



## **1998 Vermont Crime Report**

### **Introduction**

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The 1998 edition of the Vermont Crime Report contains an analysis of crime reported to law enforcement agencies throughout the state of Vermont during calendar year 1998. Crimes reported to state police, game wardens, municipal police, sheriff departments, and other state law enforcement agencies are contained in this report. Crime statistics are arranged statewide, by county, and by town. Specific details on crime definitions and how this data was collected and organized may be found in the Methodology Section.

#### **Report Format**

In the past, the Vermont Crime Report included in one paper edition both statewide and local crime data for all counties. Feedback from our readers indicated that most users were only interested in crime data from their town and their county and in statewide data for comparison purposes. As such, nearly 85% of the paper report was not consulted by the typical reader. As a way of addressing this issue, the 1997 edition of the Vermont Crime Report was published in two formats – a printed format, and an Internet format. The printed format contained statewide, county, and local data for a specific county. The Internet format contained statewide, county, and local data for all counties.

Because the Internet format was so well received by our readers in 1997, and because there is nearly universal access to the Internet in Vermont, it was decided to retire the paper version of the report and to publish the 1998 edition of the Vermont Crime Report exclusively in the Internet format. The only paper copies of the 1998 edition that will be printed will be for archive purposes.

#### **Trend Data**

The 1998 edition of the Vermont Crime Report has incorporated a useful feature to assist readers to compare data reported in the 1998 edition with that reported in the 1997 edition. At the bottom of each page of the 1998 edition a link has been established which will allow the reader to switch back and forth between the 1998 and the 1997 data for the specific table that the reader is viewing.

The reader should be cautioned, however, about making conclusions regarding the reasons for differences between the number of crimes reported year to year. This is because the State of Vermont's crime reporting program is undergoing fundamental changes. Vermont is in the process of implementing a newly established national standard for crime reporting. The new standard, called Incident-Based Reporting (IBR), involves a different methodology for reporting crime when compared to the old standard or summary-based reporting. The IBR methodology results in a more specific accounting of reported crimes and more details on the circumstances surrounding each crime incident.

Analysis from around the country suggests that when a law enforcement agency adopts the IBR standard, the crime rate for that jurisdiction may appear to increase when compared to a crime rate based on summary-based reports. The apparent increase in crime can be more related to the IBR reporting methodology than to any actual increase in crime. This phenomenon, however, has not been documented in Vermont. In fact, for many departments that have transitioned to IBR reporting, their crime rate has actually gone down. The improved accuracy of the IBR system is likely to be one of the reasons for this decline. In any case, one year changes in crime rate should be treated with caution since increases or decreases may be related to changes in reporting practices.

For more details on the IBR system in Vermont, please consult the section of this report entitled Vermont's Crime Reporting System in Transition.