

***"Turning Data into Policy:"  
Improving the Nation's Crime-  
Monitoring Infrastructure***

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# Untimely Data, Inadequate Response


- Time delays in dissemination of UCR data
  - Annual data available *9 months* after collection year
  - Monthly data delayed up to *21 months*
- Advocacy groups fill the void
  - PERF's "Gathering Storm"
- No technical necessity for such lengthy delays
- Delays impede policy evaluation and response

# Effective Response Requires *Comparative Data*

- Are local crime changes driven by local or general conditions?\*
- Evaluating “what works” requires comparative assessment and common outcome measures

\*McDowall, David and Colin Loftin. 2009. Do US City Crime Rates Follow a National Trend? The Influence of Nationwide Conditions on Local Crime Patterns. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 25: 307-324.

# Example: Crime and the Recession

- Public concern and collective security 
- National crime rates down in 2008 (except burglary)
- Comprehensive data unavailable to monitor crime changes as recession deepened
- Unanswered questions
  - Have crime rises occurred in areas hardest hit?
  - Have foreclosures spurred crime increases?
  - Do police cuts lead to crime increases?
  - Have drug markets expanded?
  - Stimulus effects?

# What Should Be Done? Three Modest Proposals

- FBI: Quarterly dissemination of UCR crime and arrest data one month after collection period
- BJS: Semi-annual analysis of UCR data for representative sample of jurisdictions
- NIJ: Ongoing research program to explain and forecast crime changes

An Immodest Proposal:  
Transfer the UCR Program from the  
FBI to the BJS

# Wrong Place, Wrong Time

- UCR program under resourced
- Little to no analytical capabilities
- Limited contact with research community
- Priorities elsewhere



# “Our Priorities”

1. Protect the United States from terrorist attack
2. Protect the United States against foreign intelligence operations and espionage
3. Protect the United States against cyber-based attacks and high-technology crimes
4. Combat public corruption at all levels
5. Protect civil rights
6. Combat transnational/national criminal organizations and enterprises
7. Combat major white-collar crime
8. Combat significant violent crime
9. Support federal, state, local and international partners
10. Upgrade technology to successfully perform the FBI's mission

# State UCR programs

- More than just a data pass-through or filter
- Functional infrastructure
- Closer ties to local agencies
- Responsive to local concerns
- Strong analytical and research capabilities
- Strong national leadership

If Not Now, When?

# Further Reading

- Goldberger, Arthur and Richard Rosenfeld, eds. 2009. Understanding Crime Trends. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Groves, Robert M. and Daniel L. Cork. 2009. Ensuring the Quality, Credibility, and Relevance of U.S. Justice Statistics. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Rosenfeld, Richard. 2007. Transfer the Uniform Crime Reporting Program from the FBI to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Criminology and Public Policy* 6: 825-834.