

Crime in 2017: Updated Analysis

By *Ames Grawert and James Cullen*

In September, the Brennan Center analyzed available crime data from the nation’s 30 largest cities, estimating that these cities would see a slight decline in all measures of crime in 2017. The report, [Crime in 2017: A Preliminary Analysis](#), concluded by noting that “these findings directly undercut any claim that the nation is experiencing a crime wave.”¹

That statement holds true in this analysis, which updates the September report with more recent data and finds that murder rates in major American cities are estimated to decline slightly through the end of 2017. Murder rates in some cities remain above 2015 levels, however, demonstrating a need for evidence-based solutions to violent crime in these areas.

Updated Tables 1 and 2 show conclusions similar to the initial report, with slightly different percentages:¹

- The overall crime rate in the 30 largest cities in 2017 is estimated to decline slightly from the previous year, falling by 2.7 percent. If this trend holds, crime rates will remain near historic lows.²
- The violent crime rate will also decrease slightly, by 1.1 percent, essentially remaining stable. Violent crime remains near the bottom of the nation’s 30-year downward trend.
- The 2017 murder rate in the 30 largest cities is estimated to decline by 5.6 percent. Large decreases this year in Chicago and Detroit, as well as small decreases in other cities, contributed to this decline. The murder rate in Chicago — which increased significantly in 2015 and 2016 — is projected to decline by 11.9 percent in 2017. It remains 62.4 percent above 2014 levels. The murder rate in Detroit is estimated to fall by 9.8 percent. New York City’s murder rate will also decline again, to 3.3 killings per 100,000 people.
- Some cities are projected to see their murder rates rise, including Charlotte (54.6 percent) and Baltimore (11.3 percent). These increases suggest a need to better understand how and why murder is increasing in some cities.

The preliminary 2017 analysis is available [here](#).

¹ In addition to providing updated data from city law enforcement agencies, this report incorporates recently-released information from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports, and uses it to “standardize” data reported by city agencies. As a result, data in Tables 1 and 2 may be compared to previous Brennan Center reports, but may diverge from figures in reported in *Crime in 2017: A Preliminary Analysis*.

Table 1: Crime in the 30 Largest Cities (2016-2017) (updated Dec. 19, 2017)

| City | 2016 Crime Rate (per 100,000) | 2017 Crime Rate (per 100,000) | Percent Change in Crime Rate | 2016 Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000) | 2017 Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000) | Percent Change in Violent Crime Rate |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| New York ³ | 2,008 | 1,904 | -5.2% | 546 | 508 | -6.9% |
| Los Angeles ⁴ | 3,134 | 3,166 | 1.0% | 661 | 692 | 4.7% |
| Chicago ⁵ | 4,238 | 4,292 | 1.3% | 1,047 | 1,056 | 0.8% |
| Houston ⁶ | 5,295 | 5,127 | -3.2% | 975 | 1,012 | 3.9% |
| Philadelphia ⁷ | 4,049 | 3,927 | -3.0% | 909 | 852 | -6.2% |
| Las Vegas ⁸ | 3,663 | 3,495 | -4.6% | 774 | 746 | -3.5% |
| Phoenix ^{9*} | 4,301 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 610 | Unavailable | Unavailable |
| San Antonio ^{10†} | 5,829 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 638 | 640 | 0.3% |
| San Diego ¹¹ | 2,362 | 2,139 | -9.4% | 337 | 323 | -4.0% |
| Dallas ¹² | 4,104 | 3,873 | -5.6% | 704 | 710 | 0.9% |
| San Jose ¹³ | 2,705 | 2,743 | 1.4% | 330 | 336 | 2.0% |
| Austin ¹⁴ | 3,835 | 3,465 | -9.7% | 329 | 318 | -3.4% |
| Charlotte ^{15†} | 4,805 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 707 | 690 | -2.5% |
| Jacksonville ^{16†} | 4,148 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 566 | 582 | 2.8% |
| San Francisco ^{17†} | 6,113 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 671 | 681 | 1.4% |
| Indianapolis ^{18†} | 6,090 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 1,295 | 1,223 | -5.6% |
| Columbus ^{19†} | 4,491 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 421 | 372 | -11.8% |
| Fort Worth ²⁰ | 3,769 | 3,757 | -0.3% | 468 | 510 | 9.0% |
| El Paso ^{21†} | 2,143 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 345 | 322 | -6.6% |
| Seattle ²² | 6,065 | 5,901 | -2.7% | 577 | 608 | 5.4% |
| Denver ²³ | 4,166 | 4,137 | -0.7% | 576 | 585 | 1.5% |
| Louisville ²⁴ | 5,071 | 4,711 | -7.1% | 647 | 638 | -1.3% |
| Detroit ²⁵ | 6,683 | 6,249 | -6.5% | 1,960 | 1,846 | -5.8% |
| Washington, D.C. ²⁶ | 5,703 | 4,996 | -12.4% | 1,055 | 806 | -23.5% |
| Boston ²⁷ | 2,816 | 2,611 | -7.3% | 666 | 614 | -7.8% |
| Nashville ²⁸ | 4,730 | 4,775 | 1.0% | 1,033 | 1,077 | 4.3% |
| Memphis ^{29†} | 7,373 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 1,739 | 1,925 | 10.7% |
| Oklahoma City [*] | 4,615 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 714 | Unavailable | Unavailable |
| Baltimore ³⁰ | 6,510 | 6,733 | 3.4% | 1,732 | 1,948 | 12.5% |
| Portland ³¹ | 5,585 | 6,198 | 11.0% | 432 | 448 | 3.8% |
| AVERAGE | | | -2.7% | | | -1.1% |

