

3



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An Introduction to Measuring Crime and Crime Patterns

ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON IN MAY 2015, CUSTOMERS IN THE TWIN PEAKS RESTAURANT IN WACO, TEXAS, were enjoying what would become an unforgettable and life-changing day. The eating place was a favorite spot of biker gang members. This particular day, a fight started and spilled out into the parking lot. In no time, guns were being fired, knives were being pulled, and brass knuckles and chains were being swung toward anyone and everyone at the restaurant. Because the police knew that bikers frequented the establishment regularly, they were nearby monitoring the area and it took less than 45 seconds for them to show up at the crime scene. At that time, a gunfight was already under way.¹

By the end of the melee, nine people were dead. Eighteen more bikers were in the hospital and more than 170 were arrested. Of those arrested, 154 were eventually indicted on the charge of engaging in organized crime.² The incident captured the attention of members of the public, given that it seemed more like a Hollywood movie than an actual real-life experience. For criminal justice students, a few questions related to the current chapter come to mind: (1) How many crimes were committed? (2) Was this

one incident or dozens of incidents? (3) How many victims were there? (4) How many offenders were involved? (5) Can someone be a victim and an offender in the same incident? These and other questions can be answered through an understanding of the way that criminal justice scholars measure the extent of crime. After we discuss strategies for measuring the extent of crime and delinquency, we will give attention to crime trends and patterns uncovered through the examination of crime and delinquency data. Understanding these topics has significant utility for promoting community safety.



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ADMISSIBLE or INADMISSIBLE Evidence

Read the statements that follow. If the statement is true, circle *admissible*. If the statement is false, circle *inadmissible*. Answers can be found on page 511.

1. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** The National Incident-Based Reporting System uses information from more than 90% of police departments to describe how much crime occurs in the United States.
2. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** The National Crime Victimization Survey only collects data from those over age 18.
3. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** Data from the Uniform Crime Reports and National Crime Victimization Survey show the same figures for the amount of crime occurring in the United States.
4. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** One of the disadvantages of the National Incident-Based Reporting System is that many agencies do not report their crime data.
5. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** The South has the highest rates of both violent and property crime, whereas the Northeast has the lowest rates.
6. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** Crime rates increase when there is a full moon.
7. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** Home burglaries occur most often at night when residents are sleeping.
8. **Admissible** **Inadmissible** Most individuals who are victimized report their victimization to law enforcement.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students will be able to:

- 3.1 Describe the main strategies used to measure the amount of crime occurring in the United States
- 3.2 Compare and contrast the various crime measurement strategies
- 3.3 Describe strategies used to measure the extent of juvenile delinquency
- 3.4 Identify three crime patterns that characterize the distribution of various offenses
- 3.5 Explain why crime varies across time and space
- 3.6 Describe juvenile offending trends and the aging-out phenomenon
- 3.7 Discuss three reasons why it is believed that men commit more crime than do women

► Measuring the Extent of Crime

Criminologists have long grappled with effective ways to measure the extent of crime and to provide accurate crime data for policy makers, researchers, and citizens. An accurate awareness about the extent of crime serves several purposes: explaining crime and demographic trends, understanding cultures and subcultures, measuring quality of life, promoting evidence-based prevention strategies, and developing evidence-based policies.³

Explaining Crime and Demographic Trends

To develop appropriate and accurate explanations of crime, we must first know how much crime is occurring in particular areas. Trying to explain crime without knowing how much crime occurs would be like ordering off a menu when you don't know the price of the food you are ordering: It would be a foolish exercise that could result in nothing but confusion. In addition, information about the extent of crime committed across various demographic groups (particularly by age category, gender, and racial category) sheds light on potential causes of crime and criminal justice enforcement patterns. Much more is written about the causes of crime in Chapter 5. For now, it is sufficient to say that we need to know about the extent of crime in order to explain crime.

Understanding Cultures and Subcultures

If a particular culture has no violent crime, then certain assumptions could be made about that culture. Conversely, if violence appears to be alarmingly common, then a different set of assumptions could be made. The same can be said of specific subcultures within different neighborhoods and communities: The extent of crime and types of crime committed by members of different subcultures tells us about those subcultures. In making this suggestion, however, we must be sure that assumptions about cultures and subcultures are based on empirical data rather than preconceived opinions. We also should recognize that cultures and subcultures change over time. Crime data and other empirical data help us understand these cultural and subcultural changes over time. Keeping with the theme of focusing on your rights, the “You Have the Right to . . .” box in this chapter focuses on the Third Amendment—an amendment that reflects a different culture from our past.



Research shows that the bulk of crimes are committed by individuals who are younger.

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Measuring Quality of Life

The formula is simple: The more crime that a particular area has, the lower the quality of life in that area. Similarly, the less crime, the higher the quality of life. Interestingly, a recent study found that quality of life (for example, happiness) was tied more to signs of social disorder than to signs of physical disorder.⁴ *Social disorder* refers to types of relationships in a community, whereas *physical disorder* includes the types of disorder you can actually see (such as litter, graffiti, burglar bars, and the like). Perhaps your own selection of a home or an apartment was informed by your community's crime rate. In effect, you used crime data to determine how to best maintain your own quality of life, given your own life circumstances.

YOU HAVE THE **RIGHT** TO . . .



NOT HAVE SOLDIERS QUARTERED IN YOUR HOUSE DURING TIMES OF PEACE

The Third Amendment to the U.S. Constitution receives perhaps the least amount of attention of all of the amendments. This amendment states that “No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.” The basis for this amendment stems from the founders’ belief in the Castle Doctrine, or the belief that individuals’ homes are their castles and not the government’s homes. Pointing out that the Supreme Court has never heard a case involving the Third Amendment, one author described the amendment as “the runt piglet of the Bill

of Rights amendments—short, overlooked, sometimes the butt of jokes.”⁵

While the amendment does not receive the same amount of fanfare as the other amendments do, imagine what would happen if your dean of students told you that you had to have the campus police officer live in your dorm room with you or if your landlord or mayor said that members of the military would be moving in with you without your consent. Our bet is that we would all become more familiar with this “runt piglet” amendment if any of these situations occurred.

Promoting Evidence-Based Crime Prevention Strategies

If certain types of crime are rare or infrequent in a particular area, then specific crime prevention strategies may do little to prevent crime in that area. Consider a gated community. If crime data demonstrate that homes are virtually never burglarized, then residents could forego the decision to purchase home security systems. In the rural town where one of the authors grew up, nobody locked their doors. Why? Because the crime data showed us that nobody ever broke into our homes. By contrast, in the home where his family lived a few years ago, they had an assortment of locks on the doors and windows in response to the published crime data that seemed to indicate the neighborhood was a haven for drug offenders, prostitution, and burglaries. (If only he had kept the garage rather than converting it, his car would not have been broken into so many times.)

Developing Evidence-Based Policies

By identifying the extent of crime and crime trends, practitioners and policy makers are able to develop policies informed by actual trends rather than feelings, emotions, or opinions about crime. As one author team noted, “Crime reduction is a major purpose of criminal justice policy.”⁶ To determine whether criminal justice policies are reducing crime, we must first know how much crime is occurring.

3.1 BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

Which of the following is not a reason we measure the amount of crime?

- (a) To identify crime trends. (b) To understand cultures and subcultures.
- (c) To determine where hospitals should be placed. (d) To develop evidence-based policies. (e) To measure quality of life.

The answer can be found on page 512.

► Strategies Used to Measure the Amount of Crime

All localities and states report the extent of crime through different publications and venues. Most colleges and universities, except for online colleges, are required by law to maintain and report to the public data about crime reported to the police. These data are particularly useful in helping to develop specific crime prevention and intervention strategies, but localized information is not useful in helping to understand societal crime trends and patterns. The three main strategies for measuring the extent of crime across the United States are the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports reporting program, the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey, and the National Incident-Based Reporting System. After we discuss these strategies, we will give attention to specific measures designed to measure and report juvenile offending.

Uniform Crime Reports

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) administers the **Uniform Crime Reports** (UCR) program as a strategy to collect data about crimes that are reported to the police. More than 18,000 police departments across the United States report information to the FBI about crimes occurring in their jurisdictions. Chances are that even your campus police department, if your college has one, reports data to the FBI as part of the UCR program. The data are informative in that they provide an indicator of the amount of crime reported to the police each year. Policy makers and researchers have used the data to better understand various dynamics related to crime.

The creation of the UCR program in 1930 was hailed as “one of the most important events in the history of criminal statistics in the U.S.”⁷ The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) called for the creation of such a program in response to concerns that the media were misrepresenting the true nature of crime across the United States. At the time, law enforcement leaders and social scientists, particularly social science statisticians, were interested in developing a national crime reporting system. Law enforcement leaders, including August Vollmer (see Chapter 1), wanted a system that would accurately portray crime in their communities.⁸ Prior to the development of the UCR program, Vollmer said:

Before energy is expended to improve police procedure, it will first be necessary to collect reliable statistical data. We hear on all sides that crime of one type

or another has increased; that cities are overrun with gunmen; that juvenile delinquency has reached such enormous proportions that national safety is endangered. These statements have been repeated so often that even conservative police officials now believe it to be true, although they are the sole possessors of such facts as are available concerning crime conditions in this country, and these facts have never been compiled, compared, evaluated, or interpreted. . . . I conclude that statistics furnish a powerful means of discovering the causes of crime, provided they are used critically and carefully.⁹

Uniform Crime Reports:

A program administered by the FBI as a strategy to collect data about crimes that are reported to the police.



The UCR provides information on crimes reported to the police.

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE PIONEER



J. EDGAR HOOVER

On May 10, 1924, Attorney General Harlan Fiske Stone appointed 29-year-old J. Edgar Hoover as acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and by the end of the year Hoover was named director.

As director, Hoover put into effect a number of institutional changes to correct criticisms made by his predecessor's administration. Hoover fired a number of agents whom he considered to be political appointees and/or unqualified to be special agents. He ordered background checks, interviews, and physical testing for new agent applicants, and he revived the earlier FBI policies of requiring legal or accounting training.

Under Hoover, the FBI grew in responsibility and importance, becoming an integral part of the national government and an icon in American popular culture. In the 1930s, the FBI attacked the violent crime by gangsters and implemented programs to professionalize U.S. law enforcement through training and forensic assistance.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the FBI garnered headlines for its staunch efforts against Nazi and communist espionage. During World War II, the bureau took the lead in domestic counterintelligence, counterespionage, and countersabotage investigations.

President Franklin Roosevelt also tasked the bureau with running a foreign intelligence service in the Western Hemisphere.

This operation was called the Special Intelligence Service, or SIS. In the early years of the Cold War, the bureau took on the added responsibility of investigating the backgrounds of government employees to ensure that foreign agents did not infiltrate the government. More traditional criminal investigations, including car thefts, bank robberies, and kidnappings, also remained important.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the FBI took on investigations in the field of civil rights and organized crime. The threat of political violence occupied many of the bureau's resources, as did the threat of foreign espionage. In spite of Hoover's age and length of service, presidents of both parties kept him at the helm of the bureau. When Hoover died in his sleep on May 2, 1972, he had led the FBI for 48 years.



National Photo Company Collection (Library of Congress)

Adapted from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/history/directors/j-edgar-hoover>

Law enforcement leaders agreed with Vollmer's assessment. Famed FBI director J. Edgar Hoover was on the advisory group that discussed the creation of the crime reporting program (see the "Criminal Justice Pioneer" box in this chapter). The IACP published the first edition of the UCR in early 1930. Later that same year, in July, the FBI assumed responsibility for administering the UCR program. Since then, the program has been an extraordinarily valuable resource for policy makers, criminal justice practitioners, and criminologists.

The findings from the UCR program are released each year in a publication titled *Crime in the United States*. The UCR program categorizes crimes as Part I and Part II offenses. Generally speaking, **Part I offenses** are viewed as more serious offenses. These offenses, and the way the FBI defines them, are as follows:¹⁰

- Criminal homicide:** (a) Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter: the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another. Deaths caused by negligence, attempts to kill, assaults to kill, suicides, and accidental deaths are excluded. The program classifies justifiable homicides separately and limits the definition to (1) the killing of a felon by a law enforcement officer in the

Part I offenses: Criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

line of duty; or (2) the killing of a felon, during the commission of a felony, by a private citizen. (b) Manslaughter by negligence: the killing of another person through gross negligence. Deaths of persons due to their own negligence, accidental deaths not resulting from gross negligence, and traffic fatalities are not included in the category manslaughter by negligence.

