



About the UCR Program

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program is a nationwide, cooperative statistical effort of more than 18,000 city, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies eligible to voluntarily report data on crimes brought to their attention. Since 1930, the FBI has administered the UCR Program and has continued to assess and monitor the nature and type of crime in the nation. The program's primary objective is to generate reliable information for use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management; over the years, however, the data have become one of the country's leading social indicators. Criminologists, sociologists, legislators, municipal planners, the media, and other students of criminal justice use the data for varied research and planning purposes.

Currently, the UCR Program consists of four data collections:

- National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)—Provides detailed incident information on 52 offenses including the victims, offenders, and property stolen, recovered, or damaged. In addition, NIBRS collects arrest data for those offenses plus 10 others.
- Summary Reporting System (SRS)—Furnishes aggregate offense counts for 10 Part I offenses and arrest data for an additional 20 offenses. January 1, 2021. The historic data collection will give way to make UCR a NIBRS-only data collection by January 1, 2021.
- Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) Program—Offers information about officers who were killed or assaulted while performing their duties. The information is published and used to help agencies develop policies to improve officer safety.
- Hate Crime Statistics Program—Provides information on crimes motivated by offenders' bias against race, gender, gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. These data are also collected via NIBRS.

The UCR Program publishes annual reports for each of these data collections and a preliminary semiannual report of summary data each winter, as well as special compilations such as Cargo Theft Report, Human Trafficking, and NIBRS topical studies.

In addition to the four major data collections, the UCR Program will manage the new National Use-of-Force Data Collection. The goal for this data collection is to provide information on incidents involving use-of-force by a law enforcement officer where a death or serious bodily injury occurred or where a law enforcement officer discharged a firearm at or in the direction of a person. A six-month pilot study concluded on December 31, 2017. Findings were provided to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval. Upon approval, the FBI anticipates approval for a national launch within calendar year 2018. In addition, the FBI will release a report detailing the pilot study. Thereafter, quarterly use-of-force publications are anticipated.

The FBI's Crime Data Explorer (CDE) is the digital front door for UCR data. The interactive online tool enables law enforcement and the general public to more easily use and understand the massive amounts of UCR data currently collected. With it, users can view charts and graphs that break down data in a variety of ways. As the CDE expands to provide greater access to crime trends, bulk datasets, and agency-level data, the UCR Program plans to increase the frequency of data releases with the tool.

UCR Advisory Groups

The Criminal Justice Information System's (CJIS's) Committees of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) provide vital links between local law enforcement and the FBI in the oversight of the UCR Program. The IACP, which represents thousands of police departments nationwide, and the NSA, which serves sheriffs throughout the country, encourage agencies to participate fully in the program. Both committees fulfill advisory capacities concerning the UCR Program's operation.

In 1988, a Data Providers' Advisory Policy Board (APB) was established to provide input for UCR matters. This board operated until 1993 when it combined with the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) APB and formed the CJIS APB to address all issues regarding the FBI's criminal justice information services. The current APB ensures a continued emphasis on UCR-related

issues. In addition, the Association of State UCR Programs (ASUCRP) focuses on UCR issues within individual state law enforcement associations and promotes interest in the UCR Program. These organizations foster widespread and responsible use of uniform crime statistics and lend assistance to data contributors when needed.

Historical Background of UCR

Recognizing a need for national crime statistics, the IACP formed the Committee on Uniform Crime Records in the 1920s to develop a system of uniform crime statistics. After studying state criminal codes and making an evaluation of the recordkeeping practices in use, the committee completed a plan for crime reporting, which became the foundation of the UCR Program in 1929. The plan included standardized offense definitions for seven main offense classifications, known as Part I crimes, to gauge fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime. The seven Part I offense classifications included the violent crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault as well as the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Developers also instituted the Hierarchy Rule as the main reporting procedure for what is now known as the SRS of the UCR Program. Under the Hierarchy Rule, law enforcement agencies report only the most serious offense in an incident.

The FBI becomes clearinghouse for crime data

In January 1930, 400 cities representing 20 million inhabitants in 43 states began participating in the UCR Program, then administered by the IACP. That same year, Congress enacted Title 28, Section 534, of the United States Code (U.S.C.) authorizing the attorney general to gather crime information. The attorney general, in turn, designated the FBI to serve as the national clearinghouse for the crime data collected beginning in September 1930. Since then, the FBI has obtained data based on uniform classifications and procedures for reporting offenses and arrests from the nation's law enforcement agencies. By congressional mandate, arson was added as a Part I offense category in 1979.

LEOKA Program emerges in UCR

Beginning in 1937, the FBI's UCR Program published general information about law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in its annual publication, *Crime in the United States (CIUS)*. Statistics regarding assaults on officers were added in 1960. In June 1971, executives from the

law enforcement conference, “Prevention of Police Killings,” called for an increase in the FBI’s involvement in preventing and investigating officers’ deaths. In response to this directive, the UCR Program expanded its collection of data to include more details about the incidents in which law enforcement officers were killed and assaulted.

