

Introduction and Methodology

The 2015 edition of the Vermont Crime Report contains an analysis of crime reported to law enforcement agencies throughout the State of Vermont during calendar year 2015. Crimes reported to state police, game wardens, municipal police, sheriff departments, and other state law enforcement agencies are contained in this report. Crime statistics may be viewed by town, county, State Police Barracks and Troop, and statewide.

What is Included in Vermont Crime On-line (VCON)

The crime data provided for Vermont Crime On-Line (VCON) is an enumeration of crimes known to law enforcement agencies and reported through the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). It is not an enumeration of all crimes that were committed in Vermont during calendar year 2015. 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 or submitted 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 Vermont law enforcement agencies are required by Vermont Statute to submit crime data for Group A and Group B crimes as defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) program. The definitions for Group A and Group B crimes are accessible from the Vermont Crime On-Line Site.

How Crimes Are Counted: Summary Data vs. VCON Data

There are two important differences between the ways in which crimes are counted by VCON vs. the way crimes were counted by the old FBI SUMMARY system used in Vermont prior to 2005:

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 VCON 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 a number of law enforcement agencies converted to new records management systems during the year there has been a notable decrease in the number of incidents reported to the state program. It is therefore highly likely that not all qualifying incidents are represented in the data available in VCON and caution should be used when comparing 2015 incidents to data from previous years.

Location Issues

Municipal police departments generally submit crime data, which is limited to their town/city. Sheriff Department's 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. Population Figures Population figures provided on the VCON site are based on the most current data available from the Vermont Department of Health.

Reporting Compliance

In 2015, crime data was received from all law enforcement agencies required to report with the exception of Vermont Department of Liquor Control.

Population Figures

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

2015 Report Methodology

There are discrepancies between crime counts reported in VCON vs. crime counts reported using the old SUMMARY system. (Reporting prior to 2005) For purposes of continuity, however, the 2015 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. Additionally, there was a notable drop in crimes reported to the state program by some law enforcement agencies during 2015. This is likely due to the introduction of new reporting systems, which may have led to a high rate of underreporting.

A Note Regarding Annual Comparisons

It is valid to compare the differences in the Statewide Crime Statistics tables between 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 since those years were collected using the VCON system and while the majority of the state was using the same reporting software. It is not valid, however, to compare the Statewide Crime Statistics table developed using the SUMMARY system prior to 2005 and after 2012 since the data collection has had notable underreporting of crime.