- *Forcible rape*: The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.
- *Robbery*: The taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim 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 usually is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Simple assaults are excluded.
- *Burglary*: The unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or a theft. Attempted forcible entry is included (also known as breaking and entering).
- *Larceny-theft*: The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. Examples are thefts of bicycles, motor vehicle parts and accessories, shoplifting, pocket-picking, or the stealing of any property or article that is not taken by force and violence or by fraud. Attempted larcenies are included. Embezzlement, confidence games, forgery, check fraud, and the like are excluded.
- *Motor vehicle theft*: The theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle. A motor vehicle is self-propelled and runs on land surface and not on rails. Motorboats, construction equipment, airplanes, and farming equipment are specifically excluded from this category.
- *Arson* (added in 1979 to the Part I offenses): Any willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, or the like.

Part I offenses have also been labeled *index offenses* in reference to the reporting program's past efforts to develop a crime index. The *crime index* referred to the total number of Part I offenses (excluding arson), whereas the *modified crime index* referred to the total number of all Part I offenses. Because a high number of larcenies drove up the crime index, and the larcenies are not as serious as other Part I offenses, the UCR program stopped reporting the crime index and modified crime index in 2004.¹¹

Part II offenses are technically less serious offenses, though most criminologists agree that such a statement is misleading given the breadth of offenses included as Part II offenses. Table 3.1 lists Part II offenses and their definitions. The UCR includes arrest data about these offenses. Although only arrest data are provided, a great deal of information can be derived from the UCR each year. Perhaps the most important finding from the reports is that arrest rates have decreased over the past two decades, and the most recent UCR shows that crime dropped between 2014 and 2015.

For the Part I offenses, the UCR's *Crime in the United States* publication includes a wealth of data about specific crime rates, demographic characteristics of suspects, and crime trends. *Crime rates* refers to the number of Part I offenses that occur per 100,000 residents. Figure 3.1 shows crime rates for Part I offenses. Property crime

Part II offenses:
Offenses that are
technically less serious than
Part I offenses.

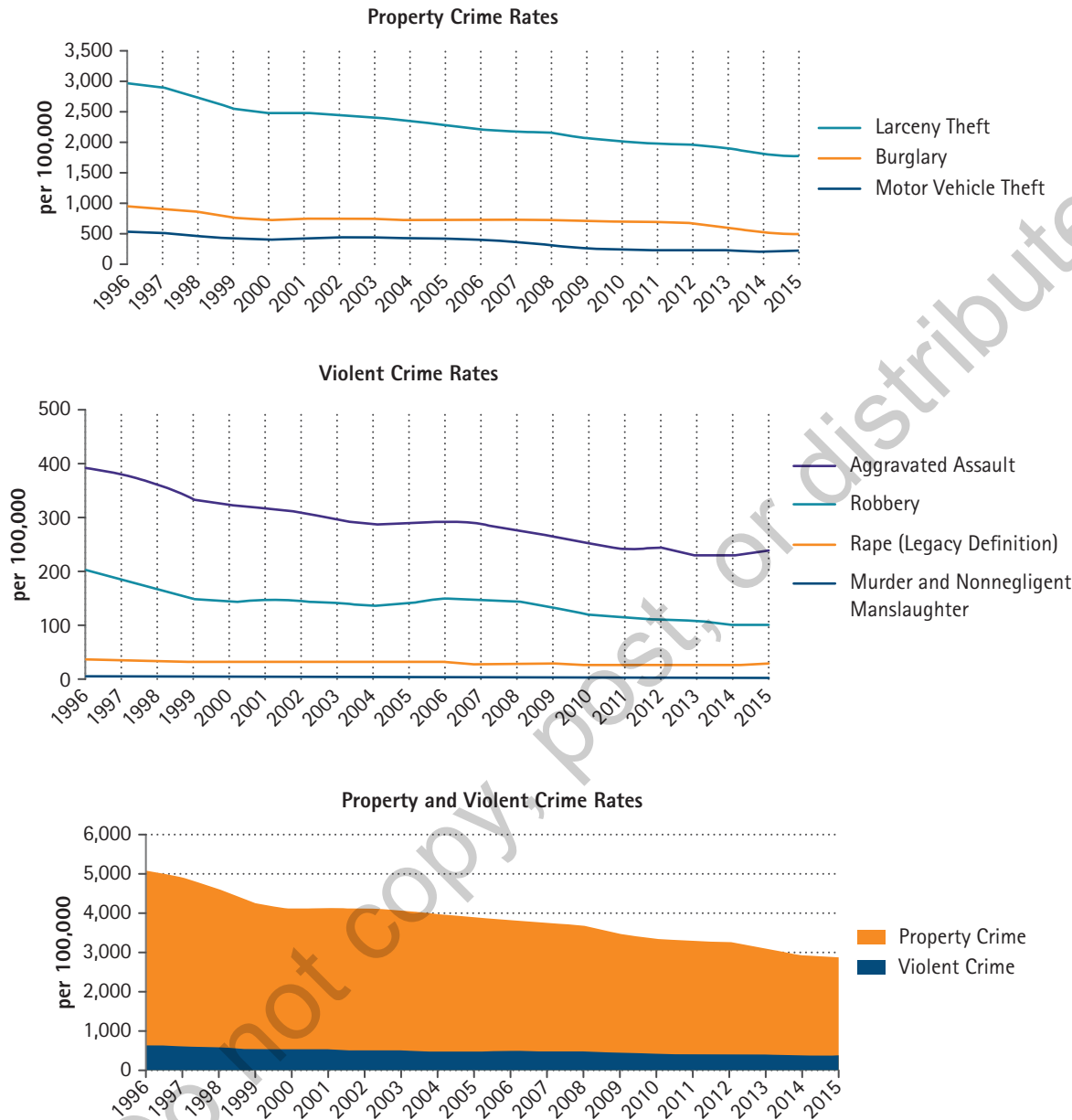
TABLE 3.1 Definitions of Part II Offenses

OFFENSE	DEFINITION
Curfew Loitering Violations	Violations by juveniles of local curfew or loitering ordinances.
Disorderly Conduct	Any behavior that tends to disturb the public peace or decorum, scandalize the community, or shock the public sense of morality.
Driving Under the Influence (DUI)	Driving or operating a motor vehicle or common carrier while mentally or physically impaired as the result of consuming an alcoholic beverage or using a drug or narcotic.
Drug Abuse Violations	The violation of laws prohibiting the production, distribution, and/or use of certain controlled substances. The unlawful cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, use, possession, transportation, or importation of any controlled drug or narcotic substance. Arrests for violations of state and local laws, specifically those relating to the unlawful possession, sale, use, growing, manufacturing, and making of narcotic drugs. The following drug categories are specified: opium or cocaine and their derivatives (morphine, heroin, codeine); marijuana; synthetic narcotics—manufactured narcotics that can cause true addiction (Demerol, methadone); and dangerous nonnarcotic drugs (barbiturates, Benzedrine).
Drunkenness	To drink alcoholic beverages to the extent that one's mental faculties and physical coordination are substantially impaired. Driving under the influence is excluded.
Embezzlement	The unlawful misappropriation or misapplication by an offender to his/her own use or purpose of money, property, or some other thing of value entrusted to his/her care, custody, or control.
Forgery and Counterfeiting	The altering, copying, or imitating of something, without authority or right, with the intent to deceive or defraud by passing the copy or thing altered or imitated as that which is original or genuine; or the selling, buying, or possession of an altered, copied, or imitated thing with the intent to deceive or defraud. Attempts are included.
Fraud	The intentional perversion of the truth for the purpose of inducing another person or other entity in reliance upon it to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right. Fraudulent conversion and obtaining of money or property by false pretenses. Confidence games and bad checks, except forgeries and counterfeiting, are included.
Gambling	To unlawfully bet or wager money or something else of value; assist, promote, or operate a game of chance for money or some other stake; possess or transmit wagering information; manufacture, sell, purchase, possess, or transport gambling equipment, devices, or goods; or tamper with the outcome of a sporting event or contest to gain a gambling advantage.
Liquor Laws	The violation of state or local laws or ordinances prohibiting the manufacture, sale, purchase, transportation, possession, or use of alcoholic beverages, not including driving under the influence and drunkenness. Federal violations are excluded.
Offenses Against Family and Children	Unlawful nonviolent acts by a family member (or legal guardian) that threaten the physical, mental, or economic well-being or morals of another family member and that are not classifiable as other offenses, such as assault or sex offenses. Attempts are included.
Other Assaults	Assaults and attempted assaults where no weapon was used or no serious or aggravated injury resulted to the victim. Stalking, intimidation, coercion, and hazing are included.
Prostitution and Commercialized Vice	The unlawful promotion of or participation in sexual activities for profit, including attempts. To solicit customers or transport persons for prostitution purposes; to own, manage, or operate a dwelling or other establishment for the purpose of providing a place where prostitution is performed; or to otherwise assist or promote prostitution.
Sex Offenses	Offenses against chastity, common decency, morals, and the like. Incest, indecent exposure, and statutory rape are included. Attempts are included (excludes forcible rape, prostitution, and commercialized sex).
Stolen Property (e.g., buying)	Buying, receiving, possessing, selling, concealing, or transporting any property with the knowledge that it has been unlawfully taken, as by burglary, embezzlement, fraud, larceny, robbery, etc. Attempts are included.
Suspicion	Arrested for no specific offense and released without formal charges being placed.
Vagrancy	The violation of a court order, regulation, ordinance, or law requiring the withdrawal of persons from the streets or other specified areas; prohibiting persons from remaining in an area or place in an idle or aimless manner; or prohibiting persons from going from place to place without visible means of support.
Vandalism	To willfully or maliciously destroy, injure, disfigure, or deface any public or private property, real or personal, without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control by cutting, tearing, breaking, marking, painting, drawing, covering with filth, or any other such means as may be specified by local law. Attempts are included.
Weapons: Carrying, Possessing, etc.	The violation of laws or ordinances prohibiting the manufacture, sale, purchase, transportation, possession, concealment, or use of firearms, cutting instruments, explosives, incendiary devices, or other deadly weapons. Attempts are included.
All Other Offenses	All violations of state or local laws not specifically identified as Part I or Part II offenses, except traffic violations.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

FIGURE 3.1 Property and Violent Crime Rates, 1996–2015 (per 100,000 Inhabitants)

Bureau of Justice Statistics (n.d.). *Crime in the United States, 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.



rates (for burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft) are considerably higher than violent crime rates (for murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault). In 2015, approximately 7,993,631 property crimes were reported to the police. This compares to fewer than 1.2 million violent crimes being reported the same year. Larceny-theft is always the most frequently reported crime, and murders are the least frequent Part I offense. As shown in Figure 3.1, each of the offense types dropped dramatically between 1996 and 2015.

The UCR’s *Crime in the United States* also reports what is known as the **crime clock** (see Figure 3.2). The crime clock provides a general breakdown of how

crime clock: Data reported in *Crime in the United States*, providing a general breakdown of how frequently crime occurs.

FIGURE 3.2 Crime Clock

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). *Crime in the United States, 2015 crime clock statistics*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

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frequently crime occurs, assuming that crime happens with the same frequency every day of the year, at each time of day. Such an assumption is misleading, however, because crime varies each hour of the day, each day of the week, each day of the month, and each month of the year. As a result, most experts caution against making statements such as, “A violent crime occurs every 25 seconds in the United States.” The statement is inaccurate for at least two reasons. First, the UCR collects information about crimes known to the police. A large number of crimes are not reported to the police. Second, no type of crime occurs regularly over time. Some crimes occur more frequently at certain times of the day, on certain days of the week, and in certain months. Saying that crime occurs regularly would be like saying that the weather is the same every place in the United States, every hour of the day, every day of the week, and every month of the year.

The UCR also provides information about the clearance rate for the Part I offenses. **Clearance rate** refers to the percentage of crimes that were “solved” either by arrest or exceptional means. The UCR considers a crime cleared by arrest if one of three conditions is met: (1) A suspect is arrested, (2) a suspect is charged with an offense, and (3) a suspect’s case is sent to the court for prosecution. In some situations, an arrest or charges may not be immediately possible. In these situations, the crime can be cleared by “exceptional means” if each of the following conditions is met:¹²

- The suspect has been identified.
- The agency has gathered enough evidence that would support an arrest.

clearance rate: The percentage of crimes that were “solved,” either by arrest or exceptional means.



