Lecture Notes

# Chapter 2: Measuring Crime

**Summary**

Measuring crime is necessary for various reasons. Some of these reasons include describing crime, explaining why crime occurs, and evaluating programs and policies. It is important to legislators, as well as concerned citizens, that crime statistics are available to describe, or gauge, criminal activity that can influence community well-being. Measuring crime is also needed for risk assessment of different social groups, including their potential for becoming offenders or victims. Another purpose of measuring crime is explanation. Identifying causes requires that differences in crime rates can be related to differences in people and their situations. Counting crime is also used to evaluate and justify programs and policies that try to address criminal activity (e.g., rehabilitation, incapacitation, and deterrence). This chapter examines various data collection methods used to enhance our understanding of criminal behaviors and patterns. Law enforcement agencies use the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR), the National-Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), Hate Crime Statistics, and the Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted Statistics (LEOKA). In addition to crime statistics provided by law enforcement, additional statistics are collected from victims. Victim data is collected using the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The final type of data collection is self-report surveys. The self-report surveys discussed in this chapter are Monitoring the Future (MTF), the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), and the National Youth Survey (NYS). Other types of surveys are designed to collect data on specific populations or problems, for example, the National Youth Gang Survey and spatial analyses of crime (crime mapping).

Learning Objectives

\* Identify key features and the major limitations of the Uniform Crime Reports

\* Describe the Supplementary Homicide Reports

\* Identify key features of the National Incident-Based Reporting System

\* Describe the Hate Crime Statistics

\* Distinguish key features and some of the major limitations associated with National Crime Victimization Survey

\* Distinguish the major differences between the Uniform Crime Reports and the National Crime Victimization Survey

\* Identify different types of self-report surveys

\* Describe additional data collection methods used for more specific purposes or specific populations

* Crime Data from Law Enforcement Agencies
  + Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)
    - Historical Overview
      * Created during the 1927 meeting of the International Chiefs of Police (IACP) to collect crime statistics in a consistent and uniform manner.
      * Classifies Offenses into Two Groups
        + Part I Crimes

Murder

Rape

Robbery

Aggravated Assault

Larceny

Burglary

Motor Vehicle Theft

Arson was added in 1978 by congressional mandate.

* + - * + Part II Crimes

Forgery and counterfeiting

Vagrancy

Fraud

Gambling

Embezzlement

Drunkenness

Stolen property: buying, receiving, possessing

Driving under the influence

Vandalism

Liquor laws

Weapons: carrying possessing, etc.

Offenses against the family and children

Prostitution and commercialized vice

Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts

Sex offenses (except rape and prostitution offenses)

Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude

Drug abuse violations

Motor Vehicle Theft

All other offenses

Suspicion

Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft)

Curfew and loitering laws (persons under age 18)

Arson

* + - The UCR Program
      * The primary objective of the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is to generate a consistent (or reliable) set of crime statistics that can be used in law enforcement administration, operation, and management.
      * The FBI emphasizes that classifying and scoring crimes are the two most important functions of those agencies participating in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Classifying is defined as determining the appropriate crime category in which to report an offense in the UCR.
    - Limitations of UCR
      * Some crimes do not come to the attention of those responsible for collecting this information.
      * Concentrates on conventional street crime but does not adequately include other serious types of offenses such as corporate crime.
      * Can be used for political purposes.
      * Some law enforcement agencies may submit incomplete or delinquent reports.
      * Problems with the collection of UCR data can also occur due to clerical and data processing errors.
      * Changes in the legal code can influence subsequent crime reports and make later comparisons difficult.
  + Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR)
    - Developed in the 1960s by the FBI
    - Collects additional information pertaining to the homicide incident including:
      * Details of the murder victim and offender;
      * Their relationship to one another;
      * The weapon used; and
      * The circumstances in each criminal homicide.
    - Key in developing policy related to homicide.
    - Also used to enhance understanding of patters and trends pertaining to homicide.
    - Considered the forerunner to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).
  + National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)
    - Initially, the UCR was considered primarily a tool for law enforcement agencies.
    - By 2013, NIBRS collects data on each incident and arrest within 23 offense categories consisting of 49 specific crimes (i.e., Group A). There are 10 Group B offenses which only arrest data are collected (see Tables 2–4). As of 2013, approximately 33 percent of law enforcement agencies report data in the NIBRS format.
    - Two Goals of the NIBRS
      * to enhance the quantity, quality, and timeliness of crime statistical data collected by law enforcement entities
      * to improve the methodology used for compiling, analyzing, auditing, and publishing the collected crime data.
    - Data Collection
      * 6 Units of Analysis
        + Administrative
        + Offense
        + Property
        + Victim
        + Offender
        + Arrestee
      * An incident can consist of multiple offenses
      * NIBRS does not use the Hierarchy Rule
    - Limitations to the NIBRS
      * As with the UCR Program, NIBRS data only include crimes reported to law enforcement; unreported and unrecorded crimes are not included in NIBRS.
      * Since the NIBRS specifications were developed by a federal agency, participating local agencies may find it difficult to work with inflexible specifications and impose problems with reporting procedures.
      * Various organizations may have different goals and incentives.
      * While NIBRS data includes more detailed information than the UCR Program, this is also a drawback.
      * Currently, little is known about the extent of the errors made when collecting NIBRS data.
  + Hate Crime Statistics
    - Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990
    - Data Collection
      * Collect data about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on
        + Race;
        + Religion;
        + Sexual orientation; or
        + Ethnicity.
    - The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994
      * Amended the Act to include both physical and mental disabilities that should also be viewed as hate crimes.
    - Provides additional information on traditional UCR collection.
      * Hate Crime Incident Report
        + Collects information on the

Location;

Victim Type (individual/business);

Number of Offenders;

Race of Offender(s); and

Bias Motivation.

