



VERSION 2016

# CRIME AWARENESS

## CHAPTER 2

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

## CHAPTER TWO: CRIME AWARENESS

### **THE UNIFORM CRIME REPORTING SYSTEM (UCRS)**

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting System began in 1930, when Congress, through the U.S. Attorney General, authorized the collection of crime statistics. The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program has become a nationwide cooperative statistical effort of approximately 16,000 city, county, and state law enforcement agencies voluntarily reporting data on crimes reported to them. The FBI administers the program and issues periodic assessments of the nature and type of crime in our 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 has, over the years, become one of the country's leading social indicators. The American public looks to the UCR program 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 various research and planning purposes.

The FBI is concerned with eight specific types of crime. These are known as Part I crimes and are the only crimes reported as part of the UCR reporting system. They are:

Murder (criminal homicide)	Burglary
Robbery	Motor vehicle theft
Forcible rape	Larceny—theft
Aggravated assault	Arson

The first column of four Part I crimes reflect what are known as crimes against persons, or violent crime. The second column of four crimes constitute crimes against property.

To ensure that the statistics submitted can be compared among the different police agencies and jurisdictions, a standard definition has been developed for each of the Part I crimes:

- Criminal Homicide (Murder/Negligent Homicide)—the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another.
- Forcible rape—the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will.
- Robbery—taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the person in fear.
- Aggravated assault—an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault can be accompanied by the use of a weapon or by other means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.
- Burglary—the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or a theft.
- Larceny/theft—the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another.
- Motor vehicle theft—the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle.

- Arson—the willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn, with or without intent to defraud, of a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, etc.

All urban and most rural law enforcement agencies report crime statistics to the FBI. The numbers are normally submitted to a state agency, such as Utah's Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI), which then submits the crime statistics from all of the state's reporting agencies. The FBI tabulates the statistics received and releases the nation's crime statistics.

UCR crime statistics are also utilized to produce what is known as the "crime rate." The crime rate is reached by comparing the number of crimes committed to the population of the geographic area being analyzed. This allows users to factor in the change in population to find out whether crime is actually rising or falling in comparison to population change. The U.S. crime rate is a comparison of total crimes committed to total population divided by 100,000 people, while Utah uses a comparison rate of 1,000 people.

Arrests and clearances are also defined by the FBI's guidelines. For UCR purposes, a crime index offense is cleared when a law enforcement agency has identified the offender, there is enough evidence to charge him (probable cause), and he is actually taken into physical custody. The arrest of one person can clear several crimes, or several persons may be arrested in the process of clearing one crime. Clearances are also recorded in exceptional circumstances when some element beyond law enforcement control precludes formal charges from being filed against the offender.

## **PERSONS ARRESTED**

In addition to crimes committed, the UCR system also tracks the number of arrests made in the United States. Primarily a gauge of law enforcement's response to crime, arrest totals also provide valuable data concerning the age, sex, and race of perpetrators. The number of persons arrested for all violations except traffic offenses is compiled monthly and submitted by the reporting agencies. Both adult and juvenile arrests are recorded in order to compute arrest trends and volume.

## **CLEARANCE RATES**

One measure of police effectiveness is the clearance rate. A crime is usually cleared by an arrest, but there are several other ways in which a crime can be cleared. An identified suspect may have fled the jurisdiction where the crime occurred. The suspect may have died or may be unable to stand trial. The suspect may admit to and be responsible for numerous crimes, but may only be officially charged with some of them.

This is common in the case of burglars. After a burglar is caught inside a building or by detective work, the burglar may have little to lose by admitting his or her guilt in other cases, and will often clear other burglary cases. Because of plea bargaining and other legal procedures involved, the burglar will only be charged with one or two of the actual crimes committed.

Clearance rates vary depending on the seriousness of the crime, police resources, citizen support, and department policies on clearing and closing cases. Obviously, the murder clearance rate is extremely high for a combination of reasons—the expertise of the assigned detective(s), resources assigned to such cases, and the physical evidence often available at the scene. On the other hand, burglary is a low-clearance crime, in part due to high caseloads, little or no physical evidence, and the

difficulty of identifying stolen items.

**For current clearance rates see Appendix C, the Bureau of Criminal Identification.**

## **NATIONAL INCIDENT-BASED REPORTING SYSTEM (NIBRS)**

In 1982, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the FBI initiated a joint study of the UCR system. The goal of the study was to improve UCR so that it would meet the needs of all concerned in the foreseeable future. The final conclusion of the completed study was that UCR was inadequate and a new system was needed. This analysis led to the introduction of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which is a more comprehensive and detailed system.

The UCR system collects offense information only on the eight Part I crimes, while the NIBRS program now tracks information on 46 offenses. This new reporting system provides a more detailed, meaningful, and timely database from which to gather information and intelligence.

