

## MODULE 1 - WHERE ARE WE?

### LECTURE 10 - CUISC – CRIME TRENDS

#### WHY HAVE CRIME RATES DECREASED SO MUCH?

Alright, let's **chew on** that effectiveness and CJ filter stuff a little. Remember that first perspective thing we went over before (4.5 billion years, 200 empires, etc.).

The **NCVS started** in 1973.<sup>26</sup> Not exactly 5,000 years ago, but at least it started then. Most countries still don't have anything as comparable or as accurate. So how can they know what their real crime rates are, I wonder? I don't know. I wish somebody would explain that to me. That seems kind of important to know when we try to compare rates between countries.

Over the years, the **highest number** of violent crimes the NCVS ever reported was 51 per 1,000 people in 1994, but the number of these crimes had dropped steadily since then. In 2012, there were just 26 violent crimes per 1,000 people, and in 2009 there were only 17 – that was the lowest number ever counted. Wow – from 51 to 17 in just 15 years – how did we do that? Actually, I don't think we really know for sure yet. See **how good we are?** Even when we do good, we can't even figure out how or why. No joke.

**Similarly, for property** crimes, the high count was 553 per 1,000 households in 1975, and in 2012 it was 156 per 1,000 households. Again, from 553 to 156 in just 37 years – somebody must be doing something right! I just wish I knew what. Maybe we're becoming more like those tiny countries when we looked at the international murder crime data. I mean the tiny countries with the low murder rates, not the ones with the high murder rates, of course!

So the NCVS, which is our best national indicator of **Visible crimes committed**, clearly shows a **marked decrease** in numbers of Index-similar crimes over the past several decades, to some of the lowest levels – ever! Or at least since 1973.

The **UCR also** shows corresponding decreasing trends in the number of Index crimes **reported to the police**. Man, we're on a roll here! **Pat-on-the-back** time yet?

- Some say that about a 10% increase in the roughly 750,000 force of state and local sworn officers that began during the 1990s accounted for the decreases in crime –the more police - less crime argument. But crime actually **began to decrease** well before the number of police began to increase. **Whoops!**

- Others say the higher **incarceration** rates and longer sentences were responsible – the ol’ more criminals in prison - fewer on the street argument. Between the 1990s and 2010, the number of people incarcerated grew from about one million to a little over two million.<sup>128</sup> Quite an increase, but again the incarceration patterns don’t quite match the decreases in crime time-wise. And it seems most criminals **never even get caught** or go to prison, anyway!

- Still others say that, after the 1973 US Supreme Court decision in the Roe v. Wade case, which essentially **legalized abortion**, increases in abortion rates since then would have decreased the numbers of the highest crime-prone group of our population (18 to 24 year olds) by the 1990s, when violent crime began to subside. Indeed, in 2011 it was estimated that **almost 50 million** women had abortions since 1973.<sup>58</sup> But critics say that crime among older criminals began to decrease before crime among younger ones.

- There is also an argument that the wave of **drug abuse** that began in the 1960s, started to subside in the 1990s.<sup>56</sup> I wonder why – I don’t think we ran short on the supply end, and I thought we were losing the war on drugs. That’s why we need to legalize marijuana, right?

As an interesting aside here, just to **get your juices flowing** even more by comparing annual statistics, about 17,000 or so people die of illegal drugs (2004 data), but about 33,000 die of controlled legal drugs (2012), about 25,000 die of legal alcohol consumption (2010), and about 35,000 die from motor vehicle accidents (2010 data).<sup>136, 137</sup> Seems like the legal activities are more dangerous than the illegal ones, so maybe we’re not losing the drug war as much as we thought. OK, now go argue somewhere else, please.

I think the researchers are **still working** on this problem and haven’t quite gotten in all sorted out yet. But it is certainly fascinating, and when we do figure it out, it could have quite positive ramifications for dealing with crime in our society in a more rational way in the coming years. Or maybe we could just ask some of those other countries with lower crime and incarceration rates~~ They would know, right, SKEPTICAL TRAVELER?

## WHY DON'T PEOPLE REPORT CRIME?

Getting back to reality, in 2012, the NCVS reported that 44% of the violent crimes and about 34% of the property crimes it identified in its surveys were reported to the police. When the people who said they were victims in the NCVS survey were asked **why they did not report** a crime to the police, their responses included that they didn't think the police would or could help; that it was a personal/private matter; that the severity of the offense was not sufficient; that they feared reprisal; and that they wanted to protect the offender (typically a relative or acquaintance).<sup>27</sup> **Butt-kicking** time yet?

Now let's **scrub down that CJ Filter data** – seems a little **squishy** to me. It starts off with 1,000 serious crimes. I assume that's the Index crimes, probably just the FARM, or MRRR, ones. Oh, come on, you remember those acronyms, right? If you don't keep them in your head, then how do you expect to use them? Document them, or something!

