

# ***Criminology A:***

# ***CHAPTER 2***

TEXT "Criminology the Core" by Larry J. Siegel

Course of Study Designed and Constructed by Dr. M. Scott

**SECTION 1:** Pages 29 – 38 (3 Pages of Hand Written Notes)

*"Chapter Outline" to "Crime Trends"*

**SECTION 2:** Pages 38 – 47 (4 Pages of Hand Written Notes)

*"Crime Trends" to "Race and Crime"*

**SECTION 3:** Pages 47 - 54 (4 Pages of Hand Written Notes)

*"Race and Crime" to "Thinking Like a Criminologist"*

**\*HEADINGS for ALL written work should follow the example below:**

**Criminology A**

(Course Title)

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_


(First & Last)

**Chapter / Section**

**Class Period:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **TAKING NOTES: Approaches & Strategies: Teach Yourself How to Learn!**

### **The Classic Approach**

Gather the Important Data  
*Target Reading!* 

**WHO:** Name the Players    **WHERE:** Geography  
**WHAT:** Vocabulary    **HOW:** Actions & Process  
**WHEN:** Dates in Order    **WHY:** Reasons

*"In Your Own Words!!!"*

### **The Personalized Approach "Summarize"**

**TRANSLATE**  
**"Text Book"**  
**English to**  
**YOUR English**

*Copying "Word For Word" does NOT insure Understanding*

**TRANSLATION and SUMMARISING INSURES UNDERSTANDING**

**"Knowing ≠ Understanding just as Understanding ≠ Knowing" - Doc**

## Q & A: WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

### CREATE FIVE (5) Questions and Correct Answers for EACH SECTION

Questions should be related to the material being studied.

*The questions should be written as if YOU were explaining the material to another person and wanted to see if they understood the Content of the Course.*

#### Questions 1 – 3 should be “BASIC and FACTUAL”

(Vocabulary and/or Basic Information – “*Who, What, When & Where*”)

#### Questions 4 & 5 should require demonstration of “DEEPER UNDERSTANDING”

(Explain, Compare & Contrast – “*Why & How*”)

The Questions YOU CREATE should be labeled and numbered clearly.

ANSWERS to each question should be written on a new line – just below the question.

**For Example:** Let’s say the topic we were talking about was “*Chickens*.”

(It won’t be – but I don’t want to give away answers from a topic we WILL be discussing),

GOOD “Q & A” Assignments would look like this:

#### Criminology A

#### Chapter 1: Section C

Dr. Scott

Period 9

Q1. “**What is a chicken?**” (Basic Vocabulary – *What?*)

A1. A bird of the clucking variety that many people find delicious.

Q2. “**Who usually raises chickens?**” (Basic Fact – *Who?*)

A2. Usually farmers but sometimes people who like to keep them as pets.

Q3. “**Where are chickens usually raised?**” (Geography - *Location*)

A3. In coops found on farms that often times have business relationships with fast food chains and grocery stores.

Q4. “**Why did the chicken cross the road?**” (Deeper Understanding – *Why?*)

A4. To get to the other side, away from many people who might be hungry.

Q5. “**Explain how a chicken can escape:**” (Deeper Understanding – *How?*)

A5. Using power tools, quick thinking and inspiring an uprising against the oppression of the farmers.

## Chapter Outline

### Primary Sources of Crime Data

Official Records: The Uniform Crime Report  
NIBRS: The Future of the Uniform Crime Report  
Survey Research  
The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)  
Self-Report Surveys  
Evaluating Crime Data

### Crime Trends

Contemporary Trends  
Trends in Victimization

### Policies and Issues in Criminology

INTERNATIONAL CRIME TRENDS

### Policies and Issues in Criminology

EXPLAINING TRENDS IN CRIME RATES

Predicting Future Crime Trends

### Crime Patterns

Co-Offending and Crime  
Gender and Crime  
Race and Crime  
The Ecology of Crime  
Use of Firearms  
Social Class and Crime  
Unemployment and Crime  
Age and Crime

### Chronic Offenders/Criminal Careers

What Causes Chronicity?  
Implications of the Chronic Offender Concept

## FACT OR FICTION?

- Crime is out of control and is more dangerous now in the United States than at any time in history.
- Immigrants who are in the United States illegally commit a lot of crime, a fact that justifies limiting immigration and closing down the borders.

**O**n September 13, 2014, 18-year-old University of Virginia student Hannah Graham went missing. The night before, Graham had met friends at a restaurant for dinner before stopping by two off-campus parties. She left the second party alone and eventually texted a friend saying she was lost. After a search involving thousands of volunteers, Graham's remains were found on October 18 near Charlottesville, in a spot roughly six miles from where the body of another murder victim, 20-year-old Virginia Tech student Morgan Harrington, was found after she vanished in 2009.

A lead in the case developed when police examined surveillance videos taken the night Hannah disappeared. In the video, she seems disoriented and can be seen walking unsteadily past a bar and a service station and then on to a seven-block strip of bars, restaurants, and shops. Also caught on the tape was 32-year-old Jesse Leroy Matthew Jr., who had a long history of violent behavior with women. Matthew became a prime suspect in the case and was eventually arrested in Galveston, Texas, as he planned to leave the country; he was charged with abduction with intent to defile Graham. Forensic evidence linked Matthew to both murders as well as other sexual assaults.

1

**Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**

Large database, compiled by the FBI, of crimes reported and arrests made each year throughout the United States.

**Part I crimes**

The eight most serious offenses included in the UCR: murder, rape, assault, robbery, burglary, arson, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

**murder and nonnegligent manslaughter**

The willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another.

**L01** Discuss the various forms of crime data.

**forcible rape**

Under common law, the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. In 2012, a new broader definition of rape was implemented: "The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim."

**robbery**

The taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear.

**aggravated assault**

An unlawful attack by one person upon another, accompanied by the use of a weapon, for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury.

**burglary**

The unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or a theft.

**larceny**

The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another.

When splashed across the media and rehashed on nightly talk shows, cases such as the murder of Hannah Graham help convince most Americans that we live in a violent society. If an innocent student at an elite college can be brutally murdered, who among us is truly safe? Are Americans justified in their fear of violent crime? Should they barricade themselves behind armed guards? Are crime rates actually rising or falling? Where do most crimes occur and who commits them? To answer these and similar questions, criminologists have devised elaborate methods of crime data collection and analysis. Without accurate data on the nature and extent of crime, it would not be possible to formulate theories that explain the onset of crime or to devise social policies that facilitate its control or elimination. Accurate data collection is also critical in assessing the nature and extent of crime, tracking changes in the crime rate, and measuring the individual and social factors that may influence criminality.

In this chapter, we review how data are collected on criminal offenders and offenses and what this information tells us about crime patterns and trends. We also examine the concept of criminal careers and discover what available crime data can tell us about the onset, continuation, and termination of criminality. We begin with a discussion of the most important sources of crime data that criminologists use to measure the nature and extent of crime.

## Primary Sources of Crime Data

The primary sources of crime data are surveys and official records. Criminologists use these techniques to measure the nature and extent of criminal behavior and the personality, attitudes, and background of criminal offenders. Understanding how such data are collected provides insight into how professional criminologists approach various problems and questions in their field.

### Official Records: The Uniform Crime Report

In order to understand more about the nature and extent of crime, criminologists use the records of government agencies such as police departments, prisons, and courts. The Federal Bureau of Investigation collects the most important crime record data from local law enforcement agencies and publishes it yearly in their **Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**. The UCR includes crimes reported to local law enforcement departments and the number of arrests made by police agencies.<sup>1</sup> The FBI receives and compiles records from about 17,000 police departments serving a majority of the U.S. population. The FBI tallies and annually publishes the number of reported offenses by city, county, standard metropolitan statistical area, and geographical divisions of the United States for the most serious crimes. These **Part I crimes** are **murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson**.

In addition to recording crimes reported to the police, the UCR also collects data on the number and characteristics (age, race, and gender) of individuals who have been arrested for committing a crime. Included in the arrest data are both people who have committed Part I crimes and people who have been arrested for all other crimes, known collectively as **Part II crimes**. This latter group includes such criminal acts as sex crimes, drug trafficking, and vandalism.

**COMPILING THE UNIFORM CRIME REPORT** The methods used to compile the UCR are quite complex. Each month, law enforcement agencies report the number of Part I crimes reported by victims, by officers who discovered the infractions, or by other sources.

Whenever criminal complaints are found through investigation to be unfounded or false, they are eliminated from the actual count. However, the number of actual offenses known is reported to the FBI whether or not anyone is arrested for the crime, the stolen property is recovered, or prosecution ensues.

In addition, each month, law enforcement agencies also report how many crimes were cleared. Crimes are cleared in two ways: (1) when at least one person is arrested, charged, and turned over to the court for prosecution; or (2) by exceptional means, when some element beyond police control precludes the physical arrest of an offender (for example, the offender leaves the country). Data on the number of clearances involving the arrest of only juvenile offenders, data on the value of property stolen and recovered in connection with Part I offenses, and detailed information pertaining to criminal homicide are also reported. Nationwide slightly less than 50 percent of violent crimes and 20 percent of property crimes are cleared.

Violent crimes are more likely to be solved than property crimes because police devote more resources to these more serious acts, witnesses (including the victim) are frequently available to identify offenders, and in many instances the victim and offender were previously acquainted.

The UCR uses three methods to express crime data. First, the number of crimes reported to the police and arrests made are expressed as raw figures. Second, year over year percentage changes in the number of crimes are computed. Finally, the crime rate per 100,000 people is calculated. The equation used:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Repeated Crimes}}{\text{Total US Population}} \times 100,000$$


= Rate per 100,000

So, in 2013, there were 14,196 murders, a 4.4 percent decrease from 2012, and a 7.8 percent decrease from 2009; the murder rate was 4.5 per 100,000 people. Preliminary 2014 data indicate that the crime drop has continued.

**VALIDITY OF THE UCR** The UCR's accuracy has long been suspect. Many serious crimes are not reported to police and therefore are not counted by the UCR. The reasons for not reporting vary:

- Victims may consider the crime trivial or unimportant and therefore choose not to call police.
- Some victims fail to report because they do not trust the police or have little confidence in the ability of the police to solve crime. Cities in which people believe the police can help them are more likely to report crime.<sup>2</sup>
- People without property insurance believe it is useless to report theft.
- Victims may fear reprisals from an offender's friends or family.
- Some victims have "dirty hands" and are involved in illegal activities themselves. They do not want to get involved with police.

Because of these and other factors, less than half of all criminal incidents are reported to the police.




**Charleston Police Department**  
 180 Lockwood Blvd., Charleston, SC 29403  
 June 18, 2015




## Need To Identify

On June 17, 2015 at approximately 8:00PM, the below pictured white male suspect entered the Emanuel AME church located at 110 Calhoun Street and began shooting church members. The suspect was seen leaving the church in the below pictured black four door sedan.

Law Enforcement needs help to identify this individual as part of the ongoing homicide investigation. The suspect is considered armed and dangerous. Anyone with information regarding the suspect's identity or whereabouts is asked to call 1-800-CALLFBI (1-800-225-5324).



Suspect is described as a younger white male. He stands approximately 5'09" in height and has a slender build.

Handout/Reuters/Landov

Official crime data are made up of crimes reported to police. Acts are included even if the crime is never solved or a suspect identified. This is the "wanted" poster released by the Charleston (South Carolina) Police Department when they were searching for the perpetrator of the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 18, 2015. At the time the gunman, now identified as Dylann Roof, was still at large. This horrific crime would have been reported to the FBI and become part of the Uniform Crime Report data regardless of whether the shooter had ever been identified.

### motor vehicle theft

The theft of a motor vehicle.

### arson

The willful or malicious burning of a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle, aircraft, personal property of another, or the like.

### Part II crimes

All other crimes, aside from the eight Part I crimes, included in the UCR arrest data. Part II crimes include drug offenses, sex crimes, and vandalism, among others.

The way police departments record and report criminal activity also affects the validity of UCR statistics. Some departments may define crimes loosely—reporting a trespass as a burglary or an assault on a woman as an attempted rape—whereas others pay strict attention to FBI guidelines. Some make systematic errors in UCR reporting—for example, counting an arrest only after a formal booking procedure, even though the UCR requires arrests to be counted if the suspect is released without a formal charge. These reporting practices may help explain inter-jurisdictional differences in crime. Differences in the way crimes are defined may also influence reporting practices. Because many jurisdictions have broadened their classification of rape to include all forms of sexual assault, the FBI has followed suit, in 2012 changing the definition used in the UCR to, *“The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”*

Some critics take issue with the way the FBI records data and counts crimes. According to the “Hierarchy Rule,” in a multiple-offense incident, only the most serious crime is counted. Thus, if an armed bank robber commits a robbery, assaults a patron as he flees, steals a car to get away, and damages property during a police chase, only the robbery is reported because it is the most serious offense.

