

Bowling Green State University

From the Selected Works of Philip M Stinson

November 20, 2014

Police Crime Arrests in the United States, 2011

Philip M Stinson, *Bowling Green State University - Main Campus*

Evin J Carmack, *Bowling Green State University*

Jacob M Frankhouser, *Bowling Green State University*

Mallorie A Wilson, *Bowling Green State University*

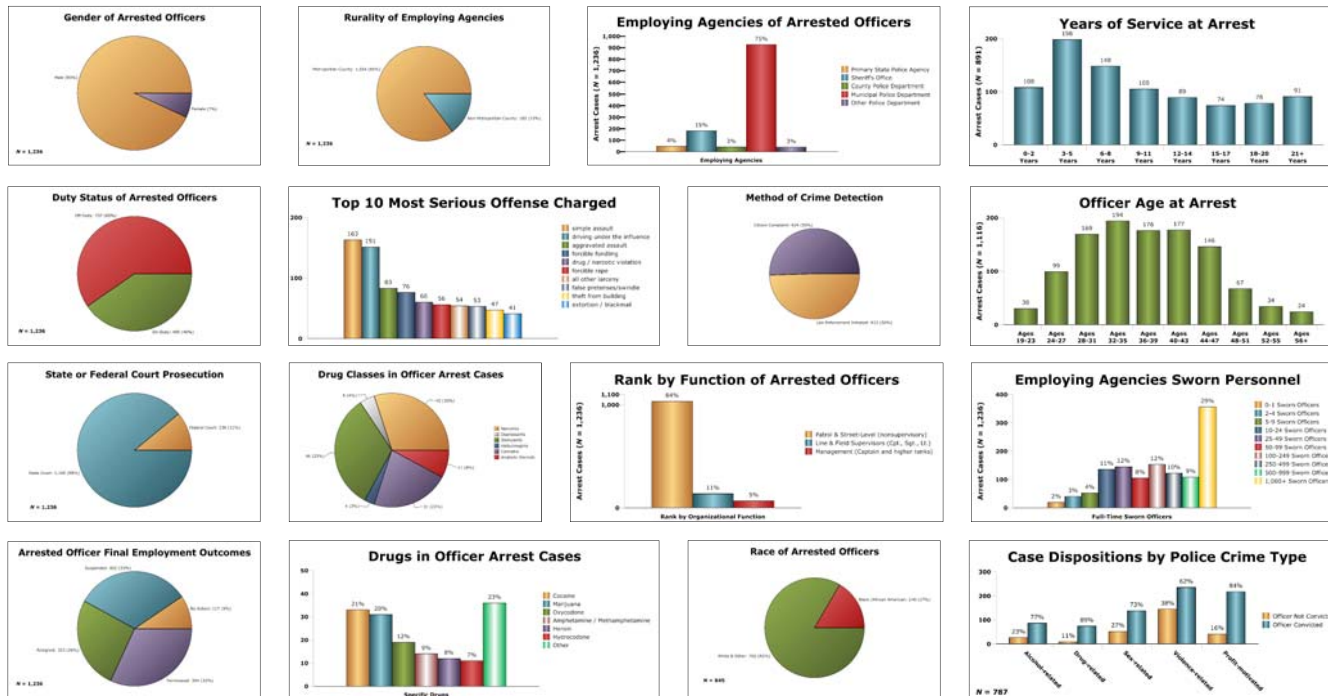


Available at: https://works.bepress.com/philip_stinson/38/

POLICE CRIME ARRESTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2011

Philip M. Stinson, Evin J. Carmack, Jacob M. Frankhouser & Mallorie A. Wilson
Bowling Green State University

This project was supported by Award No. 2011-IJ-CX-0024, awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice. The project was also supported by a Building Strength grant from BGSU.



ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of the study is to provide empirical data on cases of police crime arrests during the year 2011. The study identifies and describes incidents in which nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers were arrested for one or more criminal offenses.

Research Design & Method – The study is a quantitative content analysis of news articles identified through the Google News search engine using 48 automated Google Alerts queries. The unit of analysis in this study is criminal arrest case (not individual arrested officer).

Intercoder Reliability – The Krippendorff's alpha coefficient is strong (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .9153$) across the variables in the study. The overall level of simple percentage of agreement between coders across all of the variables (97.7%) also established a high degree of reliability.

Research limitations/implications – The data are limited to cases that involve an official arrest. The data are also the result of a filtering process that includes the exercise of media discretion as to types of news stories reported and content devoted to particular news stories.

Practical Implications – The study demonstrates that an annual report on police crime arrests can provide empirical data to better understand this neglected area of research.

Originality/value – The study augments the few existing studies on the topic and is the only one known to describe the phenomenon in an annual report of police crime arrests as it occurs within law enforcement agencies nationwide.

RESULTS

As part of a larger police integrity research project, the study identified 1,236 criminal arrest cases of 1,064 nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers during the year 2011. The arrested officers were employed by 679 state and local law enforcement agencies located in 475 counties and independent cities in 48 states (all except Maine and Wyoming) and the District of Columbia. Of these, 97 arrested officers had more than one case, either because they were arrested more than once during 2011 or they had more than one victim resulting in charges.

Sworn law enforcement officers were arrested during 2011 for crimes as varied as, *inter alia*, driving under the influence ($n=179$), official misconduct ($n=173$), drug offenses ($n=96$), forcible fondling ($n=89$), forcible rape ($n=57$), kidnapping/abduction ($n=41$), embezzlement ($n=32$), statutory rape ($n=19$), murder or nonnegligent manslaughter ($n=18$), vehicular hit-and-run ($n=17$), pornography ($n=16$), robbery ($n=15$), and negligent manslaughter ($n=11$).

DISCUSSION

The data collection method provided for the identification of police crimes during 2011 that occurred within virtually every sort of place, as well as the opportunity to draw some conclusions about how often these events occur across the nation. Police crimes are not isolated events. Police crime is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon that is often alcohol-related, drug-related, sex-related, violence-related, and/or profit-motivated.

The study identified and analyzed an unprecedented amount of data on the year 2011 arrests of nonfederal sworn officers employed by law enforcement agencies across the United States. The data collection methodology allows for the aggregation of information that would not otherwise be possible. It would also be very difficult to process and code the content of the vast amount of raw data analyzed without a sophisticated object-relational database within an enterprise-level content management (ECM) system. The methodology and ECM project database design deployed in this project can serve as a model for other social science research projects utilizing big data in a variety of structured and unstructured formats.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This poster presents a small portion of the data generated by the project and demonstrates that an annual report of police crime arrests in the United States can increase empirical knowledge on the conceptually difficult-to-research phenomenon of police crime as it occurs in many law enforcement agencies across the country. Police crimes are not uncommon. Sworn officers get arrested for crimes with some regularity in many jurisdictions across the nation, including rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and large cities. While only a small percentage of the total number of law enforcement officers will ever be arrested for a criminal offense, the data in this study directly contradict some of the prevailing assumptions and the proposition that only a small group of rotten apples perpetrate the vast majority of police crime.