

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>
1997	1,023,201	382.3
1998	974,402	360.5
Percent change	-4.8	-5.7

Aggravated assaults decreased in 1998, marking the fifth consecutive year of decline. The estimated total of 974,402 aggravated assaults represented a 5-percent decline for this offense and accounted for 64 percent of the violent crimes in 1998.

The number of reported aggravated assaults decreased in all of the Nation's regions. Forty-one percent of the aggravated assault volume occurred in the Southern Region, the Nation's most populous area according to geographic distribution figures. The Western Region followed with 24 percent, the Midwestern Region with 20 percent, and the Northeastern Region with 15 percent. (See Table 4.)

The monthly figures for July and August represented the highest volume of aggravated assaults in 1998, while the lowest number occurred during February.

Table 2.23

Aggravated Assault by Month					
Percent distribution, 1994-1998					
Months	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
January	7.2	7.6	7.8	7.5	7.9
February	6.9	7.0	7.4	7.0	7.0
March	8.2	8.1	8.0	8.3	8.1
April	8.5	8.3	8.1	8.2	8.3
May	8.7	8.8	8.9	9.3	9.2
June	8.9	8.8	9.1	9.0	8.9
July	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.5	9.4
August	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.4	9.4
September	8.8	8.9	8.6	8.8	8.7
October	8.7	8.7	8.5	8.4	8.3
November	7.6	7.5	7.4	7.5	7.4
December	7.7	7.4	7.6	7.2	7.4

The Nation's cities collectively experienced a decrease of 5 percent in the aggravated assault volume from 1997 to 1998. Among city population groupings, decreases ranged from 8 percent in cities with populations of 100,000 to 499,999 to 2 percent in cities with 1 million and over inhabitants. The number of aggravated assaults also decreased 3 percent in suburban counties and showed no change in rural counties. During the same 2-year period, aggravated assaults increased by 1 percent in cities with populations under 10,000. (See Table 12.)

The 5- and 10-year trends for the country as a whole show aggravated assault figures for 1998 were 12 percent lower than in 1994 and 2 percent above those in 1989. (See Table 1.)

Rate

There were 360 reported victims of aggravated assault for every 100,000 people nationwide in 1998. The rate was 6 percent lower than in 1997 and 16 percent below the 1994 rate. The 1998 rate was 6 percent lower than the 1989 rate.

In 1998, the rate in metropolitan areas at 390 per 100,000 inhabitants was higher than the national average. Cities outside metropolitan areas experienced a rate of 339 and rural counties a rate of 183.

Compared to 1997 rates, 1998 aggravated assault rates were down in all regions. The aggravated assault rate was 418 per 100,000 people in the South, 384 in the West, 310 in the Midwest, and 288 in the Northeast. The West registered a 7-percent drop, while the Northeast, Midwest, and South each decreased by 5 percent. (See Table 4.)

Nature

Thirty-six percent of the aggravated assaults involved blunt objects or other dangerous weapons in 1998. Twenty-seven percent of the assaults were committed with personal weapons such as hands, fists, and feet; 19 percent with firearms; and 18 percent with knives or cutting instruments.