Although these issues are troubling, the UCR continues to be one of the most widely used sources of criminal statistics. Because data for the UCR are collected in a careful and systematic way, it is considered a highly reliable indicator of crime patterns and trends. That is, even if reporting problems impede a precise count of total crimes committed in a single year, measurement of year-to-year percentage change should be accurate because measurement problems are stable over time. If the UCR reports that the murder rate decreased about 5 percent between 2012 and 2013, that assessment is probably accurate because the reporting and counting problems that influenced data collection in 2012 had the same effect in 2013.

### NIBRS: The Future of the Uniform Crime Report

Clearly there must be a more reliable source for crime statistics than the UCR as it stands today. Beginning in 1982, a five-year redesign effort was undertaken to provide more comprehensive and detailed crime statistics. The effort resulted in the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**, a program that collects data on each reported crime incident. Instead of submitting statements of the kinds of crime that individual citizens report to the police and summary statements of resulting arrests, NIBRS requires local police agencies to provide at least a brief account of each incident and arrest, including the incident, victim, and offender information.

Under NIBRS, law enforcement authorities provide information to the FBI on each criminal incident involving 46 specific offenses, including the 8 Part I crimes, that occur in their jurisdiction; arrest information on the 46 offenses plus 11 lesser offenses is also provided in NIBRS. In addition to common-law crimes such as rape and murder, NIBRS reporting provides information on most of the criminal justice issues facing law enforcement today—terrorism, white-collar crime, information about assaults on law enforcement officers, offenses in which weapons were involved, drug/narcotic offenses, hate crimes, domestic and familial abuse including elder abuse, juvenile crime, gang-related crime, parental abduction, organized crime, and pornography, as well as arrest data related to driving under the influence. In addition, NIBRS reporting captures whether the offender was suspected of using drugs/narcotics or alcohol during or shortly before the incident and whether the offender used computer equipment to perpetrate the crime; this makes it possible to develop a national database on the nature of crime, victims, and criminals.

To date, the FBI has certified 33 state programs for NIBRS participation that together hold about one-third of the population (about 93 million people). Other state programs are in various stages of testing NIBRS.<sup>3</sup>

#### National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

Program that requires local police agencies to provide a brief account of each incident and arrest within 22 crime patterns, including incident, victim, and offender information.

## Survey Research

Another important method of collecting crime data is through surveys in which people are asked about their attitudes, beliefs, values, and characteristics, as well as their experiences with crime and victimization. Surveys typically involve **sampling**, the process of selecting for study a limited number of subjects who are representative of an entire group that has similar characteristics, called the **population**. To understand the social forces that produce crime, a criminologist might interview a sample of 3,000 prison inmates drawn from the population of more than 2 million inmates in the United States; in this case, the sample represents the entire population of U.S. inmates. It is assumed that the characteristics of people or events in a carefully selected sample will be similar to those of the population at large. If the sampling is done correctly, the responses of the 3,000 inmates should represent those of the entire population of inmates.

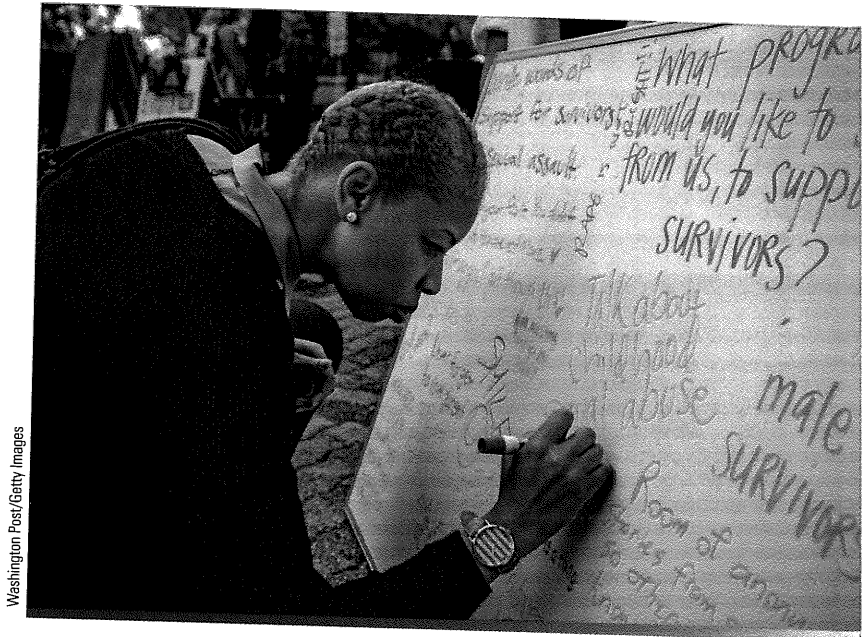
## The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

Because many victims do not report their experiences to the police, the UCR cannot measure all the annual criminal activity. To address the nonreporting issue, the federal government sponsors the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**, a comprehensive, nationwide survey of victimization in the United States conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

In the most recent survey, 90,380 households and 158,090 persons age 12 or older were interviewed for the NCVS.<sup>4</sup> People are surveyed twice a year, so each interview covers a six-month period. Households stay in the sample for three years, and new households are rotated into the sample on an ongoing basis. The NCVS collects information on crimes suffered by individuals and households, whether or not those crimes were reported to law enforcement. It estimates the proportion of each crime type reported to law enforcement, and it summarizes the reasons that victims give for reporting or not reporting. In 1993, the survey was redesigned to provide detailed information on the frequency and nature of the crimes of rape, sexual assault, personal robbery, aggravated and simple assault, household burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft. In 2006, significant changes were also made to the way the NCVS is collected. The methodological changes included a new sampling method, a change in the method of handling first-time interviews with households, and a change in the method of interviewing. Computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) replaced paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI).

Through this massive and complex survey, the NCVS provides information about victims (age, sex, race, ethnicity, marital status, income, and educational level), offenders (sex, race, approximate age, and victim-offender relationship), and crimes (time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, and economic consequences). Questions also cover the experiences of victims with the criminal justice system, self-protective measures used by victims, and possible substance abuse by offenders.

The greatest advantage of the NCVS over official data sources such as the UCR is that it can estimate the total amount of annual crimes, not just those that are reported to police. As a result, the NCVS provides a more nearly complete picture of the nation's crime problem. Recently, the Bureau of Justice statistics surveyed trends



A passerby writes a message related to sexual assault during an event on UCLA's campus to pay respect to students who have experienced sexual violence. While campus sexual assault is a significant problem, many victims fail to report the crime to police or other authorities, so the true extent of this vicious crime remains unknown.

### sampling

Selecting a limited number of people for study as representative of a larger group.

### population

All people who share a particular characteristic, such as all high school students or all police officers.

### National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

The ongoing victimization study conducted jointly by the Justice Department and the U.S. Census Bureau that surveys victims about their experiences with law violation.

in reporting practices and calculated the percentage of serious violent crime—rape or sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault—that was not reported to police declined from 50 to 42 percent, a finding that indicates that people are more willing to report crime today than in the past. Only 17 percent of motor vehicle theft victimizations now go unreported, presumably because most cars are insured for theft. However, many crimes still remain significantly unreported, including theft (71 percent) and rape or sexual assault (65 percent) victimization.<sup>5</sup>

**VALIDITY OF THE NCVS** Although its utility and importance are unquestioned, the NCVS may also suffer from some methodological problems. As a result, its findings must be interpreted with caution. Among the potential problems are the following:

- Overreporting due to victims' misinterpretation of events. A lost wallet may be reported as stolen or an open door may be viewed as a burglary attempt.
- Underreporting due to the embarrassment of reporting crime to interviewers, fear of getting in trouble, or simply forgetting an incident.
- Inability to record the personal criminal activity of those interviewed, such as drug use or gambling; murder is also not included, for obvious reasons.
- Sampling errors, which produce a group of respondents who do not represent the nation as a whole.
- Inadequate question format that invalidates responses. Some groups, such as adolescents, may be particularly susceptible to error because of question format.

While these issues are critical, there is no substitute available that provides national information on crime and victimization with extensive detail on victims and the social context of the criminal event.

## Self-Report Surveys

### self-report survey

A research approach that requires subjects to reveal their own participation in delinquent or criminal acts.

Another tool commonly used by criminologists to measure crime is the **self-report survey** that asks people to describe, in detail, their recent and lifetime participation in criminal activity. Self-reports are given in groups, and the respondents are promised anonymity in order to ensure the validity and honesty of their responses. Most self-report studies have focused on juvenile delinquency and youth crime.<sup>6</sup> However, self-reports can also be used to examine the offense histories of prison inmates, drug users, and other segments of the criminal population.<sup>7</sup>

Most self-report surveys also contain questions related to the subjects' background and history: family makeup, upbringing, income, school performance, and personal beliefs. Using this information, criminologists can search for links between personal history and characteristics and criminal behaviors. For example, they can explore whether people who report being abused as children are also more likely to use drugs as adults or whether failure in school leads to delinquency.<sup>8</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

Criminologists suspect that a few high-rate offenders are responsible for a disproportionate share of all serious crime. Results would be badly skewed if even a few of these chronic offenders were absent or refused to participate in schoolwide self-report surveys. For more on chronic offenders, see "Chronic Offenders/Criminal Careers," later in this chapter.

**VALIDITY OF SELF-REPORTS** Critics of self-report studies frequently suggest that expecting people to candidly admit illegal acts is unreasonable. This is especially true of those with official records—the very people who may be engaging in the most criminality. At the same time, some people may exaggerate their criminal acts, forget some of them, or be confused about what is being asked. Some surveys contain an overabundance of trivial offenses, such as shoplifting small items or using false identification to obtain alcohol, often lumped together with serious crimes to form a total crime index. Consequently, comparisons between groups can be highly misleading.

The "missing cases" phenomenon is also a concern. Even if 90 percent of a school population voluntarily participates in a self-report study, researchers can never be sure whether the few who refuse to participate or are absent that day constitute a significant portion of the school's population of persistent high-rate offenders. Research indicates that offenders with the most extensive prior criminality are also the most likely "to be poor historians of their own crime commission rates."<sup>9</sup> It is also unlikely that the most serious chronic offenders in the teenage population are willing to



cooperate with criminologists administering self-report tests.<sup>10</sup> Institutionalized youths, who are not generally represented in the self-report surveys, not only are more delinquent than the general youth population but also are considerably more misbehaving than the most delinquent youths identified in the typical self-report survey.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, self-reports may measure only nonserious, occasional delinquents, while ignoring hard-core chronic offenders who may be institutionalized and unavailable for self-reports.

To address these criticisms, various techniques have been used to verify self-report data. The “known group” method compares people known to be offenders with those who are not, to see whether the former report more crime, which they should. Research shows that when people are asked whether they have ever been arrested or sent to court, their responses accurately reflect their true-life experiences.<sup>12</sup>

**MONITORING THE FUTURE** One way to improve the reliability of self-reports is to use them in a consistent fashion with different groups of subjects over time. That makes it possible to measure trends in self-reported crime and drug abuse to see whether changes have occurred. One important source of longitudinal self-report data is the Monitoring the Future (MTF) study that researchers at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research (ISR) have been conducting annually since 1978. This national survey, which typically involves more than 50,000 high school students, is one of the most important sources of self-report data on drug abuse.<sup>13</sup> A subsample of respondents is also asked about their self-reported delinquency.

Table 2.1 contains data from the most recent MTF survey. A surprising number of teenagers report involvement in serious criminal behavior. About 8 percent reported hurting someone badly enough that the victim needed medical care (4 percent said they did it more than once); about 20 percent reported stealing something worth less than \$50, and another 7 percent stole something worth more than \$50; 23 percent reported shoplifting one or more times; 7 percent damaged school property, 4 percent more than once.

