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Crime and Delinquency in Nevada

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The Social Health of Nevada

Leading Indicators and Quality of Life in the Silver State

Crime and Delinquency in Nevada

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Crime and justice system have received much attention from American scholars and politicians in the last than 50 years, with issues in adult criminality, delinquency, and penology emerging at the center stage of criminological inquiry. While scholarly literature now includes many studies focused on different regions and cities, there are no large-scale empirical examinations of crime and delinquency in Nevada. One exception is the *Social Health of Nevada* report issued in 2006 by University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Center for Democratic Culture (CDC).

Highlights

- Nevada is ranked 2nd in the nation for violent crime.
- Nevada is ranked 2nd in the nation for motor vehicle theft.
- Nevada is ranked 3rd in the nation for robbery.
- Nevada is ranked 9th in the nation for forcible rape and aggravated assault.
- Juvenile arrests are down in Nevada from 2000, but still above national rate.
- Nevada incarceration rates have remained constant since 2000.

This report will update 2006 study, provide an overview of adult crime and juvenile delinquency in Nevada, offer possible explanations for the existing patterns, stress the importance of sustained attention to crime issues for policy makers at all levels of government, list available community resources, and highlight the urgent need for conducting a systematic research in this area.

How to Cite this Report

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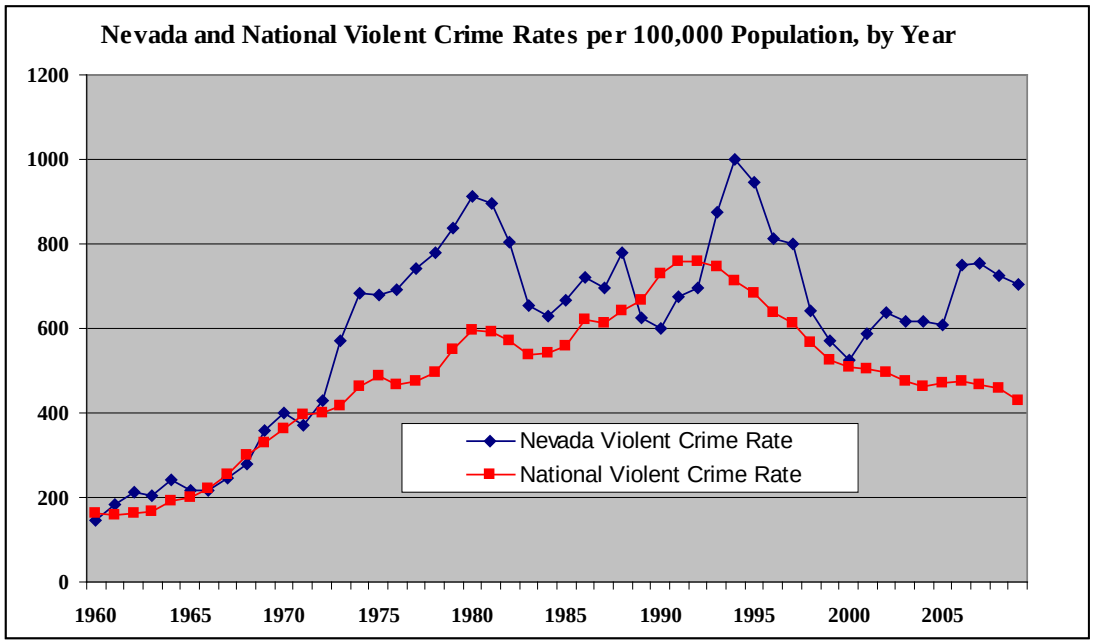
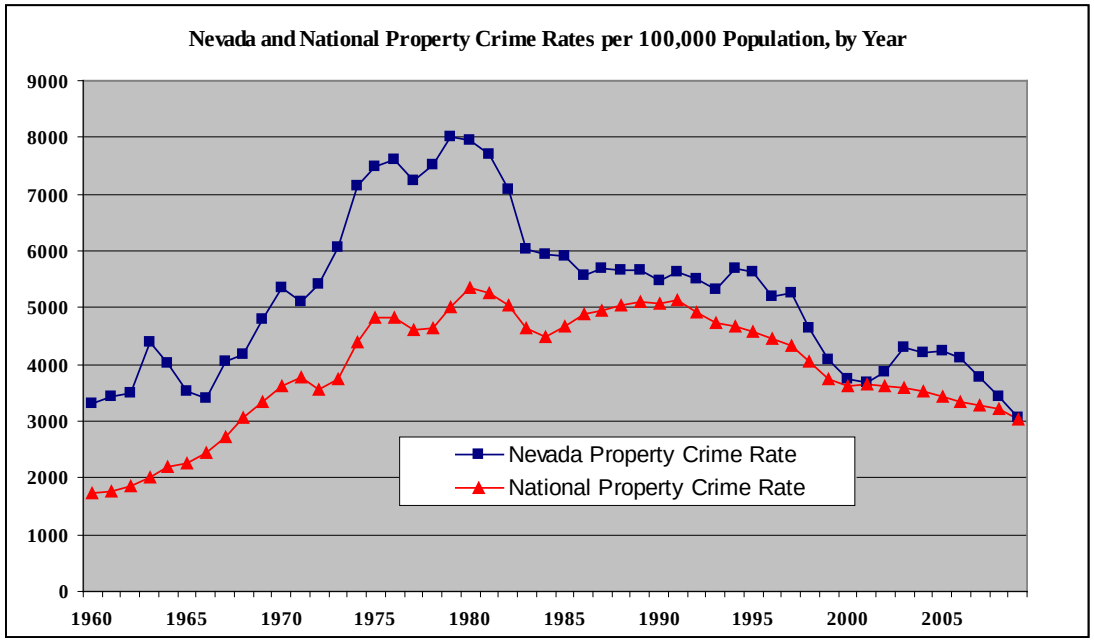
Historical Overview

Violent crime rates in Nevada peaked in 1980 and declined through the rest of the decade only to resume their climb in the early 1990s and decrease by 2000, and then

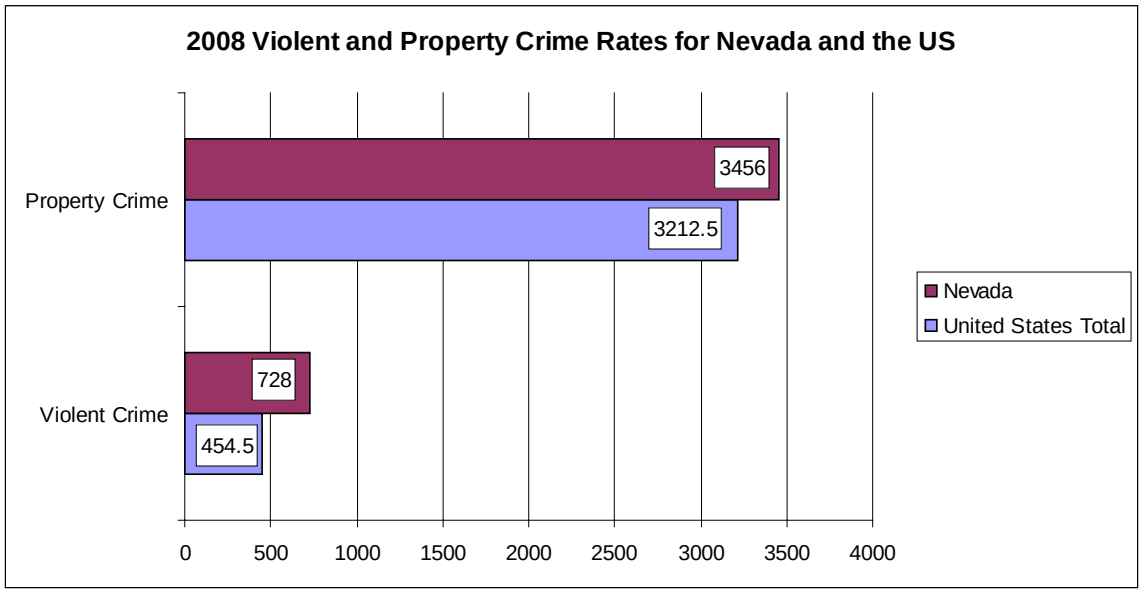
rise again. Murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, aggravated assault, and arson – all major categories of violent crime have registered a decrease in the last few years. The dynamic drop in crime mirrors the national trend, as there was a marked decrease in violent crimes in the United States throughout the 1990's, followed by an upswing in all categories of violent crimes.





