



A Publication of the  
Justice Center

# ALASKA JUSTICE FORUM

Alaska Justice  
Statistical Analysis Unit

Summer 1988

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Vol. 5, No. 2

## RURAL CRIME RATES HIGH

— Nella Lee

According to a preliminary analysis based on Department of Public Safety data from 1985 and 1986, the incidence of crime in rural Alaska is much higher than the national average. The figures, which reflect reported incidents in eight villages in the Bethel region, have been assembled as part of a larger, more broadly based study of crime and social dysfunction in rural Alaska. While data from such a small sample must be viewed with caution, the rates presented in the accompanying tables empirically support the opinions commonly expressed by justice personnel working in the Alaska bush: the incidence of crime is much higher than statewide averages.

Because of the way crime data have been accumulated in the state, it has been very difficult to separate rural from urban crime. Data aggregated by region or by state do not reflect the extent to which rural Alaskans suffer from violent crime, alcohol abuse, accidental deaths and suicides. The study from which this preliminary report derives marks one of the first efforts to fill this research need.

The villages sampled in this preliminary project are Yupi'k Eskimo, have populations under 500, have a strong traditional subsistence hunting base, and are either coastal or riverine cultures. They are all members of a sovereignty movement interested in establishing tribal courts. All

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- BJS examines international crime rates, page 4.

except one have adopted local option laws.

These villages were selected for this study, in part, on the supposition that very traditional Eskimo enclaves would have fairly low rates of reported violent crime and few alcohol-related incidents. It was assumed that limited contact with Western culture in conjunction with an adherence to traditional problem solving devices would result in a relatively quiet village environment with a low reporting rate.

The rates reported in the tables are calculated in two different ways: (1) a rate based on the actual population of the sample and (2) a rate based on a population of 100,000. The latter rate is reported for several reasons. First, state and national crime rates are usually reported on a base of 100,000 people, so the significance of crime rates per 100,000 is generally recognized. Second, rates based on actual population figures can appear to be insignificant when the sample is from such a small area. It may not be immediately obvious what the impact of two rapes in a town of 350 people is; the reported incidents have therefore been translated into the rate which would apply in a population of 100,000. It must again be cautioned, however, that the actual sample is, in fact, very limited. The rates per 100,000

*Please turn to CRIME, Page 2*

### 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.

**CRIME**

(continued from page 1)

are presented here primarily for impressionistic purposes.

For the offenses of rape, burglary, assault and larceny in 1986, the crime rate per 100,000 ( $42/2802 \times 100,000$ ) in the eight sampled villages is 1,498.9. According to the national Uniform Crime Reports assembled by the FBI, the state crime rate for 1986 was 570.4. This sample reveals a violent crime rate 1.63 times higher than that of the state. (In reality, it is even higher since the state rate includes the offenses murder, robbery, arson, and motor vehicle theft, for which the data from the villages were not available for this preliminary analysis.)

The figures reported for protective custody are of particular interest, because seven of the eight villages are "dry." Since 1982 they have all had bans on the sale and importation of alcoholic beverages. Protective custody incidents almost always involve people who present a danger to themselves or others due to intoxication. The rate per 100,000 averaged for the two years is 3,569. The rate for alcohol transport for the two years is 285.5. This suggests that local option laws are underenforced or inadequate.

It may be that the original assumption about traditional village environments is wrong. Taken as a whole, the rate per 100,000 for all incidents included in the report for 1985 is 5,700; for 1986 the rate is 9,172. In terms of the real population, in 1985 there were 20 incidents reported for every 350 persons; in 1986, there were 32 for every 350. These are clearly very high rates and indicate only the reported incidence of social problems in these traditional villages. Further study is warranted.

Please see *CRIME*, page 3

Table A

**INCIDENCE OF CRIME IN SELECTED RURAL VILLAGES - 1985****N = VILLAGE POPULATION\*\***

OFFENSE	N = 459	N = 277	N = 241	N = 408	N = 299	N = 303	N = 453	N = 362	TOTALS *N = 2802
rape	1	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	5 / .002
assault	2	4	2	1	-	1	-	2	12 / .004
burglary	-	-	1	1	1	-	4	-	7 / .002
larceny	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1 / .000
malicious mischief	2	1	-	1	-	-	3	-	7 / .002
child sexual assault	-	1	2	-	2	4	1	-	10 / .004
alcohol transport	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	5 / .002
weapons offense	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 / .000
drunk/protective custody	22	13	-	1	29	-	13	-	78 / .028
DWI	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 / .001
Criminal trespass	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2 / .001
game taken out of season	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	9 / .003
accidental death	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2 / .001
suicide	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1 / .000
family offense	2	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	6 / .002
minor in need of supervision	3	2	-	-	2	-	1	-	8 / .003
minor in possession	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	4 / .001
<b>TOTALS/ village rate</b>	33 .072	33 .119	17 .071	5 .012	38 .127	5 .017	25 .055	4 .011	160 .057
rate @ 100,000	7,200	11,913	7,100	1,200	12,700	1,700	5,500	1,100	5,700

