

Commission

Arizona Crime Trends: A System Review High Level Overview/Fact Sheet

Our mission is to sustain and enhance the coordination, cohesiveness, productivity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Arizona

Arizona Crime Trends: A System Review, a report by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, found that the state ranks number one — over all other 49 states — in Crime Index, property crime and motor vehicle theft.

Arizona also ranks in the top 10 nationally for murder, robbery, burglary, and larceny-theft. Specifically, Arizona is seventh in the nation for murder, tenth in robbery, seventh for burglary, and third in larceny-theft.

VICTIMIZATION

The trend of annually declining violent crime rates began after 1993. According to the NCVS report, the annual national violent crime rate has decreased about 50 percent since that time.

Of the 5.7 million violent crimes (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault), the decrease in violent victimization was attributed to a decrease in simple assaults. Declines in the other violent crime categories were not statistically significant.

Since 1992, males and females were victims of simple assault at similar rates. In previous years, males suffered more simple assault than females.

During that same time period, Arizona moved from the sixth highest rate of motor vehicle theft in 1991 to the number one ranked state in the nation by 2001. "Arizona's motor vehicle theft rate is 40.9 percent greater than the second ranked state of Nevada. We are leading the nation in motor vehicle theft by a huge margin.

Motor Vehicle Theft
1991/ 2001Rate
(Percent Change)

Under 18 50/27.8 (-44.8%)

18/Older 32/70.1 (119%)

Total 82/97.1 (8%)

Arizona Crime Rate occurring per 100,000 inhabitants:

Offense	1991 Rate (National Rank)	2001 Rate (National Rank)
Crime Index	7405.6 (3)	6077.4 (1)
Violent Crime	670.7 (18)	540.3 (15)
Murder	7.8 (20)	7.5 (7)
Rape	42.4 (20)	28.6 (31)
Robbery	165.7 (21)	167.1 (10)
Aggravated Assault	454.8 (15)	337.1 (16)
Property Crime	6734.9 (3)	5537.1 (1)
Burglary	1607.5 (5)	1032.9 (7)
Larceny-Theft	4266.3 (2)	3520.6 (3)
Motor Vehicle Theft	861.1 (6)	983.6 (1)

Contributing factors to Arizona's new prominence in Crime Index is directly related to the state's dramatic population increase since 1991:

- Our population grew more than three times faster than the rest of the nation between 1991 and 2001.
- Since 1991, the population in Arizona has nearly doubled, increasing 41.5 percent in contrast to a 12.9 percent national average

The substantial population shift in Arizona over the past 10-years has placed an increased burden on all components of the criminal justice system. This burden has been compounded by trying to maintain established levels of service.

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CRIME

Arizona has maintained a high crime ranking over the past 10-years. In 1991, Arizona's overall crime rate ranked third in the United States. In 2001, Arizona's ranking increased to number one in the nation.

In 2000 and 2001, Arizona ranked number one in property crime rate in the United States.

Arizona moved from the sixth highest rate of motor vehicle theft in 1991 to the number one ranked state in the nation in 2001. Arizona's motor vehicle theft rate is 40.9 percent greater than the 2nd ranked state and is separating itself from national motor vehicle theft rates.

Two categories, murder and motor vehicle theft, tend to be most reliable in reporting accuracy and are two of the categories in which Arizona has shown a marked increase.

Arizona placed in the top 10 during 2001 for murder (7), robbery (10), burglary (7), larceny-theft (3) and motor vehicle theft (1).

The national property crime rate has decreased 28.9 percent over the past 10 years, while the Arizona property crime rate has fluctuated over this same time period and is down 18.8 percent from 1991 to 2001.

When comparing national and Arizona UCR trends for 2001 several similarities occurred. Larceny-theft represented the largest category of offenses for both national and state trends, followed by burglary and motor vehicle theft.

