

Improving Domestic Violence Data in New York State: An Explanation of 2008 Reporting Changes

In May 2008, DCJS revised its domestic violence reporting procedures to clarify and standardize the definition of domestic violence within the Uniform Crime Reporting program. This brief explains these new reporting practices, as well as the impact of these changes on official crime statistics.

This brief explains the data collected to measure reports of domestic violence across New York State. Beginning with a discussion of how domestic violence is measured by the Division of Criminal Justice Services, official crime reporting systems—the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program and the Incident Based Reporting (IBR) Program—are discussed.

The 2008 and 2009 domestic violence data from the UCR Program should not be compared to prior years due to the new reporting procedures phased in beginning in May 2008. An increase or decrease in reported domestic violence from 2007 to 2008 likely reflects changes in how domestic violence is being measured and not the actual number of reported victimizations. Data from the IBR Program can be used to make annual comparisons, because IBR data are not affected by these new reporting procedures. The impact of these changes on reporting domestic violence is presented using data from IBR agencies. Annual data are also compared for IBR agencies for 2007 vs. 2008. In the future, once agencies have implemented the new reporting practices, annual comparisons of all domestic violence data will be possible.

DCJS collects domestic violence victim data through the New York State Crime Reporting Program. Information is collected through both the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) and the Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) systems. Domestic violence data submitted by participating UCR agencies are provided in a summary format that displays the number of domestic violence victims by select offense types and domestic relationships. IBR data provides a more complete picture of the domestic offense. For IBR, each incident involving domestic violence provides victim and offender demographics (when applicable), location of offense, as well as other valuable incident level details.

Major Revisions to Domestic Violence Reporting

In 2008, DCJS reviewed the domestic violence data collection process and made significant improvements. In revising the collection requirements for domestic violence victim data, several major changes were implemented:

1. Expanded Definition of “Domestic Relationship-Living Status.” For the purpose of crime reporting, domestic relationship was expanded to include all persons who are currently or were previously involved in a significant intimate or dating relationship regardless of whether or not those individuals previously lived together. This expansion, which is consistent with the Family Court definition in place as of July 2008, now ensures all victims of domestic violence are reported regardless of their living status.

2. Expanded Definition of “Domestic Relationship-Spouses/Intimate Partners.” Prior to the 2008 revisions only intimate partner victimizations between spouses or common-law spouses were specified to be included in the reporting of domestic violence. This excluded those intimate partners who currently had a dating relationship (boyfriends/girlfriends, same-sex partners) or previously had an intimate relationship (ex-spouse). Modifications were made to the collection requirements of domestic violence victim data to include current and former spouses, common law spouses, and boyfriends/girlfriends. The expanded definition also explicitly defined same-

sex partners as a domestic relationship.

3. Definitive List of Qualifying “Domestic Violence Offenses.” Prior to the revisions in 2008, domestic violence offenses included the categories of aggravated assault, simple assault, sex offense, other offense, and violation of protective orders. A review of the New York State Penal law was conducted to clarify that only violent offenses against persons were identified as qualifying “domestic violence offenses” and to ensure that what was being reported by law enforcement agencies as domestic violence was both consistent and logical. Inconsistencies were found among the crimes that were being included under the classification of other offenses, which had been defined simply as “all other criminal offenses involving domestic violence.” Other offenses were relabeled as “other violent offenses” and this category now includes only murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child. The revised list of offenses allows now DCJS to capture victims of domestic incidents involving aggravated assaults, simple assaults, sex offenses, violation of protective orders, and other violent offenses.

Definition and Measurement of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is defined by the relationship of the victim to the offender and the type of crime. A domestic relationship includes intimate partners (spouse, ex-spouse, common-law spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, same-sex partner) and family members (parent, child, sibling, grandparent, in-law, other relative). The types of crime that are reported as domestic violence are crimes against persons (aggravated assault, simple assault, sex offense, other violent offense and violation of protective order). This excludes crimes against property and society which may involve a domestic relationship.

DCJS utilizes the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system for measuring domestic violence. In addition to collecting summary crime data required for the National Uniform Crime Reporting Program, DCJS collects summary counts of domestic violence victims—the Domestic Violence Victim Data table—which is not required by the FBI.

