

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

Criminal History Records in Arizona 1997 to 2005 Trend Analysis

Our mission is to sustain and enhance the coordination, cohesiveness, productivity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Arizona

July 2007



Background

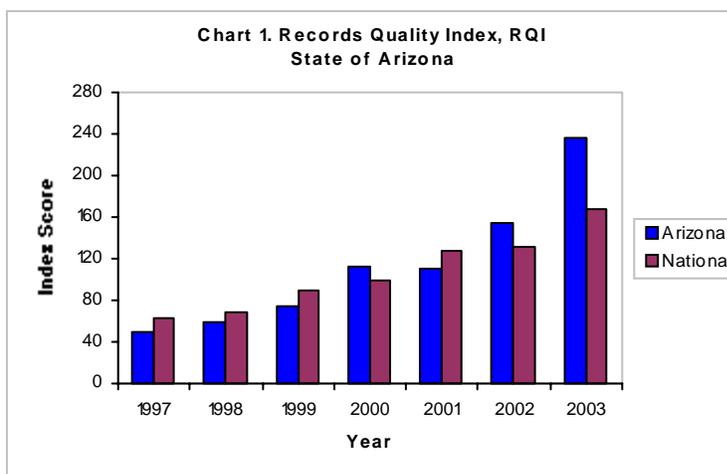
As mandated by Arizona Revised Statute §41-1750, Arizona criminal justice agencies are required to submit arrest and case disposition information for all felony, sexual, domestic violence, and DUI offenses to the central state repository, also called the Arizona Computerized Criminal History (ACCH). The criminal arrest and disposition information creates a criminal history record within the ACCH linking an offender to the specific offense. In turn, this information is shared with local, state, and federal agencies as well as private institutions for running background checks, investigating criminal cases, and issuing firearms permits.

The Records Quality Index

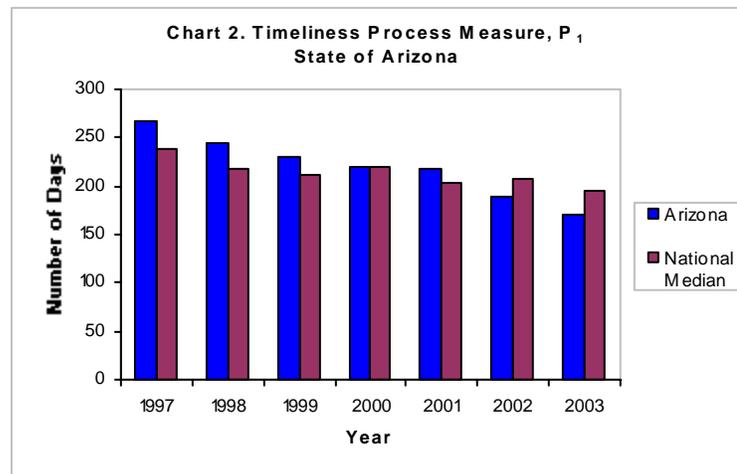
The Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission utilized the Records Quality Index (RQI), developed by Structured Decisions Corporation (SDC), for an assessment of the quality of Arizona's criminal history records in the ACCH. The index is calculated by accounting for the timeliness, completeness, and level of accessibility of the criminal history records; the higher the RQI, the greater the records quality.

Records Quality Index Results

As seen in Chart 1, Arizona's RQI was lower than the National RQI (NRQI) in 1997. But by 2003, the state's RQI



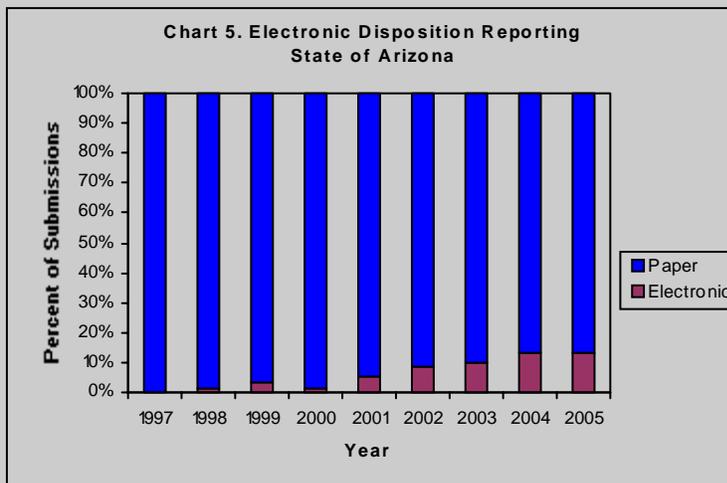
increased well beyond the NRQI. This sudden increase over the seven year period is mainly attributable to improvements in both the timeliness and completeness of criminal history record information. Although by 2003 the average time between the date of arrest and the date the disposition was rendered to the ACCH was lower than the national average (see Chart 2), it was much lower than the average time between these two submissions to ACCH in 1997. The state's percentage of dispositions which are complete was slightly higher than the nation in 2003 (see Chart 3 on the following page), which was a marked improvement since 1997.



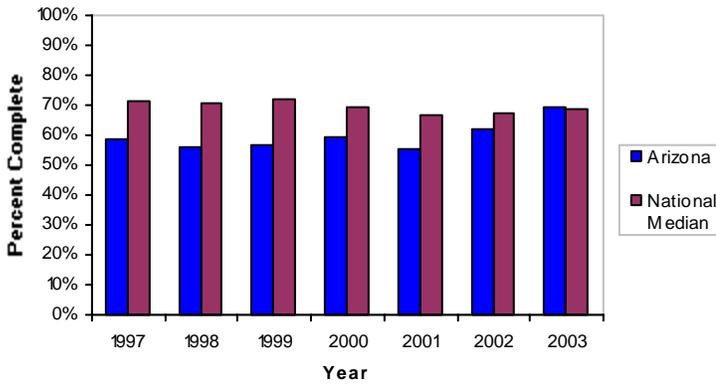
Electronic Disposition Reporting

The State of Arizona began reporting dispositions electronically in 1998 (see Chart 5). At that time, only 1.4% of all Arizona criminal case dispositions were submitted to the ACCH electronically. As of 2005, Arizona increased the percentage of electronic disposition submissions to 13.2%. The Arizona court system submits the majority of electronic dispositions, followed by Arizona prosecuting attorneys.