Arizona has gone from 3rd to 1st in total crime ranking while at the same time the overall crime rate has decreased. Upon closer inspection, Arizona has experienced a decrease in the crime rate in all but two of the Part I crime categories, robbery and motor vehicle theft.

ARREST

Arrests (defined as each separate occasion in which an individual is taken into custody, notified to appear, or cited for an offense) for Part I crimes in Arizona are down from 1991 to 2001 with the exception of motor vehicle theft which is up 44.7 percent.

The most dramatic difference between over and under 18 year old arrest rates is motor vehicle theft. Motor vehicle arrests decreased by 44 percent for under 18 year olds while increasing 119 percent for 18 and older year olds.

The property crime rate in Arizona has decreased from 6,734.9 to 5,537.1 or 17.8 percent from 1991 to 2001. The overall property crime arrest rate has decreased from 1,328.8 to 732.9 or 44.8 percent in the same period.

COURTS

The number of felonies filed by prosecutors in Superior Court from 1991 to 2001 has increased each year with the exception of 1993 and 1999. The number of felony cases filed has increased by more than 17,000 over the last 10 years. The difference in the number of felonies filed in Superior Court is 26,140 in 1991 to 43,462 in 2001. As such, the number of convictions and dismissals has also increased over the same period.

The courts in Arizona processed more than 2.4 million filings in fiscal year 2001. Of the 2.4 million filings, almost 1.6 million were for criminal traffic and civil traffic violations, all handled by the limited jurisdiction courts in the state (Justice and Municipal Courts).

From FY1996 to FY2001, the number of juveniles with a petition filed increased by 22 percent although there was only a one percent increase in the number of referrals.

Juveniles petitioned in Maricopa County increased by 36 percent, while juveniles petitioned in Pima County increased by 20 percent and by 4 percent in the rural counties overall.

The number of juveniles petitioned for felony crimes against persons and property declined from FY1996 to FY2001 (41 percent and 28 percent respectively), while the number of juveniles petitioned for misdemeanor crimes against persons and property increased over the six years (74 percent and 12 percent respectively). In addition, juveniles petitioned for drug crimes increased by 67 percent.

From FY1996 to FY2001, there was a one percent increase in juveniles referred to Juvenile Court while there was a one percent increase in juveniles transferred or direct filed in adult court.

PROBATION

The number of adult individuals on probation in Arizona is increasing. Over, the past five years adults on probation have increased from 47,839 in 1996 to 61,872 in 2000. The number of individuals on Intensive Probation Supervision (IPS), the type of probation reserved for the more serious offenders has increased 36 percent from 1996.

The number of juveniles on probation was up 2.4 percent to 9,625 at the end of FY2001.

CORRECTIONS

Males represented 88.2 percent of juveniles committed to ADJC, 11.8 percent were female, increasing from 9.6 percent in 1996 to 14.2 percent in 2000.

The adult corrections population has increased substantially over the past 10 years. The prison population in Arizona increased from 15,464 to 28,059 (81.5 percent).

Males made up more than 95 percent of the adult total corrections population.

The time served by inmates has gradually increased over the past 10-years, primarily because of harsher penalties for dangerous and repetitive offenders under the Truth-in-Sentencing mandate.

As the inmate population has continued to increase, so has the number of authorized full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in the Department of Corrections.

There has been a significant increase in the percent of Latino and Native American inmates and in the percent of inmates age 35 or over. There has also been a significant decrease in the percent of inmates committed for crimes against property, coupled with moderate increases in the percent committed for each of four other types of crimes, including crimes against persons, drug offenses, DUI and miscellaneous offenses.

The two largest counties in Arizona, Maricopa and Pima, have experienced different trend patterns in regard to juveniles committed to ADJC. Juveniles committed to ADJC from Maricopa County have decreased from 57.8 percent in FY1996 to 41.7 percent in FY2000, while juveniles committed from Pima County have increased from 18.8 percent in FY1996 to 27.5 percent in FY2000.