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ACQUISITIONS

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URBAN STUDIES CENTER  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

## Kentucky's Crime Estimation Program

### Background

The Crime Estimation (CREST) program has been established as an ongoing Kentucky-specific crime victimization database at the Kentucky Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center (SAC). The program will provide continuously updated crime information for state and local policymakers.

Telephone interviews of a random sample of households in Kentucky were the source of the preliminary data. Within each household, the residents were screened in order to create a sample representative of Kentucky adults (aged 18 and older).

Data for the preliminary analysis were collected from July through December, 1986. However, additional data have been collected on a monthly basis since this period.

Residents were asked about crime incidents that had occurred during the previous six months. Respondents were then asked detailed questions about their crime experiences, as well as those of all members of their household.

The demographic characteristics of the 460 respondents interviewed during the first six months were weighted to reflect the residents of Kentucky. This population is primarily white (94%), about half women (51%), and a little over half (59%) live in an urban area.

### Highlights

Statewide estimates of crime for 1986 indicate that approximately 27 percent of Kentucky households were touched by crime. Five percent of the households were affected by a violent crime; a household crime was experienced by 22 percent of the households surveyed.

Fear of becoming a crime victim is prevalent in Kentucky; 58 percent were fearful of being burglarized and 38 percent expressed fear of being robbed and physically assaulted when they were away from home; 14 percent stated that they do not walk alone at night; 7 percent reported fear of being attacked or assaulted by a relative, a neighbor, or an acquaintance. It was also found that respondents in households touched by crime were significantly more depressed than were respondents from nonvictimized households.

The program found that citizens of Kentucky are taking the initiative in varying degrees to protect themselves, but they do not necessarily use the services of formal crime-prevention programs. For example, 88 percent ask friends and neighbors to keep an eye on their homes when away, but only 4 percent have participated in police-sponsored Neighborhood Watch programs; 41 percent mark their belongings, but only 17 percent have had their

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### MESSAGE FROM ATTORNEY GENERAL FREDERIC J. COWAN

As Kentucky's new chief legal officer, it is my responsibility to assure all Kentuckians that our criminal justice system is working for them. Throughout my career as a public servant, including the six years in the General Assembly, I have dedicated myself to the reform of this system for the safety and security of the citizens of this Commonwealth.

In 1986, I sponsored the Victims' Bill of Rights. Crime victims now have specific rights vis-a-vis prosecutors, the courts, and the parole board, which I believe will make them feel a part of the system that was designed to protect them.

In addition to sponsoring the Victims' Bill of Rights, I have sponsored bills requiring treatment programs for both adult and juvenile sex offenders, supported legislation for increased parole terms for violent offenders, and fought for more prisons. Many of you provided strong support and technical

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valuables engraved through Operation Identification; and just 15 percent have anti-burglary decals.

Almost four out of every five Kentuckians consider child abuse to be a problem, 42 percent stating that it is very much a problem.

Approximately 37 percent of the respondents with children reported that their children have participated in an educational program for preventing child sexual abuse; most of these programs (96%) were sponsored by the school system.

Through educational programs attended by their children approximately two thirds of the parents (66%) have received literature on child sexual abuse. Sixty-four percent found the literature to be helpful for promoting their child's safety.

Over one third of the citizens (37%) are aware that they can contribute to the Child Victims' Trust Fund by checking a box on their state income tax forms.

### **The CREST Database**

The CREST database contains four categories of information--victimization, mental health, government and citizen crime-prevention initiatives, and citizen opinions and behaviors relating to special current public safety issues.

### **Victimization**

While national-level victimization estimates are available through the National Crime Survey (NCS) program (1970-1986), state-level victimization rates for Kentucky cannot be obtained. Therefore, CREST data eliminate this void. Further, the CREST data are comparable with the state's Uniform Crime Report, a report of all crimes in Kentucky reported to the police.

The victimization data contains information on the prevalence and

seriousness of both violent and property crimes.