\* rate per offense for total actual population

\*\* Source: Alaska Department of Law

Table B

**INCIDENCE OF CRIME IN SELECTED RURAL VILLAGES - 1986**  
**N = VILLAGE POPULATION\*\***

OFFENSE	N = 459	N = 277	N = 241	N = 408	N = 299	N = 303	N = 453	N = 362	TOTALS *N = 2802
rape	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2 / .001
assault	3	1	3	2	8	-	3	1	21 / .007
burglary	-	8	4	-	1	-	3	-	16 / .006
larceny	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	3 / .001
malicious mischief	1	3	-	-	1	-	1	1	7 / .002
child sexual assault	-	-	1	1	1	-	3	-	6 / .002
alcohol transport	-	2	3	-	3	-	3	-	11 / .004
weapons offense	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	4 / .001
drunk/protective custody	-	9	1	2	80	12	18	-	122 / .044
DWI	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	4 / .001
Criminal trespass	-	1	2	1	-	-	1	1	6 / .002
game taken out of season	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0 / .000
accidental death	2	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	6 / .002
suicide	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 / .000
family offense	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1 / .000
minor in need of supervision	-	2	-	-	-	41	3	-	46 / .016
minor in possession	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 / .000
<b>TOTALS/ village rate</b>	8 .017	29 .105	16 .066	8 .020	96 .321	54 .178	41 .091	5 .014	257 .092
rate @ 100,000	1,743	10,469	6,639	1,961	32,107	17,822	9,051	1,381	9,172

\* rate per offense for total actual population

\*\* Source: Alaska Department of Labor

**CRIME***(continued from page 2)*

These preliminary findings are limited, due to a data set which does not include variables on perpetrator and victim, weapons, and alcohol. It will not be possible to conduct a sophisticated methodology until the sample is complete. The completed study will include these variables and will also reflect figures on incidents from sixteen villages over a longer period. The gross reporting rates presented here, however, indicate a very high incidence of crime, as well as of other forms of social dysfunction.

*(The data discussed in this report have been assembled with the cooperation of the Alaska Department of Public Safety.)*

*(Nella Lee is a doctoral candidate at Rutgers University.)*

## BJS GRANT AWARDED

The Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit of the Justice Center has received a grant of over \$21,000 from the Bureau of Justice Statistics to investigate possible sentencing disparities between urban and rural Alaska.

According to the 1987 Justice Center statewide survey, sentencing practices in Alaska are predominant among the justice-related issues needing research. The planned study will provide an examination of one area of concern.

Allan Barnes of the Justice Center will serve as principal investigator on the study, which will be completed early next year.

Table 1. Summary Data on International Crime Rates

Crime and data series	Number of crimes per 100,000 population		
	United States	Europe <sup>a</sup>	Canada, Australia, and New Zealand <sup>a</sup>
<b>Homicide (excluding attempts)</b>			
WHO 1980	10.5	1.4	1.5
UN 1980	10.1	1.3	...
Interpol 1980	10.0	1.8	2.3
Interpol 1984	7.9	1.5	2.2 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Rape</b>			
UN 1980	36.0	5.0	...
Interpol 1980	36.0	4.2	10.5
Interpol 1984	35.7	5.4	14.1 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Robbery</b>			
UN 1980	240.9	25.4	...
Interpol 1980	244.0	38.4	56.4
Interpol 1984	205.4	49.1	63.8
<b>Burglary</b>			
Interpol 1980	1669.0	893.1	1498.4
Interpol 1984	1263.7	1055.3	1806.0
<b>Theft</b>			
UN 1980	5262.2	2086.8	...
<b>Auto Theft</b>			
Interpol 1980	495.0	233.8	418.0 <sup>d</sup>
Interpol 1984	437.1	221.8	444.8 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rates represent averages for reporting countries; Interpol data for 1980 and 1984 are not directly comparable since identical sets of countries did not report for both years.

