



**Metropolitan Police Department City of St. Louis**

**Information Technology Division**

**SLMPD NIBRS Crime Data**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

## Table of Contents

What is “crime” data and how does it differ from 911 calls or incident reports?.....	3
The data in this crime file doesn’t look the same as it used to. Why is it different? .....	3
How is NIBRS different from UCR Summary Reporting? .....	4
Why are incidents that occurred in a previous month in the file for the current month? .....	4
I’m keeping all of this data in a database of my own. How should I handle supplements? .....	5
How is this data collected? Who is responsible for entering data? .....	5
What are NIBRS codes? Why does the same “offense” sometimes have different NIBRS codes for different incidents? .....	5
What does it mean if an incident is “Unfounded”? Why is there very little information for these incidents? .....	5
Why do some records not list a neighborhood or district? .....	6
Why do I see the same ASSAULT 13A offense listed more than once for the same incident?.....	6
How can I tell how many victims there are for a crime? .....	6
When I count the rows in the file for Thefts, I get more than is reported on the NIBRS report. Why is this? .....	6
Why does the Incident Nature sometimes disagree with the Offense? .....	6
Where else is this data reported?.....	7

## What is “crime” data and how does it differ from 911 calls or incident reports?

“Crime” data from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD) refers specifically to criminal acts known to the police as defined by Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) standards.

There are several different types of law enforcement data at the SLMPD.

- *Calls for service* – This data primarily consists of 9-1-1 calls, but also includes self-initiated and administrative patrol activities. Some of these calls are to report criminal activity and result in the creation of an incident report; other calls are, for various reasons, closed without any further action needed from the police department (i.e. a burglar alarm that was accidentally set off).
- *Incident reports* – If activity comes to the attention of the police that violates the criminal code of the Missouri State Revised Statutes (RSMo) or violates ordinances of the City of St. Louis, an incident report is written. This incident report is meant to document facts and evidence regarding alleged criminal activity to be passed on for prosecution in the appropriate court.
- *Crime* – Incident reports categorize criminal activity according to the criminal code of Missouri, but these charges may not be the same in other states. For example, a person who is beaten and has both legs broken may be a victim of “Assault 1<sup>st</sup> degree” in the State of Missouri but may be a victim of “Battery” in a different state (dependent on that State’s particular criminal law). In order to ensure that crimes are reported in a comparable manner regardless of where they happen common standards are applied when listing or counting crime. Under UCR guidelines, the person in the example above is a victim of “Aggravated Assault”, regardless of the criminal law of their state or the charge that may result from prosecution.

## The data in this crime file doesn’t look the same as it used to. Why is it different?

SLMPD formerly published crime data that conformed to UCR Summary Reporting (SRS) standards; the current data files reflect National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) guidelines. NIBRS and UCR SRS are two different standardized methods of collecting and counting crime statistics. Both programs are implemented by the FBI, but on January 1, 2021, UCR Summary Reporting was officially retired in favor of NIBRS.

The codes used to identify and classify crimes have changed with the transition to NIBRS and it is not possible to directly compare SLMPD crime files generated prior to January 1, 2021, to any files posted since that date.

## How is NIBRS different from UCR Summary Reporting?

There are several important differences between UCR SRS and NIBRS in addition to using different codes and categories. These changes affect which offenses should be counted as crimes.

For UCR Summary Reporting, the “hierarchy rule” limited most crimes to one crime per incident, with the highest, or most serious, crime for the incident being the only one counted. NIBRS reporting does not use the hierarchy rule; all distinct offenses that occurred during an incident are counted as crimes. This means that files of NIBRS data will typically have more rows than the SRS crime files did on a monthly basis. This does not automatically mean that more crime is occurring; it is simply reflecting a different system for what should be reported and counted.

Another change is that all NIBRS reporting is point-in-time. All crime data is current at the time it is reported, but the data can change over time if new information is discovered concerning the incident. Due to the way that UCR monthly crime data was compiled, the data in the monthly files prior to 2021 never changed after it was published; it remained static forever. This will not be the case for NIBRS data and updates to previously reported data should be expected.

This data file is best understood as a set of Offenses, or Charges, that make it possible to count crime, rather than a list of crimes. For incident-based reporting, NIBRS counting rules may dictate that certain offenses are not counted as crimes (such as when there are multiple offenses in the same NIBRS group within a single incident.)

For more information concerning NIBRS Codes and other reporting guidelines, please refer to the NIBRS User Manual, which can be found on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) website: <https://le.fbi.gov/informational-tools/ucr/ucr-technical-specifications-user-manuals-and-data-tools>

## Why are incidents that occurred in a previous month in the file for the current month?

As stated previously, NIBRS data can change if new information becomes available about an incident that was previously included in a crime file. When facts are discovered as part of an ongoing police investigation, officers will write a supplement to the original police report and record the new information. These supplements may or may not affect the offenses for the incident, but if they do, the crime data for that incident could change. When an incident from a previous month is included in a new data file, it means that the incident was supplemented during the current month. (It does not, necessarily mean that there was a change that would affect the crime data.)