* + - * + Categories of bias motivation include

Race;

Ethnicity/National Origin;

Religion;

Sexual Orientation; or

Disability.

* + Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted Statistics (LEOKA)
    - The FBI also collects data on the number of law enforcement officers killed and assaulted in the United States each year. UCR Program began gathering data in 1972.
    - Data Collection
      * Collects data from participating agencies on officer line-of-duty deaths and assaults.
        + Line-of-duty death
        + Felonious death
        + Accidental death
      * Participating agencies are required to report on officers who are killed or assaulted and who meet the following criteria:
        + Working in an official capacity;
        + Having full arrest powers;
        + Wearing a badge (ordinarily);
        + Carrying a firearm (ordinarily); and
        + Being paid from governmental funds allocated for payment of sworn law enforcement representatives.
* Crime Data from Victims of Crime
  + The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
    - * Primary Purpose
        + To provide additional insight into the dark figure of crime (crimes unreported to law enforcement).
      * Why victims failed to report these crimes to law enforcement include:
        + The victim believed nothing could be done about the incident;
        + The victim felt that the crime incident was not important enough to report to the police;
        + The victim perceived the incident was too private or personal; and
        + The victim thought that the police would not want to be inconvenienced with the crime incident.
      * The NCVS is also intended to
        + Identify portions of the population at risk of victimization;
        + Estimate multiple victimization rates;
        + Provide data needed to evaluate crime prevention programs; and
        + Allow for comparison of patterns, amounts, and locations of crime with the UCR.
      * Law enforcement agencies use the NCVS for
        + Enhancing citizen cooperation with officials in deterring and detecting crime,
        + Establishing special police strike forces to combat those crimes which the NCVS reported as being most prevalent,
        + Developing street and park lighting programs in those areas with high reported crime rates.
      * Any individual 12 years of age or older living in the United States is eligible to participate.
      * Information Provided
        + Data about the victims

Age

Sex

Race

Ethnicity

Marital Status

Income

Educational Level

* + - * + Offenders

Sex

Race

Approximate Age

Victim-Offender Relationship

* + - * + Crimes

Time and Place of Occurrence

Use of Weapons

Nature of Injury

Economic Consequences

* + - * + Victims experience with the criminal justice system, if they used any self-protective measures, and possible substance abuse by offenders.
    - Limitations of the NCVS
      * Crimes, such as prostitution, drug dealing, and gambling, are not often revealed in interviews for obvious reasons.
      * Since the NCVS surveys only households, crimes committed against commercial businesses (e.g., stores) are not included.
      * The validity of the NCVS is also an issue. Validity is a term used to refer to whether an instrument is measuring what it intends to measure.
    - Comparing the NCVS and UCR
      * Both collect data on the same types of serious crimes.
        + UCR only measures rape as a crime against women, NCVS measures rape as a crime against both sexes.
      * Differences
        + Each program developed to serve different purposes.
        + Types of crimes are not necessarily identical.
        + Use different methods to collect crime data.
        + Use different bases to calculate rates for certain crimes.
        + Implement different sampling procedures.
  + Self-Report Surveys
    - Addresses four broad classes of questions:
      * The prevalence of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors;
      * Changes in these attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors over time;
      * Difference between groups of people in their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors; and
      * Causal propositions about these attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.
    - Data Collection
      * Collected by asking respondents to provide information about themselves, usually as to whether they have engaged in certain forms of illegal behavior.
      * Can be collected through written questionnaires or through in-person interviews.
    - Types of Self-Report Surveys
      * Monitoring the Future (MTF)
        + In 1975, the National Institute on Drug Abuse sponsored the annual self-report survey.
        + Collects information to measure substance and alcohol use patterns among youths.
        + Originally sampled 12th-grade students, in 1981 8th- and 10th-grade students were also included in the annual survey.
      * National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA)
        + Used annually to collect information on the use of illegal drugs by individuals in the United States.
        + Currently sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services; data collection is conducted by the Research Triangle Institute.
        + One of the largest surveys of drug use ever conducted in the United States.
        + Data Collection

Administered through face-to-face interviews with individuals at their place of residence.

Samples individuals 12 years and older who are residents of households and civilians living on military bases.

* + - * National Youth Survey (NYS)
        + Implemented in 1977 by researchers at the University of Colorado.
        + Measured in Waves

First Five Waves (1976–1980)

Wave 6 (1981–1983)

Wave 7 (1984–1986)

Waves 8 & 9 (1987–1994)

* + - * + Includes items that measure a respondent’s involvement in criminal activity.

Measures over forty offenses that represent the full range of offenses reported in the UCR.

Also includes measuring respondents’ attitudes on issues such as level of community involvement, educational aspirations, employment skills, pregnancy, abortion, neighborhood problems, and the use of drugs and/or alcohol.

* + - * + Categories of Responses

Self-Reports of Delinquency

Parental Appraisals of their Children

The Youths’ Internal Appraisals of themselves from their parents’, friends’, and teachers’ perspectives.

* + Additional Approaches to Collecting Crime Data
    - National Youth Gang Survey
      * Established by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Institute for Intergovernmental Research established the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC).
      * One of the primary tasks was to implement period national surveys to collect data on problems associated with youth gangs.
      * First survey was conducted in 1995.
    - Spatial Analyses of Crime
      * Incorporates where and when crimes occur.
      * Mapping crimes can provide such information as location, distance, direction, and pattern.