Domestic Violence Victim Data Table

The Domestic Violence Victim Data table (Table 1) provides aggregate counts of domestic violence-related offenses (one offense per victim) by various relationships between the victim and offender (some gender specific). The table is limited to the offense categories of aggravated assault, simple assault, sex offense, other violent offenses, and violation of protective order. Relationship categories are restricted to wife by husband, husband by wife, child by parent, parent by child, other family, intimate partner (female victim), and intimate partner (male victim). No other information regarding incidents of domestic violence is included in the UCR Domestic Violence

Table 1. 2008 UCR Domestic Violence Victim Data Table

	WIFE BY HUSBAND	HUSBAND BY WIFE	CHILD BY PARENT	PARENT BY CHILD	OTHER FAMILY RELATION	INTIMATE PARTNER		TOTAL
						FEMALE VICTIM	MALE VICTIM	
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
SIMPLE ASSAULT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
SEX OFFENSE ¹	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
OTHER VIOLENT OFFENSE ²	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
VIOLATION OF PROTECTIVE ORDER	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

¹Sex offenses (includes sexual misconduct, rape, sodomy, sexual abuse, compelling prostitution, incest, and promoting the sexual performance of a child).

²Other violent offenses (include murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child).

Incident Based Reporting System (IBR)

The New York State Incident Based Reporting (IBR) system is an adaptation of the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which collects crime data from law enforcement agencies. Unlike the traditional Uniform Crime Report (UCR) which collects only summary information on the most serious offense in a criminal incident, IBR records specific incident details, including information about the offender, victim, and property. This includes detailed information on the circumstances of the incident, weapon use, demographic characteristics of the victim and offender, relationship between victim and offender, and any injury to the victim. Data are collected on all types of crimes, not just the most serious offenses. If multiple crimes occur during a single incident, they are all reported.

Crime data submitted by IBR participating agencies is an electronic snapshot of what has been recorded on these agencies' record management systems. Data files are sent to DCJS where they are processed and checked for errors. The data are then stored in a relational database, which allows domestic violence criminal activity to be analyzed at various levels—incident, victim, offender, offense, etc. As a result, IBR data allow for a more detailed review of crime, including domestic violence. Incidents of domestic violence can be identified in the IBR database through a combination of type of offense and relationship between the victim and offender.

While IBR data provide a wealth of information related to domestic violence, statewide coverage is limited. In 2008, there were 234 IBR participating jurisdictions which covered about one-third of the population outside of New York City, and these agencies reported approximately 29 percent of the non-New York City violent and property crime in the state. In order to provide a complete picture of domestic violence victim data outside of New York City, IBR data are converted into a UCR summary format to match the data reported by UCR agencies. Thus, the Domestic Violence Victim Data table is representative of the state (excluding New York City), and it is the best source for a “complete” picture of domestic violence for jurisdictions outside of New York City.

Table 2. DCJS Domestic Violence Data Sources

Database	Data Source	Description
Incident Based Reporting (IBR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incidents entered into record management systems (RMS) for law enforcement agencies. - Domestic violence is identified by relationship between victim and offender and type of offense. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects detailed information about criminal event (incident), including victim and offender information. - Coverage is only 29% of non-NYC index crimes. - Findings cannot be generalized to entire state. - Not affected by 2008 reporting changes.
Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)	Domestic Violence Victim Data table reported on UCR Return A form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects information about victims—offense category by domestic relationship. - Aggregate data. - Offense hierarchy (most serious offense per victim). - Limited information. - Definition change May 2008 has been phased in with different effective dates across agencies.

Implementation of Changes to Definition of Domestic Violence

In 2008, DCJS modified the reporting procedures for domestic violence for the purpose of crime reporting. DCJS expanded the definition of domestic relationship to include ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner. These relationships were incorporated into the old version of UCR DV Victim Data table (see Tables 3 & 4). Ex-spouse was included in the gender appropriate categories of wife by husband (column A) or husband by wife (column B). The categories of common-law wife by husband (column F) and common-law husband by wife (column G) were relabeled as intimate partner female victim and intimate partner male victim. Boyfriend/girlfriend and same-sex partner were then included in the gender appropriate categories of intimate partner victim. To make a distinction between domestic violence and a domestic incident, the offense category of other offense was relabeled as other violent offense and redefined to include only the crimes of murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child. This distinction was made because there was a lack of consistency in what agencies had been reporting in the other offense category.

In May 2008, DCJS asked agencies to implement these changes for UCR. Implementation is still underway for some local law enforcement agencies that participate in the UCR program. Some law enforcement agencies that utilize an electronic record management system (RMS) to report their UCR data were required to make program changes to their RMS or switch to an IBR system to ensure reporting requirements are met.

The expansion of domestic relationship to now include ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner will increase the number of domestic violence victims reported in the relationship categories of wife by husband, husband by wife, intimate partner female victim, and intimate partner male victim. The restriction of other offenses to other violent offenses (murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child) will reduce the number of reported domestic violence victims for some agencies.

