



Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Summary System

Frequently Asked Questions

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Q1. What is UCR?

A1. UCR is a city, county, and state law enforcement program which provides a nationwide view of crime based on the submission of statistics by law enforcement agencies throughout the country. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 1*)

Q2. When and how was the program implemented?

A2. In the 1920's, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) recognized the potential value in tracking national crime statistics. The Committee on Uniform Crime Records of the IACP developed and initiated this voluntary national data collection effort in 1930 and still continues to advise the FBI on the UCR Program process. During that same year, the IACP was instrumental in gaining Congressional approval which authorized the FBI to serve as the national clearinghouse for statistical information on crime. In June 1966, the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) established a Committee on Uniform Crime Reporting to serve in an advisory capacity and to encourage sheriffs throughout the country to fully participate in the Program. Since 1930, through the UCR Program, the FBI has collected and compiled data to use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management, as well as to indicate fluctuations in the level of crime in America. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 1*)

Q3. For which categories (e.g., penal, prosecution, arrest, conviction) are statistics collected through the UCR Program?

A3. To best depict total crime and to provide the most meaningful data to police administrators, it was determined that the UCR Program would specifically collect data on known offenses and persons arrested by police departments. Findings of a court, coroner, jury, or the decision of a prosecutor are not recorded since the intent of the data collection is specifically to assist in identifying the law enforcement problem. (*UCR Handbook, Pgs. 2 & 5*)

Q4. Which specific crimes are reported to the UCR Program, and why were these crimes identified for reporting?

A4. The selected offenses are 1) Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter, 2) Forcible Rape, 3) Robbery, 4) Aggravated Assault, 5) Burglary, 6) Larceny-Theft, 7) Motor Vehicle Theft, and 8) Arson. These are serious crimes by nature and/or volume. Not all crimes, such as Embezzlement, are readily brought to the attention of the police. Also, some serious crimes, such as Kidnapping, occur infrequently. Therefore, for practical purposes, the reporting of offenses known is limited to the selected crime classifications because they are the crimes most likely to be reported and most likely to occur with sufficient frequency to provide an adequate basis for comparison.

Arson was not originally part of the crime reporting process. Arson became the eighth Index crime as the result of a limited Congressional mandate in October 1978. With the passage of the Anti-Arson Act of 1982, Arson was permanently designated as reportable. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 2*)

Q5. What is the Crime Index total?

A5. The Crime Index total is the sum of selected offenses used to gauge fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime reported to law enforcement. The offenses included in the Crime Index total are the violent crimes of Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter, Forcible Rape, Robbery, and Aggravated Assault, and the property crimes of Burglary, Larceny-theft, and Motor Vehicle Theft. Because they are not consistently available, Arson figures are not included in the Crime Index total. Arson figures are added to the Crime Index total figures to obtain the Modified Crime Index total. (*Crime in the United States, 1995, Pg. 5*)

Q6. Is UCR participation mandatory?

A6. Participation in the National UCR Program is strictly voluntary. (*Crime in the United States, 1995, Pg. 1*)

Q7. To what extent are crime statistics reported to the UCR Program?

A7. During 1995, law enforcement agencies active in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program represented nearly 251 million United States inhabitants or 95 percent of the Nation's total population. (*Crime in the United States, 1995, Pg. 1*)

Q8. How are crimes estimated for publication in Crime in the United States?

A8. Due to the fact that not all law enforcement agencies provide complete data for a given year, it is sometimes necessary for the UCR Program to generate crime estimates at the local, state, and national levels. Using the known crime experiences of similar areas within a state, the estimates are computed by assigning the same proportional crime volumes to non-reporting agencies. The size of an agency, type of jurisdiction, e.g., police department versus sheriff's office, and geographic location are considered in the estimation process. A similar procedure is used for national arrest estimates.

Q9. Are agency populations provided by the Bureau of the Census?

A9. Bureau of the Census population figures are used. Otherwise, population figures for individual jurisdictions are estimated by the UCR Program in noncensus years. For example, in 1995 population figures for individual jurisdictions were updated by applying their 1995 state population growth rates to their 1994 population estimates.

Q10. Is there any program in operation which attempts to address unreported crime?

A10. Understanding the nature of unreported crime is an important dimension in the overall effort to combat crime. The U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) estimates the number of unreported serious crimes nationwide.

Q11. How do UCR and NCVS differ from one another?

