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Missing Adults: Background, Federal Programs, and Issues for Congress

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Summary

Adults may go missing due to personal choice, an abduction, foul play, a mental or physical disability, or a natural catastrophe, among other reasons. No accurate estimates exist of the number of missing adults; however, approximately 56,000 cases of missing adults (age 18 and older) were pending in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system, a computerized index with data on crimes and locator files for missing and unidentified persons. Certain adults are particularly vulnerable to missing episodes; for example, those with dementia are at risk for becoming disoriented while engaged in a routine activity and may not be able to determine where they are or get to where they should be.

Primary responsibility to address missing adults rests with state and local law enforcement agencies. Unlike children, adults have the legal right to go missing under most circumstances. As a result, families of missing adults may receive limited assistance from law enforcement entities in recovering their loved ones. The federal government provides limited technical, financial, and other assistance in recovering missing adults. Cases of missing children and young adults under the age of 21 must be reported to the NCIC, while reporting missing adults to the database is voluntary. In recent years, however, the federal government has increasingly played a role in efforts to (1) prevent certain types of missing adult incidents; (2) recover adults who go missing, including those who are deceased and for whom only remains can be found; and (3) support databases, including NCIC, that maintain records of missing adults and unidentified remains.

The primary federal program to address missing adults is the Missing Americans Alert program. The focus of the program is to prevent wandering and locate missing individuals with forms of dementia or developmental disabilities. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322) established the program, formerly known as the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program. The Missing Americans Alert Program Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-141) reauthorized funding at $2 million annually for FY2018 to FY2022. Appropriations have been provided for FY1996 through FY2015 and FY2019. Separately, Kristen's Act (P.L. 106-468) was enacted in 2000 to authorize the Department of Justice (DOJ) to make grants to establish a national clearinghouse for missing adults and provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies in locating these individuals. For FY2002 through FY2006, DOJ awarded grants for these purposes. In addition, the federal DNA Initiative supported efforts for FY2004 through FY2008 to recover missing persons and identify unidentified human remains with DNA analysis.

In addition to the NCIC, the federal government maintains the National DNA Index System (NDIS), which stores criminal information as well as information on individuals believed to be missing, their relatives, and unidentified human remains; and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), which includes databases for missing adults and unidentified remains. Records are submitted to most of the databases by law enforcement agencies, medical examiners and coroners, and selected other entities.

Policymakers and other stakeholders might be interested to learn more about coordination of the federal databases on missing persons. In a 2016 report, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examined how NCIC and NamUs operate and identified three areas in which the systems are fragmented or overlapping. Stakeholders may also examine the role of the federal government in helping states and localities develop alert systems and technology to locate missing adults. The Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-401) directs the Department of Justice (DOJ), subject to the availability of appropriations, to establish a national communication network to assist with efforts to recover missing adults. Funding authorization is $3 million for each of FY2019 through FY2022. Funding has not been provided, and this network has not been established, as of the writing of this report.

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Introduction

Adults may go missing due to personal choice; an abduction or foul play; a physical developmental, or cognitive disability; natural catastrophes that displace individuals, such as a hurricane; or certain high-risk behaviors, including gang involvement or drug use, among other circumstances.

In the United States, state and local laws govern how law enforcement entities respond to missing adult cases. This response is complicated by a number of factors. Unlike children, adults have the legal right to go missing in most cases and may do so to seek protection from a domestic abuser and other related reasons.[1] Further, law enforcement agencies may be hesitant to devote resources to missing adult cases, given competing priorities. Law enforcement agencies within and across states also respond differently to missing adult cases. Some states require at least a 24-hour waiting period after the person is believed to be missing before a police report may be filed, while others take reports without a waiting period.[2]

The federal government has played a role in efforts to both (1) prevent certain types of missing adult incidents and (2) recover adults who go missing, including those who are deceased and for whom only remains provide clues to their identity. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322) authorized the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program to assist in locating missing individuals with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. The Missing Americans Alert Program Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-141) reauthorized the program, and broadened it to include individuals with developmental disabilities. Now known as the Missing Americans Alert Program, it has been funded for each of FY1996 through FY2015 and for FY2019. Kristen's Act (P.L. 106-468) was enacted in 2000 to make grants to establish a national clearinghouse for missing adults and provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies in locating missing adults.[3] These activities were funded for each of FY2002 through

[1] Guardians and the court system may limit the autonomy of some adults through conservatorship or guardianship arrangements.

[2] For information selected about state responses to missing adults, see U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunity May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*, GAO-16-515, June 2016. (Hereinafter, GAO, *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunity May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*.)

[3] This report refers to multiple laws that are named after individuals who have gone missing. Kristen's Act (P.L. 106-468) was named after Kristen Modafferi, who has been missing since 1997. Kristen was 18 when she disappeared and her family was unable to access services through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children because, at the time, the organization only provided support on cases involving children under age 18. The law authorizes the Department of Justice (DOJ) to make grants to establish a national clearinghouse for missing adults and provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies in locating these individuals. Suzanne's Law, enacted by the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003 (PROTECT Act, P.L. 108-21), was named for 19-year-old Suzanne Lyell who went missing and has not been found. The act amended the law to define children as those under the age of 21, thereby requiring law enforcement to submit information about adults ages 18 through 20 to the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) within two hours of receiving a report that they are missing. "Kevin and Avonte's Law" is Division Q of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141), which amended and reauthorized the Missing Americans Alert Program. The program authorizes DOJ to fund grants focused on preventing, and responding to, individuals who wander with forms of dementia or have developmental disabilities. The law is named for two boys with autism who perished while wandering. The Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-401) is named for Ashanti Billie, a 19-year-old who was kidnapped and murdered. Her parents advocated for a communication system to alert the public about vulnerable missing adults. The law directs DOJ to provide guidance and technical assistance on issuing alerts for missing adults, and authorizes DOJ to support such regional or local alert systems.

FY2006. The federal government has also supported efforts to establish databases to track and identify missing adults, their relatives, and unidentified human remains.

