

AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

DEFINITION

Aggravated assault is an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Attempts are included since it is not necessary that an injury result when a gun, knife, or other weapon is used which could and probably would result in serious personal injury if the crime were successfully completed.

TREND		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants</i>
1998	976,583	361.3
1999	916,383	336.1
Percent change	-6.2	-7.0

For the sixth consecutive year, reported aggravated assault figures showed a decline from the preceding year's figures. The 1999 estimated total of 916,383 aggravated assaults represented a 6-percent decrease from 1998 data for this offense, and the lowest measure since 1988. Aggravated assault comprised 64 percent of all the violent crimes in 1999.

All of the Nation's regions observed a decline in reported aggravated assaults. Forty-two percent of the aggravated assault volume occurred in the Southern Region, the Nation's most populous area. The Western Region followed with 23 percent, the Midwestern Region with 19 percent, and the Northeastern Region with 15 percent. (See Table 3.)

The highest volume of aggravated assaults, according to monthly distribution figures, occurred in July, and the lowest number was observed in February.

Table 2.23

Aggravated Assault by Month

Percent distribution, 1995-1999

Month	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
January	7.6	7.8	7.5	7.9	7.9
February	7.0	7.4	7.0	7.0	7.0
March	8.1	8.0	8.3	8.1	7.9
April	8.3	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.3
May	8.8	8.9	9.3	9.1	9.0
June	8.8	9.1	9.0	8.9	8.7
July	9.4	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.5
August	9.4	9.3	9.4	9.4	9.2
September	8.9	8.6	8.8	8.7	8.6
October	8.7	8.5	8.4	8.3	8.7
November	7.5	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.7
December	7.4	7.6	7.2	7.4	7.5

Collectively, the Nation's cities experienced a 7-percent drop in aggravated assault totals from 1998 to 1999. Among city population groupings, decreases ranged from 11 percent in cities with populations 25,000 to 49,999 to 5 percent in cities with 1 million and over inhabitants. The number of aggravated assaults in suburban counties and rural counties declined 6 percent and 4 percent, respectively. In those cities with populations of 250,000 and over, aggravated assault fell 6 percent when compared to the previous year's data. (See Table 12.)

Five- and 10-year trends for the country as a whole show aggravated assaults 17 percent lower than in 1995 and 13 percent below the 1990 figure. (See Table 1.)

Rate

Nationwide, there were 336 reported victims of aggravated assault per 100,000 inhabitants in 1999. The rate was 7 percent lower than in 1998 and represented a 20-percent drop from the 1995 rate. The 1999 rate was down 21 percent from the 1990 rate.

The rate in metropolitan areas, 363 per 100,000 inhabitants, was higher than the national average. Cities outside metropolitan areas experienced a rate of 307 and rural counties a rate of 177.

Compared to the preceding year's rates, 1999 aggravated assault rates were down in all regions. The aggravated assault rate was 401 per 100,000 inhabitants in the South, 347 in the West, 279 in the Midwest, and 271 in the Northeast. The West and Midwest each registered 10-percent drops; the Northeast decreased by 6 percent; and the South experienced a 4-percent decline. (See Table 4.)

Nature

Blunt objects or other dangerous weapons accounted for 35 percent of the weapons used in aggravated assaults in 1999. Twenty-nine percent of the assaults were committed with personal weapons such as hands, fists, and feet. Knives or cutting instruments and firearms each accounted for 18 percent of the weapons used.

Aggravated assaults decreased in all weapon categories when comparing 1999 to 1998 figures. Aggravated assaults with firearms fell by 12 percent; personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.), 7 percent; knives and cutting instruments, 6 percent; and blunt objects or other dangerous weapons, 5 percent. State-by-state totals for weapons used in aggravated assaults during 1999 are shown in Table 22.

