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# Summary and Interpretation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime in the United States, 2008

*Rosemary J. Erickson, Ph.D.  
President*

*Sandra J. Erickson, MFS  
Research Associate*

*Shannon M. Brick  
Crime Analyst*



Erickson, Erickson & Brick  
Athena

**Summary and Interpretation of the  
Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime in the United States, 2008**  
Rosemary J. Erickson, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>, Sandra J. Erickson, MFS<sup>2</sup> and Shannon M. Brick<sup>3</sup>  
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The Federal Bureau of Investigation has released its annual report regarding crime in the United States in 2008. The key findings, taken from there, are discussed and interpreted below.

**CRIME VOLUME**

This section is on crime volume, as compared to crime rate. Crime volume is based on the total number of crimes only. Crime rate is the number of offenses per 100,000 persons. Violent crime decreased by 1.9% from 2007 to 2008. In fact, violent crime decreased slightly in all categories. Property crime volume also decreased slightly in the same period by 0.8%. Comparing 2008 violent crime to 2007 violent crime, the category of murder decreased 3.9%, rape decreased 1.6%, robbery decreased 0.7%, and aggravated assault decreased 2.5%. Much of the property crime was at an increase, with one exception. Burglary increased by 2.0%, larceny/theft increased 0.3%, while motor vehicle theft was markedly down by 12.7%. The percentage change from 2007 to 2008 is shown in Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1: PERCENT CHANGE IN VIOLENT CRIME VOLUME**

<b>CRIME CATEGORY</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>-1.9%</b>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>-1.6%</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>

For the five year period from 2004 to 2008, violent crime overall was up 1.6%. Both murder and robbery increased, with robbery having the greatest increase of 10.1%, and murder following that with an increase of 0.8%. Both rape and aggravated assault decreased over this five year period. Aggravated assault decreased by 1.5%, and rape decreased by 6.4%.

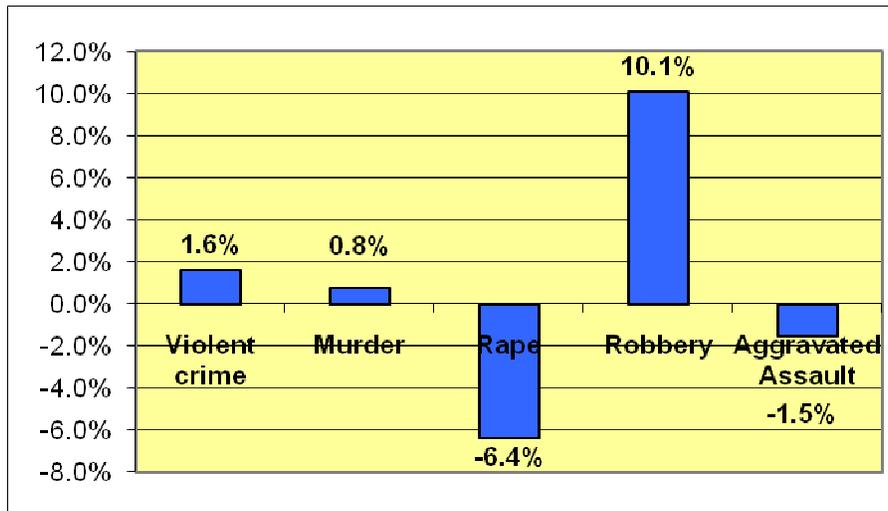
<sup>1</sup> Rosemary J. Erickson holds a Ph.D. in Sociology: Justice and is president of Athena Research.

<sup>2</sup> Sandra J. Erickson holds a Masters in Forensic Science and is a research associate at Athena Research.

<sup>3</sup> Shannon M. Brick is a student and Crime Analyst for Athena Research.