The FBI releases the preliminary crime reports in June and annual reports in September each year. Typically, a great deal of media attention follows the release of the reports. How do you think the data can be incorrectly used?

© AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

- The suspect's exact location is identified.
- The agency confronted a situation outside of its control that prevented the suspect from being arrested.

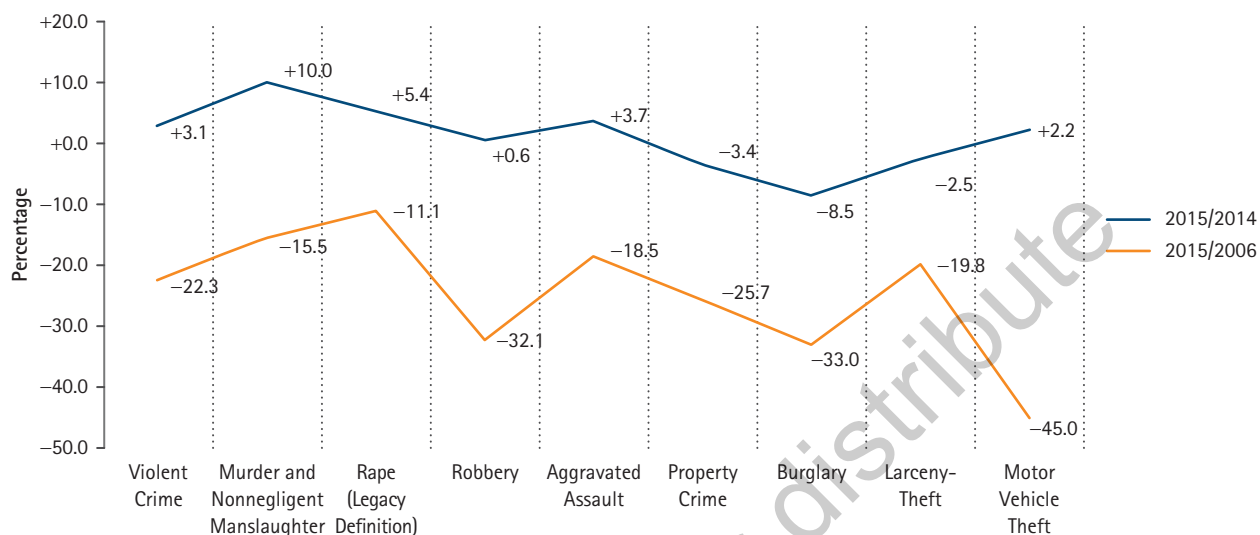
Typically, violent crimes have higher clearance rates, and property crimes have lower clearance rates. In particular, murder usually has the highest clearance rate and motor vehicle theft and burglaries generally have the lowest clearance rates. In 2015, just under two-thirds of murders and nonnegligent manslaughters were cleared, whereas just 13.1% of motor vehicle thefts and 12.9% of burglaries were cleared. What this means is that if your home is broken into, more likely than not the offender will not be caught. A similar situation arises for larceny-theft: In 2015, about one in five larcenies was cleared.

The UCR also reports information about *crime trends* over time and between years. Although the UCR is published each year, in the middle of the year, the FBI typically releases preliminary data that compare crimes between the current year and prior year. Whereas the preliminary reports highlight between-year trends, the annual reports highlight long-term trends across each of the offense types.

With regard to annual changes over time, a review of the annual crime reports shows that crime increased significantly between 1960 and the early 1990s, and has dropped precipitously since then. Criminologists have suggested several reasons for this crime drop, and these reasons are addressed later in this chapter. For now, note that we would not even know about this crime drop if national databases on crime did not exist. Figure 3.3 shows the two- and nine-year crime rate trends between 2014 and 2015 (two-year trends) and 2006 and 2015 (nine-year trends). A slight concern is that violent crime was up 3% between 2014 and 2015. Property crime was down 3.4% overall. The increase in violent crime between 2014 and 2015 is offset by the fact that violent crime was still down 22% when comparing 2006 and 2015.

A wealth of information is available in the crime reports. For many students, you can even learn about how much crime was reported to the police at your college or university.

FIGURE 3.3 Two- and Nine-Year Crime Rate Trends

Bureau of Justice Statistics (n.d.). *Crime in the United States, 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Criticisms of the UCR

Several criticisms have been leveled against the UCR program. One of the most common criticisms is that the database does not include crimes that are not reported to the police. An assortment of factors influence victims' decisions to report their victimization to the police. Among other things, decisions to contact the police are influenced by (a) the victim's perceptions of the seriousness of the offense, (b) prior experiences with the justice system, (c) whether an insurance agency requires the victim to contact the police, (d) whether the victim is a stranger or an acquaintance (victims are less likely to report the crime if they know the offender), (e) concerns about retaliation, (f) whether the victim has cognitive impairments that prohibit him or her from contacting the police, and (g) fear of revictimization by the justice system.¹³ The phrase **dark figure of crime** is used to describe the amount of crime that is not reported to the police.

Other authors have criticized the UCR program for mischaracterizing the crime problem. In particular, some experts argue that the eight Part I, or index, offenses are not necessarily more serious than Part II offenses. Consider the difference between larceny and embezzlement. If your professor steals your book bag, this would be a larceny: a Part I offense. In contrast, if your professor embezzled \$100,000 from the workplace, this would be a Part II offense. Most observers would agree that stealing \$100,000 is worse than stealing a book bag (unless you are the one who lost the book bag and you are really attached to that book bag). Still, the embezzlement would not be captured as a Part I offense. As an illustration, Bernard Madoff's arrest for embezzling billions of dollars would be coded as a Part II offense, whereas Winona Ryder's arrest for shoplifting a few thousand dollars' worth of goods from a Beverly Hills Saks Fifth Avenue store would be coded as a Part I offense.

Incidentally, although the Part I and Part II offense dichotomy may misrepresent the actual seriousness of offenses, the distinction captures more accurately perceptions

dark figure of crime:

A phrase used to describe the amount of crime that is not reported to police.



Whose offense was more serious? Bernard Madoff's Ponzi scheme or Winona Ryder's shoplifting incident? The UCR categorization would imply that Ryder's was more serious, but in reality, Madoff's offenses created untold damage.

© Orjan F. Ellingvag/Corbis Historical/Getty Images; © AP Photo/STEVE GRAYSON

of seriousness, which are important given that perceived seriousness affects decisions to contact the police.¹⁴ Offenses defined as serious tend to be those that result in bodily injury, involve property of significant value, are committed by strangers, or involve actions of breaking and entering. Gove and his coauthors conclude that Part I offenses “are valid indicators of serious crimes as defined by the citizenry.”¹⁵ In other words, most individuals would perceive situations in which their professor committed burglary (for example, breaking into an apartment to steal a book bag) to be more serious than embezzlement (for example, stealing from the workplace).

Another criticism of the UCR is that law enforcement agencies routinely underreport or overreport crime when completing the monthly crime reports (see the “Ethical Decision Making” box in this chapter). In some cases, departments classify more serious crimes, such as aggravated assault, as less serious offenses, such as simple assault, in an effort to lower the “official” crime rate.¹⁶ One city official disparaged such practices, stating that “We have a right to hear precisely what’s going on. If we aren’t given the unvarnished truth, it makes it rather difficult to do what’s right for our community.”¹⁷

Some criminologists have criticized the UCR for failing to provide data in a timely fashion. As of March 2017, for example, the FBI had published data for 2015 but had only released preliminary reports for 2016. According to Richard Rosenfeld, the inability to provide timely crime data has serious consequences, including (a) negatively influencing policy development, (b) prohibiting effective planning, (c) making it more difficult to distribute financial resources, and (d) misinforming the public about crime.¹⁸ Rosenfeld argued that the Bureau of Justice Statistics, rather than the FBI, should administer the UCR program. After all, a program specializing in data collection and statistical analyses should be able to gather data more efficiently. As part of his argument, Rosenfeld quoted former FBI director Robert Mueller, who said of the UCR program: “We collect, we announce, we pass on. We do not analyze.”¹⁹ Criminologists have also criticized the UCR for being limited in the amount of data that is collected from police agencies. For instance, little information is collected about the specific incident, the victim, and the dynamics surrounding the offense. As is discussed in the next two sections, the FBI has developed other strategies to address this concern.

3.2 BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

Which agency administers the Uniform Crime Reports?

(a) The Federal Bureau of Investigation. (b) The National Institute of Justice. (c) The Bureau of Justice Statistics. (d) The Central Intelligence Agency. (e) The Office of Inspector General.

The answer can be found on page 512.

National Crime Victimization Survey

Whereas the UCR program collects information about crimes reported to the police, the **National Crime Victimization Survey** (NCVS) collects information directly from residents of the United States to assess their victimization experiences. Initially called the National Crime Survey, the NCVS was created in 1972 after President Johnson's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice called for national data collection strategies to increase understanding about the dark figure of crime. The NCVS has changed significantly since it was created roughly a half-century ago. The crime incident report part of the survey instrument was initially a four-page survey with 20 questions and subquestions; the current version includes a 24-page survey with questions and subquestions.²⁰ Other changes include that the initial NCVS program surveyed businesses and included face-to-face interviews for all contacts with respondents. The business surveys stopped in the mid-1970s, and phone interviews were implemented for follow-up interviews in the early 1980s.²¹

The NCVS collects information about household and personal victimization and asks respondents about the costs of victimization and whether they reported their victimization to the police. The survey is funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and data are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. Once individuals are selected to be a part of the sample, respondents are interviewed every six months for three years and are asked during each interview whether they have experienced specific types of victimization in the past six months.²² The findings from the survey provide estimates of threatened, completed, and attempted rapes, aggravated assaults, simple assaults, burglary, person theft, burglary theft, property theft, and motor vehicle theft.²³

The practice of asking about victimization within a specific amount of time is known as **bounding**, which is important because researchers do not want to double-count a specific victimization type. The label **telescoping** is used to refer to situations in which respondents "indirectly identify the timing of past events."²⁴ Interviewers for the NCVS review each respondent's prior responses to determine if it appears that the respondent has reported the same victimization multiple times. The interviewer will follow up with the respondent to determine whether the most recently reported victimization is the same victimization reported in the earlier survey. NORC at the University of Chicago was recently called upon by the Bureau of Justice Statistics to explore the feasibility of changing the NCVS to a 12-month bounding period, which would cut down on the costs of doing the survey every six months.²⁵ The research is examining whether telescoping may increase with a longer time period and whether interviewers can use certain cues to reduce telescoping. Preliminary results suggest that "telescoping will be more important" with the longer reference period.²⁶

The most recent NCVS found that, between 2014 and 2015, property crime rates decreased from 118.1 to 110.7 per 1,000 households, although there was no statistically significant change in violent crime rates for that time period.²⁷

An ongoing question in criminal justice centers on which database is more accurate: the UCR or the NCVS. It can be particularly confusing when the two strategies show different crime trends. One author team quoted a state criminal justice agency

National Crime Victimization Survey:

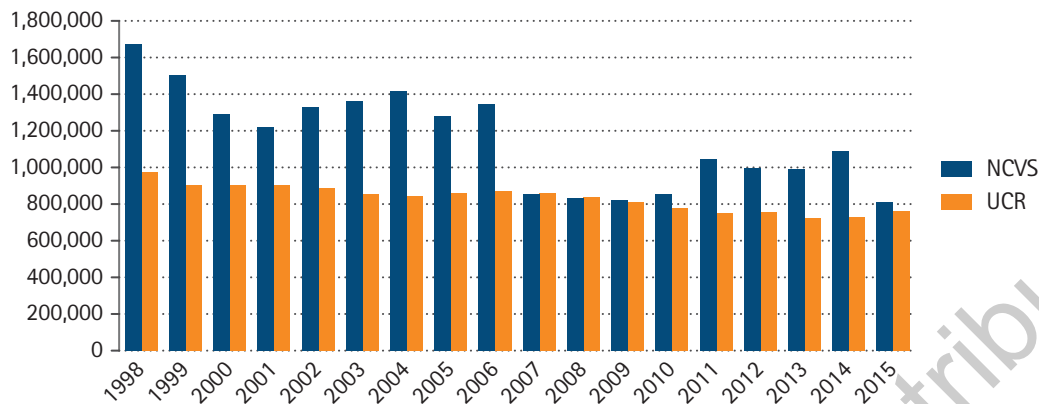
Survey that collects information directly from residents of the United States to assess their victimization experiences.

bounding: The process of asking about victimization within a specific amount of time in order to reduce the likelihood of double-counting a specific instance of victimization.

telescoping: Situations in which respondents indirectly identify the timing of past events.

