



Vermont Crime Information Center

Department of Public Safety - Division of Criminal Justice Services

2007 Vermont Crime Report

Introduction

The 2007 edition of the Vermont Crime Report contains an analysis of crime reported to law enforcement agencies throughout the State of Vermont during calendar year 2007. 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.

VERMONT CRIME ON-LINE: A new format for the Crime Report

The State of Vermont's Uniform Crime Reporting program has been in transition for several years. The program has been changing from a SUMMARY-BASED to an INCIDENT-BASED reporting system. The SUMMARY system which had been in effect since 1984 in Vermont provided information on only a limited number of crimes referred to as Part I and Part II crimes. The INCIDENT system reports on a much broader range of crimes referred to as Group A and Group B crimes and includes data on the circumstances of the crime including characteristics of victims and defendants. Vermont's transition mirrors similar changes in other states as law enforcement agencies across the country implement the Federal Bureau of Investigation's crime reporting system known as the National Incident-Based Reporting System or NIBRS. In Vermont the new NIBRS format is known as Vermont Crime On-Line or VCON. 2004 was the debut year for VCON.

Vermont Crime On-Line provides the full complement of data elements specified by NIBRS. VCON allows the user to view standard reports or to create their own custom reports on-line. Another advantage of the VCON format lies in enhanced data quality – more data and more accurate data. While the SUMMARY format collected crime data on 25 crimes, VCON collects data on 56 crimes. In addition, VCON reports information on the time and day when crimes occur, crime location type, the amount of property crime loss, victim injuries, statistical information on the age, gender, and race of both victims and defendants, and other crime circumstance data of interest to the public, law enforcement, public administrators, legislators, and researchers.

The enhanced accuracy of VCON data stems from the manner in which it is collected. In the SUMMARY system, crime data was reported directly to the Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC) with little or no error checking performed by the reporting agency. The VCON system requires rigorous data quality auditing before the data can be submitted to VCIC for inclusion in the VCON system. Consequently, the incidence of crime in a community will be more accurately recorded due to the automated error checking in the reporting software.

VERMONT CRIME ON-LINE (VCON) Methodology

What is Included in VCON

The crime data provided for Vermont Crime On-Line (VCON) is an enumeration of crimes known to law enforcement agencies. It is not an enumeration of all crimes that were committed in Vermont during calendar year 2007. Crimes that are included in VCON are based on reports received by law enforcement agencies from victims, officers who discover infractions, or other sources. Crimes that may have occurred but were not reported are not included in this report. All reports of crime have been validated by a law enforcement officer. That is, reports which are later shown to be unfounded (e.g., property reported as stolen but later discovered as misplaced) are not included in this report.

All agencies were required to submit crime data for Group A and Group B crimes as defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's NIBRS program. The definitions for Group A and Group B crimes are accessible from the Vermont Crime On-Line Site.

There are two important differences between the way in which crime is counted by VCON vs. the way crime was counted by the old SUMMARY system:

VCON collects data on 56 crimes vs. the 26 crimes counted in the old SUMMARY system. This change affects the way in which the data is displayed rather than the total amount of crime counted. VCON provides a greater level of detail than the old summary system. VCON only collects data for Group B offenses (a group of 11 less serious crimes) when there is an arrest. The old SUMMARY system as implemented in Vermont collected data on all reported less serious offenses not just less serious offenses for which an arrest was made. This change does result in a reduction in the total number of crimes reported on VCON.

Data Quality

The data in this report were provided by municipal, sheriff, state police, and other Vermont state law enforcement agencies which are solely responsible for the accuracy of their submissions. Agencies are required to utilize automated editing software to error check their data prior to submitting the information to the Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC). The FBI performs similar edit checks on Vermont's data before including the data in the national system. The data which appears in VCON has undergone edit checking at both the local and federal level before being published. VCIC also has a NIBRS data quality program which audits each reporting agency at least once every two years.

The data quality of the VCON system is higher than that of the old SUMMARY system due to automated vs. manual data collection methods and the data quality editing that is performed at both the local and federal level. As such there will be some discrepancies when comparing crime data from previous years collected using the SUMMARY format vs. data collected in more recent years using VCON. Due to more rigorous data collection standards the amount of crime reported in VCON will be less than the number of crimes reported in the old SUMMARY system.

Location Issues

Municipal police departments generally submit crime data which is limited to their town/city. Sheriff Departments report crime data for towns for which they have law enforcement responsibilities. State Police and other state law enforcement agencies report crime data based on the location of the crime. It is not uncommon for towns to have different law enforcement agencies policing the jurisdiction depending on the time of day or day of the week. In these cases, the Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC) collates crime reports from all involved law enforcement agencies to ensure the accuracy of the town's crime rate.

Reporting Compliance

In 2007, crime data was received from all law enforcement agencies required to report with the exception of: Bristol Police Department, Vernon Police Department, Chittenden County Sheriff, Essex County Sheriff, Department of Motor Vehicles, and the Department of Liquor Control. As such, no data from these agencies are included on the Vermont Crime On-Line site.

Population Figures

Population figures provided on the VCON site are based on the most current data available from the Vermont Department of Health.

2007 Report Methodology

As discussed in the Methodology Section above there are discrepancies between crime counts reported in VCON vs. crime counts reported using the old SUMMARY system. These discrepancies have arisen for three reasons: 1) changes in the way crimes are counted; 2) more rigorous data quality standards; and 3) the failure of some law enforcement agencies to report.

In light of these findings VCIC discontinued the use of unaudited, SUMMARY style data from reporting agency record management systems as the basis for reporting Statewide Crime Statistics in 2005. Rather, only INCIDENT crime data reported to VCON and subject to data quality audits are used in this report. As a result, crime statistics from prior to 2005 will be lower than those reported in years prior to 2005 when data was collected using the SUMMARY system.

For purposes of continuity, however, the 2007 Crime Report does contain a Statewide Crime Statistics table which is based on the old SUMMARY Crime Index (known as Part I crimes). The Crime Index was developed by the FBI and is used as an indicator to measure changes in the total amount of crime in a jurisdiction. The data in the Statewide Crime Statistics table were obtained from VCON and collapsed into the SUMMARY system crime types. In the past the Statewide Crime Statistics table contained both the Crime Index and a list of less serious crimes known as Part II crimes. Because of different reporting practices between the SUMMARY and VCON system it is not possible to collapse VCON data into a valid SUMMARY, Part II crime table. A complete enumeration of crimes reported to law enforcement is, however, available from VCON. Crime statistics are arranged statewide, by county, and by town.

A Note Regarding Annual Comparisons

It is valid to compare the differences in the Statewide Crime Statistics table between 2005, 2006, and 2007 since those years were collected using the VCON system. It is not valid, however, to compare the Statewide Crime Statistics table developed using the SUMMARY system prior to 2005 with those collected using the VCON system in 2005 and later years since the data collection methodologies were different.