The first section of this report discusses some of the factors that may contribute to the disappearance of adults in the United States, as well as demographics and record keeping of missing adults and unidentified remains. This section also discusses federally funded databases that are used to track data on missing adults and unidentified individuals. The next section of the report describes the federal programs and initiatives to assist in locating missing adults, including funding data where applicable. The final section discusses selected issues concerning the federal role in missing adult cases.

Why Do Adults Go Missing?

Certain circumstances can make adults vulnerable to going missing. Adults may go missing because of an abduction or foul play. A physical or developmental disability or cognitive disorder, such as Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, may also contribute to a missing episode. Adults with dementia have been identified as high-risk for going missing by advocates for older adults. According to the nonprofit Alzheimer's Association, 5.8 million people in the United States suffer from Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and about 60% of those will wander away from their homes or health care facilities.[4] Further, a natural catastrophe can displace individuals and make their whereabouts unknown to others. Finally, other adults vulnerable to missing incidents may include those with high-risk lifestyles, such as individuals who abuse drugs or are gang involved, and those that have a history of victimization, including domestic violence.

Data on Missing Adults and Unidentified Remains

There is no definitive estimate of the number of adults who go missing, because some adults are not known to be missing or are not reported to databases that compile data on missing persons. However, three federally supported data sources provide some insight into this number: the (1) Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Crime Information Center (NCIC); (2) FBI's National DNA Index System (NDIS); and (3) National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), maintained with support by DOJ's National Institute of Justice (NIJ) within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP).[5] Profiles of missing individuals entered into one database do not automatically populate other databases, although some missing individuals may be reported to more than one of the databases. Therefore, numbers of missing persons should not be added across any of the databases.

The NCIC, NamUs, and NDIS also contain information about unidentified decedents, or remains. However, the true number of unidentified missing adult cases (e.g., unidentified remains) is unknown because remains can go undiscovered, or if they are recovered, they may not be reported to the databases or retained. In a census conducted by DOJ in 2004, medical examiners and coroners reported a total of 13,486 unidentified human remains on record. About 51% of medical examiner and coroners' offices lacked policies for retaining records such as x-rays, DNA,

[4] Alzheimer's Association, *2019 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*, p. 17; and Alzheimer's Association, "Wandering," https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/stages-behaviors/wandering.

[5] Some private organizations that advocate for missing adults and provide assistance to the families of missing adults maintain missing person records that can be accessed by the public. Such organizations include Let's Bring Them Home and the Doe Network.

or fingerprints that could identify missing individuals.[6] (The report also found that 90% of offices serving large jurisdictions did retain such records.) Further, medical examiners and coroners estimated that about 4,400 unidentified human decedents were reported nationwide in an average year, with approximately 1,000 (23.0%) remaining unidentified after one year.

DOJ separately reported in 2007 on unidentified remains based on the death records reported by states to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the federal government's lead public health agency. DOJ found that 10,300 records reported from 1980 through 2004 were for unidentified decedents. This number is an approximation, as states do not uniformly specify on the death certificate whether a person's identity is unknown.[7] In addition, the criteria used by DOJ to search the death records may have included individuals whose identities were known, as well as unidentified individuals who were later identified.

The next section describes each database and discusses how they vary in the number of profiles they contain, as well as the type of information they collect, such as basic demographic profiles, DNA profiles, etc. Data from the NCIC on missing persons are readily available, and routinely updated in this report.

National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

The NCIC within the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division maintains statistics on missing adults and unidentified decedents.[8] The NCIC, established in 1967, is a computerized index of information concerning crimes and criminals of nationwide interest and files for missing and unidentified persons.[9] Since October 1, 1975, the NCIC has maintained records of missing persons (known as the missing person file) that are added and modified by criminal justice agencies (CJAs), such as state and local police departments and selected federal agencies, and nonlaw enforcement agencies, such as the courts. CJAs can view the database. Non-CJAs, such as state departments of motor vehicles and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), can view selected records in NCIC but generally cannot enter or modify records.[10]

The Missing Children Act of 1982 (P.L. 97-292) required the FBI to "acquire, collect, classify, and preserve any information which would assist in the location of any missing person (including an unemancipated person as defined by the laws of the places of residence of such person) and provide confirmation as to any entry for such a person to the parent, legal guardian, or next of kin of that person."[11] Pursuant to the National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-647), records of missing children under age 18 must be entered into NCIC within two hours of law enforcement receiving such report.[12] Suzanne's Law, enacted by the Prosecutorial Remedies and

[6] Matthew J. Hickman et al., *Medical Examiners and Coroners' Offices, 2004*, DOJ, OJP, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), June 2007.

[7] Kristen Hughes, *Unidentified Human Remains in the United States, 1980-2004*, DOJ, OJP, BJS, November 2007.

[8] The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is authorized to maintain the NCIC under 28 U.S.C. §534 and 28 C.F.R. 20.

[9] GAO, *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunity May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*, pp. 5-6, 7-8.

[10] As discussed subsequently, NCMEC supports cases of missing children under the age of 18 and provides services for missing young adults ages 18 through 20.

[11] 28 U.S.C. §534(a)(2)).

[12] The law was enacted as Title XXXVII of the Crime Control Act of 1990; 34 U.S.C. §41308. The act also requires the Attorney General to publish an annual statistical summary of children reported as missing to law enforcement agencies.

Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003 (PROTECT Act, P.L. 108-21), amended the law to define children as those under the age of 21, thereby requiring law enforcement to submit information about adults ages 18 to 21 to the NCIC within two hours of receiving a report that they are missing.[13] NCIC users are not mandated under federal law to submit missing person records of adults over the age of 21. Although records of missing adults are captured, the NCIC does not include the complete number of adults who go missing and are not reported to the database.

The NCIC Missing Person File includes records for individuals who are missing because they

- have a proven physical or mental disability,
- are missing under circumstances indicating that they may be in physical danger,
- are missing under circumstances indicating their disappearance may not have been voluntary,
- are under the age of 21 and do not meet the above criteria,
- are missing after a catastrophe, or
- are 21 and older and do not meet any of the above criteria but for whom there is a reasonable concern for their safety.

