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Coordinating Criminal Justice Computer Information Systems

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According to a report recently prepared for the Judicial Council, Alaska might begin the twenty-first century with a criminal justice information system which could serve as a model in the rest of the country if the state adopts recommendations made recently to the legislature and the Criminal Justice Working Group. Wolfe and Associates prepared these recommendations for the legislature under a contract to the Alaska Judicial Council.

Since the early 1970s, state agencies have discussed sharing data and connecting their computer systems, but each attempt has ended with little progress made. The Wolfe and Associates report reviews the existing systems for each department, sets a framework for making decisions about coordinating the sharing of information, discusses available technologies, and recommends that Alaska move from its existing reliance on a combination of mainframes and in-house PC systems to networked client/server computers. What follows is a summary of the findings of the study and its recommendations.

1. The current criminal justice computer information systems are, to varying degrees, inadequate even for individual departments.

The state designed and acquired many parts of the current systems twenty or more years ago, when the demographics, state

structure, prison population and technology differed greatly from the current situation. Moreover, the systems of the various departments, even when adequate for their individual needs, seldom can communicate with one another. This inability to communicate leads to inefficiency.

The Department of Corrections is in the worst position with a computer system that dates back over twenty years. It must manage a large and expanding prison population, as well as a budget well over \$100,000,000 per year, with what is essentially a paper information system. The great expense and chance for serious mistakes created by managing such a complicated organization without an adequate computer information system makes a compelling case for implementing the systemwide changes we suggest.

While the computer information system within the Department of Public Safety best serves the needs of its department, even this system needs improvements. Specifically, DPS needs a new fingerprint identification system. The Court System's information system is comprehensive in theory; however, the software is only now being written. The Department of Law's system is outdated and not as useful as it should be.

2. The computer systems of the separate departments are not coordinated.

Many, though not all, of the subparts of Alaska's criminal justice computer systems should work together. Each department processes the same criminals, collects much of the same information about them, and in many situations needs information available only from other agencies. Nonetheless, the departments have separate systems that for the most part do not communicate.

An example of problems presented by the lack of communication is revealed in the handling of information about an offender's conviction. Ideally, the court would immediately enter the conviction into a court case management computer system and transfer

it electronically to Corrections, Public Safety, the Department of Law, and the Public Defender Agency. However, under the current system, essential conviction information is transmitted in paper forms, with varying degrees of speed and efficiency, to other agencies. Employees at the other agencies then must manually type the information into the various computer systems, sometimes months later, with the risk of data entry errors that accompany manual systems.

3. The criminal justice agencies are working together to improve the system.

All agencies are participating in inter-agency groups designed to identify and resolve critical integration issues. The Criminal Justice Working Group, the Computer Policy Coordination Group, and the Criminal Justice Information Systems Technical Users Group meet regularly, with staff support from the Alaska Judicial Council. The Division of Information Services in the Department of Administration has defined the requirements for and is working to implement a statewide backbone telecommunications network that would allow agencies using different computer systems to communicate with one another. As already noted, the Alaska Court System is designing a state-of-the-art management system and the Department of Public Safety has significantly improved the identification of offenders and has provided leadership in implementing change.

4. Unless improvements are made, Alaska faces substantial and increasing problems.

Inadequate case management systems compromise important functions of Alaska's criminal justice system. With the current system, child care centers and other employers cannot obtain reliable criminal history

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HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The Bureau of Justice Statistics examines characteristics of female state prison inmates (page 2).
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics presents data on guns and crime victimization in the U.S. (page 5).
- The Justice Center presents data on guns and crime in Alaska (page 7).

A BJS Report

The number of women in state prisons grew 75 per cent from yearend 1986 to yearend 1991, reaching almost 39,000 by June 1991. At that time women were 5.2 per cent of all prisoners, up from 4.7 per cent in 1986.

Relying on responses to questions in interviews with a nationally representative sample of state inmates, this report describes

those women. It provides details on offenses and criminal histories, and it also depicts the women's personal characteristics and backgrounds.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted the 1991 Survey of Inmates of State Correctional Facilities in 277 prisons nationwide. At each facility, inmates were chosen systematically from the day's roster. Through personal interviews with 13,966 inmates, about 94 per cent of those selected, data were collected on individual

characteristics of state prison inmates, current offenses and sentences, characteristics of victims of violent inmates, criminal histories, prior drug and alcohol use and treatment, and health care services provided in prison. Similar surveys occurred in 1974, 1979, and 1986.

