

## The Facts About Assault

In 2010, there were an estimated 725,189 incidents of aggravated assault and 2.4 million cases of simple assault in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In 2010, incidents of assault accounted for 63 percent of violent crime in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

In both simple and aggravated assaults, firearms were the most common weapons used, followed by knives.<sup>5</sup>

During a 1-year period, 47 percent of youth ages 14 to 17 experienced a physical assault.<sup>6</sup>

In 2010, an aggravated assault occurred every 41 seconds.<sup>7</sup>

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010, Violent Crime, "Terms & Definitions."

<sup>2</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2010*, Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011, *Crime in the United States 2010*. Washington, DC.

<sup>6</sup>D. Finkelhor et al., 2009, *Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey*. Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

<sup>7</sup>Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011, *Crime in the United States 2010*. Washington, DC.

## Resources for Information and Assistance

National Center for Victims of Crime  
202-467-8700  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

National Organization for Victim Assistance  
1-800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682  
[www.trynova.org](http://www.trynova.org)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-TALK (8255) [24/7 hotline]  
1-888-628-9454 (Spanish)  
1-800-799-4889 (TTY)  
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Directory of Crime Victim Services  
Office for Victims of Crime  
Office of Justice Programs  
U.S. Department of Justice  
<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices>

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Assault

## What Is Assault?

*Assault*—an unlawful physical attack or threat of attack—is the most common violent crime in the United States. *Aggravated assault* is an attack, with or without a weapon, resulting in serious physical injury, such as broken bones, lost teeth, or internal injuries. The definition also includes a threat or attempted attack with a deadly weapon, such as a gun or a knife, resulting in no physical harm. *Simple assault* is an attack or threat of an attack without a weapon with the intent to inflict less serious violence upon another person.<sup>1</sup>

Many victims know their attackers. In 2010, for instance, 64 percent of female victims and 40 percent of male victims of aggravated assault knew their attacker as a friend, acquaintance, relative, or intimate partner.<sup>2</sup>

Assault victims may face extensive physical, emotional, and financial consequences. Assault victims may have been seriously or permanently injured. Even if they were not injured, they have faced the possibility of death and fears of leaving behind loved ones. These fears and the potential physical aspects of the assault may have a significant immediate and long-term emotional impact on assault victims. And just as everyone reacts to a crisis differently, not everyone copes with the impact of a crisis in the same way or within the same timeframe.

## If You Are a Victim of Assault

If you were assaulted, you may experience a wide range of different feelings about and reactions to the assault. 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—remember that your reactions are normal.

Your reaction may be immediate or delayed. Some feelings may subside within a few days, while others may continue for some time or resurface after being triggered by another event. You may feel shock that this could happen to you and guilt that you could not prevent it. You may feel that others believe the crime was somehow your fault, and you may feel humiliated or rejected by family members or acquaintances.

You may feel angry at the attacker or at the police and the criminal justice system for not doing enough about the assault. You may be fearful that you could be assaulted again. You also may be disturbed by new feelings of vulnerability and loss of control similar to what you felt during the assault.

Many assault victims are at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder, which can involve having flashbacks or nightmares about the assault, avoiding places that remind them of the assault, feeling depressed or emotionally numb, and being easily startled at little noises or abrupt movements.

Whatever your reaction, it is important for you to deal with your emotions at your own pace and in your own way. It is also important to seek help if you feel the need. There are many resources and forms of assistance available to you.

## Where Can You Get Help?

Remember that, as a victim of assault, 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 learn about crime victims' rights in your state.

If the assault involved an 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. The applications are also available online from each state's program.

It is important to keep a record of expenses you incur as a result of the assault. If the attacker is arrested and convicted, a judge may order restitution for certain losses as part of the sentence. However, even if an offender is convicted and ordered to pay restitution, you may receive no, or only partial, restitution for your losses because, in many cases, the defendant may not have sufficient assets or income to pay restitution. (In many jurisdictions, a restitution order can be converted into a civil judgment so that victims can garnish any future wages, tax refunds, or other income the offender may earn.)

You may request restitution by completing a victim impact statement and listing your losses and expected future expenses (such as necessary medical treatment). A victim-witness specialist or victim-witness coordinator in the prosecutor's office can help you with this process.

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 entirely yours.