

TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 14

THE  
AMERICAN CRIMINAL HISTORY  
RECORD

PRESENT STATUS  
AND FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

37102  
DUP



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*a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the justice system . . .*

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**TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 14**  
**September 1976**

**THE**  
**AMERICAN CRIMINAL HISTORY**  
**RECORD**  
**PRESENT STATUS AND FUTURE REQUIREMENTS**

**NCJRS**

**NOV 9 1976**

**ACQUISITIONS**

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under Law Enforcement Assistance Administration Grant No. 75-SS-99-6020.

Submitted by SEARCH Group Inc.  
1620 35th Avenue, Suite 200, Sacramento, California 95822

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## PREFACE

The primary goals of this study effort were to conduct an intensive analysis of the life cycle of criminal history information; and to address the needs for, and uses of this information today and in the future.

Acknowledgement is made to the members of the project advisory committee who labored long and conscientiously. The expertise and insight brought to bear on the issue, and comments made did much to enhance the quality of this report.

Special thanks is extended to the entire SEARCH Membership Group for each member's assistance in administration of our national survey. Recognition is also due to those criminal justice practitioners who took valuable time out to respond to our questionnaires.

Others who participated meaningfully are those individuals of the project team from Boeing Computer Services, Inc. This firm provided the necessary subcontractor support services.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American criminal history record chronicles each contact that an individual has with the criminal justice process by documenting such events as arrests, dispositions, sentences, and correctional commitments. The American criminal history record is the informational thread that weaves together the functions performed by law enforcement, prosecutors, defense, courts, corrections, probation and parole.

To quantify the patterns of usage and the growing need for criminal history information, this research focused on the following objectives:

- Identify the present national capability at the state and local level for collection and dissemination of criminal history information.
- Estimate the national requirements for criminal history information from 1975 through 1985.

Based on data collected and analysis performed during the study, four major conclusions have been drawn:

1. The criminal history record is a primary source of information vital to exercising discretion and making decisions concerning individuals throughout the criminal justice process. There is no substitute.
2. The existing criminal history system is incapable of satisfying the data demands and timeliness requirements being placed on it.
3. Growth trends and usage patterns indicate that this condition will worsen in the future, and that the present criminal history system configuration may become unmanageable.
4. A national computerized criminal history (CCH) system offers the potential for making the system manageable, thereby alleviating many present and projected problems.

Since 1969, the United States has been developing a computerized system for the interstate exchange of criminal histories. At present, 28 states have computerized name indexes and 17 have computerized at least some of their records. Overall, of the 28.5 million criminal histories maintained at the state level, 3.9 million have been computerized.

However, conditions exist that prohibit an orderly and manageable national CCH system.

Today, the collection of data, its storage, and the dissemination of criminal history information is uncoordinated at all governmental levels. The number of users and their requirements for CCH information is misunderstood. Operational criminal justice agencies are relying on secondary sources for CCH records and are storing these records in their own files.

New users of criminal history records are continually emerging, and unanticipated usage is being made of CCH systems. Yet, accuracy, completeness and timeliness of data are not acceptable. Additional requirements and constraints imposed by Security and Privacy rules, speedy trial provisions and bail reform are not practical in light of present deficiencies.

In 1975, the United States maintained over 195 million criminal history records at state and local levels. These records, stored in manual, automated, or electro-mechanical form, were in addition to the 21.4 million records in the files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Using 1974 FBI data, it was calculated that only 12 million records would be required nationally to account for the number of first time and repeat adult criminal offenders. This is approximately one-sixteenth the number presently being kept.

DUPLICATION, REDUNDANCY, and OBSOLESCENCE are obvious characteristics of the present state of practice.

Based upon the results of this research, only one-third of the operational criminal justice agencies in the United States need criminal history information to conduct primary criminal justice functions. More importantly, only local police and local corrections have immediate, real-time requirements to obtain this information. Local law enforcement alone accounted for 80% of all requests for criminal history in 1975.

Files maintained by local police served as the source for 70 percent of criminal history requests. This datum suggests that local law enforcement is serving as a secondary source for information — independent of the centralized state and federal files.



The existence of redundant, unmanageable criminal history files and the multiple ways to request this information enlarges the problem. Today, when local criminal justice practitioners obtain criminal history records to make decisions, 30 percent of those records are missing required data. Moreover, 10% of these records have erroneous data contained in them.

If the state repository record is considered the master criminal history record, two factors contribute to inaccuracy and incompleteness at that level. First, 30 percent of the states do not have mandatory reporting requirements. Secondly, in many of those states with mandatory reporting, reporting timeframes as well as compliance are difficult to enforce. Nevertheless, arrests in 1975 generated 19 million input transactions to the criminal history system. (Input transactions are reporting of intermediate events and final dispositions).

#### Future Conditions

The number of adult criminal arrests as well as the relative number of adult criminal offenders is expected to increase through 1985. One can expect the number of requests, responses, records and updates to increase also. New requirements will continue to be placed on system resources.

To determine what the system will look like in 1980 and 1985, projections were made. Based upon these projections, the number of requests for criminal history will increase 22 percent by 1980 and 37 percent by 1985.

The number of input transactions will also increase. The 19 million event-reportings in 1975 is projected to increase to an average of 23.5 million by 1980 and 27 million by 1985.

The primary unknown for the future is the number of direct access terminals that will be required. The data indicate police agencies and local corrections have an immediate need for computer terminal response times, and it is estimated that there are approximately 10,000 such agencies in the United States. The situation is much less clear with respect

to the courts and prosecutors. Although the prosecutors have a need for four times as many criminal histories as they are receiving, it is possible their needs can be met other than with computer terminals. If, however, courts and prosecutors are shown to need terminals, the total rises to approximately 17,000.

As states continue to enhance computerized capabilities, new, unanticipated uses will be made of their systems. Presently, one out of five requests to state-level CCH centers is for non-criminal justice uses; for license and employment applications and security checks. While the processing of these requests receives a lower priority than those criminal in nature, this 20 percent represents competing demand upon existing system resources. And, this percentage will increase.

A national CCH system would not be of the magnitude perceived today. Rather, its scale of operations can be quite manageable.

A national CCH system would involve a much smaller number of records than presently exist, with no significant increase in the number of required data inputs and outputs. On a national basis, the projected number of needed records in 1975 was approximately 12 million. Assuming a ten-year purge criterion, 20-25 million records would be needed in 1985. This was approximately the number kept at the state-level in 1975.

Often, automation has been viewed as the means of handling a growing and increasingly complex problem of data processing. The startling conclusion made from this study is that computerization of criminal history records is necessary to simplify the system itself, not solely the procedures to deal with it.

In overview, it is concluded that a national CCH system would provide the potential for a more manageable criminal history operation. As an alternative to the present methods of operation, it would appear to provide the most promise for adequately meeting projected criminal justice needs.

## BACKGROUND

The criminal history record (illustrated in Figures 1 and 2) is an integral part of America's criminal justice system. A record is initially established when an individual is arrested for the first time. Entries concerning charges, dispositions, and sentences are made as the individual is processed through the criminal justice system. If an individual is arrested more than once, additional entries are appended to the same record.

The possible forms of the criminal history record are as complex as the criminal process itself. After an individual is arrested, the charge may be dismissed, plea bargaining may result in a lesser charge, or the defendant may be tried and found innocent. If found guilty, the offender may be incarcerated, placed on probation, fined, receive a suspended sentence, or receive a deferred sentence. According to *Crime in the United States, 1974*, 81 percent of those arrested in 1974 were subsequently tried in the courts. Further, 75 percent of those tried were found guilty, either of the same or a lesser charge; 45.2 percent of those found guilty were incarcerated, 41.4 percent were placed on probation, 6 percent were fined, and 7.4 percent received "other" dispositions.<sup>1</sup> A criminal history record, if complete, will contain an individual's entire criminal past, describing the consequence of every arrest.

The FBI, as part of its "Careers in Crime" program<sup>2</sup> conducted an analysis of 207,748 records in its Computerized Criminal History (CCH) file, and found that 34.8 percent of the records contained a single arrest, 18.1 percent contained two arrests, 10.9 percent contained three arrests, and 36.2 percent contained four or more arrests. The "average" record reported four arrests over a period of five years five months between the first and fourth arrest.

Prior to this study, there was no estimate of the number of criminal history records that exist in the United States. The FBI has 21.4 million. In addition, most states maintain separate files in central repositories. Further, local criminal justice agencies often maintain criminal history files of their own. Since a total of 57,575 criminal justice agencies have been

identified by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration<sup>3</sup> the number of criminal history records is potentially very large.

Criminal history records have been maintained in the United States since before the turn of the century. Common practice has been to maintain a record indefinitely, regardless of whether the individual ever comes into contact with the criminal justice system again, or even whether he is alive. Consequently a large number of records are no longer active. Some indication of the proportion of inactive files can be gained from a recent experience in the state of Minnesota where the criminal history files were purged in preparation for development of a computerized criminal history (CCH) system. The purge criteria were the elimination of:

- all records of individuals over 75
- all records of individuals who had had no contact with the criminal justice system for ten years or more
- all records for which the dispositions after arrest were unknown

Using these purge criteria, the Minnesota criminal history file was reduced from 300,000 to 100,000 records, a two-thirds reduction.

Whether active or inactive, criminal histories are often incomplete. The FBI, for example, has reported<sup>4</sup> that an examination of 835,000 charges revealed that disposition data had not been received on over 372,000 (45%). The problem of incompleteness is more severe at the state and local levels where agencies do not possess the extensive data collection capabilities of the FBI.

The criminal history record is used for a wide variety of purposes. Among these are prearrest investigations by law enforcement officers and prosecutors; arrest and bail release decisions; plea bargaining, court case preparation, and witness verification; juror qualification, witness verification, and sentencing; and post-trial corrections and probation/parole activities such as estimating the likelihood of escape and violence.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
IDENTIFICATION DIVISION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20537  
FICTITIOUS RECORD

The following FBI record, NUMBER 000 000 X, is furnished FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.  
Information shown on this Identification Record represents data furnished FBI by fingerprint contributors.  
WHERE DISPOSITION IS NOT SHOWN OR FURTHER EXPLANATION OF CHARGE OR DISPOSITION IS  
DESIRED, COMMUNICATE WITH AGENCY CONTRIBUTING THOSE FINGERPRINTS.