In 2008 Nevada was ranked 2nd in the nation for highest violent crime rate with 728 violent crimes per 100,000 people, which was significantly above the national average of 454.5 (US Census Bureau, 2011). During the same year, the property crime rate in

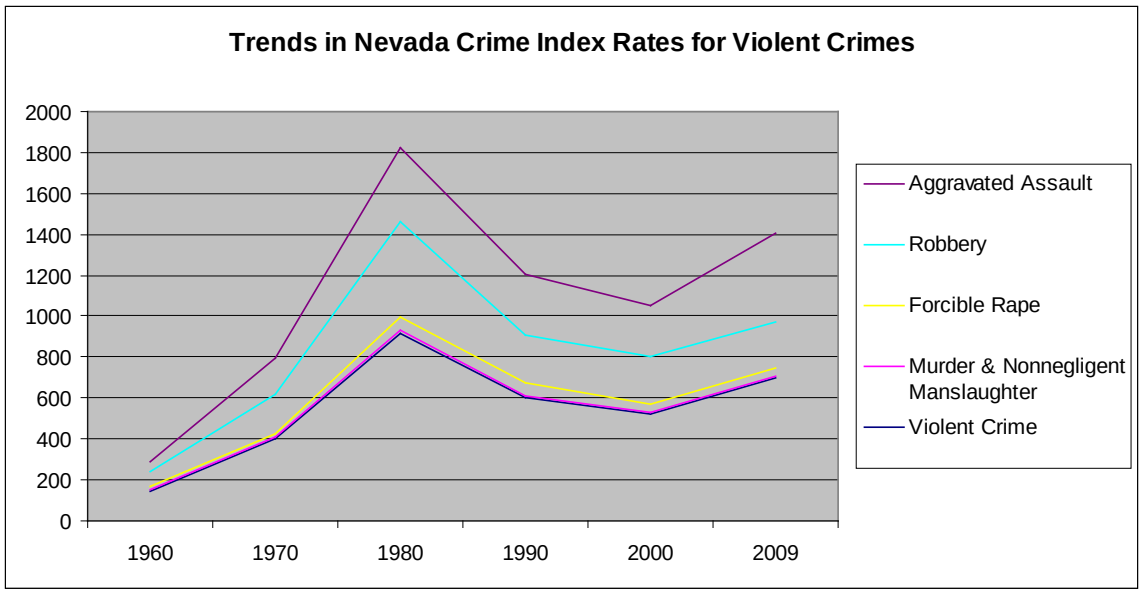
Nevada was 3456 per 100,000 people, ranking Nevada 21st in the nation. For property crime, the national rate in 2008 was 3212.5; thus, Nevada places closer to the national rate for property crimes.



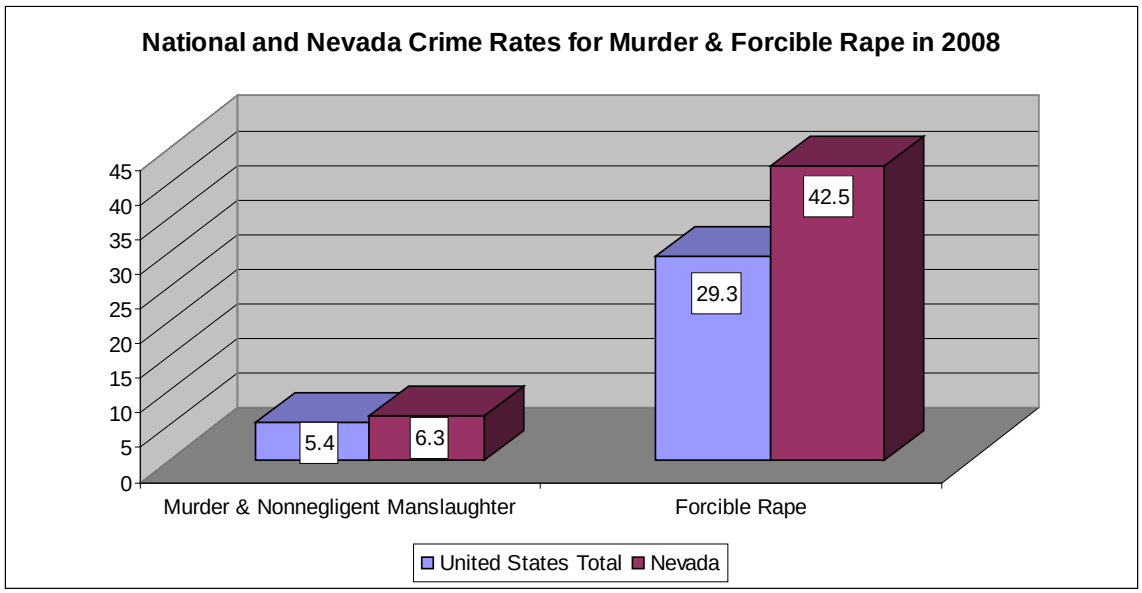
Violent Crimes

The violent crime category consists of four types of violent crimes: aggravated assault (which is sometimes split into aggravated and simple), robbery, forcible rape, and murder and nonnegligent manslaughter. The data used in the following section was gathered from the US Census Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 2011, unless specifically indicated.

As discussed briefly above, the rates in Nevada for violent crime have both increased and decreased over the past 50 years consistently with the national violent crime rates. The following chart offer a snap shot of violent crime in Nevada over half a century (http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/nvcrime.htm). (Note: there was a crime spike in the mid 1990s that is not visible in the chart.)

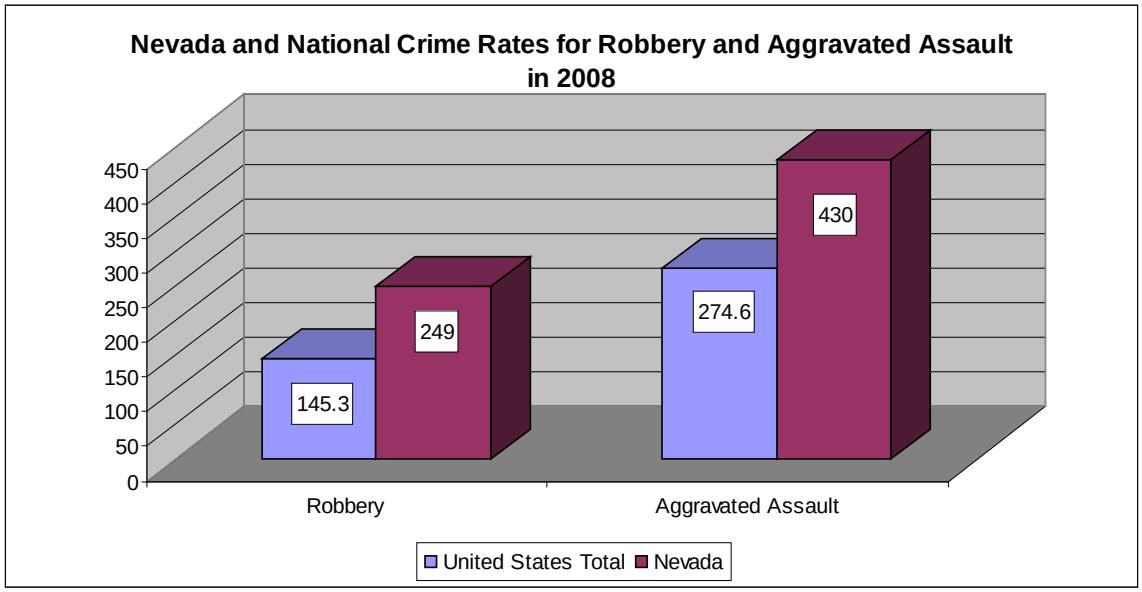


Though the trends in crime in Nevada are consistent with the nation, Nevada has a significantly higher rate for violent crime (728) than the national rate (454.5) in 2008. In the category of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter Nevada's rate was 6.3 per 100,000 people and the national rate was 5.4. In 2008, Nevada ranked 16th in the nation for highest murder rates. In the category of forcible rape, Nevada's rate was 42.5 compared to the national rate of 29.3, ranking Nevada the 9th in the nation for forcible rape.

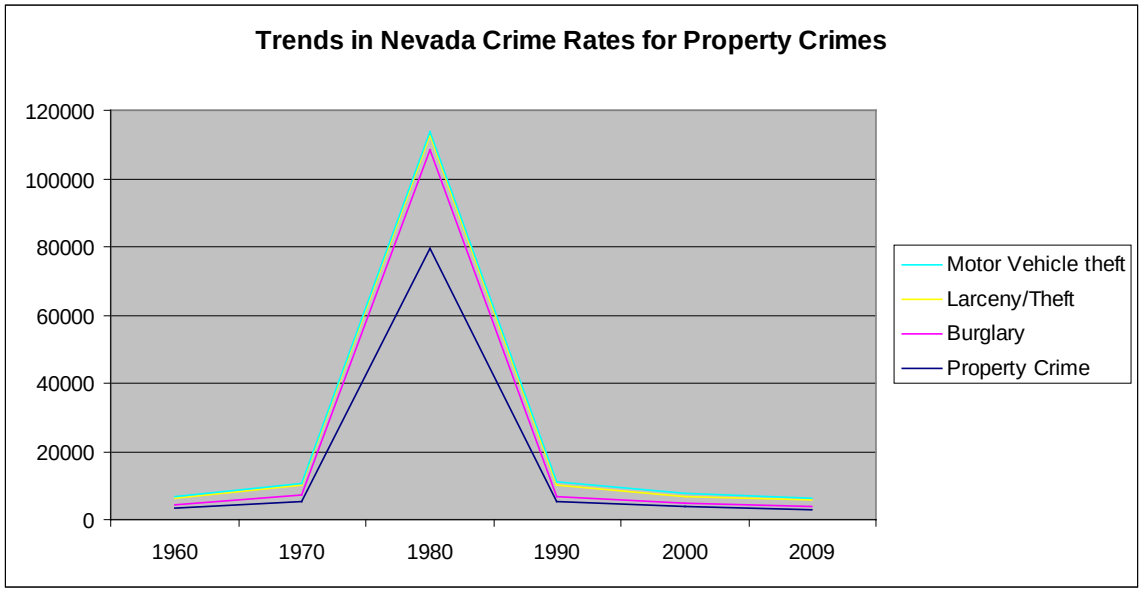


In 2008, the Nevada crime rate for robbery was 249 per 100,000 people. The national crime rate for robbery during the same year was 145.3. In the United States, Nevada had the 3rd highest state ranking for robbery in 2008. Nevada was ranked 9th highest state

for aggravated assault in 2008, with a rate of 430, compared to the national rate of 274.6.