FIGURE 3.4 UCR and NCVS Aggravated Assault Trends, 1998–2015

Compiled from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Federal Bureau of Investigation



head who once asked, “Did crime go up in 1986?” because the UCR showed that crime increased by 10% and the NCVS showed no change.²⁸ A cursory review of NCVS and UCR data over time shows that the UCR portrays a smaller decline in crime over time. Figure 3.4 shows the UCR and NCVS trends in aggravated assault rates over recent years. Eric Baumer and Janet Lauritsen scrutinized data from the two sources and found that the NCVS showed that robbery, rape, and aggravated assault decreased by 51% in the 1990s, whereas the UCR showed that crime decreased by 27% in the same timeframe.²⁹ Baumer and Lauritsen concluded that changes in decisions to report crime to the police account for much of the difference in the way crime trends are portrayed over time.³⁰ Drawing attention to the fact that the UCR gathers data from reports to the police and the NCVS collects information directly from victims, the authors noted that several factors have potentially resulted in victims being more willing to call the police: (a) Police were more involved in their communities in the 1990s than they were before, (b) members of the public held more favorable attitudes about the police in the 1990s than they did before, (c) members of the public became more punitive, (d) victims have been given a more central role in the criminal justice process over time, (e) technological shifts have made it easier to report crime, and (f) individuals have become less trustworthy and more prone to contacting formal agencies for assistance. According to the author team, the findings demonstrate “the need to corroborate findings about crime trends from multiple data sources.”³¹

National Incident-Based Reporting System

A recognition of the limitations of the UCR to provide contextual information about incidents of crime, and appreciation for the detailed information provided by the NCVS, has led to the development of a third national crime reporting system: the **National Incident-Based Reporting System** (NIBRS).

Also administered by the FBI, the NIBRS was created in the late 1980s in an effort to provide more detail about crime incidents. By 2015, a total of 6,647 law enforcement agencies participated in the NIBRS program, though this represents only 36.1% of departments that provided all of their crime data through the UCR.³² Because of the low participation rate by agencies, the amount of crime reported in the NIBRS is about one-fourth of the amount reported in the UCR.³³ One of the reasons for the lower agency participation rate is that the NIBRS is so detailed. The system captures 57 data elements related to the offense, offender, victim, property, and arrestee. This means that, in comparison to the UCR program, it would take the law enforcement agency much longer to compile the data

National Incident-Based Reporting System

A national crime reporting system developed in the late 1980s in an effort to provide more detail about crime incidents.

TABLE 3.2 Differences Between the UCR and the NIBRS

ITEM	UCR	NIBRS
Crime Count	Consists of monthly aggregate crime counts for eight index offenses	Consists of individual incident records for eight index crimes and 38 other offenses with details on offense, offender, victim, and property
Incidents Reported	Records one offense per incident as determined by hierarchy rule	Records each offense occurring in the incident
Hierarchy Rule Effect	Suppresses count of lesser offenses in multiple offense incidents	No effect, given that all offenses in the incident are counted
Completed Versus Attempted	Does not distinguish between completed and attempted offenses	Does distinguish between completed and attempted offenses
Rape Counting	Records rape of females only	Records rape of males and females
Weapon Information	Collected for murder, robbery, and aggravated assault	Collected for all violent offenses
Arrest Counts	Provides counts of arrests for eight Part I offenses and 21 other offenses	Provides details on arrests for eight Part 1 offenses and 49 other offenses

Rantala, R., & Edwards, J. (2002). *Effects of NIBRS on crime statistics*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

required for the NIBRS program. Table 3.2 highlights differences between the UCR and NIBRS programs. For example, the UCR provides aggregate counts of offenses, whereas the NIBRS provides detailed information about individual incidents. Also, the UCR does not distinguish between attempted and completed offenses, whereas the NIBRS does. This means that the NIBRS provides a much more detailed portrait of crime.

The NIBRS also captures information on a broader range of offenses (see Table 3.3). The application of the *hierarchy rule* also varies between the two sources of crime data. The hierarchy rule refers to the UCR's practice of counting only the most serious offense if an offender is arrested for committing several offenses in the same incident. Kal Penn (Kumar of *Harold and Kumar* fame) had a frightening experience that exemplifies this rule. In April 2010, he was robbed at gunpoint by an offender who stole Penn's wallet and two cell phones. The offender was caught and charged with robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. With respect to crime data reporting, only the robbery would be counted in the UCR program, whereas both offenses would be captured in the NIBRS program.

Other differences between the NIBRS and the UCR are that (a) the NIBRS includes information about all rapes, whereas until 2013 the UCR collected information only about rapes of females; (b) the NIBRS distinguishes between completed and attempted offenses, whereas the UCR does not; (c) the NIBRS collects information about weapons for all offenses, whereas the UCR provides weapons information for murder, robbery, and aggravated assault; and (d) the NIBRS provides details on incidents of 57 offenses (eight index offenses and 49 other offenses), whereas the UCR provides information about 29 offenses (eight index offenses and 21 other offenses).³⁴ Additional advantages of the NIBRS cited in the literature include the following:³⁵

- The program captures different types of victims (businesses and communities) and victimless crimes.
- It provides additional data about victims of all ages with more precision.
- It provides better and more reliable data about violence against women.
- It allows researchers to examine links between victimization and arrests.

Most experts agree that, when all agencies eventually participate in the NIBRS program, it should be more useful than the UCR and the NCVS in painting a picture of local

TABLE 3.3 Offenses Included in the NIBRS

GROUP A OFFENSES (REPORTS EXTENSIVE DATA)	GROUP B OFFENSES (ARRESTEE DATA ONLY)	
Arson	Kidnapping/abduction	Bad checks
Assault offenses	Larceny/theft offenses	Curfew/loitering/vagrancy violations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggravated assault • Simple assault • Intimidation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pocket-picking • Purse-snatching • Shoplifting • Theft from building • Theft from coin-operated machine or device • Theft from motor vehicle • Theft of motor vehicle parts or accessories • All other larceny 	Disorderly conduct
Bribery	Motor vehicle theft	Driving under the influence
Burglary/breaking and entering	Pornography/obscene material	Drunkenness
Counterfeiting/forgery	Prostitution offenses	Family offenses, nonviolent
Destruction/damage/vandalism of property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitution • Assisting or promoting prostitution 	Liquor law violations
Drug/narcotic offenses	Robbery	Peeping tom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug/narcotic violations • Drug equipment violations 	Sex offenses, forcible	Runaway
Embezzlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forcible rape • Forcible sodomy • Sexual assault with an object • Forcible fondling 	Trespass of real property
Extortion/blackmail	Sex offenses, nonforcible	All other offenses
Fraud offenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incest • Statutory rape 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False pretenses/swindle/confidence game • Credit card/automatic teller machine fraud • Impersonation • Welfare fraud • Wire fraud 	Stolen property offenses (receiving, etc.)	
Gambling offenses	Weapon law violations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betting/wagering • Operating/promoting/assisting gambling • Gambling equipment violations • Sports tampering 		
Homicide offenses		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter • Negligent manslaughter • Justifiable homicide 		

National Archive of Criminal Justice Data

indicators of crime.³⁶ In other words, local law enforcement agencies and communities should be able to make more effective use of NIBRS data than other forms of nationally collected data. Shortly after the NIBRS program was created, Michael Maxfield described the program as “a new approach to measuring crime, one that is simultaneously ambitious, revolutionary, evolutionary, cumbersome, little-known, and disappointingly slow to be adopted.”³⁷ More than a decade later, one could probably make the same statement today: The NIBRS has been “disappointingly slow to be adopted.” Still, the FBI hopes that NIBRS will “become the UCR data standard by January 1, 2021.”³⁸

Measuring Juvenile Delinquency

Thus far, attention has been given to the way that criminal justice scholars measure the extent of crime. The same methods discussed so far—Uniform Crime Reports, National Crime Victimization Survey, and National Incident-Based Reporting System—can be used to assess the degree of offending by juveniles (UCR and NIBRS) and victimization of juveniles (NCVS and NIBRS). These methods, though, often have adult crimes overshadowing juvenile offending and fall short in capturing many of the

more common delinquent behaviors by juveniles. Data sources useful for understanding juvenile offending include the following:

- The Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) publishes the *Statistical Briefing Book*.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) publishes a report titled *Child Maltreatment* annually, depicting the amount of child maltreatment reported each year.
- The Department of Education (DOE) publishes *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, describing incidents of school violence occurring each year.
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) provides funding for the *Monitoring the Future* study, which measures trends in drug use among juveniles.

The OJJDP *Statistical Briefing Book* is a source of data that uses existing databases to centralize data about juveniles. The briefing book includes information on juvenile arrests, juvenile court appearances, juvenile probation trends, and juvenile corrections populations. In addition, data from the NIBRS are reported in the briefing book to show various trends. Victimization trends in schools and juvenile facilities are also available in the briefing book. Tools available to help view these trends include the following:

- Easy Access to Juvenile Populations
- Easy Access to the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports
- Easy Access to FBI Arrest Statistics
- Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics
- Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement
- National Disproportionate Minority Contact Databook³⁹

Providing additional insight into the victimization of juveniles, the DOE's Crime and Safety Surveys Program, part of the department's National Center for Education Statistics, publishes the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety Report* each year. The report focuses on violence and safety in schools across the United States. Each report includes information on the number of violent deaths occurring in school, the number of victimizations reported by students, the number of victimizations reported by principals, the number of threats against teachers, perceptions of safety, and perceptions of drug use.⁴⁰ Information about bullying, discipline strategies, and security measures is also included in the report. In general, data from the report show a dramatic decrease in school violence rates and a steady increase in the use of security measures to make schools safer.

While the OJJDP and FBI data focus on cases reported to the criminal justice system, the *Child Maltreatment* report published each year by the DHHS focuses on reports of suspected child abuse made to child protective services workers (these are social workers who work in social services departments). Each annual report includes a wealth of information about the reported cases of abuse. Data available in each report include but are not limited to the following:

- Sources of child maltreatment reports
- Response time for child protective services workers
- Caseloads of child protective services workers

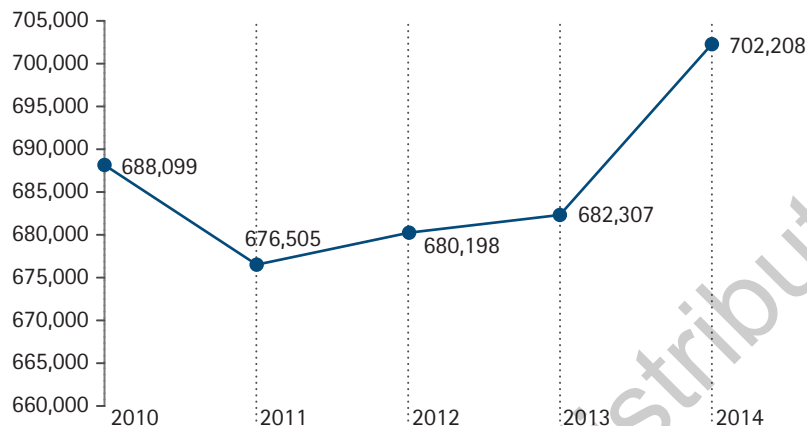


Learning from Kumar: Kal Penn was robbed at gunpoint and his offender was charged with robbery and assault. The UCR program would only count the most serious offense, while NIBRS would provide information about both offenses.

Noam Galai/Stringer/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

FIGURE 3.5 Child Maltreatment Reports, 2010–2014

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *Child maltreatment 2014*.



- Number of child victims
- Child victim demographics
- Maltreatment types
- Risk factors
- Perpetrator relationship
- Number of child fatalities
- Child fatality demographics
- Number of perpetrators
- Perpetrator demographics
- Perpetrator relationship⁴¹

Figure 3.5 shows the trends in substantiated child maltreatment reports between 2010 and 2014. Although there was a little fluctuation, the rates have remained relatively stable.

