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# Summary and Interpretation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime in the United States, 2009

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**Summary and Interpretation of the  
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The Federal Bureau of Investigation has released its annual report regarding crime in the United States in 2009. 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. Crime rate is the number of offenses per 100,000 persons. Violent crime decreased by 5.3% from 2008 to 2009<sup>4</sup>. In fact, violent crime decreased in all categories. Property crime volume also decreased in the same period by 4.6%. Comparing 2009 violent crime to 2008 violent crime, the category of murder decreased 7.3%; rape decreased 2.6%; robbery decreased 8.0%; and aggravated assault decreased by 4.2%. Property crime also decreased. Larceny/theft decreased 4.0%, motor vehicle theft was markedly down by 17.1%, and burglary decreased by 1.3%. The percentage change from 2008 to 2009 is shown in Table 1 below.

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

<b>CRIME CATEGORY</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>-5.3%</b>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>-7.3%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>-8.0%</b>
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>-4.2%</b>

For the five year period from 2005 to 2009, violent crime overall was down 5.2%. Murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault decreased over this five-year period. Murder decreased 9.0%, rape by 6.6%, aggravated assault by 6.4%, and robbery by 2.2%.

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

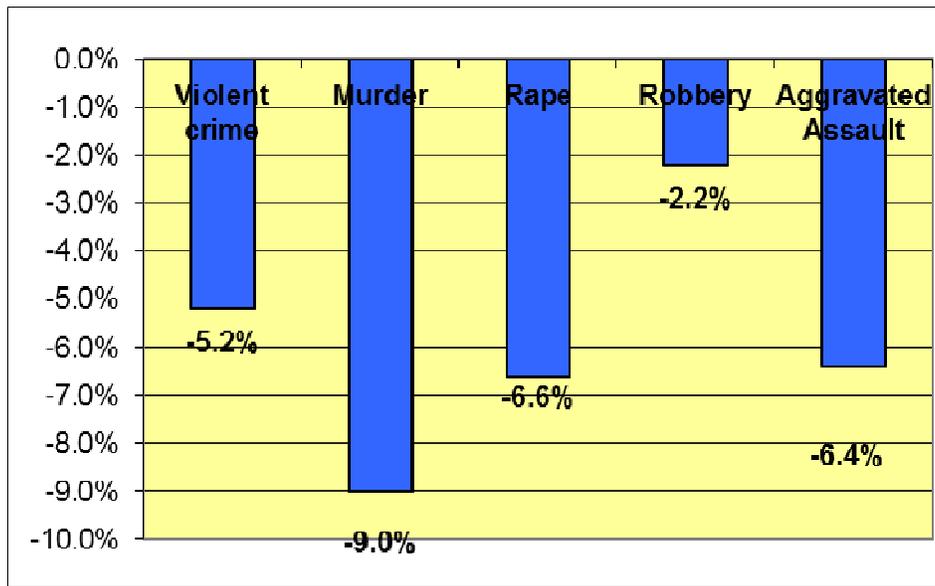
<sup>2</sup> Sandra J. Erickson holds a Masters in Forensic Science and is a research associate at Athena Research.

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<sup>4</sup> Adjusted 2008 figures are used in this analysis. The data presented in Uniform Crime Reports from prior years may have been updated and adjusted by the FBI. Therefore, the numbers for previous years' Uniform Crime Reports may differ slightly from the numbers provided in this year's analysis.



**CHART 1: VIOLENT CRIME VOLUME COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO – 2005 TO 2009**



In addition to percentage increases and decreases in crime, it is important to keep in mind the actual numbers. There were 1,318,398 violent crimes committed in the United States in 2009, down from 1,392,629 the previous year. Murders totaled 15,241 in 2009, down from 16,442 in 2008. There were 408,217 robberies reported in the United States in 2009, down from 443,574 in 2008. Rapes totaled 88,097 in 2009, down from 90,479 in 2008. In 2009, there were 806,843 aggravated assaults, down from 842,134 in 2008.