When a missing person is located, or remains are identified, that record is removed from the database. **Table A-1** includes further detail about the missing person categories.

NCIC Missing Person Data[14]

As of December 31, 2018, there were 85,459 individual records (entered in 2018 and previous years) remaining in the Missing Person File. Of these, 55,701 (65%) were for missing adults ages 18 and older and 33,052 (35%) were for children ages 17 and younger. In calendar year 2018, 612,846 individuals of all ages were reported missing to the NCIC. Of those individuals, a total of 188,780 (30%) were ages 18 and older. **Table A-1** summarizes the number of missing cases entered in 2014 through 2018 for individuals ages 18 and older under the six missing person categories listed previously. The highest number of missing adults went missing for an unspecified reason, but there was a reasonable concern for their safety. In any given year, the vast majority of persons are found.

Of the nearly 189,000 adults age 18 and older who were reported missing in 2018, most were male (59.1%). The majority of missing adults were white (65%), followed by individuals who were black (27%), of an unknown race (3%), Asian (3%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%).[15] Relative to their share of the population generally, missing white and Asian adults appear

[13] FBI, 2018 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics Pursuant to P.L. 101-647, 104 Statute 4967, Crime Control Act of 1990 Requirements. (Hereinafter, FBI 2018 Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics.)

[14] FBI, 2018 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics Pursuant to P.L. 101-647, 104 Statute 4967, Crime Control Act of 1990 Requirements. Some numbers and percentages are based on calculations by CRS.

[15] Asian includes individuals who identify as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. In October 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published revised standards for the reporting by federal agencies of statistics on race and ethnicity. The standards specify the racial categories of American Indian or Alaska Native, black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and white; and ethnic categories of Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. However, the FBI received an exemption from this reporting requirement for the NCIC. According to the FBI, states are not required to comply with the racial and ethnic classifications, due to the uniqueness of crime data and the fact that the data are reported by state and local jurisdictions. This information was provided to the Congressional Research Service (CRS) by DOJ, FBI, Criminal Justice Information Services Division (CJIS) in May

to be underrepresented and missing African American adults appear to be overrepresented.[16] The NCIC does not report on the Hispanic origin of missing individuals, and NCIC users are instructed to enter records for Hispanic individuals using the race code (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black, or white) that most closely represents that individual as perceived by the law enforcement official.

NCIC Unidentified Missing Persons Data

Some individuals who go missing may be found deceased, and their remains, intact or not, may be the only available clues concerning their identity and circumstances surrounding their disappearance. Since 1983, the NCIC has taken reports of unidentified missing persons (i.e., unidentified remains and individuals who are living but identity is unknown), pursuant to the passage of the Missing Children Act of 1982 (P.L. 97-292). The act required the FBI to "acquire, collect, classify, and preserve any information which would assist in the identification of any deceased individual who has not been identified after the discovery of such deceased individual."[17] The NCIC's Unidentified Remains File was established to take reports of unidentified deceased persons, persons of any age who are living and unable to state their identity (e.g., infant, individual with amnesia, etc.), and unidentified catastrophe victims.[18] Reports may include information about bodies found shortly after death, when a person's remains may be fairly intact, as well as skeletal remains. For those individuals who are living and their identities are unknown, information entered about their appearances (e.g., tattoos or birthmarks) could help in reuniting them with relatives.

The total number of unidentified persons in the NCIC may represent just a fraction of the true number of missing remains. As of December 31, 2018, the Unidentified Remains File included 8,135 unidentified persons. During 2018, just over 800 unidentified person records were entered into NCIC. Of those, about three-fourths were for deceased unidentified bodies; approximately one-fourth were for living persons who could not be identified; and less than 1% was for unidentified victims of catastrophes.[19]

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), at http://www.namus.gov, is an online repository for information about missing persons and unidentified remains that is overseen by DOJ's National Institute of Justice.[20] In 2005, NIJ convened stakeholders for a national strategy meeting called the "Identifying the Missing Summit." The summit focused on the challenges in investigating and solving missing person cases. After the summit, work began on the development of the online repository. DOJ appointed an expert panel of medical examiners

2008.

[16] For information about demographics of the general population, see Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones and Roberto R. Ramirez, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*, U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Briefs, March 2011.

[17] 28 U.S.C. §534(a).

[18] GAO, *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunity May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*, pp. 5-6, 7-8.

[19] U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *2018 Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics.*

[20] DOJ, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), National Institute of Justice (NIJ), "Lost But Not Forgotten: Finding the Nation's Missing," *NIJ Journal*, no. 279, November 2017. (Hereinafter, DOJ, NIJ, "Lost But Not Forgotten: Finding the Nation's Missing.") This publication includes the number of entries into NamUs and selected demographics of profiles, as of February 2017.

and coroners, which ultimately articulated the need for a central reporting system for unidentified human remains. These efforts also led DOJ to establish and fund NamUs. NamUs has been accessible via the web since 2009, and has been operated by the University of North Texas (UNT) Health Center under a cooperative agreement with NIJ since 2011. Appropriations for NamUs have been $2.4 million for each of FY2016 (P.L. 114-113), FY2017 (P.L. 115-31), FY2018 (P.L. 115-141), and FY2019 (P.L. 116-6) for the "operationalization, maintenance, and expansion" of the system. NIJ has supplemented this funding for each of these years, and provided funding in earlier years.[21]

NamUs is composed of three databases: missing persons, unidentified remains, and unclaimed remains. Law enforcement agencies, coroners, and medical examiners are permitted to enter, modify, and view cases in NamUs. This includes data that are not published to the public part of the NamUs website. Forensic anthropologists and other forensic subject matter experts—who use forensic techniques to assist law enforcement in identifying human remains—have more limited access to enter and modify cases. Registered members of the public, such as advocates and family members of missing persons, can enter missing person cases only and view some information on the NamUs website.[22] NamUs staff vet professional users. They also review case data to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information, and determine whether the case can be published to the public website. These staff request records from NCIC and review data from both systems to ensure that the information is accurate.[23]