**CHART 1: VIOLENT CRIME VOLUME COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO – 2004 TO 2008**



In addition to percentage increases and decreases in crime, it is important to keep in mind the actual numbers. There were 1,382,012 violent crimes committed in the United States in 2008, down from 1,408,337 the previous year. Murders totaled 16,272 in 2008, down slightly from 16,929 in 2007. There were 441,855 robberies reported in the United States in 2008, down from 445,125 in 2007. Rapes totaled 89,000 in 2008, down from 90,427 in 2007. In 2008, there were 834,885 aggravated assaults, down from 855,856 in 2007.

In the period of 2007-2008, all regions of the country experienced an overall decrease in violent crime volume with the exception of the Northeast (+0.0001%). The Midwest saw a decrease of 2.5% and the West a decrease of 2.9%. Murders were up 1% in the Northeast, and down in all others. The number of murders in the Midwest was down the least at 0.8%. The South was down 5.3%, and the West was down the most at 6.8%. Rape volume was up in the Northeast, with an increase of 1.5%. All other regions experienced a decrease- down by 1% in the Midwest, down by 3.1% in the South, and down by 1.1% in the West. Robberies were up in the Northeast by 1.0%. The Midwest was down 0.3%, and the West was down 1.6%, and robberies were down 1.1% in the South. Firearms were used in 43.5% of all robberies in 2008 nationwide, up from 42.8% in 2007. The South experienced the highest percentage of firearm usage (51.5%) and the West the lowest (33.8%).

**CRIME RATE**

This section is on rate, not volume. Rate is the number of offenses per 100,000 inhabitants. The violent crime rate decreased 2.7% from the 2007 rate. The property crime rate also decreased 1.6%. From 2007 to 2008, the murder rate decreased 4.7%, rape decreased 2.4%, robbery decreased 1.5%, and aggravated assault decreased 3.2%, as shown in Table 2 below.



**TABLE 2: PERCENT CHANGE IN VIOLENT CRIME RATE**

<b>CRIME CATEGORY</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>-4.7%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>-2.4%</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>-3.2%</b>

For the five year period from 2004 to 2008, the violent crime rate overall was down 1.9% as shown in Table 3 below, but robbery increased 6.3% during that five-year period. Murder was down 2.7%, rape down 9.6%, and aggravated assault down 4.8%.

**TABLE 3: PERCENT CHANGE IN VIOLENT CRIME RATE – FIVE YEAR PERIOD**

<b>CRIME CATEGORY</b>	<b>2004-2008</b>
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>-1.9%</b>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>-9.6%</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>+6.3%</b>
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>-4.8%</b>

### **CRIME DETAILS AND TRENDS**

Aggravated assault accounted for 60.4% of the violent crimes in 2008. Robbery accounted for 32.0%, forcible rape accounted for 6.4%, and murder accounted for 1.2% of the violent crimes in 2008, as shown in Chart 2. These percentages are consistent with previous years.



