

What are the facts about assault?



- In 1999, there were an estimated 916,383 incidents of aggravated assault, accounting for 64 percent of the violent crime in the United States. (*Crime in the United States 1999*. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2000)
- In 1999, there were an estimated 4.7 million simple assaults in the United States. (*Criminal Victimization in the United States 1999*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)
- Dangerous weapons (excluding knives and firearms), such as clubs or other blunt objects, were used during 35 percent of all aggravated assaults in 1999. (*Crime in the United States 1999*. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2000)
- In 1999, fewer than 5 out of 10 aggravated assault victims knew their offenders as an acquaintance, friend, relative, or intimate partner. (*Criminal Victimization in the United States 1999*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)
- Juveniles constitute 19 percent of all aggravated assault victims and 19 percent of all simple assault victims. Simple assault is the most common crime committed against juveniles, constituting 41 percent of all offenses against juveniles known to police. (*Characteristics of Crimes Against Juveniles*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000)
- The 1996 National Crime Victimization Survey found that 14 percent of all assaults occur in the home; 7 percent occur at a friend's, relative's, or neighbor's home; and 3 percent occur on the street near the victim's home. (*Criminal Victimization in the United States 1999*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)

Resources for Information and Assistance

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-800-FYI-CALL or 1-800-394-2255
www.ncvc.org

National Organization for Victim Assistance
1-800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682
www.try-nova.org

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center
1-800-627-6872
TTY 1-877-712-9279
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html



Assault Victimization

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Office for Victims of Crime
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Advocating for the Fair
Treatment of Crime Victims

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Victims of Crime

What is assault?

There are two types of assault: aggravated and simple. Aggravated assault is an unlawful attack on another person for the purpose of causing severe physical injury. It is usually called aggravated when it includes use of a weapon or some other means that could cause death or serious physical harm to the victim. A person can be convicted of aggravated assault even if the victim was not physically harmed. Simple assault is the attempt or threat to inflict less serious physical injury without a weapon.

Assault is the most common violent crime in the United States.

—from *Criminal Victimization in the United States 2000*.
Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001

The number of assaults is much higher than the number of homicides in the United States. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, one aggravated assault occurred every 29 seconds in 1995. Unlike other violent crimes, assaults are committed almost equally by strangers and nonstrangers, which means that many victims know their attackers. Almost one out of every four assaults occurs in the victim's home; at a relative's, friend's, or neighbor's home; or on the street near the victim's home.

Assaults on juveniles have nearly doubled during the past few years. Teenage victims of violent assaults are more likely than adult victims to report that the offender is someone they know. Many juvenile assault victims say the first assault they remember was in their homes. The attackers generally have been family members, friends, or acquaintances.

In aggravated assault, the threat of serious physical injury and possible death is substantial. Even when assault victims do not sustain extensive injury or loss, they are forced to suffer threats of violence and physical harm at the hands of their assailants.



If You Are an Assault Survivor

An assault is a violent, life-threatening situation. When you were assaulted, you faced death. Even if you were not seriously or permanently injured during the assault, you had to deal with the possibility of death and fears of leaving loved ones behind. These and other aspects of the assault can have a great emotional impact on you, immediately and in the long term.

You may have many feelings about, thoughts about, and reactions to what has happened—from shock that this could happen to guilt about not being able to prevent it. You may feel that others believe the crime was somehow your fault. You also may feel humiliated or rejected by family members or acquaintances.

No one has the right to assault another person, regardless of how angry the attacker is or whether the attacker feels the victim has somehow wronged him or her. Even if you knew your attacker, the assault was not your fault.

You may feel angry at the attacker or the police and court system for not doing enough about the assault. You may be fearful that you could be assaulted again. You may have nightmares or flashbacks about the assault. You may find that you startle more easily at little noises or abrupt movements. You also may be disturbed by new feelings of vulnerability and loss of control similar to what you felt during the assault.

How victims react to assault varies from person to person. Your reaction may be immediate or delayed. Although you may feel as if you are the only one experiencing these feelings—and that no one else understands what you are going through—your reactions are normal. Some feelings may subside within a few days, while others may continue for some time or resurface after being triggered by another event. It is important for you to deal with your emotions at your own pace and in your own way. Just as everyone reacts to a crisis differently, not everyone copes with the consequences of crisis in the same way or within the same timeframe.

Where can you get help?

Remember, as an assault victim, you are not alone. Your community may have victim assistance programs, caring professionals, and support groups—all of which are there to help you by providing assistance, information, services, and referrals. Social services programs and trained professionals also can help you find out about crime victim rights in your state.

If the assault involved an injury or threat of injury, you may be eligible for reimbursement by your state's crime victim compensation program for certain out-of-pocket expenses, such as medical or counseling expenses and lost wages. To be eligible for these funds, you must report the assault to the police and cooperate with the criminal justice system. Victim assistance programs in your community can provide compensation applications and additional information.

It is important to keep a record of expenses you incur as a result of the assault. If the attacker is arrested and convicted, you may request restitution by completing a victim impact statement and listing your losses and expected future expenses (such as necessary medical treatment). Restitution for certain losses may be ordered by a judge as part of the sentence imposed on the attacker. However, in many cases, the defendant may not have sufficient assets or income to pay restitution. It is possible that even if an offender is convicted and ordered to pay restitution, you may receive no, or only partial, restitution for your losses.

Whether you have been assaulted by a stranger or someone you know, the best way to ensure your safety is to report the incident to local law enforcement immediately. Of course, the decision to report an assault is always yours.