<sup>b</sup> Does not include Australia.

<sup>c</sup> Does not include Canada.

<sup>d</sup> Does not include New Zealand.

Source: World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics Annual*, Vols. 1982-86;  
Interpol, *International Crime Statistics*, Vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84;  
United Nations, Second United Nations Crime Survey;  
U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1987.

Source of table: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

## A BJS Report

### INTERNATIONAL CRIME RATES

According to a study released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the rate of violent crime in the United States is several times higher than in other countries for which information is available. The rate of property crime in the United States is also higher than in the majority of these countries. The BJS study examines data collected by the United Nations (UN) and the International Police Organization (Interpol) and data from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Crimes of violence (homicide, rape, and robbery) are 4-9 times more frequent in the United States than they are in Europe; crimes of theft (burglary, theft, and auto theft) are also more frequent, but not to the same degree. However, between 1980 and 1984 the difference between U.S. crime rates and rates for other countries narrowed because U.S. crime rates decreased while rates for other countries generally increased.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics study on international crime rates was originally intended to include the 20 countries of the world with populations of 50 million or more; all other countries in North America, South America, and Europe; and Australia and New Zealand—a total of 62 countries. However, only 41 countries in these categories provided data to at least one of the three international organizations that collect information on crime.

The study focused on the crimes of homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, theft, and auto theft because these crimes are most likely to be understood and defined in the same general way from country to country. The UN provided statistics on homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, and auto theft; and WHO, on homicide.

Crime rates from country to country are difficult to compare because of differences in criminal justice systems, in

Please see *INTERNATIONAL*, page 5

## INTERNATIONAL

(continued from page 4)

definitions of crime, in crime reporting practices and recordkeeping, and in methods of reporting statistics to international agencies. Two techniques were used to reduce some of the effects of this variability. First, multiple data sources were used whenever possible. Second, for purposes of direct comparison with the United States, all European countries in each data set were averaged together, and a second group—Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—were also averaged when data were reported for at least two of these countries.

U.S. crime rates for the three violent crimes studied were several times higher than the averages for reporting European countries. The U.S. homicide rate per 100,000 persons in the population ranged from 10.5 (WHO 1980) to 7.9 (Interpol 1984); the rate of homicide in Europe from all 3 sources was less than 2 per 100,000.

The U.S. crime rate for rape was around 36 per 100,000, roughly 7 times higher than the average for Europe. Each data source showed U.S. crime rates for robbery at more than 200 per 100,000 compared to European rates of less than 50 per 100,000.

For the crimes of theft and auto theft the ratio of U.S. rates to average European rates was roughly 2 to 1. Burglary was the only crime examined for which U.S. rates were less than double those for European countries.

The U.S. rates for violent crime were also higher than those of the second group (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), but the differences were smaller, compared to Europe. For burglary and auto theft the rates were quite similar. In fact, 1984 Interpol data show a burglary rate for the combined group that is about 40 per cent higher than the U.S. rate.

Table 2. Trends in International Crime Rates, 1980-84: Interpol Data

Crime	Per cent Change in Crime Rates, 1980 - 84		
	United States	Europe	Canada, Australia, and New Zealand <sup>a</sup>
Homicide (excluding attempts)	-21%	...	...
Rape	0	19%	63% <sup>a</sup>
Robbery	-16	50	13
Burglary	-24	40	21
Auto Theft	-12	13	6 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Does not include Canada

<sup>b</sup> Does not include New Zealand

...Not available; too few countries reporting for both 1980 and 1984

Note: Data for Europe and for Canada/Australia/New Zealand include only countries reporting data for both 1980 and 1984. Per cent change was calculated by computing the average rate for each year and then comparing the yearly averages.

Source of table: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Between 1980 and 1984 the crime rate in the United States dropped for each crime studied, except rape. The decreases were sizeable, ranging from 12 per cent for auto theft to 24 per cent for burglary. In contrast, the average crime rates for Europe and for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand increased for all crimes except homicide, for which there were insufficient data to make reliable comparisons. In most cases the increases experienced by European countries and by Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were larger than the decreases in the United States. These countertrends significantly reduced the differences between the crime rates of the United States and those of the other countries.

(This article was based on the Bureau of Justice Statistics report NCJ-110 776, "International Crime Rates." Copies of the report can be obtained through the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit, Justice Center.)

