Vice President's Conversation on the Future

Trend Research: Crime and Terrorism

Descriptor Definition

This descriptor white paper centers on trends in the crime rates of Ohio and the issue of terrorism prevention.

Author Insights: Descriptor Relevance[1]

Crime and terrorism are deeply feared by a large number of Americans. Anybody can suddenly and unexpectedly become a victim of a crime, resulting in lost money, damaged property, physical injury and pain, and death. Data suggest a number of variables that may affect incidents of crime, including economic conditions, age, gender, and race. It has been widely claimed that high crime rates seriously disrupt economic activities and cost taxpayers more money for local police, county sheriff, and state police and National Guard protection. Crime and terrorism may also be issues of particular concern for institutions of public and higher education, as there have been incidents in Ohio of theft, aggregated assaults, rapes, and murders in schools and on college campuses that may discourage young people from exposing themselves to such potential hazards.

Trend Information and Interpretation

Crime Rates in 2012

For the year 2012, with a population of a little over 11.5 million, the total number of reported crimes in Ohio was 394,478. Of these, about 9% were violent crimes and 91% were property crimes. Violent crimes include murder, rape, armed robbery, and assault. The leading property crimes are burglary, larceny, theft, arson, shoplifting, and vandalism. Based on units of 1,000 people, the violent crime in Ohio is 3.0, which is considerably less than the national violent crime rate of 3.9. The property crime rate in Ohio is slightly over 30.0, which is higher than the national property crime rate of 28.6. This means that one is much less likely to be the victim of a violent crime in Ohio than in other places around the country, but is slightly more likely to be a victim of a property crime in Ohio than elsewhere in the U.S. (Neighborhood Scout, 2014).

In 2012, there were 495 murders in Ohio and 3,658 reported cases of rape. The murder rate in Ohio is less than the national average, but the rate of rape is higher. The murder rate in Ohio was .04 in 2012, while it was .05 for the country. The rate for rape was .32 in Ohio and .27 for the whole U.S. The robbery rate was 1.32 for Ohio and 1.13 for the country. Assault was 1.32 for Ohio, but 2.43 for the country. In sum, relative to other states in the U.S., one is less likely to get murdered, more likely to get raped, more likely to get robbed, but much less likely to be the victim of assault (Neighborhood Scout, 2014).

Ohio has more property crimes than the national median (31.17 versus 28.6). It also has more burglary (8.9 versus 6.7) and more theft (20.53 versus 19.59), but less motor vehicle theft (1.69 versus 2.30) (Neighborhood Scout, 2014).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) keeps national crime statistics known as the crime index. The index is comprised of eight major crimes: murder, non-negligent homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. The crime index for Ohio for selected years appears as follows (Disaster Center, 2014):

Year	*Population*	*Crime Index*
1960	9,706,397	151,307
1970	10,652,017	380,744
1980	10,766,808	584,787
1981	10,776,000	587,007
1990	10,847,155	523,373
2000	11,353,140	458,874
2010	11,537,968	413,142
2012	11,544,225	394,478

Author Insights

The data show that there was a significant rise in crime in Ohio during the 1960s and 1970s. This was a period in American history noted for rapid economic growth in the 1960s followed by a decade of slow economic growth, high inflation rates, and rising energy prices during the 1970s. The period was also characterized by the social upheavals and associated acts of violence during the Civil Rights Movement, the war in Vietnam, anti-war protests and demonstrations, and the coming of age of the Baby Boomers (those born from 1946 to 1964). The crime index hit a peak of 523,373 in 1981. This was about 3.5 times higher than it had been in 1960. Then the trend was for a gradual net decline. The index was still over 500,000 by 1990, but fell to under 500,000 by 2000. By 2012, the index had further fallen to under 400,000. While the crime index for 2012 looks better than that of 1981, it is still 2.6 times higher than it was in 1960 (Disaster Center, 2014).

The prevailing crimes in Ohio concern property. In 1960, the crime index for property crimes was 143,187. In contrast, there were 8,120 violent crimes, including 311 murders. By 2012, property crimes had increased to 359,883. Murders had risen to 495 (Disaster Center, 2014).

