BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE TWENTY YEARS

at New York University School of Law

CRIME IN 2017: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Ames C. Grawert and James Cullen

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I. **CRIME AND MURDER IN 2017**

Based on new data collected from police departments in the 30 largest cities,* this report finds that all measures of crime — overall crime, violent crime, and murder — are projected to **decline** in 2017. Indicators show that 2017 will have the second lowest rates of crime and violent crime since 1990.

These findings directly undercut any claim that the nation is experiencing a crime wave. In 2015 and 2016, overall crime rates remained stable, while murder and violent crime rose slightly. Now, in 2017, crime and murder are projected to decline again.

This report's main findings are explained below, and detailed in Figure 1, and in Tables 1 and 2:

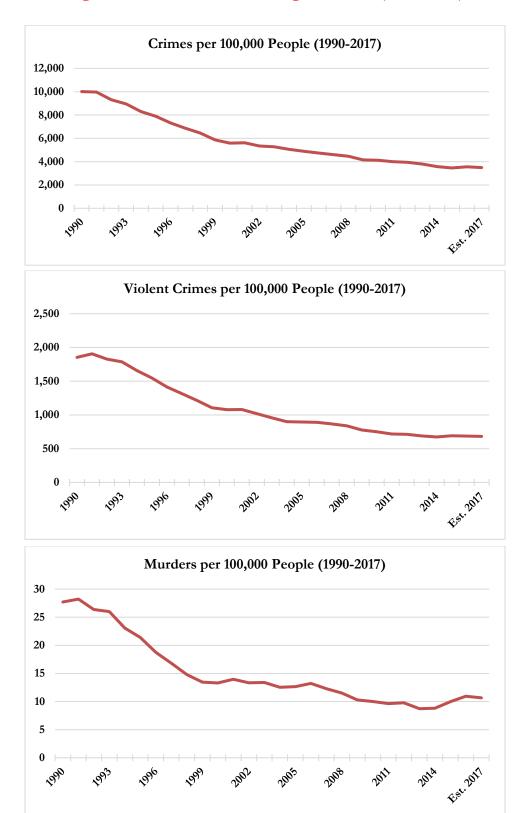
- The overall crime rate in 2017 is projected to decrease slightly, by 1.8 percent. If this estimate holds, as it has in past analyses, 2017 will have the second lowest crime rate since 1990.¹
- The violent crime rate is projected to decrease slightly, by 0.6 percent, essentially remaining stable. This result is driven primarily by stabilization in Chicago and declines in Washington, D.C., two large cities that experienced increases in violence in recent years. The violent crime rate for this year is projected to be the second lowest since 1990 — about one percent above 2014's violent crime rate.
- The 2017 murder rate is projected to be 2.5 percent lower than last year. This year's decline is driven primarily by decreases in Detroit (down 25.6 percent), Houston (down 20.5 percent), and New York (down 19.1 percent). Chicago's murder rate is also projected to fall, by 2.4 percent. The 2017 murder rate is expected to be on par with that of 2009, well at the bottom of the historic post-1990 decline, yet still higher than the lowest recorded rate in 2013. Notably, more than half the murder increase from 2014 to 2017 (55.6 percent) is attributable to two cities — Chicago and Baltimore. This year's decrease could indicate that the increases in 2015 and 2016 were short-term fluctuations in a longer-term downward trend.
- While crime is down this year, some cities are projected to experience localized increases. For example, Charlotte's murder rate doubled in the first six months of 2017 relative to last year. Detailed graphs on each of the 30 cities studied, where data was available, is included in Section III.

The Brennan Center's previous report analyzing crime in 2016 is available here, and a report analyzing historical crime trends from 1990 to 2016 is available here.

^{*} This report collected data on six Part I index crimes tracked by the FBI in the Uniform Crime Reports: murder, robbery, and aggravated assault (collectively, "violent crime"), and burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft (collectively, "property crime"). "Overall crime" includes all six offenses.