Most of the female state prison inmates were over age 30, at least high school graduates or holders of a GED, and members of a racial or ethnic minority. Large majorities were unmarried, mothers of children under

Recent BJS Reports

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

"Pretrial Release of Federal Felony Defendants," an examination of the likelihood of pretrial release in federal courts, NCJ-145322.

"Criminal Victimization," a report based on the annual National Crime Victimization Survey report, NCJ-144776.

"Using NIBRS Data to Analyze Violent Crime," an initial report on the first data collection under the National Incident-Based Reporting System, NCJ-144785.

"Prosecuting Criminal Enterprises," an examination of the application of federal criminal enterprise statutes which specifically target criminal behavior conducted like a legitimate business, NCJ-142524.

"Capital Punishment 1992," the annual statistical examination of the application of the death penalty, NCJ-145031.

"Federal Drug Case Processing, 1982-91," information on court case processing for federal drug offenders, NCJ-144392.

"National Judicial Reporting Program, 1990," a description of the number and characteristics of felons convicted in state courts in 1990, NCJ-145323.

Women in Prison

Table 1. Characteristics of State Prison Inmates, by Sex, 1991 and 1986

| | Percent of inmates | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | 1991 | | 1992 | |
| | Females | Males | Females | Males |
| Number of inmates | 38,796 | 672,847 | 19,812 | 430,604 |
| Race/Hispanic origin | | | | |
| White non-Hispanic | 36.2% | 35.4% | 39.7% | 39.5% |
| Black non-Hispanic | 46.0 | 45.5 | 46.0 | 45.2 |
| Hispanic | 14.2 | 16.8 | 11.7 | 12.7 |
| Other ^a | 3.6 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Age | | | | |
| 17 or younger | 0.1% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.5% |
| 18-24 | 16.3 | 21.6 | 22.3 | 26.9 |
| 25-34 | 50.4 | 45.5 | 50.5 | 45.5 |
| 35-44 | 25.5 | 22.6 | 19.6 | 19.4 |
| 45-54 | 6.1 | 6.6 | 5.5 | 5.2 |
| 55 or older | 1.7 | 3.2 | 1.8 | 2.5 |
| Median age | 31 years | 30 years | 29 years | 29 years |
| Marital status | | | | |
| Married | 17.3% | 18.1% | 20.1% | 20.4% |
| Widowed | 5.9 | 1.6 | 6.7 | 1.6 |
| Divorced | 19.1 | 18.4 | 20.5 | 18.0 |
| Separated | 12.5 | 5.9 | 11.0 | 5.8 |
| Never married | 45.1 | 55.9 | 41.7 | 54.3 |
| Education^b | | | | |
| 8th grade or less | 16.0% | 19.6% | 16.5% | 20.9% |
| Some high school | 45.8 | 46.2 | 49.7 | 50.6 |
| High school graduate | 22.7 | 21.9 | 19.1 | 17.7 |
| Some college or more | 15.5 | 12.3 | 14.8 | 10.8 |
| Pre-arrest employment | | | | |
| Employed | 46.7% | 68.5% | 47.1% | 70.1% |
| Fulltime | 35.7 | 56.5 | 37.1 | 58.4 |
| Parttime | 11.0 | 12.0 | 10.0 | 11.7 |
| Unemployed | 53.3 | 31.5 | 52.9 | 30.0 |
| Looking | 19.2 | 16.2 | 22.0 | 17.8 |
| Not looking | 34.1 | 15.3 | 30.9 | 12.2 |

Note: In 1991, data were missing on marital status for 1.1% of cases, on education for 0.8%, and pre-arrest employment for 0.7%. In 1986, data were missing for race and Hispanic origin for 0.4% of cases, on education for 0.4%, on marital status for 0.1%, and on pre-arrest employment for 0.5% of cases.

a. Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other racial groups.

