



A Publication of the  
Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit

# ALASKA JUSTICE FORUM

Justice Center  
School of Justice

Spring 1988

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Vol. 5, No. 1

## Crime in Anchorage Declines

According to preliminary statistics released in April by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, crime increased nationwide but declined in Anchorage in 1987. The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting statistics are based on an index of selected offenses: murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson. The figures include individual statistics only for cities with populations over 100,000.

The figures for Anchorage reveal a decline in reported numbers for all index offenses from 1986 to 1987. Total offenses reported to the FBI dropped to 13,910 from 16,668 in 1986, a decline of almost 17 per cent. Murder declined 12 per cent, from 17 to 15; forcible rape declined 7 per

cent, from 167 to 154; aggravated assault dropped 16 per cent, from 684 to 571; and robbery, 14 per cent from 330 to 285. Burglary declined 25 per cent, from 2,824 to 2,113; larceny-theft dropped 14 per cent, from 11,071 to 9,491; motor vehicle theft declined 19 per cent, from 1,386 to 1,117 and arson dropped 13 per cent from 189 to 164. (The population in Anchorage declined from 236,934 to 231,492 from July, 1986 to July, 1987, according to the Alaska Department of Labor; migration from the city during the same period is estimated at 9,673.)

The total number of serious crimes reported to law enforcement agencies nationwide rose 2 per cent overall from 1986 to 1987. The rise marked the third consecutive annual increase in reported crime.

### HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The Bureau of Justice Statistics examines drunk driving (p. 3).
- State court filings examined (p. 2).

Among the violent crimes reported, aggravated assault was up nationally 2 per cent from 1986. Decreases recorded for the other three reported violent offenses were: murder, 4 per cent; forcible rape, 1 per cent; and robbery, 5 per cent.

The individual property crimes of larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft registered index upswings of 3 and 5 per cent, respectively, while the burglary volume dropped 1 per cent. Arson decreased by 5 per cent.

The 1987 preliminary figures indicated an overall rise of 1 per cent in the Midwest, 3 per cent in the Northeast, and 4 per cent in the South. The West experienced the only decline, a drop of 1 per cent.

Following the trend for the nation as a whole, the index volume in cities with populations over 50,000 and in suburban and rural areas nationwide was also up 2 per cent.

*(The comprehensive analysis of Uniform Crime Report data for 1987 will be released by the FBI in late summer. "Crime in Alaska," the annual study compiled by the Alaska Department of Public Safety, is also scheduled for release in the summer.)*

### SEARCH Conference

The Justice Center and SEARCH Group, Inc. will co-sponsor a seminar entitled "Microcomputer Technology for Criminal Justice Agencies" September 21 to September 23, 1988. The program is designed to provide criminal justice managers with an overview of microcomputer technology.

The seminar will examine concepts of data processing and peripheral issues surrounding the planning, acquisition, operations and maintenance of computer systems in a criminal justice agency. The training will include demonstrations of microcomputer technology.

SEARCH Group, Inc., the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the criminal justice system through technology. SEARCH is based in Sacramento, California.

Funding for the training seminar is provided through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. There is no tuition charge. Criminal justice professionals interested in attending the seminar should contact the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

## State Court Filings

More than 14.3 million new civil cases—including torts, contracts, small claims, and domestic relations cases—were filed in limited and general jurisdiction state courts in 1985, according to a report released by the National Center for State Courts. In Alaska in 1985, 42,361 civil cases were filed.

More than 9.3 million new criminal cases were filed in limited and general jurisdiction state courts in 1985. State appellate courts, including courts of last resort and intermediate appellate courts, recorded more than 180,000 new filings. Alaska reported 29,489 criminal filings.

These and other data about state court caseloads are reported in the National Center's *State Court Caseload Statistics: Annual Report 1985*, the latest in a series of reports compiling and comparing caseload statistics between and among states. Appellate, civil, criminal, traffic, and juvenile caseload (filings and dispositions); dispositions as a percentage of filings; and filings per capita for all state courts providing comparable and complete data for 1985 are reported.

