

National Incident-Based Reporting System: How We Got Here

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THE POST'S VIEW

Opinion

Is crime going up, down or sideways? Don't ask the FBI.

12/28/2022

By the Editorial Board

Flow

- Interesting historical parallels
- What's behind the numbers
- Where we are today
- The road to tomorrow
- The day after tomorrow

Wickersham Commission, 1929

- Report on the Lawlessness of Police
 - “Physical brutality, illegal detention, and refusal to allow access of counsel to the prisoner is common”

A plan of action

- A need for uniformity in crime reporting
- A way to indicate national crime trends
- A way to make penal codes comparable
- A sample of 300 agencies

The Result:

A uniform crime reporting system

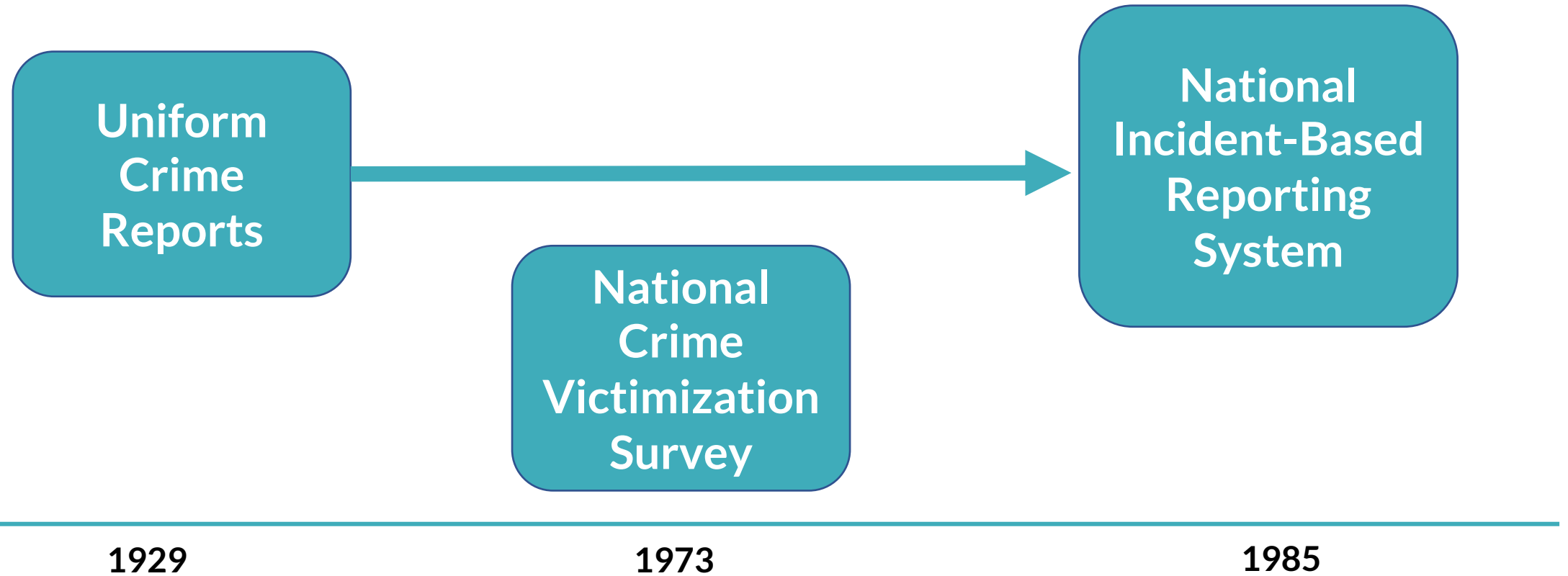
Origins of UCR—Part I crimes

- Murder and non-negligent manslaughter
- Robbery
- Rape
- Aggravated assault
- Burglary
- Larceny-theft
- Motor vehicle theft
- Arson (added in 1979)