b. Based on highest grade completed.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Table 2. Most Serious Offense of State Prison Inmates, by Sex, 1991 and 1986

| | Percent of prison inmates | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | 1991 | | 1992 | |
| | Females | Males | Females | Males |
| Number of inmates | 38,462 | 665,719 | 19,761 | 430,151 |
| Violent offenses | 32.2 | 47.4 | 40.7 | 55.2 |
| Murder ^a | 11.7 | 10.5 | 13.0 | 11.2 |
| Negligent manslaughter | 3.4 | 1.7 | 6.8 | 3.0 |
| Kidnaping | 0.4 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 1.7 |
| Rape | 0.4 | 3.7 | 0.2 | 4.5 |
| Other sexual assault | 1.3 | 6.2 | 0.9 | 4.7 |
| Robbery | 7.8 | 15.2 | 10.6 | 21.3 |
| Assault | 6.2 | 8.3 | 7.1 | 8.1 |
| Other violent ^b | 1.1 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 0.8 |
| Property offenses | 28.7 | 24.6 | 41.2 | 30.5 |
| Burglary | 4.5 | 12.9 | 5.9 | 17.0 |
| Larceny/theft | 11.1 | 4.5 | 14.7 | 5.6 |
| Motor vehicle theft | 0.7 | 2.3 | 0.5 | 1.4 |
| Arson | 1.0 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 0.7 |
| Fraud | 10.2 | 2.4 | 17.0 | 3.2 |
| Stolen property | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 2.0 |
| Other property ^c | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| Drug offenses | 32.8 | 20.7 | 12.0 | 8.4 |
| Possession | 11.8 | 7.3 | 4.0 | 2.9 |
| Trafficking | 19.8 | 13.0 | 7.3 | 5.3 |
| Other/unspecified | 1.3 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.2 |
| Public order offenses | 5.7 | 7.0 | 5.1 | 5.2 |
| Weapons | 0.5 | 1.9 | 0.9 | 1.5 |
| Other public order ^d | 5.1 | 5.1 | 4.3 | 3.7 |
| Other offenses | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| All offenses | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Note: Excludes an estimated 7,462 inmates in 1991 and 505 inmates in 1986 for whom offense was unknown. Detail may not add to total because of rounding.

- a. Includes nonnegligent manslaughter.
 b. Includes blackmail, extortion, hit-and-run driving with bodily injury, child abuse, and criminal endangerment.
 c. Includes destruction of property, vandalism, hit-and-run driving without bodily injury, trespassing, and possession of burglary tools.
 d. Includes escape from custody, driving while intoxicated, morals and decency, and commercialized vice.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

age 18, and daughters who had grown up in homes without both parents present. Before entering prison a large percentage of the women had experienced physical or sexual abuse.

In addition, data from the survey reveal the following points.

Current Offenses

- The expanding population of women who served a sentence for a drug offense accounted for more than half of the total growth; violent offenders, a fifth.

- In 1991, ten per cent of female inmates were in prison for fraud (which includes forgery and embezzlement), down from 17 per cent in 1986.

Criminal Histories

- Nearly half of all women in prison were currently serving a sentence for a nonviolent offense and had been convicted in the past for only nonviolent offenses. Nearly two-thirds of all female inmates had two or fewer prior convictions.

- About 71 per cent of all state female prisoners had served a prior sentence to probation or incarceration, including 20 per cent who had served a sentence as a juvenile.

Victims of Violent Inmates

- Nearly two-thirds of the women serving a sentence for a violent crime had

victimized a relative, intimate, or someone else they knew.

Family Characteristics

- Two-thirds of the women had at least one child younger than 18; altogether, they were mothers to more than 56,000 minor children.

- An estimated 46 per cent of women with minor children said they talked with those children on the phone at least once a week; 45 per cent had contact by mail at least once a week; and nine per cent were visited by their children.

- More than half reported their minor children were living with grandparents; a quarter, with the father.

- About 47 per cent of the women reported having an immediate family member who had been in jail or prison. About 35 per cent had brothers and ten per cent had sisters who had been incarcerated.

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BJS*(continued from page 3)***Drugs and Alcohol Use**

- Almost half of the women in prison reported committing their offense under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- More than half of women in prison in 1991 had used drugs in the month before the current offense. About two-fifths had used drugs daily.

- The percentage of women who used cocaine or crack in the month before their offense increased from 23 per cent in 1986 to 36 per cent in 1991.

This article is based on the Bureau of Justice Statistics report "Women in Prison," NCJ-145321. Copies of the entire report are available through the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit, Justice Center.