**CHART 2: VIOLENT CRIME BY OFFENSE**

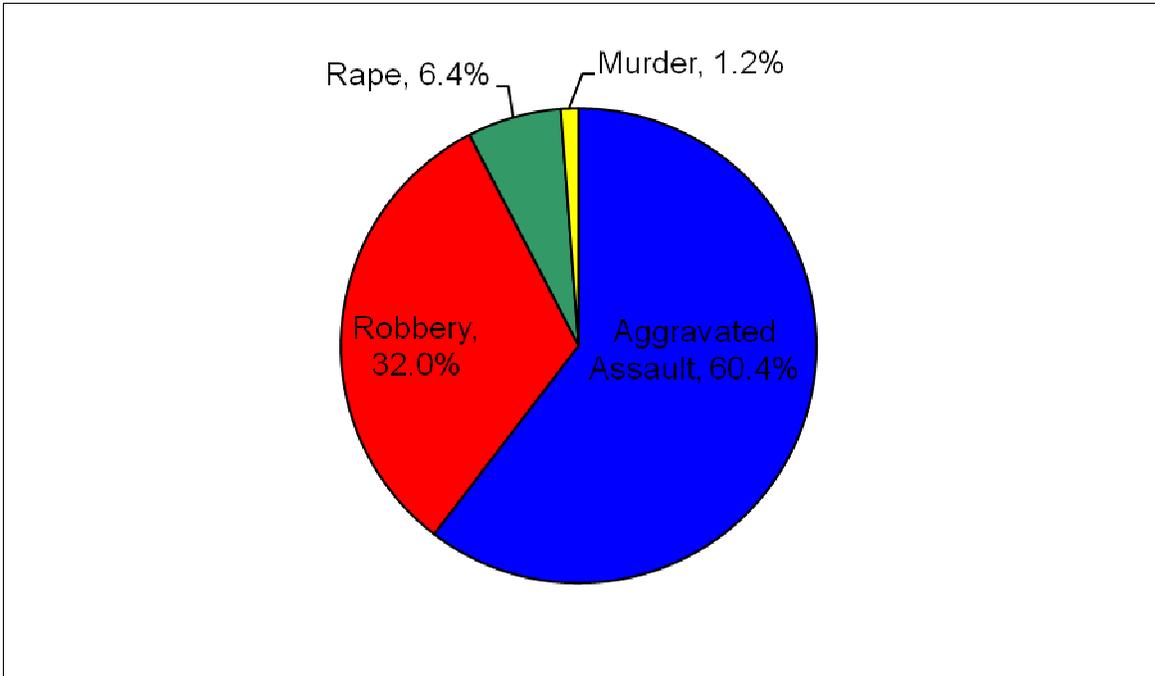
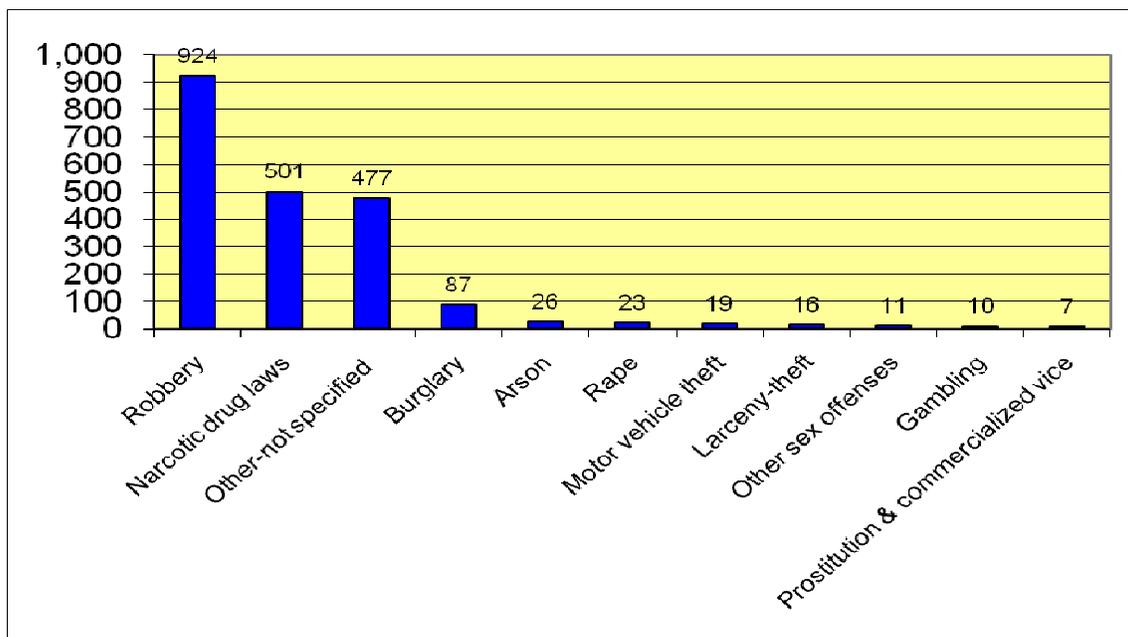


