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**NEW FAMILY VIOLENCE STUDY**

A study released by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics on Sunday finds that declines in family violence continue, along with overall declines in violent crime. Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler called the new study a “ray of hope that we are finally on the right track in addressing the violence that devastates so many families, but our work is not nearly done.”

*Family Violence Statistics* concludes that there were approximately 3.5 million violent crimes committed against family members from 1998 to 2002. Family violence declined by about half from 1993 to 2002, mirroring the overall drop in all violent crime in the period. Still, family violence as a proportion of all violent crime remained stable during the decade.

“Domestic, dating and family violence are still taking a terrible toll,” Soler said, noting that the study examines data only through 2002. Many experts have expressed concern that the declines in family and other violence have not continued across the board in more recent years.

In the report, family violence is defined to include abuse by current or former spouses, child abuse, and abuse by another family member. Crime between current or former boyfriends and girlfriends is defined as “nonfamily” violence. Among the findings:

**Domestic Violence and Homicide**

- Women are 84 percent of spouse abuse victims, and 86 percent of victims of

abuse at the hands of a boyfriend or girlfriend.

- Males are 83 percent of spouse murderers, and 75 percent of murderers who kill a boyfriend or girlfriend.

**Family Violence of All Kinds**

- Family violence accounted for 11 to 33 percent of all violent crime from 1998 to 2002, depending on whether you examine victimization surveys or police data, respectively.
- Half (49 percent) of family violence is a crime against a spouse, eleven percent is a parent attacking a child, and 41 percent is an offense against another family member.
- Nearly three in four family violence victims are female (73 percent).
- Seventy-six percent of family violence perpetrators are male.
- Forty percent of family violence victims are injured during the incident.
- About three-quarters of family violence incidents occur in or near the victim’s residence.
- Family violence remains under-reported. About two in five incidents were not reported to police from 1998 to 2002.
- Of the nearly 500,000 people in state prisons for violent crimes in 1997, 15 percent were there for a violent crime against a family member. Forty-five percent of them had been subject to a restraining order at some time. Seventy-eight percent of their crimes were against a female, most often a child.
- Females were more than half of family murder victims (58 percent) in 2002. Family members were responsible for 43

percent of all murders of females that year.

“This report offers a sobering reminder that women are the victims in the vast majority of cases of domestic violence and homicide, and that it often goes unreported,” Soler added. “But because it provides little data on dating violence and violence among unmarried couples, *Family Violence Statistics* does not provide a full picture of violence against women and children in our country. It is not news that violence is most prevalent among younger couples who are less likely to be married and to fit the Justice Department’s definition of ‘family’ than couples who are older.”

“The resources we have put into services and solutions through the *Violence Against Women Act*, first passed in 1994, and other initiatives are beginning to work,” she added. “We need to intensify those efforts so that every family can live in peace.”

*Family Violence Statistics* examines the National Crime Victimization Survey, two FBI databases, and several Bureau of Justice Statistics surveys. It was written by Matthew R. Durose, Caroline Wolf Harlow, Patrick A. Langan, Mark Motivans, Ramona R. Rantala and Erica L. Smith of the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

*It is available online at*  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fvs.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fvs.htm)

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