**Los Angeles Crime Rates Pre and Post Covid-19**

We look at the crime rate of Los Angeles before and after the beginning of the Covid-19 virus as well as the initial country wide shut down. We decided to look at a credible source for data on open data from the Los Angeles area and, was provided with data tables of criminal reports in the Los Angeles area from 2010-2019 as well as a separate data file from 2020-2021. As we mentioned beforehand, we wished to look at the year right before the Covid-19 epidemic’s present in the US, which was the year 2019, and the year that the virus took a hold of the general population in America that was the cause of the shutdown, that being the year 2020. After downloading the datasets, we went through cleaning up the data for all columns that held useful information about our goal and any interesting details that’ll help us in providing any other useful insight. In this process of cleaning up the data, we used Jupyter Notebook. From this we went forward and, organized all the different crimes committed into general categories of crimes; Property, Violent, Public Order, Organized, and White-Collar crimes. After creating a brand-new CSV file of our organized data sets, we decided to use Tableau as a tool to create good data visualization. I went ahead and created a Pie chart of the crime categories to show a general look of the crime count for each year. We also decided to use a Histogram to show the frequency distributions for each crime categories for each month. A Time-Plot graph was also created on the amount crimes and its fluctuation from month to month of both years. These graphs have their 2019 and 2020 varieties respectively and placed them side by side for comparison.

Looking at the data first and foremost there is one major detail to point out and its that 2020 had a larger number of general crimes to occur in the Los Angeles district than its previous year. Seeing as how such a major new occurrence of the stay-at-home order given nationwide it wouldn’t be too shocking to see that many people to cause a general disturbance in populated cities. However, at the same time it was expected that due to the stay home order, that general crimes should’ve decreased in some of the criminal categories. It could be pointed out that in 2020, besides Covid-19, a lot of social unrest occurred due to racial injustices from across the country as well as people protesting against Covid-19 regulations imposed by the government. Looking a little deeper into our data, we see that while 2020 had more general crimes, the category of crimes shifted in position as we began to see more of one category of crime occur more often than the other. An example of this statement is that Public Order classified crimes decreased in 2020 versus 2019. This is quite strange as we previously mentioned that civil unrest was occurring nationwide for multiple reasons. Though one could say that due to this stay-at-home mandate less people were inclined to go out and do any form of public activism with the virus out, especially in large, crowded cities. We also saw another interesting data point was found out which was Violent and Organized crime rates from 2019 greatly decreased in 2020, which is most likely another effect from the stay-at-home mandate made that prevented people from going out putting each other a life threating risk.

To take this analysis a little farther we can go ahead and evaluate a credible source that has its own reporting of crimes during the pandemic on a much larger scale than just California. This report comes from the United Nations, specifically the Office of Drugs and Crime (shortened to UNODC). While my focus was specifically on Los Angeles, using findings from professionals can give us some useful insight of the situation even when being evaluated on a more global scale than our own project. Their findings were focused on Violent and Property based crimes, and what they saw was a general increase of crimes in the year 2020, compared to the crime rate of last year. 2020 has a 25% decrease in Violent crime rates and a 50% decrease of Property based crimes (which was stated to shock the researchers as it was thought to increase) in a majority of recorded countries (UNODC). This is quite interesting to see since for LA County, there was actually a decrease of Violent based crimes (which is similar), but an increase of Property based crimes. It should be stated that the report does keep note of difficulty in recording crime rates in more troubled areas of the world such as certain cities in Latin American countries, compared to European countries. It is also mentioned how the reporting of crimes has come to some difficulty in the new pandemic climate for many justice institutions. However, it seems that despite some of the challenges in data gathering these numbers were wouldn’t cause a huge difference in count. There comes a general consensus of these findings that while it was shocking to see Property based crimes decrease there was still the hypothesis that as more stress is placed on individuals from the increased unemployment rate and higher likelihood of family-related issues that people will become more desperate to achieve financial stability. It is seen that with some business that depend on individuals to come in contact (mostly Blue-Collared jobs) start to stay closed down for longer durations, the more likely people will turn to robbery and theft. There is discussion of two different theories that explain plausible occurrences to occur in society affected by the pandemic, called the Strain Theory and Opportunity Theory. The Strain theory explains that socioeconomic issues that affect a large part of the population, especially the most vulnerable groups, have the potential to create an atmosphere of pressure that drives individuals to commit crime (UNODC). While Opportunity theory discusses about how the lockdown can potentially reduce the possibility of crimes being perpetrated because of the restrictions imposed on movement and social interaction (UNODC). Regardless of which theory ends up becoming truer than the other, we will ultimately see that Covid-19 has impacted society of the majority of countries for better or for worse. Measures will need to be made in accordance to what occurs in the future to either support the drop of crime or find better methods in combating it in these more troubling times of an ever evolving Covid-19.

A very important note to make about the data sources found for Los Angeles was that despite the data coming from the same databank source, the crime count between 2019 and 2020 was almost doubled, which was quite odd considering that typically crime rates of large populated cities, at least for LA, stay relatively constant (give or take a small amount of reported crimes). This can come from a multitude of reasons including the reporting of the dataset itself, but if we wanted to make some thoughtful speculation that wasn’t due to human error we can take into account of some recent developments around Los Angeles. For one matter southern California in general has seen a large influx of the homeless population skyrocket that has hit some places hard, specifically the larger cities such as San Diego and LA. The numbers themselves of the population increased to 63,706 of the whole LA County in the year 2020 which was a 13% increase compared to the last year of 2019 when Covid-19 wasn’t a current issue (LAist). While this can be related to the previous statement made, we should also look at the unemployment rate that occurred in LA County between 2019 and 2020, where in 2019 there was an annual unemployment rate of 4.6% versus 2020’s average annual unemployment rate of 13.04% (YCharts). This was more than triple of last year’s unemployment rate and we can give some reasoning behind this where companies were laying off more workers, especially for Blue-Collar type work (Tapp). Combine this large loss of work for many people combined with the housing rental rates in California to remain as expensive as it did previously (Tapp) instead of changing with the social situation could lead to believe that desperate or angry individuals who abruptly lost work and housing to commit more acts of crime. Meaning that large fluctuations are not very common in and has led us to believe that there might be some sort of human error in reporting these crimes in 2020. We feel that this data may be somewhat misleading in its presentation, at least for the 2020 crime data as it did almost double in count. There could be some guesses made about what could’ve caused these strange data point numbers. One idea could be that simply put, more crimes did occur in 2020 compared to its previous year as drastic changes occurred to the general public in the form of a pandemic rising and more government made mandates regulating general human interactions between one another, which could lead to general unrest of individuals. Now another reasoning of this occurrence could be taking human error of the police in recording criminal records into account. It is very possible that the police officials simply made more mistakes in recording criminal activity in 2019 or possibly over reported in 2020 and led to the drastic count difference.

**Reference:**

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