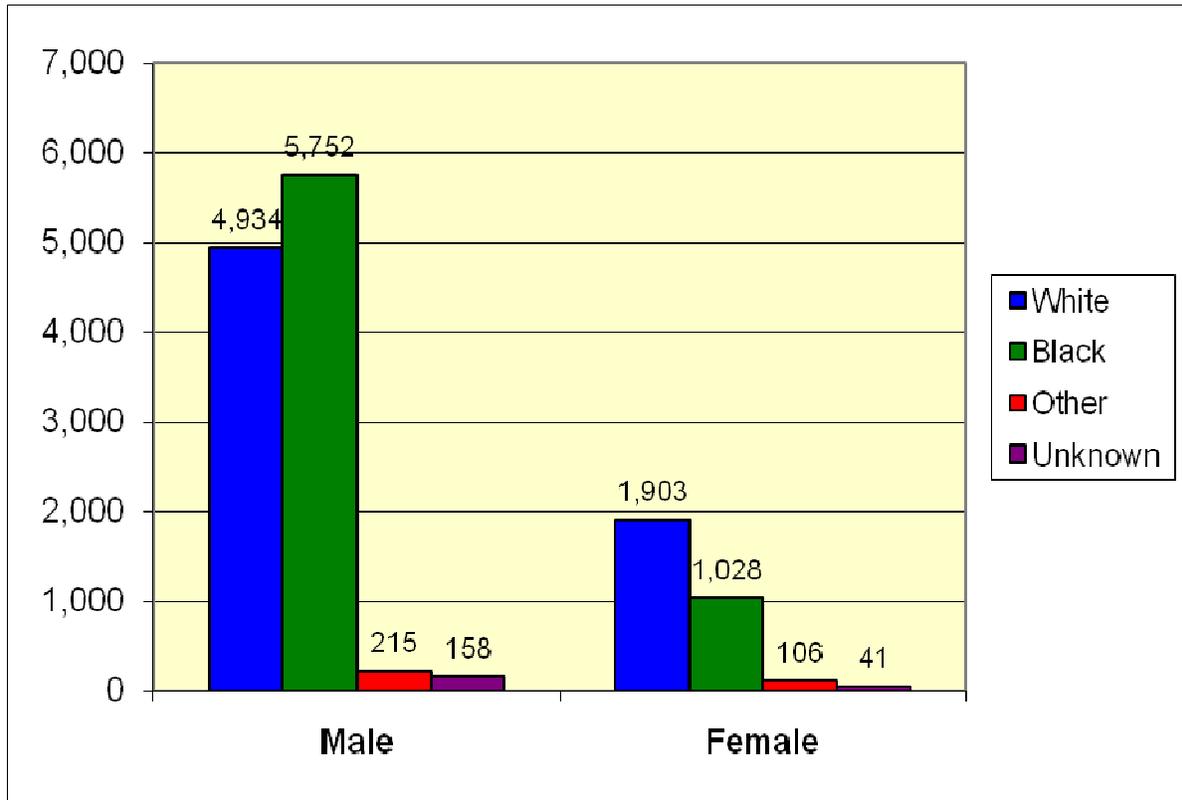
Chart 3 shows the breakdown of murders that occurred during the commission of other felonies. Of all felony murders, the most frequent (924) were robbery related. That number has stayed the same from the number in 2007.

**CHART 3: FELONY MURDER CIRCUMSTANCES**



Murder victims were killed with firearms 66.9% of the time in 2008, down from 68% in 2007. Chart 4 shows murder victims by race and sex. In 2008, 78.0% of known murder victims were male. Murder victims, for whom race was known, were 48.2% white, 47.8% black, and the remaining victims were from other or unknown races.

**CHART 4: MURDER VICTIMS BY RACE AND SEX**



In 2008, 44.2% of the perpetrators were unknown, down from 46.1%. When the relationships of murder victims and offenders were known, 21.6% were killed by an acquaintance, 13% of victims were slain by family members, and 12.3% were murdered by strangers.

Chart 5 depicts the 5-year trend in the number of murders. In 2008, the number of murders was up 0.8% from 2004.



