Crime Data Requests, 1994-96
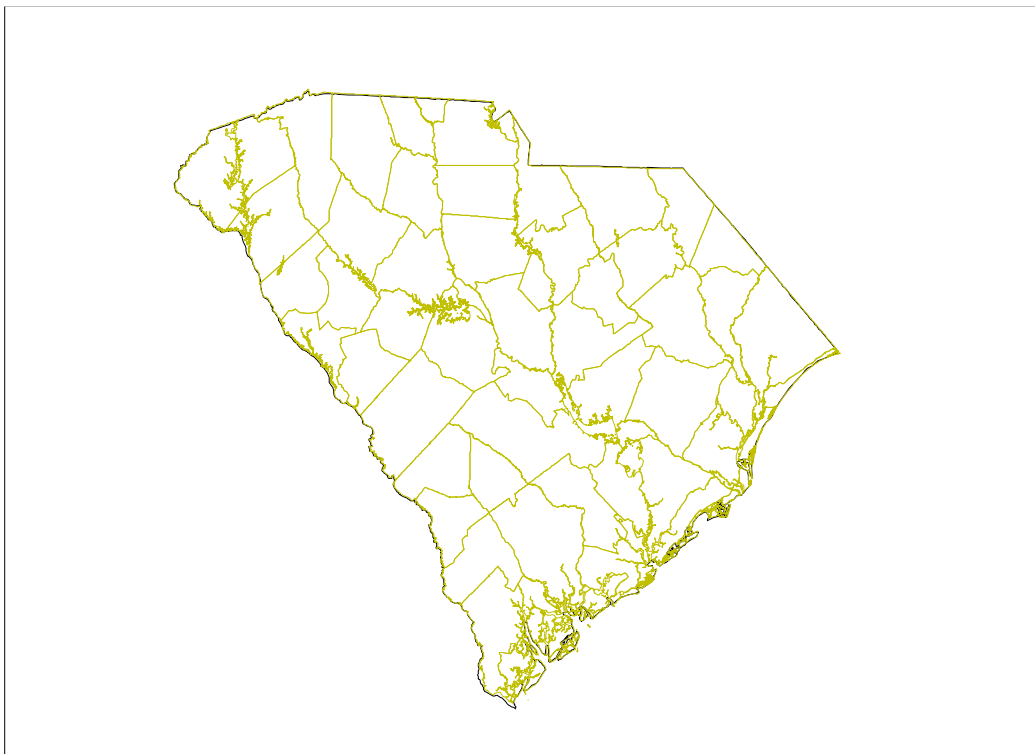
A Review of Requests for Crime Information

from the State Law Enforcement Division of South Carolina

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A Review of Requests for Crime Information

from the State Law Enforcement Division of South Carolina

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Crime Data Requests:

South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division

Background

The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) Department of the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) maintains statewide crime statistics. This includes capturing data through the South Carolina Incident-Based Reporting System (SCIBRS). South Carolina was the first state to implement a statewide crime data system compatible with the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). SLED aggregates crime statistics from local law enforcement agencies, produces statewide figures, and forwards compiled information to the FBI. Annually, SLED publishes *Crime in South Carolina* that provides crime information to the public, researchers, and law enforcement agencies.

In addition to providing annual publications, SLED responds to numerous inquiries for crime statistics and related information from a variety of public and governmental sources. In September 1997, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) conducted a systematic review of these information requests. The review was to help assess the nature of the information requested and to identify standard incident-based tables that could streamline SLED's provision of information and might also be useful in other states.

Summary

Number of requests

The task of reviewing data requests made to the UCR Department of the SLED was completed to gain an improved understanding of the types of criminal information most commonly requested. A review of the available SLED records indicate that in the period of January 1, 1994, through December 31, 1996, an estimated 820 information requests were made to SLED. The following is a review of the specific nature of these requests, including the types of individuals and agencies soliciting information, and the jurisdiction-level pertaining to these requests (national, state, county, or agency-specific).