Source: Police department and city reports. See endnotes for specific sources. Cities are ordered by population size. Percentage changes in rates are calculated from unrounded estimates.

* These cities did not respond to requests for data in time for publication.

† For these cities, the authors were able to obtain data on violent crime only.

Table 2: Murder in the 30 Largest Cities (2016-2017) (updated Dec. 19, 2017)

| City | 2016 Total Murders | 2017 Total Murders | Percent Change in Murder | 2016 Murder Rate (per 100,000) | 2017 Murder Rate (per 100,000) | Percent Change in Murder Rate |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| New York ³² | 335 | 281 | -16% | 3.9 | 3.3 | -16.8% |
| Los Angeles | 293 | 274 | -7% | 7.3 | 6.8 | -7.5% |
| Chicago | 765 | 675 | -12% | 28.1 | 24.7 | -11.9% |
| Houston | 301 | 220 | -27% | 12.9 | 9.2 | -28.6% |
| Philadelphia | 273 | 304 | 11% | 17.4 | 19.3 | 10.8% |
| Las Vegas ⁱⁱ | 158 | 130 | -18% | 9.9 | 8.0 | -19.5% |
| Phoenix* | 146 | Unavailable | Unavailable | 9.2 | Unavailable | Unavailable |
| San Antonio | 149 | 131 | -12% | 9.9 | 8.5 | -14.4% |
| San Diego | 50 | 36 | -29% | 3.5 | 2.5 | -29.7% |
| Dallas | 171 | 160 | -7% | 12.9 | 11.9 | -8.3% |
| San Jose | 47 | 32 | -33% | 4.5 | 3.0 | -33.6% |
| Austin | 39 | 31 | -20% | 4.1 | 3.1 | -22.8% |
| Charlotte | 67 | 106 | 58% | 7.5 | 11.6 | 54.6% |
| Jacksonville | 106 | 118 | 11% | 12.0 | 13.2 | 9.8% |
| San Francisco* | 57 | 79 | 39% | 6.5 | 9.0 | 36.9% |
| Indianapolis | 148 | 135 | -9% | 17.1 | 15.5 | -9.2% |
| Columbus | 91 | 126 | 38% | 10.6 | 14.3 | 35.5% |
| Fort Worth | 66 | 69 | 5% | 7.7 | 7.9 | 2.6% |
| El Paso | 17 | 17 | 0% | 2.5 | 2.5 | -0.4% |
| Seattle | 19 | 27 | 41% | 2.7 | 3.7 | 37.2% |
| Denver | 57 | 59 | 4% | 8.2 | 8.2 | 1.1% |
| Louisville | 119 | 110 | -7% | 17.4 | 16.0 | -8.1% |
| Detroit | 303 | 269 | -11% | 45.2 | 40.8 | -9.8% |
| Washington, D.C. | 138 | 118 | -15% | 20.3 | 17.0 | -16.3% |
| Boston | 49 | 59 | 21% | 7.3 | 8.7 | 19.1% |
| Nashville | 81 | 91 | 12% | 12.1 | 13.4 | 10.4% |
| Memphis | 196 | 186 | -5% | 29.9 | 28.4 | -5.0% |
| Oklahoma City ³³ | 70 | 86 | 23% | 10.9 | 13.2 | 20.7% |
| Baltimore | 318 | 353 | 11% | 51.4 | 57.2 | 11.3% |
| Portland | 14 | 17 | 21% | 2.2 | 2.6 | 20.1% |
| AVERAGE | | | -4.4% | | | -5.6% |

