

1947

Current Notes

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CURRENT NOTES

Austin L. Porterfield, *Guest Editor*

Index of Crime Trends by States in the War and Postwar Periods—The writer has been making a study of crime trends by states from the years 1937-39 as the base period. Only Part I offenses as reported in *Uniform Crime Reports* have been considered: *murder (including non-negligent man-slaughter)*, *robbery*, *aggravated assault*, *burglary*, *larceny*, and *auto theft*. An index was constructed for each offense, taking the number of times it was reported per 100,000 population (annual average) as known to police by states in 1937-39 as the score 100. Then the index score for a given offense in a given state in 1943 or 1946 was simply expressed as a percentage of the rate for the prewar period. Next a composite score was computed for each of these years by obtaining the arithmetic mean of the comparative scores (percentages) for the six offenses listed above. Thus, in Texas, for example, in 1943, the murder rate was 95 per cent of the mean annual rate for the base period, and the rates for robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and auto theft were 70, 120, 85, 78, and 96 per cent, respectively, of those of the corresponding prewar period. The mean of these percentages for Texas in 1943 was 91, expressed as an index number; for 1946 the corresponding composite score was 127.

Interpretations of these studies are to be published elsewhere. Only the rank of the states in the decrease of crime rates to 1943, the scores for 1943 and 1946, and the percentage of change up to these years are given in the table below.

RANK OF THE STATES IN THE DECREASE OF CRIME RATES FROM THE PREWAR BASE PERIOD (1937-1939 ANNUAL AVERAGE IS 100) TO 1943 AS COMPARED WITH THE RATES FOR THE POSTWAR YEAR OF 1946.

State	Rank in Decrease 1943	Index Score 1943	Index Score 1946	Per Cent	
				Decrease or Increase 1943	1946
N. D.	1	55	78	45	22
Minn.	2	59	83	41	17
Iowa	3	59	114	41	14*
Ida.	4	71	100	29	0
Tenn.	5	71	103	29	3*
Mont.	6	75	121	25	21*
Fla.	7	76	105	24	5*
Ky.	8	79	105	21	5*
W. Va.	9-10	80	92	20	8
Ga.	9-10	80	92	20	8
Kans.	11	80	96	20	4
Mass.	12	80	110	20	10*
N. C.	13	82	103	18	3*
Pa.	14	83	110	17	10*
N. Y.	15	83	127	17	27*

*Increase.

State	Rank in Decrease 1943	Index Score 1943	Index Score 1946	Per Cent	
				Decrease or Increase 1943	1946
N. J.	16	84	104	16	4*
Ark.	17	84	123	16	23*
N. M.	18	85	133	15	33*
Ohio	19	87	109	13	9*
Okla.	20	89	109	11	9*
Ill.	21	89	110	11	10*
Vt.	22	89	123	11	23*
Wyo.	23	90	177	10	77*
Texas	24	91	127	9	27*
Ind.	25	92	103	8	3*
Wis.	26	93	108	7	8*
Ala.	27	95	128	5	28*
Wash.	28	95	147	5	47*
S. D.	29	96	80	4	20
Conn.	30	96	123	4	23*
N. H.	31	99	89	1	11
Va.	32	100	111	0	11*
S. C.	33	100	127	0	27*
Mo.	34	103	193	3*	93*
Ariz.	35	107	135	7*	35*
La.	36	111	138	11*	38*
R. I.	37	114	235	14*	135*
Nebr.	38	115	163	15*	63*
Colo.	39	122	150	22*	50*
Me.	40	124	108	24*	8*
Mich.	41	125	166	25*	66*
Md.	42	126	134	26*	34*
Calif.	43	126	166	26*	66*
Oreg.	44	130	155	30*	55*
Del.	45	138	146	38*	46*
Miss.	46	150	141	50*	41*
Nev.	47	153	258	53*	158*
Utah	48	154	158	54*	58*

*Increase.

