UCR Program
Description

Connecticut UCR Program

Purpose

The Uniform Crime Reporting Program periodically measures crime in the United States by counting those offenses brought to the attention of law enforcement agencies. The program's objective is to produce reliable crime statistics for law enforcement administration, operation, and management. Criminal justice professionals, legislators, scholars, and others concerned with crime problems make frequent use of UCR generated statistics. The Uniform Crime Reporting Program measures the extent, fluctuation and distribution of crime throughout the United States.

National Program

Uniform Crime Reporting was initiated in 1929, when the International Association of Chiefs of Police (I.A.C.P.) standardized procedures for crime data collection. On June 11, 1930, Congress enacted legislation authorizing the Federal Bureau of Investigation to collect nationwide crime counts and to serve as the clearinghouse for such data.

Seven offenses were chosen to serve as an Index for gauging fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime. Known as the Crime Index, these offenses included the violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. The Index was modified by congressional mandate in 1979 when it added the crime of arson.

During the early planning of the Program, it was recognized that the differences among criminal codes precluded the possibility of computing a national crime total based upon an aggregate of local statistics. 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 to provide nationwide uniformity in crime reporting, standardized offense definitions were formulated by which law enforcement agencies were to submit data, without regard for local statutes.

The Committee on Uniform Crime Records of the I.A.C.P. continues to advise the F.B.I. in the operation of the UCR Program and offers them a valuable link to local police departments.

State Program

In July 1977, Connecticut began its own Uniform Crime Reporting Program. By August of the same year, data collection began with the recruitment and training of 70 agencies. Today, Connecticut has 100% participation with 100 police departments participating in its UCR Program.

The State Program ensures quality control and uniformity of the crime and arrest reports submitted. The centralized state collection agency streamlines the time consuming process of resolving questions between contributors and verifiers. Upon completion of the quality control process, the returns are forwarded to the F.B.I.

Types of Data Collected

Every month law enforcement agencies throughout the state submit UCR data. They indicate the number of offenses brought to their attention through such sources as victim, police or witness reports.

After counting Crime Index offenses reported, minus any unfounded complaints, contributors provide the number of "actual offenses" and the number of crimes cleared. For a criminal offense to be "cleared," either of the following situations must prevail: (1) at least one person is arrested, charged, and turned over to the court for prosecution; or (2) some element beyond police control precludes the physical arrest of the offender (e.g., death of offender, victim refuses to cooperate, confession by offender already in police custody), resulting in the offense being cleared by "exceptional means." Contributing agencies also include data on the value of property stolen and recovered in connection with the reported offenses, plus specific information regarding homicides, officers assaulted and arson.

UCR arrest data is collected for all crimes except traffic violations. The age, sex, and race of arrestees are reported for all crime categories.

Verification Procedure

UCR reports are set up with numerous internal crosschecks to achieve reporting accuracy of the data. It is standard operating procedure to examine each incoming report for arithmetical accuracy. Reports are then subjected to logical

tests of reasonableness, which are of key importance to confirming validity. Logical errors resulting from misinterpretations of what is to be measured can then be corrected. UCR personnel correct minor errors without contacting contributors, but necessary arithmetical adjustments or unusual variations are brought to the attention of the submitting agency.

UCR Limitations

There are inherent limitations in current crime reporting practices. Of primary importance is the question of how much crime is being reported by the public. The degree to which crimes are being reported varies from area to area. A considerable volume of crime is not reported to law enforcement agencies because the victims consider the offenses against them to be of very little consequence or that the likelihood of apprehending the suspect is small. They may also fear retaliation from offenders, or in fact, be a participant in a crime, i.e., a prostitute who is robbed.

Even with these given limitations, the UCR Program provides the best network of actual state and national crime figures currently available.

Crime Factors

Because not all factors that have an impact on crime problems are measured or considered by the UCR Program, superficial conclusions are sometimes drawn from crime and arrest data, particularly when attempts are made to compare jurisdictions. Local ordinances and criminal justice administrative policies, record-keeping practices, and the degree of adherence to Uniform Crime Reporting standards all affect the number of crimes and arrests reported. Additionally, socio-economic conditions and the characteristics and attitudes of the local population influence the extent and nature of criminal behavior in a community. The following factors must be taken into consideration before an informed assessment of crime data can be made:

- Density and size of the community population and its surrounding area

- Variations in the composition of the population, particularly its age, sex, and race characteristics

- Stability of population with respect to such factors as commuters, seasonal residents, and other transient groups

- Economic conditions, including unemployment

- Cultural conditions, such as educational, recreational, and religious characteristics

- Climate

- The trafficking and abuse of drugs in the community

- Effective strength of law enforcement agencies

- Administrative and investigative efficiency of the local law enforcement agency

- Policies of other components of the criminal justice system, such as prosecutorial, judicial, correctional, and probational

- Attitudes of citizens toward crime

- Crime reporting practices of citizens

NIBRS Implementation and Data Sharing

The Connecticut UCR program has made significant progress toward establishing a statewide National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). NIBRS is a second-generation UCR system, in which information is collected and reported on an incident level, thereby permitting numerous cross-tabular statistics (e.g., the number of incidents in which a white juvenile male used a firearm to rob a convenience store after midnight.) By the end of 2003, 60 of 101 Connecticut law enforcement agencies were reporting NIBRS data to the statewide repository.

FBI pilot testing has begun of a third-generation crime reporting system, which extends the scope of NIBRS into the realm of information sharing. This new system promises to provide law enforcement agencies with current, secure, investigative information that has strategic, operational, and tactical intelligence value.

Questions regarding Summary UCR, NIBRS, or new directions in crime reporting at the FBI should be directed to the CT NIBRS Program Coordinator:

David Porteous
Department of Public Safety
Crime Analysis Unit
1111 Country Club Road
Middletown, CT 06457-9294
Phone: 860-685-8030
Email: CTNIBRS@po.state.ct.us