



SAFETY & CRIME COMMUNITY POLICING REHAB- CORRECTIONS TION

In 1997, the U.S. incarcerated a greater proportion of its population than any countries except Russia. More than 1.7 million people were either in prison or in jail in 1997, reflecting an incarceration rate of more than 645 per 100,000 residents, double the rate of a decade before. Approximately one in every 117 adult males was in prison.

– Human Rights Watch, 1999

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**How is this parish doing?**Crime
in Louisiana ☹️Crime
in the parish ☹️Community
policing 😊**DID YOU KNOW?**

The cost of crime to victims is an estimated \$450 billion per year when factors such as medical cost, lost earnings, pain, suffering and lost quality of life are considered.

– Miller, 1996.

CRIME AND SAFETY

Every night on the news, crime is a sobering reality. Crime is a scary topic for many communities. Sometimes the fear of crime may be bigger than are the real risks. This is especially true for violent crimes. A desire for personal safety can affect how people feel and where they live. It can also affect choices about work and play time.

Violence and crime are related to other factors which affect health. Low educational levels, poverty, unemployment and discrimination are all risk factors for violence and poor health. According to the DHHS, violence and the perception of violence, both have a great impact on quality of life (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998).

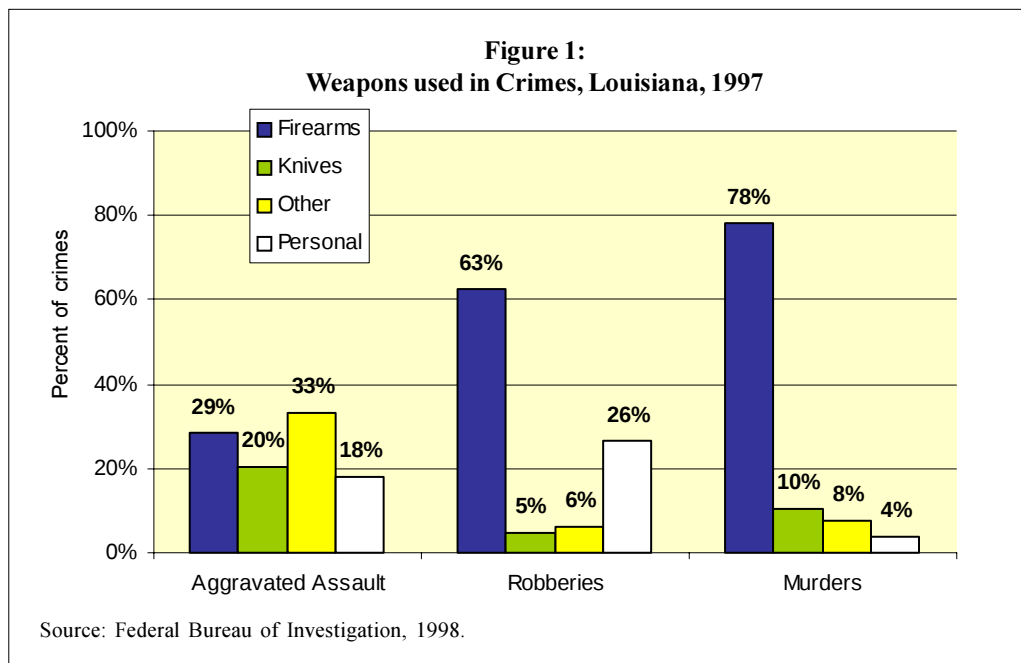
Another way crime and safety issues can impact health is by creating a perception that individuals can not trust people in their neighborhoods or communities. Recently, a study showed a correlation between a lack of trust and a self-report of poor health. People who reported a distrust of the people around them also reported being in poor health. The greater the mistrust, the more likely they were to say they have bad health (Kawachi et al, 1999). In 1999, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the perception of danger in a neighborhood had a negative impact on residents' ability to get regular physical activity, an important part of overall health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999).

