

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

Arizona Crime Trends 2007 Fact Sheet



Our mission is to sustain and enhance the coordination, cohesiveness, productivity, and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Arizona

January 2007

Are more crimes being committed in Arizona? Yes, look at the numbers. In 2005 there were 29,424 violent crimes reported to the police; in 2000 there were 27,200. In 2005, 277,513 property crimes were reported to the police; in 2000, only 271,413.

But these raw numbers do not account for the state's tremendous increase in population. In 2005, 5.9 million people lived in Arizona, versus 5.1 million in 2000 and 2.7 million in 1980. From 1980 to 2005 the population has more than doubled. Therefore, the increase in the number of crimes committed is partially a function of population increase; just looking at crime

Chart I: Actual Crimes Reported in Arizona

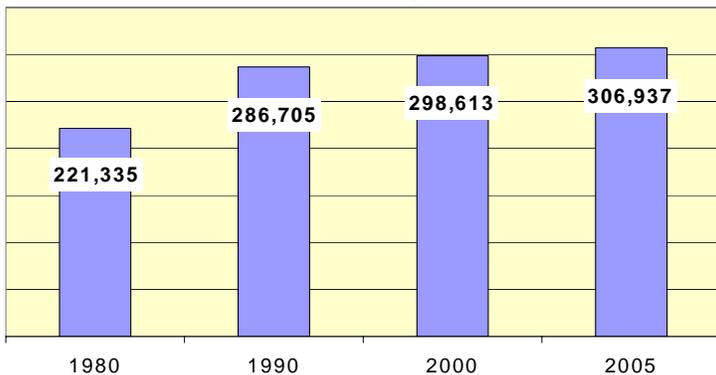
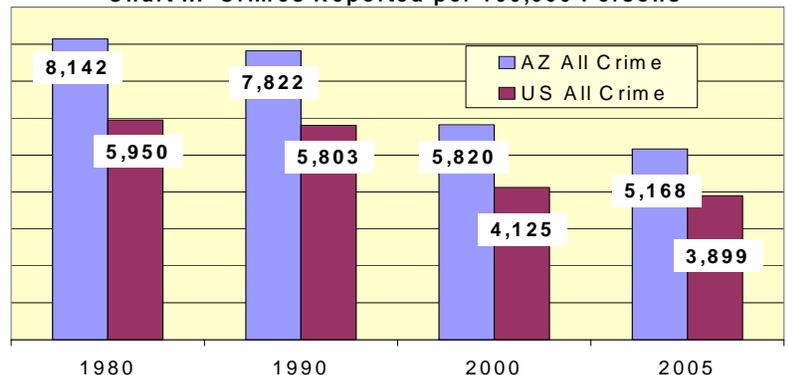


Chart II: Crimes Reported per 100,000 Persons



Data in this report come from the annual Crime in Arizona published by the Arizona Department of Public Safety and the FBI's Crime in the United States. The data represent crimes reported, not arrests or convictions.

In 2005, according to Crime in Arizona, there were 306,937 crimes reported to Arizona police agencies. That is 5,168 crimes for every 100,000 persons. In 1980, there were 221,335 crimes reported, 8,142 per every 100,000. This is shown in the two tables above. The actual number of crimes reported has increased, but Chart II above tells us that the rate of crime reported to the police decreased from 8,142 per 100,000 in 1980 to 5,168 in 2005. That is a decrease of 36 percent.

But the table also shows that Arizona's rates are consistently higher than rates for the USA as a whole. In 2000, Arizona's rate of 5,820 was 41 percent higher than the national rate; however, in 2005 it was only 32 percent higher.

Not all crimes reported to the police are counted in Crime in Arizona. Reported crime is represented by seven index crimes: four violent offenses (murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and three property offenses (burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft). These crimes are called index crimes because they are the offenses the FBI uses to put together its annual index of crime entitled "Crime in the United States."

Chart III on the right shows that, with the exception of 1990, Arizona's rates for the four violent offenses have been about five to ten percent higher than national rates.