Source: Police department and city reports. See endnotes for specific sources. Cities are ordered by population size. Percentage changes in rates are calculated from unrounded estimates.

* These cities did not respond to requests for data in time for publication.

ⁱⁱ This estimate is based on data through December 16, 2017, received by the authors from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department on December 19, 2017. The murder total provided excludes the 58 killings caused by the October 1, 2017, mass shooting outside the Mandalay Bay resort. Police departments often code acts of terror differently than homicides. Because the Vegas MPD did not include these deaths in its murder total, this report does not do so either.

METHODOLOGY

This report analyzes crime in the 30 largest American cities, based on population totals reported in the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting program (UCR). It is part of a series of crime reports published each year by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law. These reports are meant to provide near real-time data on crime trends in a representative sample of major American cities, as well as to provide some insight into national crime trends. Any reference to the “crime rate,” “violent crime rate,” or “murder rate” in this report refers to the average rate in the 30 largest cities rather than national rates.

Sources for Crime Data

Data on crime in 2016 were derived from the UCR.³⁴ For data on crime in 2017, the authors collected crime data directly from police departments, and constructed estimates based on it. To ensure accurate estimates, the authors excluded any city that was not able to provide data through at least the first three quarters of the year — that is, through the end of September. Cities that did not meet that cutoff, or that reported no data, were marked “unavailable.” All estimates are based on the most recent data available on December 19, 2017.

When collecting data, the authors searched first for reliable, regularly-updated data sources. Accordingly, weekly CompStat reports, monthly reports, and quarterly reports were used wherever possible. Reliable open data portals, such as those maintained by Baltimore and Chicago, were also prioritized.

Not all cities release these regular analyses or maintain trustworthy data portals. In those cases, the authors reached out to local police departments directly. The authors also conducted direct outreach in cases where publicly available data exists, but is slow to update, or has otherwise proved incomplete. For example, the authors obtained data directly from the Detroit Police Department. Lastly, if no response to this outreach was received in time for publication, the authors drew data from the most recent violent crime report compiled by the Major City Chiefs Police Association.

Offense Definitions

Offense data was then categorized according to UCR definitions. Violent crime includes murder, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crime includes burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Murder includes solely homicides. Overall crime includes all of the above. Rape was excluded from this analysis because its UCR definition has changed over time, creating inaccuracies when data is compared, and police reporting rates appear to be low. Valid comparisons of the number of rape offenses committed could be made, in a different type of analysis, using victimization reports.³⁵ While most city crime reports use UCR definitions of offenses, some variation between cities may exist based on state or local laws.