- The Missing Persons Database serves as a repository for information on missing persons that can be entered by law enforcement agencies. Profiles of missing individuals may include photographs and information about the circumstances around their disappearance, their dental records, DNA, physical appearance, and police contact information, among other items. Users of the website may search the database based on these attributes.
- The Unidentified Remains Database is available for medical examiners and coroners to upload information about remains and where they are found. Website users may view profiles of the unidentified remains, and can search based on characteristics such as demographics, anthropologic analysis, the location where the remains were found, and distinct body features. Only law enforcement agencies and other authorized entities may enter information and review additional information and photographs that are not available to the public. Some

[21] Total FY2013 funding was $2.2 million, FY2014 funding was $3.7 million, FY2015 funding was $5.0 million, $4.7 million in FY2016, $7.5 million in FY2017, and $5.0 million in FY2018. The FY2016 through FY2018 appropriations for NamUs were reduced for assessments that apply to nearly all OJP programs, such as for management and administration. This left $2.1 million each year for program activities. DOJ provided FY2013 through FY2018 funding to NamUs through the DNA Analysis and Capacity Enhancement and Other Forensic Activities line item; and additional FY2017 funding to NamUs from the Crime Victims Fund and the Office on Violence Against Women to fund the creation of a Victim Services Unit. The intent of this unit is to link families of missing individuals with service providers, support networks, and other resources. This information was provided to CRS by DOJ, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of Communications in May 2016, April 2019, and June 2019. There is no specific statutory authority for NamUs outside of appropriations law; however, other statutes are relevant, including the general authorities of the National Institute of Justice (34 U.S.C. §§10121-10122), which manages the database, to support research and develop tools and technologies, as well as statutes concerning the general authorities of NIJ's Office of Science and Technology (6 U.S.C. §§161-165).

[22] GAO, *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunity May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*, pp. 9-10.

[23] DOJ, OJP, NIJ, "Lost But Not Forgotten: Finding the Nation's Missing."

of the profiles note that remains are fully intact, whereas others note pieces of the missing person's body or other information about the remains.

- The Unclaimed Remains Database is available for medical examiners and coroners to upload profiles of deceased individuals who have been identified by name, but for whom no family members have been identified or located to claim the body. NamUs automatically performs comparisons of its three databases to determine matches or similarities between profiles of missing persons, unidentified persons, or unclaimed remains.

Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)

The FBI's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) began in 1990 as a pilot program to maintain DNA profiles.[24] The term "CODIS" refers to both the overall system that retains the DNA profiles as well as the software that DNA laboratories use to track and compare profiles. CODIS is used by local, state, and federal forensic laboratories. Local forensic laboratories enter DNA into the Local DNA Index System (LDIS), which can then populate the central laboratory for each state, known as a State DNA Index System (SDIS). SDIS laboratories may upload DNA profiles directly to the National DNA Index System (NDIS) operated by the FBI Laboratory. Searches of data entered by other states into NDIS are conducted by the FBI Laboratory, which automatically searches new DNA data when profiles are submitted by the state laboratories.[25]

The DNA Identification Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322) provided authority for the FBI to establish NDIS.[26] The act, as amended, specifies that the FBI can establish an index of DNA identification records of persons convicted of crimes, persons charged in an indictment or information with a crime, analyses of DNA samples recovered from crime scenes, analyses from unidentified human remains, and analyses of relatives of missing persons. No names of the offenders, arrestees, or detainees are stored in NDIS; however, missing person records may include available identifying information, such as the date of birth. NDIS contains more than 18 million DNA profiles.[27]

The FBI Laboratory's National Missing Person DNA Database (NMPDD) is designed to assemble data on missing persons and unidentified remains.[28] DNA profiles of missing persons, unidentified remains, and biological relatives of missing persons can be searched against one another in the database. DNA analysts at the state and local forensic laboratories review the data to confirm the match. These laboratories are responsible for alerting relevant law enforcement agency, medical examiners, or coroners of the results.

[24] FBI, "Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) Brochure," https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/combined-dna-index-system-codis-brochure.pdf/view.

[25] Ibid.

[26] The law was enacted as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994; 34 U.S.C. §12592. FBI, "Laboratory Services: Frequently Asked Questions on CODIS and NDIS," https://www.fbi.gov/services/laboratory/biometric-analysis/codis/codis-and-ndis-fact-sheet#National-Missing%20Person%20Program. (Hereinafter, FBI, "Laboratory Services: Frequently Asked Questions on CODIS and NDIS.")

[27] This is as of February 2019. See, DOJ, FBI, "CODIS-NDIS Statistics," http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/codis/ndis-statistics.

[28] DOJ, FBI, "Laboratory Services: Frequently Asked Questions on CODIS and NDIS," https://www.fbi.gov/services/laboratory/biometric-analysis/codis.

Comparison and Interaction of Databases

Records of missing persons or unidentified remains are submitted to the databases by authorized law enforcement agencies, state missing persons clearinghouses, medical examiners and coroners, or DNA laboratories. All of the databases can be accessed by criminal justice agencies; however, records in NamUs can also be reviewed by the public, though on a limited basis. **Table A-2** summarizes some of the features of the databases, as well as two others that store records of missing persons and unidentified remains.

The Senate report (S.Rept. 113-181) to accompany the FY2015 appropriations law for the Department of Justice and related agencies (P.L. 113-235) directed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review how to better integrate national missing persons databases, particularly NCIC and NamUs. In a 2016 report, GAO examined how NCIC and NamUs operate and identified three areas in which the systems are fragmented or overlapping.[29] First, GAO reported that information about missing persons or unidentified remains may be captured in one system but not the other, and that this may limit the opportunity to find missing individuals. Second, GAO raised concerns that the users are different for the two systems, and the number of users is far greater for NCIC than for NamUs. This could result in inefficiencies for officials who have to enter information and search both systems to get all available information. Finally, the report noted that duplication is possible between NCIC and NamUs because of the need to validate information in both systems. NamUs uses a validation process to ensure that cases have either a law enforcement case number or NCIC number before publishing to the public website.