Limitations of the UCR

- Only 8 offenses counted in the summary statistics
- Counting only the most serious single offense in a crime
- The lack of victims reporting some crimes to the police
- The inability to drill down into the data
- The focus on crimes in a single location
- The use of state penal codes to classify crime

The crime reporting evolution



2016: A watershed year

- Major law enforcement associations support ending summary UCR
- FBI Director declares UCR summary reporting system ending in January 2021
- FBI and BJS collaborate to fund states and major cities to convert to NIBRS
- United Nations defines international crime statistics taxonomy
- National Academies propose new taxonomy for crime reporting

The Result:
A true paradigm shift

What NIBRS DOES

- Reports multiple offenses in an incident
- Includes 52 crime categories to include more modern crimes
- Requires submittal of 58 data elements for each crime
- Introduces victim characteristics and relationships to offender
- Adds victims of domestic violence, identify theft, animal cruelty, and cybercrime

The Case for NIBRS

- The discipline of NIBRS will improve data quality
- NIBRS improves crime classification accuracy
- NIBRS improves the capability for tactical crime analysis
- When common standards are used , information sharing is easier
- Enhanced reporting quality due to NIBRS supports data driven policing
- Use of NIBRS supports regional data aggregation
- Modern records management systems contain NIBRS data elements

The NIBRS Impact

Evidence-based policing

The NIBRS Enabler

Benchmarking agency performance

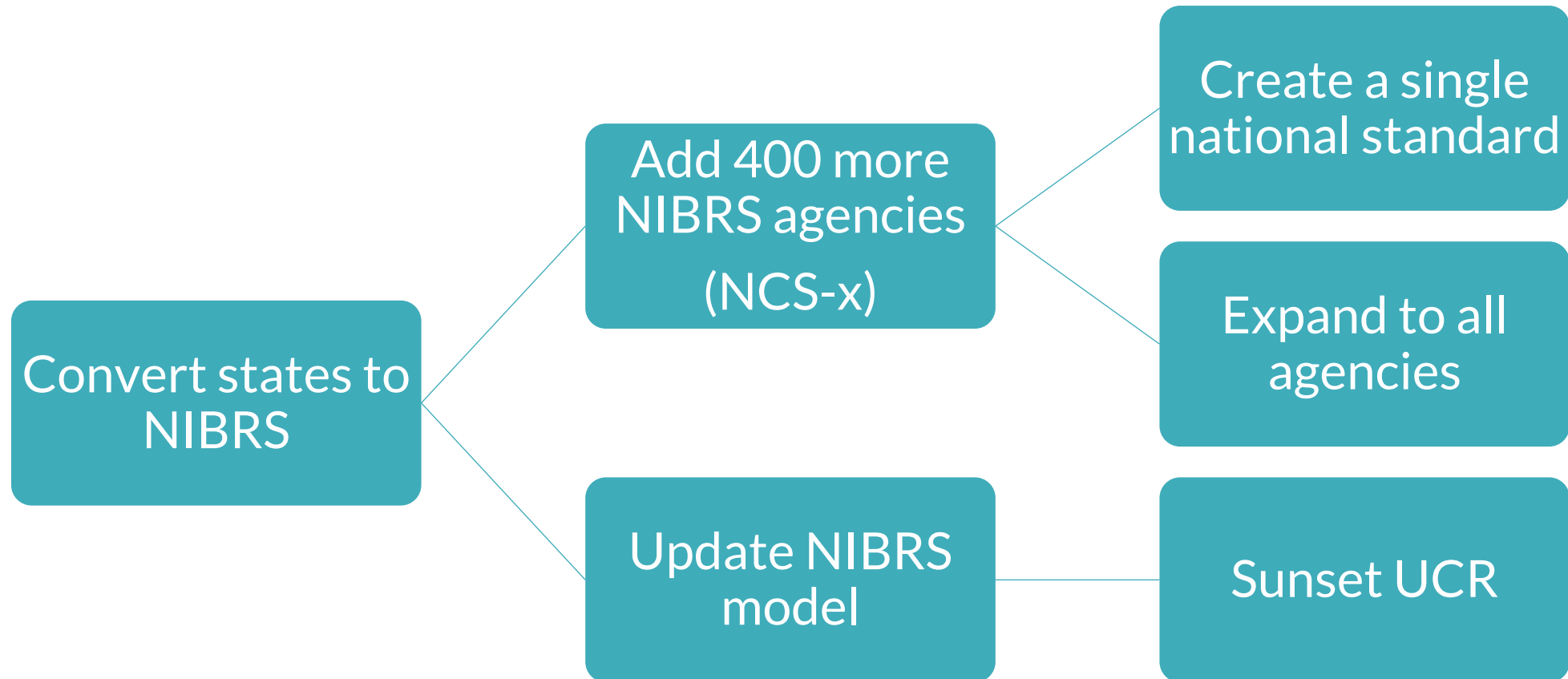
The NIBRS Driver

Public policy formulation

The NIBRS Insight

Crime problem segmentation

The time is right



NIBRS Adoption in May 2023

States certified to submit NIBRS--50

Agencies certified to submit NIBRS—14,363

Agencies not certified to submit NIBRS—4,790

Population served by NIBRS reporting—77.3%

Source: BJS

%AGENCIES CERTIFIED in May 2023

CT-100%	TN-100	MA-99.8	KS-94.8	NB-75.4
DC-100	VA-100	OR-99.8	GA-92.7	MS-63.2
DE-100	VT-100	UT-99.8	AL-90.3	AZ-62.1
ID-100	WV-100	AR-99.7	NM-85.7	NJ-60.9
KY-100	CO-100	NV-99.6	HI-85.7	AK-60.6
ME-100	MN-99.9	TX-98.8	IN-84.7	CA-54.7
MT-100	MI-99.9	MO-98.7	IL-80.4	PA-41.6
ND-100	IA-99.9	OH-97.6	MD-79.7	FL-32
OK-100	NH-99.9	NC-97.1	WY-78.1	NY-23.4
SC-100	RI-99.9	WI-95.6	LA-76.3	SD-100

