

SECTION I

Summary of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program

The Uniform Crime Reporting Program is a nationwide, cooperative statistical effort of over 16,000 city, county, and state law enforcement agencies voluntarily reporting data on crimes brought to their attention. During 1995, law enforcement agencies active in the Program represented nearly 251 million United States inhabitants or 95 percent of the total population as established by the Bureau of the Census. The coverage amounted to 97 percent of the United States population in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), 90 percent of the population in cities outside metropolitan areas, and 88 percent of the rural population.

Since 1930, the FBI has administered the Program and issued periodic assessments of the nature and type of crime in the Nation. While the Program's primary objective is to generate a reliable set of criminal statistics for use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management, its data have over the years become one of the country's leading social indicators. The American public looks to Uniform Crime Reports for information on fluctuations in the level of crime, while criminologists, sociologists, legislators, municipal planners, the press, and other students of criminal justice use the statistics for varied research and planning purposes.

Historical Background

Recognizing a need for national crime statistics, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) formed the Committee on Uniform Crime Records in the 1920s to develop a system of uniform police statistics. Establishing offenses known to law enforcement as the appropriate measure, the Committee evaluated various crimes on the basis of their seriousness, frequency of occurrence, pervasiveness in all geographic areas of the country, and likelihood of being reported to law enforcement. After studying state criminal codes and making an evaluation of the recordkeeping practices in use, the Committee in 1929 completed a plan for crime reporting which became the foundation of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.

Seven offenses were chosen to serve as an Index for gauging fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime. Known collectively as the Crime Index, these offenses included the violent crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. By congressional mandate, arson was added as the eighth Index offense in 1979.

During the early planning of the Program, it was recognized that the differences among criminal codes precluded a mere aggregation of state statistics to arrive at a national total.

Further, because of the variances in punishment for the same offenses in different state codes, no distinction between felony and misdemeanor crimes was possible. To avoid these problems and provide nationwide uniformity in crime reporting, standardized offense definitions by which law enforcement agencies were to submit data, without regard for local statutes, were formulated. The definitions used by the Program are set forth in Appendix II of this publication.

In January 1930, 400 cities collectively representing 20 million inhabitants in 43 states began participating in the UCR Program. Congress enacted Title 28, Section 534, of the United States Code authorizing the Attorney General to gather crime information that same year. The Attorney General, in turn, designated the FBI to serve as the national clearinghouse for the data collected. Since that time, data based on uniform classifications and procedures for reporting have been obtained from the Nation's law enforcement agencies.

Advisory Groups

Providing vital links between local law enforcement and the FBI in the conduct of the UCR Program are the Criminal Justice Information Systems Committees of the IACP and the National Sheriffs' Association. The IACP, as it has since the Program began, represents the thousands of police departments nationwide. The NSA encourages sheriffs throughout the country to participate fully in the Program. Both committees serve in advisory capacities concerning the UCR Program's operation.

To function in an advisory capacity concerning UCR policy and provide suggestions on UCR data usage, a Data Providers' Advisory Policy Board (APB) was established in August 1988. The Board operated until 1993 when a new Board to address all FBI criminal justice information services was approved. The Board functions in an advisory capacity concerning UCR policy and on data collection and use. The UCR Subcommittee of the Board ensures continuing emphasis on UCR-related issues.

The Association of State Uniform Crime Reporting Programs and committees on UCR within individual state law enforcement associations are also active in promoting interest in the UCR Program. These organizations foster widespread and more intelligent use of uniform crime statistics and lend assistance to contributors when the needs arise.

Redesign of UCR

While throughout the years the UCR Program remained virtually unchanged in terms of the data collected and

disseminated, a broad utility had evolved for UCR by the 1980s. Recognizing the need for improved statistics, law enforcement called for a thorough evaluative study that would modernize the UCR Program. The FBI fully concurred with the need for an updated Program and lent its complete support, formulating a comprehensive three-phase redesign effort. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Department of Justice agency responsible for funding criminal justice information projects, agreed to underwrite the first two phases. Conducted by an independent contractor, these phases were structured to determine what, if any, changes should be made to the current Program. The third phase would involve implementation of the changes identified. Abt Associates Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts, overseen by the FBI, BJS, and a Steering Committee comprised of prestigious individuals representing a myriad of disciplines, commenced the first phase in 1982.

During the first phase, the historical evolution of the UCR Program was examined. All aspects of the Program, including the objectives and intended user audience, data items, reporting mechanisms, quality control, publications and user services, and relationships with other criminal justice data systems, were studied.

Early in 1984, a conference on the future of UCR, held in Elkridge, Maryland, launched the second phase of the study, which would examine potential futures for UCR and conclude with a set of recommended changes. Attendees at this conference reviewed work conducted during the first phase and discussed the potential changes that should be considered during phase two.