Index Available

A title, author, and subject index of volumes 1 through 10 of the *Alaska Justice Forum* is now available to the public. The *Alaska Justice Forum* was originally published from May 1977 to June 1979 (Volumes 1-3). It resumed publication with Volume 4, Number 1 in Spring 1987 under a different format. Please mail requests for the index to:

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Table 3. Family Structure, Incarceration of Family Members, and Parental Abuse of Alcohol or Drugs Reported by State Prison Inmates, 1991

| | Per cent of female inmates | | | | Per cent of male inmates |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| | All ^a | White | Black | Hispanic | All ^a |
| Number of inmates | 38,630 | 13,969 | 17,739 | 5,521 | 669,578 |
| Person(s) lived with most of time while growing up | | | | | |
| Both parents | 42.0 | 55.1 | 31.9 | 40.3 | 43.1 |
| Mother only | 38.9 | 29.3 | 46.1 | 41.0 | 39.2 |
| Father only | 3.4 | 3.7 | 3.0 | 3.8 | 4.0 |
| Grandparents | 9.3 | 6.1 | 11.3 | 10.3 | 7.6 |
| Other relatives | 3.0 | 1.1 | 4.7 | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Friends | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| Foster home | 1.8 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 1.5 |
| Agency or institution | 0.8 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.8 |
| Other | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.5 |
| Ever lived in a foster home, agency, or institution while growing up | | | | | |
| No | 82.8 | 78.9 | 85.9 | 85.6 | 82.7 |
| Yes | 17.2 | 21.1 | 14.1 | 14.4 | 17.3 |
| Family member ever incarcerated | | | | | |
| No | 53.4 | 61.1 | 47.3 | 53.0 | 63.1 |
| Yes ^b | 46.6 | 38.9 | 52.7 | 47.0 | 36.9 |
| Spouse | 1.8 | 3.1 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 0.2 |
| Mother | 4.0 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 3.6 | 1.5 |
| Father | 7.8 | 10.9 | 5.4 | 6.7 | 6.3 |
| Brother | 35.1 | 26.1 | 42.0 | 35.9 | 30.9 |
| Sister | 10.0 | 5.6 | 12.4 | 14.6 | 4.2 |
| Child | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 0.2 |
| Parent/guardian abused alcohol or drugs | | | | | |
| No | 66.4 | 57.7 | 74.0 | 67.1 | 73.5 |
| Yes | 33.6 | 42.3 | 26.0 | 32.9 | 26.5 |
| Alcohol only | 26.3 | 32.7 | 20.7 | 25.4 | 21.9 |
| Drugs only | 1.6 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 0.8 |
| Both alcohol and drugs | 5.7 | 8.6 | 3.2 | 5.2 | 3.6 |

Note: Excludes 3,435 inmates for whom information on family history was missing.

- a. Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other racial groups.
b. Detail add to more than total because more than one family member may have been incarcerated.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Computer Systems
(continued from page 1)

records needed to identify convicted child molesters and felons who apply for jobs. Social service agencies cannot adequately screen felons from foster care and other programs. Moreover, the courts cannot accurately apply presumptive sentencing guidelines because the state cannot always capture the offender's full criminal history.

While the Department of Public Safety has significantly improved identification processing, the inadequacy of the state's current fingerprint identification system compromises Alaska's ability to identify felons who avoid detection by using an alias. Also, a new fingerprint identification system is needed in order for the state to fully comply with federal programs such as the Brady Bill, the Child Protection Act, the

interstate exchange of criminal history records, and the convicted alien reporting program of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

The Wolfe & Associates report to the Judicial Council recommends that the state move gradually during the next five years from its present systems to new client-server applications, new case management systems for the Departments of Law and Corrections, completion of the courts' work on building new case management systems, livescan fingerprinting with a new system for storage and transmission of fingerprints, and a state-wide communications network. Most existing programs would eventually be redesigned to run on the new computer network. The report notes that the proposed system would give the state flexibility in taking advantage of new, more powerful and less expensive technologies, that users would

find it more friendly than existing programs, and that it could interact with other software and programs more readily than the present system does.