Where to find crime data

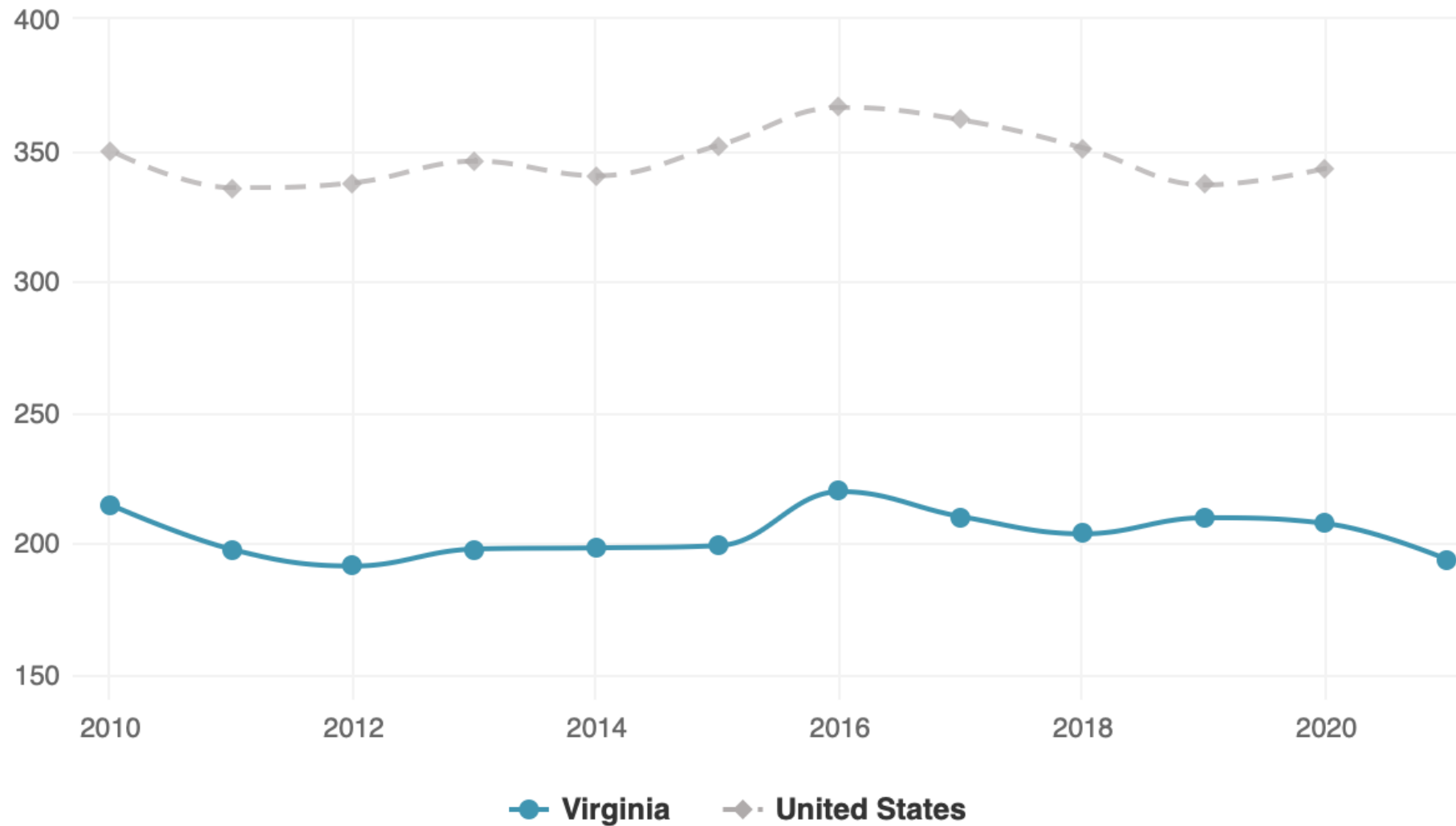
LEARNCAT--Bureau of Justice Statistics

Crime Data Explorer--FBI

- <https://learcat.bjs.ojp.gov/IncidentsCrime?Data%20Year=2021&Unit%20of%20Analysis=Count>