Findings from the evaluation's first phase and input on alternatives for the future were also major topics of discussion at the seventh National UCR Conference in July 1984. Overlapping phases one and two was a survey of law enforcement agencies.

Phase two ended in early 1985 with the production of a draft "Blueprint for the Future of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program." The study's Steering Committee reviewed the draft report at a March 1985, meeting and made various recommendations for revision. The Committee members, however, endorsed the report's concepts.

In April 1985, the phase two recommendations were presented at the eighth National UCR Conference. While various considerations for the final report were set forth, the overall concept for the revised Program was unanimously approved. The joint IACP/NSA Committee on UCR also issued a resolution endorsing the Blueprint.

The final report, the "Blueprint for the Future of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program," was released in the summer of 1985. It specifically outlined recommendations for an expanded, improved UCR Program to meet informational needs into the next century. There were three recommended areas of enhancement to the UCR Program. First, reporting of offenses and arrests would be made by means of an incident-based system. Second, collection of data would be accomplished on two levels. Agencies in level one would report important details about those offenses comprising the current Crime Index, their victims, and arrestees. Law enforcement agencies covering

populations of over 100,000 and a sampling of smaller agencies would be included in level two, which would collect expanded detail on all significant offenses. The third proposal involved introducing a quality assurance program.

To begin implementation, the FBI awarded a contract to develop new offense definitions and data elements for the redesigned system. The work involved: (a) revision of the definitions of certain Index offenses; (b) identification of additional significant offenses to be reported; (c) refining definitions for both; and (d) development of data elements (incident details) for all UCR offenses in order to fulfill the requirements of incident-based reporting versus the current summary reporting.

Concurrent with the preparation of the data elements, the FBI studied the various state systems to select an experimental site for implementation of the redesigned Program. In view of its long-standing incident-based Program and well-established staff dedicated solely to UCR, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) was chosen. The SLED agreed to adapt its existing system to meet the requirements of the redesigned Program and collect data on both offenses and arrests relating to the newly defined offenses.

To assist SLED with the pilot project, offense definitions and data elements developed under the private contract were put at the staff's disposal. Also, FBI automated data processing personnel developed "Automated Data Capture Specifications" for use in adapting the state's data processing procedures to incorporate the revised system. The BJS supplied funding to facilitate software revisions needed at the state level. Testing of the new Program was completed in late 1987.

Following the completion of the pilot project conducted by SLED, the FBI produced a draft set of guidelines for an enhanced UCR Program. Law enforcement executives from around the country were then invited to a conference in Orange Beach, Alabama, where the guidelines were presented for final review.

During the conference, three overall endorsements were passed without dissent. First, that there be established a new, incident-based national crime reporting system; second, that the FBI manage this Program; and third, that an Advisory Policy Board composed of law enforcement executives be formed to assist in the direction and implementation of the new Program.

Information about the redesigned UCR Program, called the National Incident-Based Reporting System, or NIBRS, is contained in four documents produced subsequent to the Orange Beach Conference. Volume 1, *Data Collection Guidelines*, contains a system overview and descriptions of the offenses, offense codes, reports, data elements, and data values used in the system. Volume 2, *Data Submission Specifications*, is for the use of state and local systems personnel who are responsible for preparing magnetic tapes/floppy disks/etc., for submission to the FBI. Volume 3, *Approaches to Implementing an Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) System*, is for use by computer programmers, analysts, etc., responsible for developing a state or local IBR system which will meet NIBRS' reporting requirements. Volume 4, *Error Message Manual*, contains designations of mandatory and optional data elements, data element edits, and error messages.

A NIBRS edition of the *UCR Handbook* has been produced to assist law enforcement agency data contributors implementing NIBRS within their departments. This document is geared toward familiarizing local and state law enforcement personnel with the definitions, policies, and procedures of NIBRS. It does not contain the technical coding and data transmission requirements presented in Volumes 1 through 4.

NIBRS will collect data on each single incident and arrest within 22 crime categories. For each offense known to police within these categories, incident, victim, property, offender, and arrestee information will be gathered when available. The goal of the redesign is to modernize crime information by collecting data presently maintained in law enforcement records; the enhanced UCR Program is, therefore, a by-product of current records systems. The integrity of UCR's long-running statistical series will, of course, be maintained.

It became apparent during the development of the prototype system that the level one and level two reporting proposed in the "Blueprint" may not be the most practical approach. Many state and local law enforcement administrators indicated that the collection of data on all pertinent offenses could be handled with more ease than could the extraction of selected ones. While "Limited" participation, equivalent to the "Blueprint's" level one, will remain an option, it appears that most reporting jurisdictions, upon implementation, will go immediately to "Full" participation, meeting all NIBRS data submission requirements.