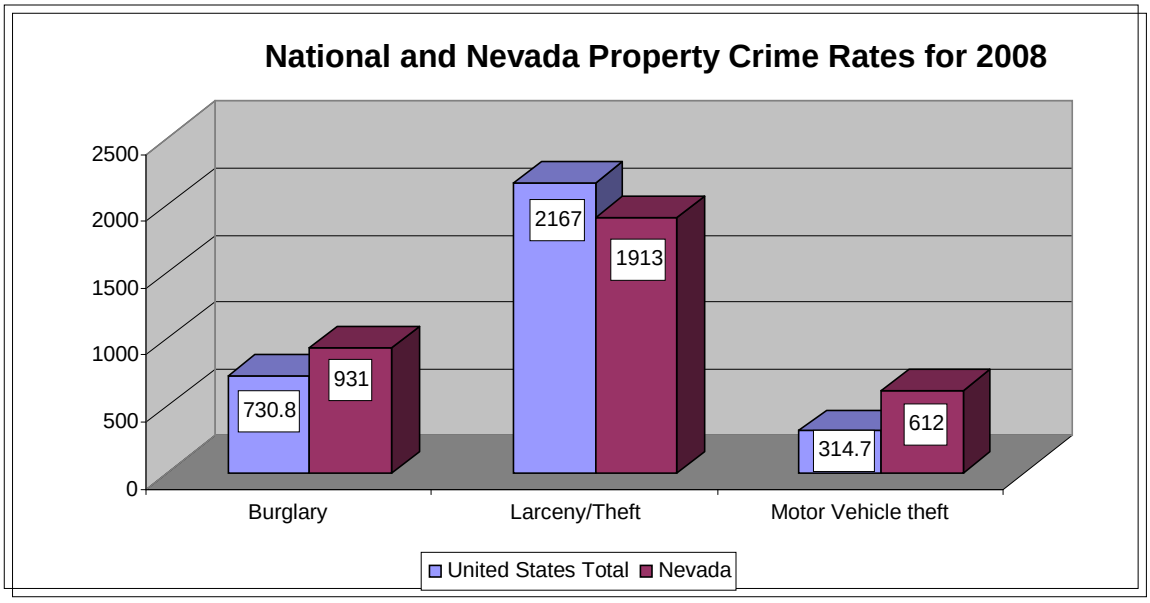


Nevada has followed a similar pattern in the domain of property crime – burglary, robbery, larceny theft, and auto theft. The overall property crime rate during 2008 for Nevada was 3,456 per 100,000 people, compared to the national rate of 3,212.5. For property crime Nevada was ranked 21st in the nation during 2008. The following chart offers a glimpse of the property crime rates in Nevada over the past 50 years (http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/nvcrime.htm).



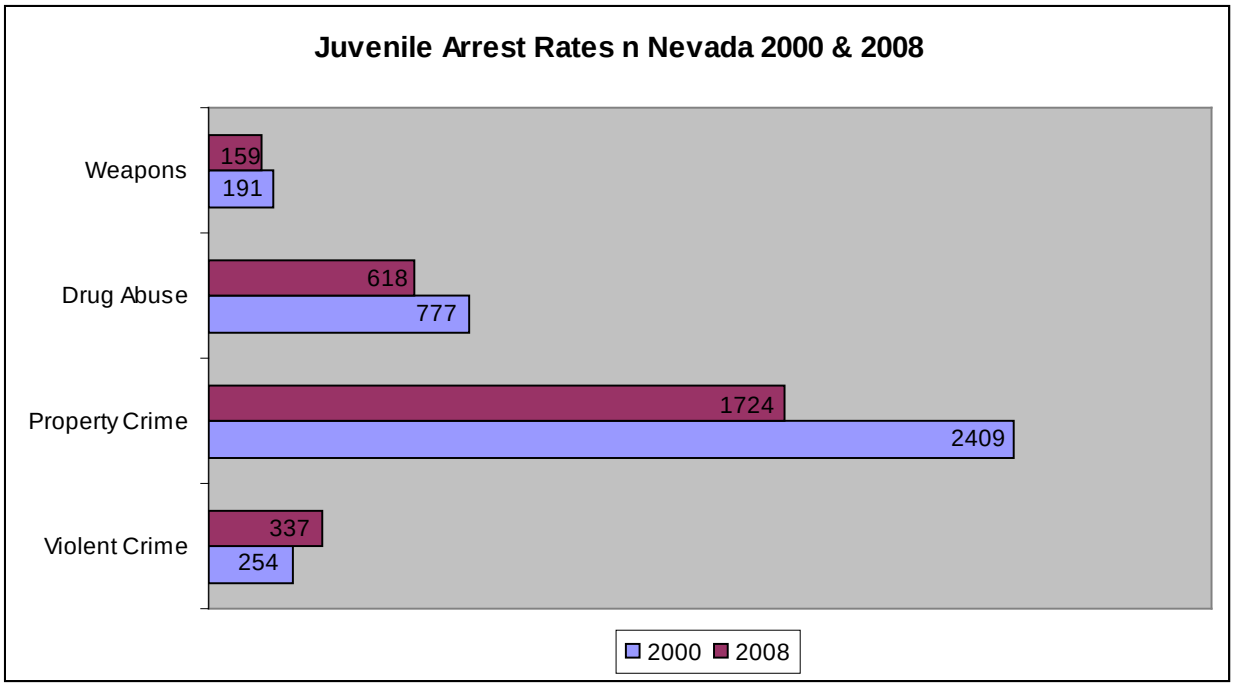
As seen in the chart below, the crime rate in Nevada for burglary in 2008 was 931, compared to the national rate of 730.8 – ranking Nevada 13th in the nation for highest

burglary rates. The larceny/theft in Nevada during 2008 was lower than the national rate, 1,193 as compared to 2,167, ranking Nevada 36th in the nation. In 2008, Nevada had one of the highest rates of motor vehicle theft in the Nation. Ranking 2nd, the motor vehicle theft rate is Nevada was 612 compared to the national rate of only 314.7.

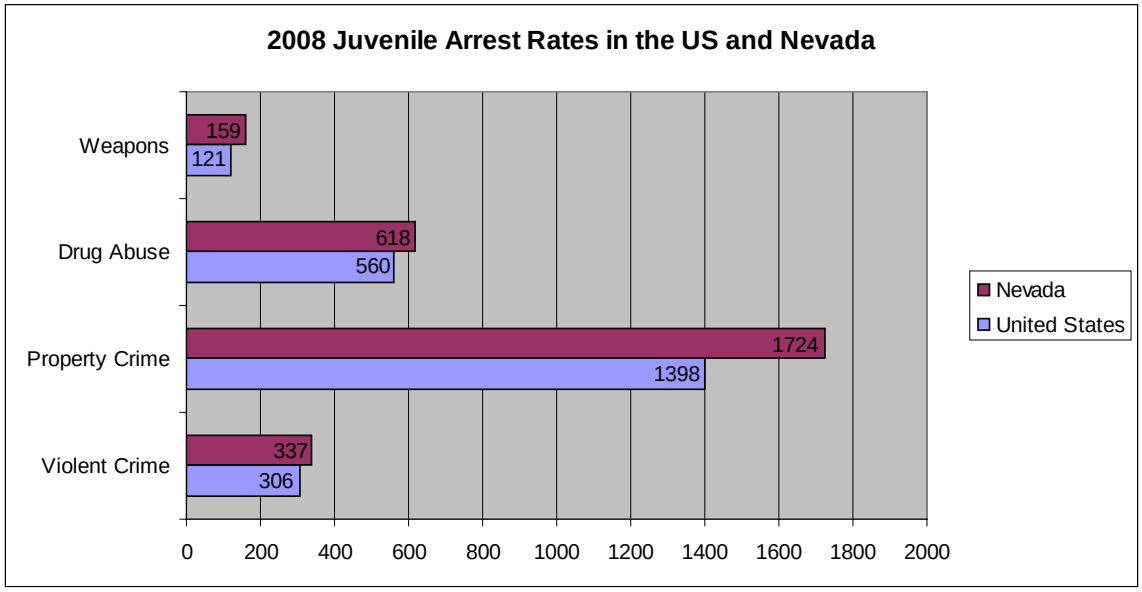


Juvenile Delinquency

Nevada has also experienced a decrease in juvenile delinquency since the mid 1990's. Since 1994, the rate of violent offenses committed by Nevada's youth has steadily decreased from 446 violent delinquent acts for every 100,000 juveniles to 337 violent offenses per 100,000 youth in 2008 (Puzzanchera 2009). Criminal acts against property committed by juveniles during the same period declined as well, from 3,043 property offenses per 100,000 juveniles in 1994 to 1,724 property offenses for every 100,000 youths in 2008 (Puzzanchera 2009). Juvenile arrests for drug abuse have declined from 777 per 100,000 (Snyder 2002) in 2000 to 618 per 100,000 in 2008 (Puzzanchera 2009). Arrests made to juveniles in Nevada for weapons have also decreased from 191 per 100,000 in 2000 (Snyder 2002) to 159 per 100,000 in 2008(Puzzanchera 2009). It is encouraging that the juvenile arrest rates in Nevada for violent crime, property crime, drug abuse, and weapons has steadily decreased since 2000.

