

## What are the facts about stalking?

The results of the April 1998 National Violence Against Women Survey (for discussion, see *Stalking in America: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 1998), jointly sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found that—



- One out of every 12 women (8,200,000) and one out of every 45 men (2,000,000) in the United States have been stalked at some time in their lives.
- It is estimated that every year in the United States, 1,006,970 women and 370,990 men are stalked.
- Ninety percent of stalking victims were stalked by just one person each during their lives. Nine percent of female victims and 8 percent of male victims were stalked by two different people, and 1 percent of female victims and 2 percent of male victims were stalked by three different people.
- The majority of stalking victims (74 percent) are between 18 and 39 years old.
- In a 1-year period, women are three times more likely to be stalked than raped, but they are two times more likely to be physically assaulted than stalked.
- Eighty-seven percent of the stalkers identified by their victims were male.
- Only 23 percent of female stalking victims and 36 percent of male stalking victims were stalked by strangers.
- Thirty-eight percent of female stalking victims were stalked by current or former husbands, 10 percent by current or former cohabiting partners, and 14 percent by current or former dates or boyfriends.

## Resources for Information and Assistance

**National Center for Victims of Crime**  
1-800-FYI-CALL or 1-800-394-2255  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
1-800-799-SAFE or 1-800-799-7233  
TTY 1-800-787-3224  
[www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)

**National Organization for Victim Assistance**  
1-800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682  
[www.try-nova.org](http://www.try-nova.org)

**Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center**  
1-800-627-6872  
TTY 1-877-712-9279  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html)

**Violence Against Women Office**  
202-307-6026  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo)



# Stalking Victimization

This brochure was developed by the National Center for Victims of Crime under a project supported by Grant No. 97-VF-GX-K007 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Treatment of Crime Victims

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**Victims of Crime**

## What is stalking?

Stalking statutes vary from state to state. In general, stalking refers to repeated harassing or threatening behavior by an individual, such as following a person, appearing at a person's home or place of business, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing a person's property. Virtually any unwanted contact between two people that directly or indirectly communicates a threat or places the victim in fear can be considered stalking.

*Anyone can be a stalker, just as anyone can be a stalking victim.*

Stalking is a crime that can touch anyone, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic location, or personal associations. Most stalkers are young to middle-aged men with above-average intelligence.

Unfortunately, there is no single psychological or behavioral profile for stalkers. Every stalker is different. This makes it virtually impossible to devise a single effective strategy that can be applied to every situation. It is vital that stalking victims immediately seek the advice of local victim specialists who can work with them to devise a safety plan for their unique situation and circumstances.

Some stalkers develop an obsession for another person with whom they have no personal relationship. When the victim does not respond as the stalker hopes, the stalker may attempt to force the victim to comply by use of threats and intimidation. When threats and intimidation fail, some stalkers turn to violence.

The most prevalent type of stalking case involves some previous personal or romantic relationship between the stalker and the victim. This includes domestic violence cases and relationships in which



there is no history of violence. In these cases, stalkers try to control every aspect of their victims' lives. The victim becomes the stalker's source of self-esteem, and the loss of the relationship becomes the stalker's greatest fear. This dynamic makes a stalker dangerous. Stalking cases that emerge from domestic violence situations, however, are the most lethal type of stalking.

The stalker may attempt to renew the relationship by sending flowers, gifts, and love letters. When the victim spurns these unwelcome advances, the stalker often turns to intimidation. Attempts at intimidation typically begin in the form of an unjustified and inappropriate intrusion into the victim's life. The intrusions become more frequent over time. This harassing behavior often escalates to direct or indirect threats. Unfortunately, cases that reach this level of seriousness often end in violence.

## If You Are Being Stalked

Any person who suspects that he or she is being stalked should report all contacts and incidents to local law enforcement. To make arrest and prosecution more likely, stalking victims should document every incident as thoroughly as possible, including collecting/keeping videotapes, audiotapes, phone answering machine messages, photos of property damage, letters received, objects left, affidavits from eye-witnesses, and notes. Experts also recommend that victims keep a journal to document all incidents, including the time, date, and other relevant information for each. Regardless of how much evidence they have gathered, victims should file a complaint with law enforcement as soon as possible.

As a result of the stalking, you may experience a variety of physical, emotional, and financial consequences. The emotional trauma of constantly being on alert for the stalker, or the next harassment, may seem to use up all the energy you have. You may feel vulnerable and out of control of your life. You may have nightmares.



Your eating and sleeping habits may change. You may feel depressed or hopeless and lack interest in things you once enjoyed. This is not unusual. The constant stress in stalking situations is very real and harmful. Realize that what is happening to you is not normal, not your fault, and not caused by anything you have done.

## Where can you get help?

Remember, as a stalking victim, you are not alone. Do not lose hope. The support network in your community may include hotlines, counseling services, and support groups. Trained victim advocates can provide vital information and a full range of support services, such as assistance through the criminal justice process and help finding out about your rights as a stalking victim.

You may be able to obtain a restraining order or a "no-contact" order through the clerk of court. These are court orders signed by a judge telling the stalker to stay away from you and not to have contact with you in person or by phone. It is not necessary for a civil or criminal domestic violence case to be filed for these orders to be issued. Most states authorize law enforcement to make an arrest for violation of such an order. Each jurisdiction and community may differ in the type of restraining order available and the process for application and issuance of orders. Local victim advocates can tell you how the process works in your community.

All states now have crime victim compensation programs that reimburse victims for certain out-of-pocket expenses, including medical expenses, lost wages, and other financial needs considered reasonable. To be eligible, you must report the crime to the police and cooperate with the criminal justice system. Victim assistance programs in your community can provide you with compensation applications and additional information.