For example, SLMPD usually has at least one homicide every year in which the victim dies years after the action that caused the person's death. Whenever this occurs, the police report is supplemented, and the charge is modified. This results in the crime being changed from an AGGRAVATED ASSAULT to a MURDER AND NONNEGLIGENT MANSLAUGHTER.

**I'm keeping all of this data in a database of my own. How should I handle supplements?**

When supplemented data is included in the monthly crime file, the data originally reported is no longer valid. If you are attempting to store this crime data in a database of your own, you will need to replace **ALL** rows for the modified incident whenever a supplement is received.

**How is this data collected? Who is responsible for entering data?**

These data files are extracted from the SLMPD incident report writing system (RMS). Officers are responsible for entering known information about the incident and for selecting the appropriate offenses in the RMS software. The possible offenses (or charges) that can be selected are established by the Missouri legislature and can be found in the Missouri Charge Code Manual: <https://www.mshp.dps.missouri.gov/CJ08Client/Home/ChargeCode>

**What are NIBRS codes? Why does the same "offense" sometimes have different NIBRS codes for different incidents?**

NIBRS codes represent crime categories and are used in counting crimes according to Incident-based standards. The NIBRS codes have been mapped to Missouri charges, but it is not a one-to-one relationship as these are groupings. In some cases, more than one NIBRS code is mapped to an offense. This means that what happens in a specific incident will determine which of the NIBRS codes is appropriate for the charge. An offense will only have one NIBRS code per offense, but that same charge may be mapped differently in another incident where the circumstances of the crime are different.

For example, an offense of "STEALING - MOTOR VEHICLE/WATERCRAFT/AIRCRAFT" could be assigned any of the following NIBRS codes: 23F, 23G, 23H, 240, and 280. The code actually applied will depend on the circumstances of the specific incident.

**What does it mean if an incident is "Unfounded"? Why is there very little information for these incidents?**

Incidents are "Unfounded" when a crime has been reported to the police and afterward further information or investigation reveals that no crime took place. For example, a citizen reports that their vehicle was stolen, but later discovers that a family member borrowed the vehicle without notifying them. Unfounded incidents are included in the crime data file to indicate that any previous crimes reported for that incident did not actually occur.

### **Why do some records not list a neighborhood or district?**

An attempt is made to “verify” all addresses of crimes in the City of St. Louis. Address verification is the process of confirming that the address is valid and attaching geographic information, such as neighborhood and district, to that call, incident, or crime record. In some cases, the address is not verified properly, and valid geographic boundary information is unavailable for that record. In some cases, the crime victim may be unsure of the location of the crime due to circumstances of the particular incident.

### **Why do I see the same ASSAULT 13A offense listed more than once for the same incident?**

An assault is a Crime Against a Person, all of which are counted by victim. There are many Assault incidents where more than one person is a victim of the same crime. In these cases, each victim counts as an instance of the crime. This is true for all Crimes Against a Person, not just Assaults.

### **How can I tell how many victims there are for a crime?**

For Crimes Against a Person, the file will contain a victim number which will uniquely identify a victim of the crime. If a person is a victim of more than one person crime *in the same incident*, the victim number will be the same for each offense. If the same individual is a victim of person crimes *in different incidents*, the victim number will not be the same for each incident. The victim number cannot be used to identify a single victim across different incidents.

A victim number will never be provided for Crimes Against Property and Crimes Against Society because these crimes are counted by incident, and not by victim. You will not be able to tell how many victims there were for these crimes.

### **When I count the rows in the file for Thefts, I get more than is reported on the NIBRS report. Why is this?**

Thefts are a Crime Against Property and are counted by incident. Sometimes an incident will have several stealing charges that all belong in the same NIBRS category. When this occurs, NIBRS rules dictate that only one instance of stealing is *counted* for the incident. This situation is common for thefts but is true for all Crimes Against Property (except for Motor Vehicle Theft, where one offense is counted for each stolen vehicle).

### **Why does the Incident Nature sometimes disagree with the Offense?**

The Incident Nature field is usually good common descriptor of the incident as a whole. However, this field is not important for prosecution purposes and officers do not always go back and update it if the known circumstances of the incident change.

**Where else is this data reported?**

Crime data is reported monthly to the Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP). The State of Missouri then delivers that data to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The summarized data can be found on the MSHP web site: <https://showmecrime.mo.gov/CrimeReporting/CrimeReportingTOPS.html>