



# CRIME

VIOLENT CRIME | MURDER AND NONNEGLIGENT MANSLAUGHTER | FORCIBLE RAPE | ROBBERY | AGGRAVATED ASSAULT | PROPERTY CRIME | BURGLARY | LARCENY-THEFT | MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT | ARSON | HATE CRIME

IN THE UNITED STATES | 2003

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IN THE UNITED STATES | 2003

## Uniform Crime Reports

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## Foreword

In the 1929 Foreword to *Uniform Crime Reporting: A Complete Manual for the Police*, the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Committee on Uniform Crime Reports stated, "The urgent need for national crime statistics in the United States is so well recognized as to require no debate."

That need is as great today as it was 75 years ago. Police executives, governmental officials, and others maintain an "unflagging interest in reliable compilations dealing with crime and criminals."

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program was created by law enforcement for law enforcement, to meet the need for crime statistics used in operational planning and policymaking. Police departments and sheriff's offices rely on the data to help them support staffing decisions, allocate funding and resources, gauge the effectiveness of specific law enforcement programs, and support legislative and judicial mandates. Many local and state agencies use UCR data to support their requests to secure federal grant monies, to design new crime-fighting initiatives, or to craft anti-crime legislation.

UCR data has also become a staple for researchers and criminologists, news and information services, academics, and others seeking a better understanding of crime in the United States. Today's UCR data consumers may range from a renowned criminologist whose research will be widely quoted in the media to the president of a small-town PTA who is preparing documentation on juvenile crime to help obtain funding for after-school programs.

Initiated by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and assigned to the FBI to manage in 1930, the UCR Program has changed a great deal over the years. In order to meet the critical assignment of amassing pertinent crime statistics, the FBI is constantly reconciling the need to change and improve with the need to protect the integrity of the long-running data series upon which law enforcement and the public have come to rely. This year's *Crime in the United States* reflects some of these well-considered changes. As outlined in the Recent Developments segment of Section I, we have suspended the Crime Index and further refined the Metropolitan Statistical Area concept as part of our efforts to keep the Program vital and relevant to all of its users.

While there have been many such changes since its creation, the fundamentals of the UCR Program have remained constant. First, the UCR Program has never lost sight of its purpose: to collect accurate and pertinent crime data for the daily use of law enforcement, as well as the government and citizens of this nation. Second, the Program has always gathered its data at the grassroots level. It is the law enforcement officers who are in a position to know what crimes have been committed, the results of investigations, and the facts concerning persons arrested for these offenses. This is the source from which the UCR gathers its information.

These fundamentals, coupled with the flexibility to adapt to the needs of its users, make the UCR Program a vital part of the FBI's efforts to support our partners in law enforcement. We continue striving to improve *Crime in the United States*, and we hope that the 2003 edition will help law enforcement leaders around the country make the best possible decisions to secure safety and prosperity in their communities.



**Robert S. Mueller, III**  
Director

Data users are cautioned against comparing 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.

The national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program would like to hear from you.

The staff at the national UCR Program are continually striving to improve the publications. We would appreciate it if the primary user of this publication would complete the evaluation form at the end of this book and either mail it to us at the indicated address or fax it: (304) 625-5394.

# 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 figures to compile rankings of cities and counties. These rankings, however, are merely a quick choice made by the data user; they provide no insight into the many variables that mold the crime in a particular town, city, county, state, or region. Consequently, these rankings lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting cities and counties, along with their residents. To assess criminality and law enforcement’s response from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, one must consider many variables, some of which, while having significant impact on crime, are not readily measurable nor applicable pervasively among all locales. Geographic and demographic factors specific to each jurisdiction must be considered and applied if one is going to make an accurate and complete assessment of crime in that jurisdiction. Several sources of information are available that may assist the responsible researcher in exploring the many variables that affect crime in a particular locale. The U.S. Census Bureau data, for example, can be used 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, educational 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, cor-

rectional facilities, 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. Although information pertaining to the number of sworn and civilian law enforcement employees can be found in this publication, it cannot alone be used as an assessment of the emphasis that a community places on enforcing the law. 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 understand and quantify the nature and extent of crime in the United States and in any of the more than 17,000 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 many disciplines. Some factors that 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., prosecutory, judicial, correctional, and probational).
- Citizens’ attitudes toward crime.
- Crime reporting practices of the citizenry.

*Crime in the United States* provides a nationwide view of crime based on statistics contributed by local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies. Population size is the only correlate of crime presented in this publication. Although many of the listed factors equally affect the crime of a particular area, the UCR Program makes no attempt 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.*** Until data users examine all the variables that affect crime in a town, city, county, state, region, or college or university, they can make no meaningful comparisons.



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