The Alaska Judicial Council has sent the recommendations to the legislature and the Criminal Justice Working Group for action. Bill Cotton, Executive Director of the Judicial Council, expects agencies to take many steps on their own and has noted that an interagency technical users' group already has adopted standards for entry of common data elements, such as name and birth date. Other groups, including a policy-level interagency committee, will decide how to implement those recommendations directed at existing programs. Any organization wishing to assist in this effort should contact Bill Cotton at the Judicial Council. *Teri Carns is senior staff associate with the Alaska Judicial Council.*

BJS Crime Data

Guns and Crime

In 1992 offenders armed with handguns committed approximately 931,000 violent crimes. Handgun crimes accounted for about 13 per cent of all violent crimes. As measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the rate of nonfatal handgun victimizations in 1992—4.5 crimes per 1,000 people age 12 or older—supplanted the record of 4.0 per 1,000 in 1982.

On average per year in 1987–1992, about 62,200 victims of violent crime, about one per cent of all victims of violence, used a firearm to defend themselves. Another 20,300 used a firearm to defend their property during a theft, household burglary, or motor vehicle theft.

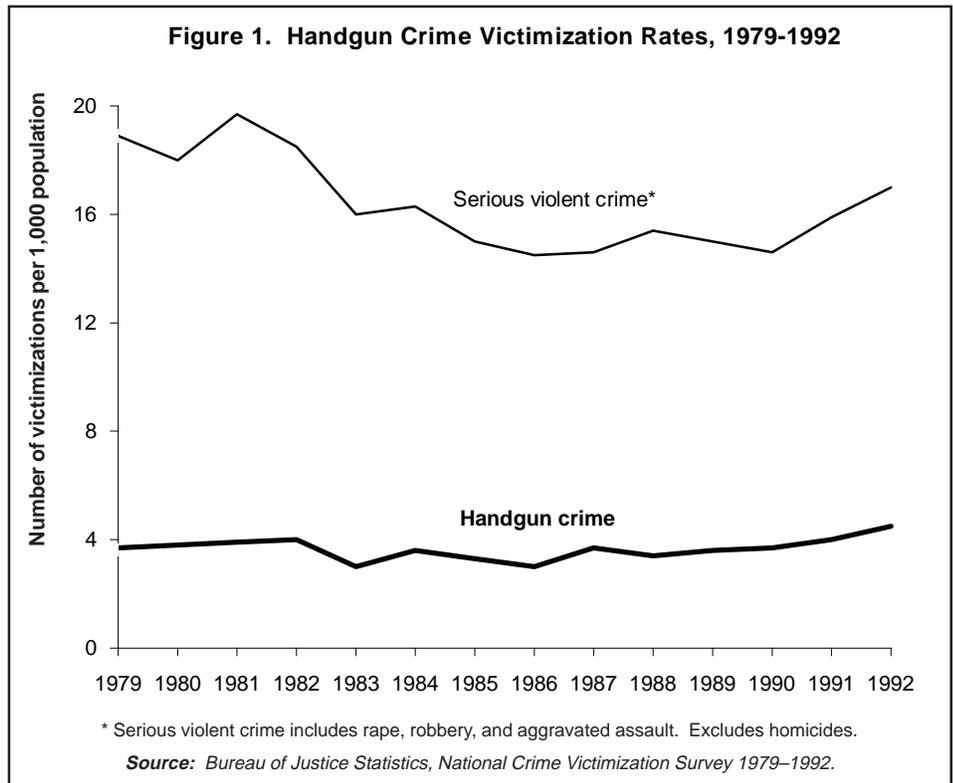
For 1987–1992 victims reported an annual average of about 341,000 incidents of firearm theft. Because the NCVS asks for types, but not a count, of items stolen, the annual total of firearms stolen probably exceeded the number of incidents.

Violent Crime Rates

Unlike the record rate of handgun crimes in 1992, the overall rates for violent crimes were well below the 1981 peaks. (Except where noted, this article excludes homicides, which NCVS does not measure.) The total 1992 rate for rape, robbery, and aggravated and simple assault was 35 per 1,000 persons, compared to 39 per 1,000 in 1981. The 1992 rate of 17 per 1,000 for the more serious crimes (rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) was also less than the 20 per 1,000 in 1981.

Most Likely Victims of Handgun Crime

- Males were twice as likely as females to be victims of handgun crimes, and blacks three times as likely as whites.