Violent crime in Virginia

Crime reported to police per 100,000 residents



Leftovers

GOVERNANCE

RELEVANCE

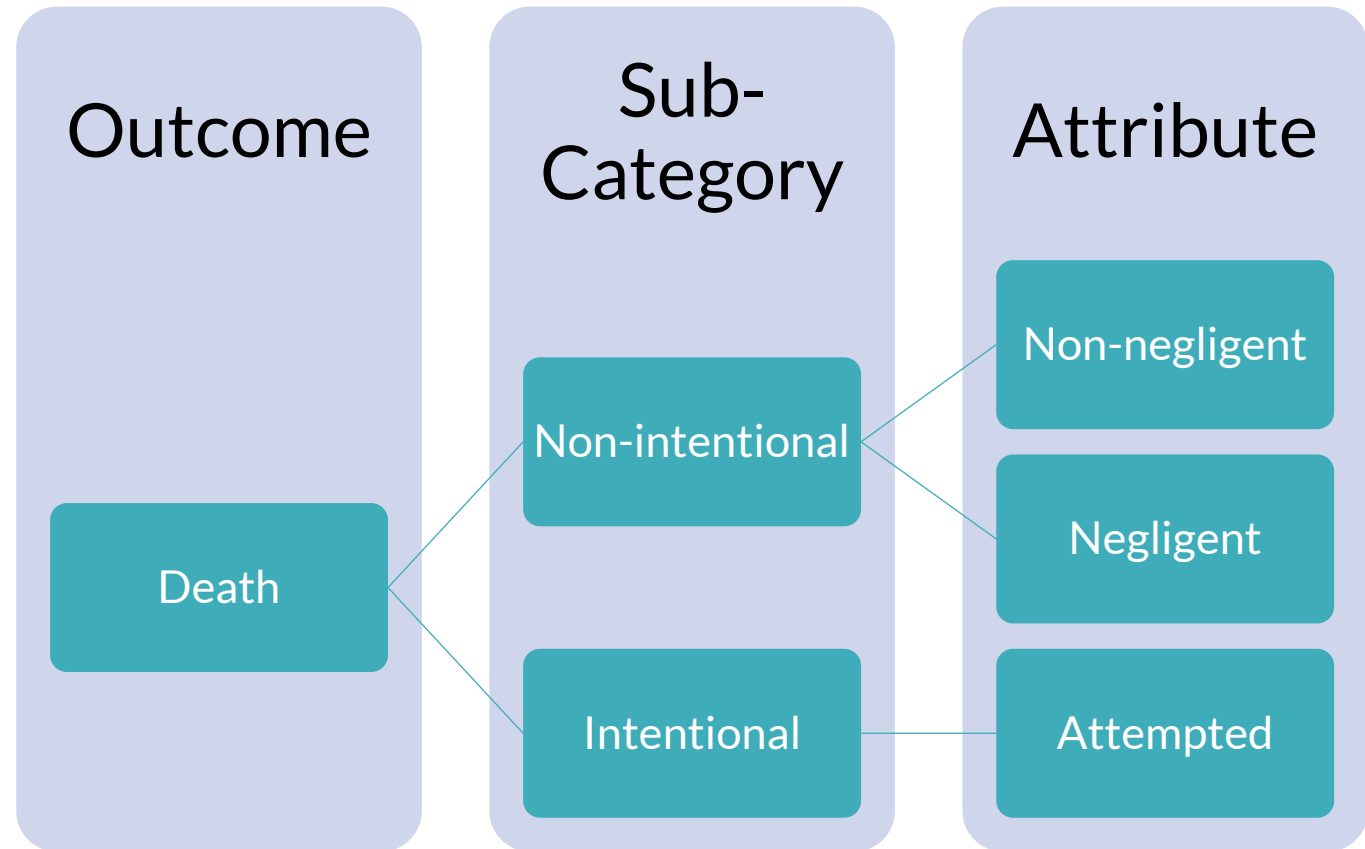
VARIANCE

OBSOLESCENCE

TRANSPARENCE

Beyond NIBRS

A
New
Taxonomy



A new taxonomy of crime

- Acts leading to death or to intending to cause death
- Causing harm or intending to cause harm to the person
- Injurious acts of a sexual nature
- Acts of violence or threatened violence against a person that involve property
- Acts against property only
- Acts involving controlled substances
- Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption
- Acts against public safety and national security
- Acts against the natural environment or against animals
- Other criminal acts not otherwise classified