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	ARRESTED OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
SO Clanton AL	John Doe A-000	3-9-65	susp	rel
SO Clanton AL	John J. Doe A-000	6-11-65	vag	rel
SO Clanton AL	John J. Joe A-000	9-18-65	intox	\$25 or 25 das; pd
PD Montgomery AL	Joseph Doe CC-000	6-11-66	forg	
St Bd of Corr Montgomery AL	John Joseph Doe C-00000	10-18-66	forg 2nd deg	2 yrs & 1 day par 5-15-67
St Bd of Corr Montgomery AL	Joseph John Doe C-00000	returned 9-5-67	PV (forg 2nd deg)	to serve un-expired term of 2 yrs & 1 day
PD Montgomery AL	John Doe A-0000	2-20-68	burg & escapee	TOT St Bd of Corr Montgomery AL
St Bd of Corr Montgomery AL	John J. Doe C-00000	returned 2-21-68	burg & escapee	2 yrs
USM Jacksonville FL	John J. Doe 00-C	10-14-70	ITSMV	
USP Lewisburg PA	John Joseph Doe 00-NE	11-15-70	ITSMV	18 mos par 8-1-71

Figure 1. Manual Criminal History Record

DATE 07-02-76 STATE OF NEW YORK  
TIME 1335 DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES  
RUN NO 9996 ALBANY, NEW YORK 12208  
CONFIDENTIAL TO: AUTHORIZED AGENCY  
NAME SAMPLE, SAM NYSID 36791864  
CAUTION - IDENTIFICATION NOT BASED ON FINGERPRINT COMPARISON

NAMES USED BY SUBJECT  
SAMPLE, SAMUEL  
SAMPLE, SAM  
JOHNSON, SAMUEL  
SAMPLE, SAMUEL S  
JOHNSON, SAM

SUMMARY OF NYS CRIMINAL HISTORY INFORMATION			
DATE	CHARGES	DISPOSITION	
05-28-69	PL D FEL DANG INST/INT USE ILL 2ND OFF PL D FEL ROBBERY-3RD	06-01-69	DISMISSED
06-07-71	FEL ASLT	06-23-69	4 YEARS
	LL E FEL CHARGE CLASS E FEL LIEN LAS PL D FEL BURGLARY-3RD PL D FEL BURGLARY-3RD	06-10-71	PROB 3 YRS
<<<<<< CRIMINAL HISTORY >>>>>>			
ARREST DATE INFORMATION	ARREST CHARGES		DISPOSITION AND CORRECTIONS DATA
* OUT-OF-STATE N. JERSEY	2A-31-1	POSS STLN PROP	2A-31-1 <DISPOSITION> DISMISSED OR ACQUITTED
ARREST DATE FEB 16, 1958	2A-94-1	B&E	2A-94-1 BURG TOOLS CONV PLEA GUILTY ABOVE OFFENSE
ARREST AGENCY NEW BRUNSWICK PD	2A-90-1	A&B	COURT NOT REPORTED FINE: \$10/10 DAS SENT: 6 MONTHS MIDDLESEX CO WKHSE
			<DISPOSITION> 2A-90-1 CONVICTED
			COURT NOT REPORTED SENT: 1 YEAR
			< CORRECTION DATA > 1 YEAR MIDDLESEX CO WKHSE 04-03-58 INMATE ID 3482 REASON: UNKNOWN
ARR DT/PL 05-28-69 NEW YORK COUNTY	265.05 PL CLASS D FEL DANG INST/INT USE ILL 2ND OFF	265.05 PL CLASS D FEL DANG INST/INT USE ILL 2ND OFF	<DISPOSITION> DISM. AFTER ARRAIGN AND HEARING
CRM DT/PL 05-28-69 NEW YORK COUNTY (CONT. NEXT PAGE)	160.15 PL CLASS B FEL		

CONFIDENTIAL

•Represents arrest information unsupported by fingerprints in our files.  
All entries are as complete as the data furnished to DCJS.

DCJS - 5 (4/75) Summary Case History

Frank J. Rogers  
Commissioner

Figure 2. Computerized Criminal History Record



Criminal histories are also used for such non-criminal justice purposes as making security checks and verifying license applications. (Nevada, for example, requires that all persons employed in the gambling industry undergo a criminal history check.) To ensure that criminal history information would be available to criminal justice agencies, the states joined with the federal government in a cooperative program to develop criminal history systems.

In 1969 the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) initiated Project SEARCH,\* a consortium of states, to develop a prototype computerized criminal history (CCH) system for the interstate exchange of criminal history information. In 1970 the Attorney General authorized the FBI to manage the interstate exchange portion of this system.

In 1972 LEAA announced the Comprehensive Data System (CDS) Program<sup>4</sup> designed "to encourage each state to develop an information system to meet its own criminal justice data needs and, at the same time, to insure uniformity of essential data reported to the national level." CCH system development is an integral part of this program. By May 1976, 26 states were participating in CCH development (see Figures 3 and 4).

In 1974 the Comptroller General of the United States<sup>5</sup> in response to a request by the Senate Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Constitutional Rights, conducted a preliminary investigation of the uses of criminal history information. A random sample of requests for criminal history information over a one week period was obtained from the criminal history data centers maintained by the FBI and the states of California, Florida, and Massachusetts. The study concluded that criminal history information is used primarily for post-arrest purposes, and that law enforcement agencies are the primary recipients.<sup>6</sup> However, because local criminal justice agencies often maintain their own files independently of the FBI and the state data centers, a question arose concerning how nationally representative the Comptroller General's data were.

In June 1975 The Institute for Law and Social Research completed a cost and benefit study of CDS<sup>6</sup> for LEAA. As a basis for this study it was assumed that all 50 states would have developed a complete

CDS capability by 1983, and that the present manual criminal history system would continue to exist throughout the CDS development period. Total costs for developing an operating CCH (exclusive of those associated with the parallel manual system) from 1975 through 1984 were estimated to be \$264 million in 1975 dollars. Among the benefits anticipated from a computerized criminal history system were:

- potential cost savings as compared with a manual system
- greater effectiveness of the criminal justice system
- greater community protection
- increased protection of individual rights

Because the needs and uses of criminal history information had not been adequately quantified, the study reported here was designed to:

- Identify the national capability at the state and local level for collection and dissemination of criminal history information in terms of the size and location of the files, the number and type of input transactions, the number and type of requests, the purposes for which the information was requested, the accuracy of the information obtained, and the time required for information retrieval.
- Project the national requirements for a computerized criminal history information system from 1975 to 1985 in terms of the size of the file, the number of input transactions, the number of requests, and the required response times.

A national survey of criminal justice agencies was conducted to determine their uses and needs for criminal history information. The data from the survey were used to determine the current situation within the United States with respect to manual and computerized criminal history capabilities, and to project the overall requirements through 1985. This methodology was chosen for two reasons.

First, it offers the potential of providing the level of in-depth information needed to answer questions raised during CDS development. Second, the methodology offers individual states a procedure that enables them to carry out more detailed studies on their own.

\* The acronym SEARCH originally stood for System for Electronic Analysis and Retrieval of Criminal Histories. More recently, with the broadening of the purpose of the organization and its incorporation as SEARCH Group, Inc., this meaning has been dropped.

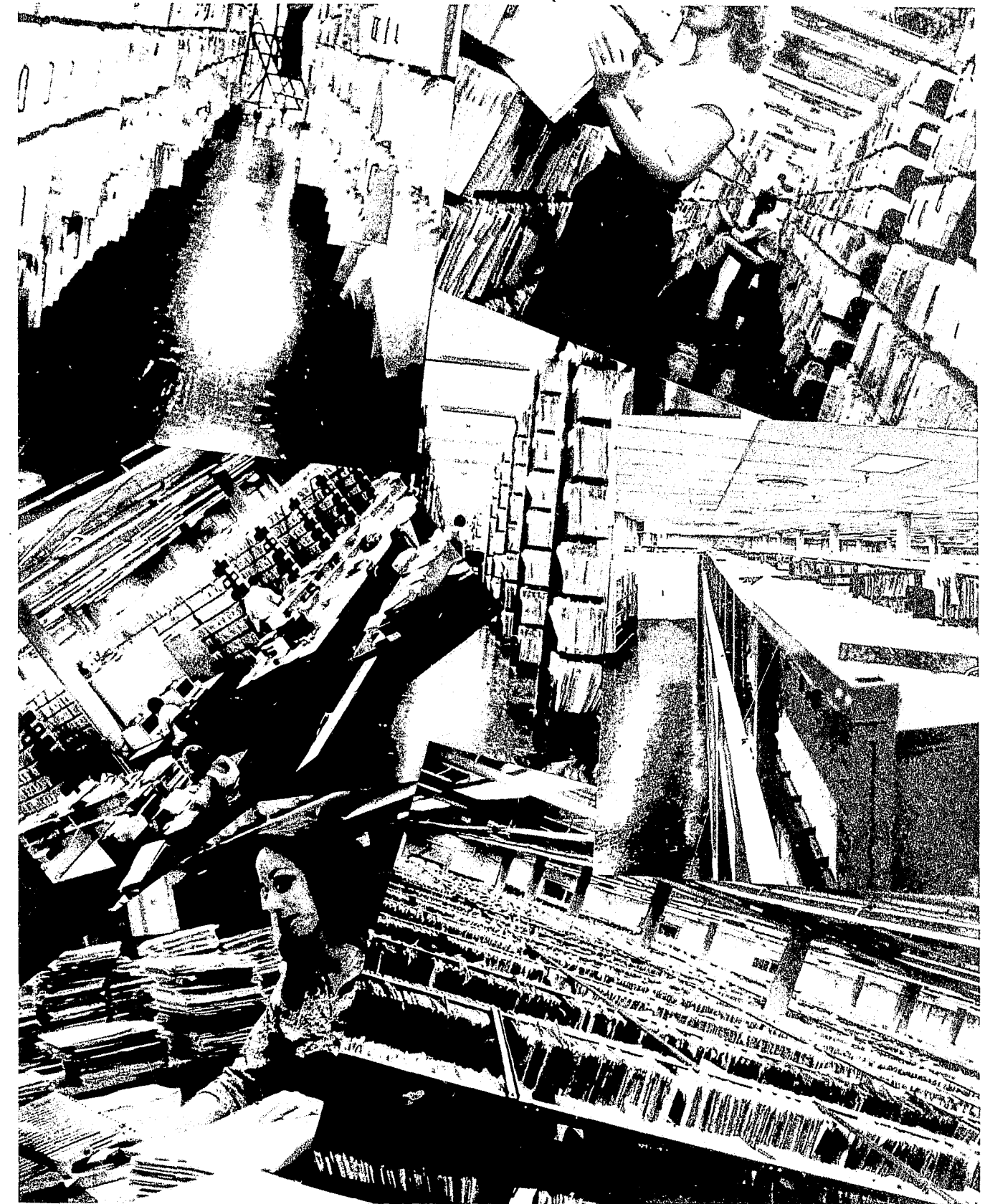


Figure 3. Manual Criminal History Files



Figure 4. Computerized Criminal History Input/Output Areas

## METHOD

The methodological basis for the study consisted of:

- Definition of the data requirements through a cooperative effort under the direction of SEARCH Group, Inc., with Boeing Computer Services, Inc. serving as a subcontractor, and an advisory committee made up of representatives of state and local criminal justice agencies throughout the country. Representatives of LEAA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) served as ex-officio members of this committee.
- Design, including field testing, of seven different questionnaires, one each for state data centers, law enforcement agencies, courts, prosecutors, defense counsel, corrections institutions, and probation/parole offices.
- Design of a national sample that would be representative of state and local level criminal justice agencies in terms of level of government (state, city and county), and size of population served.
- Administration of the survey by mail with a 100 percent follow-up mailing to the non-respondents.