Table 3. Old Version of UCR Domestic Violence Victim Data Table

	WIFE BY HUSBAND	HUSBAND BY WIFE	CHILD BY PARENT	PARENT BY CHILD	OTHER FAMILY RELATION	COMMON LAW		TOTAL
						WIFE BY HUSBAND	HUSBAND BY WIFE	
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
SIMPLE ASSAULT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
SEX OFFENSE	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
OTHER OFFENSE	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
VIOLATION OF PROTECTIVE ORDER	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

Table 4. Revised 2008 Version of UCR Domestic Violence Victim Data Table

	WIFE BY HUSBAND	HUSBAND BY WIFE	CHILD BY PARENT	PARENT BY CHILD	OTHER FAMILY RELATION	INTIMATE PARTNER		TOTAL
						FEMALE VICTIM	MALE VICTIM	
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
SIMPLE ASSAULT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
SEX OFFENSE	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
OTHER VIOLENT OFFENSE	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
VIOLATION OF PROTECTIVE ORDER	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

IBR data can be used to simulate the impact of these changes on domestic violence victim counts. Because a great deal of information is already collected for domestic violence incidents in the IBR system (e.g., relationship categories, offenses), the UCR Domestic Violence Victim Data table can be manipulated to reflect domestic violence victim counts pre- and post- modification. In addition, annual trends can be studied for IBR agencies using the new definition of domestic violence for both 2007 and 2008.

Changes to Domestic Relationship

First, the effects of expanding the victim-offender relationship to include ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner are addressed. In the table below, only data from IBR agencies were used to simulate how including these victim-offender relationships affect domestic violence counts. The definition of other violent offenses was held constant to include only murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child.

Table 5. Expansion of Domestic Relationship: IBR Agencies, 2008

Old Definitions of Relationships								
Offense	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Common Law		Total
						Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	
Agg. Assault	102	52	84	107	201	13	4	563
Simple Assault	1,945	471	672	1,351	1,814	104	27	6,384
Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	1	0	372
Other Viol Offenses	92	4	1,200	39	323	6	1	1,665
Vio. Prot. Order	81	10	11	22	23	9	0	156
Total	2,243	538	2,095	1,531	2,568	133	32	9,140
Revised Definitions of Relationships								
Offense	Wife by Husband ¹	Husband by Wife ¹	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Intimate Partner		Total
						Female Victim ²	Male Victim ²	
Agg. Assault	109	57	84	107	201	304	124	986
Simple Assault	2,262	569	672	1,351	1,814	4,924	1,048	12,640
Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	159	4	534
Other Viol Offenses	103	9	1,200	39	323	290	18	1,982
Vio. Prot. Order	114	14	11	22	23	168	13	365
Total	2,611	650	2,095	1,531	2,568	5,845	1,207	16,507

¹The relationship categories of *Wife by Husband* and *Husband by Wife* now contain victims who are ex-spouses.

²The relationship categories of *Intimate Partner Female Victims* and *Male Victims* now contain victims who are boyfriend/girlfriend and same-sex partners.

The top portion of Table 5 labeled “Old Definitions” does not include reported domestic violence where the victim was an ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, same-sex partner; the bottom portion of the table labeled “Revised Definitions” includes these victims. Expanding domestic relationship to include these additional categories increased the overall number of domestic violence victims by 81 percent (9,140 to 16,507) among the 234 IBR agencies. Total victims under the relationship categories of wife by husband and husband by wife increased through the addition of ex-spouse victims by 16 percent and 21 percent, respectively. Intimate partner female victims and intimate partner male victims increased dramatically due to the inclusion of boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner victims. Female intimate partner victims increased from a count of 133 to 5,845 and male intimate partners increased from 32 to 1,207.

Changes to Domestic Violence Offenses

Next, the effects of re-labeling and restricting the offense category of other offenses to other violent offenses are addressed. The data in the top portion utilizes the old definition for other offenses and the lower portion uses the new other violent offenses definition. DCJS contacted law enforcement agencies to determine what offenses they had previously reported as other offenses. Although there was some variation in how agencies had previously measured other offenses, it was common for agencies to include in this category any domestic incident where the offense was not an aggravated assault, simple assault, sex offense, or violation of protective order. Therefore, any violent or non-violent criminal offense in which a domestic relationship existed between the victim and offender would likely have been counted in this category. All offenses, violent or otherwise, not identified as an aggravated assault, simple assault, sex offense, or violation of a protective order were included in the top portion of Table 6 under other offenses. Domestic relationship was held constant to exclude ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner.