Additional Federal Activities to Recover Missing Adults

In recent years, the federal government has played a role both in efforts to prevent certain types of missing adult incidents and to recover adults who go missing, including those who are deceased and for whom only remains provide clues to the circumstances surrounding their disappearance. In addition to funding or operating databases that track information about missing adults and unidentified remains, the federal government has undertaken other related efforts, many of which are no longer funded. Generally, these activities have been overseen by the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP). These efforts include (1) the Missing American's Alert program to prevent missing episodes and locate missing individuals with dementia or developmental disabilities; (2) the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which works to recover missing children and adults ages 18 to 21 who are reported to NCMEC as missing by law enforcement officials; (3) activities funded under Kristen's Act to locate missing adults; (4) the activities related to DNA analysis to identify the remains of unidentified deceased individuals; and (5) the National Missing Persons Task Force, with its emphasis on achieving greater cooperation among the various federal databases. The Missing Americans Alert program and activities funded under Kristen's Act received congressional appropriations for missing adult activities. The other activities have been funded under appropriations for initiatives or programs that encompass activities other than just those for missing adults.

[29] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunities May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*. As of the date of this CRS report, GAO's recommendations remain open.

Missing Americans Alert Program

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322) authorized the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program.[30] As enacted, the purpose of the program was to provide grants to locally based organizations to protect and locate missing individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The program, now known as the Missing Americans Alert program, was reauthorized by the Missing Americans Alert Program Act of 2018, enacted under Division Q of the FY2018 omnibus appropriations law (P.L. 115-141). Appropriation laws have provided funding for each of FY1996 through FY2015 and for FY2019. The program is administered by DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) within the Office of Justice Programs.

As originally enacted, the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program authorized a grant—at $900,000 annually for each of FY1996 through FY1998—to assist organizations in planning, designing, establishing, and operating locally-based, proactive programs to protect and locate missing individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Appropriations for FY1996 through FY2015 were $750,000 to $2.0 million annually. Funding under the program was awarded to a variety of entities, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Alzheimer's Association, MedicAlert Foundation Project Lifesaver, and universities. For example, BJA awarded funds through the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program to the Alzheimer's Association for FY1996 through FY2015 to establish and carry out the MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program. The program is a nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias who wander or have a medical emergency.[31]

As amended, the renamed Missing Americans Alert program authorizes $2 million for FY2018 through FY2022 for DOJ grants to establish and operate "locally-based, proactive programs" for preventing wandering and locating individuals with dementia or developmental disabilities who wander from safe environments. The grants can be awarded to state and local law enforcement agencies, state health care agencies, and nonprofit organizations for several activities. These activities include (1) providing information, education, and training about wandering incidents; (2) developing, operating, or enhancing a notification or communication systems for alerts about individuals who need to be recovered; and (3) designing, establishing, and operating tracking technology programs for individuals with dementia or children with developmental disabilities who have wandered. FY2019 funding is $2 million.[32]

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[30] 34 U.S.C. §12621.

[31] Wandering may pose a significant, if not life threatening, danger to the personal health, safety, and welfare of those with dementia. This may occur from exposure to the elements; lack of food; dehydration or lack of medication for extended periods of time; and general inability to think, act, or communicate in a way that could assist them. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for persons with dementia to wander from their homes, sometimes repeatedly. The Alzheimer's Association reports that six out of 10 people with Alzheimer's disease will wander at least once during the course of the disease. Alzheimer's Association, "Wandering," http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-wandering.asp#who.

[32] The Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY2019 (P.L. 116-6) specified that "$2,000,000 is for a grant program authorized by Kevin and Avonte's Law." "Kevin and Avonte's Law" is Division Q of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141), which amended and reauthorized the program. The law was named for two boys with autism who perished while wandering. According to DOJ, some of this funding will be used to support a new national training and technical assistance center to focus on improving police practices to reduce injury and death among missing Americans who have dementia or developmental disabilities (as well as individuals with mental illness). See, DOJ, OJP, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), *FY 2019 BJA: A National Training and Technical Assistance Initiative to Improve Law Enforcement-Based Responses to People with Mental Health Disorders and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.* This information was provided to CRS by DOJ, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a nonprofit organization that receives federal funding, is a primary component of the federally funded Missing and Exploited Children's Program.[33] NCMEC supports cases of missing children under the age of 18 and provides services for missing young adults ages 18 through 20, pursuant to Suzanne's Law, enacted in 2003 (P.L. 108-21). Suzanne was a college student who went missing at age 19. This law changed the upper age limit of children who must be entered into the NCIC from age 18 to age 21.[34]

NCMEC processes these young adult cases differently than cases for missing children.[35] NCMEC will accept a young adult case only if it is reported by a law enforcement entity—and not by parents, spouses, partners, or others—because the organization relies on law enforcement personnel to verify that the young adult is missing due to foul play or other reasons that would cause concern about the individual's whereabouts, such as diminished mental capacity. NCMEC then assists in recovery efforts for these adults as it would for children under age 18. A case manager in the Missing Children's Division is assigned to serve as the single point of contact for the searching family and to provide technical assistance to locate possible abductors and recover missing children and young adults.

Kristen's Act

In 2000, Congress passed Kristen's Act (P.L. 106-468), named after Kristen Modafferi, who has been missing since 1997. Kristen was 18 when she disappeared and her family was unable to access services through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children because, at the time, the organization only provided support on cases involving children under age 18. Kristen's Act authorized $1 million in funding for each of FY2001 to FY2004 and permitted the Attorney General to make grants to assist law enforcement agencies in locating missing adults; maintain a database for tracking adults believed by law enforcement to be endangered due to age, diminished mental capacity, and possible foul play; maintain statistical information on missing adults; provide resources and referrals to the families of missing adults; and establish and maintain a national clearinghouse for missing adults.

Appropriations for Kristen's Act funding was provided for FY2002 through FY2006 at $150,000 to $1.7 million annually to the National Center for Missing Adults (NCMA) under the Edward Byrne Memorial Discretionary Grant Program. NCMA began in 1995 as the missing adult division of the Nation's Missing Children Organization, which is no longer in operation.

