

Alaska Crime Rate Trends 1985-2023

Presented to the Alaska House Judiciary Committee

February 14, 2025

Dr. Brad A. Myrstol

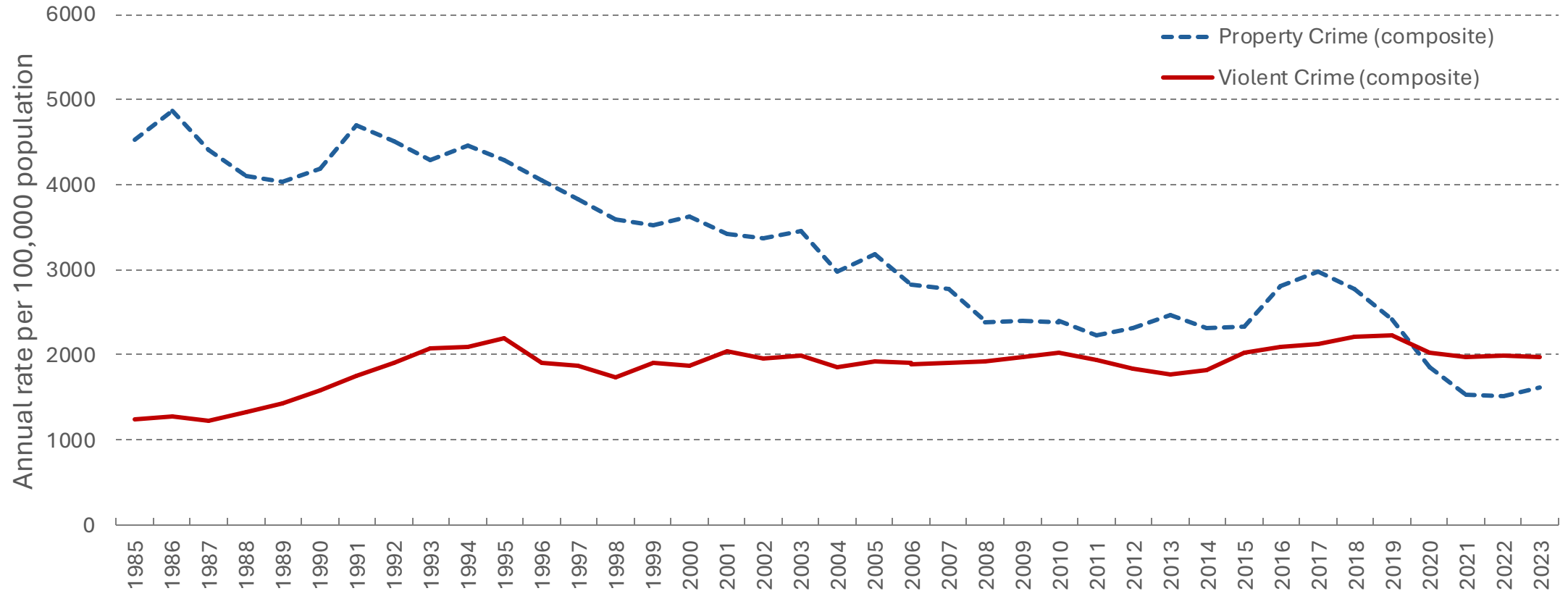
Alaska Justice Information Center

University of Alaska Anchorage

Data Source: Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

- UCR program is managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation
 - Initiated in 1929 (longest ongoing criminological data collection in the U.S.)
 - Data submitted by state, local, tribal (limited federal) law enforcement agencies
 - Program participation is voluntary (although some states require their LEA's participate)
 - Crime rate discussions often begin with UCR data
 - UCR crime rates most often cited >>> **Part I Offenses**
 - Aggravated assault; robbery; rape (<< 2012 || 2013 >>); criminal homicide
 - Larceny theft; burglary; motor vehicle theft; arson (1979)
 - “Uniform” >>> standardized crime definitions used by all participating jurisdictions
 - Purposes:
 - Gauge the overall **volume** of crimes known to police
 - Monitor **changes** in the volume/rate of crimes known to police

