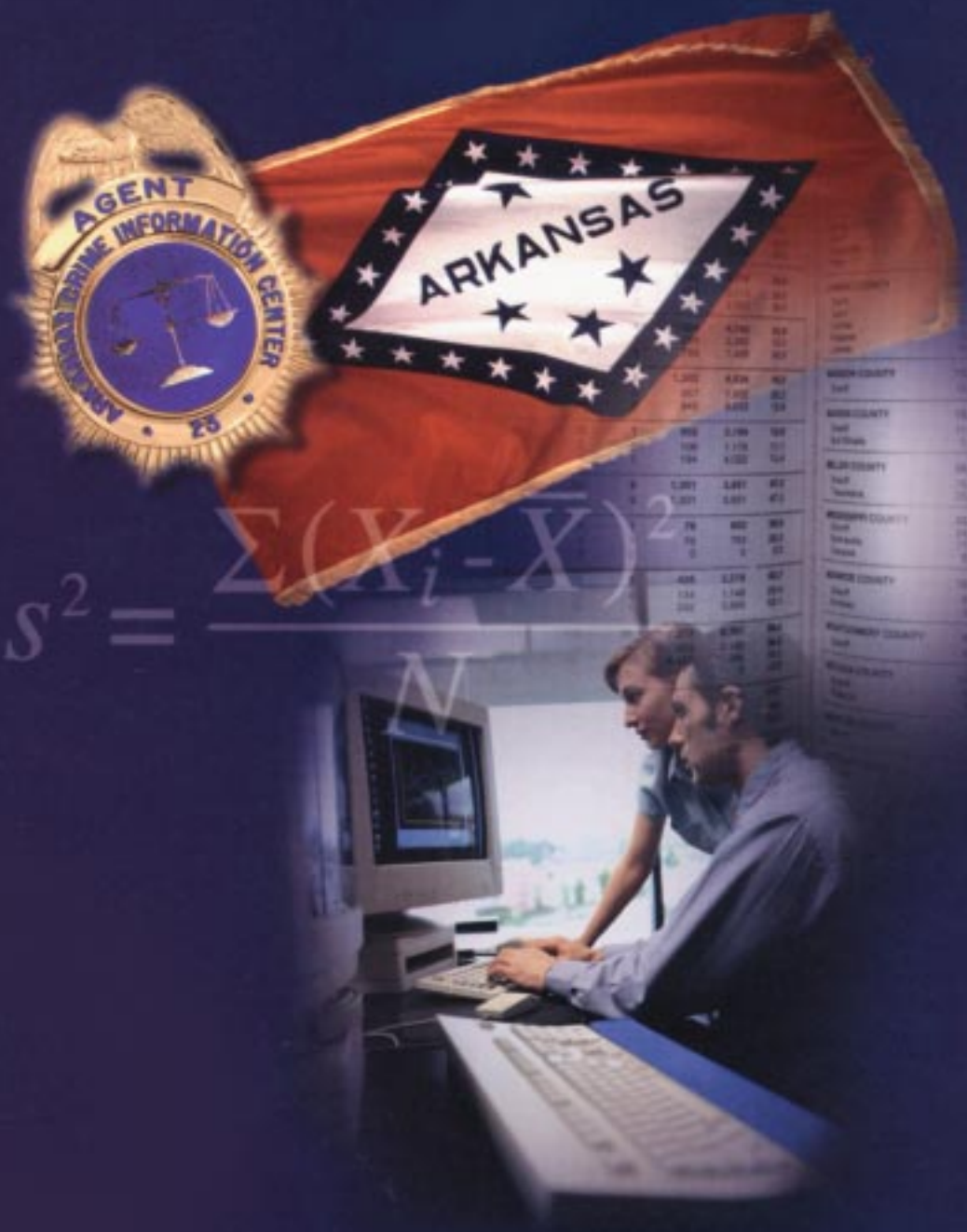
CRIME IN ARKANSAS 1998



Arkansas Crime Information Center

Introduction

We are pleased to provide this 23rd annual edition of Crime in Arkansas. It is a report on crime, based on summary information submitted by nearly 200 law enforcement agencies in Arkansas. We want to thank each of those agencies for their assistance and for their daily work in the fight against crime in this state.

