UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS

for the United States

1997

SUMMARY

CRIME INDEX

CRIMES CLEARED

PERSONS ARRESTED

TOPICAL STUDY

LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

APPENDICES

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FOREWORD

Since 1930, *Crime in the United States* has been the primal source for publication of the Nation's crime data. The data, a culmination of monthly law enforcement reports and individual crime incident records, are voluntarily submitted to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The primary objective of the UCR Program is to provide a reliable set of criminal justice statistics for law enforcement administration, operation, and management. To assist participating agencies, the Criminal Justice Information Services Division now offers a Quality Assurance Review to help maintain program integrity and to assure accountability and validity of the data reported.

UCR statistics make possible studies among regions, states, counties, cities, towns, and college and university campuses with similar populations and other common characteristics. It is imperative that other crime factors, such as those mentioned on the following page, are considered when studying specific populations to avoid simplistic ranking which often results in distorted perceptions of the crime in specific locales. In analyzing the data, responsible researchers may theorize about the possible causes of crime, fluctuations of crime trends, and effects of crime on a particular area. Therefore, the statistics are not only an aid to the law enforcement community in its assessment of crime, but they are also an aid to varied government entities and their interest groups, community development organizations, university researchers, and private citizens for a myriad of purposes.

The UCR Program shares with local, state, and federal law enforcement an ever-increasing commitment to develop computerized data-collection systems. This commitment is being realized through the research, training, and technical assistance efforts between the Program and law enforcement agencies. Not only do these systems allow for the collection of crime statistics, but some of them also link associated criminal justice information systems which generate data that benefit detectives, prosecutors, and officers in patrol cars. These automated records-management systems are the foundation for incident-based reporting, expanding the scope of reporting to include each crime or arrest that occurs within an incident. As more agencies submit data by the incident-based reporting method, the FBI will be able to offer more extensive crime statistics to the community of data users. A small sample of the types of data that can be generated from incident-based reporting appears in Section V of this edition of *Crime in the United States*. This special study presents National Incident-Based Reporting System data in concert with Summary data in an examination of gender and juvenile crime.

This sixty-ninth publication of *Crime in the United States* is the collaborative effort of diverse talents working toward a common goal. As the twenty-first century approaches, the UCR Program staff will continue with its determination to develop the most comprehensive crime statistics collection program in the world and in its commitment to a strong and effective partnership with local, state, and federal law enforcement.

CRIME FACTORS

Each year when *Crime in the United States* is published, many entities—news media, tourism agencies, and other groups with an interest in crime in our Nation—use reported Crime Index figures to compile rankings of cities and counties. These rankings lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses which often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting cities and counties, along with their residents. Assessing criminality and law enforcement's response from jurisdiction to jurisdiction must encompass many elements, some of which, while having significant impact, are not readily measurable nor applicable pervasively among all locales. Geographic and demographic factors specific to each jurisdiction must be considered and applied if crime assessment is to approach completeness and accuracy. There are several sources of information which may assist the responsible researcher. The U.S. Bureau of the Census data, for example, can be utilized to better understand the makeup of a locale's population. The transience of the population, its racial and ethnic makeup, its composition by age and gender, education levels, and prevalent family structures are all key factors in assessing and comprehending the crime issue.

Local chambers of commerce, planning offices, or similar entities provide information regarding the economic and cultural makeup of cities and counties. Understanding a jurisdiction's industrial/economic base, its dependence upon neighboring jurisdictions, its transportation system, its economic dependence on nonresidents (such as tourists and convention attendees), its proximity to military installations, etc., all contribute to accurately gauging and interpreting the crime known to and reported by law enforcement.

The strength (personnel and other resources) and the aggressiveness of a jurisdiction's law enforcement agency are also key factors. While information pertaining to the number of sworn and civilian law enforcement employees can be found in this publication, assessment of the law enforcement emphases is, of course, much more difficult. For example, one city may report more crime than a comparable one, not because there is more crime, but rather because its law enforcement agency through proactive efforts identifies more offenses. Attitudes of the citizens toward crime and their crime reporting practices, especially concerning more minor offenses, have an impact on the volume of crimes known to police.

It is incumbent upon all data users to become as well educated as possible about how to categorize and quantify the nature and extent of crime in the United States and in any of the over 17,000 jurisdictions represented by law enforcement contributors to this Program. Valid assessments are possible only with careful study and analysis of the various unique conditions affecting each local law enforcement jurisdiction.

Historically, the causes and origins of crime have been the subjects of investigation by varied disciplines. Some factors which are known to affect the volume and type of crime occurring from place to place are:

Population density and degree of urbanization.
Variations in composition of the population, particularly youth concentration.
Stability of population with respect to residents' mobility, commuting patterns, and transient factors.
Modes of transportation and highway system.
Economic conditions, including median income, poverty level, and job availability.
Cultural factors and educational, recreational, and religious characteristics.
Family conditions with respect to divorce and family cohesiveness.
Climate.
Effective strength of law enforcement agencies.
Administrative and investigative emphases of law enforcement.
Policies of other components of the criminal justice system (i.e., prosecutorial, judicial, correctional, and probational).
Citizens' attitudes toward crime.
Crime reporting practices of the citizenry.

The Uniform Crime Reports give a nationwide view of crime based on statistics contributed by local and

state law enforcement agencies. Population size is the only correlate of crime utilized in this publication. While the other factors listed above are of equal concern, no attempt is made to relate them to the data presented. *The reader is, therefore, cautioned against comparing statistical data of individual reporting units from cities, counties, metropolitan areas, states, or colleges and universities solely on the basis of their population coverage or student enrollment.*

Data users are cautioned against comparisons of crime trends presented in this report and those estimated by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Because of differences in methodology and crime coverage, the two programs examine the Nation's crime problem from somewhat different perspectives, and their results are not strictly comparable. The definitional and procedural differences can account for many of the apparent discrepancies in results from the two programs.

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