Incident-based reporting systems

The use of incident-based reporting allows for the identification of the location and time of a crime, what form it takes, and the characteristics of its victims and offenders. Under the summary-based UCR system, a statistical response would be unavailable for an estimated 40% of all SLED data requests. Examples of unavailable statistics include data pertaining to the age, sex, and race of victims or offenders; nonaggregate data on arrestees' characteristics; data on victim/offender relationships; and data providing criminal incidents by location. The level of

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detailed information found in NIBRS-compatible crime records provides law enforcement, other criminal justice agencies at all levels, the research community, and the general public with more accurate and meaningful data than statistics produced by the traditional UCR Program.
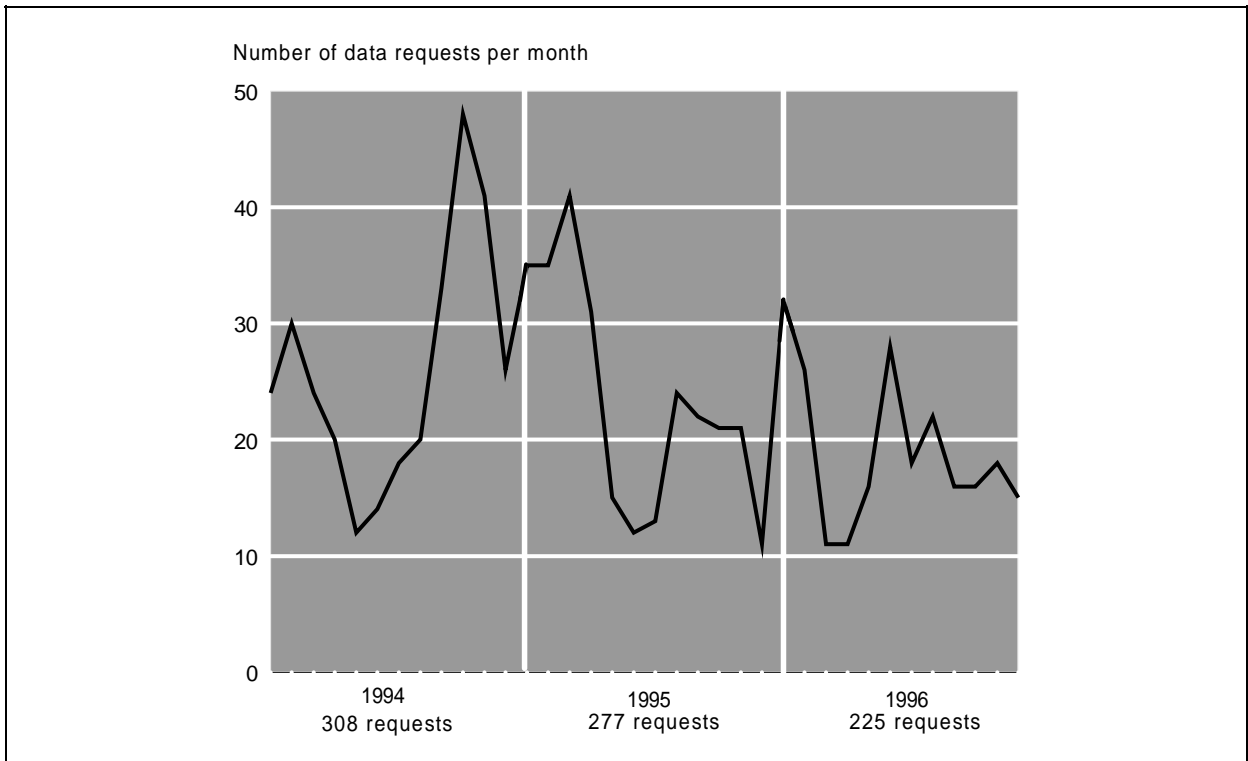
Methodology for the review

In the review process, five characteristics of each request were documented — the request date, the nature of the request, the jurisdictional region associated with the request, the data source used to satisfy the request, and a description of the organization or individual requesting information.

Recorded solicitations that contained no specific request information, such as, "needs statistics," were not included in this review. In many instances, a single solicitation included requests for multiple types of crime-related data. As a result, the total counts of responses exceeded the number of individual data requests.

Types of information requested

An overview of the types of requests for crime information indicates the following:

• 60% of all solicitations included a request for information on offenses reported to the police. This included general incident counts

Number of data requests per month

1994	1995	1996
308 requests	277 requests	225 requests

Over the 3-year period reviewed, approximately 38% of the requests were made during 1994; 34% in 1995; and 28% during 1996. More requests were made during fall and winter, while declining slightly in number during spring and summer.