## RESEARCH NEEDS IDENTIFIED

According to the results of an annual survey conducted by the Justice Center, justice system agencies and related social service agencies in Alaska view the following as the five major justice issues needing research:

1. crime causation/prevention
2. sentencing
3. juvenile justice
4. substance abuse
5. rural justice

The survey was sent in late 1987 to over 200 justice and social service agencies throughout the state. Another survey is planned for this year.

TABLE 3. Crime Rates in Selected Countries, 1984: Interpol Data

Country	Number of crimes per 100,000 population					
	Homicides		Rape	Robbery	Burglary	Auto Theft
	Actual	Including attempts				
United States	7.9	...	35.7	205.4	1263.7	437.1
Australia	...	3.4	13.8	83.6	1754.3	584.7
Austria	1.3	2.4	5.3	29.8	805.8	16.9
Belgium	...	3.3	5.6	50.0	...	140.6
Canada	2.7	6.3	...	92.8	1420.6	304.9
Chile	5.8	6.3	10.6	36.4	...	7.6
Colombia	...	2.5	4.4	32.8	...	14.2
Denmark	1.2	5.8	7.7	35.6	2230.2	469.5
Ecuador	...	4.5	5.9	22.8	...	7.8
Egypt	1.0	1.5	...	.4	...	3.3
England and Wales	1.1 <sup>a</sup>	1.4 <sup>a</sup>	2.7 <sup>a</sup>	44.6 <sup>a</sup>	1639.7 <sup>a</sup>	656.6 <sup>a</sup>
Finland	2.3	5.6	6.5	33.7	772.6	171.7
France	...	4.6	5.2	105.6	809.8	483.4
Germany (FRG)	1.5	4.5	9.7	45.8	1554.1	118.0
Greece	1.0	1.8	.9	2.3	72.8	...
Hungary	1.9	3.7	6.1	15.5	211.0	4.0
Indonesia	...	.9	1.2	5.1	38.4	4.9
Ireland	.8	1.1	2.0	5.4	1056.8	29.7
Italy	2.1 <sup>a</sup>	5.3 <sup>a</sup>	1.8 <sup>a</sup>	35.7 <sup>a</sup>	...	276.3
Japan	.8	1.5	1.6	1.8	231.2	29.4
Luxembourg	...	5.3	2.8	40.8	509.8	109.3
Monaco	...	...	...	43.2	500.0	176.3
Netherlands	1.2	...	7.2	52.9	2328.7	155.9
New Zealand	1.7	2.5	14.4	14.9	2243.1	...
Nigeria	1.5 <sup>a</sup>	1.7 <sup>a</sup>	...	...	...	...
Northern Ireland	4.0 <sup>a</sup>	19.8 <sup>a</sup>	5.0 <sup>a</sup>	119.3 <sup>a</sup>	1360.7 <sup>a</sup>	106.2 <sup>a</sup>
Norway	...	.9 <sup>a</sup>	4.2 <sup>a</sup>	...	...	273.1 <sup>a</sup>
Philippines	...	42.5	2.6	33.0	...	2.0
Portugal	3.0	4.6	2.0	21.6	99.7	61.3
Scotland	...	1.4	4.4	86.9	2178.6	632.7
Spain	...	2.2	3.6	147.3	1069.9	278.2
Sweden	1.4	5.7	11.9	44.1	1708.8	460.0
Switzerland <sup>b</sup>	1.1	2.2	5.8	24.2	276.8	...
Thailand	...	16.6	5.3	10.0	8.7	2.0
Venezuela	...	9.9	17.4	161.0	...	85.9

... Not available  
<sup>a</sup> 1983 data  
<sup>b</sup> Auto theft in Switzerland omitted because it includes bicycles.

Source: Interpol, *International Crime Statistics*, vols. 1983-84.  
Source of table: 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:

*"Households Touched by Crime, 1987," an analysis of the patterns of crime affecting American households, NCJ-111240.*

*"Drug Law Violators, 1980-86," an examination of arrest, prosecution, sentencing and recidivism of federal drug offenders, NCJ-111763.*

*"Drug Use and Crime," an analysis of the links between illegal drug use and criminal activity among state prison inmates prior to incarceration, NCJ-111940.*

*"Capital Punishment 1987," detailed annual examination of the death penalty and its application throughout the country, NCJ-111939.*

## SNOWDEN ASSUMES PRESIDENCY

Arthur H. Snowden II, administrative director of the courts for Alaska, was named president of the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) on August 4 at the annual meeting of the Conference held July 31-August 4 in Rockport, Maine. COSCA is composed of the highest judicial administrator in each of the fifty states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam.

