

# Crime Statistics – the Rest of the Story

Started in the 1930's and administered by the FBI, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) is the voluntary submission of crime and arrests data by agencies across the United States. While voluntary at the federal level, it is mandatory for agencies in California (California Penal Code § 13020(b)).

UCR data is in two forms, SRS (Summary Reporting System) and [NIBRS](#) (National Incident-Based Reporting System). While many States report NIBRS, California and a few others won't transition from SRS to NIBRS until 2021.

The City of Chico Police Department submits UCR/SRS data monthly to the State of California Department of Justice who then, in turn, submits the data to the FBI.

The value of standardized data submissions is the ability to easily compare trends across times and locations. The standards have changed over the decades but are generally consistent.

There are a number of components to the monthly UCR/SRS submissions, but two key areas are Crimes and Arrests. For Crimes, only a subset is reported, called "Part I Crimes". For Arrests, offenses for both Part I and Part II crimes are reported.

For completeness, the other components of UCR are:

- Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) Program
- Hate Crimes
- Cargo Theft (California not participating until 2021)
- Human Trafficking (California not participating until 2021)

## What exactly is a "Part I Crime?"

The UCR program founders distinguished between crimes that occurred frequently and were likely to be reported to the police (Part I Crimes) and "Vice" or other crimes (Part II Crimes).

There are 8 major classifications for Part I Crimes that are further divided. The classifications are:

- Violent Crimes
  - Murder and non-negligent homicide
  - Forcible Rape
  - Robbery
  - Aggravated Assault (note there is a "Simple Assault" that is not included in this category)
- Property Crimes
  - Burglary
  - Larceny (e.g., shoplifting, bicycle theft, etc.)
  - Motor Vehicle Theft
  - Arson

Because these submissions are specifically related to **reported** Crime (versus Part II **Arrest** Offenses) and are commonly referenced by the media, it is this data and classification that the Chico Police Department shares with the public in various forums.

## What about Part II Crimes?

The FBI defines Part II Crimes (or Offenses) as:

- “Simple” Assault (no weapon used and no serious or aggravated injury)
- Fraud
- Buying, receiving, or possessing stolen property
- Vandalism
- Carrying and Possession of Weapons
- Prostitution, commercialized vice, and sex offenses other than rape
- Drug abuse violations
- Gambling
- Offenses (non-violent) against family and children
- Drunkenness
- Disorderly Contact
- Curfew and Loitering
- Forgery and Counterfeiting
- All other violations of state and local laws not specifically categorized as Part 1 or 2 with the *exception of* traffic violations

Per the FBI UCR Standard, only Arrest data for Part II Crimes are submitted.

## Trivia

There are pockets of properties within the City where crime is reported via different agencies and therefore not included in Chico Police Department statistics. The obvious example are areas that are in the County and of course that data is reported via the Butte County Sherriff’s Office. Crimes that occur on the Chico State Campus and properties are reported by the University Police department and crimes on State property (Fairgrounds, DMV, etc.) are reported via CHP. Crimes along the Railroad tracks would be reported via the Union Pacific Railroad Police. Though Union Pacific reported only five property crimes in all of Butte County in 2018.

Arson reports are gathered by the Chico Fire Department and routed though Chico Police to the State Department of Justice. The interpretations of Arson have changed over the years (is a “couch fire” arson?) with corresponding fluctuations in the counts which make year-to-year comparisons challenging. As this fluctuation can distort the overall picture, some Chico Police summary reports to the media and public may omit the Arson component.

With SRS, there is a special “Hierarchy Rule” designed to count only a single Part I crime when multiple events occur at the same place and time. There are some nuances to the rule but in general, the Part I listing above reflects the hierarchy. An example of the Hierarchy rule is if there is both a Rape and Larceny at the same place and time, only the Rape is counted. In practice, in Chico at least, this doesn’t materially impact the statistics.

Crime statistics are reported in summary form based on the date the crime was **reported**, not when it occurred. This has two implications, the first is that there will always be some crimes that occurred in one month but were reported in a subsequent month (or year). The second is because it is a point-in-time snapshot, any subsequent updates to the particular crime (i.e., due to ongoing investigations) may cause the actual UCR category to change, either between Part I and Part II or within Part I and II. The practical implication is that if you want to research particular Part I crimes for a past month, often the actual offense counts will differ slightly from that reported to the DOJ.

In 2014, the UCR definition of Forcible Rape was amended from its original 1927 incarnation to be gender neutral and to cover additional circumstances. To accommodate reporting agencies using the older definition, the FBI would accept counts under both the old and new definitions. Chico reported to the DOJ under the new definition starting in 2017 after implementing a new computer system. This only impacts how crimes were reported not how (or what) incidents were charged.

Calls for Service (CFS) are primarily requests from the citizenry to 911 or the non-emergency line. These are the calls you may hear on a scanner or reported on Social Media by people who listen to the scanner. In 2018, roughly 1 in 8 calls to Chico Police resulted in the actual reporting of a crime or an arrest.

Sometimes you see Part I crimes labeled as Part 1 Crimes (Arabic 'one' vs Roman numeral 'one'). This is because in absence of a reference to Part II crimes, the Roman numeral 'I' looks like the letter '1' and can be confusing.

National or internet media sources may refer to Crime in "Chico", but often they really mean the Chico MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) which is all of Butte County.

## Future

The FBI is rolling out a new data collection classification system called NIBRS with a target date of Jan 1, 2021. The major change with this new system is that reporting occurs at the incident rather than the summary level. While many states have already converted, California has not. Once California implements the NIBRS system, Chico Police Department will reconfigure its internal systems to submit NIBRS data.

## References

FBI UCR Info: <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>

State of California Crime and Arrest Data: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/>

Chico MSA: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butte\\_County,\\_California#Metropolitan\\_Statistical\\_Area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butte_County,_California#Metropolitan_Statistical_Area)

Updated rape definition: <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/updated-definition-rape>