



# National Crime Prevention Council

Research and Evaluation Department

Research Brief – June 20, 2008

## Violence by Teenage Girls

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**Summary:** The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) established a Girls Study Group to determine if the increase in violence by teenage girls was an actual change in behavior or if the increase in violence reflected societal responses to violence by teenage girls, in particular changes in policy and more stringent enforcement of measures against delinquency.

**Sample:** Data were obtained from the *FBI Uniform Crime Report* (published annually), the *Monitoring the Future* study, and the National Crime Victimization Survey to determine trends in girls' violence from 1980 through 2005.

### Key Findings:

- Although girls are being arrested more for simple assaults than in the past, the incidence of these crimes has not increased in the past 25 years.
- Furthermore, there has not been an increase in the occurrence of female juvenile violence relative to male juvenile violence.
- The researchers conclude that enforcement practices have changed, causing a spike in arrests of girls and that “there is no burgeoning national crisis of increasing serious violence among adolescent girls” (p.15).

### Recommendations for Future Work:

- Future work should examine the reasoning for the increase in arrest rates of girls for violent acts, specifically simple assault.
- Researchers should explore the role of domestic violence laws, for example, school zero-tolerance policies, and law enforcement practices in explaining increased arrests of girls.
- A longitudinal study should be conducted of girls in the juvenile justice system to track adolescent girls' violent behavior. This could lead to a better understanding of how and why girls are being arrested.
- Researchers should study the difference between peer and family conflicts that result in physical violence versus ones that do not, so as to establish more effective prevention and intervention efforts.

**Implications for Crime Prevention Practitioners:** It is important for crime prevention practitioners to note that the rate of violence among teenage girls has not increased, but rather it is the response to violence that has caused the spike in arrest rates. By recognizing this, crime prevention practitioners may be able to work with communities to create and implement violence prevention programming as well as raise awareness within the community regarding the impact of societal responses to girls' violent behavior.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Girls Study Group; Understanding and Responding to Girls' Delinquency*. Washington, DC, May 2008.