



National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are the most frequently asked questions concerning NIBRS:

Q1. What is NIBRS?

A1. NIBRS is an incident-based reporting system through which data are collected on each single crime occurrence. NIBRS data are designed to be generated as a by-product of local, state, and federal automated records systems. Thus, an agency can build a system to suit its own needs, including any collection/storage of information required for administrative and operational purposes, in addition to reporting data required by NIBRS to the national UCR Program. NIBRS collects data on each single incident and arrest within 22 offense categories made up of 46 specific crimes called Group A offenses. For each of the offenses coming to the attention of law enforcement, specified types of facts about each crime are collected. In addition to the Group A offenses, there are 11 Group B offense categories for which only arrest data are reported. (UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, pp. 1-2)

Q2. What crimes are reported in NIBRS?

A2. The following offense categories, known as Group A offenses, are those for which extensive crime data are collected in NIBRS:

1. Arson
2. Assault Offenses—Aggravated Assault, Simple Assault, Intimidation
3. Bribery
4. Burglary/Breaking and Entering
5. Counterfeiting/Forgery
6. Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property
7. Drug/Narcotic Offenses—Drug/Narcotic Violations, Drug Equipment Violations
8. Embezzlement
9. Extortion/Blackmail
10. Fraud Offenses—False Pretenses/Swindle/Confidence Game, Credit Card/Automatic Teller Machine Fraud, Impersonation, Welfare Fraud, Wire Fraud
11. Gambling Offenses—Betting/Wagering, Operating/Promoting/Assisting Gambling, Gambling Equipment Violations, Sports Tampering
12. Homicide Offenses—Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter, Negligent Manslaughter, Justifiable Homicide
13. Kidnaping/Abduction
14. Larceny/Theft Offenses—Pocket-picking, Purse-snatching, Shoplifting, Theft from Building, Theft from Coin-Operated Machine or Device, Theft from Motor Vehicle, Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts or Accessories, All Other Larceny
15. Motor Vehicle Theft
16. Pornography/Obscene Material
17. Prostitution Offenses—Prostitution, Assisting or Promoting Prostitution
18. Robbery
19. Sex Offenses, Forcible—Forcible Rape, Forcible Sodomy, Sexual Assault With An Object, Forcible Fondling
20. Sex Offenses, Nonforcible—Incest, Statutory Rape

21. Stolen Property Offenses (Receiving, etc.)
22. Weapon Law Violations

The following eleven additional offenses categories, known as Group B offenses, are those for which only arrest data are reported.

1. Bad Checks
2. Curfew/Loitering/Vagrancy Violations
3. Disorderly Conduct
4. Driving Under the Influence
5. Drunkenness
6. Family Offenses, Nonviolent
7. Liquor Law Violations
8. Peeping Tom
9. Runaway
10. Trespass of Real Property
11. All Other Offenses

(UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, pp. 5-6)

Q3. What are the benefits of participating in NIBRS?

A3. The ability to precisely identify when and where crime takes place, its form, and the characteristics of its victims and perpetrators is an indispensable tool in the war against crime. NIBRS provides law enforcement with that tool because it is capable of producing more detailed, accurate, and meaningful data than that produced by the traditional summary UCR Program. Armed with such information, law enforcement can better make a case to acquire the resources needed to effectively fight crime. Many individual law enforcement agencies have very sophisticated records systems capable of producing a full range of statistics on their own activities. NIBRS allows common denominator links among agencies which enables them to identify common issues so that they can work together to develop possible solutions or proactive strategies for addressing these issues. Law enforcement is a public service and requires a full accounting from an agency's commissioner, chief, or director for the administration of that agency and the status of public safety within its jurisdiction. Full participation in NIBRS will provide statistics to enable a law enforcement agency to fulfill this responsibility. NIBRS has the capability of furnishing information on nearly every major criminal justice issue facing law enforcement today, including terrorism, white collar crime, weapons offenses, missing children where criminality is involved, drug/narcotics offenses, drug involvement in all offenses, hate crimes, spouse abuse, abuse of the elderly, child abuse, domestic violence, juvenile crime/gangs, parental kidnaping, organized crime, pornography/child pornography, driving under the influence, and alcohol-related offenses. The data will be available from all levels of law enforcement—federal, state, and local—aggregated at the level and in the manner which best meets the needs of the data user. Through NIBRS, legislators, municipal planners/administrators, academicians, penologists, sociologists, and the general public will have access to more detailed and accurate crime information than the summary system can provide. *(UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 3)*

Q4. What are the requirements for submitting data into the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)?

A4. Submission guidelines are outlined in the Uniform Crime Reporting National Incident-Based Reporting System, Volume 1: Data Collection Guidelines, and Volume 2: Data Submission Specifications. Stated in Volume 1, p. 3, Section D:

Full participation in NIBRS necessitates that an agency have the data processing and other resources needed to meet all of NIBRS' reporting requirements. . . . Because data to be extracted from the reports for national purposes are more detailed in NIBRS than in the traditional UCR Program, increased data entry and data processing burdens are involved. Therefore, agencies wishing to participate should have sufficient data processing and other resources to fulfill all of the reporting requirements set forth in Volume 2: Data Submission Specifications.

