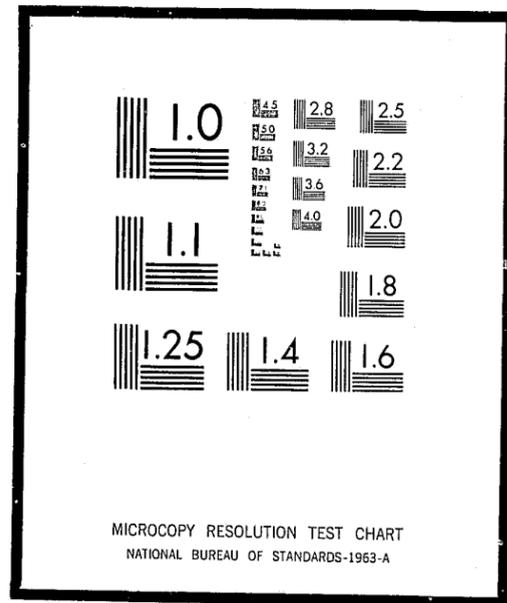


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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
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Montana -
urban-rural

crime 1974



15401

a report by bill erwin
criminal justice data center

A brief examination and comparison of urban and rural crime statistics are most interesting in what they reveal about the nature and frequency of crime in Montana.

It has been assumed for the past decade that most crimes occur in the cities and urban areas where there is the greatest concentration of population.

The mere fact of isolation of those living in rural areas does not necessarily insulate them from the various types of crime that are most generally associated with large congested cities. Wide open spaces and a minimal population density may contribute to a comfortable sense of well being and safety, but in actuality, it is no defense against the several types of violent crimes.

In Montana, slightly over half of the population (53.5%), live in urban areas and 46.5% live in rural areas. For the purpose of this report, the urban population consists of persons living in places of 2,500 inhabitants or more. The rural area population is comprised of those persons living within a county of 2,500 inhabitants or more. Rural places consist of those persons living in a rural community or a rural county of 2,500 inhabitants or less.

An analysis of urban/rural crime in Montana shows about 70% of the seven major index crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated

assault, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft) occur in urbanized areas. Rural areas account for 25% and rural places account for 5%. Even though only 30% of the offenses are occurring in the rural environment, several types of violent crimes are occurring there at a higher rate than in urban areas. These crimes are murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape and aggravated assault. (Refer to Table I and Graphs I and II.) Thirty-four or 71% of all murders and non-negligent manslaughter offenses occurred in rural areas while 14 or 29% occurred in urban areas. Out of 128 rape offenses reported in 1973, 71 or 56% occurred in rural areas while 57 or 44% took place in urban areas. Furthermore, there were 1,172 aggravated assault offenses reported in 1973 of which 778 or 66% occurred in rural areas while 394 or 34% occurred in urban areas.

The most probable cause for the high rate of occurrence of these three types of violent crimes is that they are commonly committed by persons previously known to their victims. This situation is more likely to occur in small Montana communities and isolated rural areas where an individual in any given community is likely to be known or recognized by almost every other resident in that same community.

Many of Montana's isolated communities rely heavily upon the economy provided by the seasonal industries such as forestry, certain

types of agricultural and construction work and are directly affected by the winter unemployment situation. The rural residents who are subjected to this condition lack the opportunity to travel or to simply seek out new acquaintances. As a result the forced environment of the few and all too familiar places combined with the forced company of the same old inhabitants leads to stressful situations and the inevitable clashes. These clashes are usually beyond the control of the local law enforcement agencies.

According to the Uniform Crime Report, and other studies, about 70% of all willful killings, two-thirds of all aggravated assaults, and a high percentage of forcible rapes are committed by families, friends or other persons previously known to each other. The Uniform Crime Report also summarized the circumstances in which a criminal homicide took place.

In 1972, murder within the family made up approximately one-fourth of all murder offenses. Over one-half of these family killings involved spouse killing spouse. The remainder were parents killing children and other in-family killings.¹ Also, since this type of crime is within the family, it is largely beyond the effective control of police and therefore, is almost impossible to prevent.