If the MTF data are accurate, the crime problem is much greater than official statistics would lead us to believe. There are approximately 40 million youths between

**TABLE 2.1** Monitoring the Future Survey of Criminal Activity of High School Seniors

Type of Delinquency	Committed at Least Once	Committed More than Once
Set fire on purpose	1%	1%
Damaged school property	3%	4%
Damaged work property	1%	2%
Auto theft	2%	2%
Auto part theft	1%	1%
Break and enter	10%	13%
Theft, less than \$50	9%	11%
Theft, more than \$50	3%	4%
Shoplift	9%	14%
Gang or group fight	7%	6%
Hurt someone badly enough to require medical care	4%	4%
Used force or a weapon to steal	1%	2%
Hit teacher or supervisor	2%	2%
Participated in serious fight	6%	4%

Source: Data provided by *Monitoring the Future, 2014* (Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 2015).

the ages of 10 and 18. Extrapolating from the MTF findings, this group accounts for more than 100 percent of all the theft offenses reported in the UCR. About 3 percent of high school students said they had used force to steal (which is the legal definition of a robbery). Two-thirds of them said they committed this crime more than once in a year. At this rate, high school students alone commit more than 1.56 million robberies per year. In comparison, the UCR now tallies about 360,000 robberies for all age groups yearly. Like the official crime data, the MTF finds that self-reported participation in theft, violence, and damage-related crimes has also declined over the past few years.

Concept Summary 2.1 reviews the primary data collection methods used by criminologists today.

## Evaluating Crime Data

Each source of crime data has strengths and weaknesses. The FBI survey contains data on the number and characteristics of people arrested, information that the other data sources lack. For the most serious crimes, such as drug trafficking, arrest data can provide a meaningful measure of the level of criminal activity in a particular neighborhood environment, which other data sources cannot provide. It is also the source of information on particular crimes, such as murder, that cannot be measured by survey data.<sup>14</sup> The UCR remains the standard unit of analysis on which most criminological research is based. However, this survey omits the many crimes that victims choose not to report to police, and it is subject to the reporting caprices of individual police departments.

The NCVS includes unreported crime and important information on the personal characteristics of victims. However, the data consist of estimates made from relatively limited samples of the total U.S. population, so even narrow fluctuations in the rates

### Concept Summary 2.1 Data Collection Methods

#### Uniform Crime Report

- Data are collected from records from police departments across the nation, crimes reported to police, and arrests.
- Strengths of the UCR are that it measures homicides and arrests and that it is a consistent, national sample.
- Weaknesses of the UCR are that it omits crimes not reported to police, omits most drug usage, and contains reporting errors.

#### National Crime Victimization Survey

- Data are collected from a large national survey.
- Strengths of the NCVS are that it includes crimes not reported to the police, uses careful sampling techniques, and is a yearly survey.
- Weaknesses of the NCVS are that it relies on victims' memory and honesty and that it omits substance abuse.

#### Self-report surveys

- Data are collected from local surveys.
- Strengths of self-report surveys are that they include nonreported crimes, substance abuse, and offenders' personal information.
- Weaknesses of self-report surveys are that they rely on the honesty of offenders and omit offenders who refuse or are unable, as a consequence of incarceration, to participate (and who therefore may be the most delinquent and/or criminal).

of some crimes can have a major impact on findings. It also relies on personal recollections that may be inaccurate. The NCVS does not include data on important crime patterns, including murder and drug abuse.

Self-report surveys can provide information on the personal characteristics of offenders (such as their attitudes, values, beliefs, and psychological profiles) that is unavailable from any other source. Yet, at their core, self-reports rely on the honesty of criminal offenders and drug abusers, a population not generally known for accuracy and integrity.

Although their numerical tallies of crimes are certainly not in synch, the findings on crime patterns, rates, and trends are similar.<sup>15</sup> They all generally agree about the personal characteristics of serious criminals (such as age and gender) and where and when crime occurs (such as urban areas, nighttime, and summer months). The problems inherent in each source are consistent over time. Even if the data sources are incapable of providing a precise and valid count of crime at any given time, they are reliable indicators of changes and fluctuations in yearly crime rates.

In addition to these primary sources of crime data, criminologists use other data in their studies. These are discussed in Exhibit 2.1.

## Exhibit 2.1 Alternative Crime Measures

In addition to the primary sources of crime data—UCR, NCVS, and self-report surveys—criminologists use several other methods to acquire data. Although this list is not exhaustive, the methods described here are routinely used in criminological research and data collection.

### Cohort Research Data

Collecting cohort data involves observing over time a group of people who share certain characteristics. Researchers might select all girls born in Boston in 1990 and then follow their behavior patterns for 20 years. The research data might include their school experiences, arrests, and hospitalizations, along with information about their family life (marriages, divorces, parental relations). If the cohort is carefully drawn, it may be possible to accumulate a complex array of data that can be used to determine which life experiences are associated with criminal careers.

### Experimental Data

Sometimes criminologists conduct controlled experiments to collect data on the cause of crime. To conduct experimental research, criminologists manipulate, or intervene in, the lives of their subjects to see the outcome or the effect of the intervention. True experiments usually have three elements: (1) random selection of subjects, (2) a control or comparison group, and (3) an experimental condition.

### Observational and Interview Research

Sometimes criminologists focus their research on relatively few subjects, interviewing them in depth or observing them as they go about their activities. This

research often results in the kind of in-depth data that large-scale surveys do not yield.

### Meta-analysis and Systematic Review

Meta-analysis involves gathering data from a number of previous studies. Compatible information and data are extracted and pooled together. When analyzed, the grouped data from several different studies provide a more powerful and valid indicator of relationships than the results provided by a single study. A systematic review involves collecting the findings from previously conducted scientific studies that address a particular problem, appraising and synthesizing the evidence, and using the collective evidence to address a particular scientific question.

### Data Mining

A relatively new criminological technique, data mining uses multiple advanced computational methods, including artificial intelligence (the use of computers to perform logical functions), to analyze large data sets that usually involve one or more data sources. The goal is to identify significant and recognizable patterns, trends, and relationships that are not easily detected through traditional analytical techniques.

### Crime Mapping

Criminologists now use crime mapping to create graphical representations of the spatial geography of crime. Computerized crime maps enable criminologists to analyze and correlate a wide array of data to create immediate, detailed visuals of crime patterns.


Source: © Cengage Learning

## L02 Analyze recent trends in the crime rate.




**FIGURE 2.1**  
**Crime Rate Trends**


Source: FBI, *Crime in the United States*, 2013, [www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s./2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s./2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013) (accessed 2015).




1960  
Total crimes: 3.4 million  
Violent crimes: 288,000  
Property crimes: 3.1 million



1991  
Total crimes: 14.8 million  
Violent crimes: 1.9 million  
Property crimes: 12.9 million



2008  
Total crimes: 10.7 million  
Violent crimes: 1.3 million  
Property crimes: 9.4 million



2013  
Total crimes: 9.8 million  
Violent crimes: 1.2 million  
Property crimes: 8.6 million

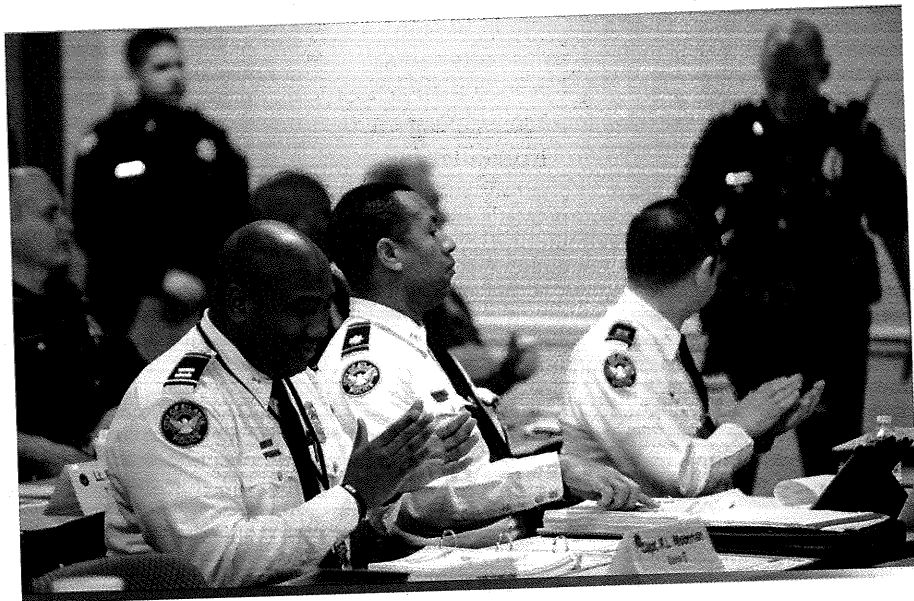
## Crime Trends

Crime is not new to this century. Studies have indicated that a gradual increase in the crime rate, especially in violent crime, occurred from 1830 to 1860. Following the Civil War, this rate increased significantly for about 15 years. Then, from 1880 up to the time of World War I, with the possible exception of the years immediately preceding and following the war, the number of reported crimes decreased. After a period of readjustment, the crime rate steadily declined until the Depression (about 1930), when another crime wave was recorded. As measured by the UCR, crime rates increased gradually following the 1930s until the 1960s, when the growth rate became much greater. The homicide rate, which had actually declined from the 1930s to the 1960s, also began a sharp increase that continued through the 1980s. During the following decade, there were sharp increases in rates of robbery, motor vehicle theft, and overall homicide and a disturbing increase in youth firearm homicide rates.<sup>16</sup>

## Contemporary Trends

After a decade of increases, crime rates peaked in 1991, when the UCR recorded almost 15 million crimes in a single year. Since then the number of crimes has been in decline; about 9.8 million crimes were reported in 2013, a drop of more than 5 million reported crimes since the 1991 peak, despite a boost of more than 50 million people in the general population. Figure 2.1 illustrates the changes in numbers of crimes reported between 1960 and 2013.

Especially welcome has been a significant drop in UCR violent crimes—murder, rape, robbery, and assault. About 1.16 million violent crimes are now being reported to the police each year, a rate of 368 per 100,000 Americans. Of course, people are still disturbed by media reports of violent incidents, but in reality there are 800,000 fewer violent crimes being reported today than in 1991, when almost 2 million incidents occurred yearly, a violence rate of 758 per 100,000. This means that the violence rate has dropped almost 50 percent from its peak because the number of violent crimes is far lower and the general population continues to increase.



Christian Science Monitor/Getty Images

Police departments are now using high-level data analysis tools prepared by crime analysts to identify crime trends and patterns and use their resources in a more effective manner. Here, a Command Operation Briefings to Revitalize Atlanta (COBRA) meeting is taking place at the Atlanta Police Department on January 15, 2015. The meetings are an opportunity for the Crime Analysis Unit to provide commanders with updates on citywide crime trends and evaluate responses.

Not only has violent crime been in decline, so too have theft offenses. The property crimes reported in the UCR include larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Property crime rates have also declined in recent years, dropping more than 10 percent during the past decade. At its peak in 1991, about 13 million property crimes were reported, a rate of almost 5,000 per 100,000 citizens. Currently, about 8.6 million property crimes are reported annually to police, a rate of about 2,730 per 100,000 population. Property crimes remain a serious national problem, and losses totaling an estimated \$17 billion now result from property crimes each year.

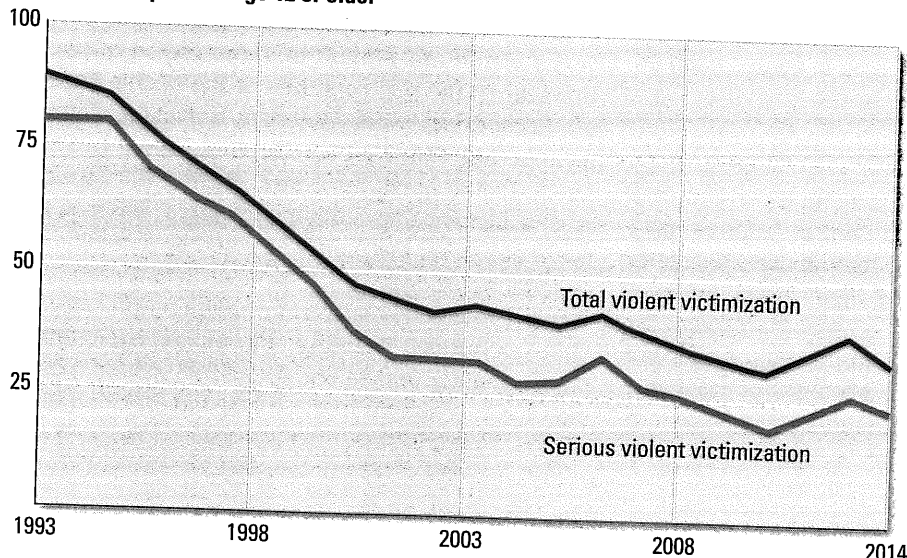
How has the rest of the world fared while the United States has undergone a significant crime drop? To find out, read the Policies and Issues in Criminology feature on international crime trends.