Anyway, if **half**, or 500 of the 1,000 are reported to the police, that agrees roughly with what the NCVS says about the violent crimes. And if **100** people are arrested, that's about 20% of 500, which is the overall clearance rate for UCR Index crimes. But that 20% includes both FARM and LAMB crimes – the average clearance rate for just FARM crimes is closer to 45%. And it seems to get even hazier from there. Also, we have an issue of **one person** having committed one crime and being arrested for it, and another person having been arrested for committing **multiple crimes** (serial burglars, rapists, etc.), but still just being counted as one person. Well, the NCVS counts persons, but the UCR counts the number of offenses reported. So are we counting people or crimes here? I'm not clear on how all that got figured into the CJ Filter calculations. But, in any event, even with all that fudging going on, 27 convictions for 1,000 crimes still seems pretty skimpy. And skimpy seems to be a pretty generous way to describe it. So why doesn't somebody check all that out? **Idunno**. Not important, I guess. But until somebody convinces me otherwise, I still remain in fear of the 90% of crimes that go undetected and unpunished in our society.

Next, let's take a closer look at what's going on with the **other four major** crime categories.

Although, as I mentioned earlier, we don't have any comprehensive **counting** systems for them, at least we're not seeing huge crime waves in what we do know about them. Of course, seeing and knowing are the operative words here.

These crimes, as you already know, are not normally reported to the police.

These **hummers** are crimes **without clear victims** to report them. People who sell, buy and use drugs usually don't like to tell the police what they are doing. Neither do gangs engaged in illegal activities. Many corporations don't tell the police about occupational crimes because they fear damage to their reputation and the loss of economic value to investors. And spies and terrorists don't want the police to know about what they are doing, either, for obvious reasons. You get the point here. I mean, it's **not exactly brain surgery**, eh?

So if nobody reports the crimes, then the traditional police investigation process of **waiting to be notified** of a crime in order to react to it **doesn't work too well**, does it? Know what I'm saying?

It's like, "the crooks don't want to tell the police what they're doing that's going to cost us a trillion bucks EVERY YEAR, because we may eventually convict 27 of them for every 1,000 crimes committed." Man, that probably really **has them shaking in their boots**, don't you think?

So we don't want to give the police more latitude to investigate crime because we're afraid that **maybe the police will hurt us**. Not as much as the criminals hurt us, but still. The criminals hurt us enough, we don't need the police piling on. So there. Our rights and privacy are worth more than our personal and family security, and more than a trillion smackers EVERY YEAR!" Well, I'm glad we finally **sorted that out!** There's plenty of **comfort** in that, right?

Oh, don't get upset, DISMAYED TRAVELER, that was just a **little rant** there, just to stir up some passion ~

### **WHY DON'T WE DO PROACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS?**

But consider this. If the police are really going to address these crimes, they can't just sit around waiting to react to them, right? Well, then....

They have to **become proactive**. Merely responding after the ACTION and ESCAPE phases of a crime are completed and the offender is a FUGITIVE does not stop the crime from occurring in the first place.

So the police have to focus on **PREVENTING AND DETECTING** these crimes in the PLAN phase and stopping them before they reach the ACTION phase, or at least interrupting the ACTION phase before it is completed.

In fact, they actually do conduct some investigations in the PREVENT and DETECT phases (drugs, gang

activity, and such-like), but they are not included in the UCR Index crimes, so we don't have much data on them.

This is particularly important in dealing with **spies and terrorists**, as the damage they can do is often catastrophic (recall Ames, Hanssen and 9/11). For them, we need lots of PREVENTING and DETECTING. (Heh-heh-heh!)

So for these crime categories where the police have to be more proactive, we expanded the CUIISC acronym to **CUIPDSC, C-U-I-P-D-S-C**, remember? Come on, **come on, keep up!**

But there's a **catch!** **Aw, geez**, there's always that. The PREVENTION and DETECTION of CUIPDSC typically involves a greater emphasis on **covert**, rather than overt, investigative techniques, such as the use of informants, undercover activities, surveillance, electronic eavesdropping, some search/seizure activities, etc., similar to those used regarding **Political crimes** (counterintelligence investigations). And in our society, these things can be quite problematic (**problem-o's**, eh?). We'll talk a lot more about this in later lectures. A lot more. And we already touched upon it a little bit earlier with our teasers about security vs. privacy.

It seems that most people report crimes based on whether they think it is in their **best self-interest** to do so.<sup>28</sup> Shocking! What kind of world are we living in, anyway?

If they, as victims or community members, are **seeking justice or want to be free** from crime, they will likely **report** crimes they are aware of that other people have committed.

However, if they think that reporting crimes to the police **threatens their personal interests or status** (like, if they are the "**perps**," then they will likely **not report** them. Sounds reasonable enough. I mean, really....

This seems to be true both with **Visible** crimes and crimes in the **other four major** crime categories as well. Astounding!!

This theme of **community and security vs. privacy and individual** interests (that Socrates stuff again) and how it influences the reporting of crime information to police is **mirrored** in how information is processed throughout our CJ system. In fact, because this is so important, we're going to chat about this in more detail in the next lecture. So keep up! I don't want to have to start **ragging** on anybody yet.

