Known Offenders

Through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), law enforcement agencies report a separate set of offender data for each offender (up to 99) involved in an incident whether or not an arrest has been made. In the UCR Program, the term "known offender" does not imply that the suspect's identity is known; rather, the term indicates that some aspect of the suspect was identified, e.g., age, sex, race, or ethnicity, thus distinguishing the individual from an unknown offender. Regardless of whether law enforcement reports specific offender data or declares that nothing is known about the "unknown offender," at least one set of offender data must be connected to each specific offense in a crime incident.

The offender segment, i.e., one of six components of a NIBRS Group A Incident Report, may contain information such as the offender's age, sex, race, and/or ethnicity. Beginning in 2013, the national UCR Program began collecting race and ethnicity data through revised categories in accordance with a directive from the U.S. Government's Office of Management and Budget. The five race categories are White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The ethnicity categories are "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino."

Highlights of Known Offender Data Collected via NIBRS for 2017

In 2017, law enforcement identified and reported information on 5,266,175 known offenders, meaning some aspect of the suspect—such as age, gender, or race—was known.

- Of these offenders, 41.9 percent were between 16 and 30 years of age.

- By gender, most offenders (62.4 percent) were male, 25.5 percent were female, and gender for 12.1 percent was unknown.

- By race, more than half (55.7 percent) of known offenders were White, 27.1 percent were Black or African American, and 1.9 percent were of other races. The race was unknown for 15.3 percent of reported known offenders.