## Trends in Victimization

According to the latest NCVS survey, U.S. residents aged 12 or older experienced about 20.7 million violent and property victimizations.<sup>17</sup> Like the UCR data, NCVS data show that criminal victimizations have declined significantly during the past 30 years (see Figure 2.2). In 1973, an estimated 44 million victimizations were recorded, far higher than today; since 1993, the rate of violent victimization has declined about 80 percent. Especially striking has been the decline in the rate of serious violent crime against youth ages 12 to 17, which has declined more than 70 percent since 1994, falling from 62 victimizations per 1,000 youth to around 14 victimizations per 1,000. During this period, among serious violent crimes against youth, the rate of rape and sexual assault declined 68 percent, robbery declined 77 percent, and aggravated assault declined 80 percent.<sup>18</sup>

While there have been year-to-year fluctuations, there is little question that the NCVS data support the findings of the UCR: the United States has experienced a significant crime drop for more than two decades.

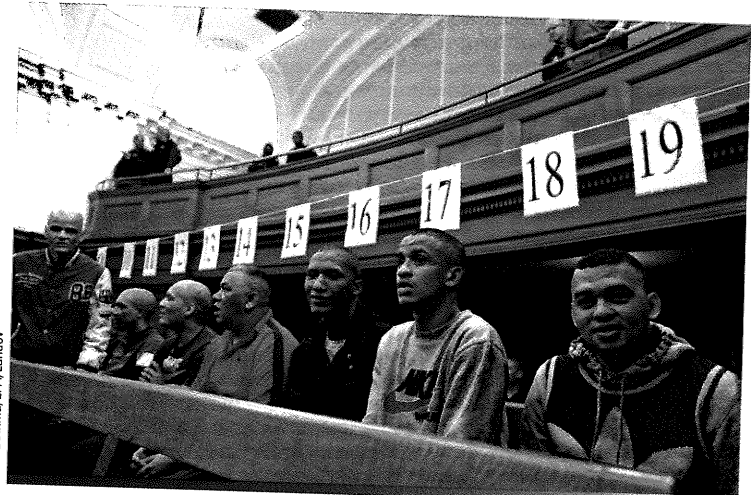
Rate per 1,000 persons age 12 or older



## FACT OR FICTION?

**Crime is out of control and is more dangerous now in the United States than at any time in history.**

**FICTION** Crime rates are lower now than they were 20 years ago. The violent crime rate, including murder, has been in decline. Crime rates were much higher in the nineteenth century.



While crime rates have been declining in the United States, they are rising abroad. Here, on May 19, 2015, co-accused in the George "Geweld" Thomas trial sit prior to sentencing procedures at the High Court in Cape Town, South Africa. "Geweld," meaning violence, is the nickname of George Thomas, head of one of South Africa's most violent and notorious gangs, the 28s. Thomas, along with sixteen others, was found guilty of crimes ranging from murder to racketeering. The trial lasted over five years and resulted in Thomas being found guilty of seven murders—two for the murder of state witnesses while he was in prison.

**L03** List the factors that influence crime rates.

**FIGURE 2.2**  
Violent and Property  
Victimization

Source: Lynn Langton and Jennifer L. Truman, *Criminal Victimization, 2014* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015).

# Policies and Issues in Criminology

## INTERNATIONAL CRIME TRENDS

There has been a marked decline in overall U.S. crime rates, which are now below those of other industrial nations, including England and Wales, Denmark, and Finland. Making international comparisons is often difficult because the legal definitions of crime vary from country to country. There are also differences in the way crime is measured. In the United States, crime may be measured by counting criminal acts reported to the police or by using victim surveys, whereas in many European countries, the number of cases solved by the police is used as the measure of crime. Despite these problems, valid comparisons can still be made about crime across different countries using a number of reliable data sources.

Countries with the highest crime and victimization rate are Ireland, England and Wales, New Zealand, and Iceland. Lowest overall victimization rates are found in Spain, Japan, Hungary, and Portugal. Just as in the United States, there has been a distinct downward trend in the level of crime and victimization during the past decade. Also similarly, some cities have much higher crime rates than others. The cities in developed countries with the lowest victimization rates are Hong Kong, Lisbon, Budapest, Athens, and Madrid; highest victimization rates are found in London and Tallinn, Estonia. Similar to the United States, most of the countries show a distinct downward trend in the level of victimization since 1995. The drops are most pronounced in property crimes such as vehicle-related crimes (bicycle theft, thefts from cars, and joyriding) and burglary. One reason is that people around the world are taking precautions to prevent crime. Improved security may well have been one of the main forces behind the universal drop in crimes such as joyriding and household burglary.

### Homicide

The global average homicide rate is about 6 per 100,000 population, but South Africa and Central America have rates over four times higher than that (above 24 victims per 100,000 population), making them the subregions with the highest homicide rates on record, followed by South America, Central Africa, and the Caribbean (between 16 and 23 homicides per 100,000 population). Subregions with very low homicide rates include Eastern

Asia, Southern Europe, and Western Europe. Homicide levels in some countries, such as Brazil, are now stabilizing, and those in South Africa, Russia, and Central Asia are actually decreasing.

### Rape

Southern Africa, Oceania, and North America have the highest recorded rape rates, Asia the lowest. Violence against women is related to economic hardship and the social status of women. Rates are high in poor nations in which women are oppressed. Where women are more emancipated, the rates of violence against women are lower.

For many women, sexual violence starts in childhood and adolescence and may occur in the home, school, and community. Studies conducted in a wide variety of nations ranging from Cameroon to New Zealand found high rates of reported forced sexual initiation. In some nations, as many as half of adolescent women and 20 percent of adolescent men report sexual coercion at the hands of family members, teachers, boyfriends, or strangers.

Sexual violence has significant health consequences, including suicide, stress, mental illnesses, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, self-inflicted injuries, and (in the case of child sexual abuse) adoption of high-risk behaviors such as multiple sexual partners and drug use.

### Human Trafficking

The crime of trafficking in persons affects virtually every country in every region of the world. Data show that during the two-year period 2010–2012, victims with 152 different citizenships were identified in 124 countries across the globe. Most trafficking is intraregional, meaning that the origin and the destination of the trafficked victim are within the same region of the world. However, in the rich countries of the Middle East, Western Europe, and North America, trafficking victims may be imported from East and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Richer countries attract victims from a variety of origins, including from other continents, whereas less affluent countries are mainly affected by domestic or sub-regional trafficking.

The most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation. The victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls. The second most common form of human trafficking is forced labor, although



this may be a misrepresentation because forced labor is less frequently detected and reported than trafficking for sexual exploitation. Trafficking for exploitation that is neither sexual nor forced labor, including trafficking of children for armed combat or for petty crime or forced begging, is also increasing.

Worldwide, almost 20 percent of all trafficking victims are children. However, in some parts of Africa and Asia, children are the majority (up to 100 percent in parts of West Africa). Although trafficking seems to imply people moving across continents, most exploitation takes place close to home. Data show intraregional and domestic trafficking are the major forms of trafficking in persons.

### Child Abuse

According to the World Health Organization, up to 53,000 children are murdered worldwide each year. Between 80 and 93 percent of children suffer some form of physical punishment in their homes; a third are punished using implements. International studies reveal that approximately 20 percent of women and 5 to 10 percent of men report being sexually abused as children, while 25 to 50 percent of all children report being physically abused. Additionally, many children are subject to emotional abuse (sometimes referred to as psychological abuse) and to neglect.

Every year there are an estimated 31,000 homicide deaths in children under 15. This number underestimates the true extent of the problem, as a significant proportion of deaths due to child maltreatment are incorrectly attributed to falls, burns, drowning, and other causes.

In armed conflict and refugee settings, girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse by combatants, security forces, members of their communities, aid workers, and others.

### Drug Crimes

Drug use continues to exact a significant toll around the world on both human lives and economic productivity. An estimated 183,000 drug-related deaths now occur each year; a mortality rate of 40 deaths per million among the population aged 15 to 64. Globally, it is estimated that between 162 million and 324 million people, corresponding to between 3.5 and 7 percent of the world population aged 15 to 64, used an illicit drug—typically marijuana, opium, cocaine, or amphetamine-type stimulants group—at

least once in the previous year. About 40 million people can be considered drug dependent.

Today there is an annual flow of about 450 tons of heroin into the global heroin market. Of that total, opium from Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic yields some 50 tons, while the rest, some 380 tons of heroin and morphine, is produced in Afghanistan. While approximately 5 tons are consumed and seized in Afghanistan, the remaining bulk of 375 tons is trafficked worldwide. The most common route is through Iran via Pakistan, Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria, then across southeastern Europe to the Western European market, with an annual market value of some \$20 billion. The northern route runs mainly through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (or Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan) to Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. The size of that market is estimated to total \$13 billion per year.

### Critical Thinking

1. Although risk factors at all levels of social and personal life contribute to youth violence, young people in all nations who experience change in societal-level factors—such as economic inequalities, rapid social change, and the availability of firearms, alcohol, and drugs—seem the most likely to get involved in violence. Can anything be done to help alleviate these social problems?
2. The United States is notorious for employing much tougher penal measures than European nations. Do you believe that our tougher measures would work abroad and should be adopted there as well? Is there a downside to putting lots of people in prison?

**Sources:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Drug Trafficking*, 2014, [www.unodc.org/documents/wdr2014/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2014\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr2014/World_Drug_Report_2014_web.pdf); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, 2014, [www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP\\_2014\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2014_full_report.pdf); United Nations, *Global Studies on Homicide*, 2013, [www.unodc.org/gsh/](http://www.unodc.org/gsh/); Stefan Harrendorf, Markku Heiskanen, and Steven Malby, eds., *International Statistics on Crime and Justice*, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, Affiliated with the United Nations, [www.heuni.fi/Oikeapalsta/Search/1266333832841](http://www.heuni.fi/Oikeapalsta/Search/1266333832841); UN World Health Organization, *Child Maltreatment*, 2014, [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs150/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs150/en/) (all URLs accessed in 2015).

## Policies and Issues in Criminology

### EXPLAINING TRENDS IN CRIME RATES

**C**riminologists consider the explanation of crime trends one of their most important goals. Yet when they are asked, "Why have crime rates declined?" or "Why are rates increasing?" they tend to fumble around, mumble, and become lost in thought, because articulating a single explanation for crime rate change has proved elusive. And despite the fact that policy makers and politicians like simple solutions to complex problems, such as getting kids to watch less violence on TV, many different factors contribute to the ebb and flow of crime rates. The interplay of these social, economic, and demographic changes determines the crime rate. Let's look at a few of the most important influences.

#### Age Structure

The age composition of the population has a significant influence on crime trends: Teenagers have extremely high crime rates, whereas seniors rarely commit crime. The greater the proportion of teens in the population, the higher the crime rate and the greater the number of persistent offenders. When the baby boomers hit their teen years in the mid-1960s, the crime rate began to increase. Because of better health care, the number of senior citizens is expanding, and the overall population is aging. Since older folks commit less crime, rates should be in decline for quite some time.

#### Immigration

Immigration has become one of the most controversial issues in American society, and some people believe that immigrants should be prevented from entering the country because they have a disruptive effect on society. Research suggests the opposite: immigrants as a whole engage in criminal activities less than the general population; the more immigrants in the local population, the lower the crime rate. Violent crime rates, especially those for robbery, tend to decrease as metropolitan areas experience gains in their concentration of immigrants. Second-generation immigrants commit more crime, but if anything are merely catching up to their native born contemporaries. If immigration continues, expect it to have a short-term suppressor effect on crime rates, at least until the second generation begins to "catch up."

#### Economy/Jobs

Although it seems logical that high unemployment should increase crime rates and that a good economy should reduce criminal activity, especially theft-related crimes, there is actually little evidence linking crime

rates and the economy. The official crime rates have declined during periods of high unemployment and a poor economy (2000–2011), while increasing in others (the Depression era). They have also increased during periods of relative economic prosperity (the 1960s). Some crime experts believe that a poor economy actually helps lower crime rates because unemployed parents are at home to supervise children and guard their possessions. Since there is less to spend, a poor economy reduces the number of valuables worth stealing. And it is unlikely that law-abiding, middle-aged workers will suddenly turn to a life of crime if they are laid off during an economic downturn. Of course, a poor economy hurts some people more than others and if there is a long period of economic downturn, crime rates may eventually be impacted.

