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Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics

State Data Brief

July 2009. CACS 2009-01-02EN

Burglary Trends in Nevada, 1990-2007

By Theresa Wilk,
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Burglary involves the unlawful breaking and entering into a home or other building with the intent to steal something within it. Nationally, about 2.2 million burglaries were known to the police in 2007 (UCR, 2007). Aside from the losses of personal property, burglary has several additional consequences to its victims and society, including its adverse effects on our fear of crime, trust in other people, and the overall quality of life. Efforts to control burglary have focused on increased home security, the establishment of neighborhood watch programs, and a variety of situational crime prevention techniques that are designed to decrease the opportunities for burglary and increase its cost to potential offenders.

This state data brief describes patterns of burglary in Nevada and compares them with national trends. It examines the prevalence of burglary over time, the different types of burglary and its offense attributes, and arrest characteristics for this crime. The limitations of the data used in this report are also discussed

The Prevalence of Burglary

According to FBI data on known offenses, both the number and rate of burglaries in the U.S. have dropped considerably over the last two decades. In particular, about 3.1 million burglaries were known to the police in 1990 and this number has declined to about 2.2 million by 2007. The burglary rate has also dropped steadily from about 1,200 to 720 offenses per 100,000 in this time period (Figure 1). The trend in the number and rate of burglaries over time in Nevada departs somewhat from the national pattern. In particular, about 16,000 burglaries were known to the police in Nevada in 1990 and the number of burglaries has increased steadily from about 18,000 in 2001 to nearly 25,000 in 2007. However, Nevada's burglary rate has ranged from a high of 1400 per 100,000 residents in 1991 to a low of about 830 per 100,000 in 2001. The state burglary rate in 2007 was about 900 per 100,000. Over the last two decades, Nevada's burglary rate is consistently higher than the national average.

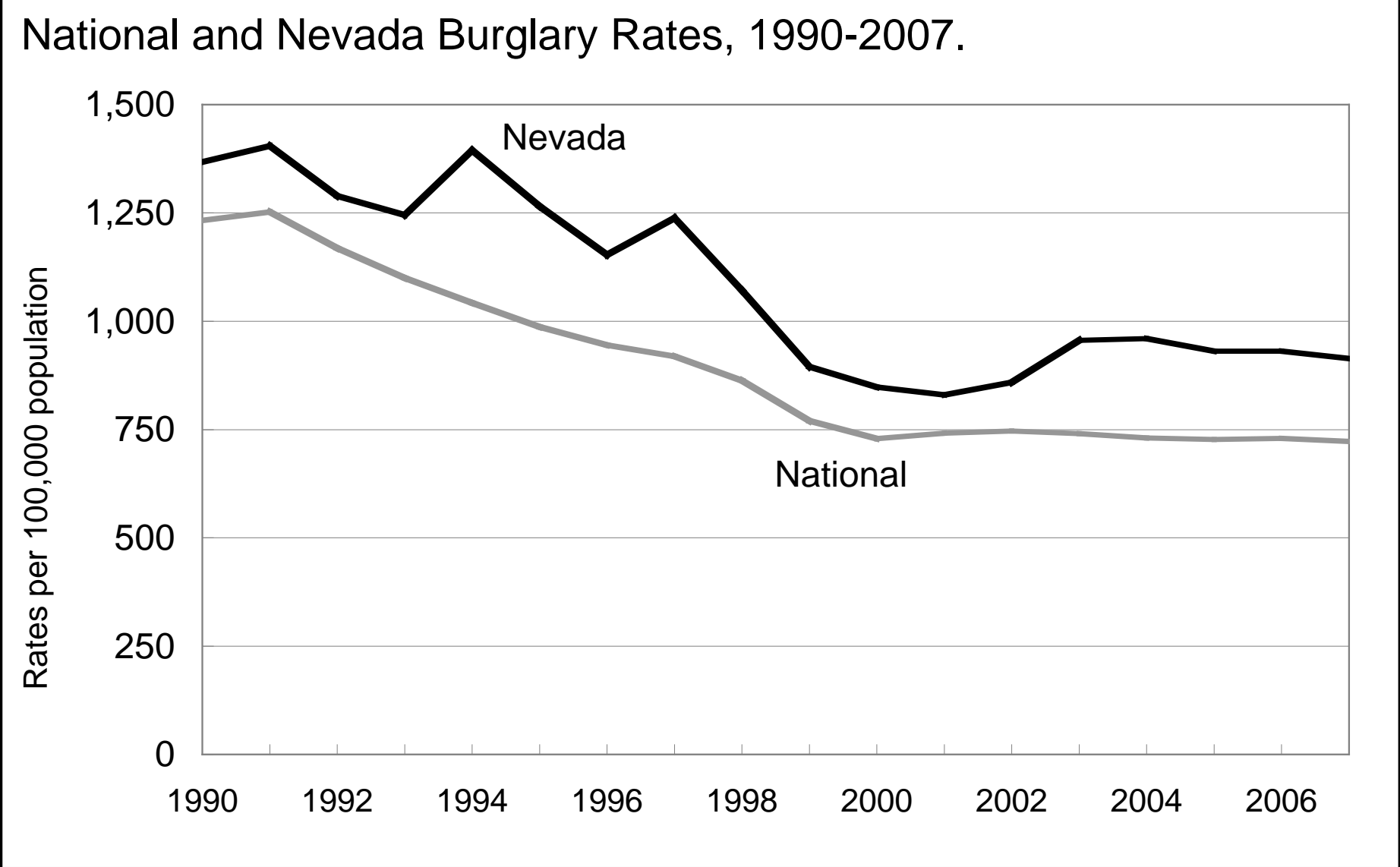


Figure 1

Characteristics of burglaries in Nevada

Burglaries are classified in police data in one of three categories: (1) forcible entry, (2) unlawful entry with no force, and (3) attempted forcible entry. A distinction is also made between residential and non-residential locations for these crimes and the time of their occurrence (daytime or nighttime).