- Administration of a follow-up telephone survey to determine whether the non-respondents to the questionnaire were representative of the respondents.
- Extrapolation of the survey data to the national criminal justice system as it existed in 1975.
- Projection of the results to determine the national CCH requirements through 1985.

### Data Definition

The initial step was to define the data to be collected. To accomplish this, the information system model shown in Figure 5 was used. Primary issues of concern were:

- Data input — in terms of the sources of the data, the volume of input data, and the elapsed time between occurrence of a criminal history event and its entry into the file.
- Data storage — in terms of the number of records, their location, the type of storage (manual, computerized), the type of record (name index, summary record, complete record), and the accuracy and completeness of the records.

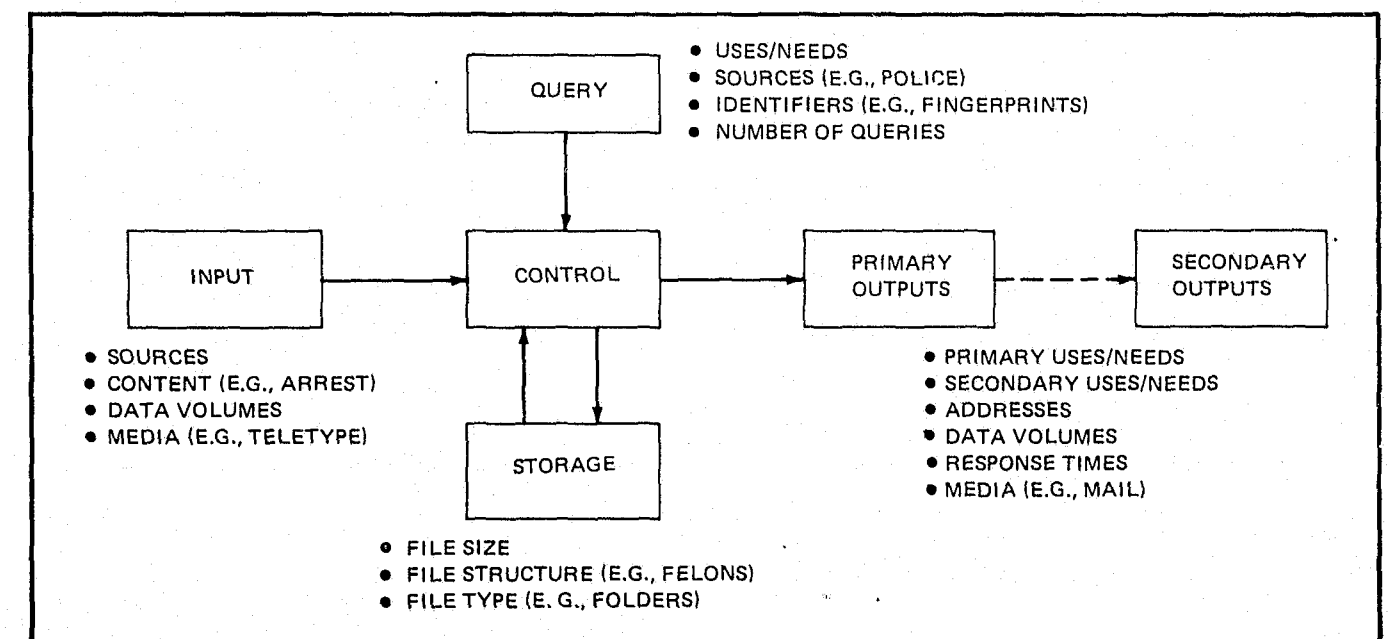


Figure 5. Information system model.

- Data inquiry — in terms of the number of requests, the agencies making the requests, the agencies queried, and the reasons for making the requests.
- Data output — in terms of the number of criminal histories provided, the recipients of the information, and the total time required to provide the information.

A total of 14 potential sources of information were identified. These were state data centers, state and local law enforcement agencies, appellate courts, courts of general jurisdiction, courts of special and limited jurisdiction, state and local prosecutors, state and local defense counsel, state and local corrections institutions, and state and local probation/parole offices.

In every case the data were referenced to the 1975 calendar year (the size of the data files in 1975, the number of requests made in 1975, etc.).

#### Questionnaire Design

Seven different questionnaires were designed, one each for the following components of the criminal justice system:

- state criminal history information centers
- probation/parole law enforcement
- courts
- prosecutors
- defense counsel
- corrections

Each questionnaire was four pages long and consisted of one page of explanatory material and three pages of questions. All questions required numerical responses (e.g., "How many requests for criminal history information will your agency have received during the 1975 calendar year from non-criminal justice agencies?", and "What percentage of the criminal history data you receive has data missing?").

Because of the exploratory nature of the study, it was not known to what extent the agencies receiving the questionnaire would be able to provide the requested information. To control for this, the explanatory material on the first page of each questionnaire state that only  $\pm 5$  percent accuracy was desired and that in the case of future needs only a "best estimate" was required. In addition, the respondents were informed that they were to indicate "U/A" (i.e., unavailable) where insufficient information was available to permit a reasonable estimate.

Prior to being finalized, the questionnaires were extensively field tested by the advisory committee to ensure that the questions were clear and that

requested information was available.

The state center questionnaire is presented in Figure 6. The core questions in this questionnaire were as follows:

- "How many offenders are listed in your criminal history file?"
- "How many criminal history records will your agency have provided during the 1975 calendar year?"
- "What was the approximate number of update transactions (e.g., arrests, prosecutions, court dispositions) to your criminal history files during 1975?"
- "How many requests for criminal history information will your agency have received during the 1975 calendar year from criminal justice agencies?"
- "How many requests for criminal history information will your agency have received during the 1975 calendar year from non-criminal-justice agencies?"
- "How are the requests for criminal history information transmitted?"

All of the questionnaires designed for the remaining six types of criminal justice agencies (law enforcement, courts, etc.), although different in specific content, were similar in overall format to the law enforcement questionnaire shown in Figure 7. The core questions on these questionnaires consisted of:

- "Does your staff maintain its own criminal history file?"
- "Approximately how many requests for criminal history information will your staff have made during 1975?"
- Based on your personal experience, what percentage of the criminal history information you receive has data missing?"
- "What were the intended uses of the criminal history information requested during 1975?"
- "If your staff had access to a complete national computerized criminal history (CCH) system during 1975, what is your best estimate of the requests that would have been made?"

#### Sample Design

According to the Criminal Justice Agencies Directories compiled by LEAA, there were a total of 57,575 criminal justice agencies in the United States at the beginning of 1975. These consisted of 17,464 law enforcement agencies, 17,583 courts, 8,739

# SURVEY

## Computerized Criminal History Information

### STATE CENTERS

SEARCH Group, Inc. is conducting a national survey of the needs and uses for computerized adult criminal history (CCH) information. The results of the survey will be used to establish a basis for projecting national, state, and local CCH needs for the period from 1975 to 1985.

Questionnaires are being sent to:

- The central criminal history repositories in all 50 states
- 416 law enforcement agencies
- 327 prosecutors
- 69 legal firms (defense counsel)
- 384 courts
- 94 probation/parole departments
- 223 correctional institutions
- 93 diversion and pretrial service agencies

Each agency receiving the questionnaire has been selected carefully based on size, population served, and geographic location. This selection will ensure a valid, representative national sample. It is extremely important, therefore, that agencies receiving the questionnaires return them to SEARCH no later than January 9, 1976.

Since the data from the questionnaires are to be averaged,  $\pm 5\%$  accuracy is acceptable in answering the questions. In the case of those questions pertaining to future needs, however, a "best estimate" is sufficient.

Copies of the final report will be available after June 1, 1976 and may be obtained from SEARCH without charge.

The completed questionnaire should be returned no later than January 9, 1976, to

CCH Project  
SEARCH Group, Inc.  
1620 35th Avenue  
Sacramento, California 95822



a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the justice system...

**SEARCH GROUP Inc.**

1620 35th AVENUE/SUITE 200  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95822/(916) 392-2550  
GARY D. McALVEY, Chairman  
O. J. HAWKINS, Executive Director

Figure 6. State center questionnaire.

State Criminal History Information Center

I.D. \_\_\_\_\_  
1-14

NOTE: Write "U/A" when the information is unavailable.

Does your agency have a computerized criminal history capability ? Yes ☐ 16-1 No ☐ 16-2

If yes:

How many offenders are listed in a computerized name index file ?  17-23

How many offenders are listed in a computerized criminal history summary file ?  24-30

How many offenders are listed in a complete computerized criminal history (rap sheet) file ?  31-37

How many of your computerized rap sheets are compatible with NCIC's CCH input standards ?  38-44

How many offenders are listed in your manual criminal history file ?  45-51

How many criminal history summaries will your agency have provided during the 1975 calendar year ?  52-58

What percent of these were obtained from your computerized files ?  % 59-60

How many complete criminal history records (rap sheets) will your agency have provided during the 1975 calendar year ?  61-67

What percent of these were obtained from your computerized files ?  % 68-69

Figure 6. (Continued.)

Approximately how many requests for summary criminal history statistics will your agency have received during the 1975 calendar year ?  70-74 80(1)

What was the approximate number of update actions (e.g., arrests, prosecutions, court dispositions) to your criminal history files during 1975 ?  16-23

Of these, what percent were from:

	Percent	Average Update Time *
Law enforcement agencies	<input type="text"/> % 24-25	<input type="text"/> 26-29
Courts		
Interim transactions	<input type="text"/> % 31-32	<input type="text"/> 33-36
Final dispositions	<input type="text"/> % 38-39	<input type="text"/> 40-43
Prosecutors	<input type="text"/> % 45-46	<input type="text"/> 47-50
Corrections	<input type="text"/> % 52-53	<input type="text"/> 54-57
Probation/parole	<input type="text"/> % 59-60	<input type="text"/> 61-64

Does your state have a mandatory requirement that criminal history events (e.g. arrests, prosecutions) be reported to your agency ? yes ☐ no ☐

\* Update time refers to the total time from the occurrence of a criminal history event (such as arrest or court disposition) to the updating of the criminal history file; indicate the units used (hours, days, weeks, etc.)

Figure 6. (Continued.)

How many requests for criminal history information will your agency have received during the 1975 calendar year from criminal justice agencies ?

66-72 80<sup>(2)</sup>

Who made the requests ?

Law enforcement agencies	16-17 %
Courts	18-19 %
Prosecutors	20-21 %
Defense counsel	22-23 %
Probation/parole offices	24-25 %
Corrections institutions	26-27 %
Diversion and pretrial service agencies	28-29 %
Other (specify) _____	30-31 %
TOTAL	100 %

How many requests for criminal history information will your agency have received during the 1975 calendar year from non-criminal-justice agencies ?

32-38

What was the purpose of these requests ?