PANEL ON MODERNIZING THE NATION'S CRIME STATISTICS

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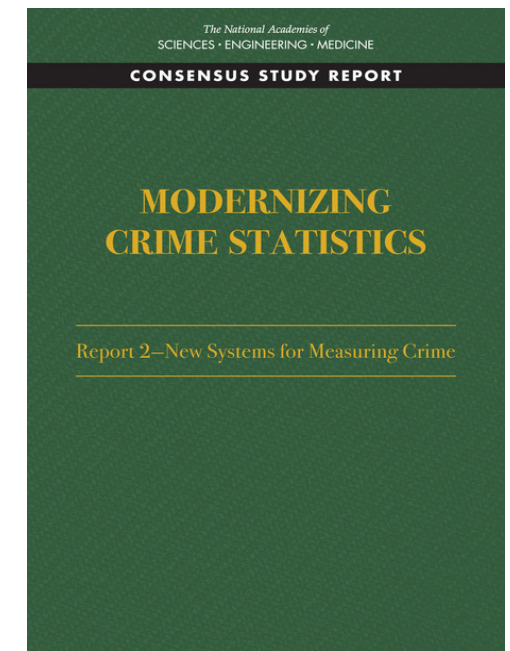
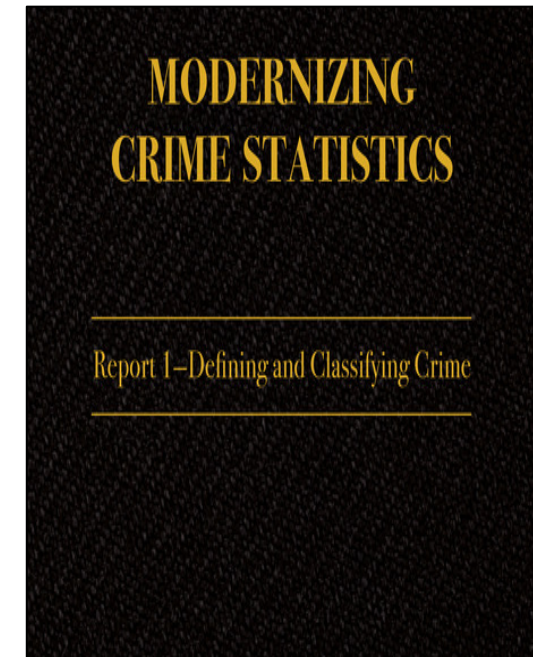
Paul K. Wormeli, Wormeli Consulting, LLC, Ashburn, Virginia (Liaison from Committee on Law
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Daniel L. Cork, Study Director

Seth Hauser, Senior Program Officer (February–October 2015)

Edward Spar, Senior Program Officer (through September 2014)

Michael Siri, Program Associate



Charge to the Panel - To evaluate and make recommendations in the following three areas:

Report 1

Substantive – Development of a framework for identifying the types of crimes to be considered in a modern crime classification

Report 2

Methodological – Assessment of methods to collect the data, including appropriateness of existing methods currently used by FBI and BJS

Implementation – How to maximize use of locally collected and existing data (a voluntary system), minimize the effects on law enforcement operations, and meet the needs of stakeholders

Report 1 Conclusions and Recommendation

Conclusion 5.1: The definitions and concepts in the current U.S. crime statistics system were developed primarily from categorization of statutory language, which varies by jurisdiction. Reliance on statutory language is inflexible and not comprehensive, and it is unduly focused on limited input sources (reports from police/law enforcement or individual victims).

Conclusion 5.2: “Crime” continues to evolve and take different shapes. Accordingly, there is a need for an expansive framework for crime classification that is amenable to periodic revision.

Report 2: Summary

- **Panel's Assessment:** Principal barrier to change/improvement is that no entity has ownership or responsibility for crime statistics as a whole
 - Central reasons for relatively “passive” mode include reservation of criminal justice functions to the states and respect for voluntary data contribution
 - Understandable, but problematic for producing quality crime data
- **Report identifies and defines ideal roles for:**
 - Coordination, or an “honest broker” role for managing day-to-day data flows
 - Governance, or determination of system content, procedures, and products

Report 2 Conclusions

- **Conclusion 3.1:** A stronger federal coordination role is needed in the production of the nation's crime statistics: providing resources for information systems development, working with software providers to implement standards, and shifting some burden of data standardization from respondents to the state and federal levels. The goal of this stronger role is to make crime data collection a product of routine operations.
- **Conclusion 3.2:** Having an effective governance structure for the complete U.S. crime statistics enterprise is critical. There is currently no entity responsible for reporting on the full range of crimes in the proposed classification (most notably for top-level categories 6–11).