The information presented in this annual report is a compilation of data submitted monthly to the Arkansas Crime Information Center as a part of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. It represents an overall tally of arrests and offenses known to and reported by law enforcement agencies. It does not include any data relating to prosecution, adjudication or correction. Likewise, it does not attempt to draw any conclusions on the causes of crime. The data on arrests and offenses from Arkansas law enforcement is forwarded by ACIC to the Federal Bureau of Investigation to become a part of the national publication called *Crime in the United States*.

Crime in Arkansas is printed with the hope that it will assist law enforcement administrators in planning their fight against crime. It should also serve as a resource for researchers, educators, other governmental entities and the public at large. We hope the crime statistics in this report will increase the awareness of all citizens about the problems facing law enforcement officials, and will be a tool to improve our overall criminal justice system.

If you have any questions or comments concerning this publication, please contact the UCR Program Manager at the Arkansas Crime Information Center. You may also check the ACIC website at "www.acic.org" for an on-line version of this and other crime publications.

David Eberdt
Director

Crime in Arkansas 1998

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Acknowledgement

We thank all the law enforcement agencies in the state who participated in the Arkansas Uniform Crime Reporting program in 1998. Without their support and cooperation, this publication and the resulting overview of crime would not be possible.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to all law enforcement officers endeavoring to uphold the laws and serve the people of Arkansas. In particular, this report is dedicated to the memory of the following officers who gave their lives while performing their duties in 1998.

Sheriff Ralph F. Baker
Madison County Sheriff's Office

Sergeant Otis V. Love, Jr.
Sheridan Police Department

Officer Bobby R. Watson
Sheridan Police Department

Constable Jonathan C. Ziegler
Bald Knob Police Department

Captain Richard J. Wyssbrod
Helena Police Department

Chief Richard L. Duncan
Decatur Police Department

Corporal Johnny M. Scarberough
Arkansas State Police

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Section 1

Uniform Crime Reporting

Background

Development of a national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program began more than 60 years ago. In 1930, Congress authorized the FBI to collect crime statistics from local police departments. All information came from reports that law enforcement agencies routinely compile for their own efficient administration. The underlying philosophy of UCR is oriented toward law enforcement statistics for use by law enforcement agencies.

In an effort to obtain a complete picture of crime on a national level, data is collected on certain offenses that become known to police. Originally, this overview was obtained by examining seven offenses that were selected because of their seriousness, frequency of occurrence, and likelihood of being reported to police. These offenses, which make up the Crime Index, are
murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft. By congressional mandate, arson was added as the eighth index offense in late 1978.

To provide nationwide uniformity in the reporting of data, a set of standard definitions were written for specific criminal acts. This standardization was necessary to overcome the variation in definitions from state to state. Reporting agencies are required to submit their data in accordance with the UCR definition of offenses. Because of the variance in punishment for the same offenses in different states, it is not possible to distinguish between felony or misdemeanor crimes in the UCR program.

In the 1970's, the FBI actively assisted individual states in the development of state-operated UCR programs compatible with the national system. With a state UCR program, data is more readily available for use by the state, and the FBI ceases collection of data directly from individual law enforcement agencies within the state. Instead, compiled information from all reporting agencies is forwarded to the national program by the state program. State programs also provide more direct and frequent contact with local agencies, assuring more completeness and quality of information provided by them.

On January 1, 1974, the Arkansas Crime Information Center began collecting monthly UCR data in our state. The following year, Act 742 of 1975 was approved, which included a section making the reporting of UCR data to ACIC mandatory for law enforcement agencies in Arkansas.

Purposes of the Arkansas UCR Program

Information from the UCR program provides a picture of reported crime in Arkansas. It should be an important tool in making effective management studies and decisions.

While there are many purposes and objectives of the Arkansas UCR program, the primary goals are:

1. To collect, verify, and analyze information on crime reported by law enforcement agencies in Arkansas.

2. To provide data back to law enforcement administrators for use in operational planning and assessments.

3. To give an overview of crime, its magnitude and trends, and to provide this information to the Governor, the Legislature, and to the general public.

4. To develop base data and statistics for use in improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and performance of the Arkansas criminal justice system.

5. To provide the FBI with complete UCR data to be included in the national crime reports.

Reporting Procedures

The Arkansas UCR program utilizes a "summary" reporting procedure. Law enforcement agencies are responsible for compiling their own crime figures and submitting them once a month to ACIC.

A good record-keeping system is necessary for the effective operation of any law enforcement agency. This record system is the source of statistics on crime. Agencies are furnished training in scoring and classifying offenses, in use of tally books, and in procedures for completing the reporting forms. ACIC will also make basic records, forms and technical assistance available to any agency.