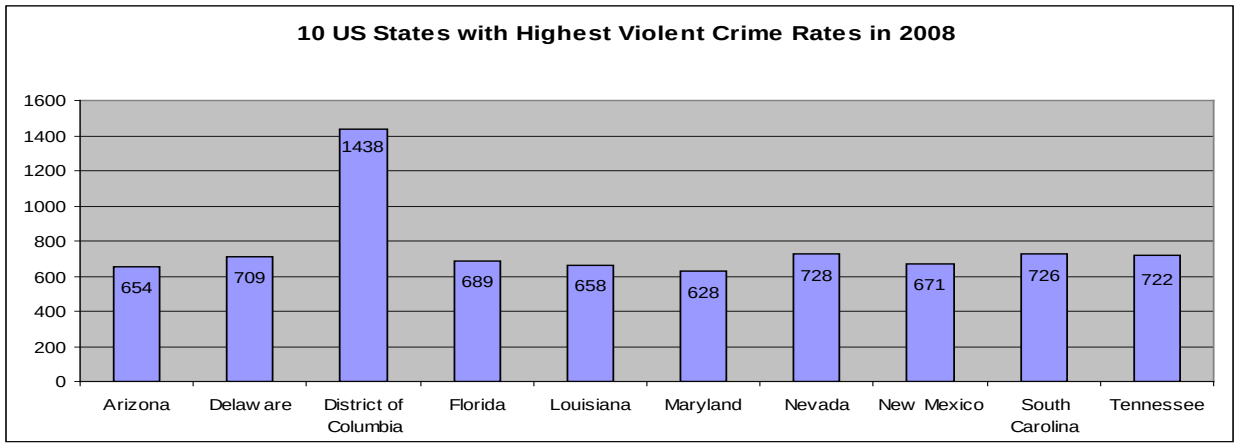


The juvenile arrest rate during 2008 in Nevada was slightly higher than the national rate across all four categories, weapons, drug abuse, property crime, and violent crime. As indicated in the chart below, the juvenile arrest rate for weapons in Nevada was 159, compared to the national rate of 121. The juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse was 618, compared to the national rate of 560. For property crime, the juvenile arrest rate is much higher than the national rate – 1,724 to 1,398 – a rate difference of 326 property crime arrests per 100,000 people. Finally, the violent crime rate for juveniles in Nevada during 2008 was 337, which was slightly higher but comparable to the national rate of 306 per 100,000 (Snyder 2002, Puzzanchera 2009).

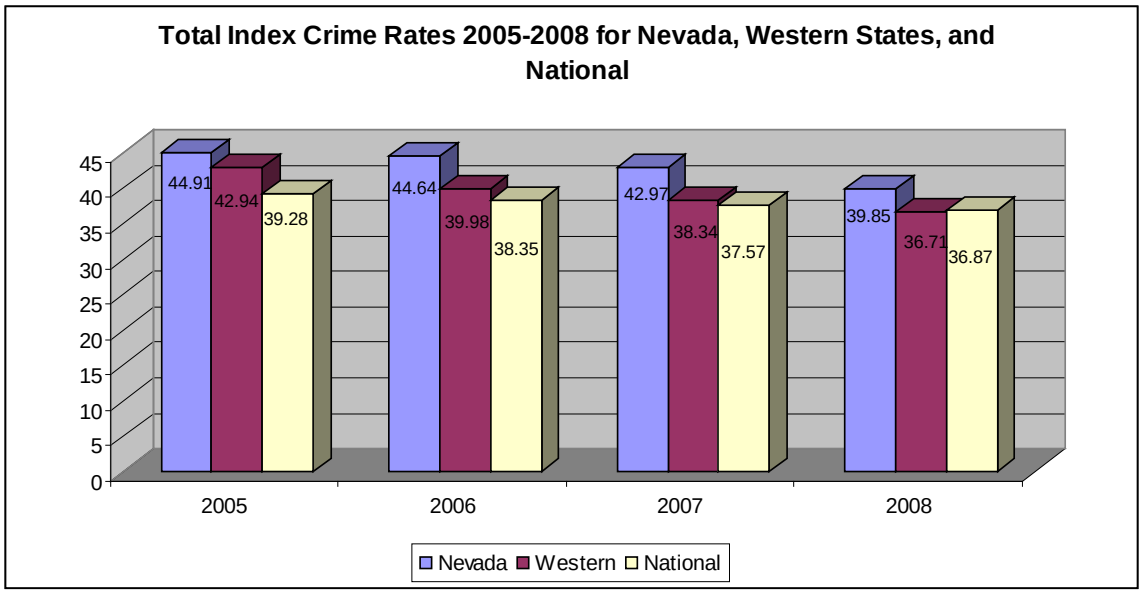


Patterns of Criminal Conduct in Nevada

Nevada ranks among the most criminal and delinquent states in the nation. It is also ahead of most other states in the property crime category. According to the 2008 statistics compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, (URL: www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/index.html/), Nevada had the second highest rank for violent crime. The following chart shows the top ten states with highest violent crime rates in 2008.



Yet, the level of criminal activity in Nevada is comparable to that of other states in the Southwest where we find the higher rates of criminal behavior. Both Arizona and New Mexico are ranked within the top ten most violent states. The following chart compares the National data for total index crimes with Nevada and the western states (which consists of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming).



Cross-County and Regional Trends

Crime across Nevada varies greatly. For example, the total index crimes for Esmeralda County in 2009 was 6, while the total index crimes for Clark County was 77,226 (Nevada Department of Public Safety). The following table lists the total index crimes for all 17 of Nevada's Counties.

Total 2009 Index Crime
Rates per 100,000 by Nevada County

Clark	77,226
Washoe	15,682
Carson	1,343
Elko	1,219
Nye	1,110
Lyon	821
Douglas	819
Churchill	569
Humboldt	283
Lander	182
White Pine	132
Pershing	124
Lincoln	71
Storey	71
Mineral	63
Eureka	34
Esmeralda	6

As we go over these statistics, we need to remember that these are crimes handled by county law enforcement jurisdictions, which do not count locally committed crimes overlapping with the reporting counties. In fact, the data may well provide an incomplete picture of crime in Nevada for two reasons: (a) law enforcement agencies are not required to submit this information and tend to do so irregularly; (b) since the locally compiled data focus on arrests, they may be a better indicator of the residents' reporting activity than actual crime in the area. In other words, the data reflects only the delinquency known to the police. A promising strategy designed to address these problems is outlined in a report provided by the Nevada Department of Public Safety, http://dps.nv.gov/, which is currently developing a program to ensure that data provided by law enforcement agencies in Nevada is as uniform and accurate as possible.

Violent Offenses Known to Law Enforcement in Nevada Cities

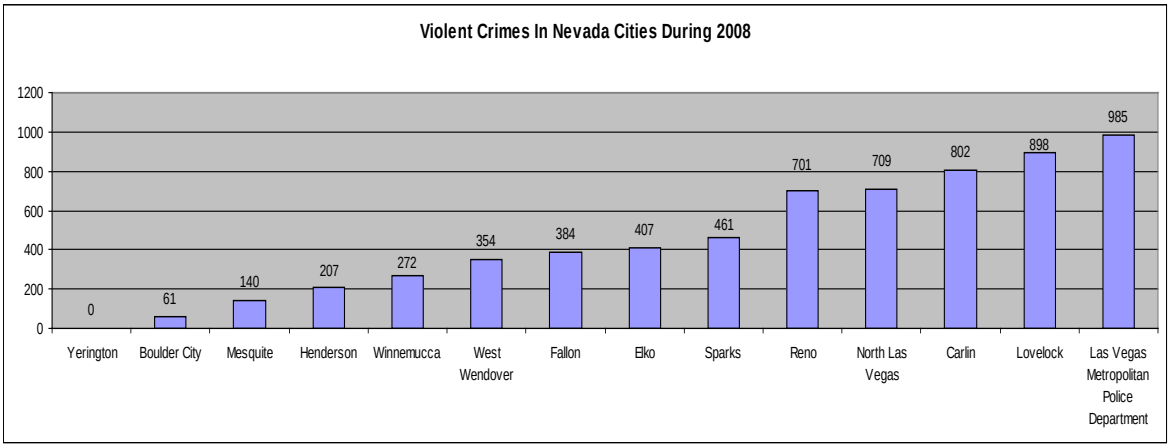
City	Population	**Violent crime**	Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	Forcible rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault
Boulder City	14,810	9	0	0	2	7
Carlin	2,119	17	0	2	1	14
Elko	17,449	71	0	15	19	37
Fallon	8,599	33	0	0	4	29
Henderson	256,091	529	5	90	212	222
Las Vegas MPD	1,353,175	13,324	120	729	4,932	7,543
Lovelock	1,893	17	0	0	0	17
Mesquite	16,470	23	0	2	8	13
North Las Vegas	228,363	1,620	11	57	554	998
Reno	218,556	1,532	15	83	488	946
Sparks	88,913	410	0	51	128	231
West Wendover	5,090	18	1	4	2	11
Winnemucca	8,097	22	2	0	0	20
Yerington	3,992	0	0	0	0	0

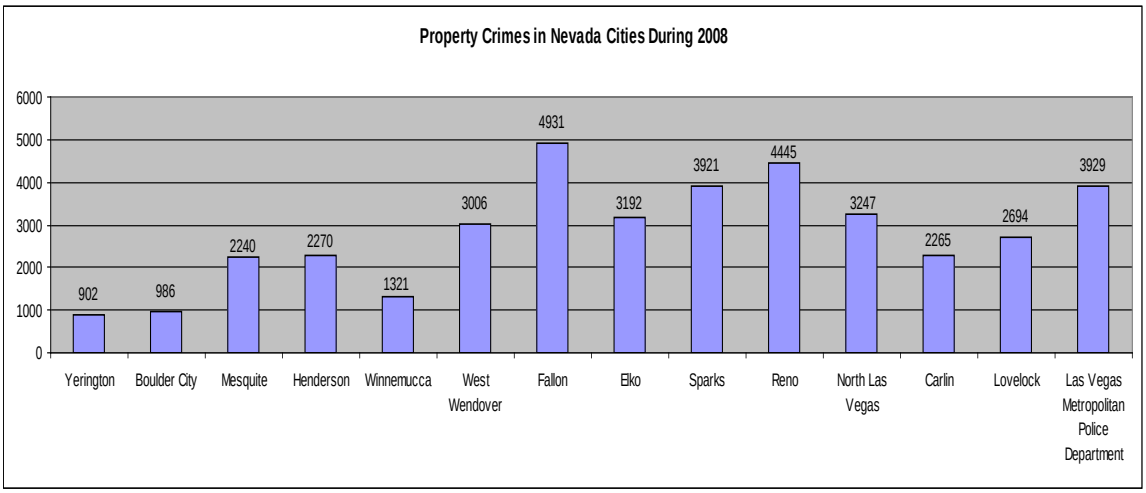
Property Offenses Known to Law Enforcement in Nevada Cities