In the period of 2008-2009, all regions of the country experienced an overall decrease in violent crime volume. The Northeast saw a decrease of 3.3%, the Midwest a decrease of 4.3%, the South was down 6.6%, and the West was at a decrease of 5.3%. Murders were down in all regions. The number of murders in the Midwest was down the least at 5.4%. The South was down 7.6%, the West was down 7.6%, and the Northeast was down the most at 8.7%. Rape volume was down in all other regions also. It was down by 1.9% in the Northeast, down by 5.1% in the Midwest, down by 1.9% in the South, and down by 1.6% in the West. Robberies were down the most in the South by 9.9%, followed by the Northeast at a 7.5% decrease, the West at a 7.4% decrease, and the Midwest with a 4.9% decrease. Firearms were used in 42.6% of all robberies in 2009 nationwide, down from 43.5% in 2008. The South experienced the highest percentage of firearm usage (50.8%) and the West the lowest (32.4%).

**CRIME RATE**

This section is on rate, not volume. Rate is the number of offenses per 100,000 inhabitants. The violent crime rate decreased 6.1% from the 2008 rate. The property crime rate also decreased 5.5% in that same period. From 2008 to 2009, the murder rate decreased 8.1%, rape decreased 3.5%, robbery decreased 8.8%, and aggravated assault decreased 5.0%, as shown in Table 2 below.



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

<b>CRIME CATEGORY</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>-6.1%</b>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>-8.1%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>-3.5%</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>-8.8%</b>
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>-5.0%</b>

For the five year period from 2005 to 2009, the violent crime rate overall was down 8.4% as shown in Table 3 below, with all categories at a decrease. Murder was down 12.1%, rape was down 9.8%, robbery was down 5.6%, and aggravated assault was down 9.6%.

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

<b>CRIME CATEGORY</b>	<b>2005-2009</b>
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>-8.4%</b>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>-12.1%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>-9.8%</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>-5.6%</b>
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>-9.6%</b>

### **CRIME DETAILS AND TRENDS**

Aggravated assault accounted for 61.2% of the violent crimes in 2009. Robbery accounted for 31.0%, forcible rape accounted for 6.7%, and murder accounted for 1.2% of the violent crimes in 2009, as shown in Chart 2. These percentages are consistent with previous years.



