

# ADVANCES IN CRIME DATA REPORTING

New system for reporting crime data will provide more accurate, reliable, and timely information to our community



Since the 1930's, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has collected crime statistics through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. In order to have reliable statistical data, the UCR Program had standardized definitions and strict reporting requirements that each law enforcement jurisdiction had to comply with in order to have their data accepted. These requirements were known as the Summary Reporting System (SRS).

In 2016, the FBI recommended changing the decades old system of counting crime to meet the needs of modern policing and made public notifications that law enforcement agencies will need to transition to the new system.

On January 1, 2021, the FBI required all agencies who participated in the UCR Program to report crime data in a new format called National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Transitioning to the new NIBRS system was complex and required significant changes in software and training of personnel.

Despite the significant hurdles to transition to the new system, Sheriff Barnes believed the increase in transparency with crime data, as well as suspect and victim data,

will enable the Orange County Sheriff's Department to develop better strategies for combating crime in our community.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department began transitioning to NIBRS on June 1, 2021, and no longer supported the Summary Reporting System.

In August 2023, after rigorous testing, the Orange County Sheriff's Department received full NIBRS certification from the California Department of Justice (CIBRS). This certification allows the Sheriff's Department to begin participating in the FBI's NIBRS program.



THE BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS CAUTIONED TO, "NOT DIRECTLY COMPARE NIBRS CRIME COUNTS TO HISTORIC SRS COUNTS WHEN DISCUSSING CHANGES IN CRIME. WHEN CRIME INCIDENTS INVOLVE MULTIPLE OFFENSES, NIBRS INCLUDES OFFENSES THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED IN SRS BECAUSE SRS REPORTING RULES SPECIFY THAT ONLY THE MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE IS RECORDED."

## Statistical Analysis: Effects of NIBRS on Crime Statistics

According to the FBI publication "Effects of NIBRS on Crime Statistics, 2019", a law enforcement agency that transitions to the NIBRS reporting system will, "Experience an appearance of an increase in crime after the transition." The new tracking method will not increase the incidents of crimes, however, the numbers of crimes tracked in each incident will increase.

<https://www.ocsheriff.gov/sites/ocsd/files/2023-12/Effects-of-NIBRS2019.pdf>

The Congressional Research Service publication "The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): Benefits and Issues" noted two studies were done in 2000 and 2014 to determine if there is a statistical impact on crime data between SRS and NIBRS. Based on the studies, the Congressional Research Service determined the, "results suggest that NIBRS does not significantly distort crime rates at the national level, but local agencies, especially in low-crime areas, may see notable increases in the reported numbers and rates of some crimes."

<https://www.ocsheriff.gov/sites/ocsd/files/2023-12/CRS%20NIBRS.pdf>

## There are key differences between the old SRS system and the new NIBRS systems.

### SRS (OLD)

Outdated, 90-year-old system of counting crime that does not meet the needs of 21st-century policing

Stopped tracking May 31, 2021

Limited to an aggregate monthly tally of crime

Records limited data for 10 offense types and reported arrests for 20 additional crimes

The most serious offense in an incident is reported; additional offenses are excluded

Does not collect contextual information about the crime, the victim, or the offender »

Cannot be used to answer important questions about the nature of crime

### NIBRS (NEW)

Modern system capturing detailed information necessary for making informed decisions about crime

Became the national crime reporting standard on January 1, 2021

Captures circumstances and context for crime in addition to counts, providing more meaningful data

Collects incident-specific data for 52 offenses and reported arrests for 7 additional offenses

Includes up to 10 offenses per incident and provides a more precise account of crime

Captures 52 data elements about the crime, including characteristics of the victim and offender, their relationship, type of injury or loss, location, and weapons involved

Can be used for tactical and strategic analysis at the local, state, and national levels

### Summary:

The transition to NIBRS will yield many benefits, including improved **reliability, accuracy, accessibility, and timeliness of national crime data**. The Orange County Sheriff's Department is committed to transparency through the development of this expanded crime data reporting.

The DOJ reports approved (SRS) crime data through May 2021 and (NIBRS) crime data starting June 1, 2021 are available at:

<https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/crimes-clearances>