By becoming president of COSCA, Snowden also becomes vice chairman of the board of directors of the National Center for State Courts, a nonprofit organization dedicated to modernizing state court operations. It serves as secretariat to COSCA and seven other national court organizations.

Snowden was appointed administrative director of the courts of Alaska on September 10, 1973. He received a B.A. from Providence College in 1963 and a J.D. from Catholic University of American School of Law in 1966.

The National Center for State Courts is a national nonprofit organization that assists state courts through research, training, information services, and direct technical assistance. Its headquarters are in Williamsburg, Virginia, with offices in San Francisco, Denver, and the Boston and Washington, D.C., areas.

## DATA BASE DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

The Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage has released the *Justice Data Base Directory*, a research catalogue of data banks maintained by Alaska justice system agencies. The directory, which will be updated regularly, describes each data base in detail and provides summary background information on the controlling agencies. The work represents the first effort in the country to collect such information on a statewide basis.

Agencies and institutions covered in this first edition include the Alaska Department of Law, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Public Safety, the Division of Family and Youth Services (Department of Health and

Social Services), the Alaska Judicial Council, the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit, the Alaska Court System, and the Alaska Bar Association.

Copies of the Justice Data Base Directory may be obtained through the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

## 1989-90 JUDICIAL FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Judicial Fellows Commission invites applications for the 1989-90 Judicial Fellows Program. The Judicial Fellows Program seeks to attract and select outstanding individuals from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds who have an interest in judicial administration and who show promise of making a contribution to the judiciary. The program was established in 1972 and is patterned after the White House and Congressional Fellowships.

Two Fellows will be chosen to spend a year, beginning in September 1989, in Washington, D.C. at the Supreme Court of the United States or the Federal Judicial Center. Candidates should be familiar with the judicial system, have at least one post-graduate degree and two or more years of successful professional experience. Fellowship stipends are based on salaries for comparable government work and on Fellows' salary histories but will not exceed the GS 15, step 3 level—presently \$58,567.

Information about the Judicial Fellows Program and application procedures is available upon request from Vanessa Yarnall, Associate Director, Judicial Fellows Program, Supreme Court of the United States, Room 5, Washington, D.C. 20543. (202) 479-3374. Application materials should be submitted by November 15, 1988.

**Alaska Department of Corrections Profile of Population**

As of July 1988, Department of Corrections had jurisdiction over 5,475 persons. This number includes:

- 2,218 persons in Alaska institutions
- 96 persons in the Federal Bureau of Prisons
- 4 persons in Minnesota state institutions
- 178 persons in community residential centers (furlougees)
- 28 persons in community residential centers (prob-parolees)
- 441 persons on parole
- 2,510 persons on probation

Since July 1984, the following increases have occurred:

Persons in Alaska's institutions	up	45%	(1,527-2218)
Persons in federal and Minnesota prisons	up	50%	(192-96)
Persons in community residential centers	up	154%	(81-206)
Persons on parole	up	100%	(221-441)
Persons on probation	up	34%	(1,870-2,510)

The makeup of the population incarcerated in Alaska's institutions, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Minnesota state prisons has changed during these four years.

	07/84	07/87	07/88	84-88 Change	87-88 Change
Felons-sentenced	1,130	1,593	1,706	+ 51%	+ 7%
Misdemeanants-sentenced	153	90	79	- 48%	- 12%
Felons-unsentenced	326	439	408	+ 25%	- 7%
Misdemeanants-unsentenced	110	108	125	+ 14%	- 16%
Totals	1,719	2,230	2,318	+ 35%	+ 4%



**Alaska  
Justice  
Forum**

Editor: Antonia Moras  
 Editorial Board: John Angell, Allan Barnes, Janet Eidson, David Parry, Nancy Schafer  
 Typesetting and Layout: Phyl Booth

Justice Center, N.E. Schafer, Director

Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit,  
 Allan Barnes, Director

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

© 1988, Justice Center, University of Alaska Anchorage.

Publication of *Alaska Justice Forum* is partially funded through the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. ISSN 0893-8903.

The University of Alaska provides equal education and employment opportunities for all, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-era or disabled veteran.

*Alaska Justice Forum*  
**Justice Center**  
**University of Alaska Anchorage**  
**3211 Providence Drive**  
**Anchorage, Alaska 99508**

**Non-Profit Organization**  
**U.S. Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**  
**Permit No. 253**