



Arson

Definition

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program defines arson as any willful or malicious burning or attempting to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, etc.

Data collection

Only the fires that investigation determined to have been willfully set—not fires labeled as suspicious or of unknown origin—are included in this arson data collection. Points to consider regarding arson statistics include:

- National offense rates per 100,000 inhabitants (found in Tables 1, 2, and 4) do not include arson data; the FBI presents rates for arson separately. Arson rates are calculated based upon data received from all law enforcement agencies that provide the UCR Program with offense data for 12 complete months and are presented in Arson Table 1.
- This data collection does not include any estimates for arson because the degree of reporting arson offenses varies from agency to agency. Because of this unevenness of reporting, arson offenses are excluded from Tables 1-7, all of which contain offense estimations.

The number of arsons reported by individual law enforcement agencies is available in Tables 8-11, arson trend data (indicating a year-to-year change) are in Tables 12-15, and arson clearance data (crimes solved) can be found in Arson Table 2 and Tables 25-28.

Overview

- Nationally, 62,807 arson offenses were reported by 14,011 law enforcement agencies that provided 1-12 months of arson data in 2008. Of those agencies, 13,980 provided expanded offense data concerning 56,972 arsons.

- Arsons involving structures (residential, storage, public, etc.) accounted for 43.4 percent of the total number of arson offenses; arsons involving mobile property accounted for 28.9 percent; and other types of property (such as crops, timber, fences, etc.) accounted for 27.7 percent of reported arsons.
- The average dollar loss per arson offense was \$16,015.
- Arsons of industrial/manufacturing structures resulted in the highest average dollar losses (an average of \$212,388 per offense).
- In 2008, arson offenses decreased 3.6 percent when compared with the 2007 number. (See Table 12.)
- Nationwide, the rate of arson was 24.1 offenses for every 100,000 inhabitants.

Expanded arson data

Expanded offense data are the details of the various offenses that the UCR Program collects beyond the count of how many crimes law enforcement agencies report. These details may include the type of weapon used in a crime, type or value of items stolen, and so forth. In addition, expanded data include trends (for example, 2-year comparisons) and rates per 100,000 inhabitants.

Expanded information regarding arson is available in the following tables:

Trends (2-year): Tables 12, 13, 14, and 15

Property types: Table 15

Arson Table 1, “Arson Rate, by Population Group, 2008”

Arson Table 2, “Arson, by Type of Property, 2008”

What you won't find on this page

Estimated arson data. The FBI does not include any estimates for arsons because the degree of reporting arson offenses varies from agency to agency.

Clearances or arrest data for arson.