Sources of Crime Data

Violent crime rates
Adjusted victimization rate
per 1,000 persons age 12 and over

How do we know when crime is "up" or "down?"

Where do we get the data?

- Two Main sources and both come from the Justice Dept. of the Federal government (hmm…)
- FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)
  - Police Reports
- National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
  - Social Scientific Survey Data – sort of like a "CNN poll"

FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

- "Crimes known to the police"
- "Part I Offenses" are the "most serious"
  - murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft, and (since 1979) arson.
- Compiled into a Crime index
  - expressed as a rate ___ per 1,000 or ___ per 100,000
- Hierarchy Rule
  - order above and arson “breaks the rule”
- Clearance Rate (see last slide for critical update!)

Part I Offenses Broken Down

- “Part I Violent Crimes”
  - murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault
- “Part I Property Crimes”
  - burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny-theft, “and” arson (which is really its own type)

Part I Violent Definitions

- UCR Definitions NOT the same as Legal Definitions!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Murder
  - all homicides not including suicide, self defense, accidents, and attempted murders
- Forcible Rape
  - Legacy definition (before 2013): "The carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will" thus no male or child rapes
  - Revised definition (since 2013): "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." -- now includes males
- Robbery
  - requires face to face interaction
- Aggravated Assault
  - use of a weapon or medical attention

Part I Property Definitions

- UCR Definitions NOT the same as Legal Definitions!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Burglary
  - unlawful entry with intent, locked or unlocked including attempt
- Larceny (theft)
  - Theft of any amount but excluding embezzlement, forgery, bad checks, and con games
- Motor Vehicle theft
  - theft of a self propelled motor vehicle
- In its own category!!! Arson
  - burning or attempted with our with out attempt to defraud
Part II Offenses

- These are counted using arrests rather than "crimes known to the police" (or reports).
- They include many "victimless crimes" such as drug use, public drunkenness, prostitution, gambling as well as some of the minor offenses like disorderly conduct, simple assault, etc. Note that embezzlement is included here!

Criticisms of UCR

- Under counts crime
  - not all crime reported
  - Hierarchy rule
- Over counts crime
  - counting attempts inflate the rate
- "Crimes known to police" is ambiguous
- Underestimates but over dramatizes crime
- Ignores corporate crime
- UCR reports manipulated for political gain
- "False increases"
- Focus on street crime distorts def of "crime"
- Time clock is joke.

UCR to be Replaced

- UCR is to be replaced by National Incidence Based Reporting System (NIBRS).
- New system was supposed to be in place by 1999 but according to Schmalleger (2001), less than 6% of US population is represented by this new counting system.
- UCR Website: http://www.fbi.gov

Distribution of Part I Offenses

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Update about "Clearance Rate" (CR)

- CR = proportion of crimes that result in an arrest
- CR does not measure "crime" it measures "policing"
- why a "cleared" crime does NOT = "solved crime"
  - "conviction" = "solved" in US Criminal Justice System
  - "clearances" and individual crimes NOT connected – only raw numbers reported for each year
- "clearance" shows up if 2009. Probably all works out in the end though...
- making cops keep track of both "convictions" and to "connect" individual crimes not easy and NOT CHEAP.
  - Fixing CR requires some "Policy Trade Off," either accept less "cops on the street" or increase police budgets substantially. No perfect "fix" for CR's problems
  - If you write a "fix UCR paper" in this course you MUST acknowledge this policy tradeoff (and your choice) AND that the CR measures "policing" rather than crime