**CHART 2: VIOLENT CRIME BY OFFENSE**

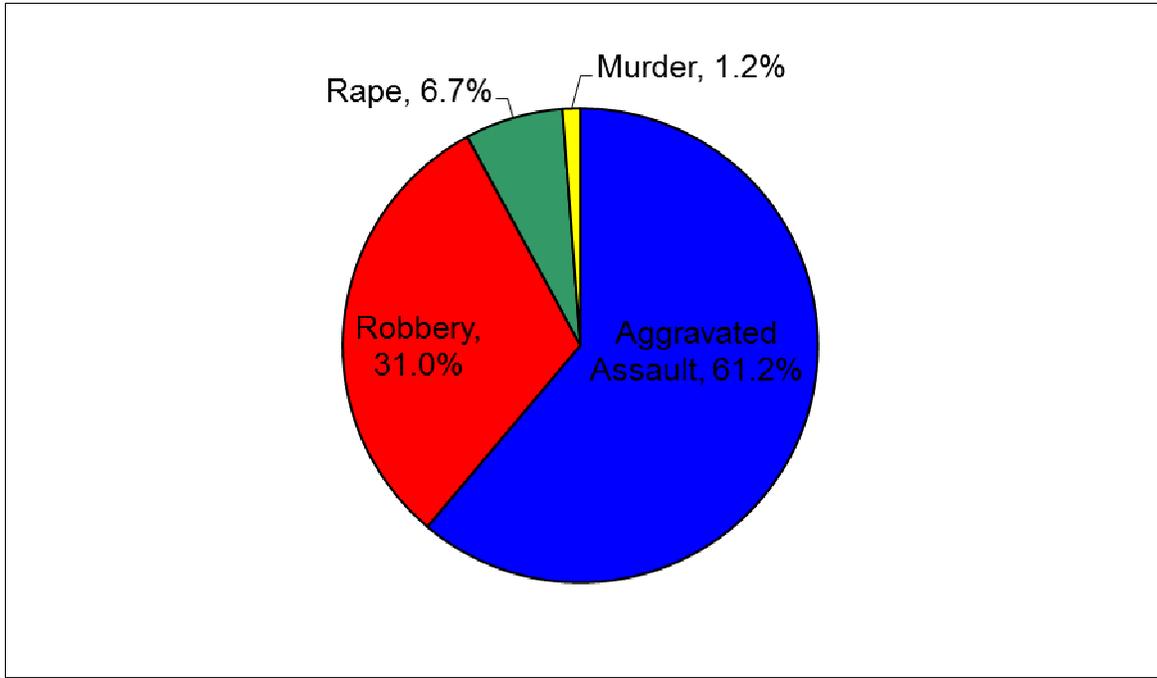
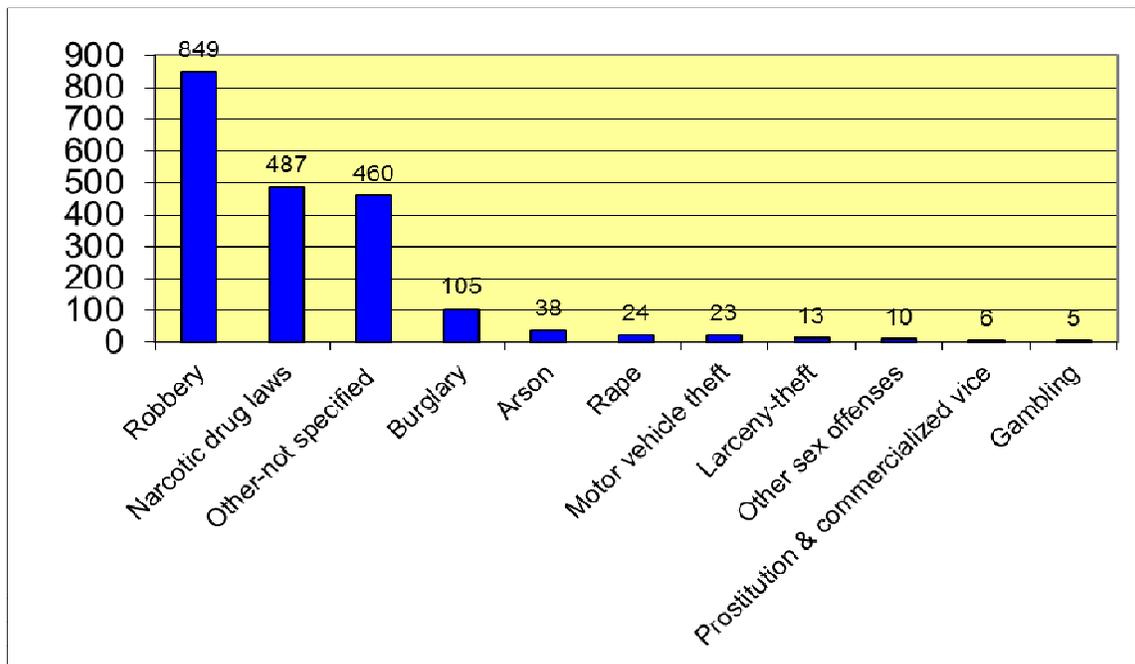


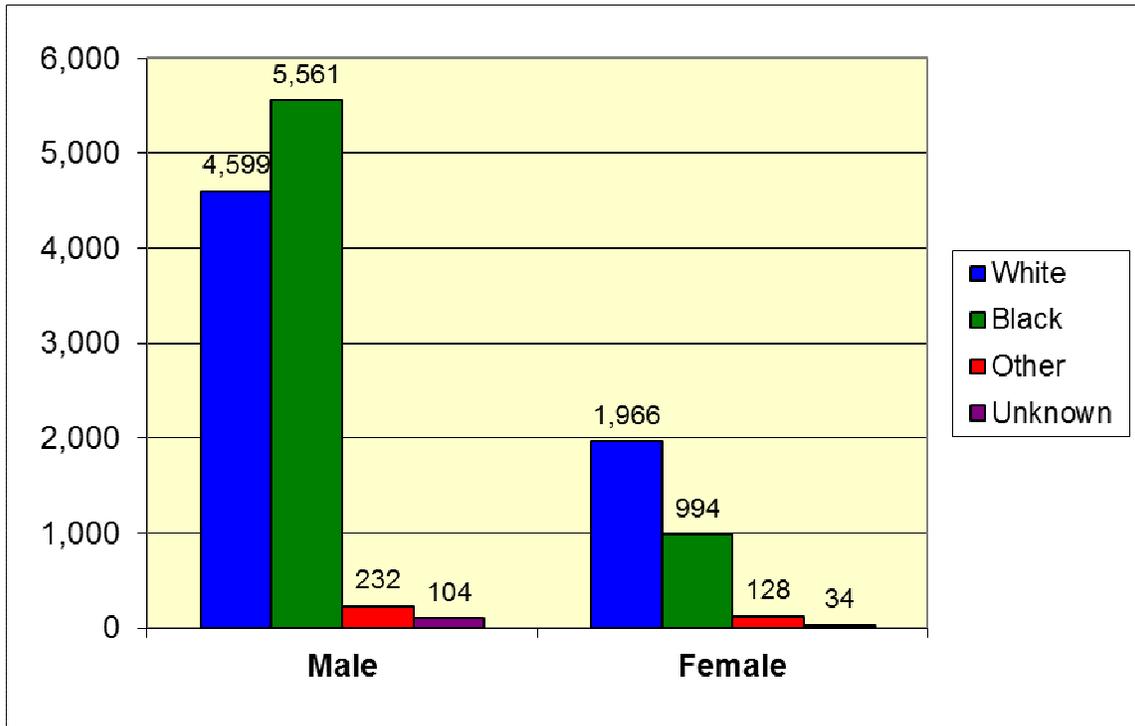
Chart 3 shows the breakdown of murders that occurred during the commission of other felonies. Of all felony murders, the most frequent (849) were robbery related. That number has been consistent over the years, but decreased slightly from 2008.