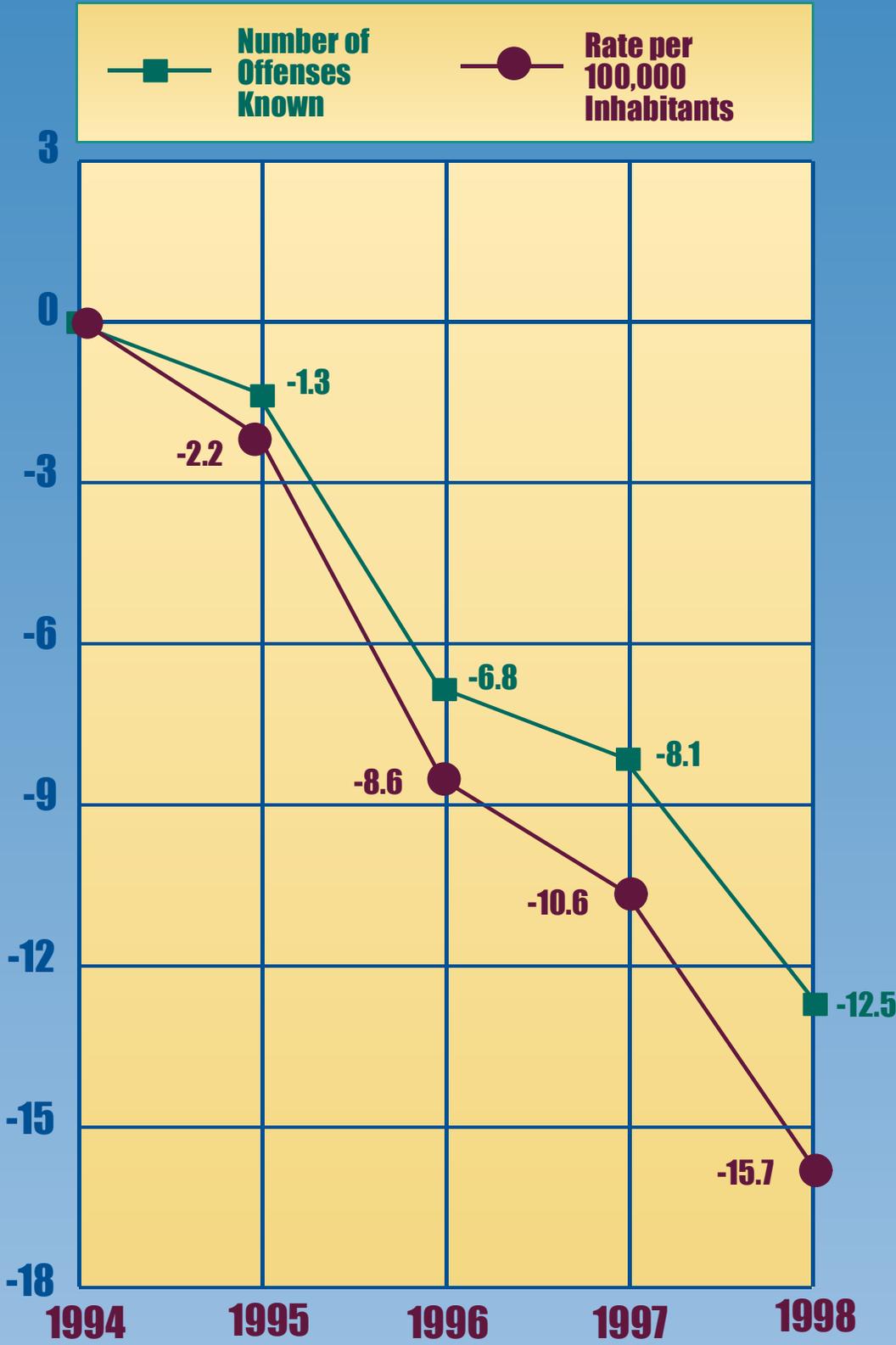
Comparing 1998 to 1997 totals, aggravated assaults decreased in all weapon categories. Aggravated assaults with firearms fell by 9 percent; personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.), 6 percent; blunt instruments or other dangerous weapons, 4 percent; and knives and cutting instruments, 2 percent. State-by-state totals for weapons used in assaults during 1998 are shown in Table 22.

Table 2.24

Aggravated Assault, Types of Weapons Used					
Percent distribution by region, 1998					
Region	Total all weapons ¹	Firearms	Knives or cutting instruments	Other weapons (clubs, blunt objects, etc.)	Personal weapons
Total	100.0	18.8	18.4	35.6	27.3
Northeastern States	100.0	11.3	20.1	39.7	28.9
Midwestern States	100.0	21.5	18.2	35.2	25.1
Southern States	100.0	22.3	20.2	36.7	20.9
Western States	100.0	16.6	14.5	31.4	37.5

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

Figure 2.10 **Aggravated Assault**
Percent Change from 1994



Law Enforcement Response

In 1998, law enforcement agencies across the country recorded a 59-percent aggravated assault clearance rate. Rural and suburban county law enforcement agencies cleared 63 and 62 percent, respectively, while cities collectively recorded 58 percent cleared. Cities with populations under 10,000 recorded the highest aggravated assault clearance rate among the city groupings at 65 percent.

Regional clearance percentages for aggravated assault were 63 percent in the Northeast, 59 percent in the West, 58 percent in the South, and 53 percent in the Midwest.

Law enforcement personnel identified persons under age 18 to be the assailants in 12 percent of the aggravated assaults cleared nationally and in cities collectively. Persons in this age group were involved in 11 and 9 percent

of the aggravated assaults cleared by law enforcement in suburban and rural counties, respectively.

Arrests for aggravated assaults represented 75 percent of violent crime arrests in 1998. Of the estimated 506,630 individuals arrested for this offense, 62 percent were white, 36 percent were black, and 2 percent were comprised of all other races. Eighty-six percent of the arrestees were adults; 80 percent were males.

Arrests for aggravated assaults were down 4 percent in 1998 from the 1997 total. During this 2-year period, arrests of adults also were down 4 percent, and arrests of persons under age 18 decreased 3 percent. Comparing the 1994 and 1998 figures, the 5-year trend shows a decrease of 4 percent for total aggravated assault arrests and 3 percent for adults. The 5-year trend also shows that juvenile aggravated assault arrests declined 13 percent.