, and male intimate partner homicide victims declined from 1,100 to 700 victims.
- The overall rate of female homicides fell 43% from 4.18 to 2.38 homicides per 100,000 female U.S. residents between 1993 and 2007.

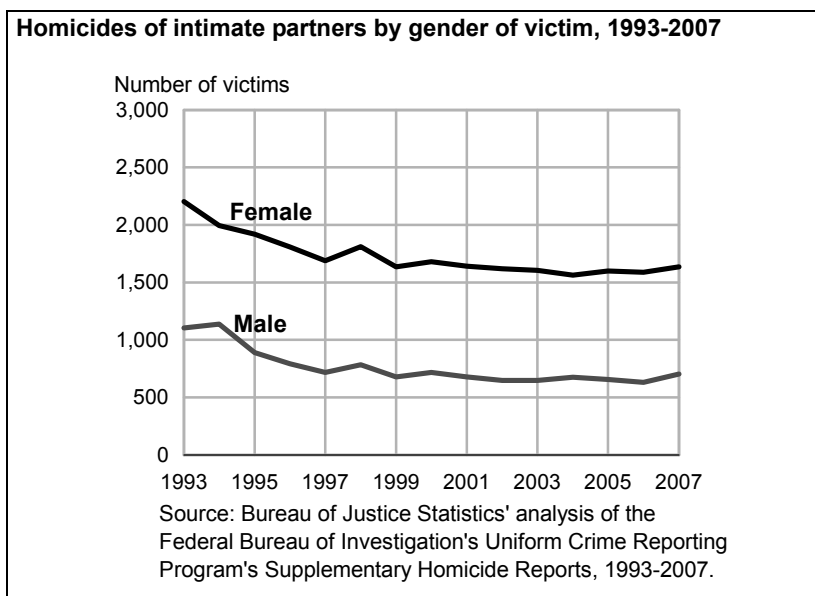


Figure 2

- The rate of intimate partner homicides of females decreased 35% (from 1.66 to 1.07 per 100,000 female U.S. residents), while the rate of non-intimate female homicide fell 48% (from 2.52 to 1.31).
- Between 1993 and 2007 the overall rate of male homicides fell 40% from 14.94 to 8.94 homicides per 100,000 male U.S. residents.
- The rate of intimate partner homicides of males decreased 46% (from 0.87 to 0.47), while the rate of non-intimate male homicides fell 40% (from 14.07 to 8.47).
- An estimated 40% of female homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner in 1993; the percentage increased to 45% in 2007. An estimated 6% of male homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner in 1993; this figure was 5% in 2007.
- From 1993 through 2007, the rate of homicide by a spouse fell 41% for females and 54% for males. Over the same period, the rate of homicide by a boyfriend or girlfriend fell 27% for females and 36% for males.
- Between 1993 and 2007, 18% of female victims of intimate partner homicide were under age 25, compared to 10% of male victims. During the same period 11% of female victims of intimate partner homicide were over age 54, compared to 14% of male victims.
- The number of black female homicide victims killed by intimate partners fell 39% between 1993 and 2007. The number of white female homicide victims killed by intimate partners fell 21%.
- From 1993 through 2007, the rate of homicide by a spouse declined 58% for black females (from 2.28 homicides per 100,000 black female residents to 0.96 per 100,000).
- The rate of homicide for white females killed by a spouse fell 36% (from 0.78 homicides per 100,000 female residents to 0.50 per 100,000).
- Over the same period, the rate of homicide by a boyfriend or girlfriend fell 42% (from 2.50 to 1.44) for black females and 15% (from 0.40 to 0.34) for white females.

### Children who witness violence

- The NCVS was not designed to capture information on the number of children who witness intimate partner violence; however, the survey is able to examine the characteristics of households with a victim of IPV, including whether children under age 12 were living in the home.
- Using NCVS data from 2001 to 2005, among households with a female IPV victim, 38% had children under age 12 living in the home. Of the households with a male IPV victim, 21% had children under age 12 living in the home.
- Court statistics can identify whether a child witnessed a violent incident between intimate partners. Of 3,750 intimate partner violence cases filed in state courts in 16 large urban counties in 2002, children were present during the violent incident in 36% of the cases. Of those children who were present, 60% directly witnessed the violence.

- Additional findings on domestic violence court cases are available in *Profile of Intimate Partner Violence Cases in Large Urban Counties*, a forthcoming BJS report expected to be released in mid-October 2009 (table 2).

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics of intimate partner violence victims and defendants in 16 large counties, May 2002**

Demographic characteristic	Percent of intimate partner violence—	
	Victims	Defendants
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	14.0%	86.3%
Female	86.0	13.7
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>		
White non-Hispanic	37.1%	33.6%
Black non-Hispanic	26.4	33.5
Hispanic	33.6	30.8
Other	2.8	2.0
<b>Age at offense</b>		
17 or younger	2.5%	0.2%
18-24	24.6	24.0
25-34	32.9	34.5
35-54	32.1	37.9
55 or older	7.8	3.4

Note: Among the 3,750 cases of intimate partner violence, data on defendant gender were reported for 99.4%; race/Hispanic origin for 85.6%; age for 100%. Data on victim gender were reported for 100% of cases; race/Hispanic origin for 94.5%; age for 100%.  
 Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Profile of Intimate Partner Violence Cases in Large Urban Counties*, NCJ 228193 (forthcoming October 2009).