Long-Term National Crime Trends

The trends in crimes in Ohio reflect in many ways the long-term crime trends in the U.S. The most serious type of violent crime is murder, which rose sharply in the country from a rate of 1.2 per 100,000 in 1900 to a peak of nearly 10 per 100,000 during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Then the murder rate dropped to just over 4 per 100,000 people by 1960. Then it rose sharply again in the 1960s and 1970s to rates comparable to those of the 1930s. After going up and down in the 1980s, the murder rate fell to 5.8 by 1999 (Caplow, Hicks, and Wattenberg, 2001).

Murders are more likely to occur in cities than in rural areas, although the murder rates in different cities can vary greatly. About two-thirds of murders are committed by firearms. The prime age range for both the victims and perpetrators of murders is 18 to 24 years of age. An African American is 8 times more likely to be both a victim and a perpetrator of murder than a white person. Males are 10 times more likely to be a murderer than a woman and 4 times more likely to be murdered than a woman. In about 3 out of 4 murders, the victim and perpetrator knew each other; it is far more likely for one to be murdered by a spouse, a relative, a friend, or an associate than to be murdered by a stranger (Caplow, Hicks, and Wattenberg, 2001).

A significant trend in crime during the 1990s was the general decline in property crimes and the large increase in illegal drug crimes. Measured in terms of convicted and imprisoned offenders in all states and in Federal courts, 59% of prisoners were incarcerated for property crimes in 1970; but by 1996 they had fallen to 26%. In 1970, about 11% of all prisoners had been convicted of drug (or alcohol) crimes; by 1996, however, it had risen to 34% (Caplow, Hicks, and Wattenberg, 2001).

Americans across the country fear a spread of the drug wars among American and Mexican drug traffickers and dealers that have plagued Texas and southern Florida. Such drug violence can erupt anywhere in the U.S., including Ohio. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice produced a report on Ohio as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. In its survey of Ohio law enforcement agencies, it found that Ohio's biggest drug threat by far was heroin, which was also highly associated with crimes of both violence and property. Ranking second, but far behind heroin, was crack cocaine and in third marijuana. The particularly high drug traffic areas in Ohio included the Cincinnati-Dayton-Columbus corridor, the Cleveland-Canton-Youngstown triangle, and greater Toledo (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2011).

A new type of crime emerged after 1995 with the introduction of the World Wide Web, which gave virtually everybody some degree of access to the international Internet. Since 1995 there has been a significant amount of cybercrimes, whereby criminals have pulled off online scams and thefts. A growing threat is the hacking into personal, banking, financial, and business computers to steal data and personal identities with which to make fraudulent purchases, money transfers, and transactions. Americans can be victims of cybercrimes by anybody in the world through the Internet.

According to FBI crime rate statistics based upon population units of 100,000 people, Ohio ranked sixth in the country for Internet crime complaints and 45th in dollars lost to Internet crimes. In 2013, Ohio had 12,661 Internet crime complaints for a loss of $10.6 million by victims (Larsen, 2014).

Incidents of Terrorism in Ohio

The terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, shocked all Americans. There was a new sense of threat and fear of extremist terrorism within the U.S. itself. Future acts of terrorism could come from radical Muslim groups, as did the incidents of 9/11, but they might come from domestic terrorists of the far right or the far left. In response to this new sense of vulnerability, the Federal government created the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The State of Ohio created a parallel office known as Ohio Homeland Security within the Ohio Department of Public Safety (Ohio Homeland Security, 2011).

There are no known incidents that have occurred in Ohio that fit the category of "terrorism." There have been no air flight hijackings, no bombings of public buildings, no shootings in shopping malls and public places, no acts of terrorism at sporting events, and no mass killings in public schools. Even so, there are strains of fear that such incidents could happen at any time and at any place across Ohio.

