

Good Crime News For 2003 Stats

FBI REPORTS VIOLENT CRIME DOWN AGAIN IN 2003

On May 24, the FBI released preliminary crime statistics indicating that in 2003 the number of violent crimes in the U.S. decreased 3.2% from the previous year. Because the nation's population rose between 2002-2003, the FBI's report implies an even greater decrease in the violent crime rate (the number of violent crimes per 100,000 people). The nation's violent crime rate has dropped every year since 1991.

There were decreases in three of the four categories of violent crime. The number of rapes and robberies both decreased by 1.9%, while the number of aggravated assaults decreased by 4.1%. The number of murders increased 1.3%, but until the final figures are published this Fall, and factored against the 2003 population count, it will be unclear what change, if any, there was in the murder rate, which, in recent years has decreased to a level not seen since the mid-1960s.

The increase in the number of murders, FBI said, was driven by a 15.7% increase in cities with populations under 10,000, and a 10.8% increase in cities with populations between 10,000 and 24,999. Murders increased 0.2% in big cities, decreased 6.5% in suburban counties, and decreased 4.7% in rural counties.

NRA members can be particularly pleased about the downward trend in violent crime. Criminologists and other experts routinely attribute the trend, in part, to stronger law enforcement and sentencing policies adopted in the states during the 1990s, in many cases with the active support of NRA. The anti-gun groups, however, must have read the FBI's report with mixed emotions. Because they profess an interest in reducing violent crime, they doubtless were pleased. On the other hand, the fact that violent crime keeps going down while the numbers of guns, gun owners, and Right-to-Carry states are increasing undercuts their anti-gun mantra that crime is caused by guns, in and of themselves, and not the criminals.