### Characteristics of rape/sexual assault

- Rape includes forced sexual intercourse, both psychological coercion and physical force, and attempted rapes. Sexual assault includes a wide range of victimizations distinct from rape or attempted rape.
- Based on the NCVS which interviews victims, females age 12 or older experienced an estimated 182,000 rapes or sexual assaults in 2008, and males experienced 40,000 rapes or sexual assaults.
- The rates of rape or sexual assaults against females and males in 2008 were 1.4 and 0.3 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, respectively.
- Black females experienced higher rates of rape or sexual assault in 2008 than white females or females of other races (2.9 compared to 1.2 and 0.9 per 1,000 females age 12 or older, respectively.)
- In 2008, Hispanic and non-Hispanic females experienced rape or sexual assault at about the same rates (1.1 compared to 1.5 per 1,000 females age 12 or older, respectively.)
- In 2008, 57% of the rape or sexual assaults against females were committed by an offender whom they knew. Strangers committed about one third (31%) of all rape/sexual assaults.
- One in five rape or sexual assaults against females (20%) was committed by an intimate partner.
- Almost half (47%) of the rape or sexual assaults against females in 2008 were reported to police.
- Four out of five (80%) of the rapes against females were committed by males.

---

## Trends in rape/sexual assault

- Based on the NCVS, between 1993 and 2008 the rate of rape or sexual assault against females declined by 70% (from 4.7 to 1.4 per 1,000 females age 12 or older).
- The rate of rape or sexual assault against males declined by 36% between 1993 and 2008 (from 0.5 to 0.3 per 1,000 males age 12 or older).

## Characteristics of stalking

- Data on stalking are from the NCVS Supplementary Victimization Survey (SVS), administered during January through June 2006. The SVS defined stalking as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.
- During a 12-month period in 2005 and 2006, an estimated 3.4 million persons age 18 or older were victims of stalking.
- During the 12-month period an estimated 14 in every 1,000 persons age 18 or older were victims of stalking.
- Females were at higher risk of stalking victimization than males. During the study period, females experienced 20 stalking victimizations per 1,000 females age 18 or older. The rate of stalking victimization for males was approximately 7 per 1,000 males age 18 or older.
- As with victimization risk more generally, the risk of being stalked diminished with age. Persons age 18 to 19 and 20 to 24 experienced the highest rates of stalking victimization.
- Asians and Pacific Islanders (7 per 1,000 persons age 18 and older) were less likely to experience stalking than whites (14 per 1,000), blacks (12 per 1,000), and persons of two or more races (32 per 1,000).
- Non-Hispanics were more likely than Hispanics to experience stalking (14 versus 11 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, respectively.)
- About 1 in 10 of all victims were stalked by a stranger, and nearly 3 in 4 of all victims knew their offender in some capacity. Stalking victims most often identified the stalker as a former intimate (21.5%) or a friend, roommate, or neighbor (16.4%).
- Stalking victimization was equally likely to be reported to police whether the victim was male or female. Thirty-seven percent of male and 41% of female victimizations were reported to the police by the victim or another person aware of the crime.
- Males were as likely to report being stalked by a male as a female offender. Forty-three percent of male stalking victims stated that the offender was female, while 41% of male victims stated that the offender was another male.
- Female victims of stalking were significantly more likely to be stalked by a male (67%) than by a female (24%) offender.

---

## Definitions of violent crimes

*Homicide*—murder and non-negligent manslaughter is defined as the willful killing of one human being by another.

*Rape*—forced sexual intercourse, including both psychological coercion and physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object, such as a bottle. This definition includes attempted rapes, male and female victims, and heterosexual and same sex rape.

*Sexual assault*—includes a wide range of victimizations distinct from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include completed or attempted attacks generally involving unwanted sexual contact between the victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force and include such things as grabbing or fondling. Sexual assault also includes verbal threats.

*Robbery*—completed or attempted theft of property or cash by force or threat of force, directly from a person, with or without a weapon, and with or without injury.

*Assault*—the unlawful physical attack or threat of attack. Assaults may be classified as aggravated or simple. Rape, attempted rape, and sexual assaults are excluded from this category, as well as robbery and attempted robbery. The severity of assaults ranges from minor threat to incidents which are nearly fatal.

*Aggravated assault*—the attack or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether or not an injury occurred and attack without a weapon when serious injury results.

*Simple assault*—an attack without a weapon resulting either in no injury, less serious injury (for example, bruises, black eyes, or cuts) or in undetermined injury requiring less than 2 days of hospitalization. Also includes attempted assault without a weapon.

## References

Bureau of Justice Statistics. National Crime Victimization Survey [special analysis].

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Supplementary Homicide Reports [special analysis].

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2006). *Violent Crime Rates Declined for Both Males and Females Since 1994*. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/vsx2.htm>.

Baum, K., Catalano S., Rand, M., and Rose, K. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009). *Stalking Victimization in the United States* (NCJ 224527).

Catalano, S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2006). *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/intimate/ipv.htm>.

Smith, E.L. and Farole, Jr., D.J. Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2009). *Profile of Intimate Partner Violence Cases in Large Urban Counties* (NCJ 228193). Forthcoming, mid-October 2009.



Washington, DC 20531

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

---

---

This report in portable document format and in ASCII and its related statistical data and tables are available at the BJS World Wide Web Internet site: <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fvv.fm>>.

**Office of Justice Programs**

*Innovation • Partnerships • Safer Neighborhoods*  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Michael D. Sinclair is Acting Director.

This Selected Findings was written by Shannan Catalano, Erica Smith, Howard Snyder, and Michael Rand. Jennifer E. Kaplan and Catherine M. Poston of the Office of Violence Against Women provided review and comments. Doris J. James and Jill Duncan edited the report, and Tina Dorsey produced the report. Jayne Robinson prepared the report for final printing.

September 2009, NCJ 228356