#### Abortion

There is evidence that the recent drop in the crime rate can be attributed to the availability of legalized abortion. In 1973, *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion nationwide, and the drop in crime rate began approximately 18 years later, in 1991. Crime rates began to decline when the first groups of potential offenders affected by the abortion decision began reaching the peak age of criminal activity. It is possible that the link between crime rates and abortion is the result of two mechanisms: (1) selective abortion on the part of women most at risk to have children who would engage in criminal activity, and (2) improved child rearing or environmental circumstances caused by better maternal, familial, or fetal care because women are having fewer children. If abortion is made illegal once again, crime rates may eventually rise.

#### Gun Availability

As the number of guns in the population increases, so too do violent crime rates. As the number of gun-toting people increases, so does the seriousness of violent crime, because a fight between gun-toting people can easily turn into murder. Tighter gun control laws would reduce murder rates.

#### Gang Membership

According to government sources, there are now about 850,000 gang members in the United States. Criminal gangs commit as much as 80 percent of the crime in many communities, including armed robbery, assault, auto theft, drug trafficking, extortion, fraud, home invasions, identity theft, murder, and weapons trafficking. Gang members are far more likely to possess guns than those not affiliated with gangs; criminal activity increases when kids join gangs. If gangs continue to grow, so too may crime rates.



### Drug Use

As drug use increases, crime rates increase. The surge in violent crime in the 1980s has been tied directly to the crack cocaine epidemic that swept the nation's largest cities. When crack use declined in urban areas after 1991, so too did crime rates. A sudden increase in drug use may be a harbinger of future increases in the crime rate, especially if guns are easily obtained and the economy is weak. But so far drug use rates have remained relatively stable.

### Media

The jury is still out, but some experts believe that violent media can influence the direction of crime rates. As the availability of media with a violent theme skyrocketed with the introduction of home video players, DVDs, cable TV, and computer and video games, teen violence rates increased as well. However, crime rates have been in decline though the media thrives on providing violent programming.

### Medical Technology

Some crime experts believe that the presence and quality of health care can have a significant impact on murder rates. The big breakthrough occurred in the 1970s, when technology that was developed to treat injured soldiers in Vietnam was applied to trauma care in the nation's hospitals. Ever since then, fluctuations in the murder rate have been linked to the level and availability of emergency medical services.

### Aggressive Law Enforcement

Reductions in crime rates may be attributed to adding large numbers of police officers and using them in aggressive police practices that target "quality of life" crimes, such as panhandling, graffiti, petty drug dealing, and loitering. By showing that even the smallest infractions will be dealt with seriously, aggressive police departments may be able to discourage potential criminals from committing more serious crimes. Cities that encourage aggressive, focused police work may be able to lower homicide rates in the area. Not all experts believe that aggressive policing can work, and others caution against the collateral damage to community relations produced by hardline police tactics that require patrol officers to stop, search, and question community residents on a routine basis.

### Incarceration

It is also possible that tough laws imposing lengthy prison terms on drug dealers and repeat offenders can affect crime rates. The fear of punishment may inhibit some would-be criminals, and placing a significant number of potentially high-rate offenders behind bars seems to help lower crime rates. As the nation's prison population has expanded, the crime rate has fallen. Even though putting

people in prison may have a short-term positive effect on crime rates, in the long run, increasing punishments may backfire. The recidivism rate of paroled inmates is quite high, and about two-thirds of those released from state custody will eventually return to prison.

### Cultural Change

In contemporary society, cultural change, such as increases in the number of single-parent families, in high school dropout rates, in racial conflict, and in teen pregnancies, can affect crime rates.

### Internet

The number of cybercrimes seems to be expanding yearly. It is possible that official crime rates will drop even further as former thieves and burglars turn to Internet fraud schemes that are not counted in the official statistics. Prostitution arrests have been in sharp decline as Internet hookup sites are now being used to arrange "dates," a method safer from police interference than streetwalking.

## Critical Thinking

1. If crime rates are influenced by economic conditions, does it mean that criminals are rational decision makers who will choose to commit crime if the need arises?
2. Gang membership is linked to crime rates. Would effective crime control involve convincing perspective gang bangers that crime does not pay and offering them alternative methods for economic gain, such as job training and vocational education?

**Sources:** Bianca Bersani, "A Game of Catch-Up? The Offending Experience of Second-Generation Immigrants," *Crime and Delinquency* 60 (2014): 60–84; David Weisburd, Cody Telep, and Brian Lawton, "Could Innovations in Policing Have Contributed to the New York City Crime Drop Even in a Period of Declining Police Strength? The Case of Stop, Question and Frisk as a Hot Spots Policing Strategy," *Justice Quarterly* 31 (2014): 129–153; Richard Rosenfeld and Robert Fornango, "The Impact of Police Stops on Precinct Robbery and Burglary Rates in New York City, 2003–2010," *Justice Quarterly* 31 (2014): 96–122; Patricia L. McCall, Kenneth Land, Cindy Brooks Dollar, and Karen F. Parker, "The Age Structure–Crime Rate Relationship: Solving a Long-Standing Puzzle," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 29 (2013): 167–190; Tim Wadsworth, "Is Immigration Responsible for the Crime Drop? An Assessment of the Influence of Immigration on Changes in Violent Crime Between 1990 and 2000," *Social Science Quarterly* 91 (2010): 531–553; Jeremy Staff, D. Wayne Osgood, John Schultenber, Jerald Bachman, and Emily Messersmith, "Explaining the Relationship Between Employment and Juvenile Delinquency," *Criminology* 48 (2010): 1101–1131; Jacob Stowell, Steven Messner, Kelly McGeever, and Lawrence Raffalovich, "Immigration and the Recent Violent Crime Drop in the United States: A Pooled Cross-Sectional Time-Series Analysis of Metropolitan Areas," *Criminology* 47 (2009): 889–928; John J. Donohue and Steven D. Levitt, "The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116 (2001): 379–420.

## CHECKPOINTS

The FBI's Uniform Crime Report is an annual tally of crime reported to local police departments. It is the nation's official crime database.

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) samples more than 75,000 people annually to estimate the total number of criminal incidents, including those not reported to police.

Self-report surveys ask respondents about their own criminal activity. They are useful in measuring crimes rarely reported to police, such as drug use.

Crime rates peaked in the early 1990s and have been in sharp decline ever since. The murder rate has undergone a particularly steep decline.

A number of factors are believed to influence the crime rate, including the economy, drug use, gun availability, and crime control policies that include adding police and putting more criminals in prison.

**L04** Identify the gender and racial patterns in crime.

Gang crime plays a significant role in determining the direction of national crime rates. This composite image shows scores of men and women arrested and charged with crimes stemming from a large shootout and fight between biker gangs outside the Twin Peaks bar and restaurant at the Central Texas Marketplace in Waco, Texas, on May 17, 2015. Nine bikers were shot and killed and 18 others wounded. In the aftermath of the bloodbath, almost 200 people were facing charges of engaging in organized crime.

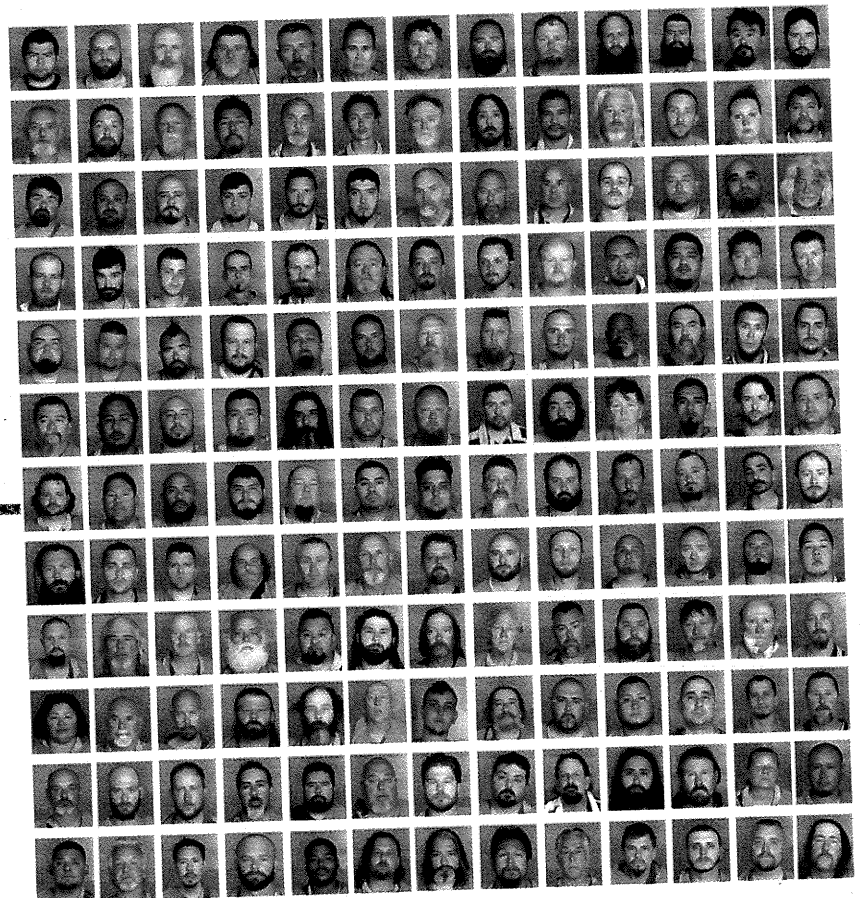
## Predicting Future Crime Trends

Speculating about the future of crime trends is risky because current conditions can change rapidly, but some criminologists have tried to predict future patterns. There are approximately 50 million school-age children in the United States (ages 6–17), and about half are ages 6–11; this is a greater number than we have had for decades. Many come from stable homes, but some lack stable families and adequate supervision. These children will soon enter their prime crime years, and as a result, crime rates may increase in the future. However, whereas kids increase crime rates, the rising number of senior citizens helps bring rates down. Even if teens commit more crime in the future, their contribution may be offset by the aging of the population, which will produce a large number of senior citizens and elderly, a group with a relatively low crime rate.

Predicting the future is always fun, but there is, of course, no telling what changes are in store that may influence crime rates either up or down. Technological developments such as e-commerce on the Internet have created new classes of crime. Social conflict such as the recent highly publicized spate of police shootings on Staten Island, New York (Eric Garner), Ferguson, Missouri (Michael Brown), and Baltimore, Maryland (Freddie Gray) and the ongoing tension between police and the public may eventually impact on crime rates. Some commentators and pundits have suggested that the murder rate may be headed upward.<sup>19</sup> So it is too early to predict that the downward trend in the crime rate will continue unabated into the foreseeable future. The Policies and Issues in Criminology feature on page 42 discusses the factors that shape crime trends.

## Crime Patterns

Criminologists look for stable crime-rate patterns to gain insight into the nature of crime. The cause of crime may be better understood by examining the rate. If criminal statistics consistently show that crime rates are higher in poor



neighborhoods in large urban areas, the cause of crime may be related to poverty and neighborhood decline. If, in contrast, crime rates are spread evenly across society, and rates are equal in poor and affluent neighborhoods, this would provide little evidence that crime has an economic basis. Instead, crime might be linked to socialization, personality, intelligence, or some other trait unrelated to class position or income. In this section, we examine traits and patterns that may influence the crime rate.