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for violent/nonviolent crimes, incident counts by specific types of offenses, incident counts for index crimes only, and rates per population by which specific types of offenses occurred.

• In about a third of these instances, statistics on the incidence of index crimes or violent offenses was sought. However, in about 40% of these cases the requester solicited information on the incidence of specific types of crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, or assault.

• 22% of all individuals requested at least one source of information on arrest data. Nearly half of these requests involved arrest types by the demographic characteristics of the arrestee, either by age, sex, or race.
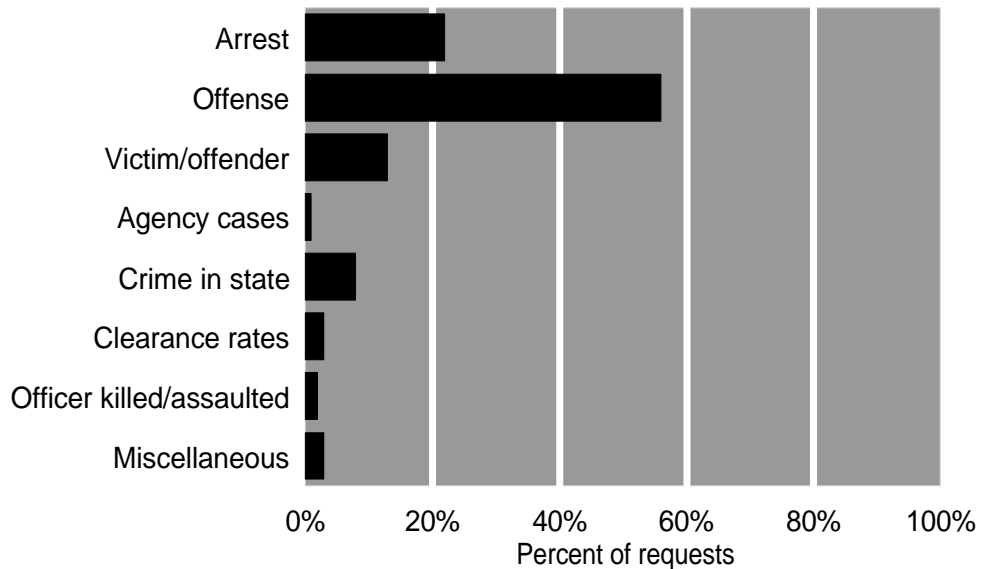
• The most frequently requested types of arrest statistics involved data on juvenile arrests, arrests for drug-related offenses, and arrests of Driving Under the Influence (DUI). About a third of requests for arrest information involved juvenile subjects, while an equal proportion requested arrest information on either drug or DUI arrests.

• Except for drug-related crimes and felony driving-related offenses, statistics on non-violent offenses were rarely requested.

Jurisdiction level requests

In addition to documenting the types of data requested, the review of the jurisdiction level pertaining to the request was recorded. South Carolina's criminal justice statistics

Well over half the information requested concerned offenses reported to the police: how many and rates per 100,000 residents. One example of a frequently requested topic was domestic violence. More than a third of the requests about offenses concerned domestic violence.

are generally displayed on a state-level basis. State-level statistics meets the needs of about 40% of the requests. Often, however, data are requested for smaller units within the state:

• 22% of all solicitations requested that data be provided at the department level or by Originating Reporter Identifier (ORI) number.