A11. The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) were designed to complement each other. The UCR Program's primary objective is to provide a reliable set of criminal justice statistics for law enforcement administration, operation, and management, as well as to indicate fluctuations in the level of crime in America. The NCVS was established to obtain and provide previously unavailable information about victims, offenders, and crime (including crime not reported to the police). While the two programs employ different methodologies, they measure a similar subset of serious crimes.

Q12. Have there been any recent changes or developments in the UCR Program?

A12. Arson was not originally part of the crime reporting process. Arson became the eighth Index crime as the result of a limited Congressional mandate in October 1978. With the passage of the Anti-Arson Act of 1982, Arson was permanently designated as reportable.

In response to a growing concern about hate crimes, in 1990 Congress enacted the "Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990" which resulted in the UCR Program collection of data ". . . about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual-orientation, or ethnicity . . ." Although the mandate required data collection for only five years, the collection of hate crime data has become a permanent addition to the UCR Program. In September 1994, the Hate Crime Statistics Act was amended to include bias against persons with disabilities. In UCR, disability bias is defined as " a preformed negative opinion of or attitude toward a group of persons based on their physical or mental impairments/challenges, whether such disability is temporary or permanent, congenital, or acquired by heredity, accident, injury, advance age, or illness." (*Crime in the United States, 1995, Pg. 3, UCR Handbook, Pg. 2*)

Q13. What are classifying and scoring?

A13. Classifying is determining the proper crime category in which to report an offense in UCR. Classification is based on facts resulting from an agency's investigation of the crime. Scoring is counting the number of offenses after they have been classified and entering the total on the appropriate reporting form.

Classifying and scoring are the two most essential functions performed by a participant in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program. The data provided to the UCR Program are based on these two functions and, subsequently, are only as good as an agency's effort to follow UCR guidelines. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 33*)

Q14. What is the Hierarchy Rule?

A14. The Hierarchy Rule states: In a multiple-offense situation (i.e., one where several offenses are committed at the same time and place), after classifying all Part I offenses, score only the highest ranking offense, and ignore all others, regardless of the number of offenders and victims. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 33*)

Example:

Incident: During the commission of an armed bank robbery, the offender strikes a teller with the butt of a handgun. The robber runs from the bank and steals an automobile at curb side.

Classification: Robbery, Aggravated Assault, and Motor Vehicle Theft are three Part I offenses apparent in this situation. Each of these offenses appears on the report listed in a certain order, and of these three crimes, Robbery is the "highest" on the list. Therefore, this incident would be classified as Robbery, and, accordingly, one offense would be scored. All of the other offenses would be ignored. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 33*)

Q15. Are there any exceptions to the Hierarchy Rule?

A15. Yes. The Hierarchy Rule does not apply to Arson, which is always reported, even in multiple-offense situations. In addition, when Larceny and Motor Vehicle Theft occur in a multiple offense situation, Motor Vehicle Theft is always reported over Larceny. Other multiple offense exceptions to the Hierarchy Rule occur with instances of Justifiable Homicide. (*UCR Handbook, Pgs. 6, 7, 35, & 57*)

Q16. How can an offense be cleared?

A16. Part I offenses reported on the Return A of a UCR report can be cleared either by arrest or exceptional means. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 41*)

Q17. How is a crime cleared by arrest?

A17. An offense is "cleared by arrest" or solved for crime reporting purposes when at least one person is (1) arrested, or (2) charged with the commission of the offense and turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice). Although no physical arrest is made, a clearance by arrest can be claimed when the offender is a per-

son under 18 years of age and is cited to appear in juvenile court or before other juvenile authorities.

Several crimes may be cleared by the arrest of one person, or the arrest of many persons may clear only one crime. Further, if several persons are involved in the commission of a crime and only one is arrested and charged, the crime is listed on the Return A as cleared by arrest. When the other persons involved in the crime are arrested at a later date, no record will be made of a clearance by arrest since the offense was already cleared following the arrest of the first person.

The number of offenses and not the number of persons arrested are counted in the clearances recorded on the Return A. No more clearances than offenses can be reported in a given month unless clearance of offenses which were reported in previous months are being scored. (*UCR Handbook, Pgs. 41-42*)

Q18. What is an exceptional clearance?

A18. In certain situations, law enforcement is not able to follow the steps outlined under "clearance by arrest" to clear offenses known to them, even though all leads have been exhausted, and everything possible has been done in order to obtain a clearance. For crime reporting purposes, if the following questions can all be answered "yes," the offense can then be cleared "exceptionally."