DNA-Related Activities

In March 2003, President George W. Bush announced a new DNA Initiative to promote the use of forensic DNA technology to solve crimes, protect individuals from wrongful prosecution, and identify missing persons. Funding was provided under the initiative for FY2004 through FY2008,

of Communications, June 2019.

[33] NCMEC receives federal funding through the Missing and Exploited Children's Program and other sources. For a full discussion of NCMEC activities, see CRS Report RL34050, *The Missing and Exploited Children's (MEC) Program: Background and Policies*.

[34] 34 U.S.C. §41307.

[35] This information was provided to CRS by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

and funding has since been provided in some years for DNA-related activities for recovering missing persons.[36] DOJ has used funding for the following:

- DNA technology to identify the missing;
- sample analysis of unidentified human remains and family reference samples;
- standardized sample DNA collection kits for unidentified remains of missing persons;
- evaluation and implementation of advanced DNA technologies to facilitate the analysis of skeletal remains;
- focus group on using DNA technology to assist the identification of human remains;
- training and technical assistance on using DNA to identify missing persons and unidentified remains;
- census of medical examiners and coroners and inventory of unidentified remains; and
- NamUs databases (which continue to receive funding).

National Missing Person's Taskforce[37]

As part of the DNA Initiative, NIJ and FBI were directed by DOJ leadership in 2005 to establish a national task force to assess how to better encourage, facilitate, and achieve greater use of federal missing person databases to solve cases of missing persons and identify human remains. In response to this directive, NIJ and the FBI convened the Missing Persons National Taskforce, composed of a broad cross-section of criminal justice officials, forensic science experts, and victim advocates. The task force met in 2005 and 2006 to address, among other issues, the federal databases that store information on missing persons and unidentified human remains. According to DOJ, members of the task force convened these meetings to better understand and improve the information-sharing tools and DNA technologies available to solve cases involving missing persons and unidentified decedents. The task force also created model state legislation to encourage states to adopt laws that improve the ability of law enforcement to locate and return missing persons, identify human remains, and provide timely information to family members of missing persons.[38]

Selected Issues

Federal and state policymakers and other stakeholders have increasingly focused on three issues related to adults who go missing: (1) coordinating databases on missing persons; (2) assisting states in establishing the capacity to develop alert systems to inform the public about missing older adults; and (3) technology to recover these individuals.

[36] DOJ, OJP, NIJ, "Funding to Identify Missing Persons," http://nij.gov/topics/forensics/investigations/missing-persons/Pages/funding-program.aspx; and DOJ, NIJ, "Lost But Not Forgotten: Finding the Nation's Missing."

[37] This information was provided to CRS by DOJ, OJP in June 2008.

[38] DOJ, OJP, NIJ, "Model State Missing Person Statute," https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/210740v2.pdf.

Coordination of Federally Funded Databases on Missing Persons and Unidentified Decedents

The first section of this report discussed the various federally funded databases that store information on missing persons and unidentified decedents. These databases do not currently populate one another, although some of the databases indicate whether information about a particular individual is available in another database. This limitation raises the question about whether the federal government can and should develop technology to enable the databases to coordinate, although concerns about privacy and funding would likely need to be addressed.

As mentioned, the 2016 GAO report identified areas in which NCIC and NamUs are fragmented or overlapping GAO recommended that DOJ evaluate the feasibility of sharing certain information among authorized users of both systems and document the result of this evaluation. In response, DOJ cited challenges with linking the two systems because it does not have authority for the NamUs system to access NCIC, and the public is prohibited from accessing NCIC data but can view some records in NamUs.

The Help Find the Missing Act, introduced in each of the 111th through 114th Congresses, would have directed DOJ to transmit information about missing persons and unidentified decedents between NCIC and NamUs and to promulgate rules to protect the confidentiality of the information contained in the NCIC. Among other activities, the bill also would have provided a grant program for law enforcement agencies, coroners, and medical examiners to enter profiles of missing persons age 21 and older and unidentified remains into both databases.

Alert Systems

The federal government has supported selected alert systems to inform the public about individuals who are endangered. Federal law provides support for state and regional Blue Alert systems, which inform law enforcement and the public about police officers who have been seriously injured, killed, or missing in the line of duty. In addition, state and regional AMBER Alerts that are issued by police alert the public of children who have been abducted.[39] At present, there is no national alert system for adults; however, federal law authorizes support to coordinate a national communications network to assist in local and state efforts to recover missing adults.

Federal Efforts

In 2011, DOJ published a guide to assist states and communities in developing or enhancing what DOJ calls an Endangered Missing Advisory (EMA), or an advisory for individuals who do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria established by DOJ.[40] The guide suggests that EMAs can be issued for missing adults, or for children while law enforcement determines whether a case meets the AMBER Alert criteria. The guide outlines the steps states and communities can take in developing an EMA plan, including creating a task force—comprised of key AMBER Alert stakeholders, broadcasters and other representatives from the media, and law enforcement, among others—that can establish criteria and procedures for the EMA and oversee its operation and

[39] See, 34 U.S.C. §20501 et seq. (AMBER Alert) and 34 U.S.C. §50501 et seq. (Blue Alert). For additional information about the federal role in AMBER Alert systems, see CRS Report RL34050, *The Missing and Exploited Children's (MEC) Program: Background and Policies*.

[40] For further information about the AMBER Alert program, see CRS Report RL34050, *The Missing and Exploited Children's (MEC) Program: Background and Policies*.

effectiveness. The guide suggests that adults may benefit from a different type of alert system than AMBER Alert, and that task forces should determine which elements of the AMBER Alert plan should be used to activate an EMA.[41]

Legislation has been introduced in recent Congresses to support alert systems for missing senior citizens (e.g., National Silver Alert Act of 2014, H.R. 5361, from the 113th Congress). In addition, the 115th Congress passed, and President Trump signed into law, the Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-401). The law was named for Ashanti Billie, a19-year-old who was kidnapped and murdered. Her parents advocated for an alert system on behalf of missing adults. The act directs DOJ, subject to the availability of appropriations, to establish a national communication network to assist with efforts in recovering missing adults. Specifically, the communication network is intended to provide assistance to regional and local search efforts for missing adults through the initiation, facilitation, and promotion of regional and local plans, in coordination with states, units of local government, law enforcement agencies, and other concerned entities with expertise in providing services to missing adults. Further, the law directs DOJ to designate a national coordinator to work with states and territories on establishing Ashanti Alerts and to develop voluntary guidelines that states can use in creating their networks. Funding authorization for the communication network is $3 million for each of FY2019 through FY2022. DOJ did not request funding for Ashanti Alert activities in the FY2020 budget, and funding has not been appropriated specifically for this purpose.