2017 Projections and 2016 Comparisons

The authors made year-end projections based on partial year data for this report. It would be incorrect to observe six months' worth of data, and assume that trends would continue unchanged through the end of the year, especially given the "seasonal" nature of crime. However, the method used by the authors to create year-end projections is specifically designed to incorporate previous years' month-to-month trends and therefore provide year-end estimates that are as accurate as possible. This helps correct for seasonal trends and possible under-reporting.

To estimate year-end crime data for 2017 in this report, the authors divided the number of crimes that occurred in each city in 2016 — according to the UCR — by the number of crimes committed year-to-date in 2016 according to city CompStat sources. The resulting ratio was then multiplied by the number of crimes that have been committed in the city by the same point *this* year. For example, suppose a city experienced 100 murders last year according to FBI data. If the same city experienced 60 murders between January 1 and November 1, 2016, according to local police data, and 70 murders between January 1 and November 1, 2017, this method would project a year-end murder count of 116.67, rounded to 117. This report is the first 2017 Center analysis to incorporate 2016 UCR data. Accordingly, estimates may diverge slightly from the Center's preliminary 2017 analysis.

The rate of each offense is the number of offenses per 100,000 citizens. As in previous reports, 2017 population estimates for rate calculations were created by assuming that the average rate of population change between 2011 and 2016, as reported by the UCR, remained constant through 2017.

Lastly, as in past reports, cities missing data in any one year were excluded from year-to-year comparisons. For example, the authors could not obtain data on the number of property crimes committed in El Paso in 2017. Thus, El Paso was excluded from both the 2016 and 2017 totals used to compute the change in the overall, 30-city crime rate. However, because data on violent crime in El Paso were available for both 2016 and 2017, the city was included in other comparisons.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ See AMES GRAWERT, & JAMES CULLEN, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUSTICE, CRIME IN 2017: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS (2017), <https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/crime-2017-preliminary-analysis>.
- ² For analysis, see BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUSTICE, PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF 2015 FBI UNIFORM CRIME REPORT, Sept. 26, 2016, <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/preliminary-analysis-2015-fbi-uniform-crime-report>. For original source material, see UNITED STATES DEP'T OF JUSTICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES, 2015 (2016), <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/>.
- ³ NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEP'T, COMPSTAT CITYWIDE (2017), <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/citywide-crime-stats.page>.
- ⁴ LOS ANGELES POLICE DEP'T, COMPSTAT CITYWIDE PROFILE 1 (2017), <http://assets.lapdonline.org/assets/pdf/cityprof.pdf>.
- ⁵ CITY OF CHICAGO, CRIMES - 2001 TO PRESENT (2017), <https://data.cityofchicago.org/view/5cd6-ry5g>.
- ⁶ CITY OF HOUSTON, POLICE DEP'T, MONTHLY UCR CRIME BY STREET/NEIGHBORHOOD (POLICE BEAT) CRIME STATISTICS (2017), <http://www.houstontx.gov/police/cs/index-2.htm>.
- ⁷ PHILADELPHIA POLICE DEP'T, MAJOR CRIMES AS REPORTED TO P.P.D. — CITYWIDE — WEEK 50, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B23Pg6Sgxll1b3FOTGphM3c3OTQ> (from this link, select “CITYWIDEWK 50.pdf”).
- ⁸ Email from Office of Public Information, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Dep't, to author (Dec. 19, 2017, 14:11 EST).
- ⁹ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ¹⁰ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ¹¹ AUTOMATED REG'L JUSTICE INFO. SYS., CRIME STATISTICS AND MAPS, SAN DIEGO (2017), <http://crimestats.arjis.org/default.aspx> (from the drop-down boxes, select “Jan / 2017” for “Begin Date,” “Oct / 2017” for “End Date,” and “San Diego” for “Agency”).
- ¹² DALLAS POLICE DEP'T, COMPSTAT DAILY BRIEFING (Dec. 3, 2017), http://www.dallaspolice.net/resource/dpd_crimerreport.
- ¹³ SAN JOSE POLICE DEP'T, PART I CRIMES REPORTED (2017), http://www.sjpd.org/CrimeStats/updates/Part_One_Crimes_Reported_YTD.pdf?cacheID=20160503.
- ¹⁴ AUSTIN POLICE DEP'T, CHIEF'S MONTHLY REPORTS (2017), <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/chiefs-monthly-reports>.
- ¹⁵ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ¹⁶ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ¹⁷ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ¹⁸ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ¹⁹ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ²⁰ Email from Sharisse Burton, Public Information Specialist, Fort Worth Police Department, to author (Dec. 5, 2017, 13:36 EST).