License applications	39-40 %
Employment applications	41-42 %
Security checks	43-44 %
Other (specify) _____	45-46 %
TOTAL	100 %

How are the requests for criminal history information transmitted ?

	Percent	Average Response Time **	
Mail	47-48 %	49-52	
Telephone	54-55 %	56-59	
Teletype	61-62 %	63-66	
Facsimile	68-69 %	70-73	80 <sup>(3)</sup>
Computer terminal	16-17 %	18-21	
In-person	23-24 %	25-28	80 <sup>(4)</sup>

\*\* RESPONSE TIME refers to the total time from initial transmission of the request by the requestor to receipt of the output; indicate the units used (hours, days, etc.)

Figure 6. (Continued.)

# SURVEY

## Computerized Criminal History Information

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

SEARCH Group, Inc. is conducting a national survey of the needs and uses for computerized adult criminal history (CCH) information. The results of the survey will be used to establish a basis for projecting national, state, and local CCH needs for the period from 1975 to 1985.

Questionnaires are being sent to:

- The central criminal history repositories in all 50 states
- 416 law enforcement agencies
- 327 prosecutors
- 69 legal firms (defense counsel)
- 384 courts
- 94 probation/parole departments
- 223 correctional institutions
- 93 diversion and pretrial service agencies

Each agency receiving the questionnaire has been selected carefully based on size, population served, and geographic location. This selection will ensure a valid, representative national sample. It is extremely important, therefore, that agencies receiving the questionnaires return them to SEARCH no later than January 9, 1976.

Since the data from the questionnaires are to be averaged,  $\pm 5\%$  accuracy is acceptable in answering the questions. In the case of those questions pertaining to future needs, however, a "best estimate" is sufficient.

Copies of the final report will be available after June 1, 1976 and may be obtained from SEARCH without charge.

The completed questionnaire should be returned no later than January 9, 1976, to

CCH Project  
SEARCH Group, Inc.  
1620 35th Avenue  
Sacramento, California 95822

Figure 7. Law enforcement questionnaire.

Law Enforcement Agencies

I.D. \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Write "U/A" when the information is unavailable.

How many full-time equivalent sworn personnel are on your force ?

1-14  
16-20

How many people reside in your jurisdiction (approximately)?

21-28

How would you describe your jurisdiction? (check one)

- Predominantly urban ☐ 29-1  
Predominantly suburban ☐ 29-2  
Predominantly rural ☐ 29-3

How many arrests were made by your force during 1970 and 1975?

	1970	1975	
Criminal homicide	30-36	37-43	80 <sup>(1)</sup>
Forcible rape	44-50	51-57	
Robbery	58-64	65-71	
Assault	16-22	23-29	
Aggravated assault	30-36	37-43	
Burglary	44-50	51-57	80 <sup>(2)</sup>
Larceny	58-64	65-71	
Motor vehicle theft	16-22	23-29	
Narcotics	30-36	37-43	

Does your staff maintain its own criminal history file?

yes ☐ 44-1 no ☐ 44-2

If yes:

Approximately how many offenders are listed in the file ?

45-51

What percent are stored in a computerized form ?

52-53 %

Figure 7. (Continued.)

Criminal History Information

Approximately how many requests for criminal history information will your staff have made during 1975 ?

54-60

What were the sources from which the information was requested ?

Source	Percent of Requests	Average Response Time *	
Your own file	61-62 %	63-66	
Other law enforcement agencies	68-69 %	70-73	80 <sup>(3)</sup>
Courts	16-17 %	18-21	
Prosecutors	23-24 %	25-28	
Parole/probation	30-31 %	32-35	
Correctional institutions	37-38 %	39-42	
Diversion and pretrial service agencies	44-45 %	46-49	
Regional information centers	51-52 %	53-56	
State information centers	58-59 %	60-63	
FBI	65-66 %	67-70	
NCIC	72-73 %	74-77	80 <sup>(4)</sup>
Other	16-17 %	18-21	

How are the requests for criminal history information transmitted ?

	Percent	Average Response Time *
Mail	23-24 %	25-28
Telephone	30-31 %	32-35
Teletype	37-38 %	39-42
Facsimile	44-45 %	46-49
Computer terminal	51-52 %	53-56
In-person	58-59 %	60-63

Based on your personal experience, what percentage of the criminal history information you receive has data missing ?

65-66 %

What percentage contains erroneous information ?

67-68 %

\* RESPONSE TIME refers to the total time from initial transmission of the request by the requestor to receipt of the output; indicate the units used (hours, days, etc.)

Figure 7. (Continued.)



Uses and Needs

NOTE: Write "U/A" when the information is unavailable.

What were the intended uses of the criminal history information requested by your force during 1975 ?

Uses	Percent of Requests	Average Response Time *	
Patrol investigation	69-70 %	71-74	80 <sup>(5)</sup>
Detective investigation	16-17 %	18-21	
Dispatch preparation	23-24 %	25-28	
Prior to citation or summons	30-31 %	32-35	
In-field interrogation	37-38 %	39-42	
Arrest/citation decision	44-45 %	46-49	80 <sup>(6)</sup>
Booking decision	51-52 %	53-56	
Case preparation	58-59 %	60-63	
Witness verification	65-66 %	67-70	
For other criminal justice system agencies	71-72 %	73-76	
For non-criminal-justice system agencies	16-17 %	18-21	
Other			
TOTAL	100 %		

If your staff had access to a complete national computerized criminal history (CCH) system during 1975, what is your best estimate of the requests that would have been made ?

Uses	Number of Requests	Priority **	Required Response Time *	
Patrol investigation	23-29	30	31-34	80 <sup>(7)</sup>
Detective investigation	36-42	43	44-47	
Dispatch preparation	49-55	56	57-60	
Prior to citation or summons	62-68	69	70-73	
In-field interrogation	16-22	23	24-27	
Arrest/citation decision	29-35	36	37-40	80 <sup>(8)</sup>
Booking decision	42-48	49	50-53	
Case preparation	55-61	62	63-66	
Witness verification	16-22	23	24-27	
For other criminal justice system agencies	29-35	36	37-40	
For non-criminal-justice system agencies	42-48	49	50-53	80 <sup>(9)</sup>
Other	55-61	62	63-66	

\* RESPONSE TIME refers to the total time from initial transmission of the request by the requestor to receipt of the output; indicate the units used (hours, days, etc.)

\*\* CODE: 1 = Top Priority; 3 = Moderate Priority; 5 = Low Priority

Figure 7. (Continued.)

prosecutors, 524 defense counsel, 5,468 corrections agencies, 3,285 probation/parole agencies, and 1,818 "other" agencies.

On the basis of an assumed response rate of 40 percent, a sample size of 1,500 was deemed appropriate.

The sample of 1,563 agencies represent approximately 3 percent of all criminal justice agencies listed in the LEAA Directories. It included all state criminal history data centers in the United States and incorporated a representative sample of state and local level criminal justice agencies covering all 50 states within all the LEAA regions.

To control for agency size, development of the sub-sample of local agencies consisted of selecting a sample of 300 municipalities and 83 counties, stratified on the basis of size, and then selecting all criminal justice agencies associated with the selected cities and counties. Municipalities of less than 2,500 in population were excluded.

In selecting the sample from the LEAA Directories, the following types of agencies were excluded:

- university security forces
- liquor control boards
- department of fisheries, parks, etc.
- coroners
- Justices of the Peace
- juvenile agencies
- the "other" category in the LEAA directories,

which include crime laboratories, police training academies, special investigatory commissions, etc.

Survey Administration

Survey administration consisted of the following three phases:

- Mailing out the questionnaires to the selected sample of 1,563 criminal justice agencies.
- Remailing the questionnaires six weeks later to those agencies that failed to respond to the original mail-out.
- Telephone follow-up to a selected sample of 90 non-respondents to determine whether they differed in a systematic manner from those agencies that responded to the survey.

The overall response rate was 31.2 percent. Forty-eight of the 50 states responded to the state center questionnaire, the two non-responding states (Vermont and Hawaii), along with Mississippi do not have a centralized state criminal history information center.

On the basis of the survey responses (many of which consisted of letters stating that the agency receiving the questionnaire did not deal with criminal cases) and on the basis of the telephone follow-up, the original sample of 1,563 agencies was pared to 974 agencies that dealt with criminal histories. This yielded an adjusted overall response rate of 36.1 percent. (See Table I).

Agency	Total Sample	Adjusted Sample*	Number Responding	Adjusted Response	Response Rate (%)	Adjusted Response Rate (%)*
Law and enforcement	416	398	156	130	37.5	32.6
Prosecutor	327	72	77	31	23.5	43.0
Defense counsel	69	43	25	16	36.2	37.2
Courts	384	105	72	38	18.7	36.1
Probation/parole	94	87	67	47	71.2	54.0
Corrections	223	221	43	43	19.2	19.4
State centers	50	48	48	47	96.0	97.9
Total	1,563	974	488	352	31.2%	36.1%

\*Adjusted figures include only those agencies having a need for adult criminal history information.

Table I. Sample size and response rate.

The questionnaires were designed specifically to avoid random guessing. As a result many of the respondents indicated that the requested information was unavailable. The percentages of instances in which this occurred are shown in Tables II and III.

#### Data Extrapolations

Three different procedures were used to extrapolate the survey data to the population of criminal justice agencies within the United States.

Since the response from State Data Centers was very favorable, extrapolations involved primarily a sum of the questionnaire data.

Since the questionnaires sent to the state-level criminal justice agencies were proportionate, the extrapolations were accomplished by multiplying the

survey results by the appropriate factor which was based on the ratio of survey responses to the total number of associated agencies within the United States.

In the case of local-level criminal justice agencies, a sample stratified on the basis of county or municipality size, the extrapolations were done by computing an average value for each stratification category (for example, the average number of criminal history requests made by law enforcement agencies for municipalities having a population between 250,000 and 500,000), and then multiplying the average by the number of agencies within the category. Where there were missing cells for any given stratification category, the average values were estimated through the use of a series of

Questionnaire Component*	Percent
1975 File size	13
1975 Update actions	25
1975 Requests	23

\*Each major component on the questionnaire contained a number of subquestions (e.g., name indices, computerized summaries, type of update actions).

Table II. Percent of responding state data centers that provided no information on major questionnaire components.

Questionnaire Component*	Type of Agency (in %)					
	Law Enforcement	Prosecutors	Defense	Courts	Corrections	Probation/ Parole
1975 File size	24	61	89	76	38	35
1975 Requests	36	37	47	54	40	15
1975 Sources	31	38	42	51	31	11
1975 Uses	43	34	68	63	31	9
Estimated CCH Requirements	51	42	63	67	56	22

\*Each major component on the questionnaire contained a number of subquestions (e.g., manual file size, computerized file size).

Table III. Percent of responding operational agencies that provided no information on major questionnaire components.

least-squares regression fits involving linear, exponential, hyperbolic, or rational polynomial equations. When the regression coefficients were not statistically greater than zero an overall aggregate average was used.

#### Future Projections

The following procedure was used to project the future requirements for a national computerized criminal history system through 1985.