NIBRS is currently in the process of being instituted throughout the nation, and will replace UCR at some time in the future. The new system is being utilized by approximately 55 agencies in Utah at this time, with more agencies participating each year. This program is designed to take advantage of computer technology, and the stated goal in Utah is to have all agencies online within three years.

## **NOT ALL CRIME IS REPORTED**

Numerous victimization studies indicate that many crimes are not reported to the police. A major survey of 200,000 people indicated that less than 50% of all crime is reported. This survey was conducted by the LEAA and the Census Bureau. Some of the reasons offered for non-reporting are fear of retaliation, feelings of police inability to solve certain crimes, and the involvement of relatives, neighbors, or close friends. The more serious the crime, the higher the reporting rate appears to be. The exception is the crime of rape, where it is estimated that only one in three to one in 10 such crimes are actually reported.

## **WHY CRIME GOES UP AND DOWN**

Crime statistics are useful in measuring the frequency and seriousness of crime in a particular area. Crime itself is affected by many influences. A rise or fall in crime may result from hiring more police, putting more people in jail or prison, or from installing more alarm systems. Crime and crime statistics are also affected by other factors such as:

1. Changes in reporting procedures.
2. Population growth.
3. The urbanization process.
4. Changes in the law.
5. Political considerations of police administrations.
6. Changes in public opinion.

1. Community involvement in crime awareness programs such as a Neighborhood Watch Program almost always appears to be counter-productive. As the community responds to requests from law enforcement to report all crimes and suspicious circumstances, the percentage of crimes reported increases. Although the actual number of crimes committed in the specific area remains the same or possibly even goes down, it appears, statistically, that the crime rate has actually gone up.

2. Although crime statistics are officially adjusted for the increase in population that most of the nation is experiencing, many politicians take advantage of absolute statistics by using ever-increasing crime numbers out of context. Rather than using the crime rate, the total number of crimes is discussed, to the disadvantage of the political opposition.

3. There is considerable sociological evidence that the urbanization process produces social factors, such as poverty, discrimination, and countercultures that tend to be accompanied by ever-increasing crime rates. The crime problem in major urban area is often pointed out as proof of such theories.

4. For many years, larcenies (thefts) were considered by many states to be felonies if the dollar value involved exceeded \$50. This law has been changed in many states, such as Utah, where the dollar amount must now exceed \$1,000 to be a felony. Thus, one year a \$300 theft is counted as a felony, and the next year it may only be a misdemeanor. The number of crimes is unchanged, but the classification varies.

The legalization of a drug such as marijuana could have the same effect. Its use would likely stay about the same, if not increase slightly, but over a million less arrests a year would occur. This is not, in itself, an argument for legalizing marijuana. We could also eliminate a million arrests by legalizing theft. What must be evaluated are the relative costs and benefits to a society as the result of a change in a particular law.

5. Police both gather and report most crime statistics, and then are judged by them. Thus, there is ample political motivation for those statistics to be manipulated. In 1977, such a case was documented in Washington, D.C., where values on many larcenies were decreased below the felony limit (then \$50) in over 1,000 cases, thus reducing the major crime index considerably. According to the FBI, similar reporting problems occurred in 1983 in Chicago.

6. Laws themselves are changed from time to time. Elected officials continually create new laws and repeal old ones, as ideas, technology, or morals change in regard to what should or should not be illegal. As an example, many states in recent years have raised the legal drinking age from 18 or 19 to 21 years old. Due to the increasing number of young drinking drivers and juveniles who otherwise break the law while intoxicated, public opinion has caused lawmakers to increase the drinking age.

Courts may also respond to changing public opinion. A court may find that a specific law is an unconstitutional infringement on citizen rights, or a judge may refuse to apply a severe sentence to a particular law violation. Members of the criminal justice system, including the police, tend to be aware of public opinion regarding the enforcement of certain laws, and with the discretion that officers enjoy, decide individually which laws to enforce.

Other laws are left on the books, although they are not enforced. This tends to satisfy the concerns of a segment of society that opposes the particular activity. Although the law is not enforced, it is often politically unacceptable to remove such laws.

If you could create two new laws, what would they be, and why?

(A)

(B)

If you could eliminate two existing laws, which would you choose, and why?

(A)

(B)

**For additional crime facts see Appendix C, the Bureau of Criminal Identification.**

## Practical Exercise

Answer the following questions by referring to Crime Statistics at the Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), according to the most current data.

1. How many violent crimes occur in the United States, each year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which state is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> nationally in homicide? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which city in Utah had the highest crime rate? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many adults in Utah were arrested for DUI? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which age group had the highest number of robberies? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many motor vehicle thefts occurred in Lubbock, Texas? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which state is ranked number one for the crime of burglary? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How often do index (Part I) crimes occur in Utah? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many females were arrested in Utah for rape? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What does UCR stand for? \_\_\_\_\_