**CHART 5: NUMBER OF MURDERS 2004-2008**

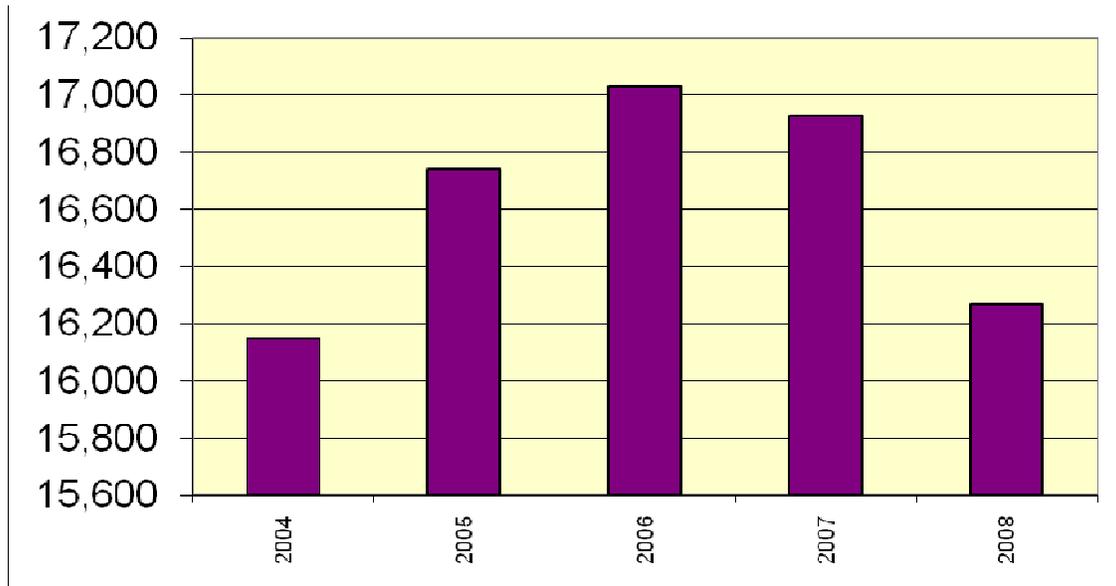
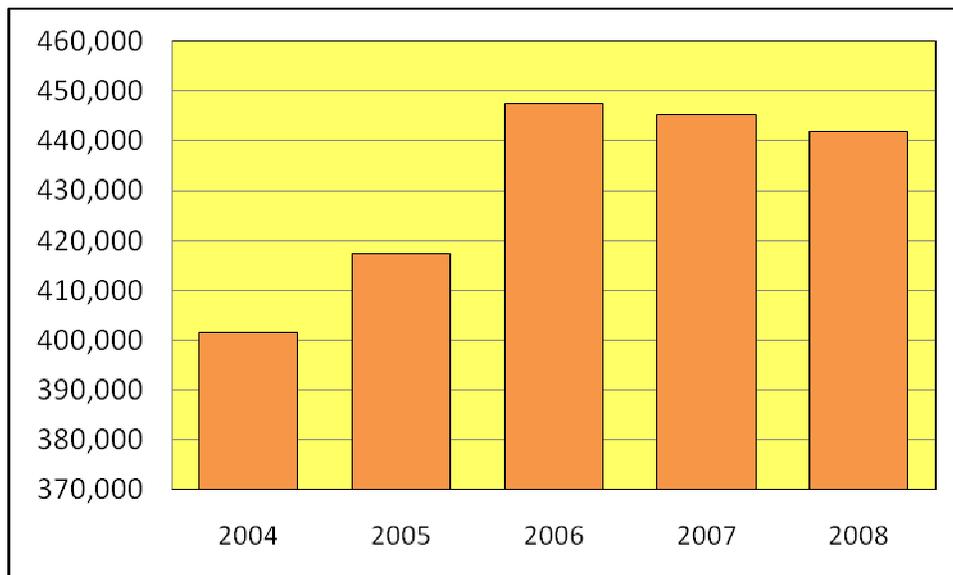


Chart 6 shows the 5-year trend for robbery. Robberies were 10.1% higher in 2008 than they were in 2004.