In a Family Weekly article titled, "You Can't Escape Crime By

Moving to the Country", the author concludes that isolation, the fact that almost every man has firearms, and the lack of adequate law enforcement, with vast areas to cover, are reasons for murder and violent crimes in rural areas. In addition, the author states that, "thefts are more rare in the country than in the city because there are few homes or business establishments that offer much to steal".² However, in addition to this, almost anyone who owns a cabin or who has owned a cabin or summer home in the country will attest that vandalism is very common.

¹U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States 1972. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), p.8.

²Sloan Wilson, "You Can't Escape Crime by Moving to the Country", Family Weekly, July 7, 1974, p.4.

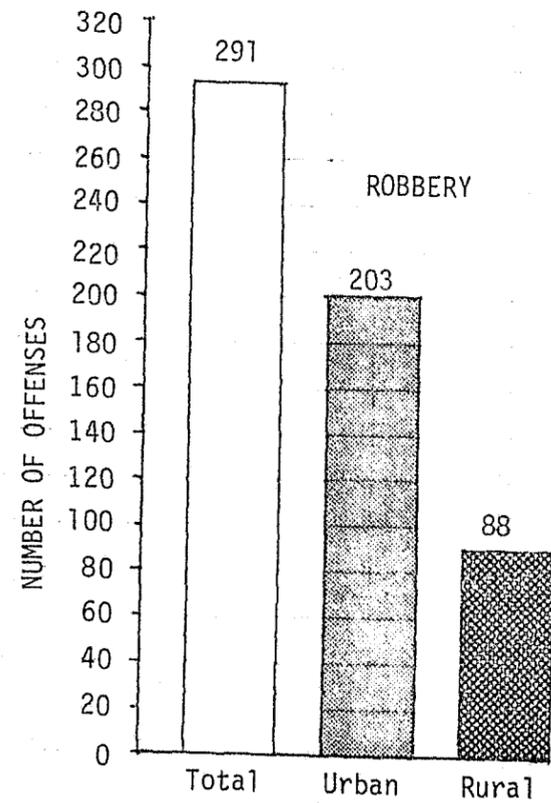
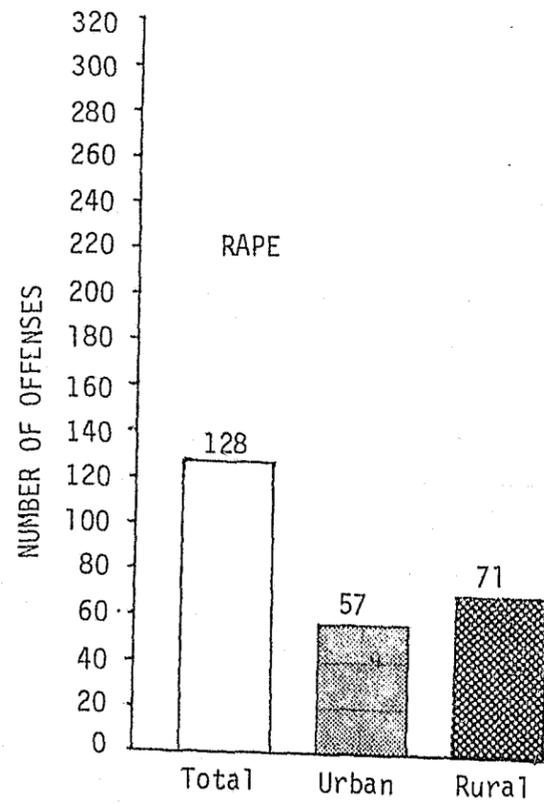
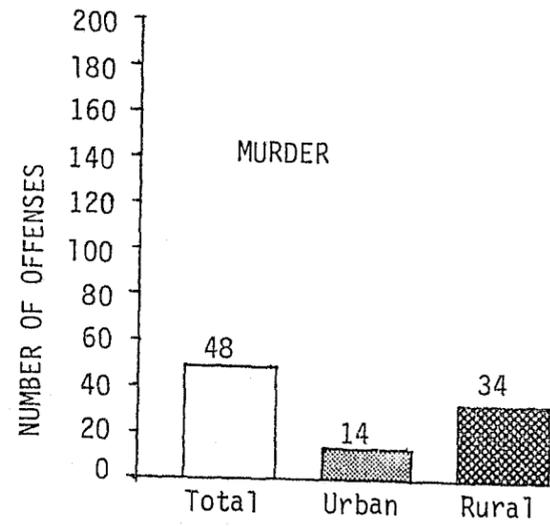
TABLE 1