Property and Violent Crime Rates in Alaska: 1985-2023



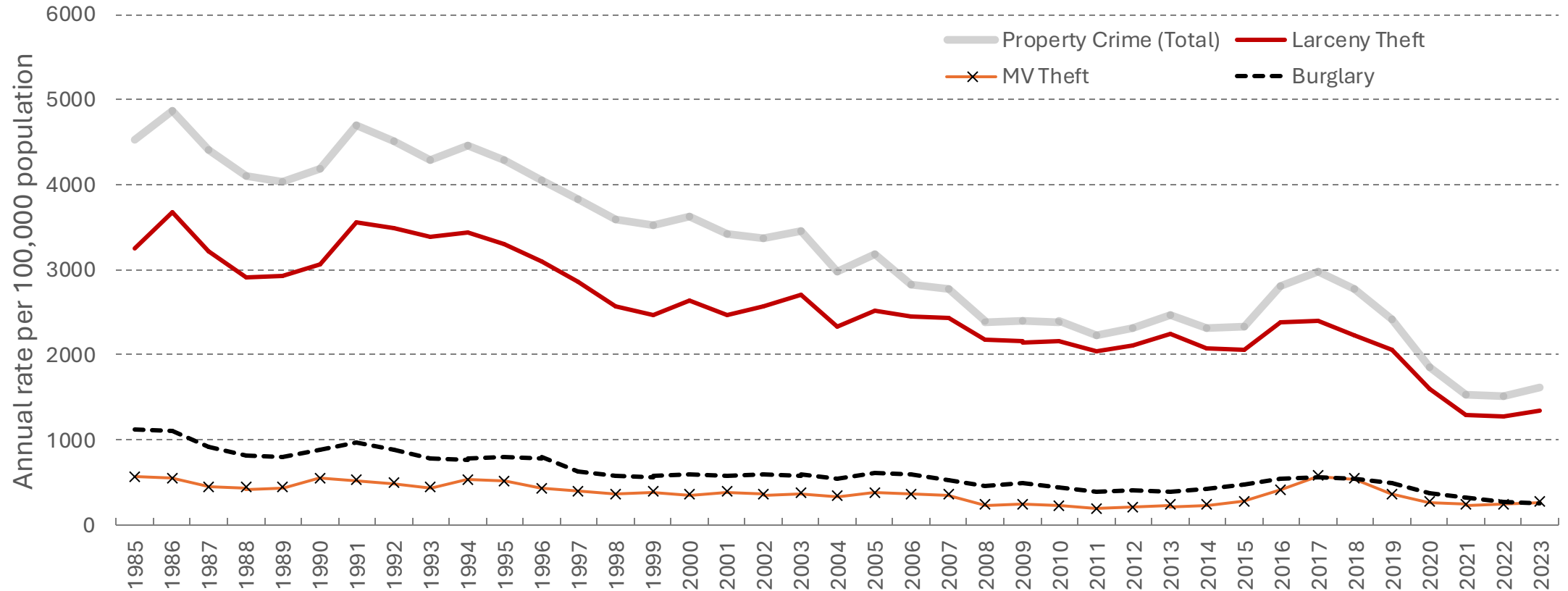
Statewide population estimates obtained from Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/index.cfm>

Statewide UCR crime data obtained from Alaska Department of Public Safety: <https://dps.alaska.gov/statewide/r-i/ucr> and the Alaska Justice Information Center: *Crime in Alaska* report archive: <https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/14773>

What do these UCR crime trends tell us?

- Alaska's crime rates are something of a “mixed bag”...
 - Good news! In the aggregate, **property crime rate has dropped markedly** since 1985 (from 4,526 to 1,620 – decline of 64%)
 - Not-so-good news: In the aggregate, **violent crime rate has held steady since 1993**
- We need to be wary of jumping to conclusions just yet...
- Criminal justice policy and practice need more detail
 - A better (more *nuanced*) understanding requires some **disaggregation**