State Efforts

Alert systems for missing senior citizens, known as Silver or Senior Alerts, have been established in multiple states.[42] These alert systems were created out of concern for the safety of seniors and other at-risk adult populations who are prone to wandering due to a physical or cognitive disability or medical condition such as Alzheimer's or other dementias. Some states have adopted alert systems for missing adults who are in imminent danger (e.g., the Critically Missing Adult Alert program in Virginia for adults who are believed to have been abducted).

Concerns about Overexposure, Privacy, and Coordination

Issuing alerts to law enforcement agencies and the public for missing vulnerable adults in some states appears to be at the discretion of the law enforcement agency—local, state, or both—and is not required of the agency.[43] In addition, state alert systems vary in terms of the target population for issuing an alert (e.g., older adults with dementia versus any adult with a disability). Most law enforcement agencies have the ability to disseminate the alert to law enforcement agencies and media in the local area, region, statewide, and other states. For example, the Texas Division of Emergency Management disseminates information within the alert advisory area to local, state,

[41] DOJ, OJP, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Guide for Implementing or Enhancing an Endangered Missing Advisory,* March 2011.

[42] For further information, see CRS Report R40552, *Alert Systems for Missing Adults in Eleven States: Background and Issues for Congress*. The report was written in 2009, when 11 states were identified as having these systems. A journal article reported that 37 states had silver alert systems as of July 2012. See, Tobias D. Wasser and Patrick K. Fox, "For Whom the Bell Tolls: Silver Alerts Raise Concerns Regarding Individual Rights and Governmental Interests," The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, vol. 41, no. 3 (September 2013). (Hereinafter, Tobias D. Wasser and Patrick K. Fox, "For Whom the Bell Tolls: Silver Alerts Raise Concerns Regarding Individual Rights and Governmental Interests.")

[43] This information is drawn from CRS Report R40552, *Alert Systems for Missing Adults in Eleven States: Background and Issues for Congress*.

and federal law enforcement agencies; media outlets; the Texas Department of Transportation; the Texas Lottery Commission; and the Independent Bankers Association of Texas.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns that alert systems may not be useful for some adults who go missing. For example, repeated news coverage of missing adult cases could desensitize the public to the issue of wandering. In addition, missing persons may not be found in a place that is well-trafficked. Among missing persons with Alzheimer's disease, about three-quarters leave on foot; and of those found alive, about half are found 1 to 5 miles from where they originated.[44] For these reasons, policymakers may consider Silver Alerts in combination with a combination of other policy approaches. One such approach might be providing support to the caregivers of individuals with dementia, to better ensure that adults with the disease do not go missing.

Further, some stakeholders have raised concerns that broadcasting information about missing adults can infringe on their rights to privacy. Unlike incidents involving the AMBER Alert program, which was established to alert law enforcement and the public when a child is missing and criminal activity may be involved, it is not a crime for an adult to wander from home or purposely go missing. The stakeholders assert that states should have criteria for activating an alert that limits disclosure of information to the public only when it is absolutely necessary to preserve the missing person's life.[45] They also assert that disclosure of this information should be reserved to the most limited geographic area possible.

Concerns have also been raised that having only selected criteria for the alert may be short-sighted.[46] For example, some have argued that making age the primary factor for issuing an alert overlooks the possibility that age alone does not necessarily signal whether a person is endangered. Another consideration is concern about broadcasting a missing person's health background to the public, and whether it would violate the individual's federal and state privacy protections.

Further, some states with alert systems could have difficulty coordinating with another state that lacks a similar system.[47] States could also have challenges coordinating with states that have alert systems with different criteria for activating an alert. Although state and local governments have taken the lead in implementing alert systems, the federal government could play a role in coordinating efforts when a missing individual is believed to have crossed state lines as well as assist in the development of formal agreements or protocols for the use of interstate alerts. The federal government could model any policies to coordinate across state lines on the AMBER Alert program, which provides training and technical assistance to states on a number of issues related to abducted children. This training addresses how jurisdictions, including those in different states, can work together to recover children who are abducted, among other topics. Through conference and training exercises, state AMBER Alert coordinators, state and local law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders have opportunities to meet and exchange ideas, which may further facilitate coordination.

[44] International Association of Chiefs of Police, "Missing Persons with Alzheimer's Disease," Training Key #648, 2010.

[45] Tobias D. Wasser and Patrick K. Fox, "For Whom the Bell Tolls: Silver Alerts Raise Concerns Regarding Individual Rights and Governmental Interests."

[46] Ibid.

[47] See, CRS Report R40552, *Alert Systems for Missing Adults in Eleven States: Background and Issues for Congress*.

Use of Technology

Technology has been developed to assist in recovering individuals who go missing. One organization, A Child Is Missing, based in Florida, has assisted law enforcement agencies throughout the country to alert the public about cases of missing children and seniors. The organization sends phone and computers alerts to the areas around which the individual was last seen before going missing.[48]

Other programs use technology to help locate individuals at risk of going missing. One such electronic program is used by some state and local law enforcement agencies with technology developed by Project Lifesaver International, a nonprofit organization that administers the Project Lifesaver program and received funding under the Missing Americans Alert program (formerly the Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program).[49] Project Lifesaver uses a transmitter that emits a signal to track individuals prone to going missing. A wristband is worn by the client continuously, and each month, a law enforcement officer or trained volunteer visits with the client to replace the wristband batteries. The program also provides referrals to clients and their caregivers in need of social services. When family members or caregivers report to the designated Project Lifesaver agency—typically a local law enforcement or first responder agency—that the client is missing, a search and rescue team responds to the wanderer's area to search using a mobile locator tracking system. In addition to providing the technology, the program trains the designated agency to communicate with persons with Alzheimer's disease and other disorders.

