

Rising crime in perspective

The 2006 Preliminary FBI Uniform Crime Report is a survey of law enforcement agencies and includes only crimes reported to those agencies.

- The Preliminary 2006 FBI Uniform Crime Report released on Monday, June 4, 2007, does not include statistics concerning age, race/ethnicity, or gang status of persons arrested.
- The UCR represents *only* crime reported to law enforcement and does not account for changes in law enforcement practices that may lead to more reports of crime (i.e. changes in policing practices, or enforcement).
- Criminologists and law enforcement officials use both the UCR and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to get a more accurate and detailed sense of public safety by region, specific population subsets, and type of offense.¹

The Department of Justice cautions that there is no evidence that the uptick in crime is a national trend.

“In general, the current data do not reveal nationwide trends in my judgment. Rather, they show increases locally in a number of communities. Each community is facing different circumstances—and in some places, violent crime continues to decrease. It is important to note that 2005 had the second-lowest crime rate on record, surpassed only by 2004.” Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. May 15, 2007²

Adults, not juveniles, represent 84 percent of all violent crime arrests

- The most recent detailed UCR (2005) shows that young people are responsible for only 15 percent of all violent crimes. The proportion of violent crime involving juvenile arrestees has not changed substantially since the 2004 report.
- While arrests are one measure of young people’s involvement in crime, convictions are another measure. The relatively small juvenile representation in the country’s violent crime data is corroborated by a 2006 study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Violent Felons in Large Urban Counties*, which analyzes violent felony cases from jurisdictions that together accounted for half of the reported violent crime in the nation. According to this report only 10 percent of homicide convictions, 12 percent of robbery convictions, and 4 percent of rape and assault convictions were under the age of 18.

¹For more information see “the Nation’s two crime measures,” <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/html/ntcm.htm>

² Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales at the National Press Club on “Safer Neighborhoods: A Plan for Partnership.” Washington, D.C., May 15, 2007.

There is little relationship between the number of gangs and crime rates in communities

- More than 80 percent of the agencies with gang problems in both smaller and rural counties reported zero gang homicides in 2004.³
- Gangs do not plague all communities equally: larger cities and suburban counties accounted for approximately 85 percent of the estimated number of gang members in 2004.
- There is little or no correlation between law enforcement gang population estimates and overall crime trends.⁴ Nationally, youth crime rates have risen and fallen counter to gang estimate trends.
- Some cities, like Los Angeles, which continue to experience a high level of gang activity, still witnessed a decrease in violent crime in 2006.
- Less than 6 percent of all homicides in 2005 were gang-related.⁵

African Americans and those living under the poverty line are the most likely to be victims of violent crime

According to the 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey:⁶

- African Americans are a third more likely to experience a violent victimization than someone who is white. People who list two or more races have the highest victimization rates.
- People earning \$7,500 - \$14,999 a year are more than third more likely to experience violence than someone earning \$75,000 per year.

Regions with growing prison populations also witnessed an increase in violent crimes.

The only region that experienced a drop in violent crimes was the only region that witnessed a drop in its prison population.

	Change in Violent Crime from 2005 to 2006*	Change in Prison Population from 2004 to 2005**
Northeast	-0.1%	-0.5%
Midwest	2.1%	1.1%
South***	0.6%	1.6%
West	2.8%	1.5%
Total	1.3%	1.4%

*source: FBI, Uniform Crime Report, 2006 Preliminary

**source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005

***UCR data includes the District of Columbia, BJS data does not.

³ Egley, A., and Christina E. Ritz. 2006. "Highlights of the 2004 National Youth Gang Survey." Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200601.pdf>

⁴ Sullivan, Mercer L. 2005. Maybe We Shouldn't Study 'Gangs': Does Reification Obscure Youth Violence? *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, Vol. 21 No. 2

⁵ FBI Uniform Crime Report, Crime in the United States, 2005. Table 9: Expanded Homicide Data.

⁶ Catalano, Shannan M. 2006. "Criminal Victimization, 2005." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.