

US Department of Justice Report

3.4 MILLION PEOPLE REPORT BEING STALKED IN THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON – An estimated 3.4 million persons identified themselves as victims of stalking during a 12-month period in 2005 and 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. About half of these victims experienced at least one unwanted contact per week from the offender and 11 percent had been stalked for five or more years.

Stalking is defined as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Individuals must have feared for their safety or that of a family member as a result of the course of conduct, or have experienced additional threatening behaviors. Individuals were classified as stalking victims if they responded that they experienced at least one of seven types of stalking behaviors on two or more separate occasions.

The most common types of stalking behavior reported by victims were receiving unwanted phone calls from the offender (66 percent), receiving unsolicited letters or email (31 percent), or having rumors spread about them (36 percent). Nearly a third of victims reported that offenders were equally likely to show up at places with no reason to be there or wait for the victim at a particular location.

Technology has become a quick and easy way for stalkers to monitor and harass their victims. More than one in four stalking victims reported that some form of cyberstalking was used, such as email (83 percent of all cyberstalking victims) or instant messaging (35 percent). Electronic monitoring of some kind was used to stalk one in 13 victims. Video or digital cameras were equally likely as listening devices or bugs to be used to track victims.

Nearly 75 percent of victims knew their offender in some capacity, and about one-tenth of all victims were stalked by a stranger. Stalking victims most often identified the stalker as a former intimate (22 percent) or a friend, roommate, or neighbor (16 percent).

Depending upon the severity of the stalking, victims suffered a range of emotions as they experienced stalking. The most common fears cited by victims were not knowing what would happen next (46 percent) and being afraid the behavior would never stop (29 percent). Nine percent of stalking victims reported that their worst fear was death.

About 130,000 victims reported that they had been fired or asked to leave their job because of the stalking. About one in eight of all employed stalking victims lost time from work because of fear for their safety or to pursue activities such as getting a restraining order or testifying in court. More than half of these victims lost five days or more from work.

This report is based on the largest data collection of stalking behavior to date. Data were collected by the Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS), a supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, and was sponsored by the Office on Violence Against Women. The SVS

data collection was conducted over a six-month period in 2006. All survey respondents age 18 or older were eligible for the supplement.

The report, *Stalking Victimization in the United States* (NCJ 224527), was written by BJS statisticians Katrina Baum, Shannan Catalano, Michael Rand, and Kristina Rose of the National Institute of Justice. Following publication, the report can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/svus.htm>.