Table 2.24

Aggravated Assault, Types of Weapons Used

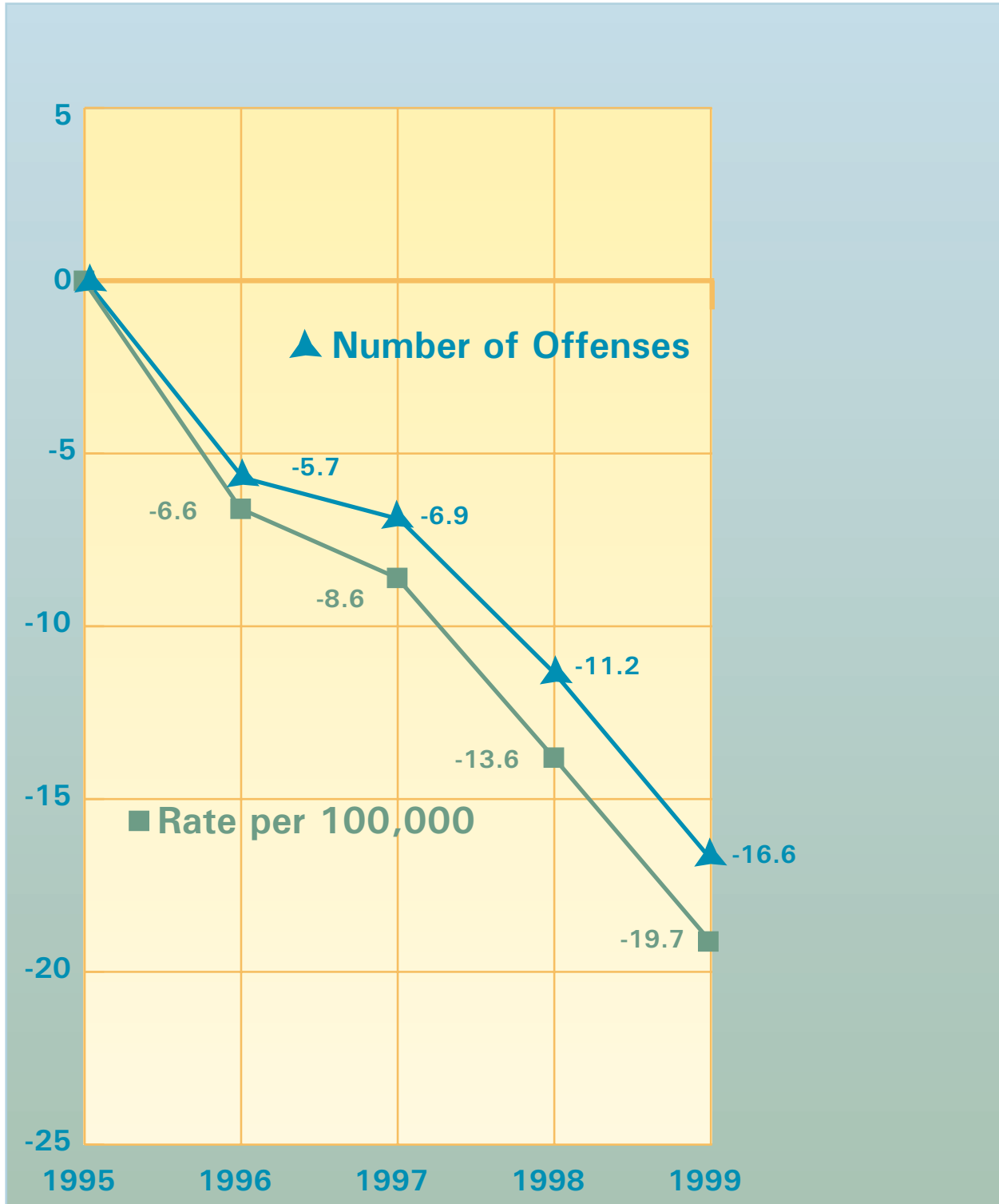
Percent distribution by region, 1999

Region	Total all weapons ¹	Firearms	Knives or cutting instruments	Other weapons (clubs, blunt objects, etc.)	Personal weapons
Total	100.0	18.0	17.8	35.3	28.9
Northeastern States	100.0	12.1	17.0	33.5	37.4
Midwestern States	100.0	20.8	18.0	34.7	26.4
Southern States	100.0	20.0	19.9	38.2	21.8
Western States	100.0	15.9	14.7	31.7	37.8

¹ Because of rounding, the percentages may not add to total.

Figure 2.11

**Aggravated
Assault**
Percent Change
from 1995



Law Enforcement Response

Law enforcement agencies nationwide recorded a 59-percent aggravated assault clearance rate during 1999. Rural and suburban county law enforcement agencies cleared 64 and 62 percent, respectively, and law enforcement in cities collectively recorded 58 percent cleared. Among the city groupings, those cities with populations under 10,000 recorded the highest aggravated assault clearance rate at 65 percent.

Regionally, aggravated assault clearances were highest in the Northeast at 63 percent. The West recorded a clearance rate of 60 percent, followed by the Midwest at 59 percent, and the South with 58.

Law enforcement in both the Nation's cities and suburban counties had a juvenile clearance rate for aggravated assault of 12 percent. In rural counties the clearance rate was 10 percent.

Arrests for aggravated assault represented 76 percent of violent crime arrests in 1999. Sixty-three percent of the estimated 483,530 individuals arrested for this offense were white, 35 percent were black, and the remaining percent were comprised of all other races. Forty percent of aggravated assault arrestees were under the age of 25. Eighty percent of all persons arrested for aggravated assault were male.

Arrests for aggravated assault were down 5 percent in 1999 from the preceding year's total. Arrests were also down 5 percent for both adults and juveniles. The 5-year trend, 1995 to 1999, shows a decrease of 10 percent for total aggravated assault arrests. Adult arrest totals were also down 10 percent, and juvenile aggravated assault arrests decreased by 13 percent.