- First, using the arrest data for 1974 published by the FBI, the annual arrest rate was projected through 1985. Upper and lower bound estimates were made. The upper bound was based on a straight-line projection and the lower bound was based on aged-weighted Census Bureau projections.
- The file size associated with these arrests was projected using data from the FBI's "Careers in Crime" program.
- The number of input transactions was projected using the arrest/prosecution/guilty ratios in the FBI's 1974 report *Crime in the United States*.
- The survey results, in conjunction with the arrest projections, were used to project the number of requests for criminal history information.
- Finally, the survey results, in conjunction with the arrest projections, were used to project the output volume and response time requirements.

#### Extrapolation Accuracy

The national estimates given in this report are point estimates, for which, using sampling theory and the information in Tables I, II, and III, confidence intervals could be generated. Confidence intervals based solely on sampling theory, however, would be extremely questionable for they would tell us nothing about the accuracy of the information on the questionnaires nor the validity of the extrapolation procedures.

A partial check on these latter concerns is available from the law enforcement and prosecutor surveys. The Bureau of the Census estimates that the 1974 population (the closest year for which published data were available) of the United States was 211 million; extrapolations from the law enforcement and prosecutor questionnaires gave total 1975 population estimates of 208 million and 206 million, respectively. It appears, therefore, that the extrapolation procedures used in this study do not unduly distort the data. Moreover, given a straightforward question such as, "What is the population of your jurisdiction?," the respondents did conscientiously fill out the questionnaires. With respect to more nebulous questions such as, "If your agency had access to a complete nationalized CCH capability during 1975, how many requests would have been made?"; these must be seen as best estimates by professionals within the criminal justice field, the accuracy of which will improve as CCH development proceeds.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the data from this study was concerned with three issues:

- Estimating the number of the state and local criminal justice agencies within the United States that have a direct involvement with adult-level criminal history information.
- Extrapolating the survey results to those agencies to determine the national status in 1975 with respect to criminal histories (number of records, the number of requests, etc.).
- Projecting the results through 1985 to identify the overall requirements for a national CCH system.

### Population Estimates

The estimated number of state and local criminal justice agencies having a need for direct access to adult criminal history information is shown in Figure 8. All of the values in Figure 8 exclude municipalities with populations of less than 2,500. In accordance with this Figure, it was estimated that 33 percent of

the agencies listed in the *LEAA Directories* are directly involved with criminal histories. These consisted of 37 percent of the listed law enforcement agencies, 26 percent of the courts, 27 percent of the prosecutors, 52 percent of the defense counsel, 49 percent of the corrections institutions (including local jails), and 23 percent of the probation/parole offices.

The process used in preparing these estimates consisted of first excluding from the *LEAA Directories* all criminal justice agencies associated with municipalities with less than 2,500 in population, and then excluding from the remainder all agencies which were clearly not involved with criminal histories. This latter step was based on the mailout/telephone surveys, a detailed review of the *LEAA Directories*, and supplementary sources. The mailout survey, for example, indicated that state highway patrols are primarily traffic oriented and thus could be excluded from the agency population of concern. Also, city courts of limited jurisdiction

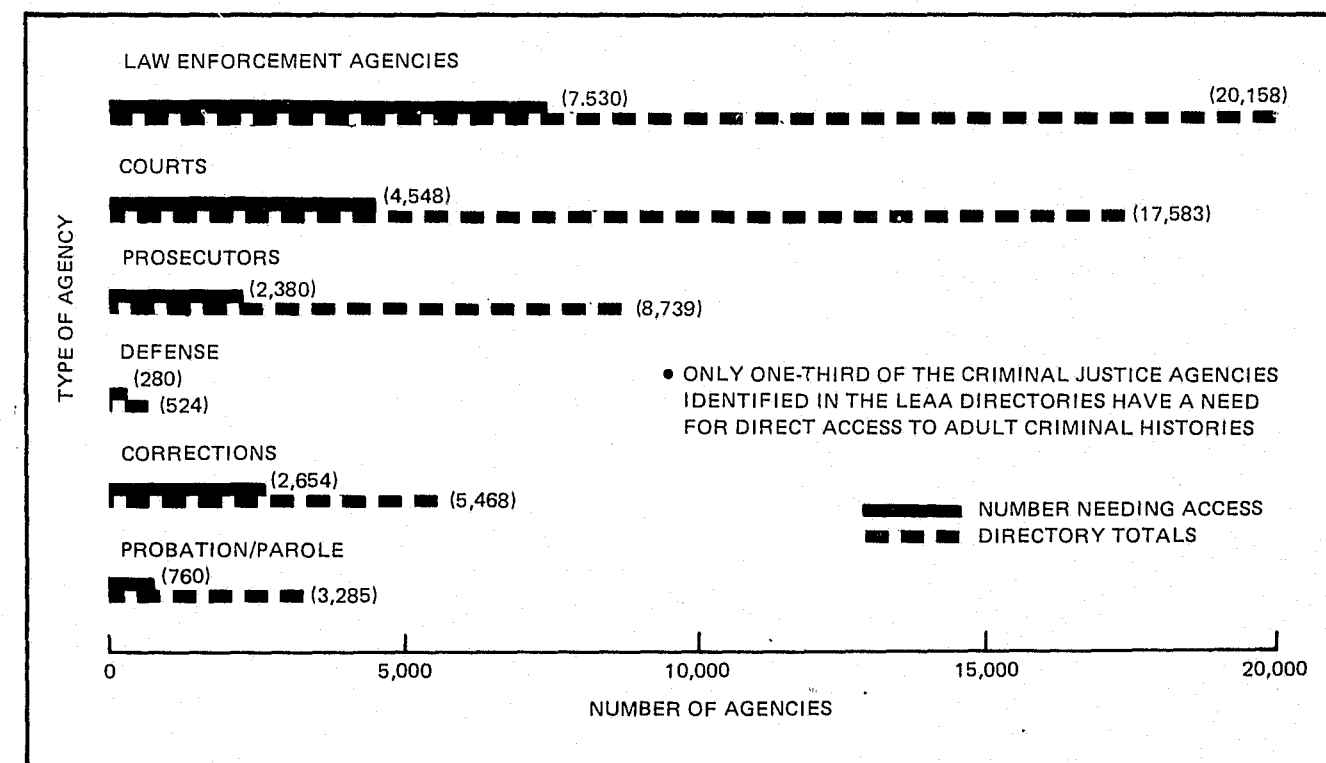


Figure 8. Criminal justice agencies having a need for direct access to adult criminal histories.

tend not to handle gross misdemeanors and felonies and could also be excluded. A number of the mailout responses suggested that many of the agencies listed in the *LEAA Directories* no longer exist because of consolidation efforts; this was corroborated by the telephone follow-up. The *LEAA Directories*, themselves, provided a basis for rejection; for example, agencies dealing solely with juveniles. Finally, supplementary information sources were used to the extent that they were

available; the National Survey of Court Organizations, for example, indicated that none of the 115 Missouri probate courts listed in the *Directories* had criminal jurisdictions.

#### State Criminal History Information Centers, 1975

All states, except Mississippi and Hawaii, have some form of criminal history data processing capability at the state level, 28 of these have a computerized capability (Table IV).

	Name Index	Summary Records	Complete Records	NCIC/CCH Compatibility
Alabama				
Alaska				
Arizona	•	•	•	•
Arkansas	•		•	
California	•	•	•	•
Colorado	•			
Connecticut	•	•		
Delaware	•		•	•
Florida	•	•	•	•
Georgia	•	•		
Hawaii				
Idaho				
Illinois	•	•		•
Indiana				
Iowa	•		•	
Kansas	•			
Kentucky				
Louisiana	•			
Maine				
Maryland	•			
Massachusetts	•	•		•
Michigan		•	•	•
Minnesota				
Mississippi				
Missouri				
Montana				
Nebraska	•	•	•	•

Table IV. Computerized capabilities of state criminal history information centers in 1975.  
(continued on next page)

Table IV. (Continued.)

	Name Index	Summary Records	Complete Records	NCIC/CCH Compatibility
Nevada				
New Hampshire				
New Jersey	•	•	•	•
New Mexico				
New York	•		•	•
North Carolina	•			
North Dakota				
Ohio	•	•	•	•
Oklahoma	•			
Oregon	•	•	•	
Pennsylvania				
Rhode Island				
South Carolina				
South Dakota				
Tennessee	•			
Texas	•	•	•	•
Utah	•	•	•	•
Vermont				
Virginia	•	•	•	•
Washington	•	•	•	•
West Virginia	•	•	•	•
Wisconsin	•			
Wyoming				
Total	28	17	17	16

The data on file sizes are shown in Table V. Of a total of 29.2 million complete criminal histories maintained at the state level, 4.1 million were computerized in 1975.

The data on input transactions are presented in Table VI. A total of 4.2 million separate criminal history events (arrest, sentencing, release from prison, etc) were entered into state files during 1975. Average time between the occurrence of the event and entry into the file ranges from a minimum of five days for data from correctional institutions to a maximum of 26 weeks for interim transactions for

the courts. The longer update or interim transactions from the courts, as compared with final dispositions, suggests that the courts may tend to submit all their data at the same time.

The data on the requests for criminal history information from criminal justice agencies are presented in Table VII. According to this table, 80 percent of all criminal justice system requests were from law enforcement agencies. Requests for non-criminal justice uses are shown in Table VIII.

The data on information transmission are presented in Table IX. Overall response time from the

Number of Records	Type of File			
	Name Index (Computerized)	Criminal History Summaries (Computerized)	Complete Criminal Histories (Computerized)	Complete Criminal Histories (Manual)
	8,348,000	3,586,000	4,066,000*	25,086,000
*3,221,000 of the computerized complete histories are compatible with CCH standards of NCIC.				

Table V. File sizes of state criminal history information centers during 1975.

Source	Number of Transactions	Average Update Time*
Law enforcement	2,500,000	12 days
Prosecutors	77,000	11 days
Courts		
Interim transactions	330,000	26 weeks
Final disposition	725,000	16 weeks
Corrections	430,000	5 days
Probation/parole	184,000	9 days
*Represents the total time from the occurrence of a criminal event (arrest, release from prison, etc.) and the entry of that event into an individual's criminal history data.		

Table VI. 1975 data input into state criminal history information center files.

Type of Requesting Agency	Number of Requests
Law enforcement	2,749,000
Prosecutors	200,000
Defense counsel	1,600
Courts	47,000
Probation/parole	206,000
Corrections	148,000
Diversion/pretrial	29,000
Other	43,000
Total	3,423,600

Table VII. Criminal justice agencies requesting criminal histories from state data centers during 1975.

Purpose of Requests	Number of Requests
License applications	397,000
Employment applications	129,000
Security checks	144,000
Other	17,000
Total	687,000

Table VIII. Non-criminal justice system agencies requesting criminal histories from state data centers during 1975.