The remainder of this chapter looks at crime and safety from a more traditional perspective. It includes a discussion of incarceration rates, admissions in the parish and state, community policing and rehabilitation efforts.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 1998 Louisiana had the nation's highest rate of residents put in prison (Butterfield, 1999). This statistic is called an incarceration rate. The incarceration rate is based upon the number of state or federal prisoners with sentences of more than one year per 100,000 residents. **The year before, in 1997, Louisiana had 651 prisoners per 100,000 residents.** Only Texas had a higher rate of 677 per 100,000 residents. The U.S. rate in 1997 was 436 per 100,000 residents.

In 1998, Louisiana's rate rose to 709 per 100,000. Louisiana's rate is 44 percent higher than the U.S. total incarceration rate of 506 per 100,000 (Butterfield, 1999 and [1] Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998). An increased incarceration rate does not necessarily mean that crime is growing. Rather, it could mean that the process of arrest, prosecution and sentencing has changed to produce more prison sentences.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

Nationally, one violent crime occurred every 19 seconds in 1997.

– National Center for Victims of Crime, 1998.

In Louisiana, one out of every two people released from prison will return within four years.

– (2) Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998.

The Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSC) in Louisiana, as well as federal agencies such as the Bureau of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, collect information on how many and what types of crimes are committed. These agencies also record information about people in prison, on parole or on probation. This information helps agencies plan for a prison population of a certain size, as well as address policy. The information also helps the public and lawmakers see the effect laws and law enforcement have on safety and crime.

This section presents the following indicators:

- Weapons used in crimes;
- Methods of homicide; and
- The types of crimes committed by parish

Community policing and drug courts play a prominent role in this chapter, as does a discussion of rehabilitative programs the DPSC supports. Community policing engages residents in crime prevention at a level police can not easily reach. Meanwhile, prison-based education and family-oriented programs help prisoners live more productive lives once they are released. Communities interested in reducing crime in their area might want to look at these kinds of programs in more

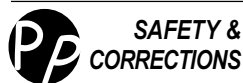
Homicides by Cause Louisiana, 1997

Cause	Number	Rate/per 100,000
Cut/pierce	76	1.7
Drowning	*	**
Fire/burn	*	**
Firearm	534	12.3
Struck by/against	7	**
Suffocation	17	**
Other	57	1.4

* Fewer than five are not reported for confidentiality.

** Rates are not calculated for fewer than 20 cases.

Source: Injury Research and Prevention Program, 1998



depth, as well as work with police to determine what issues should take priority in their area. Then they can decide how best to address those issues.

WHAT DOES CRIME LOOK LIKE?

Nationally, stricter laws have increased incarceration for drug and property crimes. The largest number of prison terms is for property crimes, including theft and vandalism. This is followed by drug offenses. Only 2.5 percent of federal incarcerations are for violent crime.

In Louisiana in 1997:

- **36.1 percent of convictions were for property crimes;**
- **29.2 percent were for drug offenses;**
- **21.4 percent were for violent crimes; and**
- **2.4 percent were for child abuse** ([2] Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998).

Possession or sale of drugs is a criminal offense, but the use of drugs and alcohol is also linked with all types of criminal offenses. These offenses range from minor property crimes and assaults to robberies and homicides. According to the Bureau of Justice, 35 percent of violent crimes involve an offender who has been drinking. Seventy-five percent of violence between spouses is due to alcohol. Of those who had been drinking, 20 percent had also used a drug of some kind. A recent study by the National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse showed disturbing results. Eighty percent of the adults in U.S. prisons are there as a result of criminal activity linked to drugs and alcohol. In Louisiana, 75 percent of people in jail have a substance abuse problem (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

Data about crimes occurring in a community can be useful in deciding how to make and enforce laws, as well as identify the types of social problems that need addressing. This chapter includes information about the impact of incarceration, types of crimes, weapons used in crimes and methods of rehabilitation. Communities may also want to address the needs of families with members in jail, as well as the lives of ex-convicts after release.

Impact of incarceration

Nationally, there is a disparity between African American and white citizens' perceptions and experiences of crime. African Americans are more concerned about being victims of crime than whites. In 1995, two and a half times as many African American households reported that crime was a problem. The difference was not nearly as large for actual victimization. Twenty-seven percent of African American households experienced one or more crimes. This is compared to 23 percent of white households (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995).