Using this comprehensive set of data, in 1972, the FBI began to produce two reports annually, the *Law Enforcement Officers Killed Summary* and the *Analysis of Assaults on Federal Officers*. These two reports were combined in 1982 to create the annual publication, *LEOKA*.

Redesign of UCR

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

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

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

ran March 1–September 30, 1987 and resulted in further refinement of the guidelines and specifications.

March 1–3, 1988, the FBI held a National UCR Conference to present the new system to law enforcement and to obtain feedback on its acceptability. Attendees of the National UCR Conference passed three overall recommendations without dissent:

- 1) Establish a new, incident-based national crime reporting system.
- 2) Designate the FBI to manage this program.
- 3) Form an APB composed of law enforcement executives to assist in directing and implementing the new program.

Furthermore, attendees recommended that the implementation of national incident-based reporting proceed at a pace commensurate with the resources and limitations of contributing law enforcement agencies.

Establishing NIBRS

From March 1988 through January 1989, the FBI proceeded in developing and assuming management of the UCR Program’s NIBRS. By April 1989, the national UCR Program received the first test submission of NIBRS data. Over the course of the next few years, the national UCR Program published information about the redesigned program in five documents. The handbook and its four associated volumes provided the definitions, policies, and procedures of NIBRS; the offense codes, reports, data elements, and data values used in the system; explanations of mandatory and optional data elements, data element edits, and error messages; data submission specifications; and approaches for implementing an incident-based system.

Originally designed with 52 data elements, NIBRS currently captures up to 58 data elements via 6 types of data segments: administrative, offense, property, victim, offender, and arrestee. The FBI refrained from making any changes to NIBRS as data contributors implemented the system in the late 1980s, and the FBI began accepting NIBRS data from a handful of agencies in January 1989. In 1990, a data element to indicate whether an incident was bias-motivated was added to help NIBRS comply with a federal mandate.

Hate Crime Statistics Program founded

On April 23, 1990, Congress passed the Hate Crime Statistics Act, 28 U.S.C. § 534, which required the attorney general to collect data “about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.” The attorney general delegated the responsibilities of developing the procedures for implementing, collecting, and managing hate crime data to the FBI Director, who, in turn, assigned the tasks to the UCR Program. Under the direction of the attorney general and with the cooperation and assistance of many local and state law enforcement agencies, the UCR Program began collecting hate crime data to comply with the congressional mandate.

The UCR Program’s first publication on the subject was *Hate Crime Statistics, 1990: A Resource Book*, which was a compilation of hate crime data reported by 11 states that had collected the information under state authority in 1990 and were willing to offer their data as a prototype. The UCR Program continued to work with agencies familiar with investigating hate crimes and collecting related information, so it could develop and implement a more uniform method of data collection on a nationwide scale. *Hate Crime Statistics, 1992*, presented the first published data reported by law enforcement agencies across the country that participated in the UCR Hate Crime Statistics Program.

Years later, with a number of changes in the data collection due to subsequent legislation, the Hate Crime Statistics Program continues to report annually on the nature and frequency of crime motivated by offenders’ bias against race, gender, gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. For more information about specific changes to the Hate Crime Statistics Program, visit About Hate Crime Statistics in the current annual publication.

Major Changes within the UCR Program

NIBRS’ Flexibility

The ability of NIBRS to be adapted to capture current crime phenomena has been demonstrated with changes to the data collection. In 1997, with the approval of its law enforcement partners, the UCR Program modified NIBRS to collect the presence of gang activity in reported incidents. In 2003, it amended the collection again to capture data concerning law enforcement officers killed and assaulted.

Suspension of the Crime Index and Modified Crime Index in the SRS

In June 2004, the CJIS APB approved discontinuing the use of the Crime Index in the UCR Program and its publications, and it directed the FBI to publish a violent crime total and a property crime total. The Crime Index, first published in *CIUS* in 1960, was the title used for a simple aggregation of the seven main offense classifications (Part I offenses) in the SRS. The Modified Crime Index was the number of Crime Index offenses plus arson.

For several years, the FBI studied the appropriateness and usefulness of these indices and brought the matter before many advisory groups including the UCR subcommittee of the CJIS APB, the ASUCRP, and a meeting of leading criminologists and sociologists hosted by the BJS. The prevailing opinion of the advisory groups was that the Crime Index and the Modified Crime Index were not true indicators of the degrees of criminality because they were always driven upward by the offense with the highest number, typically larceny-theft. The sheer volume of those offenses overshadowed more serious, but less frequently committed offenses, creating a bias against a jurisdiction with a high number of larceny-thefts, but a low number of other serious crimes, such as murder and rape.

Move to exclusively electronic publication

Following decades of making hard copies of its annual reports available, the FBI began electronically publishing the main publications of its annual UCR series in the 1990s. As technology expanded and more data users accessed information online, the FBI discontinued the printed versions of *CIUS*, *LEOKA*, and *Hate Crime Statistics* in 2006.

Collection of Cargo Theft data

A provision of the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005 required a separate category in the UCR system for reports of cargo theft collected by federal, state, and local officials. Because the “gateway” crime can turn out to be one piece of a larger case about organized crime, drug trafficking, or funding for terrorism, collecting cargo theft data could help measure the impact this type of crime has on both the economy and national security.