Alcohol and Crime—Not too much objective and scientific study has been made of the relationship of alcohol to crime. Since the use of alcohol and social well-being are both related to urbanization, it is not surprising to find, as in a study under way, that indices of social well-being and the usage of alcohol by states are positively correlated. This correlation is no sign, however, that the use of alcohol contributes to social well-being. In fact, the correlation disappears when other variables are considered.

There is also a negative relationship between the amount of alcohol known to be consumed by states and indices of crime—that is, of composite scores for Part II offenses. Perhaps this is due not only to the fact that social well-being and crime are negatively related but also to the possibility that resort to alcohol and to crime are fundamentally opposite patterns of reacting to a sense of frustration.

The relation of alcohol to Part II offenses, however, is a different matter. Among these, drunkenness and driving while intoxicated are listed. So are sex offenses except rape and disorderly conduct. Rates for these offenses tend to change together.

Sociologists frequently make unsupported statements in comparing the social characteristics of the prohibition and repeal eras of the last few decades. Just for the sake of the record, the percentage of all arrests constituted by arrests for drunkenness and drunken driving are given below from 1932 through 1945.

Year	Drunkenness: Percentage of All Arrests	Driving While Intoxicated: Percentage	Percentage Distribution: Both Items Combined
1932	3.6	1.5	5.1
1933	*	1.7	
1934	7.9	2.5	10.4
1935	10.6	3.0	13.6
1936	15.7	4.1	19.8
1937	16.4	4.3	20.3
1938	15.2	3.8	19.0
1939	15.8	4.2	20.0
1940	18.5	4.6	23.1
1941	22.6	5.4	28.0
1942	24.9	5.0	29.9
1943	22.6	3.7	26.3
1944	21.4	3.6	25.0
1945	23.0	3.8	26.8
1946	23.4	4.8	28.2

The Connecticut Study of the Needs of Neglected and Delinquent Children—In 1945 the Connecticut General Assembly authorized the Public Welfare Council of the state to “make a survey of the conditions leading to delinquency and neglect of children, and of the needs of delinquent, neglected and uncared-for children” and to “report its findings to the 1947 general assembly.”

The Public Welfare Council, of which Austin D. Barney is the President and William W. T. Squire is the Director, called upon Community Surveys, Inc. to make the study. A thorough job was done through the cooperation of consultants, case analysts, statistical field workers, and the Public Welfare Council. The work was finished in 1946 and presented to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1947 by the Public Welfare Council. Its findings concerned: (1) the characteristics of neglected and delinquent children and their families, (2) the causes of neglect and delinquency, and (3) services rendered. The introductory section gave a picture of the size of the problem.

The size of the problem was dramatized by the statement that “through its public and private agencies [the state] is now having to care for two out of every 100 children now under 21 years of age.” This proves to be twice as high as a block of 27 states with which Connecticut is compared. It probably means that Connecticut is giving better care than the other states on the whole, not that it has more delinquent and neglected children than the others.

The causes of delinquency and neglect were related to the major breakdowns which the families had suffered. These breakdowns were listed as involving, besides delinquency and neglect, mental disease of other members of the family, mental deficiency, divorce, illegitimacy, economic need, and major illness. More specifically factors in the causation of delinquency were listed as family disorganization, the emotional instability of parents or other members of the family, mental deficiency in the family, disinterested parents, deprivation of affectional needs, physical needs, and social needs, deprivation of family security, overindulgence, overprotection, and various influences outside the family.

The study is worth having on the interested person's desk. It can be obtained from the Public Welfare Council, William W. T. Squire, Director, Hartford, Connecticut.

The Howard Journal—*The Howard Journal*, which is "a review of modern methods for the prevention and treatment of crime and juvenile delinquency" published by the Howard League for Penal Reform in London, should be on more American library shelves. Issue No. 2 of Volume VII now current gathers up impressions of prisons and prison methods from various lands: Japan, South Africa, Sweden, Great Britain, "the colonies," and so on. The *Journal* is no doubt one of the best sources from which American readers can obtain reliable information on developments in criminology and penology abroad.