There are also racial differences in those who go to prison. For example, if present rates continue, one in five African American men will spend part of their lives in jail.



Many of the crimes for which they are convicted are drug-related. According to Human Rights Watch, this is not because African Americans have higher rates of drug use, possession or sales (Human Rights Watch, 1998). It is because the drugs that are most common in African American communities carry stiffer penalties. Drug use and sales occur in every segment of society.

Adult convictions in Louisiana are possible for people age 17 and older. A 17 year-old is legally considered an adult. Therefore, his or her name and address can be released to the newspapers upon arrest. In the case of very violent crimes, children in their early teens can be tried as adults. They can also be sent to adult detention centers instead of youth centers. This happens when the crime(s) committed are of an extreme nature ([1] Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998).

CRIME IN THIS PARISH

When thinking about crime in a parish, it is important to consider crime overall in the state. Comparisons can highlight problem areas. Say, for example, a parish has many more drug offenses than the state as a whole. Residents may want to find ways to address that particular aspect of crime. Numbers of admissions do not reflect the number of unreported cases, nor do they reflect the number of unsubstantiated cases each year. Child abuse cases, for example, are known to be very hard to prove. According to some estimates, only one third of child abuse cases are reported (Maternal and Child Health Program, 1998).

DID YOU KNOW?

Half of all juveniles in custody in America have a relative behind bars. 1.9 million children have a family member in jail.

- (1) Butterfield, 1999.

Adult Admissions by Crime Category Sabine, 1997

Crime	Number admitted	Percent of total
Violent	11	20.0%
Property	27	49.1%
Drug	12	21.8%
Child Abuse	**	1.8%
Total*	55	100%

Adult Admissions by Crime Category Louisiana, 1997

Crime	Number admitted	Percent of total
Violent	3,284	21.4%
Property	5,535	36.1%
Drug	4,480	29.2%
Child Abuse	368	2.4%
Total*	15,332	100%

* Category entitled "other" excluded from this chart

** Fewer than five cases not reported for reasons of confidentiality

Source: (2) Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998.

Taking Care, Taking Control: Voices of Distinction – Speaking out

Toastmasters clubs have freed many people from the bonds of public shyness about public speaking. At the same time, toastmaster members have educated and amused the public and one another with their abilities. In Lafayette Parish, a unique toastmasters club uses its members' life stories to help teenagers and other youth to not walk in their shoes. Voices of Distinction Gavel Club #97, residents of the Lafayette Parish Correctional center, wrote and now perform "Friends", a 90-minute play to communicate this message: Drugs destroy lives.

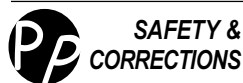
The toastmasters club at Lafayette Parish Correction Center has been recognized for its ability to reduce recidivism. That is, to reduce the likelihood that convicts will

return to prison after they are released.

Sheriff's Deputy Lt. Russell Dugas, the advisor of the club, had incorporated written communication into the program to help the adults qualify for their GED. He decided to push the club's talents further by creating "Friends."

Twenty-five prisoners are handpicked to be a part of the club. The members are selected for their motivation and ability to reflect positively upon the program. Requests for presentations from these speakers have already risen from 25 per year to several presentations a week in schools across the state.

- Chambers, C. 1999. *Breaking the Bonds. The Toastmaster. January. 65 (1) p 24 - 26.*



Changes in policy and crime definitions may also affect people's understanding of convictions. As a result of these changes, admissions for types of crimes may change, although the crimes themselves may not.

REHABILITATION

Ten Principles of Community Policing

A philosophic and organizational strategy:

Organization between police and community members is essential.

Community empowerment:

Police will enable community members to plan long-term solutions.

Decentralized and personalized policing:

Police will work on a person-to-person level with community members.

Immediate, long-term and proactive problem solving:

Police and community members will identify and work together to solve problems.

Ethics, legality, responsibility and trust:

Police and citizens will develop new partnerships to handle problems.

Expanding the police mandate:

Police may help communities be proactive rather than reactive.

Helping those with special needs:

New approaches must be found to protect the elderly and disabled, as well as to work with youth.