Table 6. Changes in Offense Categories: IBR Agencies, 2008

Old Definitions of Offenses								
Offense	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Common Law		Total
						Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	
Agg. Assault	102	52	84	107	201	13	4	563
Simple Assault	1,945	471	672	1,351	1,814	104	27	6,384
Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	1	0	372
Other Offenses	1,314	382	1,987	1,972	2,360	71	19	8,105
Vio. Prot. Order	81	10	11	22	23	9	0	156
Total	3,465	916	2,882	3,464	4,605	198	50	15,580
Revised Definitions of Offenses								
Offense	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Common Law		Total
						Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	
Agg. Assault	102	52	84	107	201	13	4	563
Simple Assault	1,945	471	672	1,351	1,814	104	27	6,384
Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	1	0	372
Other Viol Offenses ¹	92	4	1,200	39	323	6	1	1,665
Vio. Prot. Order	81	10	11	22	23	9	0	156
Total	2,243	538	2,095	1,531	2,568	133	32	9,140

¹The offense category of *Other Violent Offenses* now contains only murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child.

Table 6 shows how the redefining of other offenses into other violent offenses greatly reduces the volume of reported domestic victims among these IBR agencies. Under the old offense category, other offenses, there were 8,105 victims and a total of 15,580 domestic victims. These numbers dropped to 1,665 other violent offenses and only 9,140 domestic violence victims overall. The simulated change in redefining this offense category resulted in a 79 percent decrease in the other offenses category and a 41 percent decrease in the total volume of domestic violence victims.

The simulated results were presented in two different tables, so that the impact of each change could be seen. When these changes are implemented together, the overall counts don't change substantially, but the detail does. Table 7 shows the simulated changes that include modifying both domestic relationship and offense categories for 2008.

Table 7. Domestic Violence Victim Data Table: IBR Agencies, 2008 (With All Modifications)

Old Definitions of Offenses								
Offense	Common Law		Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Common Law		Total
	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife				Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	
Agg. Assault	102	52	84	107	201	13	4	563
Simple Assault	1,945	471	672	1,351	1,814	104	27	6,384
Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	1	0	372
Other Offenses	1,314	382	1,987	1,972	2,360	71	19	8,105
Vio. Prot. Order	81	10	11	22	23	9	0	156
Total	3,465	916	2,882	3,464	4,605	198	50	15,580
Revised Definitions of Offenses								
Offense	Intimate Partner		Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Intimate Partner		Total
	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife				Female Victim	Male Victim	
Agg. Assault	109	57	84	107	201	304	124	986
Simple Assault	2,262	569	672	1,351	1,814	4,924	1,048	12,640
Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	159	4	534
Other Viol Offenses	103	9	1,200	39	323	290	18	1,982
Vio. Prot. Order	114	14	11	22	23	168	13	365
Total	2,611	650	2,095	1,531	2,568	5,845	1,207	16,507

Table 7 shows how the increase in the number of domestic violence victims created from expanding the definition of domestic relationship and the decrease caused by limiting other offenses to other violent offenses counteract each other. Modifications in reporting domestic violence victims increased the volume of domestic violence victims from 15,580 to 16,507 victims (+6%). A comparison of the other offense category to the other violent offense category shows a dramatic decrease in the number of domestic violence victims from 8,105 to 1,982 (-76%). At the same time, the expansion of domestic relationships to include ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner shows a dramatic increase in domestic violence victims. The total number of intimate partner female victims increased from 198 to 5,845 and intimate partner male victims increased from 50 to 1,207.

The increase in the number of victims from expanding the definition of domestic relationship was counteracted by the decrease from changing other offenses to other violent offenses. However, the decrease from changing the offense categories reflects the removal of victims of non-violent domestic offenses, while the increase in number of victims from expanding the domestic relationship definition is an actual increase in the number of victims of domestic violence. These changes make it difficult to analyze the number of domestic violence victims annually at a statewide level using UCR data, because not all jurisdictions have implemented the changes and those that made changes, did so mid-year in 2008. The IBR's lack of coverage prevents one from making conclusive generalizations about domestic violence victimizations across the state, but it does allow one to study annual patterns controlling for the changes in how domestic violence is defined and measured.

Annual Comparison of New Domestic Violence Definitions Using IBR Data

Domestic violence data from IBR agencies can be used to compare incidents reported in 2007 to 2008 without any interference from the implementation of changes to how domestic violence is to be measured and reported by law enforcement agencies in New York. Victims of domestic violence were defined and measured the same way in 2007 and 2008 for IBR agencies (see Table 8). For both years, the expanded definition of domestic relationship, which included ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and same-sex partner, was used. The limited definition for offense categories was used, and other violent offenses only included murder, kidnapping, coercion, and endangering the welfare of a child.