**CHART 6: NUMBER OF ROBBERIES 2003-2007**

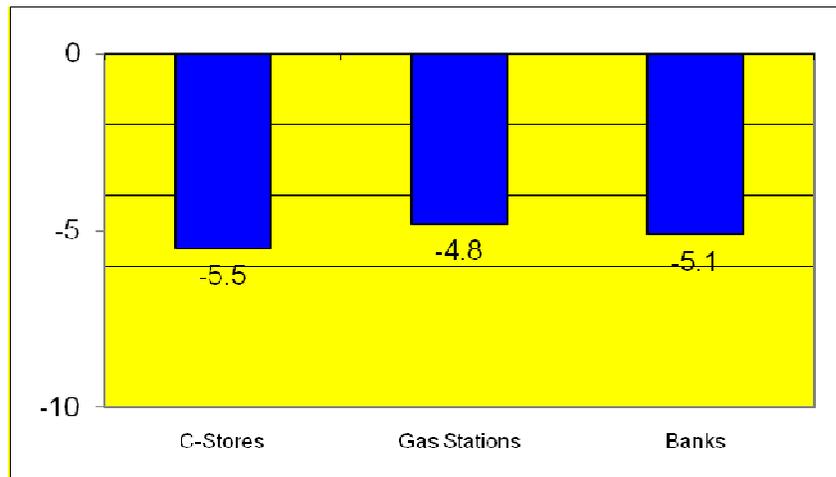


Charts 7, 8 and 9 present the robbery data for convenience stores, gas stations and banks. In evaluating the results, note that the distinction between gas stations and convenience stores is not always clear, and it is based on the law enforcement designation at the scene.



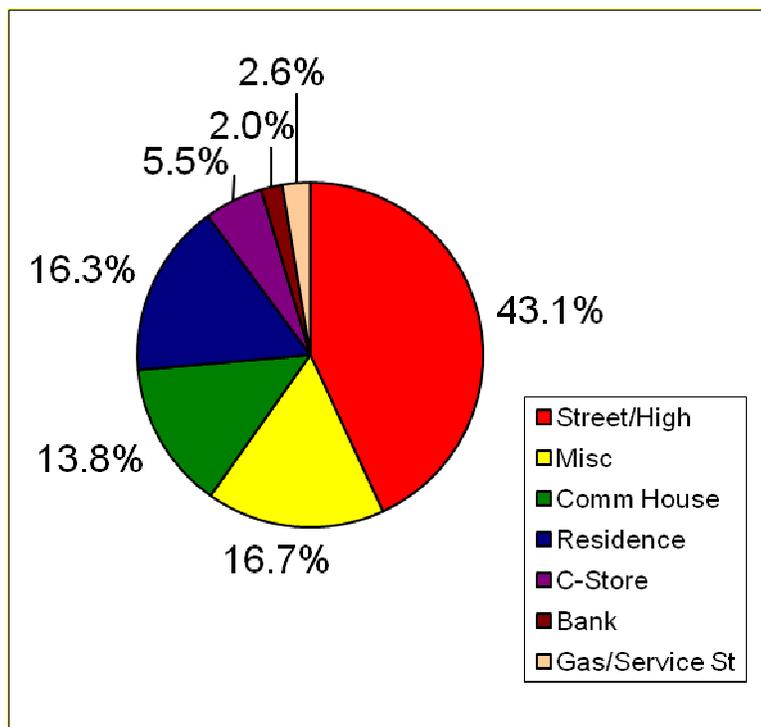
- Convenience store robbery volume was down 5.5% from 2007 to 2008.
- Gas station robbery volume was down 4.8% from 2007 to 2008.
- Bank robbery volume was down 5.1% from 2007 to 2008.