Based on national data for 2007, most of the U.S. burglaries involve forcible entry (61%), followed by unlawful entry without force (32%).

Residential burglaries represent about 63% of these offenses and the remainder involve non-residential structures. Residential burglaries are also most likely to occur during the daytime hours (64%), whereas non-residential burglaries most often happen during the nighttime (56%). The total monetary losses from burglary in 2007 were \$4.3 billion (Table 1).

Burglaries in Nevada exhibit many of the same characteristics as the national pattern. Based on state data for 2007, most of the Nevada burglaries involve forcible entry (63%), followed by unlawful entry without force (30%). Residential burglaries represent about 68% of these offenses and the remainder involve non-residential structures. Residential burglaries are also most likely to occur during the daytime hours (69%), whereas non-residential burglaries most often happen during the nighttime (61%). The total monetary losses from burglary in 2007 were \$81 million.

Arrest Characteristics

Based on national data, about 12% of the burglaries known to the police lead to an arrest of a suspect. The clearance rate is somewhat similar to what is found for other property crimes (e.g., motor vehicle theft, larceny), and considerable lower than is the case for most violent offenses. Of those persons arrested for burglary in 2007, the vast majority of them were male (85%) and over the age of 18 (73%). The proportion of burglaries that are cleared by arrest and involve males have remained relatively stable over the last two decades, but the percentage of arrestees involving juvenile offenders decreased appreciably from 2000 to 2007.

Highlights

- About 2.1 million burglaries were known to the police in the U.S. in 2007. The national burglary rate has decreased steadily over the last two decades.
- About 25,000 burglaries were known to the police in Nevada in 2007. The state's burglary rate is above the national average.
- Most burglaries in Nevada and nationwide involve forcible entries into residence. Residential burglaries are more likely to occur in the daytime hours, whereas non-residential burglaries are most common during the nighttime.
- Of the burglaries in Nevada known to the police, only about 9% are cleared by an arrest. Most people arrested for burglaries in this state are adult men.

Nevada's arrests for burglary are similar in terms of their clearance rate and demographic profile of arrestees (Table 2). Specifically, Nevada's clearance rate for burglary is 9.1%. Of those arrested for burglary in 2007, the majority of arrestees are men (79%) and over the age of 18 (76%). The proportion of burglaries that are cleared by arrest and involve males have remained stable over the last decade, but the percentage of arrestees involving juvenile offenders has decreased drastically from 2000 to 2007.

Table 2. Burglary arrest characteristics in Nevada and nationally, 2007.

	Nevada	Nationally
Clearance Rate	9.1%	12.4%
Arrestee		
Gender		
Male	78.8%	84.7%
Female	21.2%	15.3%
Age		
< 18	23.6%	26.8%
>18	76.4%	73.2%

Source: UCR (2007) and Crime and Justice in Nevada (2007).

Data Source and Limitations

The data for this report was compiled and summarized by two organizations. The first source of data was the Nevada Department of Public Safety's reports *Crime and Justice in Nevada*. The second source was the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*.

Although these sources provide the most comprehensive data on burglary

offenses known to the police, they are limited in several respects. First, burglaries that are not reported to the police are excluded from these data sources. Second, although the FBI provides strict guidelines for coding and classifying offenses in their UCR program, there is some variability across jurisdictions in terms of how burglaries are counted (e.g., unlawful break-ins without intent to steal are defined as a trespass, but some agencies may consider these unlawful entries to be included as burglaries). Third, the UCR program uses the hierarchical rule for counting only the most serious crime in a multiple offense incident. Under this rule, a burglary that results in a homicide or rape of the victim would not officially be recorded as a burglary – it would be classified as the more serious offense of homicide or rape. Fourth, only a small proportion of burglaries are cleared by an arrest so the profile of those arrested is probably not an accurate portrayal of the characteristics of all burglars.

Due to these limitations, some caution should be exercised in interpreting the estimates of the prevalence of burglary and its characteristics that are provided in this study.

State Data Brief Project

As independent research projects, faculty and graduate students in UNLV's Department of Criminal Justice write research reports on major issues in criminal justice in Nevada. These "State Data Briefs" are statistical summaries of various criminal justice system practices in Nevada over time and highlight differences between Nevada and other states. These reports cover all aspects of the criminal justice system, including trends in crime and arrests, police practices, prosecution and pretrial activities, adjudication and sentencing, and corrections. The data briefs are short in length (2-4 pages), provide several graphs and charts of statewide and national patterns, and are written in an easily readable, non-technical style. They are designed to provide members of the general public, local officials, community organizations, and media outlets a concise and objective statistical profile of current criminal justice practices in Nevada that may serve as a foundation for informed discussions of future crime control policies and practices.

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Contact Information

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