Homeland Security and the Prevention of Terrorism in Ohio

Ohio Homeland Security emphasizes the importance of the continued prevention of acts of terrorism in Ohio. It stresses the advantages of public awareness of possible threats and the reporting of suspicious people and their behavior that might fit the profile of terrorists. Communication,

cooperation, and networking among state, county, and local law enforcement offices is very important. So is the gathering and sharing of terrorist related intelligence (Ohio Homeland Security, 2014).

Ohio Homeland Security oversees the protection of Ohio infrastructure, as broadly defined. Among several areas, it emphasizes the protection of agriculture and food, water, information and communication technologies, transportation, healthcare facilities, and institutions of education and higher learning (Ohio Homeland Security, 2011).

As of 2011, Ohio has received nearly $800 million from the Federal government for homeland security programs (Ohio Homeland Security, 2011).

Overall Summary and Interpretation of Trend Information

Trends in crime are often associated with economic conditions, with the common belief that stagnant economic circumstances drive some desperate people to commit crimes. Evidence, however, suggests that this popular perception is not universal (Roman, 2013). Crime rates can also be associated with age groups, gender, and race. For example, a study conducted in Washington, D.C., reflects what may be a national trend that most violent crimes are committed by people in the age range of 18-24 and that most crimes victims are in the same age range (Urban Institute, 2001). In addition, as many as 80% of all violent crimes are committed by and upon African-Americans (Urban Institute, 2001). The people of Ohio abhor crime and wish to see it eradicated. Many Ohioans fear for their personal security and their possessions. The crime rate can affect neighborhoods and communities across the state and the common belief is that the quality of life improves with declining crime rates.

It is doubtful that major factories, businesses, and corporate offices would be located in Ohio where there are high crime rates. How would they encourage their employees to move to Ohio in the face of the fear of exposure to high crime rates? Likewise, how could they attract promising new employees? In general, businesses fear crime as a factor that destroys their property, drives away customers, and leads to higher costs for security measures.

The crime rate in Ohio has been declining over the last three decades, but it remains significantly higher than it was in 1960.

Author Insights and Alternative States for the Future

Three outcomes for the trends in crime rates and terrorism appear intuitively likely in 2014:

A. The trend toward lower crime rates will reverse and go back to an inclining rate. This would most likely be due to significant increases in drug and Internet crimes. There will also be one or more serious incidents of terrorism in Ohio causing widespread fear. Both property crimes and crimes of violence, including murder, will increase. Given the trends that exist as of 2014, and with no obvious indications of rising crime rates or incidents of terrorism, this outcome appears to have an *a priori* probability of occurrence by 2035 of 0.25.
B. Crime rates will remain consistent with the rates of 2014 with some, but not major net variations. Some crimes may increase, while others decline, and the crime rate may go up and then down. Property crimes may increase slightly or remain about the same as in 2014. Murder rates may decline somewhat. Drug and Internet crimes will remain at about the same levels as 2014. There will not likely be any major act of terrorism in Ohio, although such an act could

hypothetically happen at any place and at any time. This outcome has an *a priori* probability of occurring by 2035 of 0.40.

C. Crime rates will continue to decline both in terms of property crimes and violent crimes. This may occur with an increase in the average age, with a declining number of people in the 18-24 years of age range, the most likely to commit crimes. There may also be tougher laws and law enforcement with new successes in crime prevention, especially Internet crimes. This outcome has an *a priori* probability of occurring by 2035 of 0.35. A decline in crime would be consistent with the available historical data and appears more likely to occur by 2035 than a reversal of the trend in the direction of higher crime rates.

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[1] Along with the research-based data and statistics included in this document, is information provided by the research paper author(s). Although these author insights are not directly cited with research references, they reflect research, observation, logic, intuition, and well-considered expectations compiled by the author(s). The Author Insights sections of this paper are offered for discussion and to help provide a wider perspective for incorporating the descriptor data into the possible future trends. These conclusions are drawn by the author(s) using their knowledge of the scholarly references and their years of professional experience related to the descriptor, and are provided to help the reader more effectively envision the future impact and effects of the descriptor.