Chart III: Violent Crimes Rates per 100,000 Persons

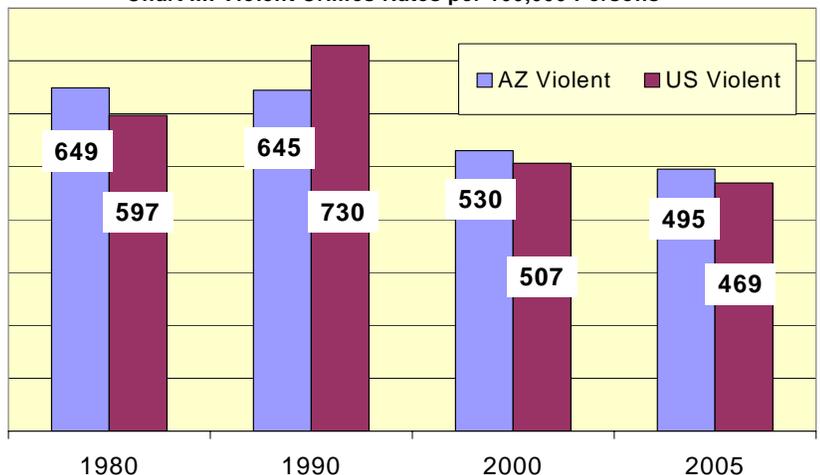
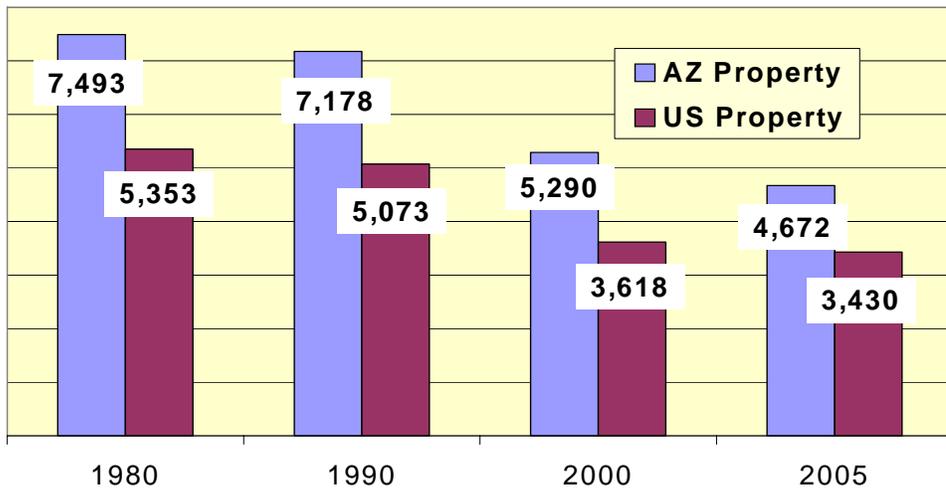


Chart IV: Property Crimes Rates per 100,000 Persons



Arizona's rates for property offenses have been much higher than national rates (as much as 46 percent in 2000). Chart IV on the left shows the decline in the property crime rate since 1980 and the difference between Arizona and the entire country.

Table I below shows the three property crimes individually. Vehicle theft rates are the chief reason why Arizona continues to exceed the national property crime rate. In both 2000 and 2005, autos were stolen in Arizona at twice the rate as the entire nation. In 1980, the Arizona stolen vehicle rate was slightly less than the nation's rate.

This fact sheet was prepared by:
 Mitch Halfpenny, Research Analyst,
 Arizona Criminal Justice Commission
 1110 W. Washington, Suite 230
 Phoenix, Arizona 85007
 (P) 602.364.1158
 (F) 602.364.1175

	Burglary		Larceny		Vehicle Theft	
	Arizona	USA	Arizona	USA	Arizona	USA
1980	2150	1684	4871	3167	472	502
1990	1652	1232	4666	3185	859	656
2000	1012	729	3438	2477	839	412
2005	904	726	2871	2286	897	417

Even though rates for violent and property crimes in Arizona are decreasing, they are decreasing all over the nation as well. Thus, our apparent improvement fades when compared to the rest of the country. But, with the exception of vehicle theft, the gaps in rates between Arizona and the USA as a whole are closing.

More importantly, the actual numbers of all offenses being reported are increasing. More reported crime requires more police to investigate incidents and arrest offenders; more lawyers, judges, and clerks to prosecute the accused; and more probation officers, prisons, and jails to supervise the convicted. Even though crime is down, the need to maintain, if not strengthen, the criminal justice infrastructure remains high.

The End of the Decline?

In the past year, there has been a growing concern that crime rates, especially for violent crimes, may be at the end of a 20 year decline. In the entire United States, the rates of violent crime reported to the police increased by 1.3 percent from 2004 to 2005. Arizona had a similar increase of 1.7 percent. It appears this upturn may be continuing into 2006, based on data from the first six months of the year for 55 selected cities. The number of homicides increased by 4.24 percent, and the number of robberies by 9.71 percent (See "A Gathering Storm—Violent Crime in America" published by the Police Executive Research Forum at <http://www.policeforum.org>). Furthermore, juveniles and young adults (up to age 24) seem to be committing a greater proportion of violent offenses. FBI arrest rates for murder, robbery, and weapons-related offenses show increases of as much as 20 percent for these groups from 2004 to 2005.

Any increase in crime is a cause for concern, but there is reason to think that a trend of rising crime may not be on the horizon. First of all, these increases are quite small and confined to two offenses (murder and robbery) committed by persons under 25 years old. The chart on the right shows the continuous decline of the violent crime rate in the USA since 1999 and how slight the increase was from 2004 to 2005.

Clearly it is too soon to call this one-year increase the start of a trend.

Chart V: Violent Crimes per 100,000

