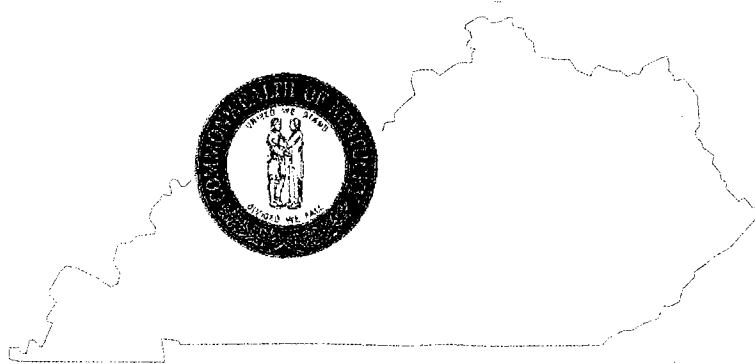


**Criminal Justice
Statistics
in the
Commonwealth**



Kentucky Criminal Justice Council
March 2003



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Kentucky Criminal Justice Council	3
Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents	7
List of Tables/Charts	9
Limitations of Current Data/Information System	13
Executive Summary	15
I. Kentucky's Changing Demographic Realities	19
II. Reported Index Crime Trends	22
III. Arrest Trends	41
IV. Bail Release Trends	44
V. Court Disposition / Sentencing Trends	48
VI. Trial Court Caseload Trends	53
VII. Commitment, Release Trends	68
VIII. Jail Population Trends	78
IX. Appellate Court Caseload Trends	81
X. Juvenile Justice System Trends	85
XI. Selected Crime Categories	89
XII. Key Criminal Justice Cost Information	107
Appendix A Description of Existing Criminal Justice Information Systems	120
Appendix B Part I and Part II Offenses and Definitions	121
Appendix C Grants Program Descriptions	123



LIST OF TABLES/CHARTS

Section I

FIGURE 1.a:	Population of Kentucky, 1970-2010	19
-------------	-----------------------------------	----

Section II

TABLE 2.1:	Comparison of the Survey Sample to the 2000 Census for Kentucky	28
TABLE 2.2:	Satisfaction with the Criminal Justice System	29
FIGURE 2.a:	Percent of Respondents Reporting Most Recent Incident to the Police	30
FIGURE 2.b:	Victim/Offender Relationship in Violent Offenses	30
FIGURE 2.c:	Location of Violent Offenses	31
FIGURE 2.d:	Percent of Property Crime Victims Who Reported Most Recent Incident to the Police	31
FIGURE 2.e:	Distribution of Median Loss Due to Property Crime	32
FIGURE 2.f:	Location of Property Offenses	32
TABLE 2.3:	Index Offenses, 1997-2000: Number and Rate per 100,000 Population	33
TABLE 2.4:	Crime Rate Comparisons, 1997 to 2000: Kentucky and Surrounding States	34
TABLE 2.5:	Index Offense Rate per 1,000 Population by County, 2000	35
MAP 2.g:	Index Crime Rates by County	39
TABLE 2.6:	Part I Offense Rates per 1,000 Population in 2000 for Cities over 10,000	40

Section III

TABLE 3.1:	Adult (18+) Arrest Rates per 100,000 Adult Population, 1997-2000	41
TABLE 3.2:	Total Arrests by Race, 2000	42
FIGURE 3.a:	Distribution of Arrests by Race, 2000	42
TABLE 3.3:	Total Arrests by Gender, 2000	43
FIGURE 3.b:	Distribution of Arrests by Gender, 2000	43

Section IV

TABLE 4.1:	Type of Bail Release by Offense in Percentages, 1996-2002	44
FIGURE 4.a:	Distribution of Bail Imposed in Index Offenses, Fiscal Year 2002	47



LIST OF TABLES/CHARTS (CONTINUED)

Section V

TABLE 5.1:	AOC Case Dispositions by Offense for Fiscal Years 1996-2002	48
TABLE 5.2:	Percentage of Charges within Each Index Offense Receiving Sepcific Sentences, FY 2001-2002	50
FIGURE 5.a:	Distribution of Sentences Imposed for Index Offense Charges, Fiscal Year 2002	52