• 33% of requests were aggregated at the county-level. Under 2% of requests were for national-level data only.
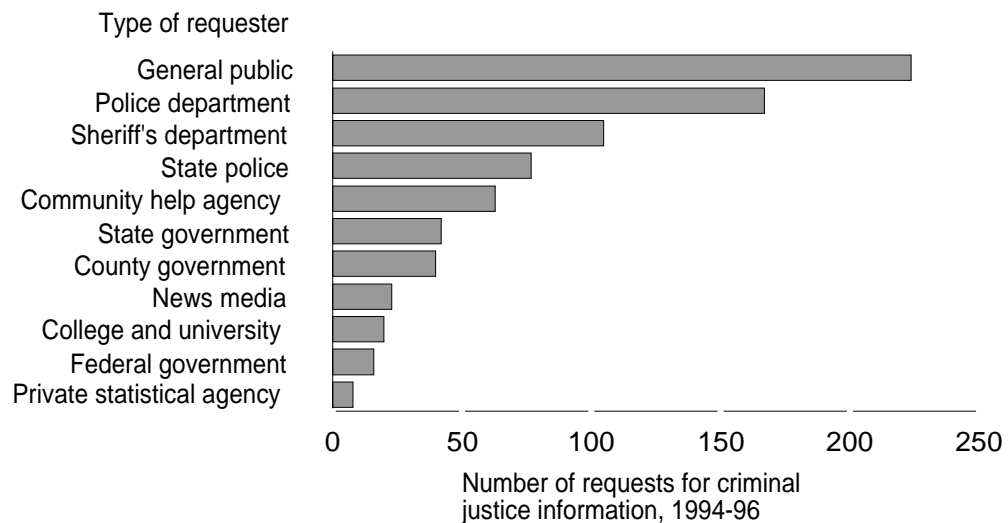
Agencies/individuals requesting information

• State or local law enforcement agencies made 44% of SLED's data solicitations from 1994 through 1996. About 21% of these solicitations originated from municipal police departments, 13% from county-level sheriff's offices, and 10% from state police agencies, including SLED.

• 28% of the information requests were made by members of the general public, 8% from community-support groups.

• About 13% of the requests were from a non-police government agency at the federal, state, or county level (including the South Carolina Statistical Analysis Center).

• The remaining types of individuals requesting information were categorized as media personnel (4%), university or college employees (2%), or as the staff of private statistical agencies (under 1%). If details of the data request source were unclear, as with provision of only a name, the case was typically labeled as originating from the general public.

The general public accounted for 29% of the 785 requests submitted to SLED, law enforcement agencies 44%, and nonpolice government agencies at all levels 12%. The Office of the Governor, South Carolina, made 10 requests.

Type of requester

Number of requests for criminal justice information, 1994-96

Note: Information about the individuals or agencies requesting data was available for 96% of the requests.

Types of data requests and responses

I. Offenses reported to the police

Fifty-six percent of the crime information requests made to SLED involved the number of offenses known to law enforcement agencies:

• A majority of the offense or incident data provided involved information on index counts or rates occurring within South Carolina. Several index requests involved the ranking of index rates for counties in the state (10 requests), or for the index ranking of South Carolina compared to the other states in the United States (3 requests).

• Requests for specific types of criminal incidents most frequently included those associated with violent crimes. About one-fifth of offense requests were for statistics on the occurrence and characteristics of domestic violence (21%). A majority of persons requesting this type of information were members of community self-help agencies or public citizens.

• Other frequently requested types of offenses-specific information involved statistics on murder, rape or robbery. Information pertaining to non-violent offenses, including property crimes, were not commonly requested.

• About 10% of offense-related requests included the specification of incident by the location of the crime, about half of which were related specifically to crime in schools and the characteristics surrounding these occurrences.

• The vast majority of school crime requests involved state-level data and centered around violent offenses. The remainder of offense by premise requests focused on topics such as robbery in convenience stores and gas stations, arson in churches and synagogues, and on criminal incidents in specific neighborhoods or regions (i.e. hot spots for crimes).

• About 4% of solicitations for offense data requested the display of offense by type of physical weapon used. The majority of these requests were concerned with weapons used in the commission of murder or intentional injuries. These inquiries varied in detail from the general, such as state violent offenses with a gun, to the specific, such as child deaths due to handgun injuries.

II. Arrest data

About 22% of data requests made to SLED from 1994 through 1996 involved arrest statistics. While many of these requests covered multiple aspects of arrest information, several basic areas were frequently specified by the soliciting party:

• Nearly half of all arrest solicitations involved the request for the demographic characteristics of the arrestee, by race, sex, and/or age. Frequently, these demographic cross-tabulations were requested for juvenile offenders (sometimes within specified age ranges). Nearly a third of the arrest statistics provided by SLED involved information on juvenile arrests.

• Additional types of arrest data frequently requested were statistics on drug offense arrests. About a fifth of arrest requests

involved information of this nature, typically indicating drug arrests by county or state and/or by the racial characteristics of the offender.

