

2004

Highlights of the Year

In 2003, crime victimizations in the United States approached 24 million—about 5.4 million were violent crimes, and more than 18 million were property crimes.¹ In addition to the emotional and mental losses for victims, crime exacts an enormous financial toll, with gross annual losses of nearly \$16 billion.²

The primary challenge for criminal justice professionals today is not from the number of crimes, however, but from the changing nature of the crime landscape. Although traditional criminal activities such as juvenile delinquency, gangs, burglary, and violent crimes remain problems for many communities, law enforcement agencies now face such new threats as the evolving globalization of crime, possible terrorism, and cybercrime.

At the same time, advances in technology—such as lower costs for the analysis of DNA samples—are changing how evidence is collected and crimes are investigated, as well as how judges and attorneys handle court cases.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and is dedicated to researching crime control and justice issues. NIJ provides objective, independent, evidence-based knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of crime and justice, particularly at the State and local levels. The agency often forms partnerships with other Federal agencies, scientific and academic institutions and experts, law enforcement and corrections agencies, and professional organizations. Such joint ventures bring together the best minds, experience, and resources to explore emerging technologies, evaluate programs, develop standards, facilitate research, disseminate findings, and tackle pressing issues involving public safety, justice, law enforcement, and corrections.

¹ Catalano, S.M., *Criminal Victimization, 2003*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, September 2004 (NCJ 205455), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv03.pdf>.

² From the National Crime Victimization Survey of 2002, published on the World Wide Web in *Criminal Victimization in the United States—Statistical Tables*, December 2003 (NCJ 200561): Table 82, “Personal and property crimes, 2002,” available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cvus/current/cv0282.pdf>.

NIJ is committed to making DNA analysis a routine and affordable tool for State and local law enforcement.

The changing landscape of crime and justice

Addressing new types of crime as well as new versions of old patterns of crime requires innovative approaches. NIJ has always been at the forefront of innovation and change. For example, during the 1970's the agency pioneered development of bullet-resistant vests for police and during the 1980's sponsored research that led to new practices for prosecuting career criminals. By the turn of the century, remarkable advances in forensics began changing how crimes are investigated and criminals are prosecuted.

The most prominent of these advances is the collection and analysis of DNA evidence. Today NIJ is supporting development of cheaper, faster ways to use DNA samples as forensic evidence in all types of crimes, not just homicide and sexual assault. For example, police have discovered that biological evidence collected from a burglary crime scene can lead to arrest and conviction of career criminals capable of more serious offenses.

Science and the law. NIJ is committed to making DNA analysis a routine and affordable tool for State and local law enforcement. In 2003, the President announced the "Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology" initiative to provide \$1 billion over 5 years to use DNA identification to solve crimes, to improve crime labs and train investigators, and to stimulate research and development. Congress passed this legislation in 2004, and NIJ launched an interagency partnership and a Web site about the initiative—<http://www.DNA.gov>.

As more offender DNA samples are collected and law enforcement becomes better trained and equipped to collect DNA samples at crime scenes, the backlog of samples awaiting testing throughout the criminal justice system has increased to more than 542,000. In response, NIJ awarded \$66.5 million in grants to reduce the DNA testing backlog and build crime lab capacity.

Globalization. Another factor that contributes to the changing landscape of crime is globalization. Business and commerce see the impact of globalization

every day. Its impact on crime may not be as readily visible, but the effect is just as dramatic. Human trafficking, for example, involves an estimated 700,000 people each year, most of them women and children taken from their homes and forced into labor and/or prostitution under the pretense of legitimate employment.³ Since 1998, NIJ has participated in and funded a range of research projects and related initiatives to understand and stop human trafficking; a new research solicitation was posted in January 2005.

Most people think of human trafficking in terms of people being smuggled into the United States. But not all cases involve victims from other countries. One-third of the victims involved in a 2003–2004 NIJ-sponsored study of 12 cases in various U.S. locations were recruited *within* the United States.⁴ The researchers examined workers in several fields, including prostitution, domestic service, entertainment, agriculture, factories, and restaurants. They found that success in combating this problem depends on close collaboration among Federal authorities, local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and service providers and that the special inspection powers and experience of U.S. Department of Labor investigators are a valuable and underutilized resource for gathering evidence on trafficking and forced labor cases.

On a more positive side, globalization has also opened up countries formerly within the Soviet orbit to democracy, permitting them to seek help from other nations. For example, Ukraine received guidance and research assistance from NIJ to find ways to reform its criminal justice system and eliminate entrenched corruption. Working with the U.S. State Department, NIJ launched a series of projects that prompted Ukraine to begin reforming its penal code and take steps to enact legislation on intellectual property crime and the global problems of Internet piracy and trafficking.⁵

Research on organized crime in Asia and intellectual property theft around the world was conducted for NIJ during 2004; findings are expected to be published in 2005.

³ Albanese, J., "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Assessing What We Know and Its Implications for Research and Practice," *International Journal of Comparative Criminology*, 4(1) (2004): 24–47.

⁴ Bales, K., and S. Lize, "Human Trafficking in the United States," final report to the National Institute of Justice, February 2005, available at <http://www.ncjrs.org>.

⁵ See *The Prediction and Control of Organized Crime: The Experience of Post-Soviet Ukraine*, Finckenauer, J.O., and J.L. Schrock, eds., Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004.

In this report

Helping the justice system adapt to the changing landscape of crime, prosecution, corrections, and public safety requires strategic thinking about how to apply limited resources. New and stable strategies and resources are needed not only for the day-to-day work of enforcement, prevention, adjudication, and incarceration, but also for forward-looking research and development.

Most State and local governments, however, cannot devote funds to criminal justice research and development. The majority of the country's 16,000 law enforcement agencies, for example, have very small staffs and limited resources that must be directed toward local crime problems. As a Federal partner, NIJ is poised to continue its role as a major source of criminal justice research and development funding for State and local agencies, as well as a source of the latest information about what works.

The *2004 Annual Report* demonstrates how NIJ is making a difference in five broad areas—solving crimes, improving law enforcement, ensuring justice, improving corrections, and increasing community safety. The timeline (see page v) places these activities within four decades of historical context. The appendixes provide detailed breakdowns of the year's financial operations, research and development grants, and public information dissemination through printed publications and the Internet.