Originating in 1975 as a survey of drug use among high school seniors and expanding to include eighth and tenth grades in 1991, *Monitoring the Future* is an annual survey of roughly 45,000 students from more than 370 high schools across the United States. Funded by the NIDA, the annual studies are conducted at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. The survey asks youth about monthly, annual, and lifetime drug use as well as their perceptions about those drugs.⁴² Findings from the study are published in the *Monitoring the Future* report and provided in press releases issued by the University of Michigan. The press release from the most recent survey described the following trends in drug use among young people:

Considerably fewer teens reported using any illicit drug other than marijuana in the prior 12 months—5 percent, 10 percent and 14 percent in grades 8, 10 and 12, respectively—than at any time since 1991. . . . In fact, the overall percentage of teens using any of the illicit drugs other than marijuana has been in a gradual, longterm decline since the last half of the 1990s, when their peak rates reached 13 percent, 18 percent and 21 percent, respectively.⁴³

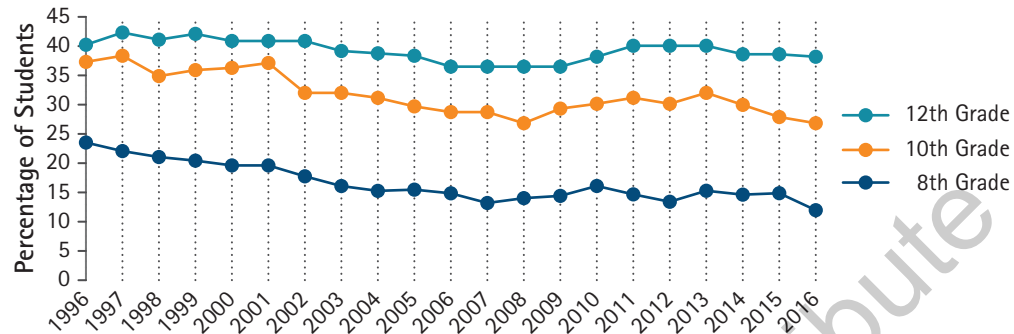
Figure 3.6 shows the changes in illicit drug use for all types of drugs since 1996.

Regardless of the strategy used to measure crime, criminal justice data programmers write programs to analyze data gathered to examine crime patterns. The “Help

Monitoring the Future: Federally funded longitudinal survey designed to track drug abuse by juveniles.

FIGURE 3.6 Changes in Illicit Drug Use

University of Michigan Regents. (2017, January 31). Table 2: Trends in annual prevalence of use of various drugs in grades 8, 10, and 12. *Monitoring the Future*.



Wanted” box in this chapter includes an overview of the duties assigned to these officials. As discussed in the next section, a number of patterns have been identified from the crime and victimization data.

► Crime Patterns

Criminologists have identified a number of different crime patterns based on data gathered from research studies and data from the official sources of crime and victimization surveys. In particular, criminologists have demonstrated how crime varies across the following dimensions: age, region, race/ethnicity, gender, community, time, and social class. Each of these dimensions is addressed in the sections that follow.

Age and Crime

Criminologists agree that crime is, for the most part, a young person’s game. This does not mean that older individuals do not commit crime or experience victimization. Instead, it can simply be suggested that the bulk of offenses are committed by younger individuals and the majority of crime victims are also younger individuals. Figure 3.7 shows what is often called the **age-crime curve**. As shown in the figure, the bulk of crimes are committed by individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. The phrases *aging out* and *maturation hypothesis* have been used to describe the way that young offenders eventually come to a point in their lives when they choose to stop committing offenses.

Some researchers have identified offenders who have apparently chosen to continue to commit crime throughout their lives. Terri Moffit developed a taxonomy of two types of offenders: **adolescence-limited offenders**, who do, in fact, age out of crime, and **life-course-persistent offenders**, who continue to engage in crime throughout their lives.⁴⁴ The concepts of *career criminal* and *criminal careers* are related. *Criminal career* refers to situations in which offenders engage in offending over a specified period of time (for example, the period of time is their career). In contrast, **career criminal** refers to a member of the small group of offenders who appear to commit the vast majority of offenses. The career criminal concept is traced to research by Marvin Wolfgang and his colleagues, who examined the offending behaviors of a sample of 9,945 juvenile delinquents in the now-classic study *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*.⁴⁵ The authors found that 6% of the juveniles accounted for more than half of the crimes and nearly three-fourths of all the homicides committed by the cohort.

In another classic study, titled *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck examined delinquency by 500 male juvenile offenders at different stages of their lives.^{46,47} Their research team interviewed subjects at average ages of 14, 25, and

age-crime curve:

A line graph that illustrates the percentage of crimes committed by members of different age groups.

adolescence-limited offenders:

Offenders whose antisocial behavior is temporary and does not extend beyond adolescence.

life-course-persistent offenders:

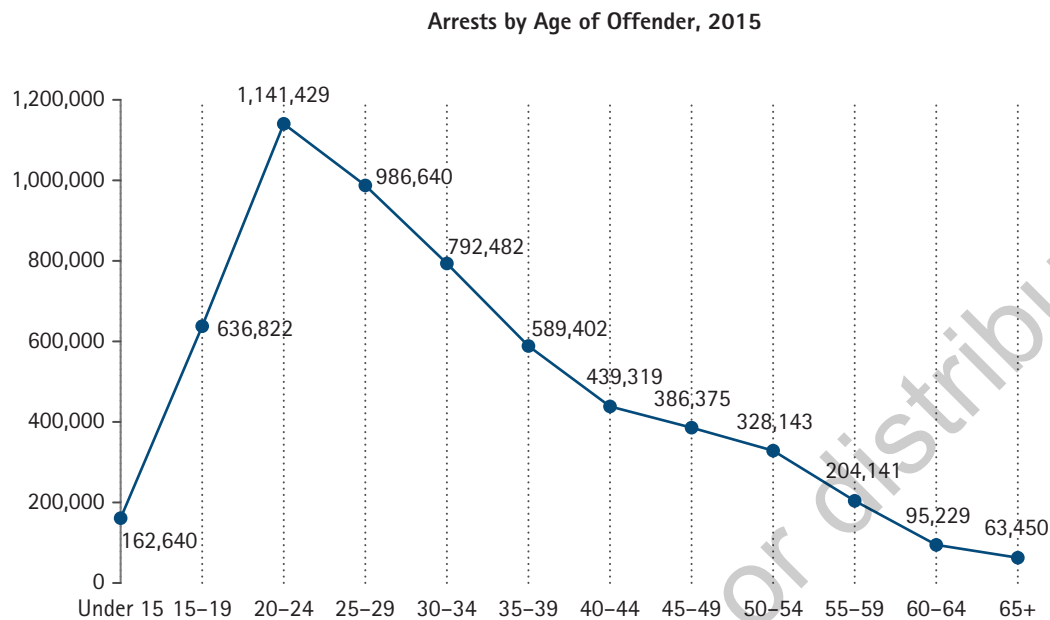
Offenders who continue to engage in crime throughout their life.

career criminal:

A member of the small group of offenders who appear to commit the vast majority of offenses.

FIGURE 3.7 Age-Crime Curve, 2015

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). *Crime in the United States, 2015: Crimes by age, 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.



32 over a 25-year timeframe. Follow-up analyses by John Laub and Robert Sampson on these 500 offenders found that they accounted for 10,000 crimes over their lives (between the ages of 7 and 70).⁴⁸ However, the authors found that, even among those actively involved in offending early in their lives, most offenders eventually stopped committing crime. They concluded: “Aging out of crime is thus the norm—even the most serious delinquents desist.”⁴⁹ This aging-out phenomenon has been used to explain the crime drop in the 1990s. In particular, in a rather controversial article, John Donohue and Steven Levitt argued that the crime drop was attributed to the passing of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.⁵⁰ The authors contended that legalizing abortion prevented the births of hundreds of thousands of children who would have been born into potentially bad parenting situations. Presumably, 19 years later, there were fewer individuals in the age group that commits the most crime because of the abortions that occurred in the aftermath of *Roe*. Hence, according to Donohue and Levitt, fewer crimes were committed because of the decrease in the number of potential offenders living in bad parenting environments. Their findings have been widely criticized and debated.⁵¹

Relatively few adult offenders begin their criminal behavior in adulthood. Among those who start crime later in life, one study found that, compared to those who started crime as juveniles, adult-onset offenders had fewer delinquent peers as teenagers and were more socially inhibited.⁵² In addition, this study found that adult-onset offenders were more likely than non-offenders to be bipolar, have schizophrenia, be dependent on alcohol, have weaker social bonds, and report committing more offenses.⁵³

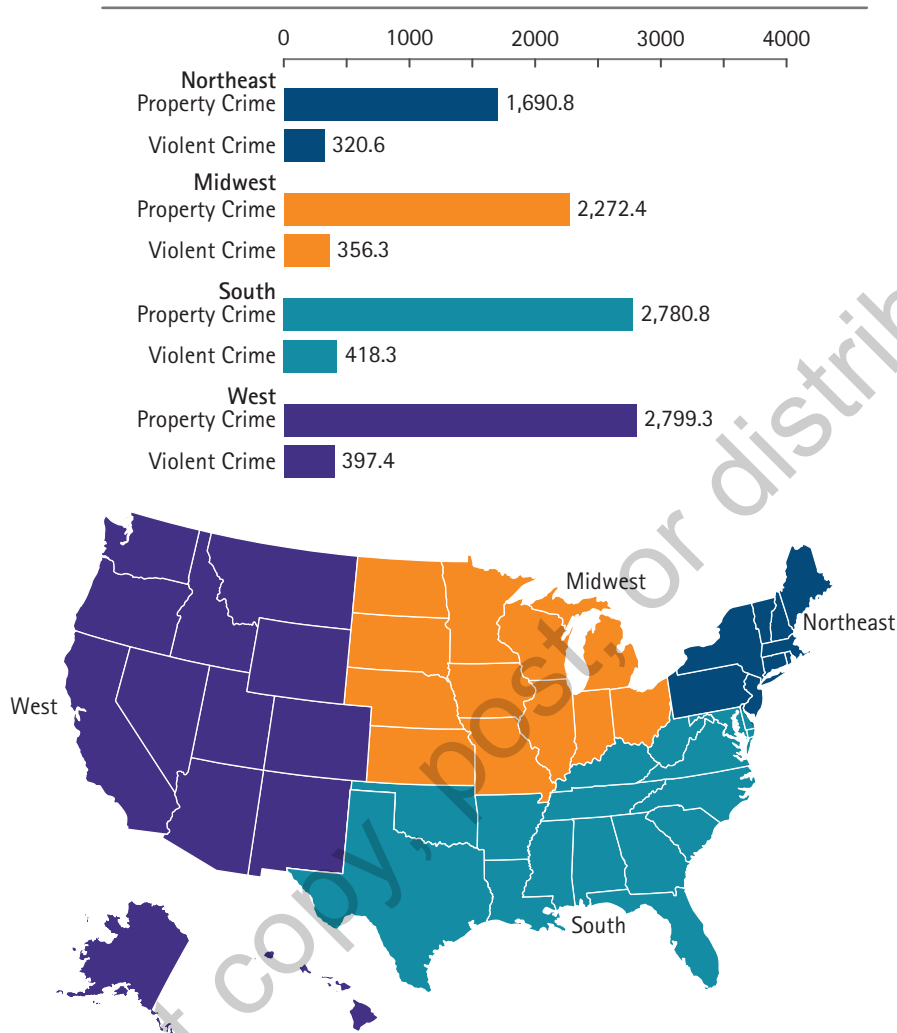
Region and Crime

Figure 3.8a shows the distribution of crime across regions according to Uniform Crime Reports data. The South has the highest rates of both violent and property crime, whereas the Northeast has the lowest rates. In 2015, 37.5% of U.S. residents lived in the South, but 42.8% of reported aggravated assaults, 45.9% of murders, and 45.2% of all the burglaries committed in the United States were committed in that region. Also, 42.2% of the property crimes were committed in the South.⁵⁴ Figures 3.8b and 3.8c show snapshots of the way crime trends were distributed across the United States in 2015.