Implementing NIBRS will be at a pace commensurate with the resources, abilities, and limitations of the contributing law enforcement agencies. The FBI was able to accept NIBRS data as of January 1989, and 10 state-level UCR Programs (Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia) are now supplying data in the NIBRS format. An additional 22 state agencies, 3 local law enforcement agencies in states not having state-level programs, and 3 federal agencies (the Departments of Commerce and Defense-Air Force and the FBI) have submitted test tapes or disks containing the expanded data. Eleven other state

agencies, agencies in the District of Columbia and Guam, and other federal agencies are in various stages of planning and development.

Recent Developments

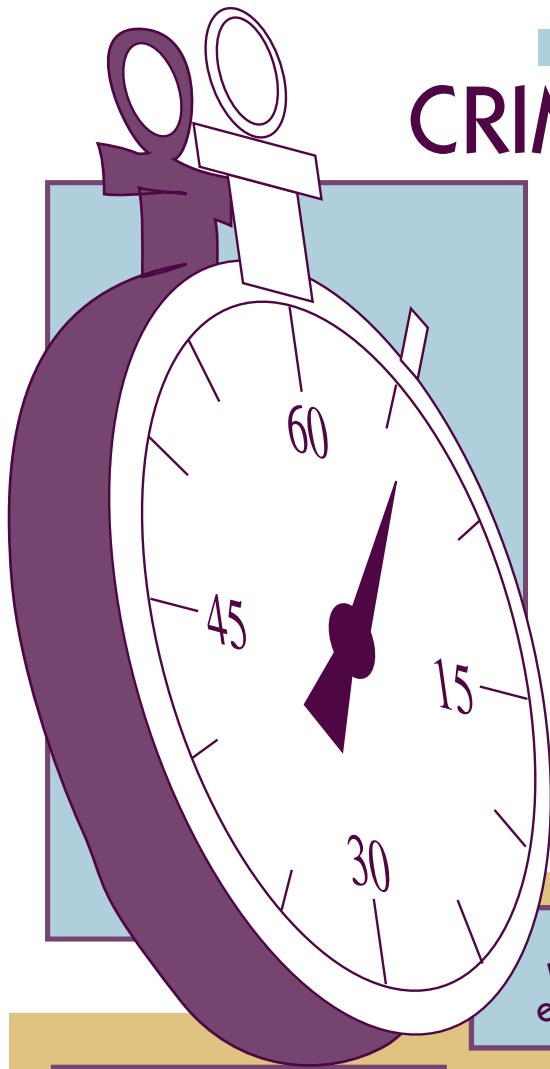
HATE CRIME STATISTICS — To comply with The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Crime Act), Public Law 103-322, enacted September 13, 1994, the UCR Program, beginning January 1, 1997, will add to its hate crime data collection crimes motivated by bias against persons with disabilities. In the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990, the types of bias to be reported were limited to those based on "race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity." The Crime Act amended the earlier legislation to include disabilities as a factor to be considered in bias-motivated crimes. In UCR, disability bias is defined as: A preformed negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their physical or mental impairments/challenges, whether such disability is temporary or permanent, congenital, or acquired by heredity, accident, injury, advanced age, or illness.

UCR RELOCATION—The UCR Program has undergone many changes over the past 60 plus years, but perhaps the most dramatic change is the one it is experiencing this year. The Program is in the final stages of moving from its traditional residence in Washington, D.C., to its new home in Clarksburg, West Virginia. This enormous undertaking involves moving computers, equipment, files, furniture, publications, and libraries—many years' accumulation of resources. As of August 5, 1996, the general mailing address for the Criminal Justice Information Services Division became:

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Criminal Justice Information Services Division
Attention: Uniform Crime Reports
1000 Custer Hollow Road
Clarksburg, West Virginia 26306

CHART 2.1

CRIME CLOCK 1995



one
CRIME INDEX OFFENSE
every 2 seconds

one
VIOLENT CRIME
every 18 seconds

one
PROPERTY CRIME
every 3 seconds

one
MURDER
every 24 minutes

one
FORCIBLE RAPE
every 5 minutes

one
ROBBERY
every 54 seconds

one
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT
every 29 seconds

one
BURGLARY
every 12 seconds

one
LARCENY-THEFT
every 4 seconds

one
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT
every 21 seconds

The Crime Clock should be viewed with care. Being the most aggregate representation of UCR data, it is designed to convey the annual reported crime experience by showing the relative frequency of occurrence of the Index Offenses. This mode of display should not be taken to imply a regularity in the commission of the Part I Offenses; rather, it represents the annual ratio of crime to fixed time intervals.