URBAN-RURAL CRIME SUMMARY

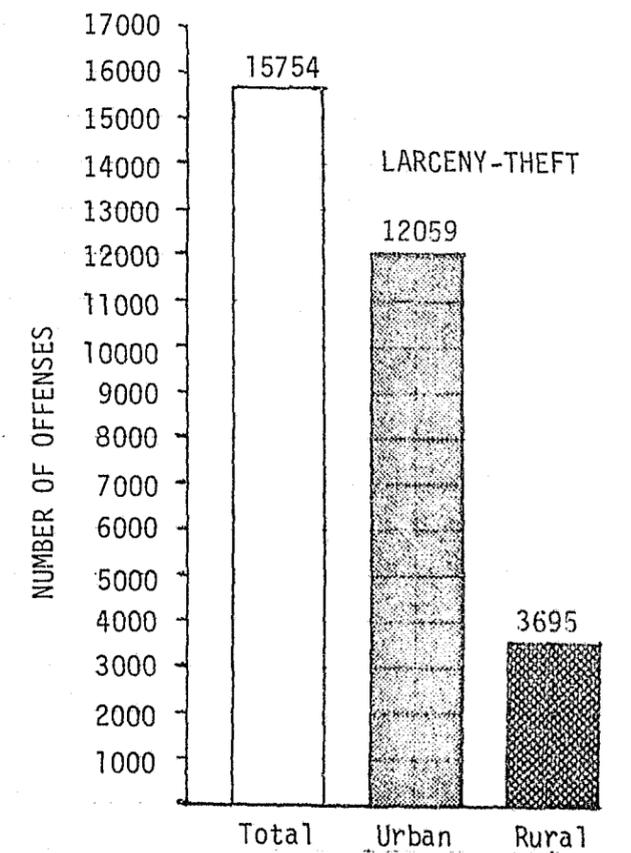
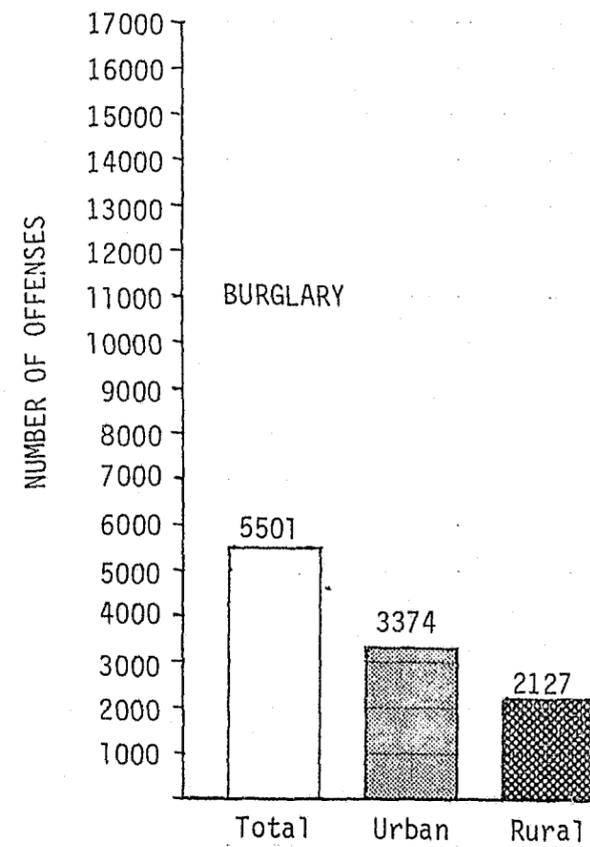
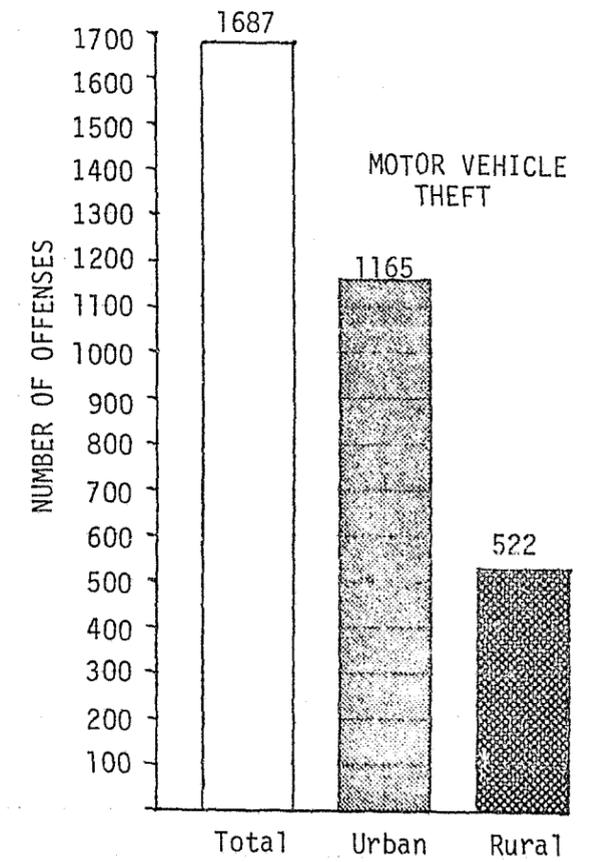
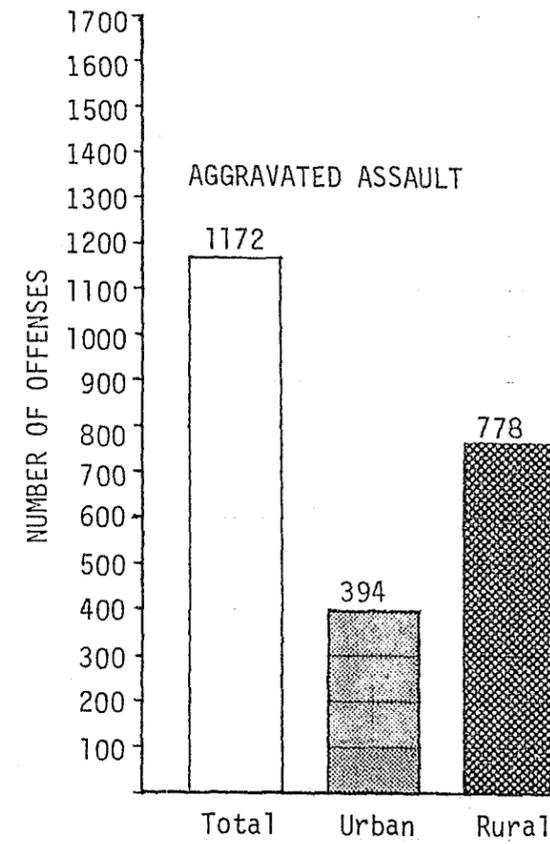
	POPULATION ESTIMATE	CRIME RATE	CRIME INDEX	MURDER NON-NEG-MAN	RAPE	ROBBERY	AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	BURGLARY	LARCENY THEFT	MOTOR VEHICLE
*Urban	343430		17266	14	57	203	394	3374	12059	1165
Rate per 100,000		5027.5		4.1	16.6	59.1	114.7	982.4	3511.3	339.2
*Rural Areas	289801		5999	25	61	80	578	1743	3084	428
Rate per 100,000		2070.0		8.6	21.0	27.6	199.4	601.4	1064.2	147.7
*Rural Places	87769		1316	9	10	8	200	384	611	94
Rate per 100,000		1499.4		10.3	11.4	9.1	277.8	437.4	695.9	107.1
State Total	721000		24581	48	128	291	1172	5501	15754	1687
Rate Per 100,000		3409.3		6.7	17.8	40.4	162.6	763.0	2185.0	234.0

*The Urban population comprises all persons living in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 inhabitants or more. Rural areas comprise all persons living outside urbanized areas of 2,500 inhabitants or more. Rural places are all persons living in places of less than 2,500 inhabitants.

GRAPH I



GRAPH II



END