FIGURE 3.8A Regional Crime Patterns, 2015

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Violent and Property Crimes per 100,000 Inhabitants



Crime Percent Distribution by Region, 2015

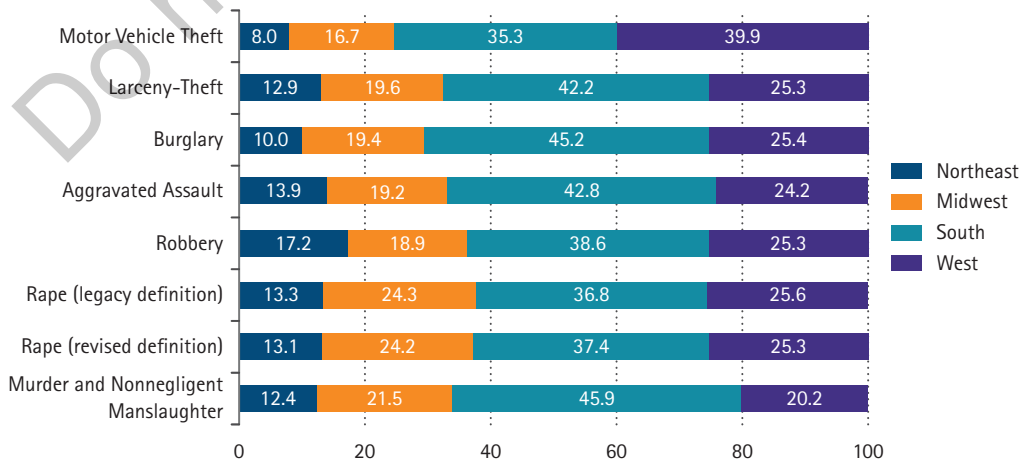
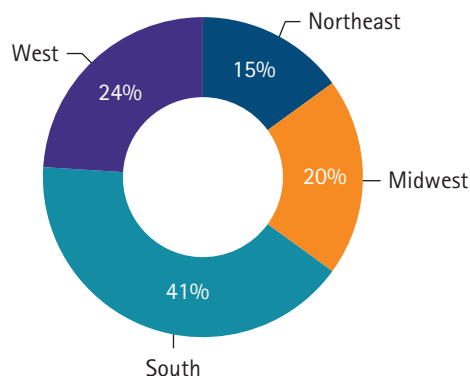
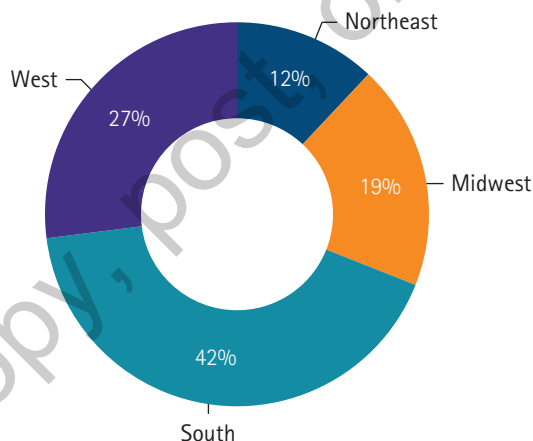


FIGURE 3.8B Snapshot of Violent Crime, 2015

Federal Bureau of Investigation

**FIGURE 3.8C Snapshot of Property Crime, 2015**Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). *Crime in the United States: Offense and population distribution by region, 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

The phrase **southern subculture of violence** has been used to characterize the higher crime rates found in the South. Those describing the southern subculture of violence suggest that southerners are socialized to accept, and use, violence in certain types of situations, particularly when the violence is perceived to help protect one's honor. This explanation is potentially useful to help explain the higher rates of violence, but it seems to do little to explain the higher rates of property crime in the South.

An interesting study on the southern culture of violence was conducted by Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen, who examined the topic from the perspective of a "culture of honor," which they suggested prevailed in the South.⁵⁵ Their research was rather innovative. In addition to surveying male research subjects to see how they would respond to different insulting behaviors, including someone trying to kiss their girlfriend, the researchers hired research assistants to actually insult the research subjects, with the subjects not knowing that the "insulter" was a part of the study. When the subjects arrived to participate in the study, they were told to fill out a survey, take the completed survey to the end of a long narrow hallway, and then return to the lab. While taking the survey down the hall, they passed by the research

southern subculture of violence: A phrase used to characterize the higher crime rate in the South, suggesting that southerners are socialized to accept, and use, violence in certain situations.

assistant, who was forced to close an open file cabinet drawer so that the subject could get to the end of the hallway. When the subject passed back by the research assistant, the assistant slammed the file cabinet door shut, bumped into the subject, called him an “asshole,” and went into a different room. Other research assistants were stationed in the hallway to observe the research subject’s reactions. The subject went into the lab and researchers gathered additional data, including cortisol samples, from the subject. In addition to this experiment, the researchers conducted two others as part of the same project. Here is how they summarized their findings:⁵⁶

- Southerners were made more upset by the insult, as indicated by their rise in cortisol levels and the pattern of emotional responses they displayed as rated by observers (though the finding about emotional reactions must be considered tentative because of the failure to replicate it in Experiments 2 and 3, in which emotional expression may have been inhibited).
- Southerners were more likely to believe the insult damaged their masculine reputation or status in front of others.
- Southerners were more likely to be cognitively primed for future aggression in insult situations, as indicated by their violent completions of the “attempted kiss script” in Experiment 1. Southerners were more likely to show physiological preparedness for dominance or aggressive behaviors, as indicated by their rise in testosterone levels.
- Southerners were more likely to actually behave in aggressive ways during subsequent challenge situations.
- Southerners were more likely to actually behave in domineering ways during interpersonal encounters, as shown in the meeting with the evaluator.

Nisbett and Cohen suggested that the southern subculture of honor is traced to the region’s past herding economy that required southerners to fight off those who tried to steal their livestock.⁵⁷ This claim has been disputed, with one author suggesting that the higher rates of violence in the South are tied to “childhood experiences, poverty, and religiosity.”⁵⁸ Others have suggested that the types of values attributed to the South are actually rural values, rather than southern values, and that similar types of value-driven violence would be found in rural communities, regardless of the region in which the community is located.⁵⁹ Perhaps the most important question to ask right now is how you would react if someone bumped into you and called you an “asshole”? Would the values you have learned influence your response?

Race/Ethnicity and Crime

UCR data show that Blacks/African Americans are overrepresented in each offense type. In 2015, roughly 13% of the American population was Black, in comparison to nearly a third of arrestees for all offense types. For robberies, 53.5% of arrestees were Blacks and roughly half of all murders involved Black suspects. Figure 3.9 shows the distribution in arrests for Whites and Blacks in 2015. Compared to their overall representation in the population, Blacks were overrepresented for each category of crime.

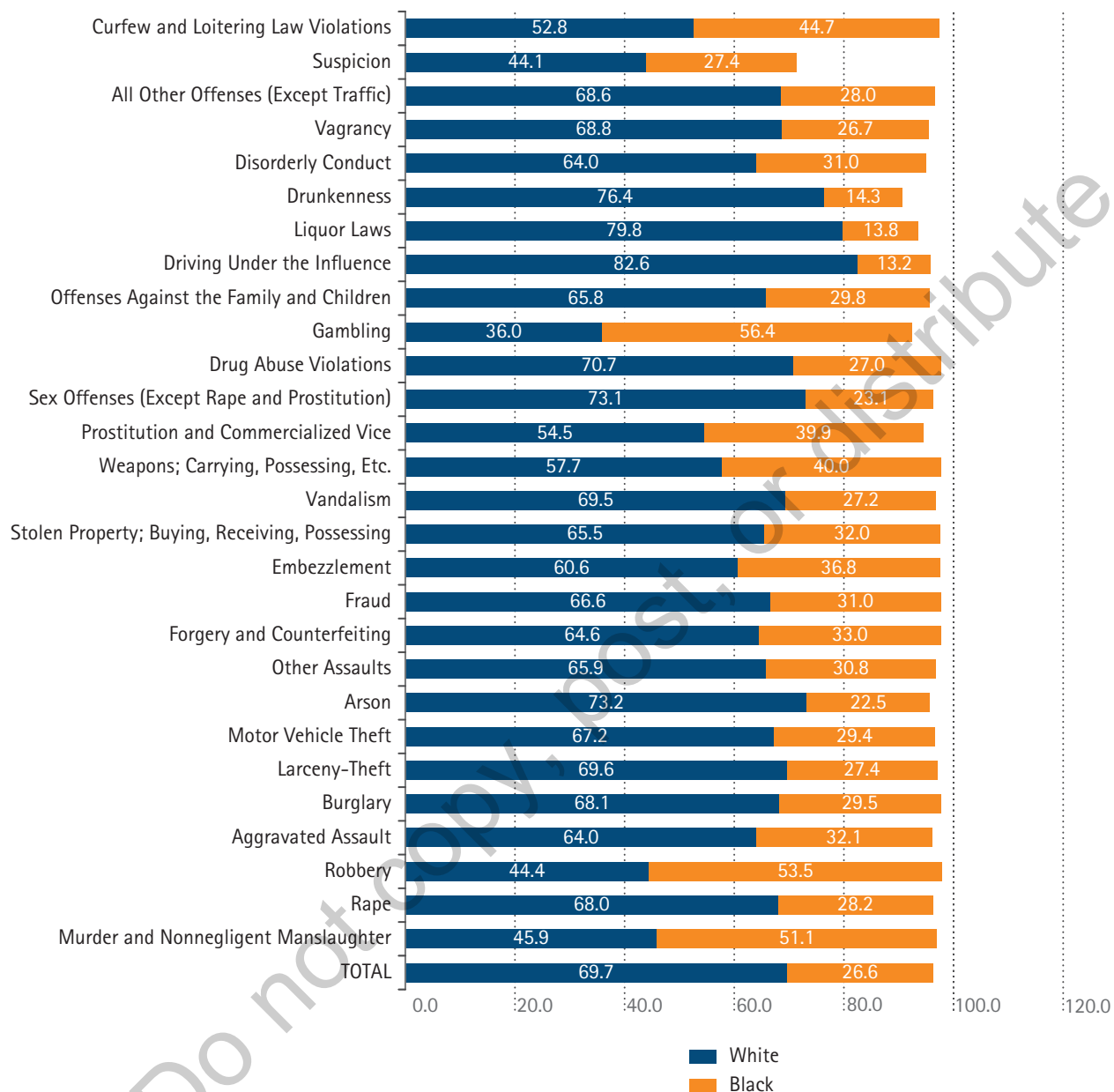


Most criminologists agree that the vast majority of crimes are committed by younger persons. Were there things you did as a younger person that you would not do now?

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FIGURE 3.9 Arrest by Race, Percentage Distribution, 2015

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). *Crime in the United States: Arrests by race and ethnicity, 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.



Violent victimization rates also vary by race in data from the 2015 NCVS. Whites and Asians had the lowest violent victimization rates, whereas Blacks, American Indians, and those of two or more races had victimization rates that far exceeded their representation in the general population. Similar findings are uncovered when examining the homicide offending and victimization data provided in the FBI’s Supplemental Homicide Reports.

These stark racial disparities in offending and victimization have led some observers to suggest that race causes crime and victimization. Indeed, some conservatives on the far right have intimated that such statistics are evidence that crime is potentially

caused by the color of one's skin.⁶⁰ As one author team has noted, the overrepresentation of minorities in crime data "has led to misperceptions about race and crime."⁶¹ Criminal justice scholars have urged commentators to look more closely at the data in an effort to understand why crime and victimization rates are higher among various racial/ethnic groups. It is not enough to say simply that crime or victimization is higher among a particular group. Instead, it is necessary to examine what it is about particular groups that elevates crime and victimization rates. For minorities, potential explanations of these higher crime rates include inequality, differential parenting, and systemic discrimination.

With regard to inequality, some observers have argued that a long history of discrimination and prejudicial attitudes toward Blacks has fostered oppression and created a situation in which impoverished minorities turn to crime in order to adapt to the pressures from the oppression. Somewhat related, it has been noted that the many minority offenders reside in disadvantaged communities that were created, in part, by "urban renewal."⁶² Robert Sampson and William Julius Wilson suggested that "the profound changes in the urban structure of minority communities in the 1970s may hold the key to understand . . . increases in violence."⁶³ They also wrote: "In structurally disadvantaged slum communities it appears that a system of values emerges in which crime, disorder, and drug use are less than severely condemned and hence expected as part of everyday life."⁶⁴ Some scholars have suggested that racial offending patterns are potentially explained by different types of parenting and child-rearing strategies by different races.⁶⁵ According to Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, Blacks are more likely than Whites to have a lower self-control as a result of minimal "levels of direct supervision by family." In turn, this lower self-control increases the likelihood of criminal behavior. From this perspective, it is believed that Black parents are more prone than White parents to use ineffective parenting strategies. Also, a higher number of single-parent families in the minority community has been attributed to higher crime rates in these communities. This higher rate of single-parent families is, according to some observers, attributed in part to the strict sentencing laws we have in the United States. According to this framework, by removing Black males from their communities and placing them in prison, neighborhoods become weaker because they have a higher number of single-parent families.⁶⁶

Systemic inequality is another potential explanation for the difference in offending and victimization rates between minorities and Whites. This perspective suggests that Blacks and Whites are treated differently by criminal justice professionals, and this differential treatment may result in higher arrest and incarceration rates for Blacks. On one level, this differential treatment may be the result of prejudicial attitudes of some criminal justice officials. The phrase **driving while Black** refers to the belief that Black drivers are more likely than White drivers to be stopped by police. Some research supports the suggestion that Black drivers are more likely to be stopped,⁶⁷ whereas other studies have identified the vast methodological difficulties that arise in trying to study this topic.⁶⁸ Incidentally, demonstrating that college campuses are a part of the "real world," a study of more than 10,000 traffic stops on a college campus found that Black drivers were more likely than White drivers to be searched, but they were less likely to receive a legal sanction.⁶⁹ According to the authors:

A possible explanation of these contradictory findings is that police officers may use a minor traffic violation as a pretext to stop and search Black male drivers/vehicles for further investigation, because of the suspicion of illegal activities such as drug trafficking. When illegal contrabands were not found, officers might terminate interactions by issuing only verbal warnings, because initial primary reasons for traffic stops would not assure any legal sanctions.⁷⁰

driving while Black:
The belief that Black drivers are more likely than White drivers to be stopped by police.