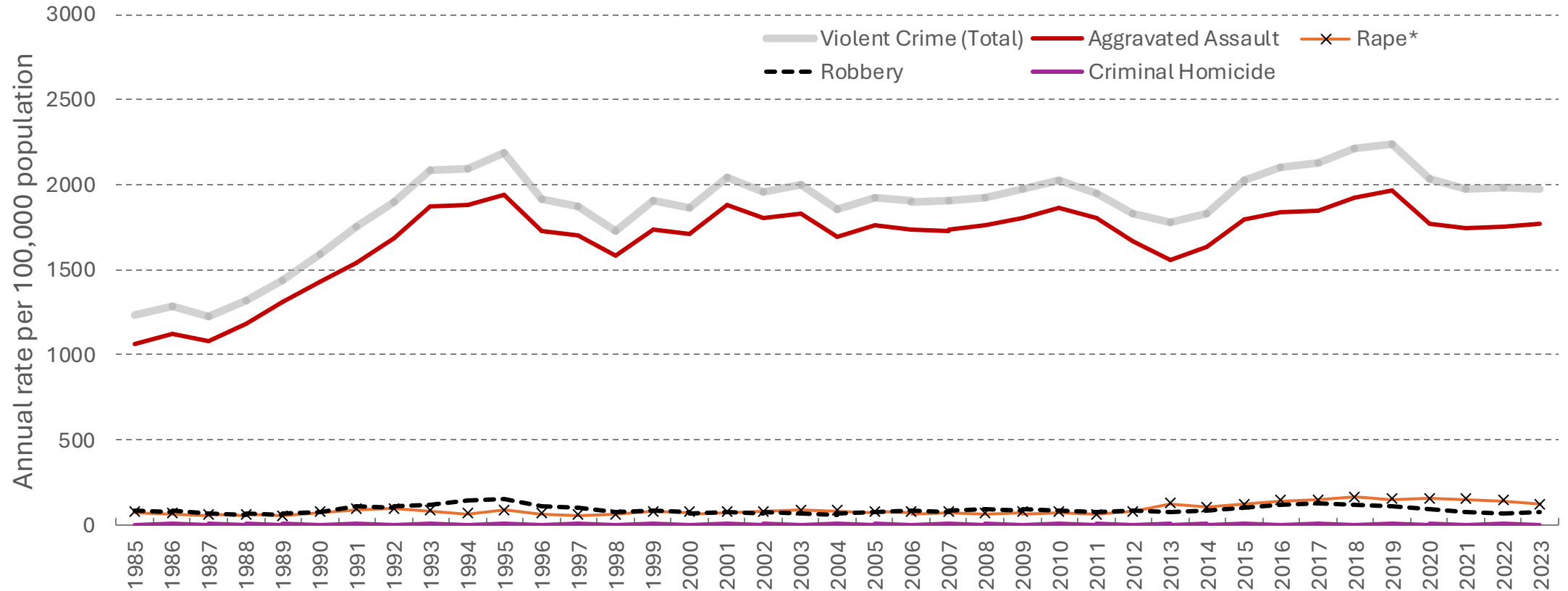
Specific Property Crime Rates in Alaska: 1985-2023 (*excluding arson*)



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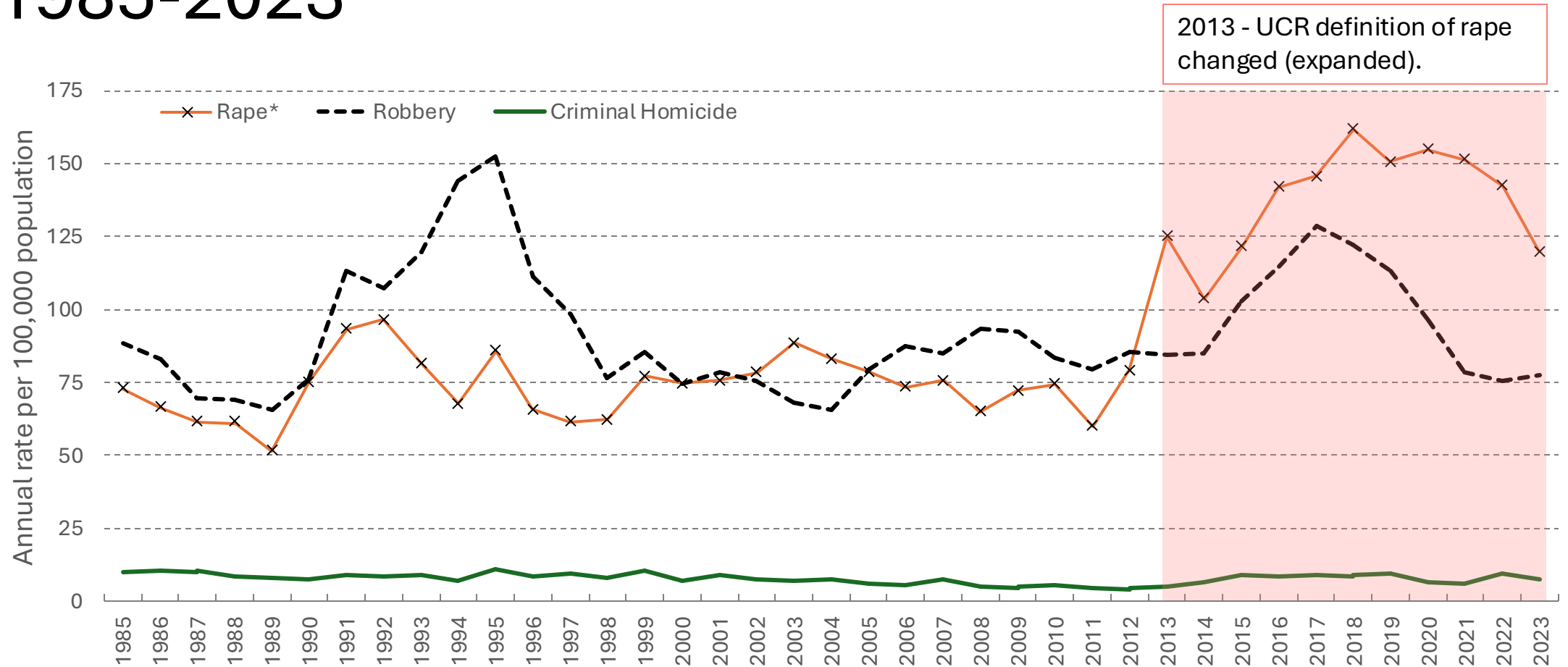
Specific Violent Crime Rates in Alaska: 1985-2023