The authors were unable to secure this data from some cities, as noted in Tables 1 and 2. As explained in the Methodology, year-end 2017 estimates are based on year-to-date crime data projected out over the full year to simulate past years' monthly trends for each city. The conclusions of this report could change if crime data for the remainder of the year do not hold these trends. Notably, the Center's 2015 and 2016 estimates accurately predicted those years' trends.

Figure 1: Crime in the 30 Largest Cities (1990-2017)



Source: Brennan Center analysis.²

II. **DATA TABLES**

Table 1: Crime in the 30 Largest Cities (2016-2017)

			v Eurgest G	•	•	
	2016 Crime Rate (per 100,000)	2017 Crime Rate (per 100,000)	Percent Change in Crime Rate	2016 Violent Crime Rate (per	2017 Violent Crime Rate (per	Percent Change in Violent Crime
				100,000)	100,000)	Rate
New York ³	2,033	1,965	-3.3%	547	506	-7.4%
Los Angeles ⁴	3,092	3,035	-1.8%	658	676	2.8%
Chicago ⁵	4,172	4,313	3.4%	992	1,008	1.6%
Houston ^{6†}	5,323	Unavailable	Unavailable	982	1,069	8.8%
Philadelphia ⁷	4,016	3,946	-1.8%	891	872	-2.1%
Las Vegas ⁸	4,117	3,928	-4.6%	588	577	-1.8%
Phoenix ^{9†}	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	278	302	8.5%
San Antonio ¹⁰	5,852	5,907	0.9%	641	666	4.0%
San Diego ¹¹	2,348	2,111	-10.1%	335	336	0.4%
Dallas ¹²	4,046	3,865	-4.5%	703	737	4.8%
San Jose ¹³	2,683	2,835	5.6%	327	310	-5.3%
Austin ¹⁴	3,849	3,479	-9.6%	352	325	-7.5%
Charlotte ^{15†}	4,766	Unavailable	Unavailable	702	691	-1.7%
Jacksonville ^{16†}	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	590	606	2.6%
San Francisco 17*	6,247	Unavailable	Unavailable	669	Unavailable	Unavailable
Indianapolis 18†	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	857	703	-17.9%
Columbus 19†	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	423	370	-12.4%
Fort Worth ²⁰	3,873	3,729	-3.7%	468	492	5.0%
El Paso ^{21†}	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	345	318	-7.8%
Seattle ²²	6,003	5,634	-6.1%	581	599	3.0%
Denver ²³	4,112	4,011	-2.5%	583	629	7.9%
Louisville ²⁴	5,451	5,226	-4.1%	632	608	-3.7%
Detroit ²⁵	5,531	5,121	-7.4%	1,617	1,463	-9.6%
Washington,	,	,		,	,	
D.C. 26	5,659	5,066	-10.5%	1,006	730	-27.5%
Boston ²⁷	2,823	2,779	-1.6%	653	590	-9.7%
Nashville ²⁸	4,875	4,978	2.1%	1,066	1,134	6.4%
Memphis ^{29†}	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,803	2,019	12.0%
Oklahoma City ^{30†}	4,608	Unavailable	Unavailable	713	662	-7.2%
Baltimore ³¹	6,338	6,690	5.5%	1,767	2,057	16.4%
Portland ³²	5,876	6,784	15.4%	445	467	4.9%
AVERAGE	-	-	-1.8%	-	-	-0.6%
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Source: Police department and city reports. See endnotes for specific sources. Cities are ordered by population size. 33

^{*} The authors were unable to obtain reliable data from San Francisco.

