



NATIONAL INCIDENT-BASED REPORTING SYSTEM (NIBRS)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General Information

THE BASICS

What is the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)?

The NIBRS is an incident-based reporting system in which agencies collect data on each single crime occurrence. NIBRS data are received from participating local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies having automated records systems. An agency can build a system to suit its own needs, including any collection/storage of information required for administration and operations, as well as to report data required by the NIBRS to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.

The 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 reported. In addition to the Group A offenses, there are 11 Group B offense categories for which only arrest data are reported.

How did NIBRS start?

Over the years, a broad utility for UCR data evolved, and law enforcement expanded its capabilities to supply crime information. In the late 1970s, the law enforcement community called for a thorough evaluation of the UCR Program to recommend an expanded and enhanced data collection system to meet the needs of law enforcement in the 21st century.

The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division was the first entity to use the proposed system to determine its workability. At a national UCR conference in March 1988, participants approved the new system.

What are the benefits of participating in the NIBRS?

The benefits of participating in the NIBRS are:

The NIBRS can furnish 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, spousal abuse, abuse of the elderly, child abuse, domestic violence, juvenile crime/gangs, parental abduction, organized crime, pornography/child pornography, driving under the influence, and alcohol-related offenses.

Using the NIBRS, legislators, municipal planners/administrators, academicians, sociologists, and the public will have access to more comprehensive crime information than the traditional Summary reporting system can provide.

The NIBRS produces more detailed, accurate, and meaningful data than the Summary reporting system. Armed with such information, law enforcement can better make a case to acquire the resources needed to fight crime.

The NIBRS enables agencies to find similarities in crime-fighting problems so that agencies can work together to develop solutions or discover strategies for addressing the issues.

Full participation in the NIBRS provides statistics to enable a law enforcement agency to provide a full accounting of the status of public safety within the jurisdiction to the police commissioner, chief, sheriff, or director.

How are the NIBRS and the Summary reporting system alike?

Most of the general concepts for collecting, scoring, and reporting UCR data in the *UCR Handbook* (2004) remain applicable in the NIBRS. For example, the jurisdictional rules for collecting data from city, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies and the conditions under which a state UCR Program must operate remain the same. The *UCR Handbook*, NIBRS Edition (1992), provides a comprehensive look at NIBRS and combines the old requirements retained from the traditional UCR Program with the new NIBRS requirements.

How does the NIBRS differ from the Summary reporting system?

The NIBRS has much more detail in its reporting system than the traditional Summary reporting system. In the NIBRS, agencies collect offense information on 46 crimes known as Group A offenses; in the Summary reporting system, agencies collect offense

information on eight crimes known as Part I offenses. In the NIBRS, an updated definition of rape includes both male and female victims; in the Summary reporting system, only females can be reported as rape victims. According to p. 14 of the NIBRS Volume 1: *Data Collection Guidelines* (August 2000), in the Summary reporting system, there is no way to report whether most crimes were completed or only attempted. In the NIBRS, each offense is designated as either attempted or completed.

In the Summary reporting system, the "Hierarchy Rule" governs multiple offense reporting. If more than one crime was committed by the same person or group of persons and the time and space intervals separating the crimes were insignificant, then the crime highest in the hierarchy is the only offense reported. However, in the NIBRS, if more than one crime was committed by the same person or group of persons and the time and space intervals were insignificant, all of the crimes are reported as offenses within the same incident.

The Summary reporting system has two crime categories: Crimes Against Persons (e.g., murder, rape, and aggravated assault) and Crimes Against Property (e.g., robbery, burglary, and larceny-theft). In the NIBRS, a third crime category was added, Crimes Against Society, to represent society's prohibitions against certain types of activities (e.g., drug or narcotic offenses).

The NIBRS collects information about crimes committed using a computer; the Summary reporting system does not. The NIBRS collects more comprehensive data about drug offenses than the Summary reporting system.

OFFENSE INFORMATION

What crimes are reported in the NIBRS?

The following offense categories, known as Group A offenses, are those for which extensive crime data are collected in the 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. Kidnapping/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

There are 11 additional offenses, known as Group B offenses, 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

AGENCY PARTICIPATION

How widespread is the NIBRS today?