## Co-Offending and Crime

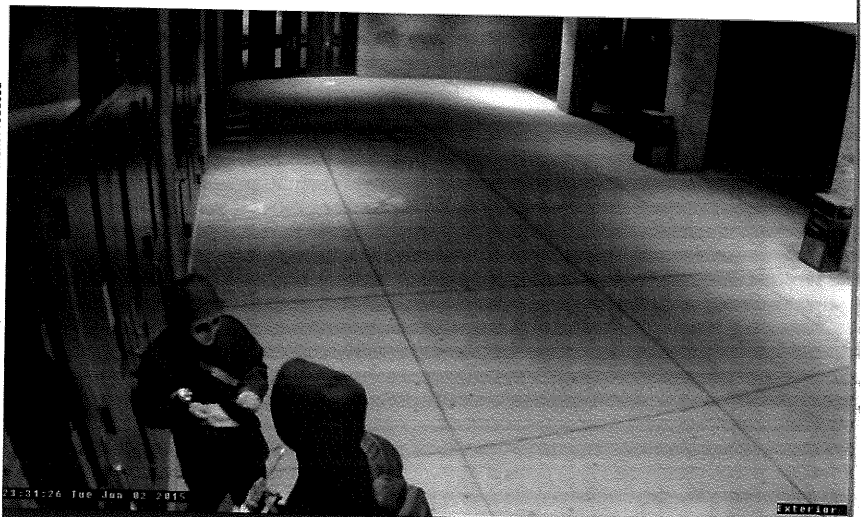
It is generally accepted that crime tends to be a group activity and that adolescents, in particular, are overwhelmingly likely to commit crime in groups. Peer support encourages offending in adolescence.<sup>20</sup> Rather than being shunned by their peers, antisocial adolescents enjoy increased social status among peers who admire their risk-taking behaviors.<sup>21</sup>

Not all offenders enjoy being part of a group or gang; many are lone wolves who shun peer involvement.<sup>22</sup> Because co-offending requires offenders to cooperate with one another in a risky endeavor, it is more likely to occur in communities that contain a supply of appropriate criminal associates who can keep their mouth shut and never cooperate with police. Co-offending is more prevalent in neighborhoods that are less disadvantaged, more stable, and contain more people who can be trusted. Ironically, this means that efforts to improve neighborhood stability and cohesiveness may also help produce an environment that encourages group offending.<sup>23</sup>

## Gender and Crime

Male crime rates are much higher than those of females. The most recent Uniform Crime Report arrest statistics indicate that males account for about 80 percent of all arrests for serious violent crimes and more than 60 percent of the arrests for serious property crimes. Murder arrests are 8 males to 1 female. Even though gender differences in the crime rate have persisted over time, there seems little question that females are now involved in many serious criminal activities and that there are more similarities than differences between male and female offenders.<sup>24</sup> UCR arrest data show that over the past decade, while male arrest rates have declined by 18 percent, female arrest rates have been more stable, declining by 5 percent. Female arrest rates have actually increased for the crimes of robbery, burglary, and larceny during the past decade, while male rates have undergone a decline. Nonetheless, as measured by the arrest data, gender differences in the crime rate still persist. How can these persistent differences be explained?

**TRAIT DIFFERENCES** Early criminologists pointed to emotional, physical, and psychological differences between males and females to explain the differences in crime rates. They maintained that because females were weaker and more passive, they were less likely to commit crimes. Cesare Lombroso argued that a small group of female criminals lacked “typical” female traits of “piety, maternity, undeveloped



AP Images/Anne Arundel County Police/Handout—Government Produced

A great deal of crime, especially juvenile delinquency, occurs in groups, a phenomenon known as co-offending. On June 2, 2015, vandals inside Chesapeake High School in Pasadena, Maryland, caused thousands of dollars in property damage. Would a lone offender vandalize a school or is this a group experience produced and supported by peer pressure?

**masculinity hypothesis**

The view that women who commit crimes have biological and psychological traits similar to those of men.

**liberal feminist theory**

A view of crime that suggests that the social and economic role of women in society controls their crime rates.

intelligence, and weakness."<sup>25</sup> Lombroso's theory became known as the **masculinity hypothesis**; in essence, a few "masculine" females were responsible for the handful of crimes that women committed.<sup>26</sup>

Although these early writings are no longer taken seriously, some criminologists still consider trait differences a key determinant of crime rate differences. They link antisocial behavior to hormonal influences by arguing that male sex hormones (androgens) account for the more aggressive male behavior; thus, gender-related hormonal differences can explain the gender gap in the crime rate.<sup>27</sup>

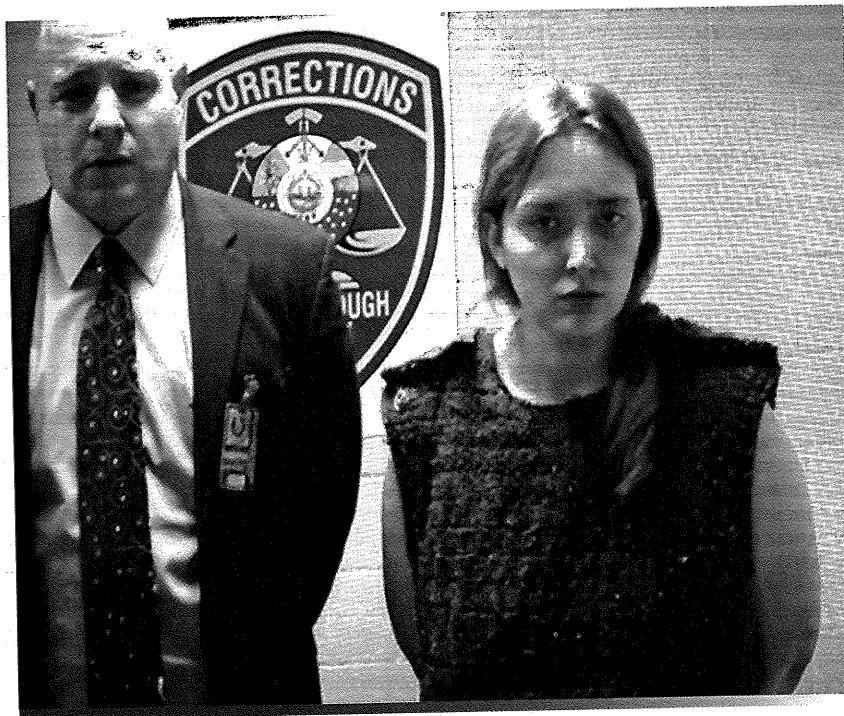
**SOCIALIZATION DIFFERENCES** Although there are few gender-based differences in aggression during the first few years of life, girls are socialized to be less aggressive than boys and are supervised more closely by parents. Males are taught to be more aggressive and assertive and are less likely to form attachments to others. They may seek approval by knocking down or running through peers on the playing field, while females literally cheer them on.<sup>28</sup> Male perceptions of power, their relative freedom, and their ability to hang with their friends help explain the gender differences in crime and delinquency.

**COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES** Psychologists note significant cognitive differences between boys and girls that may affect their antisocial behaviors. Girls have been found to be superior to boys in verbal ability, whereas boys test higher in visual-spatial performance. Girls acquire language faster, learning to speak earlier and with better pronunciation. Their superior verbal skills may enable girls to talk rather than fight. When faced with conflict, women might be more likely to attempt to negotiate, rather than responding passively or resisting physically, especially when they perceive increased threat of harm or death.<sup>29</sup>

**SOCIAL/POLITICAL DIFFERENCES** In the 1970s, **liberal feminist theory** focused attention on the social and economic role of women in society and its relationship to female crime rates.<sup>30</sup> This view suggested that the traditionally lower crime rate for women could be explained by their "second-class" economic and social position. It was assumed that as women's social roles changed and their lifestyles became more like men's, their crime rates would converge.

Criminologists, responding to this research, began to refer to the "new female criminal." The rapid increase in the female crime rate, especially in what had traditionally been male-oriented crimes (such as burglary and larceny), supports the feminist view. In addition, self-report studies seem to indicate that (1) the pattern of female criminality, if not its frequency, is similar to that of male criminality, and (2) the factors that predispose male criminals to crime have an equal impact on female criminals.<sup>31</sup>

Recent trends seem to support the feminist view of crime rate differences. Although male arrest rates are



AP Images/Don Himsel

While women still commit less crime per capita than men, the gap is closing. Here, Katlyn Marin appears via video arraignment on January 5, 2015, in the District Courtroom in Nashua, New Hampshire. Marin was charged with second-degree murder in the beating death of her 3-year-old daughter.

still considerably higher than female rates, the gap is narrowing because male rates are declining at a much faster pace than female rates; it is possible that they may eventually converge. Of course, arrest trends may reflect changing attitudes by police who may be abandoning their traditional deference toward women, resulting in higher female arrest rates.<sup>32</sup> But whatever the reason, the gender gap in crime may be narrowing.

## Race and Crime

There is no more complex and controversial issue than that of race and crime. That is because UCR arrest data indicate that minority group members are involved in a disproportionate share of criminal activity. African Americans make up about 13 percent of the general population, yet they account for about 40 percent of arrests for Part I violent crime and for about 30 percent of property crime arrests. They also are responsible for a disproportionate number of Part II arrests (except for alcohol-related arrests, which involve primarily white offenders).

Self-report studies using large samples also show that about 30 percent of black males have experienced at least one arrest by age 18 (versus about 22 percent for white males), and by age 23 almost half of all black males have been arrested (versus about 38 percent for white males).<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, while data collected by the Monitoring the Future study generally show similarity in offending patterns between African American and European American youths for most crimes, there are some significant differences in reports for some serious offenses, such as stealing more than \$50 and robbery, where African American youth do in fact admit more participation in the most serious crimes, a finding that is reflective of the UCR arrest data.<sup>34</sup> How can these differences be explained?

**INSTITUTIONAL BIAS** Racial differences in the arrest rate may be an artifact of institutional bias found in the justice system and not actual differences in criminal activity: police are more likely to stop, search, and arrest racial minorities than they are members of the white majority. Institutional bias creates a vicious cycle: because they are targeted more frequently, young black men are more likely to possess a criminal record; having a criminal record is associated with repeat stops and searches.<sup>35</sup>

The fact that police unfairly target African Americans is so widely accepted that the term **racial profiling** has been used to describe the practice of stopping and searching African Americans without probable cause or reasonable suspicion. Does such racial profiling truly exist? Numerous studies find that minority citizens are more likely to be stopped and searched than a member of the white majority especially if they seem “out of place” (i.e., driving in a white neighborhood).<sup>36</sup> Tammy Rinehart Kochel and her associates recently found significant evidence that minority suspects are more likely to be arrested than white suspects when stopped by police for the same behaviors.<sup>37</sup> Racial profiling may be more common in communities where there are relatively few racial minorities (i.e., “white neighborhoods”). In racially segregated neighborhoods and communities, police may be suspicious of people based on their race if it is inconsistent with the neighborhood racial composition.<sup>38</sup>

Racial profiling creates a cycle of hostility: young black men see their experience with police as unfair or degrading; they approach future encounters with preexisting hostility; police take this as a sign that young black men pose a special danger; they respond with harsh treatment; a never-ending cycle of mutual mistrust is created.<sup>39</sup>

Race-based differences are not confined to the arrest process. A significant body of research shows that bias can be found across the entire justice process.<sup>40</sup> Black and Latino adults are less likely than whites to receive bail in cases of violent crime.<sup>41</sup> African Americans, especially those who are indigent or unemployed, receive longer prison sentences than whites with the same employment status. Recent research conducted in New York City found that when compared to whites, black and Latino defendants were more likely than white defendants to be detained, to be incarcerated,

## CONNECTIONS

Critical criminologists view gender inequality as stemming from the unequal power of men and women in a capitalist society and the exploitation of females by fathers and husbands. This perspective is considered more fully in Chapter 8.

### racial profiling

Police-initiated action directed at a suspect or group of suspects based solely on race.



**racial threat hypothesis**

As the size of the black population increases, the perceived threat to the white population increases, resulting in a greater amount of social control imposed on blacks.

and if sent to prison to receive especially punitive outcomes, especially if they were convicted of violent crimes. In contrast, Asians received the most lenient treatment in the justice process.<sup>42</sup>

**THE RACIAL THREAT HYPOTHESIS** According to the **racial threat hypothesis** as the percentage of African Americans in the population increases, so does the amount of social control imposed on black citizens at every stage of the justice system, from arrest to final release.<sup>43</sup> The source of racial threat begins when white residents overestimate the proportion of minorities living in their neighborhood, a circumstance that leads to false perceptions of disorder.<sup>44</sup> When fear grips an area, police are more likely to aggressively patrol minority areas; suspect, search, and arrest minority group members; and make arrests for minor infractions, helping to raise the minority crime rate. As perceptions of racial threat increases, so too does the demand for greater law enforcement protection: the greater the perception of racial threat, the larger the community's police department.<sup>45</sup> The result is a stepped-up effort to control and punish minority citizens, which segregates minorities from the economic mainstream and reinforces the physical and social isolation of the minority community.

