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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
Contact: Stu Smith: 202-307-0784
After hours: 301-983-9354

URBAN AND SUBURBAN CRIME RATES STABLE **FROM 2005 TO 2006**

WASHINGTON – Violent and property crime rates in United States urban and suburban communities remained stable between 2005 and 2006, the Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. Last year BJS introduced a new sample of households and adopted automated data collection procedures that limited comparisons to urban and suburban areas.

During 2006, U.S. residents age 12 and older experienced an estimated 25 million crimes of violence and theft. Also during the year:

- The violent crime rate was 24.6 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older; for property crimes it was 159.5 per 1,000 households.
- Males experienced 26 violent victimizations per 1,000 males age 12 or older; females, 23 per 1,000 females age 12 or older.
- Blacks experienced higher rates of violence (33 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older) than whites (23 per 1,000 persons).
- Of violent offenders victimizing males in 2006, 5 percent were described as intimates and 47 percent as strangers. In contrast, of offenders victimizing females 21 percent were described as intimates and 29 percent as strangers.
- An estimated 25 percent of all violent crime incidents were committed by an armed offender. A firearm was involved in 9 percent of these incidents.
- 49 percent of all violent victimizations and 38 percent of all property crimes were reported to the police; 57 percent of robberies and 59 percent of aggravated assaults were reported to police.

Aside from the urban and suburban crime rates, the 2006 national estimates for BJS’ National Crime Victimization Survey are not comparable to those in previous years because of the methodology changes. These changes included (1) introducing a new sample to account for shifts in population and location of households that occur over time, (2) incorporating responses from households that were in the survey for the first time and (3) using computer-assisted personal interviewing.

The new sample introduction affected the survey estimates in areas that were added in 2006, especially rural areas. It also required hiring and training a large number of new interviewers in new areas.

BJS also began using first-time interview data from newly selected households. However, this change provided significantly more incidents than subsequent interviews due to telescoping (respondents remembering an event as occurring at a time other than when it actually occurred) and panel bias (respondents being less willing to provide information as the number of interviews increases). To counter these effects, BJS and the U.S. Census Bureau, the collection agent for the survey, adjusted the data based on reporting patterns in previous years.

The survey also went to a fully automated mode of data collection. All of the households that were previously interviewed using a paper questionnaire were interviewed using computer-assisted personal interviewing in the second half of 2006. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's experience, computer-assisted personal interviewing is associated with improved, but higher, survey estimates.

As a result of these changes, variations in the amount and rate of crime at the national level were too large to be attributed to actual year-to-year changes. However, because the methodological changes were minimal in urban and suburban areas, BJS is able to provide reliable comparisons with 2005 estimates. The estimates of violent and property crime remain unchanged between 2005 and 2006 in those areas that are comparable.

Although the 2006 survey is unable to provide national-level estimates of change from 2005, the changes streamline data collection procedures and improve BJS's ability to measure the level and rate of crime in the future.

The report, *Criminal Victimization, 2006* (NCJ-219413) was written by BJS statisticians Michael Rand and Shannan Catalano. Following publication, the report can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv06.htm>

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical reports and programs, please visit the BJS Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>

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