Section VI

TABLE 6.1:	Commonwealth’s Attorneys Cases Disposed in Fiscal Years 1999-2002	53
TABLE 6.2:	County Attorneys Cases Disposed in Fiscal Years 1999-2002	55
TABLE 6.3:	Unified Prosecutorial System Cases Disposed in Fiscal Years 1992-2002	58
TABLE 6.4:	Unified Prosecutorial System Cases Disposed by County, Fiscal Years 1999-2002	59
TABLE 6.5:	District Court Cases Disposed by County Statewide	62
FIGURE 6.a:	Department of Public Advocacy Caseload by Division, Fiscal Year 2002	66
FIGURE 6.b:	Department of Public Advocacy Trial Division Cases Reported Opened, Fiscal Year 2002	66
FIGURE 6.c:	Department of Public Advocacy Trial Division: Capital Eligible, Juvenile, Involuntary Commitment Cases, Fiscal Year 2002	67
FIGURE 6.d:	Department of Public Advocacy Field Office Workload, Fiscal Years 1996-2002	67

Section VII

TABLE 7.1:	DOC Commitments for Each Index Offense, 1995-2002	69
FIGURE 7.a:	DOC Commitments by Type of Crime, 1995-2002	69
TABLE 7.2:	Average Sentence in Years for Index Offenses, 1995-2002	70
FIGURE 7.b:	Average Sentence by Type of Index Offense, 1995-2002	70
TABLE 7.3:	Murder: Commitments and Releases, 1994-2002	71
FIGURE 7.c:	Murder: Commitments and Releases, 1994-2002	71
TABLE 7.4:	Rape: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	72
FIGURE 7.d:	Rape: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	72
TABLE 7.5:	Aggravated Assault: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	73
FIGURE 7.e:	Aggravated Assault: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	73
TABLE 7.6:	Robbery: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	74
FIGURE 7.f:	Robbery: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	74
TABLE 7.7:	Burglary: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	75
FIGURE 7.g:	Burglary: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	75



LIST OF TABLES/CHARTS (CONTINUED)

Section VII (continued)

TABLE 7.8:	Larceny/Theft: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	76
FIGURE 7.h:	Larceny/Theft: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	76
TABLE 7.9:	Arson: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	77
FIGURE 7.i:	Arson: Commitments and Releases, 1995-2002	77

Section VIII

TABLE 8.1:	Jail Population on December 13, 2000	78
MAP 8.a:	Jail Population on December 13, 2000	80

Section IX

FIGURE 9.a:	Department of Public Advocacy Post Trial Caseload by Branch, Fiscal Year 2000	81
TABLE 9.1:	Court of Appeals Caseload by Fiscal Year, 1996-2000	82
FIGURE 9.b:	Distribution of Appellate Cases Disposed, Fiscal Year 2000	82
TABLE 9.2:	Supreme Court Caseload by Fiscal Year, 1996-2000	83
FIGURE 9.c:	Distribution of Supreme Court Cases Disposed, Fiscal Year 2000	84

Section X

TABLE 10.1:	Juvenile Arrest Rates per 100,000 Persons Age 0-17, 1997-2000	85
FIGURE 10.a:	Number of Youth Served by Placement, FY 2002	86
FIGURE 10.b:	Percent of Youth Served Out of Community Placement by Program Type, FY 2002	86
FIGURE 10.c:	Percent of Youth Served in the Community by Race, FY2002	87
FIGURE 10.d:	Percent of Youth Served Out of the Community by Race, FY 2002	87
FIGURE 10.e:	Percent of Youth Served in the Community by Gender, FY 2002	88
FIGURE 10.f:	Percent of Youth Served Out of the Community by Gender, FY 2002	88

Section XI

TABLE 11.1:	Drug Arrests by Type of Substance, 1997-2000	89
TABLE 11.2:	Drug Arrests per 1,000 by County, 1997-2000	90



LIST OF TABLES/CHARTS (CONTINUED)

Section XI (continued)

TABLE 11.3:	Bias Motivations for Hate Crimes, 1998-2002	94
TABLE 11.4:	Location of Hate Crime Incidents, 1998-2002	95
TABLE 11.5:	Hate Crime Offense Description, 1998-2002	95
TABLE 11.6:	Comparison of Forcible Rape Rates per 100,000 Population between Kentucky and Surrounding States, 1996-2000	96
FIGURE 11.a:	Forcible Rape, 1996-2000	97
FIGURE 11.b:	Sex Offense Cases, Fiscal Years 1998-2002	97
FIGURE 11.c:	Sex Offense Convictions, Fiscal Years 1998-2002	98
FIGURE 11.d:	Percentage of Sex Cases Resulting in Conviction, Fiscal Years 1998-2002	98
FIGURE 11.e:	Sex Offenders: DOC Commitments by Crime, 1996-2002	99
TABLE 11.7:	Sex Offenders: Commitments and Releases, 1996-2002	100
FIGURE 11.f:	Sex Offenders: Commitments and Releases, 1996-2002	100
FIGURE 11.g:	Total Sentence for Sex Offenders, 1996-2002	101
TABLE 11.8:	Reported Law Violations During 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 School Year	103
TABLE 11.9	Offense Rates per 1,000 Students by Region and Offense, 1999-2000 School Year	104
TABLE 11.10	Reported legal Consequences of Part I and Part II Violations During 1999-2000 School Year	104
FIGURE 11.h:	Comparison of Reported Part I Disciplinary Actions Between 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 School Years	105
FIGURE 11.i:	Comparison of Reported Part II Disciplinary Actions Between 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 School Years	106