- Young black males continued to be the population subgroup most vulnerable to handgun crime victimization. For males age 16–19 the rate for blacks (40 per 1,000 persons) was four times that of whites (10 per 1,000). For males age 20–24 the rate for blacks (29 per 1,000) was three times that of whites (9 per 1,000).

two per cent of all violent crimes). In three per cent of handgun crimes, about 21,000 a year, the victim was wounded. (An additional annual average of 11,100 were victims of homicide by handgun). The offender shot at, but missed, the victim in 14 per cent of handgun crimes.

Self-defense with Firearms

- Thirty-eight per cent of the victims de-

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When Offenders Fired at Victims

- Offenders fired their weapon in 17 per cent of all nonfatal handgun crimes (or about

Table 1. Crimes Committed with Handguns, 1987–1992

| | Annual average, 1992 | 1987–1991 |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Homicide | 13,200 | 10,600 |
| Rape | 11,800 | 14,000 |
| Robbery | 339,000 | 225,100 |
| Assault | 566,800 | 417,300 |
| Total | 930,700 | 667,000 |

Note: Detail may not add to total because of rounding.
 Homicide data is from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Table 2. Handgun Crime Victimization, 1987–1992
 Average annual rate of crimes committed with handguns per 1,000 persons.*

| Age of victim | Male victims | | | Female victims | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| | White | Black | Total | White | Black | Total |
| 12–15 years | 3.1 | 14.1 | 5.0 | 2.1 | 4.7 | 2.5 |
| 16–19 years | 9.5 | 39.7 | 14.2 | 3.6 | 13.4 | 5.1 |
| 20–24 years | 9.2 | 29.4 | 11.8 | 3.5 | 9.1 | 4.3 |
| 25–34 years | 4.9 | 12.3 | 5.7 | 2.1 | 9.0 | 3.1 |
| 35–49 years | 2.7 | 8.7 | 3.3 | 1.4 | 3.3 | 1.7 |
| 50–64 years | 1.2 | 3.5 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 1.6 | 0.8 |
| 65 or older | 0.6 | 3.7 | 0.8 | 0.2 | 2.3 | 0.3 |
| All ages | 3.7 | 14.2 | 4.9 | 1.6 | 5.8 | 2.1 |

* Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 or older in each age category. Rates do not include murder or nonnegligent manslaughter committed with handguns. The totals include persons of other races not shown separately.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Guns and Crime
(continued from page 5)

fending themselves with a firearm attacked the offender, and the others threatened the offender with the weapon.

- A fifth of the victims defending themselves with a firearm suffered an injury, compared to almost half of those who defended themselves with weapons other than a firearm or who had no weapon. (Care should be used in interpreting these data because many aspects of crimes—including victim and offender characteristics, crime circumstances, and offender intent—contribute to the victims' injury outcomes.)

- In most cases victims who used

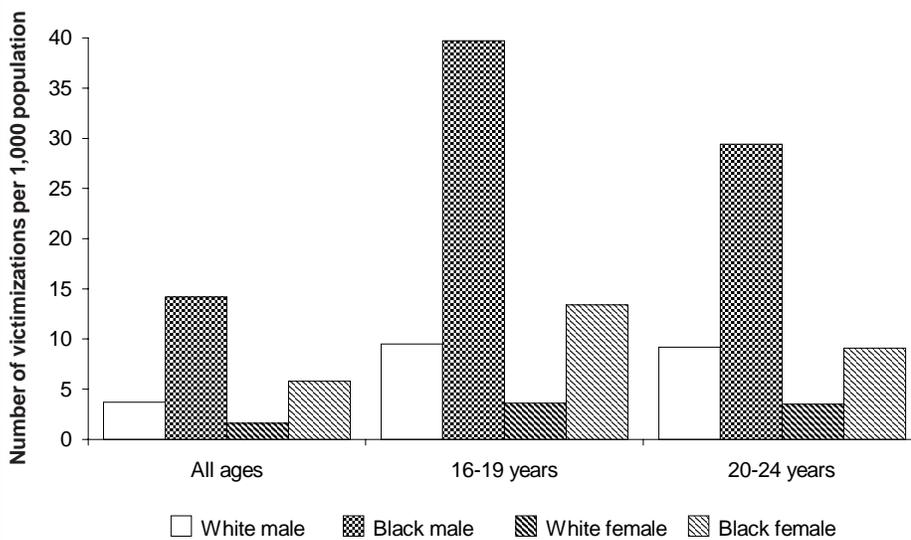
Table 3. Victimization in Which Victims Used Firearms to Defend Themselves or Their Property, 1987–1992

| | Victim attacked offender | Victim threatened offender | Total |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Violent crime | 25,500 | 36,700 | 62,200 |
| With injury | 7,300 | 4,900 | 12,100 |
| Without injury | 18,200 | 31,800 | 50,000 |
| Theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft | 5,100 | 15,200 | 20,300 |
| Total | 30,600 | 51,900 | 82,500 |