• About 13% of arrest requests included information on the frequency or characteristics of persons arrested for driving under the influence (DUI).

• Arrest statistics were typically aggregated either for South Carolina as a whole (43%) or for selected counties within the state (40%). The remaining arrest requests were provided by ORI or at the departmental-level (17%), either for specific municipal or county-level law enforcement agencies. Local sheriffs or municipal police departments requested about three-fourths of ORI-specific arrest information, typically for statistics on their own agencies.

III. *Victim/offender statistics*

About 13% of all solicitations involved a request for statistics on the victim, offender, and/or victim-offender relationship:

• Statistics concerning the characteristics of victims represented about two-thirds of these cases, with the majority of these requests focused on *victims* of violent crimes, such as of homicide, rape, or domestic violence. In addition, about half of victim requests involved some specification for victim demographic information, such as elderly, juvenile, or female victims of domestic violence.

• Information on the distinctive nature of *victim-offender* relationships, requested in about 25 cases, centered mainly on specific types of violent crimes, most frequently the relationship between victim and offender in incidents of domestic violence.

• Requests for statistics on *offender* characteristics, based on self-reported victim or witness accounts, were requested in a small number of cases. It should be noted, however, that in many cases ambiguity in the request made it difficult to distinguish between a request for offender or for arrestee statistics.

IV. *Information for local departments*

Slightly under 10% of all solicitations included the request for information by local law enforcement agencies for statistics pertaining to their own agency. These requests are separate from the general arrest information requests tallied in the arrest category above.

• Slightly under 4% of all solicitations included the request for a case-by-case listing for a law enforcement agency in a monthly time frame. These requests were exclusively made by municipal or county-level agencies and displayed incident-based information, including cases that were active versus solved. A case would only be listed as active if no arrest or exceptional clearance had been made.

• Local law enforcement agencies contacted SLED to request listings of NIBRS Part I crimes in a specified time frame, most of them indicating they were doing so to meet a grant application requirement. With few exceptions, these statistical requests pertained to the requesting agency only. Finally, local agencies contacted SLED to

obtain monthly or yearend "Executive Summaries," which have information on arrest summaries, clearance rates, number of officers assaulted, arson, hate-bias, and number of reports submitted in their department.

• About 2% of requests solicited statistics on the number of law enforcement officers killed or assaulted in South Carolina or a specific department during a specified time frame. About 1% of solicitations included the request for the number of sworn law enforcement officers in the state or in a specific department.

V. Clearance rates

A final type of statistic requested with some regularity was information on clearance rates. Law enforcement agencies measure solved cases by counting clearances, defined as the number of cases in which a known criminal offense has resulted in an arrest, citation, or summons or if the criminal offense has otherwise been resolved by exceptional clearance. Clearance rate data were requested in about 3% of all cases, with all but two requests originating from local or state law enforcement agencies.

VI. Responses

In responding to information requests, SLED employed the use of Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) COBOL Batch programs to calculate criminal statistics. These programs were used to generate tables found in *Crime in South Carolina* and to produce tables in response to daily requests. In an estimated third of responses, data requests were satisfied with tables taken directly from

Crime in South Carolina. In some cases it was necessary to manipulate these tables to meet the required criteria (such as calculating rates). The FBI's *Crime in the U.S.* was used for about 3% of responses, most frequently to rank the crime rate of South Carolina among that of other states. In about 12% of responses, ad hoc tables, developed as a result of frequent solicitations for specific crime-related information, were used. Examples include a domestic assault table showing offense by victim-offender relationship and a table on index crimes in schools.

In addition to utilizing pre-constructed information sources, SLED also ran special COBOL Batch programs in response to individual solicitations. The most frequently run program was IBR 270, which displayed the most detailed incident-based data on a case-by-case basis. If specific information was requested, such as which larceny cases were active (versus solved), this was the only relevant source. The following COBOL Batch programs were the most often used to meet individual requests:

IBR270 (case by case) = 97
IBR265 (ASR Arrestee Report) = 49
IBR200 (Offense count report) = 34
IBR285 (Victim Report) = 33
IBR216 (Executive Summary) = 32
IBR210 (Arrestee report) = 26
IBR286 (offender report) = 12

These supplementary sources were used to satisfy SLED requests:
• NIBRS Handbook
• UCR Reporting Handbook
• Respondent referred to other SLED departments or criminal justice agencies = 20 (2.7%)

• Mailing a copy of *Crime in South Carolina* provided for reference

Descriptions of information responses were unavailable in about 7% of all cases.