Through the ongoing data collection process, patterns and trends of crimes in Kentucky can be traced. Special analyses, for example, can be performed to determine the regional and geographic characteristics that may be linked with criminal victimization.

### **Mental Health**

Data are also collected to monitor two mental health indicators: depression and fear of crime. An estimate of the victim's level of depression is measured by questions about failure, happiness, and mood changes. Fear is assumed to be a mental state that is disruptive for the individual and is measured by use of various crime-prevention strategies.

In addition to producing routine statewide estimates regarding mental health, the CREST program will also conduct special analyses to identify special populations or particular geographic areas in the state that might be more affected than others by crime victimization.

### **Current Public Safety Issues**

A special section of the CREST database contains questions about citizens' awareness, opinions, and behaviors regarding current public safety issues. The questions will be updated every six months to reflect current issues that are of potential concern to Kentucky citizens.

During the first six months of the CREST survey, citizens were surveyed on their awareness, opinions, and behaviors relating to sexual abuse of children.

During the second six months of data collection, the questions focused on the home incarceration program, in which the offender is electronically monitored through a computer telephone connection in the home, and

on the expenditure of money for drug enforcement. Kentucky citizens were also asked about their view of the death penalty and actions of the parole board.

### **Government/Citizen Initiatives to Combat Crime**

Continuous information about government and citizen reactions to crime can guide improvement of service delivery to crime victims. To this end, the CREST database provides estimates on victims' use of services, as well as on the extent and type of contacts with the various criminal justice agencies.

Further, citizens' use of various crime-prevention strategies will be monitored--both those steps initiated by individual citizens and those sponsored by state and local government crime-prevention programs.

### **Diffusion and Utilization Strategy**

It is anticipated that the statistics and information from the victimization estimates will be produced routinely through the CREST program.

To maximize both the use of victimization research results and the way in which the results are used, the CREST program offers two types of diffusion and utilization services: (1) widespread dissemination and (2) on-site research utilization assistance.

Dissemination will occur in several ways. First, the estimates generated from CREST and special results will be compiled to facilitate dissemination of the results to concerned citizens. These results will be routinely printed in the Kentucky SAC Research Bulletin series and disseminated throughout the Commonwealth. Further, selected newspapers and television stations throughout the state will be asked to report updates from the CREST program.

The CREST program will provide technical assistance to anyone who  
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expresses an interest in using the results. The Kentucky SAC staff will work with agencies or citizen groups to apply the findings. The first-year victimization estimates, for example, could be provided to the appropriate legislative planning committees through a Kentucky SAC research bulletin and on-site working sessions staffed by SAC personnel.

Another example of on-site technical assistance would be helping an agency to develop a victim-specific needs assessment or evaluation program.

A final type of assistance might involve SAC's working with agencies to modify existing programs or to develop new approaches.

In sum, the Kentucky SAC has developed a victimization database from which crime estimates and crime-prevention strategies can be monitored and utilization services can be provided. The CREST program should significantly contribute to the store of policy-relevant information that will be available on an ongoing basis in Kentucky to help citizens whose lives have been touched by crime.

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#### **LOCAL AGENCIES AS BROKERS OF RESEARCH**

An evaluation of the Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) affiliate program examined the implementation, process, impact, and implications of the program designed to establish a close affiliation between the SAC and local criminal agencies. One agency from within each of 15 randomly selected judicial districts across the state acted as an extension of the SAC by distributing research results and statistics to the criminal justice agencies within its local judicial district. It was assumed that the involvement of these local agencies would facilitate dissemination and use of the research by personalizing the

local agencies' contact with the SAC and by increasing the local agencies' participation in SAC activities.

A staff person from each of the selected local agencies acted as a "SAC broker." The broker's task was to establish and maintain a local SAC affiliate network, to respond to data requests, to assist local agencies with data-related problems, and to make information referrals. The SAC assisted the brokers by providing training, SAC products, mailing lists, follow-up telephone consultation, and assistance with a special workshop for each local network.

