

Concepts and Definitions

6.1 Incident

The **"incident"** is the basis for counting reported crime in both UCR Surveys. An incident is the set of connected events usually constituting an occurrence report. In the aggregate survey, the incident is used in conjunction with the most serious offence rule (MSO) (see section 6.25 on the MSO rule) to form the aggregate offence counts. In the incident-based survey, information for each incident is reported individually. Aggregate most serious offence rules are then applied to these data in order to reconcile them with historical aggregate counts as well as with data from aggregate respondents (see section 5.6 on data compilation and verification). The **incident "date"** is based on the date the incident became known to the police, as opposed to the date on which the incident occurred.

6.2 Aggregate UCR Survey

In UCR terminology, **Aggregate UCR** has two meanings. It can represent both the aggregate survey instrument itself as well as the aggregate *form* of UCR data (thus including incident-based UCR data which have been translated into aggregate counts). The aggregate UCR concepts and definitions described below apply equally to both. In this report, aggregate UCR statistics are presented in tables 3.1 to 3.4.

- 6.21 Violent incidents** involve offences that deal with the application, or threat of application, of force to a person. These include homicide, attempted murder, various forms of sexual and non-sexual assault, robbery and abduction. Traffic incidents that result in death or bodily harm are included under *Criminal Code* traffic incidents.
- 6.22 Property incidents** involve unlawful acts with the intent of gaining property but do not involve the use or threat of violence against an individual. Theft, breaking and entering, fraud and possession of stolen goods are examples of property crimes.
- 6.23 Other *Criminal Code* incidents** involve the remaining *Criminal Code* offences that are not classified as violent or property incidents (excluding traffic). Examples are mischief, bail violations, disturbing the peace, arson, prostitution and offensive weapons.
- 6.24 Total *Criminal Code* incidents** is the tabulation of all violent, property and other *Criminal Code* incidents reported for a given year.
- 6.25 Most Serious Offence** The UCR Survey classifies incidents according to the **most serious offence (MSO)** in the incident. In categorizing incidents, violent offences always take precedence over non-violent offences. Within violent and non-violent, offences are then sorted according to the maximum sentence under the *Criminal Code*. The UCR Survey scores violent incidents differently from other types of crime. For violent crimes, a separate incident is recorded for each victim (categorized according to the *most serious offence* against the victim). If, for example, one person assaults three people, then three incidents are recorded. If three people assault one person, only one incident is recorded. For non-violent crimes, one incident (categorized according to the *most serious offence* in the incident) is counted for every distinct or separate occurrence. Robbery is one exception to the above scoring rule. Robbery is categorized as a violent offence. Unlike all other violent offences, one occurrence of robbery is equal to one incident, regardless of the number of victims. The reason for this exception is that robbery can involve many people who could all be considered victims. In a bank robbery with 5 tellers and 20 customers present, 25 incidents of robbery would be counted if the normal scoring rule for violent incidents were applied. This would seriously overstate the occurrence of robbery.

Thus, the total number of incidents recorded by the UCR Survey is not a census of all violations of the law that come to the attention of police. Rather, it is equal to the number of victims of violent crimes (other than robberies) plus the number of separate occurrences of non-violent crimes (and robberies).

6.26 Actual Incidents When a crime is reported to the police, the incident is recorded as a "reported" incident. Police then conduct a preliminary investigation to determine the validity of the report. Occasionally, crimes reported to the police prove to be unfounded. Unfounded incidents are subtracted from the number of reported incidents to produce the number of "actual incidents." Numbers and rates of crime are calculated on the basis of "actual incidents" categorized according to the **most serious offence**.

6.27 Clearance of Actual Incidents Criminal incidents can either be cleared "by charge" or "cleared otherwise". When a police investigation leads to the identification of a suspect, an "information" is laid against that person (i.e., the person is formally charged). From a statistical point of view, the laying of an information means that at least one actual incident can be "cleared by charge".

Incidents can also be "cleared otherwise." In some cases, police cannot lay an information even if they have identified a suspect and have enough evidence to support the laying of an information. Examples include cases of diplomatic immunity, instances where the complainant declines to proceed with charges against the accused, or cases where the alleged offender dies before he or she can be formally charged. Such incidents are considered to be "cleared otherwise," that is, other than by the laying of a charge.