City	Population	**Property crime**	Burglary	Larceny-theft	Motor vehicle theft	Arson[1]
Boulder City	14,810	146	66	68	12	10
Carlin	2,119	48	19	23	6	0
Elko	17,449	557	149	378	30	5
Fallon	8,599	424	59	343	22	6
Henderson	256,091	5,814	1,542	3,443	829	61
Las Vegas MPD	1,353,175	53,160	14,902	26,856	11,402	319
Lovelock	1,893	51	23	21	7	0
Mesquite	16,470	369	42	292	35	1
North Las Vegas	228,363	7,416	2,208	3,591	1,617	32
Reno	218,556	9,714	1,975	6,757	982	43
Sparks	88,913	3,486	903	2,279	304	53
West Wendover	5,090	153	38	99	16	1
Winnemucca	8,097	107	36	64	7	2
Yerington	3,992	36	21	15	0	0

[1] The FBI does not publish arson data unless it receives data from either the agency or the state for all 12 months of the calendar year.

The following charts reflect the violent crime rates and property crime rates in Nevada Cities during 2008.

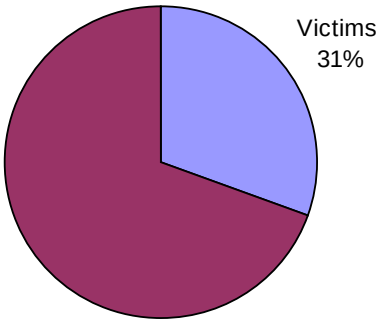




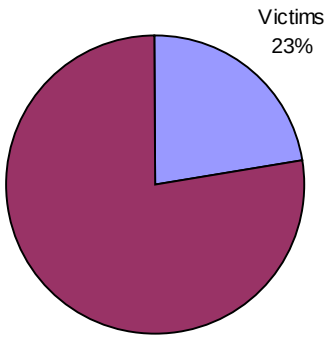
Victimization

The Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics released a report titled "Criminal Victimization in Nevada, 2008" (Hart, McGaha, LaHaie 2009). This report summarized the victimization experienced by Nevadans by conducting the state's first survey of crime victims. Victimization surveys are useful tool for crime analysts because not all people who are victimized by crime file official police reports. Thus, official data only paints part of the picture. The authors found that 31 percent of Nevadans experienced crime victimization within the past 12 months, 23 percent of respondents experienced violent crime and 25 percent reported experiencing property crime (thus, there were respondents that experienced both property and violent crime).

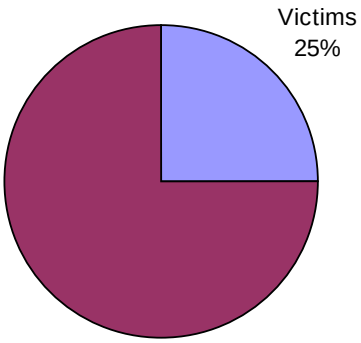
Respondents Who Reported Being Victimized in Nevada During 2008



Respondents Who Reproted Being Victimized by a Violent Crime in Nevada During 2008

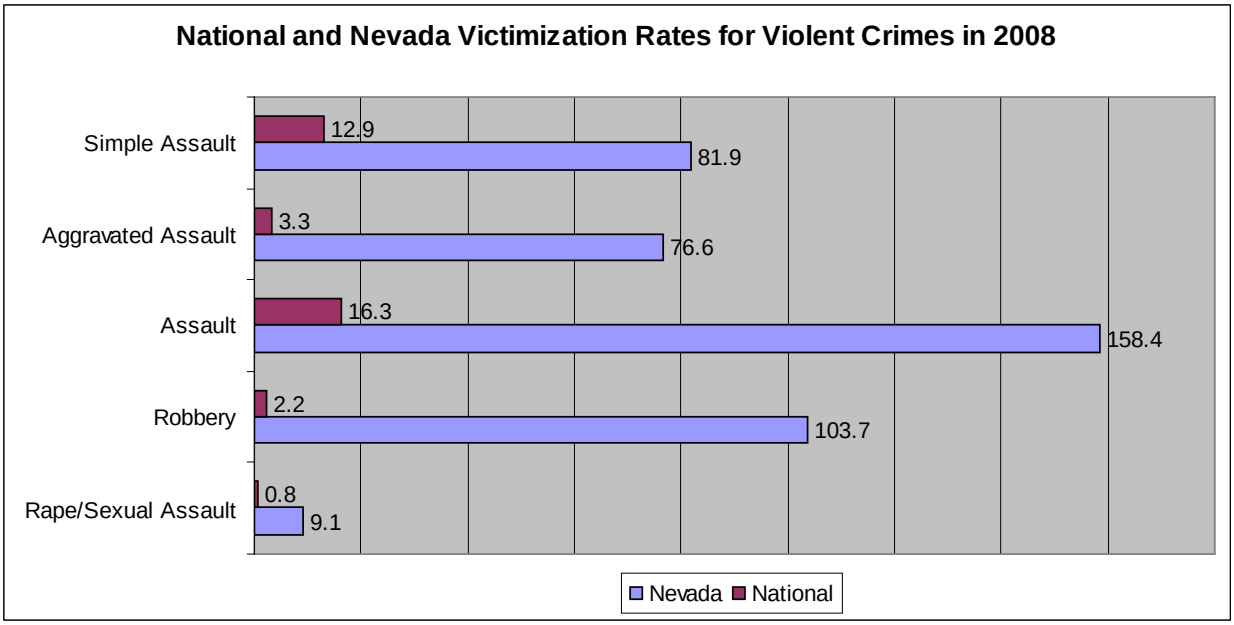


Respondents Who Reported Being a Victim of a Property Crime in Nevada During 2008

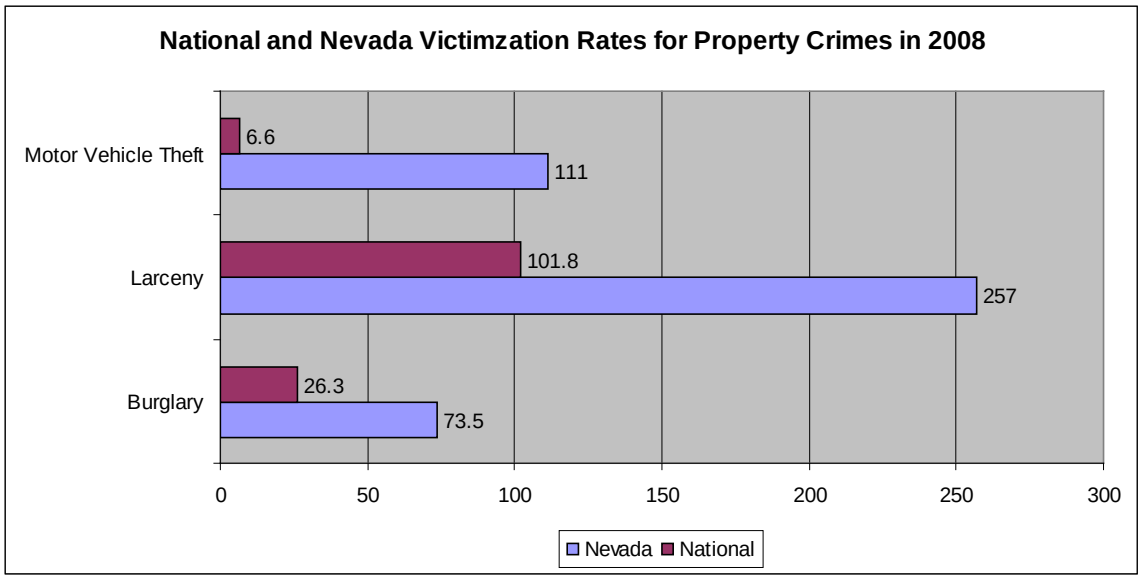


The rates found through the CACS victimization survey paint a startling different picture of Nevadan victimization when compared to the national data. The following discusses the difference in violent and property crime victimization in Nevada and Nationally using Hart et al.'s data (2009) and National data reported by Rand (2009). (Note: the following rates are reported out of a population of 1,000 as opposed to the 100,000 in which crime rates are usually constructed.)