²¹ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.

²² SEATTLE POLICE DEP'T, SEASTAT 3 (Dec. 6, 2017), https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Police/SeaStat/SEASTAT_2017DEC6_FINAL.pdf.

²³ DENVER POLICE DEP'T, CITYWIDE DATA – UNIFORM CRIME REPORTING, PART 1: CRIMES IN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER BASED ON UCR STANDARDS (2017), https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/720/documents/statistics/2017/UCR_Citywide_Report_ed_Offenses_2017.pdf.

²⁴ Louisville officials advised the authors to use CompStat data available from the Department's "Transparency Page." Email from Col. Robert J. Schroeder, Assistant Chief of Police, Louisville Metro Police Dep't, to author (Nov. 28, 2017, 14:45 EST). Louisville Metro Police Dep't, CompStat Data (Nov. 22, 2017), https://louisvilleky.gov/sites/default/files/police/sop_searchable_and_reports/lmpd_compstat_report_47_2017.pdf.

²⁵ Email from David LeValley, Deputy Chief, Detroit Police Department, to author (Nov. 27, 2017, 16:40 EST). While past reports have used Detroit's open data portal, the authors learned that the portal may take longer to update than previously expected, and chose to seek data directly from the city accordingly.

²⁶ METROPOLITAN POLICE DEP'T, DISTRICT CRIME DATA AT A GLANCE: 2017 YEAR-TO-DATE CRIME COMPARISON (2017), <http://mpdc.dc.gov/page/district-crime-data-glance>. The city's crime statistics page warns against comparing data to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. This report's methodology, as in previous Brennan Center reports using data from both the FBI and local police departments, is designed to account for this variation. Additionally, while most city data runs through Dec. 12, 2017, a significant discrepancy between several daily reports led the authors to use the crime report for Dec. 13, 2017.

²⁷ BOSTON POLICE DEP'T, BPDNEWS (2017), <http://bpdnews.com/?category=Crime+Stats>.

²⁸ Email from Elizabeth Fleming, Police Data Production Control Coordinator, Metro Nashville Police Department, to author (Nov. 29, 2017, 13:57 EST).

²⁹ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.

³⁰ OPEN BALTIMORE, BPD PART 1 VICTIM BASED CRIME DATA (2017), <https://data.baltimorecity.gov/Public-Safety/BPD-Part-1-Victim-Based-Crime-Data/wsfq-mvij> (from the raw spreadsheet, data was exported and then filtered by date to remove all years other than 2016 and 2017, and then filtered again by crime type to include only Part 1 index crimes).

³¹ CITY OF PORTLAND, CRIME STATISTICS: MONTHLY NEIGHBORHOOD OFFENSE STATISTICS (2017), <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/71978>. Readers of previous Brennan Center reports will note that this is the first year that data on Portland has been available, due to a recent redesign of the city's website.

³² Unless otherwise indicated, data citations for each city in Table 2 are identical to Table 1.

³³ Oklahoma City reported murder data through the third quarter of 2017 to the Major Cities Chiefs Association, but reported data on other offenses only through the first half of the year. Consistent with the methodology, data on crime in Oklahoma City in 2017 is included only in the homicide table. MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS: THIRD QUARTER COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.

³⁴ UNITED STATES DEP'T OF JUSTICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES, 2016 tbl. 6 (2017), <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-6/table-6.xls/view>.

³⁵ RACHEL E. MORGAN & GRACE KENA, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION, 2016 (2017), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6166>.