**STRUCTURAL RACISM** Another assumed source of racial differences in the crime rate is the racial discrimination that has pervaded American society for hundreds of years and has resulted in economic and social disparity. Racial and ethnic minorities face a greater degree of social isolation and economic deprivation than the white majority.<sup>46</sup> Many black youths are forced to attend essentially segregated schools that are

underfunded and run-down, a condition that elevates the likelihood of their being incarcerated in adulthood.<sup>47</sup>

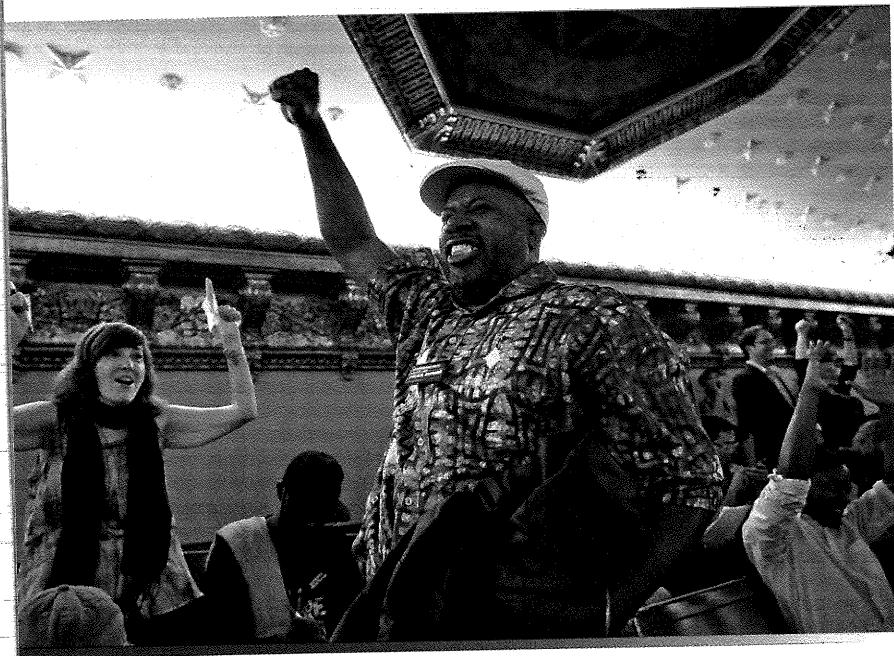
In the minority community, family dissolution may be tied to low employment rates among African American males, which places a strain on marriages.<sup>48</sup> When families are weakened or disrupted, social control over their children is compromised.<sup>49</sup>

In sum, racial differences in the crime rate have been linked to institutional and structural differences in society.<sup>50</sup> If racial and ethnic disparity in the application of justice and the distribution of social and economic resources were to end, crime rate differences between the races would evaporate.<sup>51</sup>

## The Ecology of Crime

Patterns in the crime rate seem to be linked to temporal and ecological factors. Some of the most important of these are discussed here.

**DAY, SEASON, AND CLIMATE** Most reported crimes occur during the warm summer months of July and August. During the summer, teenagers, who usually have the highest crime levels, are out of school and have greater opportunity to commit crime. People spend more time outdoors during warm weather, making themselves easier targets. Similarly, homes are left vacant more often



Spencer Platt/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Critics of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) stop-and-frisk policy celebrate after City Council members voted to establish an inspector general for the New York Police Department (NYPD) weeks after a federal judge ruled that the NYPD violated the civil rights of minorities with their stop-and-frisk policy. U.S. District Court Judge Shira Scheindlin ordered a monitor to focus on stop-and-frisk, a policy she declared that the department has used in a manner that violated the rights of hundreds of thousands of black and Hispanic men. After numerous appeals and years of court process, on October 31, 2014, a three-judge panel on the Second Circuit unanimously allowed the city to proceed with its overhaul of the police department policies.

during the summer, making them more vulnerable to property crimes. Two exceptions to this trend are murders and robberies, which occur frequently in December and January (although rates are also high during the summer). One reason: robberies are more likely to take place when it gets dark out, something that occurs earlier in winter months (in the United States and Europe, at least).<sup>52</sup>

Crime rates also may be higher on the first day of the month than at any other time. Government welfare and Social Security checks arrive at this time, and with them come increases in such activities as breaking into mailboxes and accosting recipients on the streets. Also, people may have more disposable income at this time, and the availability of extra money may encourage behaviors associated with crime, such as drinking, partying, and gambling.<sup>53</sup>

**TEMPERATURE** Weather effects (such as temperature swings) may have an impact on violent crime rates. Traditionally, the association between temperature and crime was thought to resemble an inverted U-shaped curve: crime rates increase with rising temperatures and then begin to decline at some point (85 degrees) when it may be too hot for any physical exertion.<sup>54</sup> However, criminologists continue to debate this issue:

- Some believe that crime rates rise with temperature (the hotter the day, the higher the crime rate).<sup>55</sup>
- Others have found evidence that the curvilinear model is correct.<sup>56</sup>
- Some research shows that a rising temperature causes some crimes (such as domestic assault) to continually increase, whereas other crimes (such as rape) decline after temperatures rise to an extremely high level.<sup>57</sup>

If, in fact, there is an association between temperature and crime, can it be explained? The relationship may be due to the stress and tension caused by extreme temperature. The human body generates stress hormones (adrenaline and testosterone) in response to excessive heat, and such hormonal activity has been linked to aggression.<sup>58</sup> Or as Shakespeare put it, "For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring."<sup>59</sup>

**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES** Large urban areas have by far the highest violence rates; rural areas have the lowest per capita crime rates. Exceptions to this trend are low-population resort areas with large transient or seasonal populations that typically have higher crime rates than the norm; this phenomenon has been observed in the United States and abroad.<sup>60</sup>

Typically, the western and southern states have had consistently higher crime rates than the Midwest and Northeast. This pattern has convinced some criminologists that regional cultural values influence crime rates. At one time criminologists believed there was a "southern subculture of violence" that linked high violence rates among Southerners to their keen sense of honor that compelled them to use force to defend their name, family, and property. However, recent research suggests that the southern subculture hypothesis is merely myth and Southerners are no more likely to fight for their honor than people in any other area.<sup>61</sup> It's more likely that regional differences can be explained by economic and demographic disparities and not macho cultural values.

## Use of Firearms

Firearms play a dominant role in criminal activity. According to the NCVS, firearms are typically involved in about 20 percent of robberies, 10 percent of assaults, and more than 5 percent of rapes. According to the UCR, about 70 percent of all murders involve firearms; most of these weapons are handguns. Criminals of all races and ethnic backgrounds are equally likely to use guns in violent attacks, and the presence of a weapon increases the likelihood that a violent incident will result in serious injury and/or death.<sup>62</sup>

### FACT OR FICTION?

**Immigrants who are in the United States illegally commit a lot of crime, a fact that justifies limiting immigration and closing down the borders.**

**FICTION** Immigrants, whether they are in this country legally or illegally, have very low crime rates. Immigration helps reduce crime rates.

## CONNECTIONS

Using guns to fight back against victimization is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Would you carry a concealed weapon if research showed that armed people are less likely to become crime victims?

### resource deprivation

The consequence of a lack of income and other resources, which cumulatively, leads to poverty.

### instrumental crimes

Offenses designed to improve the financial or social position of the criminal.

### expressive crimes

Offenses committed not for profit or gain but to vent rage, anger, or frustration.

Because of these findings, there is an ongoing debate over gun control. Some criminologists staunchly favor gun control. Franklin Zimring and Gordon Hawkins believe that the proliferation of handguns and the high rate of lethal violence they cause is the single most significant factor separating the crime problem in the United States from that in the rest of the developed world.<sup>63</sup> Differences between the United States and Europe in nonlethal crimes are modest at best and are getting smaller over time.<sup>64</sup>

In contrast, some criminologists, particularly Gary Kleck, believe that personal gun use can actually be a deterrent to crime and that guns “almost certainly” save lives. While guns are involved in murders, suicides, and accidents, Kleck believes the benefit of guns as a crime prevention device should not be overlooked and that at least 18 national surveys have consistently confirmed that defensive gun usage by potential victims is very common, probably more common than criminal uses of guns.<sup>65</sup> Needless to say, this remains a very controversial issue.

## Social Class and Crime

Crime is often considered a lower-class phenomenon: people living in inner-city, high-poverty areas are generally more likely to join gangs, sell drugs, and commit crimes than those residing in wealthy suburban areas. Neighborhoods experiencing income inequality, lack of informal social controls, and **resource deprivation** have crime rates significantly higher than those that can provide economic opportunities for their residents.<sup>66</sup> When these conditions exist, youth gangs flourish, resulting in high rates of the most serious violent crimes, including homicide and assault.<sup>67</sup>

It makes logical sense that crime is a lower-class phenomenon. After all, indigent people at the lowest rungs of the social structure, who are unable to obtain desired goods and services through conventional means, have the greatest incentive to commit crime. Their motivation comes from a lack of real opportunity in lower-class communities. As manufacturing moves overseas, less educated, untrained young males are frozen out of the legitimate job market and instead turn to gain through participation in illegal markets: selling drugs is generally more profitable than washing cars or working in a fast-food restaurant. However, when the economy turns around, drug dealers do not suddenly quit the trade and get a job with GE or IBM. As criminologist Shawn Bushway points out, lack of entry into legitimate labor markets creates incentives for teens and adolescents to participate in illegal activities.<sup>68</sup>

Some of them commit **instrumental crimes**, illegal acts whose goal is to provide desired goods and services that cannot be obtained through legitimate economic means; others get involved in **expressive crimes**, such as rape and assault, that express their rage, frustration, and anger against society; and some commit both kinds of crime. In contrast, when middle- and upper-class people commit crime, it's typically nonviolent, business-related, white-collar crimes that do not threaten the public or produce fear and anxiety.

Not all criminologists accept the class-crime association at face value. An alternative explanation is that the relationship between crime and social class is a function of law enforcement practices, not actual criminal behavior patterns. Police may devote more resources to poor areas, and consequently apprehension and arrest rates may be higher in these communities, giving a false picture of the true class-crime association. Prosecutors may be more likely to file charges against the poor, while handling cases involving the middle class informally, a practice which accounts for the overrepresentation of the lower class in the prison population.<sup>69</sup> And people in the middle and upper classes may commit white-collar crimes that are rarely detected or enforced.

## Unemployment and Crime

It stands to reason that crime rates should correlate with unemployment rates, peaking during tough economic times when people are out of work and money is tight. Unemployed people may feel frustrated and discouraged, leading not only to



an increase in property crimes but to angry aggression and violence. Research has linked unemployment rates to higher crime rates, especially when the government does not provide sufficient economic support such as welfare and unemployment benefits.<sup>70</sup>

While this association seems logical, there is a great deal of conflicting research, some of which shows that the two factors are only weakly related: crime rates sometimes rise during periods of high employment and fall during periods when people are out of work.

How can the weak association be explained? One reason is that during times of full employment more people are being hired, including teens, and young people with after-school jobs, unsupervised by parents, who earn wages that they can spend on themselves, are more likely to engage in antisocial activities such as drinking and drug usage.<sup>71</sup> In contrast, when unemployment rates are high, jobless parents are at home to supervise teenagers reducing their opportunity to commit crimes. Also when people are unemployed, they have less money on hand and purchase fewer things worth stealing; they are also home to guard their meager possessions. They may even sell their valuables to raise cash to pay off debts, reducing suitable targets for burglars and thieves.