**CHART 7: PERCENT CHANGE IN ROBBERY VOLUME FROM PREVIOUS YEAR – 2007-2008**



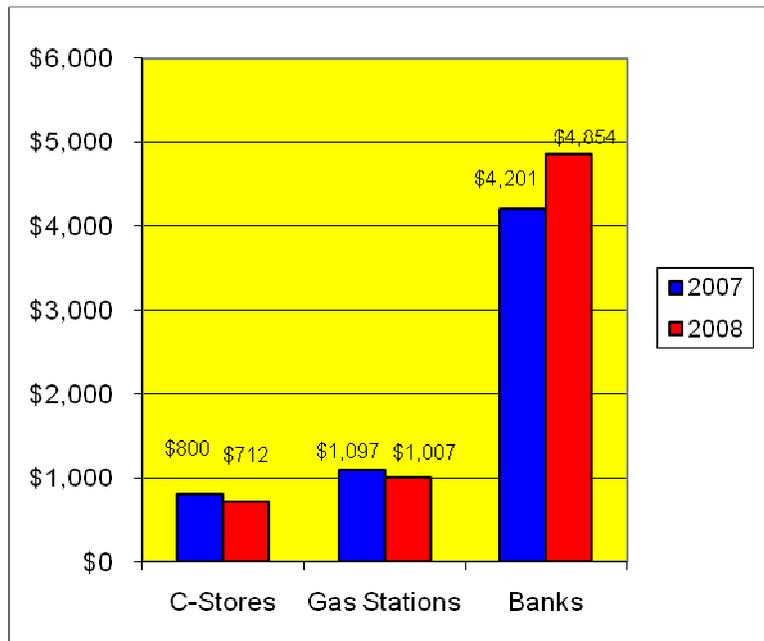
- Convenience store robbery made up 5.5% of the total robberies in 2008, 0.1% less than the previous year.
- Gas station robbery made up 2.6% of the total robberies in 2008, same as the previous year.
- Bank robberies made up 2.0% down 0.1% from the previous year.

**CHART 8: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION ROBBERY VOLUME – 2008**



- ❖ In 2008, convenience stores had an average dollar loss of \$712, down from \$800 in the previous year.
- ❖ Gas station average dollar loss in 2008 was \$1,007, down slightly from \$1,097 the year before.
- ❖ Banks had by far the highest average dollar loss at \$4,854, an increase from \$4,201 in 2007.

**CHART 9: AVERAGE LOSS PER ROBBERY**



*Authors' Note: These are not just register losses, but include safe and merchandise losses.*

## HISTORICAL CRIME DATA

According to Table 1 of the 2008 UCR report, the *violent crime rate* in this country peaked in 1991 and then began to decrease every year until 2005 and 2006 when it increased two years in a row. The 2008 data show it at its lowest point since 1991. The violent crime rate was 758.2 in 1991 and was 454.5 in 2008.

The *murder rate* in the US peaked in 1991 at 9.8. In 2000, the murder rate was 5.5, the lowest it had been since 1991. Then in 2005 and 2006, it increased for two years in a row. In 2008, it reached its lowest rate since 1991. The 5.4 rate in 2008 was the lowest murder rate since the peak of 9.8 in 1991, when it was almost double what it is now.

The *rape rate* peaked a year later than murder or robbery. It peaked in 1992 at 42.8 and was at 29.3 in 2008, the lowest rape rate since 1992.

The *robbery rate* peaked in 1991 and began decreasing each year until 2001, when it increased again. Then it reached a low again in 2003 at 136.7. It began increasing again and was 145.3 in 2008.

The *aggravated assault rate* also peaked in 1992, as did rape, at a rate of 441.9. In 2008, the aggravated assault rate was 274.6, the lowest of any year since 1992.



## **AUTHORS' CONCLUSIONS:**

All categories of violent crime were down slightly in volume in 2008, but robbery was still higher than five years before, in 2004. For this reason, employers need to stay focused on the crime prevention strategy that has been in place for nearly three decades in certain retail settings, particularly convenience stores. It incorporates the validated crime-reducing measures of good cash control; limiting escape routes; maintaining good visibility throughout the store; adequate lighting inside and outside stores; and training employees in safety and anti-violence measures.