**CHART 3: FELONY MURDER CIRCUMSTANCES**



Murder victims were killed with firearms 67.1% of the time in 2009, up from 66.9% in 2008. Chart 4 shows murder victims by race and sex. In 2009, 77.0% of known murder victims were male. Murder victims, for whom race was known, were 48.2% white, 48.1% black, and the remaining victims were from other or unknown races.

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



In 2009, 43.9% of the perpetrators were unknown, down from 44.2% in 2008. When the relationships of murder victims and offenders were known, 21.6% were killed by an acquaintance, 13.6% 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 2009, the number of murders was down 9.0% from 2005.



**CHART 5: NUMBER OF MURDERS 2005-2009**

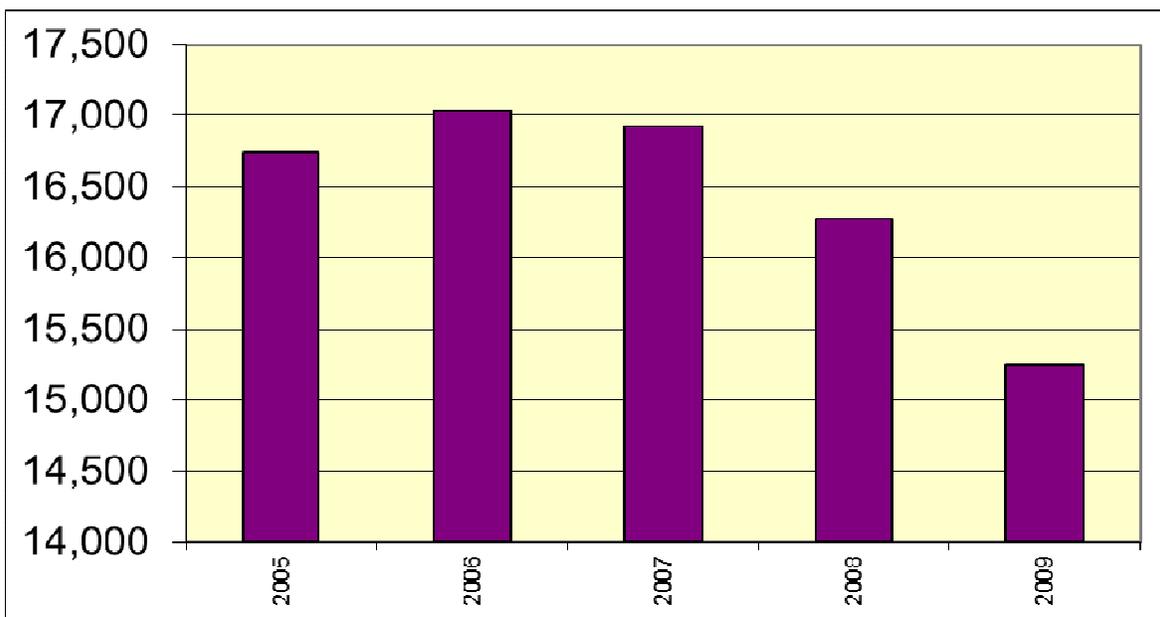
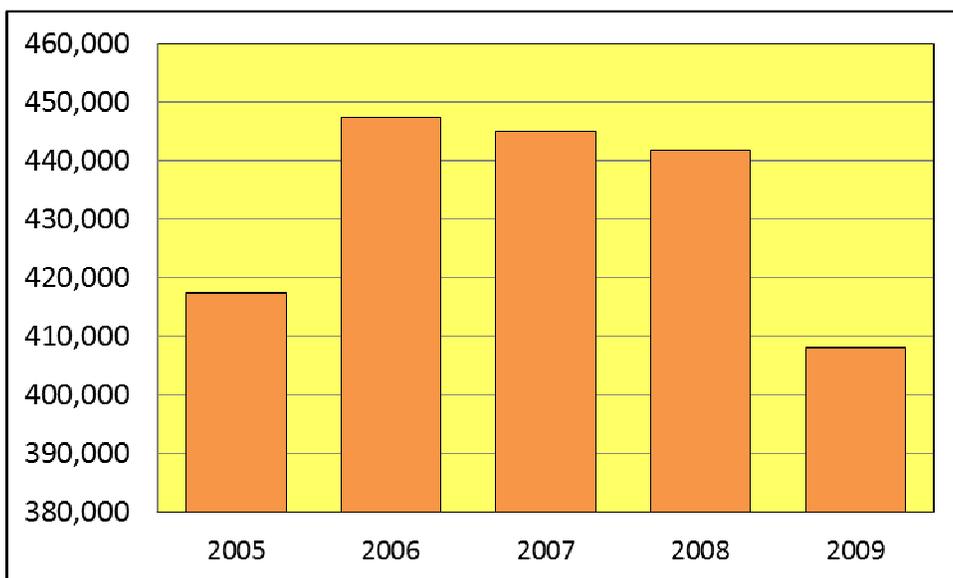