Although a concerted effort is being made to automate criminal case disposition submissions, a large majority are still reported to the ACCH in a paper format. The electronic disposition process can greatly reduce the length of time between disposition completion and its entry into the ACCH. Electronic reporting has also been found to decrease certain disposition errors.



**Chart 3. Completeness Process Measure, P₂
State of Arizona**

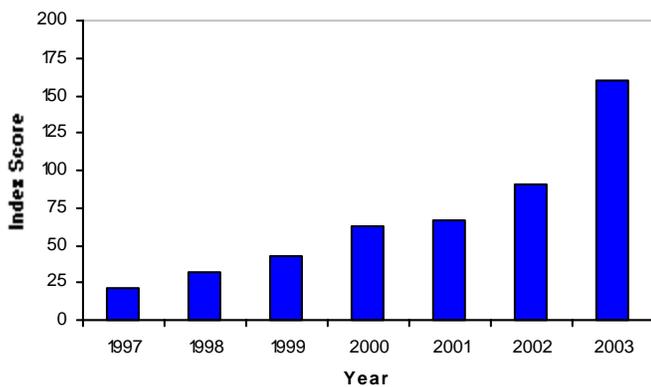


Adjusted Records Quality Index

In addition to the traditional RQI, an adjusted RQI score was created by the SAC to capture the time between case disposition rendering to the ACCH and disposition entry or final modification in the ACCH. The original RQI measure, developed by SDC, does not take this additional time into account since several states do not record any data on a disposition's entry date into a central state repository.

Although the Adjusted RQI score is lower than the traditional RQI score due to the additional record submissions process taken into account, the results of the Adjusted RQI analysis confirm the trend that was found in the original RQI analysis. Arizona's Adjusted RQI increased steadily during the period examined, which by 2003 was nearly eight times higher than in 1997 (see Chart 4).

**Chart 4. Adjusted Records Quality Index, Adjusted RQI
State of Arizona**



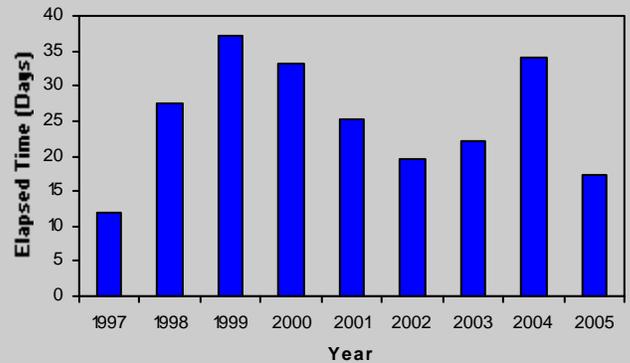
Conclusion

The timeliness and completeness of criminal history record information is critical to informed decision making affecting the safety and security of law enforcement personnel and the citizens of out state. Although improvements in the quality of Arizona's criminal history records are still needed, Arizona displayed marked improvement in records quality from 1997 to 2003. Although the state's RQI was behind the National RQI in 1997, the state index overcame the national index by nearly 70 points by 2003. When accounting for the time it takes to enter or complete modification of a disposition in the ACCH, the Adjusted RQI also shows signs of great improvement in the quality of Arizona's criminal history record information.

Additional Timeliness Measures

Separate from the RQI calculations, two additional measures investigate further the timeliness of arrest and disposition records. First, the mean number of days from the date of arrest to the date the arrest was entered or finally modified in ACCH gives a detailed look at the time it takes accurate

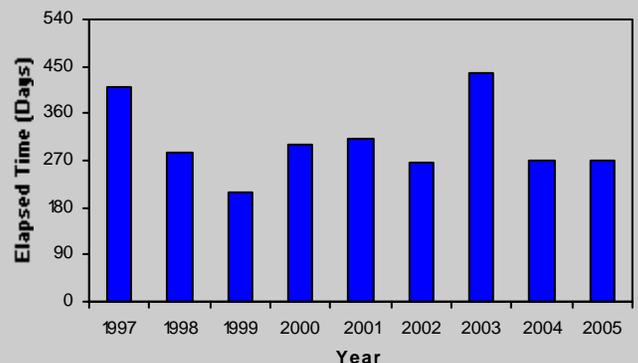
**Chart 6. Mean Days for Arrest Entry/Modification
State of Arizona**



arrest records to be entered into ACCH. Chart 6 shows that in 2005, the mean number of days to enter arrest information into ACCH was at its lowest since the beginning of the study period in 1997. The mean in 2005 stood at 17.4 days.

Second, the mean number of days from the final disposition of a case to the disposition's entry or final modification in ACCH reveals the length of time required for the disposition to be recorded in ACCH. Throughout the time period studied, Arizona's mean number of days from case disposition to entry into ACCH fluctuated, ranging from a low of 210.1 days in 1999 to a high of 436.1 days in 2003. In 2005, the mean number of days from final disposition to disposition entry or final modification into ACCH stood at 270.7, marking a two-year leveling off period (see Chart 7).

**Chart 7. Mean Days for Disposition Entry/Modification
State of Arizona**



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