Method of Transmission	Percent of Histories Transmitted	Estimated Response Time*
Mail	70.6	6 days
Telephone	5.3	18 hours
In-person	3.4	5 hours
Facsimile	12.5	3 hours
Teletype	4.8	2.5 hours
Computer terminal	3.4	4 minutes
Total	100	
*Response time is the total time from initial transmission of a request to receipt of the output.		

Table IX. Estimated 1975 response times for criminal histories requested from state criminal history information centers.

initial request to output receipt ranged from an average of six days for the mail to four minutes for computer terminals. The mail accounted for 70 percent of all transmissions.

#### Operational Agencies, 1975

The estimates of the criminal history file sizes associated with the operational agencies are presented in Figure 9. It is estimated that there were 195 million criminal history records being maintained during 1975 by state and local level criminal justice agencies. Approximately one-half of these were in local level criminal justice agencies. These data do not include municipalities of less than 2,500 in population.

The requests for criminal histories made by state and local level criminal justice agencies during 1975

are shown in Figure 10. It is estimated that approximately 68 million requests were made, 80 percent by local law enforcement agencies. Again, these do not include municipalities of less than 2,500.

Overall, it was estimated by the operational agencies that 31 percent of the criminal histories they receive have missing data and that 10 percent have erroneous data.

The sources from which the operational agencies received their criminal justice information are shown in Table X. Files maintained by law enforcement agencies served as the source for 70 percent of the requests. It is evident, therefore, that the law enforcement files are serving as a secondary source of information, independent of the centralized state and federal files.

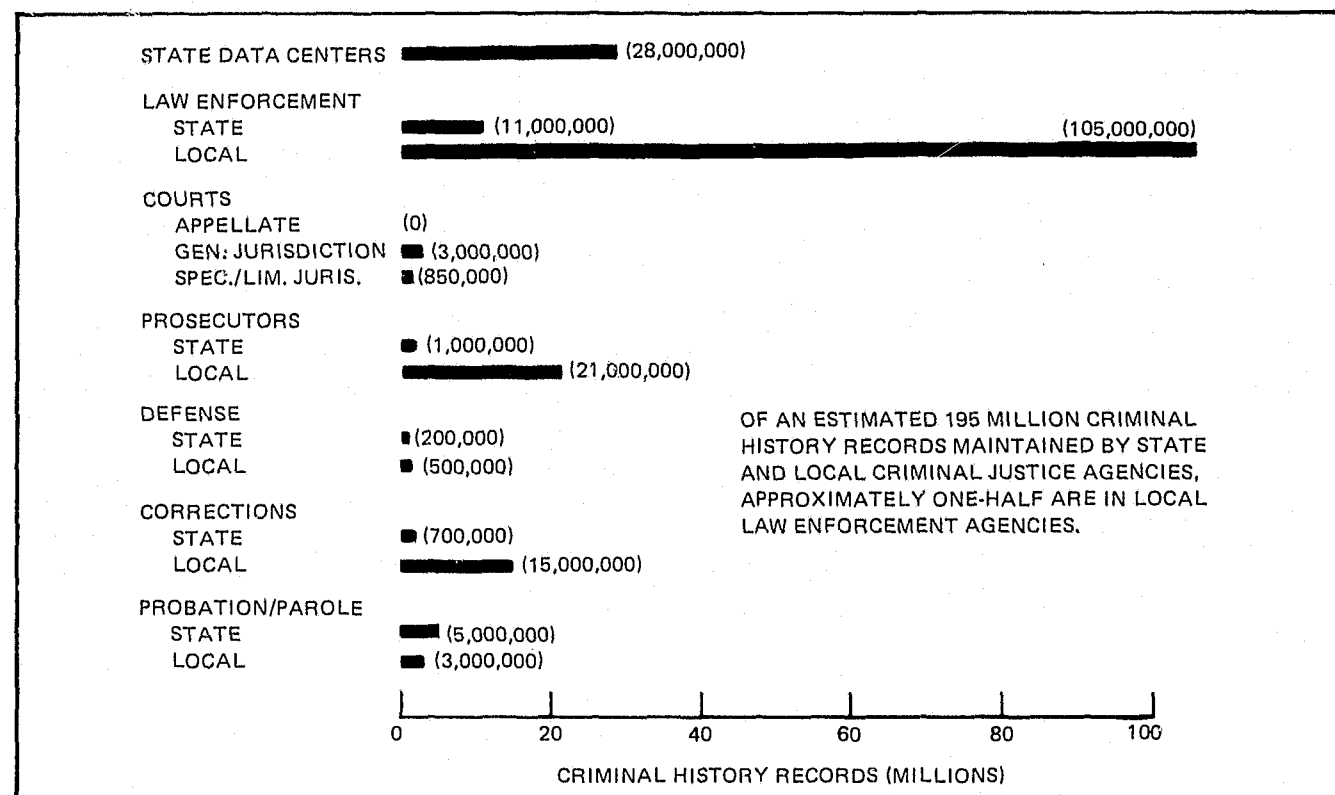


Figure 9. Estimated number of criminal history records ("rap sheets") maintained by state and local level criminal justice agencies during 1975.

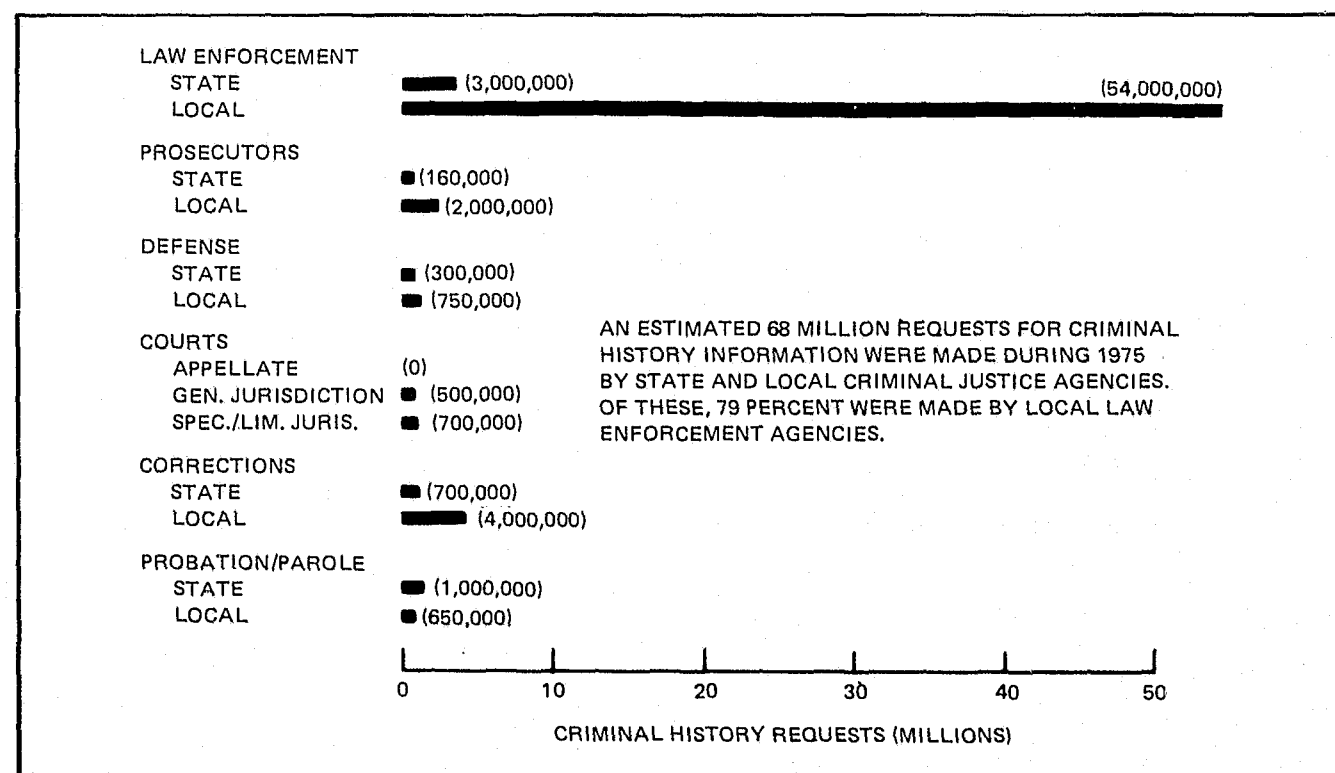


Figure 10. Estimated number of requests for criminal history ("rap sheet") information by state and local criminal justice agencies during 1975.

Information Source	Requesting Agency (Percent of Requests)*					
	Law Enforcement	Courts	Prosecutors	Defense	Corrections	Probation/Parole
Own file	73.0	21.0	20.0	2.0	52.0	52.0
Law enforcement	5.0**	64.0	48.0	74.0	20.0	34.0
Courts	3.0	1.0**	11.0	2.0	2.0	6.0
Prosecutors	1.0	11.0	2.0**	7.0	6.0	6.0
Corrections	1.0	2.0	0.5	0.5	1.0**	5.0
Probation/parole	2.0	3.0	0.4	5.0	6.0	5.0**
Diversion	1.0	0.5	2.0	0.4	5.0	1.0
State/regional information centers	7.5	2.6	16.7	9.4	19.2	30.1
FBI/NCIC	8.0	51.0	7.0	0.6	25.0	12.0
Other	2.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.0	7.0
Total***	103.5	156.3	107.6	100.9	137.2	158.1

\*Includes requests made for other agencies.  
 \*\*Indicates requests to other agencies of the same type.  
 \*\*\*Percentages sum to more than 100% because the same history is often requested by different sources.

Table X. Sources of criminal histories.

The uses for criminal history information within the criminal justice system are shown in Table XI. The primary uses for criminal histories was in pre-arrest investigations by law enforcement agencies, an observation that is at variance with the earlier report by the Comptroller General's Office. On the questionnaires, pre-arrest was defined as patrol and detective investigations, dispatch preparation, citation/summons preparation, and in-field interrogation. The data in Table XI exclude requests made for other agencies, thus the totals are lower than in Table X.

The estimates on criminal history needs are summarized in Table XII. It appears that the primary unmet needs are for greater output volume for the prosecutors and for improved response times for the law enforcement agencies. Table XIII compares required response time to actual response time. Table XIV integrates the "needs data" with the transmission time estimates from the state center survey; this table indicates that law enforcement

agencies and corrections (including local jails) have the primary need for computer terminal response capabilities.