The words "comparable and complete" are important, because not every state reports data in such a way as to be included in the National Center's analysis. As noted in the *1985 Annual Report*, "Despite encouraging signs regarding advancements in the quality and quantity of data, a significant amount of relevant data remain uncollected by the state and local courts. The lack of complete, comprehensive data renders any attempt at providing realistic national caseload forecasts, with these case types, a futile exercise."

The problems encountered in trying to collect complete state court caseload data include the lack of uniform case classifications between states, the lack of uniform methods of counting cases, the lack of complete data reported by the courts, questions related to the validity of the data collected, and variations in the subject

matter jurisdiction of the courts. Alaska civil case data are over-inclusive both because the total figures include postconviction remedy proceedings and because the method of counting support/custody cases differs from the norm. Alaska criminal case data are also over-inclusive and only 75 percent complete for 1985.

Civil litigation rates, including tort filings, do not follow national patterns but instead vary from state to state and even year to year within a state. While some states reported increases in the amount of civil litigation from 1984 to 1985, others reported decreases, and still others reported little or no change. Although more states reported increases than decreases, no consistent national pattern in civil litigation or tort rates emerged from the study.

As might be expected, increases in new small claims filings were tied to increases in the jurisdiction of small claims courts. In the twelve states that increased the jurisdiction of their small claims courts, filings increased by 17 percent, compared to only one percent in states where the jurisdiction was unchanged. In general, the larger the increase in the amount of jurisdiction, the larger the increase in new small claims filings.

The National Center's *1985 Annual Report* concludes "the per capita filing rates of tort, contract, real property rights, and small claims cases, and changes in their per capita filing rates, vary significantly among states reporting complete and comparable data between 1981 and 1985. . . such differences are currently difficult to explain—a fact which precludes any national generalizations. These filing rates are increasing in some states, decreasing in others, and remaining essentially unchanged in still other jurisdictions. . . . Therefore, it is not especially surprising that there remain significant differences of opinion as to the existence of any national trends in civil litigation filings among

state trial courts."

The National Center's series of annual reports is the result of continuing cooperation between the Conference of State Court Administrators and the National Center for State Courts. The *1985 Annual Report* lists the most current, complete, and comparable national data available on the work of the state courts. It contains information about statewide filings and dispositions of state appellate and trial courts, their organization, and jurisdiction, and is a handy reference to details of court operations.

*(The National Center for State Courts is a national nonprofit organization that assists state courts through research, training, information services, and direct technical assistance. The annual report may be purchased through the Publications Coordinator at the National Center for State Courts, 300 Newport Avenue, Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8798.*

## Corrections History Video

The Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage is producing a videotape history of corrections in Alaska since the time of statehood. This program will incorporate old file footage, photographs and slides of correctional facilities and personnel with a brief narrative. It will be used by the Justice Center in its public education mission.

This production has been funded in part by a grant from the Alaska Humanities Forum. It is scheduled for completion in the fall.

Parties who know of possible sources of photographs or slides or who have information which might aid in the research and writing of the history are invited to contact Janet Eidson at the Justice Center (786-1810).

## A BJS Report

## Drunk Driving

In 1986 more than 158 million persons held driver's licenses in the United States—nearly 86 per cent of the population age 16 and over. The FBI estimates nearly 1.8 million arrests were made by state and local police agencies during the same year for driving under the influence of an intoxicating substance. Also during 1986, 46,056 motor vehicle fatalities occurred; about 40 per cent were probably alcohol-related, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that between 1970 and 1986 the rate of arrest for DUI rose more than 127%, from 498 arrests per 100,000 licensed drivers to 1,131. (DUI is the general term for drivers who operate a motor vehicle after having consumed an intoxicant; DWI, in this report, specifically refers to inmates in local jails who were charged with driving while intoxicated by alcohol.) The peak year, 1983, reflected a record 1,921,000 arrests—about 1 arrest for every 80 licensed drivers.

Other major findings of the BJS report include the following.

- Between 1970 and 1986 arrests for DUI increased nearly 223 per cent while the number of licensed drivers increased by 42 per cent.