NIBRS data are to be generated as a by-product of state and local Incident-based Reporting (IBR) Systems. This means that a state or local agency may build its IBR System to suit its individual needs; i.e., it can have a different file structure than that used by the National UCR Program and include additional data elements and data values. However, when it is time to report to the National UCR Program, the state or local agency should extract from its IBR System only the data required by NIBRS and record it onto magnetic tapes in NIBRS' format for submission to the FBI.

Before a state or local agency begins submitting data directly to the FBI, the agency will be asked to demonstrate its ability to meet NIBRS' reporting requirements by submitting test [data] to the FBI.

If a local agency is going to participate indirectly through its State UCR Program, it is the state's responsibility to ensure that the local agency is able to fulfill NIBRS data submission requirements.

Q5. Can any local, county, or state agency submit a NIBRS test tape?

A5. No. UCR policy is to accept NIBRS test tapes only from individual state UCR Programs or from individual submitting agencies in those states that do not possess a state Program. However, a case by case assessment may be conducted to determine if any one state, county, or local agency can be considered. (*Volume 1: Data Collection Guidelines, p. 4*)

Q6. In drug seizure situations, determining drug weight and type presents a problem in terms of time and logistics for most police officers. How precise do measurement and type determination have to be?

A6. Determining the nature and extent of the illicit drug problem and the law enforcement response is one of NIBRS' primary objectives. However, NIBRS' policy only requires the seizing officer/agency to report the Suspected Drug Type and Estimated Quantity. This policy permits an approximation of the type and amount of illicit drug seized without requiring exact determinations. In 1991, NIBRS' procedures were modified to give reporting agencies the option of entering code XX = Not Reported as an authorized data value for the drug quantity data element. This modification allows reporting agencies time to send suspected substances to a laboratory for assessment before entering measurement data. The XX code is for interim purposes only and must later be replaced with a specific measurement. The FBI conducts periodic computer checks to ensure that the XX codes appearing on incident reports are eventually replaced by a specific measurement code. (*Volume 1: Data Collection Guidelines, p. 88*)

Q7. Criminal Impersonation is listed as a property crime. When there is no property loss/theft involved can this be entered with the type of loss as 1 = None? And if so, what would be used in the property description field?

A7. Attempted Criminal Impersonation would constitute no loss of property, None. The type of loss is 1, requiring Data Elements 15 through 22 to be left blank. The completed act of Criminal Impersonation requires some type of property loss. Property Description 77 could be used as it includes intangibles which are anything that cannot be perceived by the sense of touch. For example, if a person impersonates a doctor to gain entrance to a restricted area of a hospital, the benefit to the offender (entry to the restricted area) is intangible. (*Volume 1: Data Collection Guidelines, pp. 79 & 82*)

Q8. For Data Element 31 (Aggravated Assault/Homicide Circumstances), which codes are used for Drive-by Shootings, whether juvenile gang or nonjuvenile gang related?

A8. For Drive-by Shootings (juvenile gangs), the code is 05 = Juvenile Gang. For Drive-by Shootings (nonjuvenile gangs), the code is 09 = Other Circumstances. (*Volume 1: Data Collection Guidelines, p. 91*)

Q9. When the location of an incident is a motel, hotel, or self-storage unit, and several rooms/units are broken into, is that counted as more than one burglary?

A9. The Hotel Rule, which may apply in this instance, states,

Burglaries of hotels, motels, lodging houses, or other places where lodging of transients is the main purpose or burglaries of

temporary rental storage facilities, i.e., "mini-storage" and "self-storage" buildings, can pose reporting questions. If a number of units under a single manager are burglarized and the offenses are most likely to be reported to the police by the manager rather than the individual tenants/renters, the burglary should be reported as a single incident. Examples are burglaries of a number of rental hotel rooms, rooms in flop houses, rooms in a youth hostel, units in a motel, and storage units in a commercial self-storage building. If the individual living areas in a building are rented or leased to the occupants for a period of time, which would preclude the tenancy from being classified as transient, then the burglaries would most likely be reported separately by the occupants. Such burglaries should be reported as separate incidents. Examples of this latter type of multiple burglary would be the burglaries of a number of apartments in an apartment house, of the offices of a number of commercial firms in a business building, of the offices of separate professionals within one building, or of a number of rooms in a college dormitory. (*UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 13*)

Q10. When more than one car is stolen in a single incident, how is the actual number of Motor Vehicle offenses generated?