#### Future Projections, 1975 to 1985

The arrest projections are shown in Figure 11. The historical part of this figure is based on the Uniform Crime Reports and excludes arrests for drunkenness, disorderly conduct and vagrancy; it also excludes juvenile arrests. The upper bound for the 1975-85 projections represents a straight-line projection of the 1965-74 increase in per capita crime rate; it takes into account the Census Bureau's estimated 1980 and 1985 American populations. The lower bound for the 1974-85 projections represent an age-weighted projection in which it is assumed that the 1974 crime rate for each age group will remain constant at the 1975 level; it takes into account the Census Bureau's population projections by age. The upper and lower bounds estimates indicate that there will be between 5.5 and 6.6 million adult



Use	Type of Requesting Agency (Number and Percent of Requests)*						
	Law Enforcement	Prosecutors	Defense	Courts	Corrections	Probation/ Parole	Tot l
Prearrest	38,200,000 (65.4%)	60,000 (0.1%)					38,260,000 (66.5%)
Arrest/charge/ bail/diversion	3,800,000 (6.6%)	290,000 (0.5%)	290,000 (0.5%)	180,000 (0.3%)			4,560,000 (7.8%)
Pre-trial	6,400,000 (10.9%)	1,460,000 (2.5%)	530,000 (0.9%)	480,000 (0.8%)			8,870,000 (15.2%)
Trial		350,000 (0.6%)	230,000 (0.4%)	540,000 (0.9%)	290,000 (0.5%)	1,230,000 (2.1%)	2,640,000 (4.5%)
Post-trial					3,610,000 (6.2%)	420,000 (0.7%)	4,030,000 (6.9%)
Total	48,400,000 (82.9%)	2,160,000 (3.7%)	1,050,000 (1.8%)	1,200,000 (2.0%)	3,900,000 (6.7%)	1,650,000 (2.8%)	58,360,000 (100%)
*Excludes requests made for other agencies.							

Table XI. 1975 uses for criminal histories.

	Law Enforcement	Prosecutors	Defense	Courts	Corrections	Probation/ Parole
Total 1975 agency requests*	48,500,000	2,160,000	1,050,000	1,200,000	3,900,000	1,650,000
Estimated CCH requests**	44,000,000	8,360,000	2,000,000	1,050,000	3,800,000	2,500,000
1975 response time	4 hours	2 days	3.5 days	13 days	5 hours	8 days
Required response time	36 minutes	4.4 days	18 days	6 days	1.5 hours	5 days
*Excludes requests for other agencies. **Based on the survey question, "If your staff had access to a complete national computerized criminal history (CCH) system during 1975, what is your best estimate of the number of requests that would have been made."						

Table XII. 1975 CCH needs.

Type of Agency					
Law Enforcement	Prosecutors	Defense	Courts	Corrections	Probation/ Parole
35%	93%	94%	11%	8%	26%
Note: "Response time adequacy" is defined as the percent of requests for which the 1975 response time is less than or equal to the estimated required response time (exclusive of requests made for other agencies).					

Table XIII. Average 1975 response time adequacy of the national criminal history system.

Transmission Technique/ Response Time*	Type of Agency					
	Law Enforcement	Prosecutors	Defense	Courts	Corrections**	Probation/ Parole
Computer terminal/4 minutes	100%	100%		100%	100%	
Teletype/2.5 hours					46%	
Facsimile/3 hours						
In-person/5 hours		97%			8%	
Telephone/18 hours	3%	58%	100%	80%		100%
Mail/6 days		30%	64%	79%		92%
*Response time is defined as the total time from initial transmission of a request to receipt of the output; estimates were obtained from the survey of state criminal history information centers. **Includes local jails.						

Table XIV. Percent of 1975 response time requirements capable of being met with alternative transmission techniques.

arrests in 1980 (exclusive of arrests for drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and vagrancy) and between 5.7 and 8.3 million adult arrests in 1985.

The number of input transactions to be generated by the projected arrests are shown in Figure 12. The input transactions were estimated on the basis that 81 percent of all those arrested are subsequently prosecuted,<sup>2</sup> that 75 percent of those prosecuted are found guilty, and of those found guilty, 45.2 percent go to prison, 41.4 percent are put on probation, 6 percent are fined, and 7.4 percent receive "other dispositions".<sup>1</sup> In accordance with these conditional percentages, and the assumption that every corrections and probation/parole entry transaction also

generates a termination transaction, each arrest generates an average of 3.9 input transactions. The upper and lower bound estimates for total input transactions were 25.7 to 21.4 million for 1980 and 32.1 to 22.1 million for 1985.

The estimated number of offenders is shown in Table XV. The file size estimates associated with these offenders are shown in Figure 13. These estimates were based on the FBI's "Careers in Crime" program<sup>2</sup> which indicate that 65 percent of those arrested are arrested two or more times and that the average rearrestee is arrested four times over a five-year five-month period. Based on these estimates it was calculated that in 1974 there were

5.24 million known criminals still pursuing active "careers in crime". Upper and lower bound projections for known active criminals were 6.4 to 7.2 million for 1980 and 6.8 to 9.2 million for 1985. Upper and lower bound estimates of total file size assuming a ten year purge criterion (in which a file would be purged if an individual had not been arrested in the last ten years) are 19.3 to 17.8 million

for 1980 and 24.6 to 19.6 million for 1985.

The projected number of CCH requests is shown in Table XVI. These estimates were calculated by multiplying the estimated number of CCH requests from the survey questionnaires by the ratio between 1974 and 1980-85 projected arrests. The upper and lower estimates were 82 to 69 million for 1980 and 99 to 71 million for 1985.

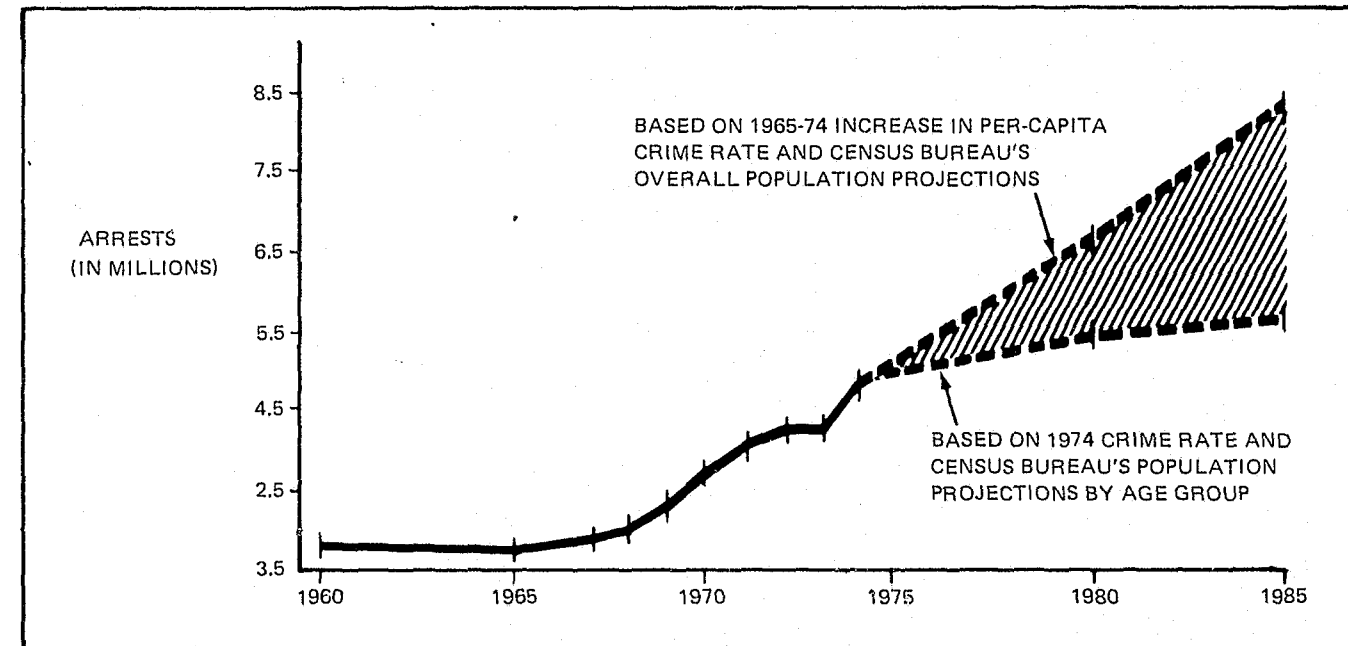


Figure 11. Estimated number of adult (over 18) arrests, exclusive of drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and vagrancy.

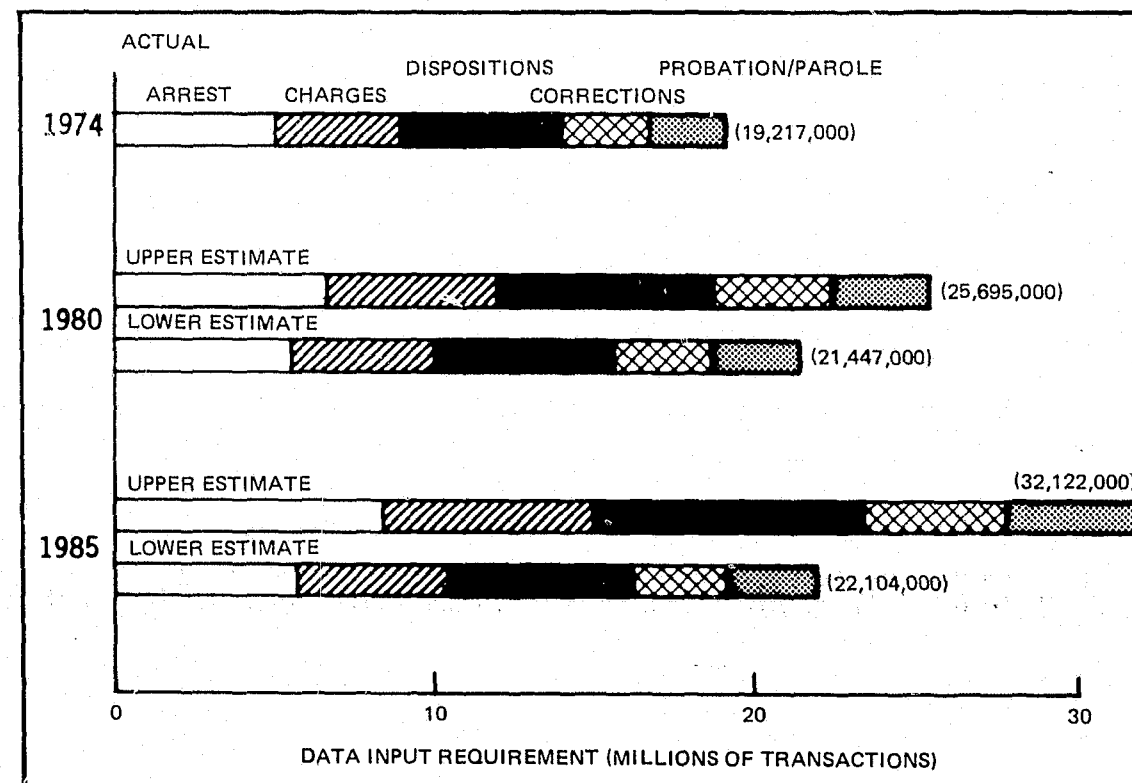


Figure 12. Projected national criminal history data input requirement.

