

Study unclear on new wave of U.S. violence

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A criminology expert said, despite a recent increase in the U.S. murder rate, it's not yet clear whether the nation faces a new wave of violent crime.

Carnegie Mellon University Professor Alfred Blumstein notes recent data show a 2.5-percent increase in killings and a 2.9 percent rise in robberies in 2005.

But one specific number that concerns Blumstein is the 9.7-percent rise in robberies during the first six months of 2006. He says that increase might be caused by such policies as the reduced size of urban police forces and redirection of police resources to deal with terror threats. He also cites a reduction of social service programs occurring as a result of cuts in federal funding.

"The problem is that we could have listed these same factors two to four years ago but we didn't see a major shift in crime during that time," Blumstein said. "And it's too early to tell if we will see a shift this time."

He presented his study last week in San Francisco during the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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