HELP WANTED



RESEARCH ASSOCIATE PROGRAMMER

DUTIES:

- Create new SAS® programs as well as modify existing SAS programs.
- Utilize SAS macros in order to make programs more generalizable and adaptable.
- Create PDFs of SAS output, tables, and figures.
- Create figures (pie charts, bar charts, line charts, etc.) in SAS including titles, footnotes, etc. in Commission styling for use in special requests, presentations, and Commission reports.
- Assist in the design and development of tables and figures in SAS, Word, and Excel.
- Assist with providing quick turnaround statistics on defendants sentenced pursuant to the federal sentencing guidelines, responding to special requests from Commissioners, Congress, the courts, and others, as directed.
- Train ORD staff in SAS software (procedures and syntax); review SAS programs written by ORD staff members for possible programming errors.
- Study issues pertinent to the development and application of the federal sentencing guidelines.
- Compile, organize, and document research-related datafiles and assist in the preparation of datafile documentation, statistical tables, and graphic displays and presentations.
- Analyze qualitative and quantitative data and contribute to published reports assessing the sentencing impact of judicial and/or congressional sentencing modifications to the guideline structure and process.
- Match USSC datafiles with datafiles from other federal agencies or from special USSC data collections.
- Modify existing SAS prison and sentencing impact micro-simulation model to satisfy requests from Commission staff, Congress, and other government agencies.
- Meet with research associates to discuss data quality issues and use feedback to create new edits to improve data quality.
- Review existing data for errors and perform edits and data cleaning of research datafiles.
- Research, review, and analyze social science research literature.
- Assist in evaluating research problems and applying or adapting available research methods to solve research problems.
- Learn and implement new technology, such as business intelligence tools (e.g., OBIE) to develop dashboards.
- Perform support or administrative tasks as needed.

REQUIREMENTS: Bachelor's degree in criminal justice, sociology or a related field; three years of experience in SAS programming as an intern or paid employee, and experience with Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

ANNUAL SALARY: \$64,650–\$119,794

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On another level, the differential treatment may be built into laws created by politicians. Crack cocaine laws are illustrative. In the 1980s and 1990s, states began to pass severe laws for possession of crack cocaine, which has been referred to as “poor man’s cocaine.” Experts note that crack cocaine use is higher among Blacks, whereas cocaine use is higher among Whites. Although the effects of the two drugs are similar, penalties for crack cocaine violations are far more severe than are the penalties for cocaine use. Research by Allison Chappell and Scott Maggard shows that Blacks and Hispanics receive longer sentences than Whites for drug law violations and that “crack is treated much more harshly than powder cocaine in the court system

in New York.”⁷¹ The authors suggest that a combination of institutional racism and decision-making practices by criminal justice officials may contribute to these inequalities. In a similar way, another study using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that “policies pursued under the War on Drugs disproportionately held African-Americans accountable for their transgressions.”⁷²

Gender and Crime

Year after year, the vast majority of crimes are committed by males, but the trends over time show that female arrests increased for property crime between 2006 and 2015, whereas male arrests for property crime decreased. The number of larceny arrests increased approximately 25.9% for females. Despite these increases, males were still arrested for nearly three times as many crimes as females in 2015.⁷³

A number of suggestions have been put forth to explain the different offending patterns observed between males and females. These hypotheses include the chivalry hypothesis, the parenting hypothesis, biological explanations, socialization hypotheses/gender roles explanations, accomplice hypothesis, and methodological explanations. The **chivalry hypothesis** refers to the possibility that females and males are treated differently by criminal justice officials and this differential treatment may, in fact, insulate females from future offending. In particular, it has been argued that female delinquents are treated more leniently by the police, and this lenient treatment may reduce the negative consequences of being labeled as an offender.

The **parenting hypothesis** suggests that differences in offending patterns in males and females result from different ways that boys and girls are treated by their parents. Just as the criminal justice system is seen as treating females more leniently, some observers have posited that parents use more positive child-rearing practices with their daughters than they use with their sons. Research shows that when negative parenting practices (such as abuse) are employed, boys react by externalizing their feelings through aggressive/criminal behavior, whereas girls react by internalizing their behavior through self-harmful behaviors (for example, depression or eating disorders).⁷⁴

Biological explanations (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) point to biological differences between males and females to explain differences in aggression and offending. Research shows that males’ and females’ brains develop differently as a result of biological and environmental forces and these differences in brain development have been linked to the higher rates of crime by males.⁷⁵ Wright and his coauthors conclude that “there are important physiological and sociological factors that go a long way towards toward understanding why males and females think differently and, thus, act accordingly (i.e., criminal or not, respectively).”⁷⁶

Socialization explanations, or the **gender role hypothesis**, point to the differences in the way that boys and girls are treated by all members of society and suggest that these differences help to explain why boys and girls behave differently. For



Criminologists have suggested different explanations for why females engage in criminal behavior. Which of those explanations do you think are most plausible?

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chivalry hypothesis:

A hypothesis explaining gender differences in crime that suggests that females and males may be treated differently by criminal justice officials, insulating females from future offending.

parenting hypothesis:

A hypothesis explaining gender differences in crime that suggests that differences in males and females result from different ways that boys and girls are treated by their parents.

gender role

hypothesis: A hypothesis that explains gender differences in crime that suggests that different norms for the behavior of boys and girls may lead to differences in criminal behavior.

POLITICS and CRIMINAL JUSTICE



SHOULD WOMEN BE PUNISHED DIFFERENTLY FOR USING DRUGS WHILE PREGNANT?

Medical experts have long recognized that the type of prenatal care an expecting mother provides to her baby will influence the baby's health outcomes. Despite this knowledge, mothers may not equally practice a high level of prenatal care. Over the past decade, politicians have increasingly debated whether laws should be passed that punish women for using drugs while pregnant. While drug use by itself is a crime, the practice of using drugs while pregnant would, in this case, be called "fetal assaults." Those supporting these

laws point to the negative effects that drug use may have on unborn children. Alternatively, those opposing such laws suggest that they may do more harm than good for the pregnant mother and the infant. They also stress that many things are harmful for unborn children (like smoking, alcohol use, poor diet, and so on) and question whether such laws are designed to exercise additional control over females. Arguments for and against such laws are provided below.

For

It would just seem to me that any society that puts value on life, that these defenseless children deserve some protection.

—State Representative Terri Lynn Weaver (R-Tenn.)⁷⁷

Against

These women are put in jail and get abused. They get the worst care.... It is the absolute opposite of what we want. And what will happen the next time they get pregnant? They will not come for care. You can help a woman onto the right path, and many of them are willing to do that, but if you set them up for failure, they're going to end up in our prisons.

—Kathy Hartke, Chair of the Wisconsin Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists⁷⁸

CROSS-EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. On what grounds could you justify punishing women for using substances while pregnant?
2. In these cases, what is more important—punishment or treatment? Explain.

instance, boys and girls are expected to adhere to a different set of norms. One author highlights the importance of gender roles in the following way: "Our entire society is organized around gender roles. Females are socialized to be 'feminine' (passive, dependent, nurturant) and then urged to pair with males, who are socialized to be 'masculine' (active, independent, macho)."⁷⁹ From this perspective, males are socialized to use power and violence in certain situations, whereas females are socialized to avoid violence. A study of Norwegian female drug dealers found that gender roles impacted their offending in various ways. Some of the offenders developed what the author called a "feminine business model," which used care and empathy, rather than violence and aggression, as a strategy to carry out drug dealing. Some offenders also developed a "street masculinity" in an effort to establish respect. A third group of female drug dealers were characterized as "emphasiz[ing] femininity." This group used their feminine qualities to engage in the drug trade. In the words of the researcher, members of this category "strongly embodied femininity, and in contrast to all other dealers in this

study, often they used sex as a tool to get by in the drug economy; they also tended to be victimized more as adults than the other dealers. In other words, they were marginalized in a double sense, both in conventional society and within the drug economy.”⁸⁰

Within this socialization hypothesis, women are expected to “behave” certain ways. When they do not behave according to societal expectations, the criminal justice process might treat women differently than males. The Politics and Criminal Justice box in this chapter provides an example.

The **accomplice hypothesis** suggests that females’ involvement in crime is often in the role of an accomplice. Researchers have noted that females are less likely than males to lead criminal groups.⁸¹ Jennifer Schwartz and Darrell Steffensmeier point out that when females are involved in criminal groups, they tend to be involved as accomplices to powerful males. They conclude that “the saying ‘she did it all for love’ is sometimes overplayed in reference to female offending, but the role of men in initiating women into crime—especially serious crime—is a consistent finding across research.”⁸²

Methodological explanations call into question our traditional strategies for studying and reporting crimes involving females. These explanations recognize that limited context about offenses provided in official data makes it hard to accurately determine crime patterns. UCR data, for example, consistently show that females have higher rates of offending in fraud, forgery, embezzlement, and other property offenses. Some have interpreted these findings to suggest that females are more involved in occupational offenses than other types of offenses. When researchers dove deeper down into the data, using information from the NIBRS and a state-level database, a different finding emerged that suggested that the majority of property crimes by females are low-level larcenies such as shoplifting and writing bad checks.⁸³

Communities and Crime

Researchers have also demonstrated that certain types of crime are more likely to occur in certain communities than in others. For example, drunk driving is more likely to occur in rural communities perhaps because public transportation options don’t exist and drinking establishments may be located farther away from the drinker’s residence.⁸⁴ Also, in rural communities, police officers will be called upon to address much different types of crimes than they would in urban communities. Below is a sampling of the offenses reported in the local newspaper’s “crime report” from the small town where one of the authors grew up:⁸⁵

- Three different people complained about three different dogs Friday; all three dogs were picked up.
- Police picked up a loose dog at Katherine and Keating Monday; the owner came to the station to claim it.
- A calico cat was reported lost on Pine Street Sunday.
- A Smith Avenue resident told police that his cat was outside Sunday evening, and when it returned, it had a bullet wound in its jaw.
- There was a complaint about a dog at the ambulance barn Saturday.
- A yellow Labrador reported missing last week was located up Skinner Creek, and a different dog was returned to its Katherine Street owner.
- A man came into the Port Allegany Police Station last Saturday night to complain that he had been headbutted by another man in a bar. The log noted that the butter will be charged.

accomplice hypothesis: A hypothesis explaining gender differences in crime that suggests that female involvement in crime is often in the role of an accomplice.



Crime rates vary across rural and urban communities, and the types of crimes committed in the two types of community also vary. Does this necessarily mean that rural communities are safer?

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A review of these crime reports showed that animal cases were the most frequently identified crimes in the small town, with 13% of the offenses involving animals.⁸⁶ Although problems with animals, such as stray dogs and cats, are likely to occur in urban communities as well, these cases are unlikely to be the most commonly reported offenses in those communities.

For victims, the dynamics of victimization are different across communities as well. Being victimized in a rural community, for example, may create more stigma for victims. Consider a case in which an offender was prosecuted for marital rape in a small town. By the very nature of the offense, and the fact that everyone in the rural community knew about the offense, the victim's identity became known to members of the community.⁸⁷ Although most media outlets protect the identity of rape victims, the victim in this case was not afforded this protection.