Note: Detail may not add to total because of rounding. Includes victimizations in which offenders were unarmed. Excludes homicides.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Figure 2. Handgun Crime Victimization for Selected Age Groups, by Race and Sex, 1987-1992



Source of data: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Table 4. Handgun Crimes in Which Offenders Shot at Victims, 1987–1992

| | Per cent of handgun crimes |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Shot at victim | 16.6% |
| Hit victim | 3.0 |
| Missed victim | 13.6 |
| Nongunshot injury | 1.6 |
| No physical injury | 12.0 |
| Did not shoot at victim | 83.4% |
| Other attack/attempt | 19.9 |
| Verbal threat of attack | 15.4 |
| Weapon present | 46.8 |
| Other threat | 0.8 |
| Unknown action | 0.5 |

Average annual number **699,900**

Note: Excludes homicides.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey.

firearms to defend themselves or their property were confronted by offenders who were either unarmed or armed with weapons other than firearms. On average between 1987 and 1992, about 35 per cent (or 22,000 per year) of the violent crime victims defending themselves with a firearm faced an offender who also had a firearm. (Because the NCVS collects victimization data on police officers, its estimates of the use of firearms for self-defense are likely to include police use of firearms. Questionnaire revisions introduced in January 1993 will permit separate consideration of police and civilian firearm cases.)

Theft of Firearms

- Although most thefts of firearms (64%) occurred during household burglaries, a significant percentage (32%) occurred

during larcenies. Loss of firearms through larceny was as likely to occur away from the victim's home as at or near the home. In 53 per cent of the firearms thefts, handguns were stolen.

This article is based on the Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief "Guns and Crime," NCJ-147003. Copies of the report are available through the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit, Justice Center.

Table 5. Victimization in Which Firearms Were Stolen, 1987–1992

| Crime in which firearm was stolen | Average annual number. | | Total incidents |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | Handgun(s) stolen | Other gun(s) stolen | |
| Violent crime | 5,300 | 2,600 | 7,900 |
| Personal theft | 33,900 | 22,300 | 56,200 |
| Household theft | 31,700 | 20,900 | 52,600 |
| Household burglary | 105,300 | 112,000 | 217,200 |
| Motor vehicle theft | 4,400 | 2,400 | 6,700 |
| Total | 180,500 | 160,200 | 340,700 |

Note: Detail may not add to total because of rounding.

This table measures theft incidents, not number of guns stolen.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Guns and Crime in Alaska, 1987–1992

This table and chart illustrating the use of firearms in crime in Alaska are based on UCR data for Alaska and for the U.S. on the use of firearms in the commission of the crimes of murder, robbery, and aggravated assault. (Rape is not included because UCR data do not indicate the weapon used in commission of rape.) The type of firearm—handgun, rifle, shotgun, or type unknown—is specified in cases of murder, but

not for robbery or aggravated assault.

Because the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)—upon which the accompanying article, “Guns and Crime,” is based—surveys victims, it reflects data both on crimes reported to the police and those that were not reported. It does not obtain information on murders. The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system administered by the FBI includes only those crimes

reported to the police and includes murders. Hence, comparison between the data presented in this table and chart and the previous article should be done cautiously.

Moreover, data on the use of firearms in violent crime in Alaska should be considered carefully, as reporting inconsistencies and variation in the number of crimes—particularly murder—committed from year to year may affect statistical significance.

