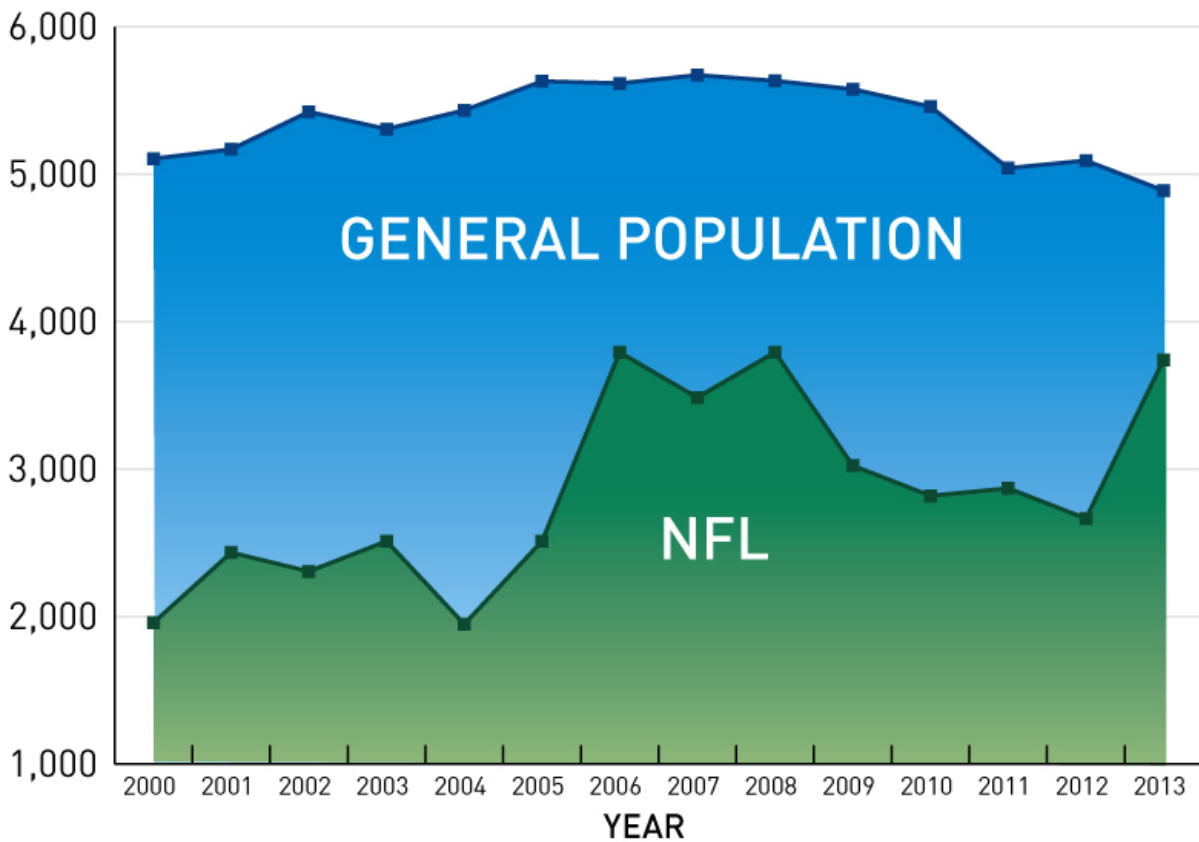


# Criminologist tackles perception of NFL players

August 25 2015

## Total Arrest Rate Comparison



A 24-hour news cycle, viral videos and tweets about football players' run-ins with the law can make it seem like criminal activity is an epidemic in the National Football League.

But a new UT Dallas study refutes that impression. The research found that the overall arrest rate for the [general population](#) was nearly twice as high as the rate for NFL [players](#) from 2000 to 2013.

"There's a perception that the NFL has this huge crime problem and that it's longstanding. That's what everybody believes," said one of the study's authors, Dr. Alex Piquero, Ashbel Smith Professor of Criminology and associate dean for graduate programs in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences. "The data show that it's not true. Over a 14-year period, for most types of crime, the general population has a greater rate of arrests than players in the NFL."

The study, "The National Felon League? A Comparison of NFL Arrests to General Population Arrests," was published online in the *Journal of Criminal Justice*. Piquero worked with co-authors Wanda Leal and Dr. Marc Gertz, both of Florida State University.

The authors compared arrest rates among 1,952 NFL players to arrest rates among males between ages 20 and 39 in the general population from 2000 to 2013. The researchers measured arrest rates for total crime, property crime, violent crime and public order crime, which includes arrests for drug and alcohol-related offenses, prostitution and disorderly conduct.

The general population figures came from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, which calculates arrest rates per 100,000 people. Using the same methods employed by the FBI to determine arrest rates for the general population, the researchers calculated arrest rates for NFL players.

For every year between 2000 and 2013, the total arrest rate for the general population was significantly higher than the total arrest rate for NFL players. For example, the total arrest rate for the general population was 4,889 arrests per 100,000 people in 2013; the total arrest rate for NFL players was 3,740. For most years, the total arrest rate for the general population was one and a half to two times as high as the total rate for NFL players.

"The data show that the perception that NFL players are overly criminal compared to the U.S. population is false," Piquero said. "In fact, when you look at the forest and not the trees, the trends over the 14-year period shows that the general population has higher arrest rates than NFL players do."

The researchers used a variety of sources to compile data on NFL arrests, including public records and online databases, such as those created by The San Diego Union-Tribune and USA Today. The newspaper databases have been cited in previous media reports that have concluded that the NFL arrests rates are lower than those in the general population. The UT Dallas research builds on those findings by providing a scientific, comprehensive analysis covering a 14-year period for various categories of crime.

The study found mixed results about the NFL arrest rate for violent crimes, a category that includes assaults and homicides. Despite media attention on domestic violence cases, the researchers could not calculate arrest rates specifically for that type of crime because the FBI does not collect or publish national arrest data on which violent crimes result from domestic violence.

The researchers found that NFL players had a higher arrest rate for violent crimes than the general population during six of 14 years studied. The violent crime arrest rates in the NFL spiked between 2004 and

2008, while the general population violent crime arrest rate remained flat. Despite the spike, the rate of violent crime arrests in the NFL has remained flat in recent years.

The study notes that contractual incentives may have played a role in the rise in some forms of [crime](#) in 2006, after players could no longer lose their bonuses if they committed illegal acts.

The authors recommend that the NFL track player arrests going forward. Piquero said that more transparency by the NFL's front office could help combat the public misconceptions about players' criminal activity. He also recommended that the NFL continue to provide sensitivity training to rookie players as well as booster session to veterans.

"What happens is, in our instantaneous world right now, you see a video, you see a tweet and it becomes real," Piquero said. "But, one image of one person does not necessarily characterize every single player."

**More information:** *Journal of Criminal Justice*,  
[www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S0047235215300015](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S0047235215300015)

Provided by University of Texas at Dallas

Citation: Criminologist tackles perception of NFL players (2015, August 25) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-08-criminologist-tackles-perception-nfl-players.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--