

Assessing the Utility of NIBRS Data

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Abstract Data produced by the FBI's National Incident-Based Crime Reporting System (NIBRS) offers researchers, policy analysts and practitioners exceptional opportunities for understanding crime. Many assume, however, the data are biased due to lack of national coverage, overrepresentation of smaller population areas, and incomplete reporting of item data. This effort attempts to measure the bias in NIBRS data and establish how that bias is changing over time as agencies increasingly employ NIBRS reporting. In this talk we track NIBRS data over a sixteen year period and compare NIBRS crime breakdowns and crime rates for violent and property crimes with national UCR Summary program results. We also provide a description of the John Jay relational database implementation of NIBRS that facilitates these studies.