Agencies and state UCR Programs are constantly developing, testing, or implementing the NIBRS. In 2007, 6,444 law enforcement agencies contributed NIBRS data to the UCR Program. The data from those agencies represent 25 percent of the U.S. population and 25 percent of the crime statistics collected by the UCR Program.

Implementation of NIBRS is occurring at a pace commensurate with the resources, abilities, and limitations of the contributing law enforcement agencies. As of 2007, the FBI has certified 31 state UCR Programs for NIBRS participation. Ten of those state Programs submit their crime data exclusively via the NIBRS. Nine state UCR Programs are in the various stages of testing NIBRS. Six other state agencies are in various stages of planning and development.

How do I find out if my agency or state contributes NIBRS or Summary reporting system data?

Contact your local law enforcement agency.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

How can I get NIBRS information?

Several NIBRS manuals, studies, and papers are available at the UCR Program's Web site at <www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>. In addition, NIBRS information is available from the UCR Program at: Multimedia Productions Group Criminal Justice Information Services Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Module D3, 1000 Custer Hollow Road, Clarksburg, West Virginia 26306-0157; telephone (304) 625-4995; facsimile (304) 625-5394; e-mail <cjis_comm@leo.gov>. (E-mail requesters must include the requester's contact information such as name, address, and telephone number.)

I looked through my copy of *Crime in the United States* and could not find any NIBRS data. Why?

Many agencies are either certified to report crime data through the NIBRS or are in the process of developing NIBRS reporting systems. However, until the UCR Program receives the majority of data via the NIBRS, the FBI will continue to report crime statistics to the Nation in a traditional format. The FBI converts statistics submitted by agencies via the NIBRS to the traditional Summary format and incorporates them into the national

crime database. When converting NIBRS data to the traditional Summary format, the UCR Program takes only one offense from each NIBRS incident based on the application of the Hierarchy Rule.

THE SPECIFICS

Because the NIBRS collects data on each crime incident and the Summary system does not, if my law enforcement agency begins reporting data via the NIBRS, will the number of offenses for my area rise?

No. Many studies have found that multiple offense crimes account for a very small number of offenses and should not have a great impact on the overall crime statistics. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) published a special report in July 2000 (updated in February 2001) concerning the effects of the NIBRS on crime statistics. The report is available at the BJS Web site at <www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/encs.pdf>.

NIBRS REQUIREMENTS

What are the requirements for submission of data into the NIBRS?

Submission guidelines are outlined in the UCR Program's NIBRS Volume 1: *Data Collection Guidelines*, August 2000. Section D, p. 3 of NIBRS Volume 1, states:

Full participation in NIBRS necessitates that an agency have the data processing and other resources needed to meet all of NIBRS' requirements. Participation should not place any significantly new burden on officers preparing incident and arrest reports as most of the data required for NIBRS are already being entered into such reports. On the other hand, because the data to be extracted from the reports for national purposes are more detailed in NIBRS than in the traditional UCR Summary system, 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 NIBRS 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 local or state agency should extract from its IBR system only the data required by NIBRS and record it onto magnetic media in NIBRS' format for submission to the FBI.

Before a local or state 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 on magnetic media 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.

Can any local, county, state, tribal, or federal agency submit NIBRS data?

The UCR Program's policy is to accept NIBRS test data only from individual state UCR Programs or from individual submitting agencies in those states that do not possess a state UCR Program. However, the FBI may conduct a case-by-case assessment to determine if any one local, county, state, tribal, or federal agency can be considered.

Is there a process for changing NIBRS requirements or policies?

The FBI frequently receives inquiries from law enforcement agencies that want to change policy or make a suggestion for change. If an agency wants to present its suggestions to the CJIS Advisory Policy Board for consideration, the agency should prepare a written description of the current policy along with an explanation of the proposed change and its benefits. The agency should forward the proposal to the CJIS Security Officer for that state for review. The CSO will then forward the suggestion to the appropriate regional Working Group chairperson. The chairpersons coordinate with the CJIS Division to identify proposed topics and prepare the agendas for the biannual Working Group meetings.