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1996

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UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS

for the United States

1996

SUMMARY

CRIME INDEX

CRIMES CLEARED

PERSONS ARRESTED

TOPICAL STUDY

LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

APPENDICES

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PREFACE

Each year *Crime in the United States* presents crime statistics for the Nation as a whole, as well as for regions, states, counties, cities, towns, and college and university campuses. These data are compiled from monthly law enforcement reports or individual crime incident records transmitted directly to the FBI or to centralized state agencies that then report to the FBI. The primary objective of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program is to provide a reliable set of criminal justice statistics for law enforcement administration, operation, and management.

UCR crime statistics permit studies among neighboring jurisdictions and among those with similar populations and other common characteristics. In addition, a study of the nature and movement of crime over time allows researchers to theorize about the causes underlying changes and fluctuations and to hypothesize about possible effects on families and communities. A study of the crime data for a specific geographic locale enables researchers to assess the influence of crime on a particular district. For these reasons, UCR data are used not only by criminal justice agencies but by university researchers, sociologists, criminologists, community development organizations, tourism agencies, media, and many others. Each year the Uniform Crime Reporting Program strives to compile and present the facts and the many facets of crime in the United States in ways that will assist all students of crime data.

This current edition includes for the first time a presentation of the reported data on those Index crimes which are motivated by bias against individuals based upon race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. The hate crime data are extracts of those to be reported in the annual publication, *Hate Crime Statistics.* Produced since 1992, they provide an important additional perspective on the Nation's crime experience and are a positive addition to the historical crime report.

As the 21st century approaches, the Uniform Crime Reporting Program shares with state and local law enforcement an ever-increasing commitment to implement fully the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The foundation of the national system will be the thousands of automated records-management systems that are being developed within individual agencies across the Nation. Within the next few years, *information* may prove to be law enforcement's most important weapon. Many progressive computerized systems have the capacity not only to compile crime statistics but to link all associated criminal justice information systems. Good automated systems generate data that benefit officers in patrol cars as much as detectives and prosecutors. They also produce the statistical reports required for NIBRS.

The UCR staff continues to support and encourage law enforcement's efforts to develop computerized data collection systems through research, training, and technical assistance. Recently, Austin, Texas, became the first city with over 500,000 population to institute NIBRS reporting as part of a comprehensive, incident-based, automated records-management system. As more and more agencies, large and small, become part of NIBRS, the FBI will be able to offer more comprehensive national and regional crime statistics for use in law enforcement decisionmaking at all levels of government.

The Uniform Crime Reporting Program staff, now fully established in Clarksburg, West Virginia, is looking to the future with optimism and a commitment to maintain the high standards that have characterized the Program from its inception.

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 16,000 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 state and local 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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