The SAC affiliate program remained in operation from April 1986 to December 1986. The program was considered fully implemented in eight of the fifteen districts. The evaluation indicated that a majority of the decisionmakers of Kentucky who reviewed SAC research used the findings in a variety of ways. The SAC affiliate program, however, did not increase the use of research beyond the level achieved by the SAC central office disseminating research directly to local agencies.

The implication from this program was that new research dissemination strategies are needed to increase the distribution and use of SAC research. One strategy being tried in 1988 is a **Criminal Justice Information Clearinghouse**. This will hopefully provide local agencies with technical reports, assistance, and data to facilitate their planning and decision-making processes. Another strategy under consideration is the establishment of a data users association. More information on these dissemination strategies will be highlighted in future SAC bulletins.

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#### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS CLEARINGHOUSE ESTABLISHED**

As part of the Kentucky Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) fourth-year grant from the Federal Bureau of

Justice Statistics, funding was allocated for the establishment of the Kentucky Criminal Justice Statistics Clearinghouse. This clearinghouse gathers the results of local, state, and federal research and statistical data from private and public agencies. Implementation of the SAC Clearinghouse builds upon the existing experience and capabilities of the Kentucky State Data Center.

Establishment of the clearinghouse has three phases: (1) acquisition of materials, (2) abstracting and cataloging, and (3) promotion, service, and evaluation. Each of these phases are ongoing. The acquisition of the research findings and statistical data, for example, entails collecting reports and newsletters from agencies in Kentucky, the federal government, and the other states across the nation. The documents that we have thus far collected have been abstracted and cataloged according to title, author and subject area(s) within a computerized data-retrieval program.

Materials on a wide variety of criminal justice topics have been collected; for example, statistics are available on AIDS in corrections and law enforcement, child abuse, drug enforcement, drunk driving, juvenile offenders and justice, block watches, prison and jail populations, and victimization. The resource documents have been identified through statewide mail and telephone surveys, in reviews of federal newsletters and publication lists, and from various unsolicited contributions.

To use the Clearinghouse, criminal justice personnel need only to call (502) 588-7990 or visit the SAC at the University of Louisville's Urban Studies Center. If the Clearinghouse does not currently have the information requested, the staff will be able to direct you to the appropriate source or obtain the materials for you. Although there may be a minimal charge for copying lengthy documents, most services of the Clearinghouse are **free**.

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assistance for this work and were instrumental in guaranteeing its success; I commend you on your diligent efforts.

As Attorney General, one of my chief goals is to introduce to the 1988 General Assembly stronger laws to prosecute those who fail to pay court-ordered child support and to improve the collection of delinquent payments. Failing to provide child support ordered by a judge is a serious crime and should be treated as such. It victimizes single parents and their children and is also extremely costly to taxpayers.

Since 1984 the Kentucky SAC has provided a vehicle for gathering and

analyzing data about the criminal justice system. SAC victimization studies provided the foundation for the development and passage of the Victims' Bill of Rights. Additionally, SAC child abuse reports have given us insight into how our system to protect children really works and where it fails.

By setting standards in our assistance to children, victims, consumers, and all Kentuckians, I believe that we can become a model for other states. SAC initiatives such as the crime estimation program (CREST), quarterly bulletins, conferences and workshops, and technical reports will enhance these possibilities and facilitate team coordination.

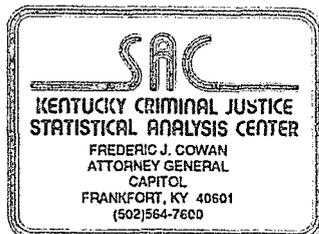
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## WE'VE MOVED

The Kentucky Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center moved in early September to the University of Louisville Belknap Campus. It is now located in the Urban Studies Center Building at 426 W. Bloom Street. The mailing address of the Statistical Analysis Center remains the same:

Statistical Analysis Center  
Urban Studies Center  
College of Urban and  
Public Affairs  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky 40292

The SAC telephone number is  
(502) 588-6626.



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