Grass-roots creativity and support:

Community policing relies on human experience and wisdom, as well as technological developments.

Internal change:

Police departments must integrate fully and engage in this over ten to 15 years.

Building for the future:

Police learn they can not impose order from the outside, but they must engage communities in the process of solving problems.

Source: Missouri Department of Public Safety, 1998.

The criminal justice system is dedicated to punishment for criminal offenses. However, it also knows that rehabilitation is possible. In fact, education and skills can help inmates, and their present and future families, break the cycle of crime and punishment ([1] Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998). The rate of return to prison after release, called recidivism, is 50 percent in Louisiana. That means for every two people released from prison, one will return within four years. Programs that provide self-improvement techniques reduce recidivism. These programs include parenting classes, skills and literacy training. Such classes help inmates envision a different life for themselves and their families. These programs can reduce the risk that family members will also end up in jail.

With the second highest rate of incarceration in the nation, and 75 percent of those in jails having a documented substance abuse history, the challenge in Louisiana is to seek alternatives to simply locking people up and throwing away the key. Drug courts are an effective solution (Office of Addictive Disorders, 2000).

Louisiana drug courts provide cost-effective and intensive monitoring programs that help people who enter the criminal justice system recover from substance abuse and stabilize their lives. The courts give communities the tools they need to help offenders stop using drugs and stop committing the crimes they undertake to support their habits. By combining sanctions, drug testing, treatment and other services, drug courts help stop substance abusers from cycling in and out of Louisiana courts and prisons. Instead, they are given a chance to turn their lives around (Office of Addictive Disorders, 2000).

In Louisiana last year, over 70 percent of drug court clients received treatment and over 70 percent of these people did not return to the criminal justice system. By diverting people from jails into drug courts, the estimated savings to the state is in excess of \$22.9 million. Such savings do not result from the closure of existing prison beds but rather from avoidance of the cost of building new ones (Office of Addictive Disorders, 2000).



During the past year alone, Louisiana increased its number of operational drug courts from six to 18 courts.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Communities working with police can help reduce crime in their area. Neighborhood Watch and community policing are well-recognized examples of community efforts.

Community policing is a partnership between law enforcement and local community members. Community policing efforts include executing warrants and patrolling, detaining and transporting people under arrest. They also include providing emergency aid and other tasks as needed.

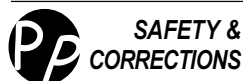
The Division of Adult Probation and Parole and the Division of Youth Services participate in community policing. They are also involved with other local initiatives to promote the welfare of the community. In December 1997, the Children's Initiative began. This initiative seeks to provide community outreach as well as institution-based services that focus on parenting skills training, character building and well-child care. Well-child care occurs before birth, after birth and in early childhood ([3] Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1998).

CRIME AND HEALTH

Crime often has ill effects on both victims and criminals. This is often due to the physical danger involved. People who live in, or think they live in, high crime areas can be affected by the constant stress. For example, fear of crime can prevent people from getting exercise. Or it may prevent them from being able to relax in their homes. The problem is very pronounced in the elderly. A national Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999) published a disturbing fact: 63 percent of elderly people living in what they described as unsafe neighborhoods were inactive. This is compared with 39 percent of those in neighborhoods perceived as safe.

THE COMMUNITY CAN ...

- ❶ **Encourage community policing and neighborhood watch**
 - Contact your local law enforcement agency about these two options. They both require police participation. With the help of neighbors, make a list of crime problems in your area that you want to begin addressing.
- ❷ **Hold block parties**
 - When people fear crime, they tend to stay indoors. Block parties provide a time and place for all people in a neighborhood to come together. Community activities will bring people outside and help to fight the community's fear of crime. Be sure to engage your local media, police, Crimestoppers and other agencies in this event.



- ③ **Watch out for vulnerable people, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and single people living alone**
 - These groups are often likely victims of property crimes. If you notice vulnerable people in your community, include them in your organization's activities. Develop ways to keep an eye on them as a group.
- ④ **Support rehabilitation efforts**
 - Provide opportunities for ex-convicts, first-time or minor offenders and youth to work with your business or community group.

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