Fact Check: Trump on Crime in Georgia

By James Cullen

Donald Trump shared several tweets Saturday about crime in Rep. John Lewis's (D-Ga.) district after the Georgia congressman was critical of Trump in an interview. Below is a fact check of his tweets.

Note: Lewis's 5th Congressional District includes all of Atlanta and parts of Fulton, Dekalb, and Clayton counties. The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program does not report data for partial counties, so the tables below include full data for all four jurisdictions.

1.   "Congressman John Lewis should spend more time on fixing and helping his district, which is in horrible shape and falling apart (not to mention crime infested) rather than falsely complaining about the election results."

Fact: This statement about crime is misleading. Atlanta, along with Fulton, Clayton, and Dekalb counties, which make up Lewis's district, has seen violent crime fall by 14 percent and murder by 7 percent since 2010. During Lewis's tenure, the violent crime has plummeted to less than half of what is was when he entered office in 1987.

Crime in the 5th Cong. District, Georgia (per 100,000 people)

Crime Rates	1987	2010	2015
Murder Rate	15.6	8.5	7.9
Violent Crime Rate	1023.0	564.0	482.9

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics, U.S. Census

The violent crime rate in these areas is 32 percent lower than in other urban areas the size of Atlanta. The murder rate is 37 percent lower.

Crime Rates in 2015 (per 100,000 people)

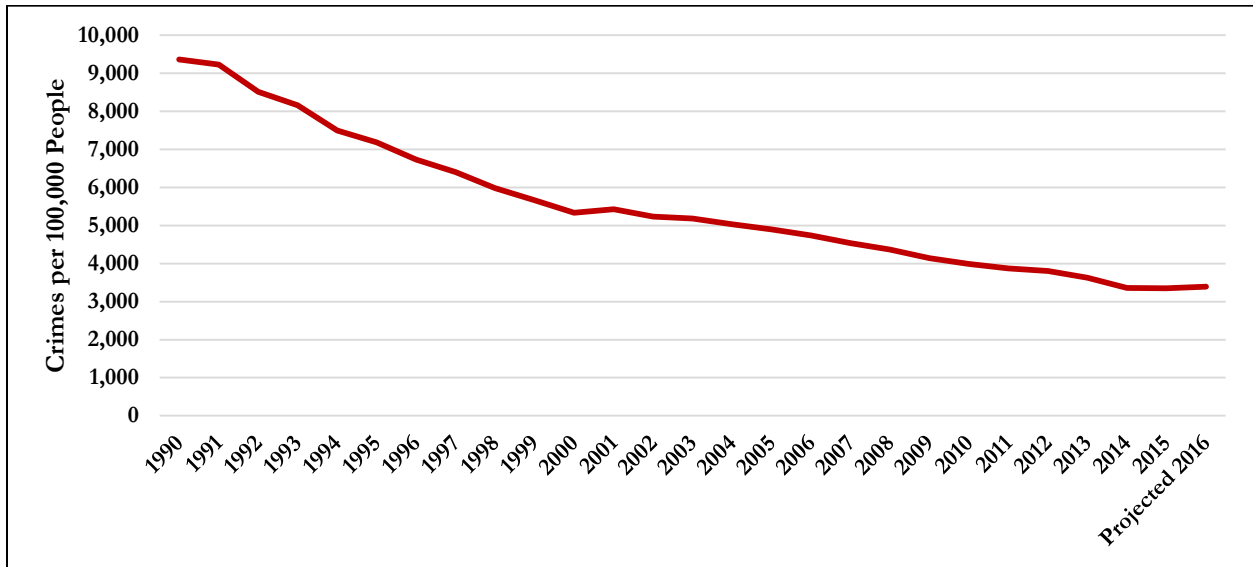|	Violent Crime Rate	Murder Rate
5th Cong. District, Georgia	482.9	7.9
Average Urban City the Size of Atlanta	708	12.5

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics, U.S. Census

2.   "Congressman John Lewis should finally focus on the burning and crime infested inner-cities of the U.S. I can use all the help I can get!"

Fact: While it is true that some cities have seen murder increases in the last two years, as the Brennan Center reports, crime and murder levels are still very low compared to historical trends.

Data from the 30 largest cities shows that crime held steady from 2014 to 2015, and from 2015 to 2016. Crime is at historic lows, around 65 percent less than its peak in 1990.

Crime Rate Since 1990 (per 100,000 people)

Source: Brennan Center for Justice 2016 Preliminary Analysis

In the 30 largest cities, the murder rate increased in both 2015 (by 11 percent) and in 2016 (by 13 percent). However, these national averages are skewed by a handful of cities. More than half the rise in 2015 was caused by Baltimore, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Almost half the rise in 2016 was caused by Chicago alone. Moreover, since the murder rate remains near historic lows, measuring in percentage increases overstates the increase in the actual numbers of murders.

The murder increases in these cities are serious problems that must be addressed. But the data do not reflect any sort of national murder wave.

Read the Brennan Center's analyses of crime in 2015 here and 2016 here.