



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

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### **NEARLY 3.4 MILLION VIOLENT CRIMES PER YEAR WENT UNREPORTED TO POLICE FROM 2006 TO 2010**

WASHINGTON – More than half of the nation’s violent crimes, or nearly 3.4 million violent victimizations per year, went unreported to the police between 2006 and 2010, according to a new report published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

Using data from BJS’s National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), this new report examines characteristics of unreported victimizations, the reasons victims did not report crimes and trends from 1994 to 2010 in the types of crime not reported to police.

The percentage of violent and property crimes that went unreported to police declined from 1994 to 2010. Across the 17-year period, victims most commonly did not report violent victimizations to the police because they dealt with the crime in another way, such as reporting it to another official or handling it privately. Among unreported violent victimizations, the percentage of victims who believed the police would not or could not help doubled, from 10 percent in 1994 to 20 percent in 2010.

During the five-year period from 2006 to 2010, about three in 10 crimes involving a weapon and an injury went unreported to police. Among these, the most common reason (42 percent) for not reporting was fear of retaliation or of getting the offender into trouble. This fear was also the most common reason (46 percent) victims did not report intimate partner violence to the police. Crimes perpetrated by someone the victim knew well, such as a neighbor, coworker or teacher (62 percent), or by a casual acquaintance (60 percent) were more likely to go unreported than crimes committed by a stranger (51 percent).

Serious violent crime (defined as rape or sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault) was less likely to go unreported to the police in 2010 than in 1994. The percentage of unreported serious violent victimizations declined from 50 percent in 1994 to 42 percent in 2010. Unreported simple assault (assaults not involving an injury or a weapon), and property crime victimizations followed a similar pattern during the same period. The percentage of unreported simple assaults declined from 63 to 51 percent, and unreported property crime declined from 67 percent to 60 percent.

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On average, an estimated 211,200 rapes and sexual assaults went unreported to police each year between 2006 and 2010. Although serious violent crime was generally less likely to go unreported to the police than simple assault, a higher percentage of rape or sexual assault (65 percent) than simple assault (56 percent) victimizations went unreported over the five-year period.

From 2006 to 2010, a greater percentage of victimizations against men (55 percent) than women (49 percent) were not reported to the police. A greater percentage of violent victimizations against white non-Hispanics (54 percent) than black non-Hispanics (46 percent) went unreported to the police. Among victims of violence, women (20 percent) were more likely than men (8 percent) to say they did not report to the police because they were afraid of reprisal or of getting the offender in trouble.

During the five-year period, nearly three-quarters of all violent victimizations occurring at school were not reported to police. Of the more than 450,000 unreported violent crimes at school on average each year, half were not reported because they were dealt with in some other way, such as reported to school staff or other officials, or were considered to be a private or personal matter. A fifth thought the crime was not important enough to report.

The NCVS provides the largest data collection on criminal victimization independent of crimes documented by law enforcement. Estimates from the NCVS, which includes offenses both reported and not reported to police, complement those from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR), which measures crimes reported to law enforcement agencies across the nation. During 2010, 40,974 households and 73,283 individuals age 12 and older were interviewed twice for the NCVS.

The report, *Victimizations Not Reported to the Police, 2006-2010* (NCJ 238536), was written by BJS Statistician Lynn Langton and Marcus Berzofsky, Christopher Krebs, and Hope Smiley-McDonald of RTI International. The report, related documents and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary Lou Leary, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at <http://www.ojp.gov>.