A10. Data Element 18 (Number of Stolen Motor Vehicles) is used to generate offense counts for Motor Vehicle Theft. (*Volume 1: Data Collection Guidelines, p. 85*)

Q11. When a Motor Vehicle Theft occurs and additional property is also stolen, if only the additional property is recovered, why is it necessary to fill in Data Element 19?

A11. As of January 1, 1997, this requirement was discontinued. Leaving Data Element 19 blank is permissible.

Q12. When an arrest is made for an old offense and at the time of apprehension the subject is now a year older, is it correct to leave the original age on the suspect screen, or must the suspect age match the arrestee age?

A12. Ages do not have to match for current NIBRS' edits; however, the national Program would like the offender's age at the time of the incident to be as accurate as possible. The arrestee's age should be as of the date of arrest.

Q13. Should an agency report the offense for which an individual is arrested or the offense for which the individual is found guilty in court when the two differ?

A13. The agency should report the offense for which the arrestee was APPREHENDED. If the arrestee was apprehended for more than one offense, the reporting agency should determine which is the most serious offense and enter it as the arrest offense. (*UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 28*)

Q14. A car is stolen in Chicago, Illinois, and the offender (with the vehicle) is stopped in Hayward, Wisconsin. Obviously, Hayward has a Possession of Stolen Property offense to report, but it makes little sense to report a Property Recovery since the car was not stolen from its jurisdiction. Is this car seized rather than recovered?

A14. Recovery of Property is reported only by the agency that first reported it missing or stolen, regardless of which agency recovered it. (*UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 6*)

Q15. One male attacks another with his fists. The victim defends himself, and in response the attacker reaches into his pocket and removes a handgun. The attacker orders the victim to leave, and the victim complies. How would this incident be classified using NIBRS?

A15. This incident would be reported as an Aggravated Assault. By definition in the UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 12, Section 2A, an Aggravated Assault is "an unlawful attack by one person upon another wherein the offender uses a weapon or dis-

plays it in a threatening manner. . ." A second offense, a Weapons Law Violation, could also be scored.

Q16. Can the exceptional clearance codes be expanded to include a code for cleared by warrant? A majority of agencies have requested this code, as many times the individuals responsible for entering NIBRS are not notified when a warrant has been executed that would clear a NIBRS incident.

A16. No. In order to clear an offense by exceptional means, each of the following four conditions must be met:

1. The investigation must have clearly and definitely established the identity of at least one offender.
2. Sufficient probable cause must have been developed to support the arrest, charging, and prosecution of the offender.
3. The exact location of the offender must be known so that an arrest could be made.
4. There must be a reason outside the control of law enforcement which prevents the arrest.

The clearing of the offense is not permitted based solely on the fact that an arrest warrant has been issued for an offender. When an arrest warrant has been issued for an offender whose identity is known to law enforcement and no further action has occurred, the above criteria are not sufficiently satisfied. Offenses can be "cleared by arrest" when the arrest warrant is actually served upon the offender in person. To accept data based on issuance of arrest warrants would produce misleading statistics in terms of the actual number of clearances produced by an agency. In instances where an arrest is made by an agency other than the originating agency, a "clearance by arrest" should be claimed by the originating agency upon being notified of the action by the arresting agency. For NIBRS purposes, the fact that an arrest occurred is sufficient for the clearance of the offense. It is the responsibility of participating agencies to monitor the status of their criminal investigations, as well as to notify the originating agency of all arrests involving their reported offenses. (*UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 34*)

Q17. A vehicle is rented with false identification and/or stolen credit cards, what offense is reported?

A17. The offense reported would be Fraud. If a credit card was used to perpetrate the fraud, the offense would be classified as Credit Card/Automatic Teller Machine Fraud. (*UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 15*)

Q18. Why are food stamps considered a nonnegotiable instrument? Anyone can use them, and further action is not required for the food stamp to become negotiable.

A18. Food stamps are considered nonnegotiable because they do not satisfy the definition of a negotiable instrument as defined by the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), Article 3. The definition of a negotiable instrument per Black's Law Dictionary reads,

Negotiable instrument—To be negotiable within the meaning of U.C.C. Article 3, an instrument must meet the requirements set out in Section 3-104: (1) it must be a writing signed by the maker or drawer; it must contain an (2) unconditional (3) promise (example: note) or order (example: check) (4) to pay a sum certain in money; (5) it must be payable on demand or at a definite time; (6) it must be payable to the bearer or to order (examples of instruments payable to order are (a) "Pay to the order of Daniel Dealer", and (b) "Pay Daniel Dealer or order"); and (7) it must not contain any other promise, order, obligation, or power given by the maker or drawer except as authorized by Article 3. See also Commercial paper; Negotiation.

Q19. How do you classify an incident involving forged prescriptions?

A19. This incident would be classified as "Counterfeiting/Forgery—the altering, copying, or imitation of something without authority or right, with the intent to deceive or defraud by passing the copy or thing altered or imitated as that which is original or genuine . . ." (*UCR Handbook, NIBRS Edition, p. 14*)