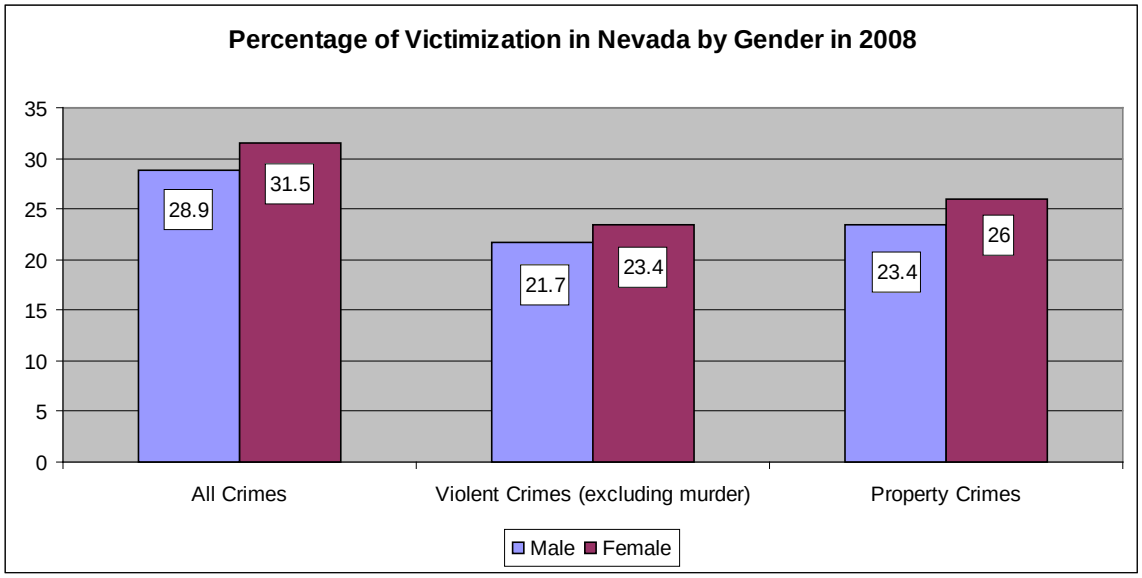
The Nevada victimization rate for simple assault in 2008 was 81.9, as compared to the National victimization rate of 12.9 The Nevada rate for aggravated assault was 76.6, high above the national rate of 3.3. The Nevada assault rate in 2008 was 158.4 per 1,000 people, which significantly higher than the national rate of 16.3. The national robbery victimization rate during 2008 was 2.2 per 1,000 people compared to the Nevada rate of 103.7. Finally, the victimization rate in Nevada for forcible rape was 19.3, compared to the national rate of only 0.8.

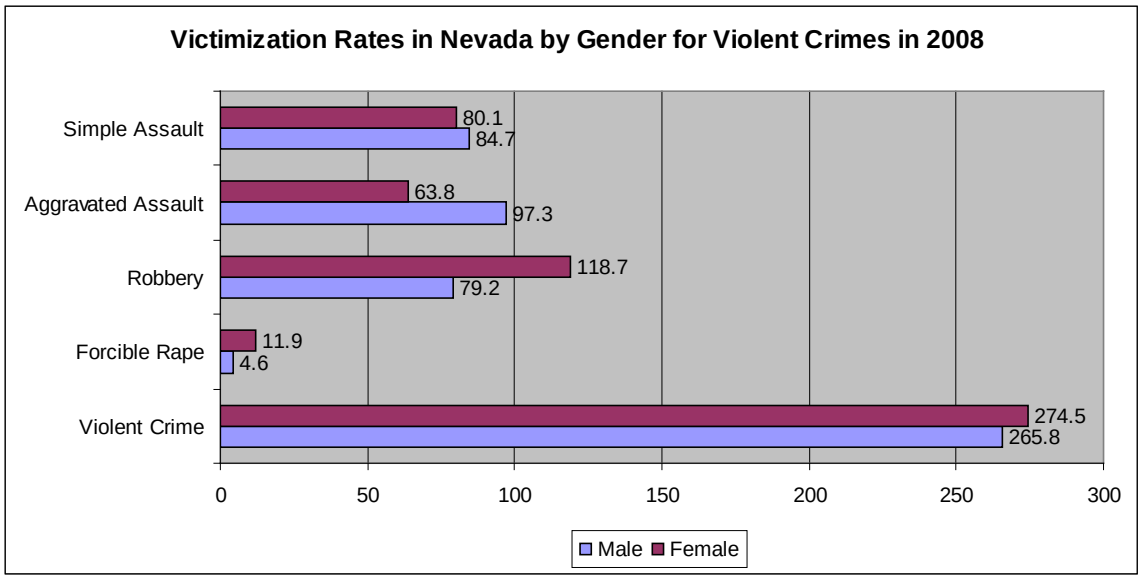


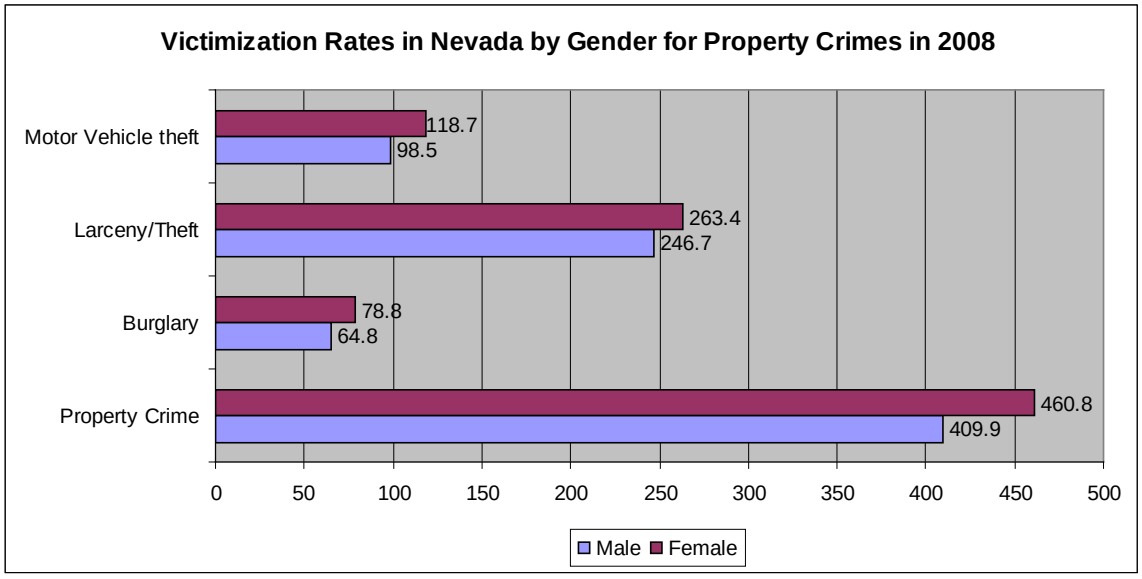
The Nevada victimization rates for property crimes in 2008 also far exceed the national rates. In the category of motor vehicle theft, Nevadans report a victimization rate of 111 per 1,000 people. Nationally, the rate is only 6.6. For larceny, Nevadans report a victimization rate of 257, compared to the national rate of 101.8 per 1,000. Finally, in 2008 the burglary rate experienced by Nevadans was 73.5 whereas the national victimization rate was reported as 26.3.



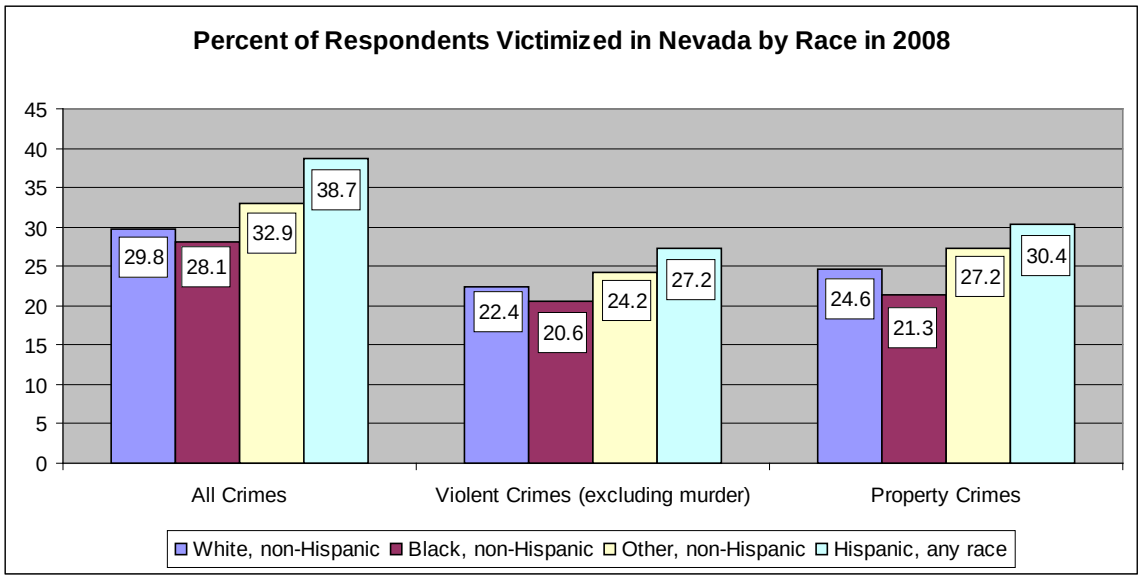
The CACS victimization survey also compared types of crime experienced with one's gender and race. The following charts show some of Hart et al. (2009) findings.