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Specific Violent Crime Rates in Alaska (zoom): 1985-2023



Statewide population estimates obtained from Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/index.cfm>

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What do specific UCR crime trends tell us?

• Property Crime Rate

- Is driven, almost exclusively, by **larceny theft** (by volume)
- All three *specific* property crimes have declined since 1985
 - Larceny theft (from 3,259.4 to 1351.7 - ↓58.5%)
 - Motor vehicle theft (from 566.8 to 268.2 - ↓52.7%)
 - Burglary (from 1,121.9 to 249.4 - ↓77.8%)
- Trending in the right direction. Really does seem to be good news!!

• Violent Crime Rate

- Is driven, almost exclusively, by **aggravated assault** (by volume)
- Much more volatility than property crimes (within and between crime categories)
 - Aggravated assault (from 1,062.7 to 1,770.4 - ↑66.6%)
 - Robbery (from 88.3 to 77.4 - ↓12.3%)
 - Rape* (**2013** >> from 124.9 to 119.8 - ↓4.1%)
 - Criminal homicide (from 10.1 to 7.6 - ↓24.8%)
- Stubborn persistence (“flat” trend) since 2000/2001 (*rape >> 2013 through 2023*)

Where are we at **today** (i.e., 2023)?

- Given what we know about Alaska's UCR crime trends, where are we at in 2023 - **comparatively**?

	Alaska	United States	Alaska vs. United States
Property (composite)	1,619.9	1,916.7	84.5%
Larceny theft	1,351.7	1,347.2	100.3%
Motor vehicle theft	268.2	318.7	84.2%
Burglary	249.4	250.7	99.7%
Violent (composite)	1,975.2	363.8	542.9%
Aggravated assault	1,770.4	264.1	670.2%
Rape*	119.8	38.0	315.3%
Robbery	77.4	66.5	116.4%
Criminal homicide	7.6	5.7	133.3%

Taken all together, what do these data tell us?

- **Property Crime Rate**

- Alaska is experiencing a **downward trend**; property crime rates are getting lower
- Alaska is, pretty much, tracking national property crime rates
- Again, it really does seem to be **good news**.

- **Violent Crime Rate**

- Violent crime, on the other hand... NOT good news.
- Persistently high rates of violent crime since 2000/2001 (“flat” trend)
 - **Abnormally high** rates in 2 violent crime categories in 2023
 - Aggravated assault: **6.7 times higher** than the national rate
 - Rape: **3.1 times higher** than the national rate
 - Robbery and Criminal Homicide: **1.2 and 1.3 times higher** than the national rate, respectively

- **Compelling temporal and comparative patterns in these data.**

- Suggests Alaska’s “crime problem” may be a **violent crime problem** (note >> lots of other crime types than the 7 examined here....)