With the collaboration of partner law enforcement agencies around the nation, a definition for cargo theft was developed, and the specifications required for capturing cargo theft data in both

the SRS and NIBRS were finalized in 2010. Cargo theft data were first collected on 13 relatable offenses in 2013 and published as the special report *Cargo Theft Update*.

NIBRS' Specificity

In 2010, the UCR Program again expanded NIBRS codes to further specify location types and property types.

Revision of Race and Ethnicity categories

The national UCR Program expanded its data collection categories for race from four (White, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Asian or Other Pacific Islander) to five (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) in response to a directive by the U.S. Government's Office of Management and Budget. The ethnicity categories also were changed from "Hispanic" and "Non-Hispanic" to "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino." These changes are reflected beginning with data reported in 2013.

Collection of Human Trafficking data

The FBI began accepting data on human trafficking (commercial sex acts, involuntary servitude, and purchasing prostitution) in January 2013 through both SRS and NIBRS in response to the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008. The offenses of human trafficking/commercial sex acts and human trafficking/involuntary servitude were added as Part I offenses in SRS, and NIBRS began collecting both offense and arrest data for those offenses as well as purchasing prostitution.

Change to the definition of rape

At its fall meeting in 2011, the CJIS APB approved changing the definition of rape. Since 1929, in the SRS, forcible rape had been defined as "the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will," (*UCR Handbook*, 2004, p. 19). Beginning with the 2013 data collection, the SRS definition for the violent crime of rape was modified to the following:

"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."

In addition, the APB approved removing the word “forcible” from the name of the offense and replacing the phrase “against the person’s will” with “without the consent of the victim.” Those changes also applied to the definitions of other sex-related offenses in the SRS, NIBRS, the Hate Crime Statistics Program, and Cargo Theft. Data contributors were given the option of reporting their rape data using either the legacy definition or the revised definition. Although the slight revision did not have as great of an impact on NIBRS data, the UCR Program converted the NIBRS offenses of rape, sodomy, and sexual assault with an object to the SRS revised definition of rape for publication and trending purposes in *CIUS*.

National Crime Statistics Exchange (NCS-X)

The BJS initiated the NCS-X in 2012, and in June 2013, it partnered with the FBI to increase crime reporting via NIBRS. Through the initiative, 400 state and local law enforcement agencies with various sizes of law enforcement presence were selected to help accelerate the pace at which the agencies report their UCR statistics through NIBRS. The goal of the NCS-X was, and is, to combine the data of the 400 agencies with the data of the existing NIBRS contributors to achieve a sample of NIBRS data from which valid national estimates can be made.

Annual publication of NIBRS data

For several years, the UCR Program has maintained its long-running time series of data via the submissions of both SRS and NIBRS contributors. Though the FBI continues to convert NIBRS data to provide equivalent summary statistics for the annual publication *CIUS*, the FBI established the annual *NIBRS* publication in 2013, releasing both the 2011 and 2012 data that year. It has also published a number of monographs to demonstrate the utility of NIBRS data and has made available NIBRS master files for those interested in studying them.

Crime Data Modernization (CDM) Initiative

The national UCR Program publicly committed to improving the way the nation collects, analyzes, and uses crime statistics in 2015 to support the growing need for more comprehensive information. The goal was, and is, to increase the reliability, accuracy, accessibility, and timeliness of crime data as well as to expand the wide range of data collected through the CDM Initiative. To achieve this goal for the UCR Program, the FBI’s plan is as follows:

- Transition local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies from SRS to NIBRS.

- Collect use-of-force statistics on all nonfatal/fatal police officer-involved incidents at the local, state, tribal, and federal levels.
- Initiate FBI participation in the UCR Program.
- Obtain UCR Program participation from the remaining Department of Justice entities, as well as other federal agencies.
- Increase accessibility of UCR data and the timeliness of its publication.

At the recommendation of the CJIS APB in December 2015 and with the approval of the FBI Director in February 2016, the UCR Program announced it would sunset the traditional SRS and replace it with a NIBRS-only data collection by January 1, 2021, as the national standard for crime reporting.

Through CDM, the UCR Program has advanced greatly towards achieving a national transition to NIBRS by 2021, including gaining the participation of the FBI and other federal agencies. In meeting the challenge of data accessibility, the FBI released the CDE in 2017, so data users can download various datasets and obtain dynamic, customized presentations. And in 2017, the FBI launched a pilot study for the National Use-of-Force Data Collection to better understand incidents in which offers use force.

Recent Developments in the UCR Program

A number of changes have been instituted in the UCR Program since 2016, e.g., the addition of new bias types for ancestry and religion, the expansion of criteria for LEOKA, and the discontinuance of rape data using the legacy definition. Moving forward, the UCR Program continues to address initiatives with CDM and maintain NIBRS' ability to address current crime issues. For example, coming NIBRS enhancements will include the addition of domestic and family violence data and the application of the cargo theft indicator to identity theft and hacking/computer invasion. Additional information about these changes and status updates on the CDM initiatives is available in [Recent Developments in the UCR Program](#).