Since the process of solving crime is often time-consuming, a criminal incident may be solved months or even years after it was reported to police and recorded on the UCR Survey. Therefore, on the aggregate UCR database, there is no direct relationship between the number of "actual incidents" and the number of "incidents cleared." This is why it is possible for the number of incidents cleared to be greater than the total number of actual incidents. Although total incidents are not necessarily linked with those incidents that are cleared, a clearance rate may provide a good indication of the proportion of incidents that are cleared by charge or otherwise for different types of offences.

Some types of procedural differences influence the comparability of municipal or provincial data. Specifically, the survey element "clearance status" is interpreted differently in several provinces compared to other jurisdictions. In New Brunswick and Quebec (for the Sûreté du Québec only), the initial clearance status recommended by the police (e.g., cleared by a specific charge) is subject to approval by the Crown. Should the Crown find insufficient evidence to proceed with the charge, the police revise their records to take into account the recommendation of the Crown. According to the data element definition, a charge is cleared only if there is sufficient evidence to proceed. However, other jurisdictions, including British Columbia which has a system similar to Quebec, do not revise their internal records when the Crown disagrees with the police assessment of the evidence. For this reason, caution should be taken in making comparisons between jurisdictions for this data element.

6.28 Persons Charged The UCR Survey also records the number of persons charged. For incidents that are cleared, the survey collects the number of adults charged by sex as well as the number of youths (aged 12 to 17 years) charged by sex. The "persons charged" category includes the number of people charged (not the number of charges laid) or recommended for charges by police. A person who is simultaneously charged with more than one offence is counted according to the *most serious offence*, even if the offences occurred in more than one incident. In addition, persons may be counted more than once throughout the year; that is, individuals are counted on each occasion that they are charged by police.

"Persons charged" refers to persons who were charged in connection with a particular incident. These persons, however, may have been charged later with a lesser offence. For example, a person who commits a breaking and entering offence may end up being charged with possession of stolen goods if, for instance, the police have better evidence on the latter offence. Both the "actual incident" and the "person charged" are counted under breaking and entering, even though the person was actually charged with possession of stolen goods.

6.3 Incident-based UCR2 Survey

6.31 Violations The Incident-based UCR2 Survey employs a new, more detailed set of offence categories compared to the aggregate UCR. Any attempt to match the aggregate UCR sub-totals of Violent, Property and Other Criminal Code Offences with the incident-based sub-totals is not advised as the two subsets are comprised of different offence categories. For example, the incident-based sub-total of Violations Against the Person includes additional offences (e.g. criminal negligence causing death/causing bodily harm, other related offences causing death, conspire to commit murder, kidnapping, hostage taking, extortion, criminal harassment and other violent violations).

There are six types of violations included in the category of **Violations against Property**: break and enter, theft, arson, possession of stolen goods, fraud and mischief. Once again, two additional offences of arson and mischief are included in this sub-grouping yet are not amongst the components making up "Total Property" offences under the aggregate UCR. Similarly, **Other Criminal Code Violations** within the Incident-based UCR2 Survey includes the additional offence categories of firearm transfers/serial numbers and threatening/harassing phone calls which are not reported separately within the aggregate survey.

Although incident-based survey respondents can code up to four violations on an incident, for reporting purposes, tables 4.2 - 4.20 in this report are based on the most serious offence rule (see section 6.25 for a description of this rule) and include only actual incidents (see section 6.26).

Persons Data

A key aspect of the incident-based UCR survey is the capture of victim and accused information which is directly linked to the incident.

6.32 Charged/Suspect-Chargeable (Accused) Refers to any person who has been identified by police as being involved in a criminal incident and against whom an information could be laid as a result of sufficient evidence/information. Accused persons include those charged as well as those not charged for a variety of reasons, including diplomatic immunity, use of alternative measures or diversion, and death. Individuals involved only for investigative purposes and subsequently released without being charged or formally processed in some other official manner will not be identified as an accused. Unless otherwise noted, the accused counts and offence characteristics described in the tables in Chapter 4 are based on each accused identified with **each** incident, not the most serious offence a person is charged with at a given time as in the aggregate method (see section 6.28).

6.33 Victim Refers to anyone who is the victim of a violation against the person (as defined by the Incident-based UCR2 Survey). These include all violent violations and any traffic violations that cause bodily harm or death to anyone other than the accused. Persons who are the victim of other types of incidents of crime are not captured. Victimization counts reported in Chapter 4 include each victim. There may be more than one victim in an incident. The categorization of violation type is, as with aggregate UCR, based on the most serious violation against that victim (see most serious offence rule, section 6.25).