JRSA IBR Resource Center

JRSA's Incident-Based Reporting Resource Center
(www.jrsa.org/ibrrc)

Incident-Based Reporting

The incident-based reporting (IBR) of criminal offenses or incidents is a data collection strategy that differs markedly from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's traditional summary-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. In IBR systems, law enforcement agencies maintain a database of the details of criminal incidents that are reported to them, and report these details to their state UCR programs. In summary reporting, most local law enforcement agencies provide a monthly count of offenses and arrests for certain offense categories to their state UCR systems, which in turn report these totals to the FBI. Localities with IBR can also fulfill the summary reporting requirements of the FBI's UCR program by aggregating selected incident-level data.

IBR systems involve comprehensive data collection on the various aspects of reported criminal incidents. Depending upon the design of the particular system, the information collected can include details about the incident location, offense(s), offender(s), victim(s), property, and arrestee(s). These systems can provide a solid foundation for tactical decision-making, strategic planning, tracking offenders through the criminal justice system, research, and reporting. Localities and states with IBR systems can map crime incidents, produce annual and special reports, and respond to requests. Some states with IBR maintain Internet sites that display standard reports and/or provide downloadable data or reports.

In 1985, the FBI introduced the National Incident-Based Crime Reporting System (NIBRS), which is a standardized IBR system. Agencies that adopt NIBRS data systems can still choose to enhance the system to accommodate additional local requirements. Since NIBRS core data elements are standardized across states and localities, the system allows for the nationwide analysis of offenses reported to the police. As more departments across the county turn from collecting summary-based crime statistics to collecting incident-based statistics, assistance in analyzing these data becomes necessary.

The IBR Resource Center

In 1998, the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) created the Incident-Based Reporting Resource Center. The Resource Center is an online resource, providing easily accessible information on, and assistance with, several aspects of incident-based reporting and the data produced. The IBR Resource Center is located at http://www.jrsa.org/ibrrc.

Since the data produced by an IBR system results in a multilevel file, effective manipulation of the file requires an understanding of the levels (incident, offense, offender, victim, and arrestee) and how they are related. In order to assist researchers and analysts in using IBR data effectively, the Center discusses research strategies and provides examples of analyses. Users can also download SPSS or SAS syntax to recreate each example. Examples of state research projects designed to address actual issues of concern to the states are also presented.

Information Provided by the Center

The JRSA IBR Resource Center consists of several components that provide information on the background, features, and potential uses of IBR data. Included are:

More About Incident-Based Reporting and NIBRS
This section contains background information on NIBRS, along with a comparison of traditional summary and incident-based data. The NIBRS data elements are presented and discussed.

Availability of Data
This section discusses where users can find national and state IBR data.

Extracting Data from Incident-Based Reporting and NIBRS
This section provides an example of the programming code needed to read a multilevel data file, to create an incident-level file for analysis, and to prepare individual data segments for detailed analysis.

Tips and Shortcuts for Working with NIBRS and IBR Data
Timesaving conversions and data recodes are available for downloading from this section of the Web site.

Data Quality Issues
An overview of the FBI-required edits in NIBRS and a discussion of data quality issues are presented, including examples.

An Examination of NIBRS Elements
In order to prepare users for analyzing incident-based data, this section presents information on individual data elements.

Analyzing and Presenting IBR Data
Examples of working with incident-based data to answer specific research questions are presented in this section.

Displaying IBR Data
This section contains examples of tables and graphs used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the FBI to present NIBRS data.

State IBR Analyses
State IBR research reports and IBR-related projects currently underway are discussed, and copies of research reports by state Statistical Analysis Centers using their state IBR data are provided.

Mapping IBR Data
This section offers an introduction to using incident-based data for crime mapping, as well as links to more information.

Using IBR Data in ACCESS
Rather than using specialized statistical packages, you may find that a familiar desktop program such as Microsoft ACCESS fills your needs.

Links to Related Sites and References
Links to other agencies and an annotated bibliography are presented to keep analysts up-to-date on issues related to IBR and on research being done across the country.

The JRSA Incident-Based Reporting Center is a valuable tool for analysts working with IBR and NIBRS data. For more information about the Incident-Based Reporting Resource Center, please contact:

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