Chart 6 shows the 5-year trend for robbery. Robberies were 2.2% lower in 2009 than they were in 2005.

**CHART 6: NUMBER OF ROBBERIES 2005-2009**

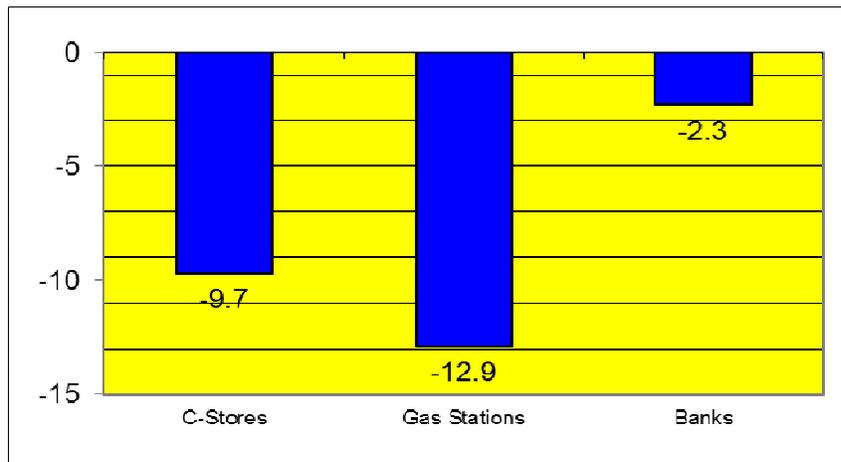


Charts 7, 8 and 9 present the robbery data for convenience stores, gas stations and banks. In evaluating the results, note that the distinction between gas stations and convenience stores is not always clear, and it is based on the law enforcement designation at the scene.