Time and Crime

Research also shows that crime tends to vary across time, in terms of time of day, day of the week, month, and time of year. In terms of time of day, one author team suggested that “crime varies greatly by hour of day—more than by any other variable.”⁸⁸ Some offenses occur more frequently during the day, whereas others occur more frequently in the evening. Burglaries of homes occur more frequently in the daytime, when homes are vacant, whereas burglaries of businesses occur more frequently in the evening, when businesses are vacant.⁸⁹ Juvenile offending tends to peak when juveniles get out of school on school days, and between 7 and 9 p.m. on other days.⁹⁰ Murders more frequently occur on weekends during evening or early morning hours.⁹¹ These temporal patterns reflect the types of activities that individuals engage in on a daily basis, given that individuals' behaviors will influence opportunities for crime and victimization.

A similar point can be made about day of the week and month of the year. The types of social activities in which individuals engage are related to types of victimization. Violence, including murder, peaks on the weekends and during summer months, primarily because individuals engage in more social activities during those times. Increases

in temperature have also been linked to violence.⁹² One study found that, for robberies, the temperature effect is “stronger in higher SES communities” and for locations near commercial zones and subway stations.⁹³ This finding also makes sense when considering the increased amount of social activities individuals engage in around businesses and subways when the weather is warmer.

Some practitioners claim that crime increases when there is a full moon. This relationship is attributed to an increase in opportunities for crime because of the increased lighting from the full moon and a belief that the lunar cycle influences individuals’ moods and behaviors. In one of the few studies to examine the link between full moons and crime rates, a team of researchers examined police data, weather data, and astronomical data in one city and found that a relationship did not exist between moon cycle and crime rates.⁹⁴ Another study, however, found some evidence for a relationship between amount of moonlight and crime. In particular, a study of 13 states and the District of Columbia examined the impact of moonlight on crime and found a direct relationship: the brighter the moon, the more crime that occurs outdoors.⁹⁵ On the surface, what this suggests is that rather than being afraid of the dark at night, we should actually be afraid of the moonlight! Or, it could be that moonlight increases vulnerability in a behavioral manner. The authors hypothesized:

It is plausible that the enhanced visibility engendered by the natural light of a full moon intensifies criminal activity by affording offenders a better opportunity to ascertain the vulnerability of a potential victim, gauge the value of a victim’s property, and by assisting them in determining the proximity of capable guardians. It is also possible that the natural illumination generated by a full moon motivates people to venture away from their homes by diminishing the fear of crime, which in turn enhances their vulnerability to criminal victimization.⁹⁶

With regard to time of year, some research has found that certain types of crimes increase around holidays. One research study, for example, found that thefts in nursing homes increased at Christmas and on birthdays when residents presumably were receiving gifts from their loved ones.⁹⁷ Another study examined calls to police in one city over a three-year period and found that “major holidays primarily were associated with an increase in expressive crimes and a decrease in instrumental crimes.”⁹⁸ *Expressive crimes* refers to those offenses that are conducted in order to express an emotion (for example, interpersonal violence), whereas instrumental crimes are those conducted with a specific purpose in mind (for example, theft, or burglary). The authors conclude that holidays bring people together, many of whom consume too much alcohol but stay at home, which would make interpersonal violence more likely but burglary less likely.

These time patterns, combined with location patterns known to exist, are used by criminal justice officials to decide how to allocate resources. If you are in a major city on New Year’s Eve, for example, you will notice an increase in the number of police officers working in certain parts of the city. Some research suggests that “place” is as important as season/weather when examining crime trends. In particular, one study



Some practitioners claim that a full moon means more crime. To date, no studies have demonstrated such a relationship.

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found that certain specific property crimes occurred at similar rates in the same places in Ottawa and Vancouver regardless of the time of year.⁹⁹ This suggests the need to consider both “space” and “time” when considering how to allocate criminal justice resources. In a rather innovative use of Twitter, one researcher showed how tweeting can be used to predict crimes. The “Criminal Justice and the Media” box in this chapter provides insight into this study.

3.3 BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

In which month would we expect to find the most violence?

(a) March. (b) July. (c) October. (d) December. (e) It depends on the state in which you live.

The answer can be found on page 512.

Social Class and Crime

Many early research studies suggested a relationship between social class and crime, with members of the lower class overrepresented as offenders. Criminologists have cited at least six possible reasons to explain apparent ties between class and crime: stress from poverty, lower-class values, violence leading to lower social class, inequality breeding crime, inequality breeding differential treatment from the justice system, and methodological limitations. With regard to stress from poverty, some criminologists point to the way that poverty produces pressures that may lead individuals to engage in offending behaviors. Incidents of child abuse, for example, that stem from poverty have been tied to the stress that poverty creates in lower-class families.¹⁰⁰ Those who see lower-class values as contributing to crime suggest that a differential value system between the classes leads to behaviors that foster criminal behavior. Members of the lower class might have values that are more supportive of violence/offending than other classes. Researchers, for example, have suggested that lower-class values such as the following may foster crime, particularly when these values conflict with middle-class values:¹⁰¹

- Less of a focus on ambition in comparison to middle-class youth
- Less emphasis on classroom success in comparison to middle-class youth
- Support for short-term gratification rather than long-term gratification
- Attitudes supportive of violence to solve problems
- Lower levels of respect for property

Inequality has also been seen as perpetuating crime. From this perspective, individuals with less power have fewer resources, and these limited resources potentially create situations in which members of the lower class turn to crime in an effort to level the playing field. Consider those who have no opportunity to go to college or find a career. Offending may be an adaptation to the inequality.

Differential treatment from the justice system may also result from inequality. In this context, many observers have suggested that the higher arrest rates among the poor reflect the power that the upper class has over the lower class in the creation and application of the law. In effect, some criminologists argue that the powerful use the criminal law to exert and maintain their power over the lower class.¹⁰² Moreover, some criminologists point out that a range of harmful behaviors by the powerful (for example, discrimination and pollution) are not defined nor treated as violations of the criminal law.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE and the **MEDIA**



TWEETING ABOUT CRIME

Based on the long history of research that showed consistent temporal and geographic patterns surrounding crime, Matthew Gerber, a researcher at the University of Virginia, examined whether Twitter feeds could be used to predict crimes that occurred in Chicago over a three-month timeframe. Reviewing tweets and crimes reported to the police over this period, and using “Twitter-specific linguistic analysis and statistical topic modeling to automatically identify discussion topics” (p. 115), Gerber found that his program was able to predict 19 of 25 crimes

at a better rate than standard prediction strategies. In particular, this strategy was able to predict the crimes of drug offenses, stalking, and criminal damage. It makes sense when you think about it. Tweets have a time stamp and the location from which tweets were sent can be determined through GPS. Given that both time and location are tied to crime patterns, Twitter might be a valuable tool for predicting future crime. Gerber recommended, in particular, that this might be a viable strategy for allocating police resources.¹⁰³

Somewhat related, methodological limitations have also been used to explain the apparent link between social class and offending. In particular, researchers have noted that arrest data and self-report data yield different conclusions about the presence and strength of a relationship between social class and crime. Arrest data might suggest a relationship between class and crime, but self-report data, where individuals are asked to report their own offending, show no relationship.¹⁰⁴ Some criminologists have suggested that evidence for a link between class and crime is “weak at best.”¹⁰⁵ As noted in the beginning of this chapter, measuring crime accurately is important in order to identify effective ways to respond to crime. Inaccurate crime measures may result in overzealous responses to certain classes of offenders. Alternatively, accurate crime measures should provide information needed to develop effective evidence-based responses to crime.

Just the Facts: Chapter Summary

- An accurate awareness about the extent of crime serves several purposes, including explaining crime, understanding cultures and subcultures, measuring quality of life, promoting evidence-based prevention strategies, and developing evidence-based policies.
- The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) program categorizes crimes as Part I and Part II offenses. Part I offenses include criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.
- Part II offenses are technically less serious offenses, though most criminologists agree that such a statement is misleading given the breadth of offenses included as Part II offenses.
- With regard to annual changes over time, a review of the annual crime reports shows that crime increased significantly between 1960 and the early 1990s, and has dropped precipitously since then.
- The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) collects information directly from residents of the United States to assess their victimization experiences.
- The practice of asking about victimization within a specific amount of time is known as bounding, which is important because researchers do not want to double-count a specific victimization type.
- A cursory review of NCVS and UCR data over time shows that the UCR portrays a smaller decline in crime over time.

- A recognition of the limitations of the UCR to provide contextual information about individual incidents, and appreciation for the detailed information provided about incidents from the NCVS, has led to the development of a third national crime reporting system: the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).
- Strategies used to measure and report juvenile offending include the traditional crime measures, the *Statistical Briefing Book* (OJJDP), *Monitoring the Future* (NIDA), *Child Maltreatment* (DHHS), and *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* (DOE).
- The bulk of offenses are committed by younger individuals, and the majority of crime victims are in the same stage in the life course.
- The phrase “southern subculture of violence” has been used to characterize the higher crime rate found in the South.
- Blacks/African Americans were overrepresented in each offense type in terms of offending and victimization in recent crime data.
- For minorities, potential explanations of these higher crime rates include inequality, differential parenting, and systemic discrimination.
- Suggestions for the different offending patterns observed between males and females include the chivalry hypothesis, the parenting hypothesis, biological explanations, the gender role hypothesis, and the accomplice hypothesis.
- Researchers have also demonstrated that certain types of crime are more likely to occur in certain communities than in others.
- Research also shows that crime tends to vary across time, in terms of time of day, day of the week, month, and time of year.
- Criminologists have cited at least six possible reasons to explain apparent ties between class and crime: stress from poverty, lower-class values, violence leading to lower social class, inequality breeding crime, inequality breeding differential treatment from the justice system, and methodological limitations.

Key Terms

accomplice hypothesis (85)	clearance rate (65)	<i>Monitoring the Future</i> (74)	Part II offenses (62)
adolescence-limited offenders (75)	crime clock (64)	National Crime Victimization Survey (69)	southern subculture of violence (78)
age-crime curve (75)	dark figure of crime (67)	National Incident-Based Reporting System (70)	telescoping (69)
bounding (69)	driving while Black (81)	parenting hypothesis (83)	Uniform Crime Reports (60)
career criminal (75)	gender role hypothesis (83)	Part I offenses (61)	
chivalry hypothesis (83)	life-course-persistent offenders (75)		

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do age, race, and gender “cause” crime? Explain.
2. Think about your college or a college near you. Next, think about how many crimes you believe were reported by campus police to the FBI’s UCR program. In particular, how many larcenies, robberies, and assaults do you think were reported? Discuss your answers with a few classmates. Then, go to the UCR’s website and find out for yourselves how much crime was reported. You can access the university reports by going to the UCR website (<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/>), clicking on the *Crime in the United States* link, clicking on the year you are interested in, and clicking on Table 9. In a small group, discuss whether your estimates were above or below what was reported to the FBI. What do you think accounts for the differences?
3. Which system provides better estimates: the UCR or the NCVS? Explain.
4. Why is it important to gather information about the extent of crime?
5. What are the advantages of the NIBRS program?
6. Should the government devote more resources to collecting crime data? Explain.
7. Why is crime higher at certain times of day and during certain times of the year?
8. Discuss three reasons why minorities have higher crime and victimization rates.
9. Compare and contrast the concepts of *aging out* and the *accomplice hypothesis*.

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING



CRIME DATA REPORTING

As part of your undergraduate criminal justice internship, you are hired to work in the campus police department. Your job is to fill out the forms used to report crimes known to your department to the FBI each month. After reviewing the FBI's UCR handbook and participating in a training session, you learn that the prior intern who had your job routinely underreported the amount of crime when filling out the monthly reports. Your supervisor explains that the

underreporting is justified because the guidelines for reporting crime are somewhat vague and many crimes reported to the police probably did not occur. You learn that the bulk of police calls seem to be for stolen books and book bags, which are occasionally located (suggesting they were just lost and not stolen). After inquiring about this underreporting, you learn that police administrators do not want to see higher crime rates in the monthly reports.

YOU DECIDE

1. Should you underreport crime in the same way that it has been underreported in the past? Why or why not?
2. Under what circumstances would it be appropriate to underreport crime to the FBI? How does discretion play into such decisions?
3. What are the implications of your decision for the campus community? What are the implications of your decision for your future career?










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-  **Author Video 3.2** Crime Trends
-  **Career Video 3.1** Director of the Urban Institute
-  **SAGE News Clip 3.1** Gun Control Legislation Changes
-  **SAGE News Clip 3.2** Post-Ferguson Racial Profiling
-  **Journal Article 3.1** Cross-National Crime Rates
-  **Journal Article 3.2** Gendered Criminal Thinking