Table 8. Annual Comparison of Domestic Violence Victims Using IBR Agencies, 2007 to 2008

Year	Offense	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Intimate Partner		Total
							Female Victim	Male Victim	
2007	Agg. Assault	122	54	85	107	240	305	150	1,063
	Simple Assault	2,259	595	720	1,400	1,775	4,850	972	12,571
	Sex Offense	21	0	169	16	281	162	4	653
	Other Viol Offenses	91	12	1,154	33	319	288	12	1,909
	Vio. Prot. Order	137	9	22	16	23	191	9	407
	Total	2,630	670	2,150	1,572	2,638	5,796	1,147	16,603
2008	Agg. Assault	109	57	84	107	201	304	124	986
	Simple Assault	2,262	569	672	1,351	1,814	4,924	1,048	12,640
	Sex Offense	23	1	128	12	207	159	4	534
	Other Viol Offenses	103	9	1,200	39	323	290	18	1,982
	Vio. Prot. Order	114	14	11	22	23	168	13	365
	Total	2,611	650	2,095	1,531	2,568	5,845	1,207	16,507

A total of 203 IBR agencies were used in the creation of the above table, because of the 234 IBR agencies that reported data for all of 2008, only 203 reported data for all of 2007 as well.

The comparison of domestic violence victims from 2007 to 2008 shows very little change overall. The number of domestic violence victims decreased from 16,603 in 2007 to 16,507 in 2008. This was less than a one percent decrease, indicating that among these IBR jurisdictions, the number of domestic violence victims has remained basically the same from 2007 to 2008. Among specific offense categories, the number of simple assault and other violent offense victims increased slightly from 2007 to 2008 (1% and 4%, respectively). Most relationship categories experienced decreases in the volume of domestic violence victims from 2007 to 2008. Intimate partners, however, experienced an increase in reported domestic violence with female victims increasing by one percent and male victims increasing by five percent.

What UCR Data Shows

Current data for the UCR Domestic Violence Victim Data table indicate that the prescribed changes in reporting domestic violence have not been fully implemented across all jurisdictions in New York State. Available domestic violence information is limited, since a large portion of UCR agencies have not been able to implement these changes. Table 8 shows the non-New York City domestic violence data for only UCR agencies from 2007 to 2008.

Table 8. Domestic Violence Victim Table: UCR Agencies, 2007 to 2008

Old Definitions									
Year	Offense	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Common Law		Total
							Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	
2007	Agg. Assault	432	106	141	188	885	167	54	1,973
	Simple Assault	2,443	660	826	1,452	4,174	1,388	330	11,273
	Sex Offense	43	4	54	19	198	41	10	369
	Other Offenses	6,358	2,082	1,564	3,883	10,967	2,855	881	28,590
	Vio. Prot. Order	1,551	376	235	669	1,952	475	45	5,303
	Total	10,827	3,228	2,820	6,211	18,176	4,926	1,320	47,508
Revised Definitions									
Year	Offense	Wife by Husband	Husband by Wife	Child by Parent	Parent by Child	Other Family	Intimate Partner		Total
							Female Victim	Male Victim	
2008	Agg. Assault	519	138	293	276	913	415	133	2,687
	Simple Assault	2,798	827	941	1,872	5,172	2,562	518	14,690
	Sex Offense	72	14	46	20	144	78	18	392
	Other Viol Offenses	4,944	1,831	1,482	3,161	7,066	3,041	1,206	22,731
	Vio. Prot. Order	1,531	457	340	699	1,711	1,013	136	5,887
	Total	9,864	3,267	3,102	6,028	15,006	7,109	2,011	46,387

A total of 331 UCR agencies were used in the creation of the above table, and this includes agencies that reported only through the UCR program for both 2007 and 2008.

New definitions were phased in beginning in May of 2008 for UCR agencies.

The 2008 data shows that there were 46,387 victims of domestic violence reported across the state (excluding New York City). The most common offense was other violent offenses (22,731) followed by simple assaults (14,690). The most common domestic relationship among victims were other family members (15,006) followed by wives who were victimized by their husbands (9,864). The findings that other violent offenses outnumber simple assaults and other family victims outnumber intimate partner victims are indications that many agencies have been slow to implement the new reporting practices. DCJS continues to monitor the implementation of these reporting changes.