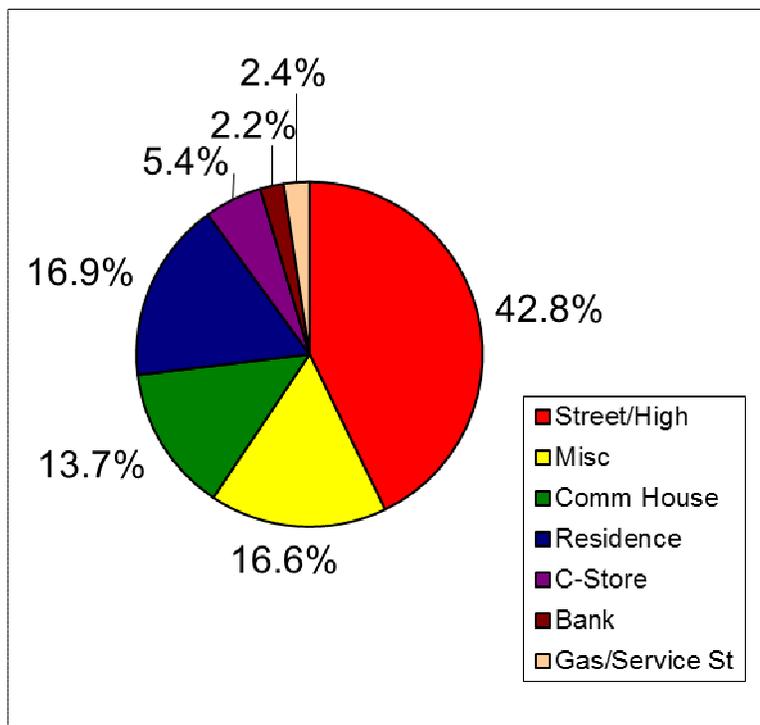
- Convenience store robbery volume was down 9.7% from 2008 to 2009.
- Gas station robbery volume was down 12.9% from 2008 to 2009.
- Bank robbery volume was down 2.3% from 2008 to 2009.

**CHART 7: PERCENT CHANGE IN ROBBERY VOLUME FROM PREVIOUS YEAR – 2008-2009**



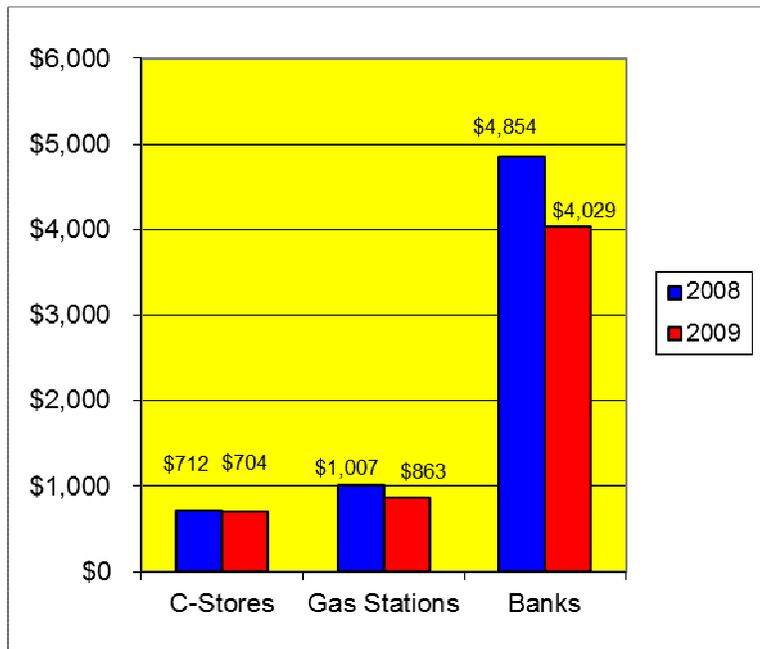
- Convenience store robbery made up 5.4% of the total robberies in 2009, 0.1% less than the previous year.
- Gas station robbery made up 2.4% of the total robberies in 2009, 0.2% less than the previous year.
- Bank robberies made up 2.2% up 0.2% from the previous year.

**CHART 8: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION ROBBERY VOLUME – 2009**



- ❖ In 2009, convenience stores had an average dollar loss of \$704, down from \$712 in the previous year.
- ❖ Gas station average dollar loss in 2009 was \$863, down from \$1,007 the year before.
- ❖ Banks had by far the highest average dollar loss at \$4,029, with a decrease from \$4,854 in 2008.

**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 2009 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 2009 data show it at its lowest point since 1991. The violent crime rate was 758.2 in 1991 and was 429.4 in 2009.

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. In 2009, it reached its lowest rate since 1991. The 5.0 rate in 2009 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 28.7 in 2009, 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 2004 at 136.7. It began increasing again for two years before beginning another decline. It was 133.0 in 2009.

The *aggravated assault rate* also peaked in 1992, as did rape, at a rate of 441.9. In 2009, the aggravated assault rate was 262.8, the lowest of any year since 1992.



## **AUTHORS' CONCLUSIONS:**

All categories of violent crime were down slightly in volume in 2009. We had predicted that crime would increase in the mid-2000s and decrease by 2010, based on the demographics of the number of young people (18-24) declining as a percentage of the total population. We also caution against complacency, however, and recommend that employers 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.