Caveats

- **Dark Figure of Crime**
 - Crimes that occur, but never reported to police
 - A lot of crime occurs that is never captured in the UCR
- **Hierarchy Rule**
 - Crime events are usually “bundles” of offenses, but (legacy) UCR only captures single most serious crime
- UCR is **not well suited for measuring prevalence** of crime, but **works pretty well for trend analysis** and **taking the “long view”**
 - “Uniformity” of measurement error
 - Changes in rates over time are meaningful
- NCVS isn’t perfect either...
 - Provides **national victimization estimates**. But crime is highly contextual!
 - Examples: Prevalence of crime; reporting to police
- **Alaska would benefit greatly from a statewide NCVS-type crime victimization survey!**

Percentage of Crimes Reported to Police, 2023 National Crime Victimization Survey

Crime Victimization Type	% reported to police
Violent Crime	50.6%
Aggravated Assault	57.1%
Robbery	42.4%
Rape/sexual assault	46.0%
Property Crime	29.9%
Burglary	42.2%
Motor vehicle theft	72.4%
Other theft	24.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2024). *Criminal Victimization, 2023*. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv23.pdf>



Alaska's Council on
Domestic Violence
& Sexual Assault



<https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/7782>



UAA Justice Center
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Principal Investigators

Dr. Andre Rosay (2010, 2015)

Dr. Ingrid D. Johnson (2020)

Measuring Rape/Sexual Assault in Alaska

- In 2020, Alaska's **UCR** program recorded **1,135 rapes**
- In 2020, Alaska's **Felony Sex Offense (FSO)** data collection recorded **1,363 sex offense incidents** (not limited to UCR definition of rape) involving **1,309 victims**, 1,166 (89.1%) of whom were **female**
- But, based on national data (NCVS), we know that **a majority of rape/sexual assault victimizations go unreported** to police
- Thus, we still didn't know **how many people** experienced rape or sexual assault in Alaska in 2020 (or any year) if we rely solely on UCR data
- The **Dark Figure of Crime** makes it very difficult to provide services to survivors of rape and sexual assault, to design and implement sexual assault prevention initiatives, to develop and deliver appropriate offender accountability measures, and more!
 - What was needed was a **victimization survey** designed to provide estimates of **victimization prevalence** (i.e., estimates of how many people experience rape and/or sexual assault)

Overview of AVS Methodology

- Statewide **telephonic** survey (cell phone, and landline) conducted in 2010, 2015, 2020
- Limited to adult, English-speaking, non-institutionalized **women**
- Uses **behaviorally specific** questions.
 - Does not require respondents to define their experience as a crime.
- Survey results are **weighted** to account for non-response and sampling error (geographic region, age, race/ethnicity)
- Provides **victimization prevalence** estimates (% of population) for three types of violence:
 - Intimate partner violence
 - Sexual violence
 - Stalking
- Estimates are computed for PAST YEAR as well as LIFETIME victimization
- To date: Nearly **13,000** Alaskan women have participated

Estimated percentage of adult women in Alaska who experienced:

Type of Violence	PAST 12 MONTHS (%)		
	2010	2015	2020
Intimate partner violence (IPV composite)	9.4	6.4	6.9
Threats of physical violence	5.8	3.0	2.6
Physical violence	8.6	5.9	6.5
Sexual violence (SV composite)	4.3	2.9	3.4
Alcohol- or drug-involved sexual assault	3.6	2.0	2.1
Forcible sexual assault	2.5	1.6	2.2
IPV, SV, or both (composite)	11.8	8.1	8.1

Source: *Alaska Victimization Survey*. (2010, 2015, 2020). University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center. See: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/avs/avs-results/statewide-results.cshtml>

Estimated number of adult women in Alaska who experienced:

Type of Violence	PAST 12 MONTHS		
	2010 (249,631)	2015 (264,204)	2020 (265,572)
Intimate partner violence (IPV composite)	23,240	16,909	18,314
Threats of physical violence	14,340	7,926	6,873
Physical violence	21,262	15,588	17,198
Sexual violence (SV composite)	10,631	7,662	8,791
Alcohol- or drug-involved sexual assault	8,901	5,284	5,596
Forcible sexual assault	6,181	4,227	5,712
IPV, SV, or both (composite)	29,174	21,401	21,217

Source: *Alaska Victimization Survey*. (2010, 2015, 2020). University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center. See: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/avs/avs-results/statewide-results.cshtml>, as well as: <https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/7782>

Estimated number of adult women in Alaska who experienced felony sex offense || sexual violence victimization, 2020

Type of Violence	PAST 12 MONTHS	
	2020 FSO	2020 AVS
Sexual violence (SV composite)	525	8,791
Alcohol- or drug-involved sexual assault	---	5,596
Forcible sexual assault	---	5,712

Sources: *Alaska Victimization Survey*. (2010, 2015, 2020). University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center. See: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/avs/avs-results/statewide-results.cshtml>, as well as: <https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/7782>, and <https://dps.alaska.gov/getmedia/38dd8f78-dd21-48bc-a872-3e9d453f53c3/Felony-Level-Sex-Offenses-2020>

Questions?

