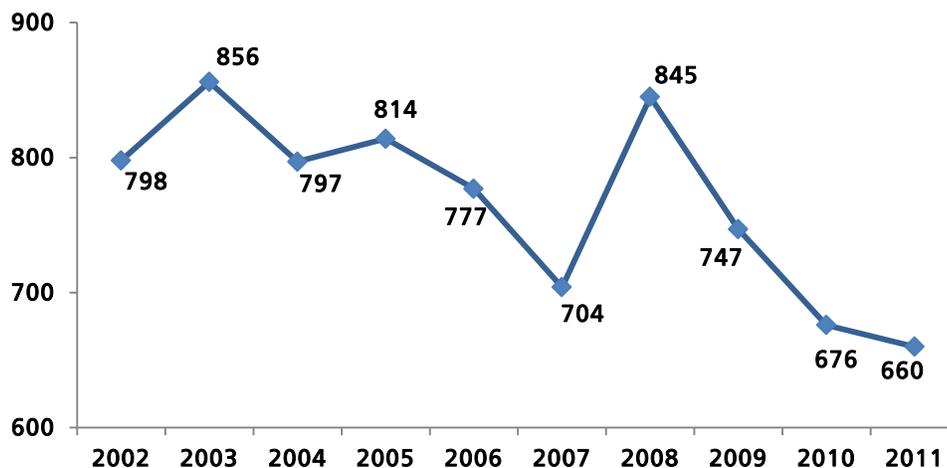


## More Sexual Assaults to be Categorized as Rape Under New Federal Definition

The crime category of forcible rape was established in the United States in 1927, and at that time, it was narrowly defined as “the carnal knowledge of a female, forcibly and against her will<sup>1</sup>.” This definition held fast despite rape victims and advocates asserting it was antiquated and omitted many incidents of sexual assault from the data. In response to this sentiment, the U. S. Attorney General’s Office announced in January 2012 that the FBI agreed to use an expanded definition of rape in the Uniform Crime Report as follows: “*The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim<sup>2</sup>.*” While this does not mean all states will adopt the new definition, it will likely fuel an increase in the number of rapes reported by the FBI. A more accurate count of rapes occurring each year could enhance crime trend analysis and increase public awareness about the prevalence of rape.

Over the past ten years in San Diego County, the number of violent crimes<sup>3</sup> reported to law enforcement decreased 22 percent, while the number of rapes dropped 17 percent from 798 in 2002 to 660 in 2011 (Figure 1). As local agencies change how they report violent crime to incorporate the broader definition of rape, SANDAG will pay close attention to any increase in the number of reported rapes to determine if the change is a contributing factor.

Figure 1  
NUMBERS OF REPORTED RAPES HAVE DECREASED OVER PAST 10 YEARS



NOTE: This 2011 number should be considered preliminary until regional crime figures are finalized.  
SOURCE: SANDAG, 2012

SANDAG’s mid-year crime bulletin, presenting regional crime data through June 30, 2011, is available at [www.sandag.org/cjc](http://www.sandag.org/cjc). Data through year-end will be released in April 2012, which is also “Sexual Assault Awareness Month”. For more information about educational and prevention outreach activities taking place across California, go to the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault Web site at <http://calcasa.org/>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/January/12-ag-018.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Part I violent crimes include homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.