Year	Single-Arrest Offenders	Multiple-Arrest Offenders
1965	330,000	3,420,000
1967	350,000	3,430,000
1968	360,000	3,510,000
1969	400,000	3,680,000
1970	450,000	3,950,000
1971	490,000	4,240,000
1972	510,000	4,410,000
1973	510,000	4,580,000
1974	590,000	5,240,000
<u>Projections</u>		
1980 Upper	780,000	7,240,000
1980 Lower	650,000	6,390,000
1985 Upper	980,000	9,230,000
1985 Lower	670,000	6,770,000

Table XV. Estimated number of offenders.

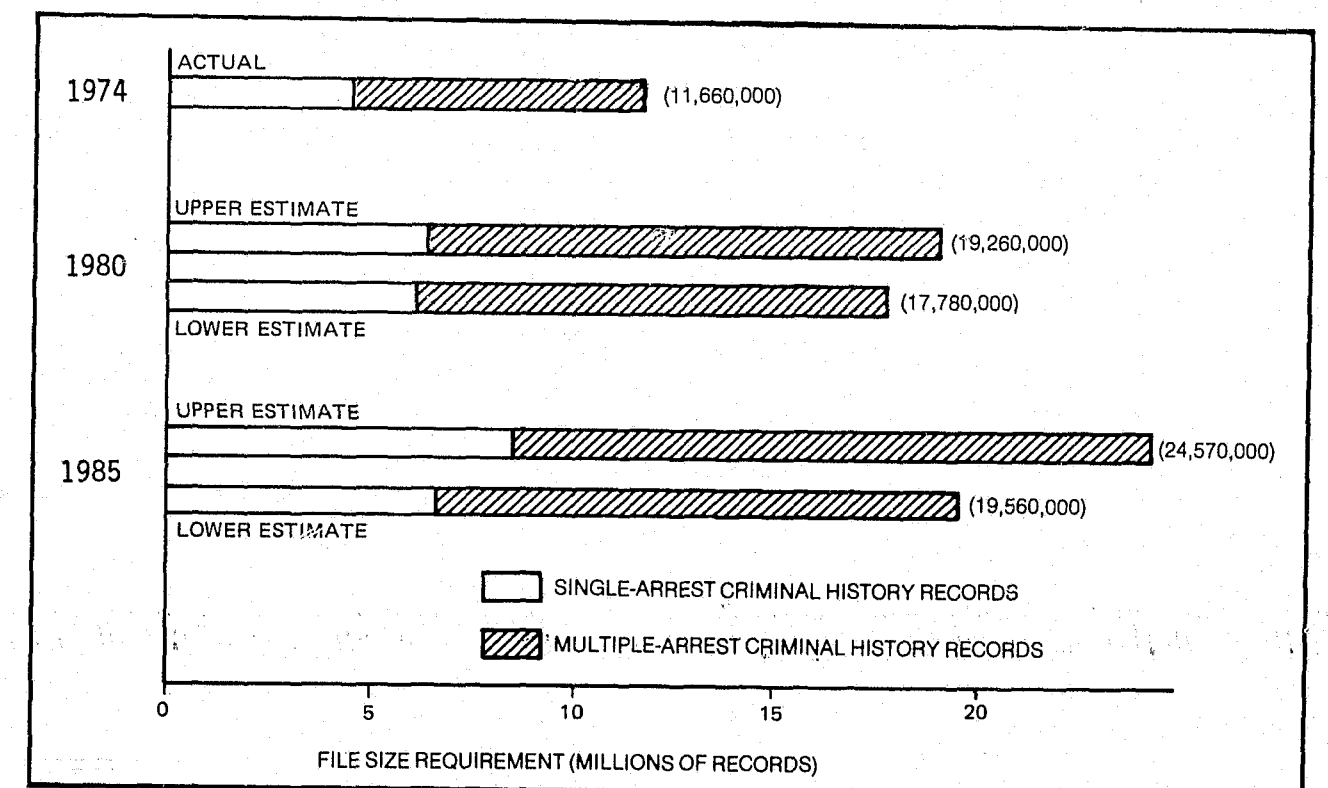


Figure 13. Projected national criminal history file size requirement [assumes 10-year purge criterion].

	1975 (Actual)	1980 (Projected)	1985 (Projected)
Upper estimate	62,000,000	82,000,000	99,000,000
Lower estimate	—	69,000,000	71,000,000
Note: Projections are based on data obtained from 1975 survey.			

Table XVI. Estimated CCH requests

## FINAL COMMENTS

For a population of approximately 5 million career criminals, the United States is maintaining about 195 million criminal history records at the state and local level. For this situation to exist, many records must contain individuals whose crime careers are over or who are no longer alive; records must be fractionated across many files; and records must be held redundantly in a number of different files.

Regardless of file size, however, the current criminal history system within the United States is severely input limited. The FBI has reported<sup>2</sup> that out of a sample of 835,000 documented charges it was found that disposition data were ultimately received on only 463,000. The problem of insufficient data input is more critical at the state data centers which reported a total of 4.2 million 1975 input transactions, whereas 1975 arrests should have generated a total of 19.5 million transactions. Moreover, operational agencies indicate that 30 percent of the criminal histories they receive have missing data.

Two factors contribute to the problem of inaccurate or incomplete data. First, 30 percent of the states do not have any requirements that criminal history events be reported. Second, even in those states with mandatory reporting, there is often either no time specification, or enforcement power; as a result, criminal history transaction reporting receives a low priority.

With respect to output volume the current system appears to perform well, with the exception of prosecutors. Law enforcement agencies, for example, estimate that they would require fewer outputs from a national computerized system than they are currently making with the present system, because a single system would require fewer redundant requests from a number of different files. The prosecutors estimate that their output requirements from a single system would be almost four times that which they are currently receiving.

With respect to response time, the current system is severely constrained. This is particularly true for law enforcement agencies which estimate that they need an average response time of 36 minutes, but are currently getting an average of 4

hours. Apparently, this need is because the primary use of criminal histories by law enforcement agencies is for pre-arrest purposes. A response time problem also exists for the correctional institutions (including local jails) who estimate they need an average response time of 1.5 hours, but are currently getting 5 hours. The data suggest that the response time problem is particularly critical for those correctional institutions that receive prisoners on short notice and have an immediate need to assess the prisoner's tendency toward violence or escape.

It is surprising to observe that a great many agencies do not know, in a quantitative sense, what the histories are used for. For example, a defense counsel may know that the agency uses criminal histories for plea bargaining, but may be unable to quantify requests made for this purpose. Overall, 63 percent of the defense counsel and 67 percent of the courts were unable to quantify their use of criminal histories. Although the law enforcement agencies were somewhat more successful (43 percent were unable to quantify their uses), inspection of the data indicates that this was not the case with the larger law enforcement agencies. Presumably, because of their size, no one person in the large agencies is in a position to fully know how the requests are used.

These qualifications, notwithstanding, the overwhelming use of criminal histories at the state and local level within the United States is for pre-arrest purposes by law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement agencies are estimated to account for over 80 percent of all criminal history requests.

Often, automation has been viewed as the means of handling a growing and increasingly complex problem of data processing. *The startling conclusion from this study is that computerization of criminal history records is necessary to simplify the system.* By 1985, a national computerized criminal history system would reduce the more than 195 million records distributed in criminal justice agencies throughout the United States to a manageable 20 to 25 million records maintained in state data centers. These estimates assume that all 50 states will have developed CCH systems by 1983<sup>6</sup> and that a ten year

purge criterion is applied to the data files.

Because a ten year purge criterion has been assumed, the file size projections represent an upper limit. If, for example, a perfect technique were to be developed for predicting rearrest, the 1985 files could be reduced from the estimated 20 to 25 million records to between 6.8 and 9.2 million, the estimated number of known career criminals for 1985. Although it is extremely unlikely that a perfect zero-error procedure for predicting rearrest could be developed, a moderately successful procedure could reduce the overall file size considerably. State privacy and security regulations which require file purging under such conditions as the dismissal of a charge, acquittal, or failure to receive disposition data could also affect file size. These regulations could reduce the criminal history file size below that estimated here.

Although the rate of file size growth is not dealt with directly in this study, this is an extremely important consideration for CCH development, and is dependent on the "conversion philosophy" chosen. Conversion options, the ground rules used in determining whether a criminal history should be converted to a computer-readable form include the following:

- historical conversion of all manual records
- purging the manual records prior to conversion using such criteria as age, time since the last arrest, etc.
- converting the manual record whenever an individual is arrested
- converting only records on first offenders
- converting the manual record whenever an individual is released from prison
- converting the manual record whenever a period of probation or parole is terminated for an individual

As with file size, file growth is closely related to rearrest rate. A state that chooses to convert only current arrests, does so on the assumption that a current arrestee has a higher probability of being arrested again than someone who was last arrested ten years ago. Selection of the best conversion philosophy is, thus, strongly dependent on a thorough understanding of rearrest patterns; an understanding that does not at present exist.

To make a computerized criminal history system a viable reality, it is essential that the problem of data entry be resolved. This is especially true of court dispositions. Not only are dispositions insufficiently reported, but when reported they are an average of

four months out of date. It is unlikely that this problem can be resolved solely within the context of CCH, for, to assure that necessary disposition data is available and timely, courts must develop reporting systems for this information. Until court information systems have been developed, it is likely that CCH will continue to be input limited and that a significant number of criminal histories will lack critical data.

To determine which agencies should have on-line access to CCH is largely a matter of trading "cost" against "effectiveness". The results from this study indicate that police agencies (with the exception of highway patrols) and local jails have a need for immediate access. Defense counsel and probation/parole offices, on the other hand, have response time requirements that can be met without direct computer access. The situation is less clear for the prosecutors and courts. The volume requirement for the prosecutors may be sufficient to justify direct computer access from a cost-saving viewpoint. For the courts, 80 percent of their response time requirements can be met without direct, real-time computer access, suggesting their needs may be of lesser priority than that of police and corrections.

On a national scale, providing terminals for all police and correctional institutions would involve approximately 10,000 agencies, and providing them to all courts and prosecutors dealing with criminal histories would involve an additional 7,000 agencies. However, there undoubtedly exists a need hierarchy within the various components of the criminal justice system, such that some agencies have a much greater need for direct access than others. This study did not deal directly with such a need hierarchy, partially because of the research difficulties involved, but also because this is a problem that can be more effectively dealt with at the state level.

Finally, the projections in this study were made under the assumption that there will be no major discontinuity in the criminal behavior of the American people or in the effectiveness of the American criminal justice system over the next ten years. Since there have been no such discontinuities over the 200 year history of the United States, this assumption would appear to be fairly safe. Criminal justice, however, is an extremely dynamic field, and few things have more explosive potential for generating change than information. Consequently, there is risk in attempting to predict the future.

Moreover, information systems often exhibit growth phenomena that elude forecasting. Once a computerized system is operational, new uses are

made of it and demands beyond those originally conceived are placed on the capability. As CCH systems become operational, courts, prosecutors and corrections agencies may come to depend on the criminal history information as the basis for exercising discretion and making decisions. As a result, the patterns of needs and uses for CCH might shift dramatically to the point that terminal access to the data is then required by many more agencies across the justice system.

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