A New Field for Probation: The Divorce Courts—Sol Rubin, who is legal consultant for the National Probation Association, tells how probation officers are coming to be used in cases of divorce proceedings to make investigations, particularly where children are involved. Though not new, the practice is not widespread. It is the practice in Hudson and Essex counties in New Jersey, in the Court of Domestic Relations in St. Louis, in certain areas in Michigan, Kentucky, Minnesota, Maryland, and in Harris and Dallas counties in Texas. Also in Kansas (Wyandotte county only), the probate judge may designate one of the probation officers to "make investigations when requested by the district court judges who have divorce jurisdiction." In Maine, when a minor child is involved in a divorce action, the court may call on the State Bureau of Social Welfare for an investigative officer. In Indiana, "the judge may request the juvenile court to refer the case to a probation officer for full investigation and report to the (marital) court."

Mr. Rubin (in *Probation* for April) has thus shown how various agencies dealing with child and family welfare may with very great advantage learn how to cooperate.

"Our Law-Abiding Law-Breakers"—This is another title which "jumps at you" out of the printed page (in *Probation* for April, 1947). It is written by James S. Wallerstein and Clement J. Wyle over an article on some more "hidden delinquency and crime." Stimulated somewhat by other researches, these representatives of the Randen Foundation in New York City undertook to find out from adults, "weighted on the upper economic side" and without court records, whether before the age of sixteen they had done one or more of the 49 acts defined

by the penal law of the state of New York as criminal enough to draw a maximum sentence of not less than one year. Replying to the questionnaires were 1,020 men and 678 women. The proportions reporting such offenses are very large. The authors conclude:

“Whether a man becomes a confirmed criminal may well depend less on what he does to society than on what society does to him . . . Perhaps the principal conclusion to be drawn from this study is the revelation of the prevalence of lawlessness among respectable people. It is perhaps less important to show that good citizens are not always good than that these same citizens can commit crimes and still become eminent scientists, intelligent parents, leading teachers, artists and social workers, or prominent business executives . . . From this angle the punitive attitude of society toward the convicted offender becomes not only hypocritical but pointless. In time to come men may be rated not by their past mistakes but by their assets and potentialities.”

Reprints of this article are available.

It Couldn't Happen in Brotherhood Week But It Did—In the State of South Carolina where vast numbers of people deplore such behavior as brutal, a mob of thirty-five white men ushered in Brotherhood Week in Pickens County with the lynching of a Negro, Willie Earle, who was charged with assaulting a taxi driver.

Brotherhood Week has not obliterated such interracial crimes as lynchings. Since then the nearly thirty men who were brought to court have been acquitted. Our ideal of a government by laws and not by men is surely not yet fully achieved.

Hans Von Hentig and Edwin H. Sutherland on Theories of Crime—Two important books have recently appeared as texts in criminology. Hans Von Hentig's *Crime: Causes and Conditions* is one of them (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), and Edwin H. Sutherland's revision of his *Principles of Criminology* (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1947) is the other. Sutherland maintains his theory of differential association as the cause of systematic lawless behavior. Von Hentig divides his criminals into two groups: those who are criminals only under great pressure, and those whose innate dispositions do not have to be pressured much to commit crimes. Von Hentig has produced a useful and a very interesting book, but his theory of “innate dispositions” in the causation of crime in the minds of many will need much more demonstration than anyone has ever furnished yet. We may predict that most favorable reviews will appear in praise of both books.

Medico-Legal Conference and Seminar—The Department of Legal Medicine of the medical schools of Harvard, Tufts, and Boston University, in association with the Massachusetts Medico-Legal Society, will present a six-day program of lectures, conferences, and demonstrations having to do with the investigation of deaths in the interests of public safety. Attendance will be limited to 25 persons who have registered in advance. The conference is for Pathologists, Medical Examiners and Coroners. It will be held at Harvard Medical School October 13-18, 1947.

Further information may be obtained from the Department of Legal Medicine, 25 Shattuck St., Boston, Mass.