The Alzheimer's Association, a national nonprofit organization, has the Comfort Zone program that also uses tracking technology. The program is a web application that includes a location-based mapping service. The enrolled individual carries a tracking device with global positioning system (GPS) technology. Caretakers can track the individual's whereabouts via a secure online website through the Alzheimer's Association. The website includes a map with addresses of the vicinity in which the person is located. Caretakers can also receive alerts and notifications of the individual's whereabouts, such as when the individual leaves a specified radius (e.g., beyond their house or some other location).[50]

Tracking technology raises questions about the rights to privacy and autonomy of individuals who are enrolled. These organizations appear to have taken steps to ensure that enrolled participants meet the eligibility criteria and to secure the consent of the enrolled individual, where possible. For individuals who participate in Project Lifesaver, consent usually comes from a caregiver having legal responsibility for the individual. In rare cases, the individual gives consent. Individuals enrolled in Comfort Zone give consent to be enrolled, and in some cases the caregiver with legal responsibility gives consent. According to the Alzheimer's Association, the program is ideally for individuals with early stages of dementia.

[48] A Child Is Missing Inc., "A Child Is Missing," https://achildismissing.org/.

[49] Project Lifesaver International, "About Us," http://www.projectlifesaver.org/.

[50] Alzheimer's Association, "About Comfort Zone," http://www.alz.org/comfortzone/about_comfort_zone.asp.

Appendix.

Table A-1. National Crime Information Center (NCIC): Missing Entries of Adults Ages 18 and Older, 2014-2018

Category (as defined under the NCIC Operating Manual)	Number (and Percentage) of Missing Adults and Share of Total Missing Adult Cases				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Disability: a person of any age who is missing and under proven mental/physical disability or senile, thereby subjecting himself/herself or others to personal and immediate danger.[a]	27,243 (16.2%)	28,059 (16.1%)	28,342 (15.6%)	28,918 (15.5%)	28,244 (15.0%)
Endangered: a person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety may be in danger.	34,259 (20.4%)	35,446 (20.3%)	36,608 (20.1%)	36,449 (19.5%)	36,191 (19.2%)
Involuntary: a person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance may not have been voluntary, i.e., abduction or kidnapping.	12,825 (7.6%)	13,550 (0.7%)	12,329 (6.8%)	11,856 (6.3%)	10,009 (5.3%)
Catastrophe: a person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe.[a]	178 (0.0%)	169 (0.0%)	188 (0.1%)	242 (0.1%)	291 (0.2%)
Juvenile: a person between ages 18 and 21 who is missing and does not meet any of the enter criteria set forth under the Disability, Endangered, Involuntary, or Catastrophe categories.	4,504 (2.7%)	4,213 (2.4%)	4,391 (2.4%)	4,180 (2.2%)	3,828 (0.2%)
Other: a person age 21 and older who does not meet any of the criteria in the other categories, but for whom there is a reasonable concern for his or her safety; or a person who is under age 21 who is declared emancipated by the laws of his or her state of residence.	89,197 (53.0%)	92,772 (53.3%)	99,901 (55.0%)	105,257 (56.3%)	110,217 (58.4%)
Total	**168,206**	**174,209**	**181,759**	**186,902**	**188,780**

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), *2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics Pursuant to* P.L. 101-647, *104 Statute 4967, Crime Control Act of 1990 Requirements.*

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

a. According to the FBI, "proven physical or mental disability" refers to an individual who could have suicidal tendencies or a drug addiction, is a hemophiliac or diabetic, or has previously escaped custody, among other possible characteristics. A "catastrophe" refers to a disaster, such as an airplane crash, terrorist attack, natural disaster, among other possible scenarios. This information was provided to the Congressional Research Service (CRS) by the FBI, Criminal Justice Information Services Division (CJIS) in December 2007.

Table A-2. Databases of Missing Adults and Unidentified Remains

Database—Administering Agency or Organization	Features	Access to Database
National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File and Unidentified Persons File—Department of Justice (DOJ)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)	The database includes descriptive information about the missing individual or their remains. Individuals are classified under one of six missing person categories or one of three unidentified missing person categories. The databases indicate whether DNA and fingerprinting information are available.	Data are reported by, and available to, authorized federal, state, and local criminal justice and noncriminal justice agencies.
National DNA Index System (NDIS)—DOJ/FBI	The system includes three databases for the DNA of missing persons, unidentified remains, and relatives of missing persons.	Data are reported by state and local DNA laboratories, in cooperation with state and local law enforcement officials. All profiles can be accessed by the FBI; some profiles can be accessed by the state and local DNA laboratories.
National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)—DOJ/National Institute of Justice (NIJ)	The system includes three databases—Missing Persons, Unidentified Persons, and Unclaimed Persons—for descriptive information, pictures, and dental records, DNA, and fingerprints where available.	Data are reported by, and available to, authorized federal, state, and local criminal justice and noncriminal justice agencies. Profiles can be accessed by these entities and the public, although the public may not have access to information and photographs for some profiles.
Next Generation Identification (NGI), DOJ/FBI (replaced [as of 2014] the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System [IAFIS])	The system includes fingerprints and corresponding criminal histories.	Data are reported by authorized international, federal, state, and local criminal justice and noncriminal justice agencies.
Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP)—DOJ/FBI	The system includes information on crimes, including missing person cases where the circumstances indicate a strong possibility of foul play and the victim is still missing. The database entries are continuously compared on the basis of certain aspects of the crime.	Data are reported by authorized federal, state, and local criminal justice and noncriminal justice agencies.

Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), based on U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: Opportunity May Exist to Share Information More Efficiently*, GAO-16-515, June 2016; FBI, "Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, Part 1: Sharing Information to Stop Serial Offenders," May 3, 2016; and FBI, CJIS, "Biometrics: Next Generation Identification (NGI)."

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