Contact Information:

Brad Myrstol

Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Alaska Justice Information Center Director

Email: bamyrstol@alaska.edu

APPENDIX: AVS Sexual Violence Measures

- **Alcohol- or drug involved sexual violence**

- *When you were alcohol or drug intoxicated and unable to consent, has anyone...*
 - *Had vaginal sex with you?*
 - *Made you receive anal sex?*
 - *Made you perform oral sex?*
 - *Made you receive oral sex?*

- **Forcible Sexual Violence**

- *Has anyone used physical force or threats of physical force to physically harm you to...*
 - *Make you have vaginal sex?*
 - *Make you receive anal sex?*
 - *Make you perform oral sex?*
 - *Make you receive oral sex?*
 - *Put their fingers or an object in your vagina or anus?*
 - *Try to have vaginal, oral, or anal sex with you?*

APPENDIX: AVS Intimate Partner Violence Measures

- **Threats of physical violence by intimate partner(s)**

- *Have your romantic or sexual partners made threats to physically harm you?*

- **Physical violence by intimate partners**

- *Have your romantic or sexual partners...*
 - *Slapped you?*
 - *Pushed or shoved you?*
 - *Hit you with a fist or something hard?*
 - *Kicked you?*
 - *Hurt you by pulling your hair?*
 - *Slammed you against something?*
 - *Tried to hurt you by choking or suffocating you?*
 - *Beaten you?*
 - *Burned you on purpose?*
 - *Used a knife or a gun on you?*

APPENDIX: UCR Part 1 Violent Crime

Definitions

Criminal homicide (murder/non-negligent manslaughter)

- The willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another
 - Based solely on police investigation, not a determination by a court, a medical examiner, coroner, jury, or other judicial body.
 - Does not include deaths caused by negligence, suicide, accident, or justifiable homicides.
 - Attempts and assaults to murder are classified as aggravated assault.

Rape (2013)

- Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another without consent.
 - Not victim or offender sex- or gender-dependent
 - Includes instances when victim is incapable of giving consent because of temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity (including influence of alcohol and/or drugs), or age
 - Attempts and assaults to commit rape are included
 - Statutory rape and incest are excluded

APPENDIX: UCR Part 1 Violent Crime Definitions

Robbery

- The taking or attempted taking of anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence, and/or by putting the victim(s) in fear.
 - A type of theft that includes direct confrontation with the victim
 - While robbery involves the taking of property, it is categorized as a violent crime because of the violent nature of the offense

Aggravated Assault

- An unlawful attack by one person on another to inflict severe or aggravated bodily injury.
 - Usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by other means likely to produce death or grievous bodily harm
 - Includes assaults involving the display of, or threat to use, a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon
 - Attempts to murder are included

APPENDIX: UCR Part 1 Property Crime Definitions

Burglary

- The unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.
 - “Structure” includes (but is not limited to) permanent dwellings, businesses, offices, warehouses
 - Vessels/ships are included
 - Mobile homes, tents, houseboats, and other readily moveable dwellings used for recreation are not included
 - Does not require the use of force to gain entry

Larceny Theft

- The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another.
 - Motor vehicle theft is not included (has its own category)
 - Embezzlement, fraud, counterfeiting, obtaining money under false pretenses, larceny by check, larceny by bailee, and check fraud are not included

APPENDIX: UCR Part 1 Property Crime Definitions

Motor Vehicle Theft

- Theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle.
 - “Motor vehicle” is a self-propelled vehicle that runs on land surfaces and not on rails
 - Cars, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, ATV’s, and snowmobiles are included
 - Does not include farm equipment, construction equipment (e.g., road grader, bulldozer), or watercraft (e.g., jet skis, recreational boats)

Arson (*not included in today’s presentation*)

- Any willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, or personal property of another.
 - Fires of suspicious or unknown origin are not included