1. Has the investigation definitely established the identity of the offender?
2. Is there enough information to support an arrest, charge, and turning over to the court for prosecution?
3. Is the exact location of the offender known so that the subject could be taken into custody now?
4. Is there some reason outside law enforcement control that precludes arresting, charging, and prosecuting the offender? (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 42*)

Q19. A store owner shoots at a robber, misses, and kills an innocent bystander. Would this be classified as a Criminal Homicide?

A19. This situation would be reported as a Robbery to UCR. The UCR definition of Criminal Homicide calls for "the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another." The circumstances in this situation do not meet this definition. The death of the bystander would be considered an accidental death which is not counted in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 6*)

Q20. A witness of a crime dies as a result of a heart attack. Is this incident classified and scored as a Murder?

A20. No. For UCR purposes, a Criminal Homicide is defined as "the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another." The policy governing the classification of criminal Homicide is contained on page 6 of the UCR Handbook. The applicable provision reads as follows: "Situations where a victim dies of a heart attack as the result of a robbery or witnessing a crime do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the Criminal Homicide classification. A heart attack cannot, in fact, be caused at will by an offender. Even in instances where an individual is known to have a weak heart, there is no assurance whatever that an offender can cause sufficient emotional or physical stress to guarantee the victim will suffer a fatal heart attack."

Q21. A nine-month pregnant woman is stabbed in the stomach. The baby is taken from the mother but is delivered dead due to the stabbing. The mother survives. Is this a Murder?

A21. No. Suicides, traffic fatalities, and fetal deaths are totally excluded from the UCR Program. The incident would be scored as one Aggravated Assault. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 6*)

Q22. A firefighter dies as a result of fighting a fire. It is later revealed the fire was an Arson. Is this a Murder?

A22. No. The UCR Program excludes arson-related deaths and injuries (unless willful murders or assaults) of police officers and firefighters due to the hazardous natures of their professions. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 30*)

Q23. *A husband assaults his wife and forces her against her will to have sexual intercourse. Is this a Rape?*

A23. Yes. For the purpose of Uniform Crime Reporting, the relationship of the offender and victim (in this case, husband and wife) does not affect the classification of the offense. (*UCR Handbook, Pg.10*)

Q24. *For UCR reporting purposes can a male be raped?*

A24. No. Sexual attacks on males should be classified as Assaults or "Other Sex Offenses," depending on the nature of the crime and the extent of injury. An Assault is a Part I offense and would be reported on Return A. "Other Sex Offenses" qualify as Part II offenses and would be reported on the appropriate age, sex, race, and ethnic origin form. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 10*)

Q25. *How is the illegal entry of several rooms in a hotel classified and scored?*

A25. Burglaries of hotels, motels, lodging houses, and other places where lodging of transients is the main function of the facility are scored under provisions of the "Hotel Rule." This principle of scoring dictates that if a number of dwelling units under a single manager are burglarized, and the offenses are most likely to be reported to the police by the manager rather than the individual tenants, the burglaries should be scored as one offense. Examples of the Hotel Rule are burglaries of a number of rental hotel rooms, rooms in "flop" houses, rooms in a youth hostel, and units in a motel.

If the individual living areas in a building are rented or leased to the occupants for a period of time which would preclude the tenancy from being classified as transient, then the burglaries would be reported separately by the occupants. These burglaries would be scored as separate offenses. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 20*)

Q26. *Three individuals are robbed in three separate motel rooms. Does the Hotel Rule apply?*

A26. No. The Hotel Rule may only be applied to the offense of Burglary. Robbery of individuals in three separate motel rooms should be scored as three offenses of Robbery. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 12*)

Q27. *A juvenile enters a convenience store and tells the attendant that he is holding up the store. The juvenile keeps his hand in his pocket and demands money. The juvenile receives the money from the attendant, at which time the juvenile flees the store. No weapon is observed. How is this classified?*

A27. In cases involving pretended weapons or those in which the weapon is not seen by the victim but the robber claims to possess one, the incident should be classified as Armed Robbery and scored accordingly. If an immediate "on view" arrest proves that there is no weapon, the offense should be classified as Strong-arm Robbery. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 12*)

Q28. *How should an incident be classified when an individual intentionally drives a motor vehicle into another occupied motor vehicle?*