- Arrest rates for DUI were highest among 21-year-olds and reached their peak in 1983 with a rate of 1 arrest for every 39 licensed drivers of that age.

- Since 1983 most states have phased in new laws raising the minimum age for the purchase or sale of alcoholic beverages to 21. Per capita arrest rates for DUI for those age 18-20 have decreased by 14 per cent since then—more than twice the rate of decrease for those age 21-24.

- About 7 per cent of all persons confined in local jails on June 30, 1983 were charged with or convicted

of DWI; nearly 1.3 per cent of inmates had a current charge or prior conviction for DWI.

- Those in jail for DWI in 1983 were 95 per cent male, had a median age of 32, and reflected a racial distribution similar to the adult general population. Nearly 80 per cent were not living with a spouse at the time of arrest, and they were more likely to be unemployed than other adults

- Nearly half of those in jail for DWI in 1983 had previously been sentenced to probation, jail, or prison for DWI, and three-quarters had a prior sentence for some crime (including DWI).

- Nearly half of all inmates in jail for DWI in 1983 had previously been involved in an alcohol abuse treatment program—about 1 in 11 was in treatment at the time of the arrest for DWI.

- Prior to their arrest for DWI, convicted offenders for 1983 had consumed a median of 6 ounces of pure alcohol (about equal to the alcoholic content of 12 bottles of beer or 8 mixed drinks) in a median of 4 hours. About 26 per cent consumed at least 10 ounces of pure alcohol (equivalent to 20 beers or 13 mixed drinks).

- For 1983, about 54 per cent reported drinking only beer, about 2 per cent only wine, 23 per cent liquor only, and 21 per cent had been drinking two or more different beverages. This last group consumed the most alcohol prior to arrest.

- In 1983, for DWI offenders sentenced to jail, the median term imposed was 5 months; those with prior DWI sentences received sentences that were about twice as long as first timers.

(This article was based on the Bureau of Justice Statistics report NCJ-109945, "Drunk Driving." Copies of the report can be obtained through the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit, Justice Center, University of Alaska Anchorage.)

Table 1

Characteristics of jail inmates charged with or convicted of DWI 1983.

Characteristic	Per cent of inmates
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	94.7%
Female	5.3
<b>Race</b>	
White	85.6%
Black	9.8
Other	4.6
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	17.2%
Non-Hispanic	82.8
<b>Age</b>	
17-19 years	2.4%
20-24	22.3
25-29	17.3
30-34	17.1
35-39	11.6
40-44	8.0
45-49	6.9
50-54	6.8
55-64	6.5
65 and older	1.0
<b>Median age</b>	32 years
<b>Education</b>	
Less than 8 years	13.1%
8-9	15.9
10-11	19.4
12	36.0
Some college	15.7
<b>Median education</b>	12 years
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married	22.2%
Widowed	2.0
Divorced/separated	39.1
Never married	36.7
<b>Employment status at arrest</b>	
Unemployed	32.7%
Employed	67.3
Full-time	58.2
Part-time	9.1
<b>Median annual income*</b>	\$ 8,750
<b>Type of usual occupation</b>	
Laborer	16.7%
Construction trade	16.2
Machine operator	11.4
Farm worker	9.7
Mechanic/craftsman	7.4
Transportation/heavy equipment	7.2
Food services	5.3
Executive/managerial	4.4
Administrative support	4.2
Sales	3.8
All other	13.7
<b>Total number of inmates</b>	14,915

\* For those who had been free at least 1 full year prior to arrest

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

## Recent BJS Reports

In addition to the report summarized in the preceding article, the following recent studies and reports from the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available from the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit:

*"Motor Vehicle Theft," an examination of the characteristics of motor vehicle theft and an analysis of potential victims, NCJ-109978.*

*"Prisoners in 1987," population counts for the nation's prisons on December 31, 1987, NCJ-110331.*



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Published quarterly by the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit of the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508.

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Publication of *Alaska Justice Forum* is funded through the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. ISSN0893-8903

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*Alaska Justice Forum*  
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3211 Providence Drive  
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