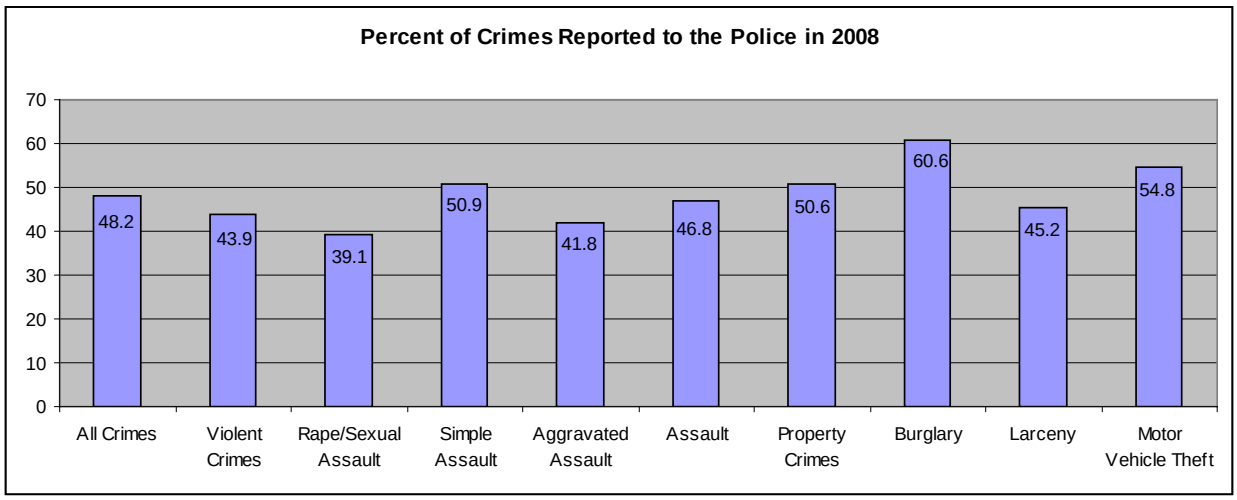


Based from these findings, we can see that females are more likely to be victimized than males in all types of crime. (Note: Murder was excluded from violent crimes because the data was collected through a victimization survey.) The following chart examines Nevadans' victimization rates by race.



From this chart, we can see that Hispanics reported being victimized more than all other races for both property and violent crimes, followed by those who noted their race as 'other.' Though this could suggest racially motivated crime, the rates are more likely due to social context of Nevada.

Another notable finding by the CACS victimization survey was that only 48.2 percent of all crimes were reported to the police. For property crimes 50.6 percent of respondents reported being victimized. Burglary had the highest likelihood of being reported of all crimes with a reporting percentage of 60.6. Among violent crimes, only 43.9 percent were reported. Simple assault had the highest likelihood of being reported with 50.9 percent, while rape/sexual assault had the lowest likelihood of being reported with only 39.1 (Hart et al. 2009).



The Social Context of Criminal Behavior in Nevada

Nevada crime indicators have shot up in recent years, but much of this happened in the Las Vegas and Reno metropolitan areas. Since the crime situation is typically the worst in the heavily urbanized areas, the present analysis will focus on the factors contributing to crime in Nevada cities.

The factor most responsible for the crime increase in Nevada is the dramatic increase in population and the range of issues traceable to rapid population growth. The population of Nevada has exploded exponentially in the last two decades. This demographic pressure is known to (a) strain to the criminal justice system, (b) sap social welfare resources, and (c) decrease the efficiency of community response in urban neighborhoods.

An influx of new residents tends to strain relations among current residents in established neighborhoods. A large body of research focused on crime in urban areas has shown a deteriorated collective efficacy in the areas facing a surge in its population. Among the negative consequences are a lack of mutual trust, unwillingness to supervise youth, and the failure to organize the neighborhood efforts to maintain social order. When residential stability is low, collective efficacy diminishes, as it becomes more difficult to form interpersonal relationships, mobilize local communities, and maintain informal social control over juveniles and defend neighbors' property. In addition, residents of transitional neighborhoods are less likely to involve themselves in community service and join organizations fighting crime. Nevada's high rates of property crime and juvenile delinquency can be explained in part by the high population turnover in many urban neighborhoods.

Nevada youth and their counterparts in the United States experience social problems unknown to their grandparents. While in many ways social conditions have improved in the last two decades, improvements did not help much to stem either adult crime or juvenile delinquency. Studies show that crime rates are very sensitive to (a) rapid population growth; (b) economic hardship; and (c) weakening of institutional controls.

Rapid Population Growth

As the population numbers shoot up, the available resources have to be stretched thinner and thinner. The programs and facilities funded by the state are operating under much stress, with crime prevention programs in all Nevada counties struggling to stay in business and deliver services to local populations.

In 2009, the resident population in Nevada was 2,643,085, a 32.2 percent increase since 2000. The national population in 2009 was 307,006,550. In comparison to other states, Nevada had the 35th highest population in 2009. Interestingly, in 2008 Nevada was ranked 8th in the nation for resident population under 18 years of age. In the state of Nevada 25.7 percent of the population is under the age of 18.

Changes in residence and school are linked to delinquent behavior. When youth move to new places and begin to adapt to new social and academic surroundings, they are less likely to form positive attachments with their schools and often find it difficult to form

relationships with conventional peer groups. The strain and social isolation produced by these changes increases chances that a young man or woman will be drawn to delinquent peer groups. The effect of changes in residence is acutely felt in Nevada's cities, where the proportion of new residents is very high. The problem is further exacerbated by the economic pressures on Nevada residents.

Economic Hardship

The relationship between poverty and crime is a complex one. It is mediated by structural factors like job availability, training options, and other opportunities for advancement. So, whenever we the normal avenues for personal advancement are blocked by structural factors, crime rates are likely to go up and delinquency rates will rise.

In 1993, 11.5% of the residents of Nevada had incomes below the poverty line, while 16.7% of families with children 17 and under lived in poverty. As long as poverty rates stay in Nevada, the criminological situation in the region will remain tense. In 2008, the national unemployment reached 5.8 percent. In Nevada, unemployment was 6.7 percent, ranking Nevada 6th highest state for unemployment. The unemployment rate has caused a national increase in poverty. In 2008, 11.3 percent of Nevadans lived below the poverty line, ranking Nevada 33rd in the nation and below the national rate of 13.2 in 2008.

Researchers have found that relative economic hardship correlates with crime. Income inequality is positively associated with crime rates across cities, states, and nations. Social scientists have shown that crime and delinquency are most tangible in the urban neighborhoods with high proportions of residents living in extreme poverty.

In Nevada, the gap between the richest and poorest families with children grew 10% between 1980 and 1996. It is possible that this increase in income inequality among families with children has contributed to changes in rates of delinquency, especially in the poorest urban neighborhoods. In 2008, the Nevada median income was 56,361. At this time, Nevada was ranked 15th in the nation for highest median income. The national average for median income in 2008 was 52,029.

Weakening of Institutional Control

Students of crime stress the importance of the family and the school as institutions central to effective social control. Juvenile delinquency is more prevalent among children who fail to form attachments to school and parents. Single parent households contribute to the delinquency problem because these families are less able to provide effective supervision of juveniles. This link sheds light on the delinquency situation in Nevada.

The number of single parent households increased in Nevada from 12% to 28 % between 1970 and 1997 – a trend observed in other parts of the country.

Children who experience family disruption are more likely to be delinquent. Changes in family structure caused by parental divorce or remarriage are associated with

delinquency. As divorce rates continue to climb across the nation, weakened family structure spurs delinquency rates across Nevada as well.

Schools help supervise youth behavior and provide necessary life skills. Yet when schools fail to engage students in conventional activities, they are less likely to form attachments to school and learn to value education. Many studies have confirmed a link between poor educational attainment and criminal behavior. Improving the educational success rate of young people is important in controlling delinquency. The school drop-out rates have increased in Nevada from an average of 16.7% in 1991-1993 to an average of 18.6% in the years 1994 to 1996. In 2009, the graduation rate was only 46.8 % according to Education Week's annual Diplomas Count study.

The poor graduation rates in Nevada shape the future of the workers. In 2008 the national percent for persons over 25 years old and over with a bachelor's degree or more was 27.7. In Nevada, only 21.9 percent of the population fit this criteria, causing Nevada to be ranked 45th in the Nation.

Supervision of Criminal Offenders in Nevada

A number of sentencing options are available for individuals convicted of crime in Nevada, including placement in a correctional facility and living in a community under supervision.

Adult Offenders

According to the Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC), the state has twenty correctional facilities, including 1 transitional housing center (the "Casa Grande" community correctional center in Las Vegas), 1 restitution center, 8 correctional facilities, and 10 conservation camps. The NDOC's current statistical factsheet show the total inmate population at 12,458 as of June 30, 2011. According to Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reports (see the *Prisoners in the United States* series, particularly West, Sabol and Greenman 2010), which contains data current through 2009, the inmate population, which had increased 32 percent between 1995 and 2001, did not increase substantially during the 2000's. In 2001, Nevada had 10,201 inmates, while in 2009 the state was housing 10,063 inmates. Likewise, the proportion of women remained steady: 839 women were incarcerated in Nevada in 2001, and 846 in 2009. Prior data on prison population compiled by a Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pubalp2.htm), rated Nevada with a capacity of 11,122 inmates at year end 2003 (Harrison and Beck, 2004).

Some highlights from the most recent BJS report (West, Sabol, and Greenman 2010) include:

- At the yearend 2009, the 10,063 inmates in custody represented a *decrease* from the 10,478 adult offenders under the jurisdiction of state and local correctional facilities in 2003. This decrease follows a national trend of reduced incarceration in the last few years.

- Nevada's incarceration rate is slightly lower than the national rate. Specifically, Nevada has 486 inmates per 100,000 residents, while nationally the rate is 502. In 2003, these rates had been 462 and 482, respectively.
- In 2001, it cost $17,572 per inmate to house each prisoner in a correctional facility (National Institute of Corrections).
- Inmate turnover is high in Nevada. Nearly half the inmate population enters and leaves each year. In 2009, 5,409 inmates were admitted and 4,727 were released. Although Nevada's overall incarceration rate is lower than the national average, the state is incarcerating female offenders at a higher rate than the U.S. as a whole.
- At year end 2003, Nevada housed 880 women in its correctional facilities and local jails, and in 2011 the NDOC showed 950 female inmates.
- In 2003, 79 females per 100,000 female residents were being housed in Nevada's institutions while serving sentences greater than one year. The national rate at that time was 62 females per 100,000 female residents. In 2009, these rates were 76 for Nevada and 73 nationally.