Data sources

In preparing responses for information requests for criminal justice-related statistics, SLED's UCR Department used multiple data sources. The vast majority of responses originated directly from information provided in the following Cobol Batch programs, which allowed data to be selected based on jurisdiction (ORI, County, District, State) and dates of occurrence:

• Offense Count Report
• Clearance Count Report
• Count Offenses: Non-Hierarchy
• Hate-Bias Report
• Arrestee Report
• Executive Summaries
• Seized Drug Report
• Property Loss Report
• Relationship Report
• Multiple Offense Matrix
• Location Report
• Participation Report
• Distribution Report: Non-Hierarchy
• ARS Arrestee Report: Hierarchied
• ARS Arrestee Report : Non-Hierarchied
• Arrest Case by Case Listing
• Continued Case by Case Listing
• Yearly Offense Count Report
• Number of Arrests by Month
• ASR Victim Report : Hierarchied
• ASR Victim Report : Non-Hierarchied
• ASR Offender Report : Hierarchied
• ASR Offender Report : Non-Hierarchied
• Multiple Arrest Matrix
• LEOKA Report

Examples of requests and responses

1. "Please provide information on domestic assault for Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, and Oconee Counties in 1993-1994," mother of student working on school-related project.
Provided: table for each of the respective counties on "Domestic Violence" giving details on the number of assaults, number of domestic assaults as percent of total, number of domestic assaults by relationship, spouse abuse as percent of total domestic assaults in county
Tables were faxed.

2. "Wants the total number of DUI arrests for Chester County in 1994. Number of arrests for drug offenses in the county for the same year," Chester County Sheriff's Office.
Provided: table on arrest data by county taken from *Crime in South Carolina*
Table was faxed.

3. "Arrests for violent crimes in Abbeville, Greenwood, Laurens, and Newberry Counties. What percent was attributed to juveniles?" 8th Circuit Solicitor's Office.
Provided: printout from COBOL Batch Program IBR 265 and UCR 90700
Information was faxed.

4. "What are Newberry County's index crime rates (by type) compared to the other counties in SC for 1995," Newberry County Sheriff's Office.
Provided: table on index crime rates by county taken from *Crime in South Carolina*

5. "What are the characteristics of murder victims age 15 to 24 in SC for 1993?" State Statistical Analysis Center (SAC).
Provided: printout from IBR 285
Information was faxed.

6. "How often are elderly persons over the age of 65 the victims of assault?" general public.
Provided: IBR 285A, victim report (non-hierarchical)

7. "Active larceny, breaking & entering, and aggravated assault cases for sheriff's office January through February 1996," Sheriff's Office.
Provided: IBR 270 (proportion of cases cleared vs. active)
Results were faxed.

8. "Intentional injuries and deaths attributed to assaults by type of weapon, by county and state for 1993," Community Help Agency.
Provided: printout from data IBR 270
Information was faxed.

9. "Incidents of robbery in convenience stores in South Carolina county for 1995," News media.
Provided: IBR 270

10. "Crimes of violence occurring in school for South Carolina in 1994," South Carolina Department of Education.
Provided: table "Index Crimes in Schools 1990-94"
Table was mailed.

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              U C R    R E P O R T    R E Q U E ST
             ***** REQUESTS FOR THE NIBRS SYSTEM *****
                          BATCH PR0GRAMS
Revised 1/16/96

    OPTION __ (1) ORI_____ (2) CNTY____ (3) DISTRICT __ (4) STATE
       BEGIN MM DD YYYY __  __  ____ END MM DD YYYY __  __  ____

ORI(S)_____  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____
***MAKE SURE IBR120 HAS BEEN STRIPPED IN THE RIGHT ORDER***SEE RUN SHEET