On a monthly basis, law enforcement agencies report the number of offenses that become known to them during the month. This count is taken from the complaints received by the agency from victims, other sources or as discovered by officers. Whenever complaints of a crime are determined through investigation to be unfounded or false, they are eliminated from the count. The number of "actual offenses known" are reported to ACIC without regard to whether anyone is arrested for the crime, any stolen property is recovered, or any other restrictive consideration. Law enforcement agencies also report the total number of these crimes which they clear by either arrest or exceptional means. To supplement the offense information, data is reported on the value of property stolen and recovered, circumstances surrounding homicides, additional information concerning assaults on police officers and other pertinent information.

In addition to offense information, reports on the number of persons arrested on all criminal offenses are collected. These reports provide age, sex and race information, with the adult and juvenile arrests separate. Names of the individuals arrested are not included in the UCR program.

Arkansas Crime Index

The Crime Index is used as a basic measurement of crime. It is the figure which is often publicized by the news media and which is widely used to assess the level of crime in a given location. Many of the figures presented in this report indicate the volume, fluctuations and distribution of crime in Arkansas on the basis of this Crime Index. The eight offenses making up the Crime Index are:

1. Murder
2. Forcible Rape
3. Robbery
4. Aggravated Assault
5. Burglary
6. Theft
7. Motor Vehicle Theft
8. Arson

These crimes were selected for use as an "index" due to their serious nature, their frequency of occurrence and the reliability of reporting from citizens to law enforcement agencies. The Crime Index is the total number of index crimes that come to the attention of law enforcement.

In reviewing crime index figures, the reader should keep in mind that there is currently no way of determining the total number of actual crimes committed. The Crime Index has been established to measure only the instances of crime which come to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

Violent crime refers to events such as murder, rape, and assault that may result in injury to a person. Robbery is also considered a violent crime because it involves the use or threat of force against a person.

Property crimes are unlawful acts with the intent of gaining property, but do not involve the use of threat of force against an individual. Theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson are examples of property crimes.

In UCR, an offense is considered to be cleared (solved) when at least one offender is arrested. The arrest of one person can clear several crimes, or several persons may be arrested in the process of clearing one crime. Offenses may also be cleared by exceptional means when the offender commits suicide; makes a dying declaration; confesses while in custody or serving time for another crime; is prosecuted in another jurisdiction for the same offense; when the victim refuses to prosecute or another jurisdiction refuses to extradite. When examining clearance data, keep in mind that not all crimes are cleared within the calendar year in which the offense occurs. Also note that the recovery of property stolen with regard to a specific offense does not, by itself, constitute a clearance for UCR purposes.

The *Crime Rate* is one of the most quoted crime statistics and is based on the number of Index Crime per 100,000 population.

Data Comparisons and Limitations of UCR

While UCR is the best source of crime statistics available at the present time, it has been subject to much criticism during its history. Some of these criticisms may be valid. However, the criticism is softened when it is remembered that the program was developed to furnish information for use primarily by law enforcement agencies.

The obvious tendency with a publication of this kind is to make comparisons of data between jurisdictions, whether they be between agencies, or counties, or regions. Caution should be exercised for the many reasons which should be apparent as the reader continues through this publication. Comparisons may not be appropriate because of the great variety of factors which affect the extent and fluctuation of crime. Such factors are not taken into consideration in either raw data or crime rates. All crimes are considered “equal” in computing crime rates. One theft affects a crime rate the same as one murder.

The Uniform Crime Reporting program is designated to measure offenses reported and persons arrested. Difficulty will arise if this distinction is not kept uppermost in mind. Crime relates to events, but arrest relates to persons, and this is not a one-to-one correspondence. While UCR is the best information available, no claim is made that they represent “all crime”.

Summary

The information in this report portrays the most accurate and realistic assessment available on the crime situation in Arkansas. ACIC is grateful for the participation of the law enforcement agencies that contributed data each month, without which this publication would not be possible.

Individuals using these tabulations are again cautioned against drawing conclusions by making direct comparisons between agencies. Numerous factors affect the amount and type of crime from place to place. More valid use can be made of these figures by determining deviations from state averages or through comparisons with averages for similar population groups.

It is important to remember that crime is a social problem, and therefore, a concern of the entire community. The efforts of law enforcement are limited to factors within its control.