



About the UCR Program

The FBI UCR Program is a local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement program. The FBI UCR Program provides a nationwide view of crime based on the submission of crime information voluntarily reported by law enforcement agencies (LEAs) throughout the country. LEAs submit crime data either through a state UCR Program or directly to the FBI UCR Program. The program's primary objective is to generate reliable information for use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management; however, its data have over the years become one of the country's leading social indicators.

Historical Background of UCR

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 crime statistics. After studying state criminal codes and making an evaluation of the recordkeeping practices in use, the Committee completed a plan for crime reporting that became the foundation of the UCR Program in 1929. The plan included standardized offense definitions for seven main offense classifications known as Part I crimes to gauge fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime. Developers also instituted the Hierarchy Rule as the main reporting procedure for the Summary Reporting System of UCR.

The seven Part I offense classifications 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, the UCR Program added arson as the eighth Part I offense category in 1979.

In January 1930, 400 cities 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 crime data collected. Every year since, the nation's LEAs have submitted data based on uniform classifications and procedures for reporting offenses and arrests.

UCR Advisory Groups

The Criminal Justice Information Systems Committees of the IACP and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) provide vital links between local law enforcement and the FBI in conducting the UCR Program. The IACP, representing the thousands of police departments nationwide,



and the NSA, serving sheriffs throughout the country, encourage agencies to participate fully in the program. Both committees serve in advisory capacities concerning the FBI UCR Program's operation.

In 1988, the UCR Program established a Data Providers' Advisory Policy Board to provide input for UCR matters. That Board operated until 1993 when it combined with the National Crime Information Center Advisory Policy Board to form a single Advisory Policy Board (APB) to address all issues regarding the FBI's criminal justice information services. The current APB ensures continuing emphasis on UCR-related issues. In addition, the Association of State Uniform Crime Reporting Programs (ASUCRP) focuses on UCR issues within individual state law enforcement associations and also promotes interest in the UCR Program. These organizations foster widespread and responsible use of uniform crime statistics and lend assistance to data contributors when needed.

Redesign of UCR

Although the data collected and disseminated by the UCR Program remained virtually unchanged throughout the years, in the 1980s a broad utility had evolved for UCR. Recognizing the need for improved statistics, law enforcement called for a thorough evaluative study to modernize the UCR Program. The FBI concurred with the need for an updated program and lent its complete support, formulating a comprehensive three-phase redesign effort. The first two phases of this effort, guided by input from representatives of the FBI, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the IACP, and the NSA, culminated with the release of a comprehensive report.

The UCR Program released the final report, the *Blueprint for the Future of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (Blueprint)*, in May 1985. It specifically outlined three areas of enhancement to help the UCR Program meet future informational needs. First, agencies would use an incident-based system to report offenses and arrests. Second, the FBI UCR Program would collect data on two levels (i.e., limited and full participation), and third, the FBI would introduce a quality assurance program.

In January 1986, the FBI began phase III of the redesign effort guided by the general recommendations set forth in the *Blueprint*. Contractors developed new data guidelines and system specifications while the FBI studied various state systems to select an experimental site to implement the redesigned program. Upon selecting the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), which enlisted the cooperation of nine local LEAs, the FBI developed automated data capture specifications to adapt the SLED's state system to the FBI UCR Program's



standards, and the BJS funded the revisions. The pilot demonstration ran from March 1–September 30, 1987, and resulted in further refinement of the guidelines and specifications.

March 1–3, 1988, the FBI held a national UCR Conference to present the new system to law enforcement and to obtain feedback on its acceptability. Attendees of the national UCR Conference passed three overall recommendations without dissent: first, that there be established a new, incident-based national crime reporting system; second, that the FBI would manage this program; and third, that the FBI form an APB composed of law enforcement executives to assist in directing and implementing the new program. Furthermore, attendees recommended that the implementation of national incident-based reporting proceed at a pace commensurate with the resources and limitations of contributing LEAs.

Establishing the NIBRS

From March 1988 through January 1989, the FBI proceeded in developing and assuming management of the UCR Program's NIBRS, and by April 1989, the FBI UCR Program received the first test tape of NIBRS data. Over the course of the next few years, the FBI UCR Program published information about the redesigned program in five documents: *Data Collection Guidelines*, *Data Submission Specifications*, *Approaches to Implementing an Incident-Based System*, *Error Message Manual*, and *Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook, NIBRS Edition*. The FBI recently released the *NIBRS Technical Specification*, a document based on the above-mentioned legacy documents and captures the procedural requirements of a legacy NIBRS position-based flat-file submission.

Originally designed with 52 data elements, currently (2011) the NIBRS captures up to 57 data elements via six types of data segments: administrative, offense, victim, property, offender, and arrestee. Although, in the late 1980s, the FBI committed to hold all changes to the NIBRS in abeyance until a substantial amount of contributors implemented the system, three modifications have been necessary. To meet growing challenges in the fight against crime, the system's flexibility has permitted the addition of a new data element to capture bias-motivated offenses (1990), the expansion of an existing data element to indicate the presence of gang activity (1997), the addition of three new data elements to collect data for law enforcement officers killed and assaulted (2003), and a new data element to collect data on cargo theft (2005). The FBI is modernizing its legacy mainframe-based UCR system to improve its ability to collect, analyze, and report on national crime statistics. Once this upgrade is completed, the FBI UCR Program will collect data on the latest NIBRS reporting requirements, such as human trafficking and gender and gender identity biases.



As more contributing LEAs become educated about the rich data available through incident-based reporting and as resources permit, more agencies are implementing the NIBRS. More information about the NIBRS, as well as many of the documents referred to in this summary, are available at www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/.

UCR Program Requirements

The following are the standards under which a UCR Program must operate:

1. A UCR Program must conform to the FBI UCR Program's submission standards, definitions, specifications, and required deadlines.
2. A UCR Program must establish data integrity procedures and have personnel assigned to assist contributing LEAs in quality assurance practices and crime-reporting procedures.
3. A UCR Program's submissions must cover more than 50 percent of the LEAs within its established reporting domain and be willing to cover any and all UCR-contributing LEAs who desire to use the UCR Program within its domain. For example, a state police agency who requests to become a UCR Program must be willing to report for 100 percent of the LEAs within that state.
4. A UCR Program must furnish the FBI UCR Program with all of the required UCR data collected by the LEAs within its domain.