1. ____   IBR200 OFFENSE COUNT REPORT ***

2. ____   IBR201 CLEARANCE COUNT REPORT ***

3. ____   IBR205 COUNT OFFENSES NON-HIERARCHY ***

4. ____   IBR206 HATE-BIAS REPORT ***

5. ____   IBR210 ARRESTEE REPORT *** CC 3S____ 0 BOTH REPORTS

                                    ____ 1 ALL AGES
                                    ____ 2 JUVENILE REPORT
              JUVENILE AGE SWITCH CC42
                                    ____ O. JUVENILE 16 AND UNDER
                                    ____ 1. JUVENILE 17 AND UNDER

  N O T E ------------------->      16 AND UNDER IS NORMAL
  N O T E ------------------->      17 AND UNDER IS SPECIAL

6. ____ IBR215 ADMIN REPORT *** ALL ORIS    FROM _____TO_____
                                            DATES

7. ____ IBR216 EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES          FROM _____TO_____
                        SUPRESS FLAG   YES_____NO_____

      NOTE: IF 'YES' TO SUPRESS FLAG, ONLY THE IBR216 WILL BE PRINTED.
               IF 'NO ' TO SUPRESS FLAG, THE IBR201, IBR206, IBR210,
                    IBR215, AND IBR295 WILL BE PRINTED.
      TO SUPRESS: PUT A 'Y' IN CC 40 OF THE IBR216 DATA CARD.

 8. ____  IBR220 QUALITY CONTROL/AUDIT REPORT***

 9. ____  IBR225 SEIZED DRUG REPORT

10.____  IBR230 PROPERTY LOSS REPORT *** OFFENSE OPTION YES NO

             IF 'YES' MAKE SURE A 'Y' IS IN CC 35 OF DATA CARD.
             IF 'NO' MAKE SURE A 'Y' IS NOT IN CC35 OF DATA CARD.

                     FLIP UP FOR BACK SIDE
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11.____  IBR235 RELATIONSHIP REPORT

12.____  IBR240 MULTIPLE OFFENSE MATRIX

13.____  IBR245 LOCATION REPORT *** OPTION 1 ALL LOCATIONS
                                 OPTION 2 LOCATION _____

14.____  IBR250 PARTICIPATION REPORT ****** NO

15.____  IBR255 DISTRIBUTION REPORT**OFF ___ATT_COM _ BOTH _ (OPT 2)
              (NON-HIERARCHIED)

16.____  IBR255A DISTRIBUTION REPORT**OFF ___ATT_COM _ BOTH _ (OPT 2)
              (HIERARCHIED)
17.____  IBR265 ASR ARRESTEE REPORT    (HIERARCHIED)

18.____  IBR265A ASR ARRESTEE REPORT   (NON-HIERARCHIED)

19.____  IBR266 ARREST CASE BY CASE LISTING *** USE REQUEST SHEET

20.____  IBR270 CASE BY CASE LISTING *** USE REQUEST
              (TO SELECT ORI BREAK FOR STATE) YES ____ NO ____


         NOTE: THE ORI BREAK SELECTION SHOULD ONLY BE SELECTED FOR STATE

             IF 'YES' IS CHECKED, PUT A 'Y' IN CARD COLUMN 35 OF THE
                FIRST DATA CARD ONLY!!!! DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN CC 35
              OF THE SECOND DATA CARD.

             IF 'NO ' IS CHECKED, MAKE SURE CC 35 OF THE FIRST CARD IS
                BLANK.

21.____  IBR271 CONTINUE CASE BY CASE LISTING *** USE REQUEST SHEET

22.____  IBR275 YEARLY OFFENSE COUNT REPORT *** ONLY USES YEAR

23.____  IBR280 NUMBER OF ARRESTS BY MONTH *** ONLY USES YEAR

24.____  IBR285 ASR VICTIM REPORT   (HIERARCHIED)

25.____  IBR285A ASR VICTIM REPORT  (NON-HIERARCHIED)

26.____  IBR286 ASR OFFENDER REPORT (HIERARCHIED)

27.____  IBR286A ASR OFFENDER REPORT(NON-HIERARCHIED)

28.____  IBR290 MULTIPLE ARREST MATRIX

29.____  IBR295 LEOKA REPORT

30.____  IBR900 NIBRS PURGE (PROGRAMMING RUNS THIS)
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