
Crime in Arkansas 2003

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Arkansas Crime Information Center
One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
501-682-2222
Fax 501-682-7444
www.acic.org

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Uniform Crime Reporting Staff

Gwen Ervin-McLarty
UCR Program Manager

Ronda Barentine
Administrative Assistant

Matthew Pate
NIBRS Field Agent

Ralph Ward
NIBRS Program Coordinator

Regina Wilson
NIBRS Planning Specialist

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.

Description of Current Data

In 2002, the Arkansas Crime Information Center Supervisory Board mandated a change in crime data reporting; moving the state from summary reporting to incident based reporting. The implementation date was January 1, 2003.

The new reporting system increases the amount of crime data collected and requires electronic submission to ACIC. The complexity of this project required ACIC to provide a software solution to many smaller to medium sized departments for the collection of this data. Other departments, using their own records management systems, were required to update their systems to accept incident based data.

2002, 2003, and 2004 are transition years resulting in the statewide installation of new software; upgrading hardware, and on-going training. During this transition period many departments are unable to maintain dual reporting systems. This results in ACIC receiving less data than in the previous years. Therefore, the 2003 statistics are published with the understanding they may not have the reliability of previous data; however, this should improve as more agencies begin their incident based reporting. This was not an issue that was unexpected, but merely a result of the needed transition.