According the NDOC Annual Report for 2009, slightly more than half (52 percent) of all inmates serving time in the state were violent offenders, while this proportion for female inmates was 39 percent. Additional, the NDOC report indicates that 21 percent of Nevada inmates are sex offenders, 11 percent drug offenders, and 12 percent property offenders. Among female inmates, 22 percent are drug offenders, and 27 percent are property offenders.

In addition to housing offenders in secure facilities, the Nevada correctional authorities place offenders under community supervision. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/, reports the number of offenders placed under community supervision in Nevada in 2003 (Glaze and Palla, 2004) and in 2009 (Glaze and Bonczar 2010):

- As of January 1, 2003, Nevada had 12,290 adult offenders on probation. By 2009, this number had increased to 17,245. In 2003, 5,869 offenders were placed on probation during 2003 while another 6,000 were removed from probation supervision. In 2009, these figures had increased to 10,433 coming in and 11,192 exiting. At the end of 2003, Nevada had 12,159 offenders on probation for a net loss of 1.1%, while in 2009 the decrease was even greater (-4.4 percent). The probation population had clearly increased between 2003 and 2009, but decreased during that last year, similar to incarceration rates.

A number of offenders are placed on parole following release from a correctional facility. 1, 2003, Nevada had 12,290 adult offenders on probation.

- As of January 1, 2003, Nevada had 3,971 adult offenders on probation, and this figure had declined to 3,908 in 2009. In 2003, nearly 3,000 offenders were placed on parole, while 4,202 were placed on parole in 2009. The release figures were 2,800 in 2003 and 3,924 in 2009.

Juvenile Offenders

Youth found to be responsible for criminal or delinquent behavior may be supervised in a number of ways. Like their adult counterparts, young men and women may be placed on probation for supervision in the community. Alternatively, they may be committed to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), http://www.dcfs.state.nv.us/, which provides supervision and treatment programs. DCFS is also responsible for providing parole services to youth returning to the community upon release from a training center.

Data on the number of youth under supervision in Nevada is not available.

Treatment of Offenders in Nevada

We should not expect that simply incarcerating or putting under supervision criminal offenders will reduce their propensity to re-offend. To change criminal behaviors we need to take other practical steps. The State of Nevada offers a number of treatment services to its criminal population, yet information is scarce on how these services are allocated. The following services are available to adult offenders in the Nevada correctional and special treatment institutions:

Substance Abuse Programs

- Therapeutic communities
- Boot camps
- DUI programs
- Psycho-education services
- *A Change in Thinking*

Sexual Treatment of Offenders in Prison (S.T.O.P)

According to the NDOC website, S.T.O.P. is a year-long program that addresses criminal thinking errors, emotional deficits, relationships, and relapse prevention. The program is offered at the following facilities:

- Lovelock Correctional Center, http://www.doc.nv.gov/lcc/
- Nevada State Prison, http://www.doc.nv.gov/nsp/
- Northern Nevada Correctional Center, http://www.doc.nv.gov/nncc/
- High Desert State Prison, http://www.doc.nv.gov/hdsp/
- Southern Desert Correctional Center, http://www.doc.nv.gov/sdcc/

Special Needs Programs

The HighDesertState Prison offers “Growing Straight” to offenders between the ages of 14 and 22 sentenced to DOC. Youth are housed in the program for a minimum of one year as they acclimate to prison and begin receiving education and treatment services.

The Northern Nevada Correctional Center offers a "True Grit' program for elderly inmates or middle-aged, disable inmates. The program provides mental health and physical health services as well as program activities such as art classes and "therapy dog" visits.

Gender-Specific Programming is offered to female offenders with the focus on family reunification. Female inmates are also provided opportunities to participate in parent skills, receive vocational training, and counseling services.

Going Home Prepared, http://www.doc.nv.gov/programs/ghp.php, is a re-entry program provided at the Southern Desert Correctional Center. This program is provided to violent or serious inmates during their last 6 months of incarceration is intended to provide treatment and services aimed at easing the transition from a prison setting to the community. The program requires all participants to engage in victim empathy, criminal thinking errors, and life skills courses. Upon leaving the institutional setting, participants are placed on a minimum of 6 months Intensive Supervision parole and receive parole services for a minimum on one year.

Street Readiness is a program that teaches life skills, including time and money management, to inmates preparing to be released back to the community.

The Nevada Department of Corrections, http://www.doc.nv.gov/, is opening a TransitionCenter, http://www.doc.nv.gov/programs/re-entry.php, in Las Vegas in December 2005. The center will target non-violent offenders nearing the end of the sentence. It intends to offer employment assistance, family counseling, and educational services to its participants.

The Northern Nevada Restitution Center, http://www.doc.nv.gov/nnrc/index.php, houses male inmates during the last 18 months of their sentence. It provides inmates an opportunity to make restitution payments by working while serving their sentence.
Other services offered in general population inmates include:

- Education services
- Vocational services
- Mental health groups, including criminal thinking errors, survivors of past victimization groups, and family violence groups
- Monitoring of psychotropic medications
- Religious services

The following services are offered to youth under the jurisdiction of the Nevada Division of Child & Family Services:

- The Caliente Youth Center, http://www.dcfs.state.nv.us/DCFS_CalienteYouth.htm, houses both male and female juvenile delinquents. It provides services targeting mental health,

cognitive restructuring, educational services, and vocational training.

- The Summit View Youth Correctional Facility, http://www.dcfs.state.nv.us/DCFS_SummitView.htm, serves violent youth ranging in age from 12 to 18. It offers mental health and educational services in addition to medical services.

- The Nevada Youth Training Center, http://nytc.state.nv.us/, provides educational and vocational services in addition substance abuse and mental health programming. Youth housed at the training center may also receive individual counseling.

- The Youth Parole Bureau, http://www.dcfs.state.nv.us/DCFS_YouthParole.htm, provides re-entry programming to serious and violent youth. Youth in this program may participate in programming aimed at substance abuse, anger management, life skills, and vocational skills.

- The Youth Parole Bureau, http://nytc.state.nv.us/parole.html, is also in the process of piloting a transitional program. The program is intended to provide intensive wrap-around services to youth with multiple needs including mental health, substance abuse, and behavioral issues.

What We Can Do to Combat Crime in Nevada

Scholars in the fields of developmental criminology and psychology argue that minor delinquency is common for most adolescents and that most youths will desist from criminal activity as they become young adults. If this is indeed the case, the best way to deal with minor property offenses is to provide effective supervision of youth during this "crime-prone" time of life.

Violent youth may benefit from programs designed both to increase supervision and to replace delinquency with pro-active behavior. Our primary focus should be on programs targeting violent delinquent behavior. These programs are especially welcome in the large urban areas of Las Vegas, Reno, and Carson City, regions with the highest rates of violent delinquency.

We can take a page from other cities that have mounted concerted efforts to deal with delinquency. As their experience suggests, the first step we need to take is to (a) study the social characteristics and behaviors of the most delinquent youth; and (b) evaluate the scope and effectiveness of existing social welfare policies aimed at controlling delinquency. After interviewing youth and assessing existing programs, the cities with successful juvenile delinquency programs were able to retool existing welfare organizations to focus them on the most at-risk youth. The following policy changes have proven to be most effective in containing and preventing juvenile crime:

- Increase police patrol of youth during after-school hours

- Support afterschool activities designed to increase students' cognitive and social skills
- Provide opportunities for community service
- Increase opportunities for legal money-making activities for youth
- Coordinate the work of local government and youth-serving organizations/agencies
- Build coalitions of small youth serving organizations with similar efforts and goals

No large scale study of delinquents and programs catering to their needs has been conducted in Nevada to date. Yet, policy changes should not be implemented without a detailed study of both juvenile offending patterns and current correctional practices in Nevada's cities. Nevada should strive to implement the most successful policies developed elsewhere in the country and aimed at helping young men and women at risk.

Prospects for the Future and Work Ahead

While Nevada offers a number of treatment services to its incarcerated population, the quality of these programs bears closer scrutiny. The State of Nevada should review systematically the designs and delivery of these programs to determine how consistent they are with the best practices, with "what works" for reducing recidivism (Gendreau, 1996). Studies show that the most promising programs have the following features:

- Effective programs to combat recidivism vary the intensity and duration of services based on risk. The highest risk offenders should receive the most intensive services.

- Programs should target factors related to recidivism. Appropriate treatment targets include antisocial attitudes, antisocial peer associations, substance abuse, anger management, family functioning, and education/vocation.

- The most effective programs provide opportunities for participants to practice new behaviors and skills and offer appropriate reinforcement on the use of those skills.

- While some of Nevada's programs may provide services consistent with the literature on effective interventions, it is also likely that those administering the programs may need assistance in providing such services. The State should consider conducting thorough assessments of its programming and services in an effort to identify systematic weaknesses in programming. It should then consider providing training and curricula development in an effort to assist programs in reducing recidivism.

Conclusion

While Nevada's crime rates have followed national trends, the Siler State ranks among the states with the highest rates of nearly all types of crime. This situation needs to be understood in the context of the population explosion that hit hard Nevada's urban areas and that is known to exacerbate social problems contributing to crime.

Nevada's cities have lagged behind other urban areas in conducting research on juvenile delinquency and related social welfare programs aimed at youth that is necessary to construct policies to effectively control delinquent behavior.

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