Report 2 Summary Recommendation

Recommendation 3.1: The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) should explore the range of coordination and governance processes for the complete U.S. crime statistics enterprise—including the “new” crime categories—and then establish such a structure. The structure must ensure that all of the component functions of generating crime statistics are conducted in concordance with the sensibilities, principles, and practices of a statistical agency. It should provide for user and stakeholder involvement in the process of refining and updating the underlying classification of crime. The new governance process also needs to take responsibility for the dissemination of data products, including the production of a new form of Crime in the United States that includes the “new” crime categories.

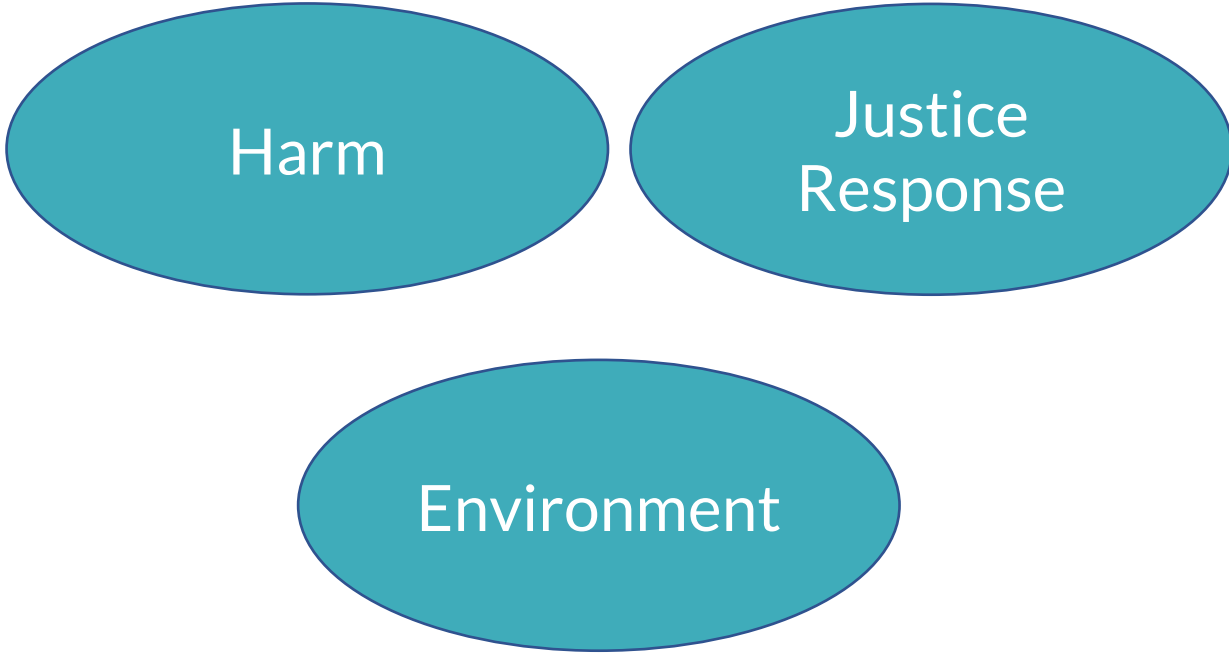
The new purpose of the justice enterprise

...to ensure neighborhood wellness

Crime Indicators Working Group, for the
Bureau of Justice Statistics

The day after tomorrow

A
New
Vision of
Incident
Reporting



But for now.....

- There is more data available today on crime
- We don't know how much crime there is in the U.S.
- Crime trends cannot be measured by a single offense
- We have far less violent crime in 2023 than in the 1990s
- Violent crime is not increasing significantly
- Exception: Gun violence is increasing
- We need to know more about the impact of crime

THE PATH TO UNDERSTANDING crime trends RELIES ON:

- Incident based reporting for all crime categories
- True national standards for data
- Careful explanation of national data
- National, state and local leadership
- An informed public