Section XII

FIGURE 12.a:	Fiscal Year 2000 Criminal Justice Enacted Budgets	107
TABLE 12.1:	Police Employment, 2000	108
TABLE 12.2:	Cost to Incarcerate by Institution, Fiscal Year 1999-2000	109
TABLE 12.3:	Cost to Incarcerate by Type of Institution, Fiscal Year 2001-2002	109
TABLE 12.4:	Kentucky Agency for Substance Abuse Policy: Interagency Substance Abuse Budget, Fiscal Year 2003	110
TABLE 12.5:	Department of Corrections Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Costs Per Day, FY 2002	111
MAP 12.a:	Justice Cabinet Grant Funding by County, Fiscal Year 1999-2000	112
TABLE 12.6:	Number of Grant Awards per County by Granting Agency and Program, Fiscal Year 2002-2004	113
TABLE 12.7:	Community Corrections Program: Alternative to Incarceration Awards, Fiscal Year 2003-2004	117



LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT DATA/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

As you review the information contained in this Sourcebook, it is important to keep in mind that data have been drawn from a number of state level criminal justice computer systems in an attempt to provide a snapshot of crime trends in the Commonwealth. A detailed description of the existing systems can be found in Appendix A. Until these systems are fully integrated into a statewide Unified Criminal Justice Information System, there will remain limitations in the data available for analysis. These limitations are delineated below:

- Data collection systems of criminal justice agencies were established independently for in-house data management purposes and not for planning or policy evaluation.
- There are currently no standardized formats for defining data elements or counting criminal justice events. Agencies vary according to what is being counted, e.g. charges, cases, or individuals, and whether data are compiled on a calendar year or fiscal year basis.
- As a result of the variation across agencies, it is currently not possible to publish a fully integrated criminal justice system report or to perform systemic trend analysis. This report is intended to provide individual snapshots of the key components of the justice system (law enforcement, courts, corrections, prosecution and defense); and to draw general conclusions regarding system trends where possible.
- It is important to keep in mind that the National Institute of Justice estimates that only 38% of all crime is reported to the police. In order to provide a better picture of the actual levels of victimization that are occurring within the Commonwealth, the Kentucky Criminal Justice Council plans to conduct a biennial crime victimization study in conjunction with the Statistical Analysis Center. This study will help to provide a better picture of the actual levels of victimization that are occurring within the Commonwealth.
- Variations in definitions may result in considerable inconsistencies in numbers across agencies. The data may be used to determine whether trends are consistent across agencies, however, individual numbers may differ significantly. Therefore, this report should be viewed as a starting point which will improve over time as reporting practices become more consistent.



LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT DATA/INFORMATION SYSTEMS (CONTINUED)

- Kentucky currently uses the FBI's Summary Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR) to collect data. The UCR is a nationwide, cooperative statistical effort of nearly 17,000 city, county, and state law enforcement agencies voluntarily reporting data on crimes brought to their attention. Eight offenses serve as an index for gauging fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime. Known collectively as the Crime Index, these offenses include the violent crimes of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Recognizing the need for improved statistics, law enforcement called for a thorough evaluative study that would modernize the UCR Program. As a result of this study, the UCR has been redesigned into the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Kentucky is in the transition phase from Summary UCR to NIBRS. NIBRS collects data on each single incident and arrest within 22 crime categories. For each offense known to police within these categories, incident, victim, property, offender, and arrestee information are gathered when available. The goal of the redesign is to modernize crime information by collecting data presently maintained in law enforcement records; the enhanced UCR program would involve the use of existing records systems. As such, the integrity of UCR's long-running statistical series will be maintained.

- In response to the need for better data throughout the criminal justice system, the Kentucky Criminal Justice Council has created a Public University Research Consortium (PURC) to address specific research needs. PURC is comprised of academic researchers placed regionally throughout the state. Recognizing the need for aggregate statewide data as well as the distinct demographic differences among the various regions of Kentucky, the PURC model is designed to enable researchers with varied backgrounds to work collaboratively on statewide research studies. With the ability to select project coordinators by research specialty and with data collection administered at the regional level, the Council hopes to obtain information that is valuable both regionally and in the aggregate.