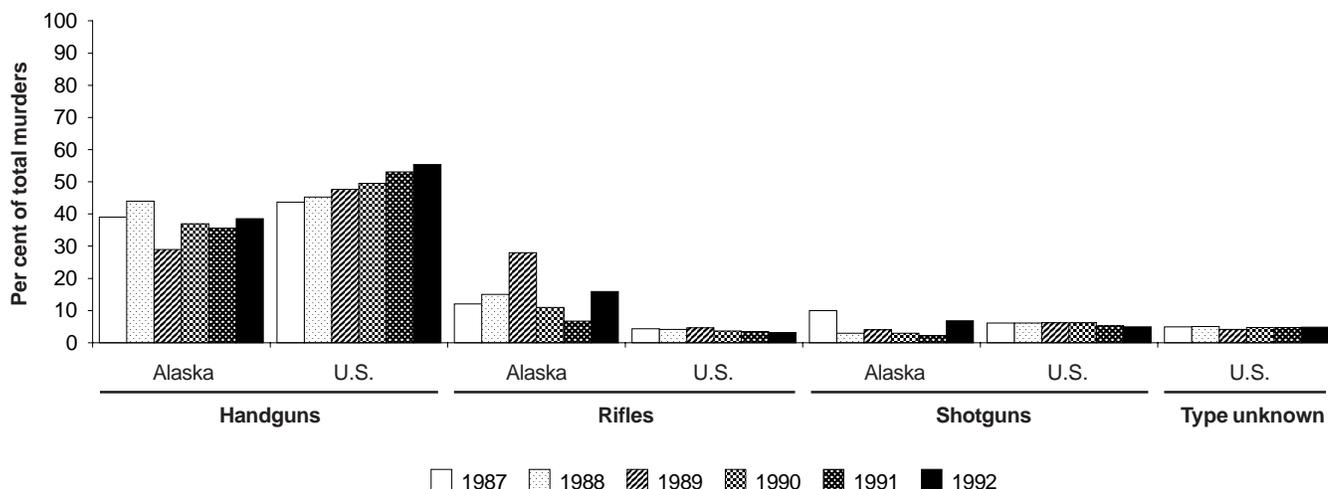
Table 1. Percentage of Crimes in Alaska and the U.S. in Which Firearms Were Used, 1987–1992

| | 1987 | | 1988 | | 1989 | | 1990 | | 1991 | | 1992 | |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Total number of crimes | % committed with firearms | Total number of crimes | % committed with firearms | Total number of crimes | % committed with firearms | Total number of crimes | % committed with firearms | Total number of crimes | % committed with firearms | Total number of crimes | % committed with firearms |
| Alaska | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter | 51 | 61% | 33 | 62% | 43 | 61% | 37 | 51% | 45 | 44% | 44 | 61% |
| Handguns | | 39 | | 44 | | 29 | | 37 | | 36 | | 39 |
| Rifles | | 12 | | 15 | | 28 | | 11 | | 7 | | 16 |
| Shotguns | | 10 | | 3 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 7 |
| Robbery | 376 | 32% | 370 | 30% | 352 | 34% | 419 | 37% | 643 | 33% | 628 | 34% |
| Aggravated assault | 1,569 | 26% | 1,858 | 19% | 1,882 | 22% | 2,005 | 22% | 2,192 | 24% | 2,557 | 24% |
| U.S.* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter | 17,963 | 59% | 17,971 | 61% | 18,954 | 62% | 20,045 | 64% | 21,505 | 66% | 22,540 | 68% |
| Handguns | | 44 | | 45 | | 48 | | 50 | | 53 | | 55 |
| Rifles | | 4 | | 4 | | 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 3 |
| Shotguns | | 6 | | 6 | | 6 | | 6 | | 5 | | 5 |
| Type unknown | | 5 | | 5 | | 4 | | 5 | | 5 | | 5 |
| Robbery | 517,704 | 33% | 542,968 | 33% | 578,326 | 33% | 639,271 | 37% | 687,732 | 40% | 672,478 | 40% |
| Aggravated assault | 855,088 | 21% | 910,092 | 21% | 951,707 | 22% | 1,054,863 | 23% | 1,092,739 | 24% | 1,126,974 | 25% |

* U.S. figures include only those crimes for which weapon was identified.

Source of data: Crime Reported in Alaska, Alaska Department of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Reporting, 1987-1992 (for Alaska figures); Crime in the United States, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting (for national figures).

Figure 1. Percentage of Murders in Alaska and the U.S. in Which Firearms Were Used, 1987–1992



Source of data: Crime Reported in Alaska, Alaska Department of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Reporting, 1987-1992 (for Alaska figures); Crime in the United States, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting (for national figures).

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Vanessa M. Yarnell
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Judicial Fellows Program
Supreme Court of the United States
Room 5
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