A28. The incident should be classified as an Aggravated Assault regardless of the extent of injury sustained by the victim or amount of damage caused to the vehicles. This type of Assault would be classified opposite the 4C--Other Dangerous Weapon category of Assault. If the victim dies as a direct result of the incident, it would then be classified as a Homicide. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 16*)

Q29. *What factors are used to distinguish Aggravated from Simple Assault?*

A29. Generally, the weapon used and/or the extent of the injury sustained are the deciding factors in distinguishing Aggravated

from Simple Assault. In only a very limited number of instances should it be necessary to examine the intent of the assailant. Careful consideration of the following factors should assist in classifying Assaults:

1. The type of weapon employed or the use of an object as a weapon;
2. The seriousness of the injury;
3. The intent of the assailant to cause serious injury. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 17*)

Q30. An individual enters an open garage and steals several items. Would this be classified as a Burglary or a Larceny?

A30. This would be classified as "Burglary-Unlawful Entry-No Force." The entry in this burglary situation involves no force and is achieved by use of an unlocked door or window. The element of trespass to the structure is essential in this classification, which includes thefts from open garages, open warehouses, open or unlocked dwellings, and open or unlocked common basement areas in apartment houses where entry is committed other than by the tenant who has lawful access. If the area entered was one of open access, thefts from the area would not involve an unlawful trespass and would be scored as Larceny. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 21*)

Q31. When a break-in (unlawful) of a structure, such as a cabin or summer home which is occupied for only part of a year, occurs, and a theft or felony is committed, how is this crime classified and scored?

A31. When unlawful entry of a cabin or summer home occurs, a Burglary should be scored provided there is the intent to commit a felony or theft, and the building itself is, in fact, a structure. Occupation is not a factor in the consideration of the Burglary offense. *Page 20* of the UCR Handbook provides additional information regarding the offense of Burglary.

Q32. How would the following be classified? A homeowner returns home and surprises a burglar. The burglar physically attacks the homeowner, steals his property, and flees.

A32. Based on the facts that the homeowner is physically attacked and his property stolen, the incident must be classified as a Robbery.

Given the same set of circumstances, with the exception that the homeowner is not physically confronted by the burglar and merely observes the burglar exiting the residence, the incident would be classified as a Burglary, even if the burglar flees the residence empty-handed. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 20*)

Q33. A store detective observes a customer remove the price tag on an item and replace it with a price tag showing a lower price; the customer is arrested. This customer is not an employee nor is he authorized to change price tags. What type of crime is this?

A33. This incident should be considered a Part II crime and reported under the Fraud category. Fraud "consists of some deceitful practice or willful device, resorted to with the intent to deprive another or in some way to do an injury." (*UCR Handbook, Pgs. 24-25*)

Q34. An owner of a mobile home dealership, upon opening the business in the morning, learns that five of the mobile homes for sale on the lot were broken into during the night, and kitchen appliances were taken from all five mobile homes. How would this crime be classified/scored?

A34. This situation should be classified as a Larceny and scored as one offense. In order to fit the description of a "structure," which would result in the classification of Burglary, a mobile home must qualify as a permanent dwelling. The mobile homes in question are not permanent; hence the Larceny classification. (*UCR Handbook, Pgs. 20, 24, & 26*)

Q35. An individual drives into a gasoline station and requests gasoline be pumped into his motor vehicle. He then leaves the station without paying. What type of crime is this?

A35. By asking for the gasoline, the individual enters into an implied contract. His departure without paying constitutes the offense of Fraud. Fraud is a Part II offense, and if an arrest were made, it would be reported on the age, sex, race, and ethnic origin form. An individual who takes gasoline from a self-service station without paying commits a Larceny-theft (no implied contract), sub-classified as (I) "All Other Larceny." Gasoline taken from a parked vehicle would be Larceny-theft, sub-classified as (E) "Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts and Accessories." (*UCR Handbook, Pgs. 25-26, & 79*)

Q36. A pickup truck with a camper containing camping equipment is stolen. The truck and camper are recovered but the equipment is missing. How would this be scored?

A36. When it is necessary to choose between Larceny-theft and Motor Vehicle Theft, such as in this case, the offense should be classified and scored as Motor Vehicle Theft. Motor Vehicle Theft is a special type of Larceny-theft. It is a separate classification because of the volume of such thefts and the prevailing law enforcement need for specific statistics on this offense. (*UCR Handbook, Pg. 35*)

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