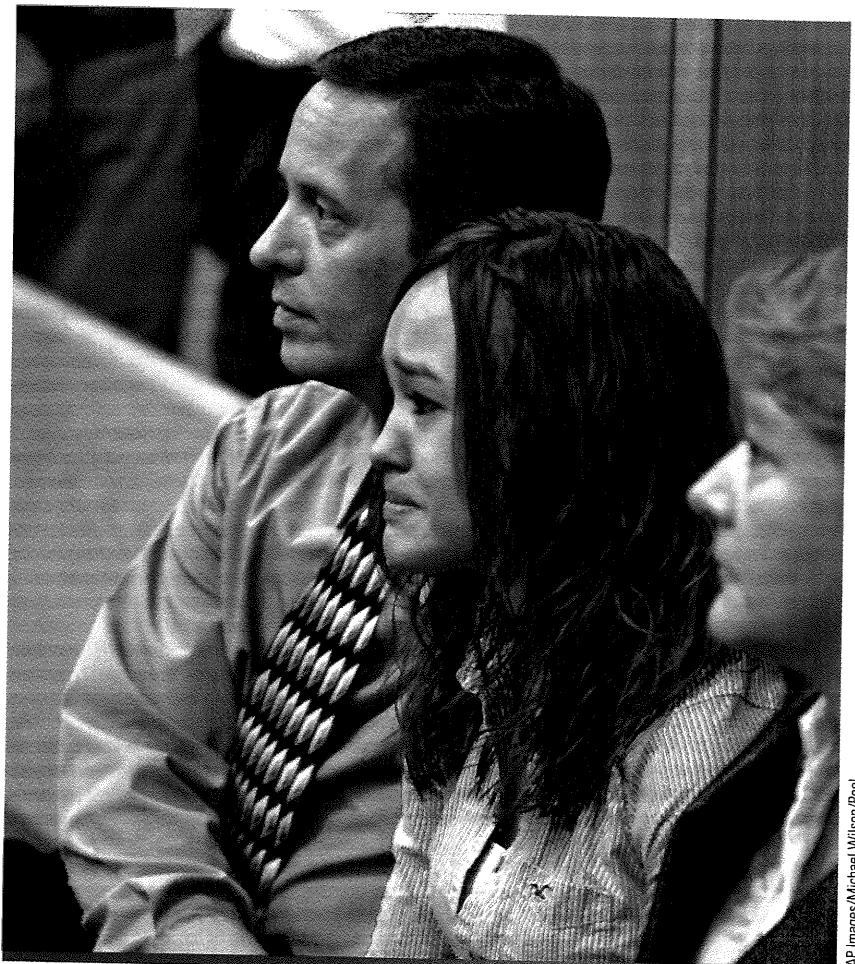
## Age and Crime

There is general agreement that age is inversely related to criminality. Criminologists Travis Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson state that "Age is everywhere correlated with crime. Its effects on crime do not depend on other demographic correlates of crime."<sup>72</sup>

Regardless of economic status, marital status, race, sex, and other factors, younger people commit crime more often than older people, and this relationship has been stable across time.<sup>73</sup> Official statistics tell us that young people are arrested at a rate disproportionate to their numbers in the population; victim surveys generate similar findings for crimes in which assailant age can be determined. As a general rule, the peak age for property crime is believed to be 16, and for violence, 18. The 10-to-24 age group make up about 21 percent of the population but commit 39 percent of serious violent crimes and 45 percent of all property crimes. In contrast, the elderly are particularly resistant to the temptations of crime. Elderly males 65 and over are predominantly arrested for alcohol-related matters (such as public drunkenness and drunk driving) and elderly females for larceny (such as shoplifting).

**AGING OUT OF CRIME** Criminologists agree that people commit less crime as they age.<sup>74</sup> Crime peaks in adolescence and then declines rapidly thereafter.

**L05** Clarify what is meant by the term *aging-out process*.



AP Images/Michael Wilson/Pool

Most illegal acts are committed by teens who eventually age out of crime and become responsible adults. Kayla Hassall, 16 (center), one of five teenagers accused of beating fellow teen Victoria N. Lindsay, tries to contain her emotions as she sits in court prior to a plea hearing in Bartow, Florida. On the left is her father, Jeff Hassall, and to the right is her mother, Kari Hassall. Kayla Hassall and April Cooper were among the teens accused of attacking a 16-year-old girl. The attack was recorded on video and seen around the world via the Internet and TV. She received one year of juvenile probation for her crime.

## CHECKPOINTS

- ▶ Gauging future trends is difficult. Some experts forecast an increase in crime, whereas others foresee a continued and ongoing decline in the crime rate.
- ▶ There are stable and enduring patterns in the crime rate.
- ▶ Males have a higher crime rate than females, but the gap is narrowing.
- ▶ Some criminologists suggest that institutional racism, such as police profiling, accounts for the racial differences in the crime rate.
- ▶ Others believe that African American crime rates are a function of living in a racially segregated society, a phenomenon referred to as structural racism.
- ▶ Crime is more common during the summer and in urban areas.
- ▶ Crime rates are highest in areas with high rates of poverty.
- ▶ Young people have the highest crime rates; people commit less crime as they mature.

**L06** Define the concept of chronic offending and know its causes.

### aging out

Phrase used to express the fact that people commit less crime as they mature.

### chronic offenders (career criminals)

The small group of persistent offenders who account for a majority of all criminal offenses.

In modern, industrial societies adolescents are given most of the privileges and responsibilities of adults but also experience less supervision and fewer responsibilities, which can result in a reduced ability to cope in a legitimate manner and increased incentive to solve problems in a criminal manner.<sup>75</sup> Young people tend to discount the future.<sup>76</sup> They are impatient, and because their future is uncertain, they are unwilling or unable to delay gratification. As they mature, troubled youths are able to develop a long-term life view and resist the need for immediate gratification.<sup>77</sup>

**Aging out** of crime may also be a function of the natural history of the human life cycle.<sup>78</sup> Deviance in adolescence is fueled by the need for money and sex and is reinforced by close relationships with peers who defy conventional morality. At the same time, teenagers are becoming independent from parents and other adults who enforce conventional standards of morality and behavior. They have a new sense of energy and strength and are involved with peers who are similarly vigorous and frustrated. Adults, on the other hand, develop the ability to delay gratification and forgo the immediate gains that law violations bring. They also start wanting to take responsibility for their behavior and to adhere to conventional mores, such as establishing long-term relationships and starting a family.<sup>79</sup> Some criminologists now believe that the key to desistance and aging out is linked to human biology. Levels of hormones and brain chemicals ebb and flow over the life course. During adolescence, dopamine increases while serotonin is reduced; in adulthood, dopamine levels recede while serotonin levels become elevated. It is possible that these biological changes influence behavioral choices.<sup>80</sup>

While the age-crime association is a key element of criminology, the association may soon have to be rethought. Though teens are still very active in crime, according to the most recent UCR data the arrest rate for teens dropped 37 percent since 2003, while adult arrests dropped only 3 percent, evening out the gap between adult and teen official crime rates. If these trends continue, the rates will eventually converge, calling into question the age-crime association.

## Chronic Offenders/Criminal Careers

Crime data show that most offenders commit a single criminal act and, upon arrest, discontinue their antisocial activity. Others commit a few less serious crimes. A small group of criminal offenders, however, account for a majority of all criminal offenses. These persistent offenders are referred to as **career criminals** or **chronic offenders**. The concept of the chronic, or career, offender is most closely associated with the research efforts of Marvin Wolfgang, Robert Figlio, and Thorsten Sellin.<sup>81</sup> In their landmark 1972 study *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*, they used official records to follow the criminal careers of 9,945 boys born in Philadelphia in 1945 from the time of their birth until they reached 18 years of age in 1963. Official police records were used to identify delinquents. About one-third of the boys (3,475) had some police contact. The remaining two-thirds (6,470) had none. Each delinquent was given a seriousness weight score for every delinquent act.<sup>82</sup> The weighting of delinquent acts enabled the researchers to differentiate between a simple assault requiring no medical attention for the victim and serious battery in which the victim needed hospitalization. The best-known discovery of Wolfgang and his associates was that of the so-called chronic offender. The cohort data indicated that 54 percent (1,862) of the sample's delinquent youths were repeat offenders, whereas the remaining 46 percent (1,613) were one-time offenders. The repeaters could be further categorized as nonchronic recidivists and chronic recidivists. The former consisted of 1,235 youths who had been arrested more than once but fewer than five times and who made up 35.6 percent of all delinquents. The latter were a group of 627 boys arrested five times or more, who

accounted for 18 percent of the delinquents and 6 percent of the total sample of 9,945.

The chronic offenders (known today as “the chronic 6 percent”) were involved in the most dramatic amounts of delinquent behavior. They were responsible for 5,305 offenses, or 52 percent of all the offenses committed by the cohort. Even more striking was the involvement of chronic offenders in serious criminal acts. The chronic 6 percent committed 71 percent of the homicides, 73 percent of the rapes, 82 percent of the robberies, and 69 percent of the aggravated assaults.

Wolfgang and his associates found that arrests and court experience did little to deter the chronic offender. In fact, punishment was inversely related to chronic offending: the more stringent the sanction chronic offenders received, the more likely they were to engage in repeated criminal behavior.

In a second cohort study, Wolfgang and his associates selected a new, larger birth cohort born in Philadelphia in 1958, which contained both male and female subjects.<sup>83</sup> Although the proportion of delinquent youths was about the same as that in the 1945 cohort, the researchers again found a similar pattern of chronic offending. Chronic female delinquency was relatively rare—only 1 percent of the females in the survey were chronic offenders. Wolfgang’s pioneering effort to identify the chronic career offender has been replicated by a number of other researchers in a variety of locations in the United States.<sup>84</sup> The chronic offender has also been found abroad.<sup>85</sup>

### What Causes Chronicity?

Criminologists believe that chronic offenders tend to be at-risk youth who are exposed to a variety of personal and social problems and who begin their law breaking at a very early age—a phenomenon referred to as **early onset**.<sup>86</sup> Research studies have also linked chronicity to relatively low intellectual development and to parental involvement in drugs.<sup>87</sup>

#### **early onset**

The view that repeat offenders begin their criminal careers at a very young age.

### Implications of the Chronic Offender Concept

The findings of the cohort studies and the discovery of the chronic offender revitalized criminological theory. If relatively few offenders become chronic criminals, perhaps chronic offenders possess some individual trait that is responsible for their behavior. Most people exposed to troublesome social conditions, such as poverty, do not become chronic offenders, so it is unlikely that social conditions alone can cause chronic offending. Traditional theories of criminal behavior have failed to distinguish between chronic and occasional offenders. They concentrate more on explaining why people begin to commit crime and pay scant attention to why people stop offending. The discovery of the chronic offender 40 years ago forced criminologists to consider such issues as persistence and desistance in their explanations of crime; more recent theories account not only for the onset of criminality but also for its termination.

The chronic offender has become a central focus of crime control policy. Apprehension and punishment seem to have little effect on the offending behavior of chronic offenders, and most repeat their criminal acts after their release from corrections.<sup>88</sup> Because chronic offenders rarely learn from their mistakes, sentencing policies designed to incapacitate chronic offenders for long periods without hope of probation or parole have been established. Incapacitation rather than rehabilitation is the goal. Among the policies spurred by the chronic offender concept are mandatory sentences for violent or drug-related crimes; **three-strikes policies**, which require people convicted of a third felony offense to serve a mandatory life sentence; and truth-in-sentencing policies, which require that convicted felons spend a significant portion of their sentence behind bars. It remains to be seen whether such policies can reduce crime rates or are merely get-tough measures designed to placate conservative voters.

#### **three-strikes policies**

Laws that require offenders to serve life in prison after they are convicted of a third felony.

# Thinking Like a Criminologist

## Rough Justice

The planning director for the State Department of Juvenile Justice has asked for your advice on how to reduce the threat of chronic offenders. Some of the more conservative members of her staff seem to believe that these kids need a strict dose of rough justice if they are to be turned away from a life of crime. They believe juvenile delinquents who are punished harshly are less likely to recidivate than youths who receive lesser punishments, such as community corrections or probation. In addition, they believe that hard-core, violent offenders deserve to be punished; excessive concern for offenders, and not enough concern for their acts, ignores the rights of victims and of society in general.

The planning director is unsure whether such an approach can reduce the threat of chronic offending. She is concerned that a strategy stressing punishment will have relatively little impact on chronic offenders and, if anything, may cause escalation in their serious criminal behaviors. She has asked you for your professional advice.

## Writing Assignment

Write an essay explaining both sides of the issue, comparing the potential effects of stigma and labeling with the need for control and security. Explain how you would handle chronic offenders, and tie your answer to the aging-out process.

## SUMMARY

### L01 Discuss the various forms of crime data.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation collects data from local law enforcement agencies and publishes that information yearly in its Uniform Crime Report (UCR). The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) is a program that collects data on each reported crime incident. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is a nationwide survey of victimization in the United States. Self-report surveys ask people to describe, in detail, their recent and lifetime participation in criminal activity.

### L02 Analyze recent trends in the crime rate.

Crime rates peaked in 1991, when police recorded almost 15 million crimes. Since then the number of crimes tallied by the FBI has been in a steep decline. In addition, NCVS data show that criminal victimizations have declined significantly during the past 40 years: in 1973, an estimated 44 million victimizations were recorded, compared to about 20 million today, a drop of nearly 50 percent.

### L03 List the factors that influence crime rates.

The age composition of the population, the number of immigrants, the availability of legalized abortion, the number of guns, drug use, availability of emergency medical services, numbers of police officers, the state of the economy, cultural change, and criminal opportunities all influence crime rates.

### L04 Identify the gender and racial patterns in crime.

Male crime rates are much higher than those of females. Gender differences in the crime rate have persisted over time, but there is little question that females are now involved in more crime than ever before and that there are more similarities than differences between male and female offenders. Official crime data indicate that minority group members are involved in a disproportionate share of criminal activity. Racial and ethnic differentials in crime rates may be tied to economic and social disparity and institutional racism.