

Crime in Arkansas 2001

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to all law enforcement officers endeavoring to uphold the laws and serve the people of Arkansas. Without their support and cooperation, this publication and the resulting overview of crime would not be possible.

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Section 1

Uniform Crime Reporting

Background

The national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program began more than 70 years ago. In 1930, Congress authorized the FBI to collect crime statistics from local police departments. All information came from reports that law enforcement agencies routinely compile for their own efficient administration. From the beginning, the primary motive behind UCR was to provide law enforcement statistics for use by law enforcement agencies.

To gain an overall picture of crime on the national level, data is collected on certain offenses that become known to law enforcement. Of all offenses, eight were selected to make up what is called the "Crime Index". These eight offenses were selected because of their seriousness, frequency of occurrence, and likelihood of being reported to police. The eight are murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft and arson.

For nationwide uniformity in the reporting of data, a set of standard definitions were written for specific criminal acts. This standardization was necessary to overcome the variation in definitions from state to state. Reporting agencies are required to submit their data in accordance with the UCR definition of offenses. Because of the variance in punishment for the same offenses in different states, it is not possible to distinguish between felony or misdemeanor crimes under the UCR program.

In the 1970's, the FBI transferred responsibility for data collection to state-operated UCR programs. Arkansas assumed this responsibility in 1974. With a state UCR program, data is more readily available for use by the state, and the FBI no longer collects data directly from individual law enforcement agencies within a state. Compiled information from all reporting agencies is forwarded by the state program to the national program. State programs also provide more direct and frequent contact with local agencies, assuring more completeness and quality of reported information.

Purposes of the Arkansas UCR Program

Data collected in the UCR program provides a picture of reported crime in Arkansas. While there are many purposes, the primary goals are:

- To collect, verify, and analyze information on crime reported to law enforcement agencies in Arkansas.
- To provide data back to law enforcement administrators for use in operational planning and assessments.
- To give an overview of crime, its magnitude and trends, and to provide this information to the Governor, the Legislature, and to the general public.
- To develop base data and statistics to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and performance of the Arkansas criminal justice system.
- To provide the FBI with complete UCR data to include in the national crime reports.

Reporting Procedures

A good record-keeping system is necessary for the effective operation of any law enforcement agency. These record systems are the source of statistics on crime. Most of the data reported in Arkansas is by a "summary" reporting procedure. Law enforcement agencies are responsible for compiling their own crime figures and submitting them once a month to ACIC. ACIC provides the agencies with training in scoring and classifying of offenses and in procedures for reporting data.

On a monthly basis, law enforcement agencies submit a summary of the number of offenses made known to them during the month. This count is taken from the complaints received by the agency from victims, other sources or as discovered by officers. The number of "actual offenses known" are reported to ACIC without regard to whether anyone was arrested for the crime, any stolen property was recovered, or any other restrictive consideration. Law enforcement agencies also report the total number of these crimes which they clear by either arrest or exceptional means. To supplement the offense information, data is also reported on the value of property stolen and recovered, circumstances surrounding homicides, additional information concerning assaults on police officers, and other pertinent information. In addition to offense information, reports on the number of persons arrested on all criminal offenses are also collected. These reports provide age, sex and race information, with the adult and juvenile arrests separated. Names of the individuals arrested are not included in the UCR program.

Arkansas Crime Index

The Crime Index is used as a standardized measurement of crime. It is the figure most often publicized by the news media and is widely used to measure the level of crime in a given location. Many of the figures presented in this annual report indicate the volume, fluctuations and distribution of crime using the eight Crime Index offenses. The Crime Rate is one of the most quoted crime statistics and is based on the number of Index Crimes per 100,000 population.

The Crime Index offenses were selected for use as an "index", because of their serious nature, their frequency of occurrence and the reliability of reporting by citizens to law enforcement agencies. In viewing Crime Index figures, the reader should keep in mind that there is currently no way of determining the total number of actual crimes committed. The Crime Index shows only the instances of crime which came to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

Violent crime refers to events such as murder, rape, and assault that may result in personal injury to a person. Robbery is also considered a violent crime because it involves the use or threat of force against a person.

Property crimes are unlawful acts with the intent of gaining property, but do not involve the use of threat of force against an individual. Theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson are examples of property crimes.

In UCR, an offense is considered to be cleared (solved) when at least one offender is arrested. The arrest of one person can clear several crimes or several persons may be arrested in the process of clearing one crime. Offenses may also be cleared by *exceptional means* when the offender commits suicide, makes a dying declaration, confesses while in custody or serving time for another crime, is prosecuted in another jurisdiction for the same offense, or when the victim refuses to prosecute or another jurisdiction refuses to extradite. When examining clearance data, keep in mind that not all crimes are cleared within the calendar year in which the offense occurs. Also note that the recovery of property stolen with regard to a specific offense does not, by itself, constitute a clearance for UCR purposes.

Data Comparisons and Limitations of UCR

While UCR has been the best source of crime statistics available, it has been subject to much criticism during its history. Some of these criticisms may be valid. However, the criticism is softened when it is remembered that the program was developed to furnish information primarily for use by law enforcement agencies.

The obvious tendency with a publication like the Crime in Arkansas is to make comparisons of data between jurisdictions, such as between agencies, or counties, or regions. Caution should be exercised in making comparisons, because of the great variety of factors which affect the amount and types of crime. Such factors are not taken into consideration in either raw data or crime rates. All crimes are considered "equal" in computing crime rates. For example, one theft affects a crime rate the same as one murder.

The Uniform Crime Reporting program measures offenses reported and persons arrested. Difficulty will arise if this distinction is not kept clearly in mind. Crime relates to events, but arrests relate to persons, and there is not a one-to-one correspondence. While UCR is the best information available, no claim is made that this represents "all crime".

Summary

The information in this annual report portrays the most accurate and realistic assessment available on the crime situation in Arkansas. ACIC is grateful for the participation of the law enforcement agencies that contributed data each month, without which this publication would not be possible. Individuals using this data are again cautioned about drawing conclusions based on direct comparisons between agencies. Numerous factors affect the amount and type of crime from place to place. More valid use can be made of these figures by determining deviations from state averages or through comparisons with averages for similar population groups. It is important to remember that crime is a social problem, and therefore is a concern of the entire community. The efforts of law enforcement are limited to factors within their control.