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

Table 2: Murder in the 30 Largest Cities (2016-2017)

					/	
	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 ³⁴	335	273	-18.4%	3.9	3.1	-19.1%
Los Angeles ³⁵	294	306	4.0%	7.4	7.6	3.0%
Chicago ³⁶	781	764	-2.2%	28.6	27.9	-2.4%
Houston ³⁷	290	235	-19.0%	12.6	10.0	-20.5%
Philadelphia ³⁸	271	291	7.5%	17.2	18.4	6.9%
Las Vegas ³⁹	168	143	-14.9%	10.6	8.8	-16.5%
Phoenix ⁴⁰	80	60	-25.0%	5.0	3.7	-26.3%
San Antonio ⁴¹	149	132	-11.6%	10.0	8.6	-13.5%
San Diego ⁴²	50	42	-16.3%	3.5	2.9	-17.8%
Dallas ⁴³	172	172	0.0%	13.0	12.8	-1.7%
San Jose ⁴⁴	47	28	-41.4%	4.5	2.6	-42.5%
Austin ⁴⁵	40	30	-23.8%	4.1	3.0	-27.0%
Charlotte ⁴⁶	68	145	113.6%	7.5	15.7	108.4%
Jacksonville ⁴⁷	103	116	12.3%	11.8	13.0	11.0%
San Francisco ⁴⁸ *	58	Unavailable	Unavailable	6.6	Unavailable	Unavailable
Indianapolis 49	124	116	-6.5%	14.2	13.2	-7.2%
Columbus ⁵⁰	82	118	43.5%	9.5	13.4	40.7%
Fort Worth ⁵¹	65	67	2.6%	7.6	7.6	0.1%
El Paso ⁵²	20	26	30.0%	2.9	3.8	29.4%
Seattle ⁵³	18	15	-14.3%	2.6	2.1	-16.8%
Denver ⁵⁴	58	81	39.3%	8.3	11.2	35.7%
Louisville ⁵⁵	118	141	19.7%	17.2	20.5	18.8%
Detroit ⁵⁶	301	220	-26.9%	45.4	33.8	-25.6%
Washington, D.C. ⁵⁷	135	118	-12.9%	19.7	16.8	-14.7%
Boston ⁵⁸	46	58	26.1%	6.8	8.4	24.0%
Nashville ⁵⁹	83	109	31.7%	12.6	16.4	30.2%
Memphis ⁶⁰	190	170	-10.8%	28.9	25.8	-10.8%
Oklahoma City ⁶¹	71	62	-12.5%	11.0	9.5	-14.2%
Baltimore ⁶²	318	375	17.9%	51.3	60.6	18.1%
Portland ⁶³	17	29	71.4%	2.7	4.7	70.3%
AVERAGE	-	-	-	-	-	-2.5%

Source: Police department and city reports. See endnotes for specific sources. Cities are ordered by population size.

^{*} The authors were unable to obtain reliable data from San Francisco.

III. **CITY-LEVEL GRAPHS**

For graphs of crime and murder rates in each of the cities studied in this report, please see this link, also available at this URL:

https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/city-graphs-crime-2017-preliminary-analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Sources for Crime Data

Annual data on crime through 2015 are derived from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). 64 However, final UCR data for 2016 and 2017 have not yet been released. For both years, the authors collected crime data directly from police departments in the 30 largest American cities, and used that data to compile year-end estimates as described below.

Not all cities responded to the authors' data requests in time for publication. For 2016, partial data was obtained for Columbus, El Paso, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, and Phoenix. For 2017, reliable data could not be secured from San Francisco. Partial data was obtained for Charlotte, Columbus, El Paso, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Oklahoma City.

Offense data was then categorized according to UCR definitions. Violent crime includes murder, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crime included burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Murder included only murder. 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 over time is compared. 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

To estimate year-end crime data for 2017, the authors started with raw data from cities on crimes that have occurred so far this year. Where cities offered incident-level data, this raw material was interpreted in a way that ensured consistencies between years, and with each city's previous UCR reports. Next, the authors took the proportion of the year's crimes committed to date last year and multiplied that by the 2017 crime rates. For example, if a city had 100 murders through July 2016 and 200 by the end of 2017, then if the same city had 150 murders by July 2017, the author's projected the city would have 300 murders this year. While this method is empirically accepted as a method to calculate estimates, it is based on the assumption that monthly trends do not vary significantly from year-to-year, and cannot account for unique events.

Projections in most previous Brennan Center reports have been based on comparisons to UCR data from the immediately preceding year. That was not possible here, since the FBI had not yet released its final 2016 analysis by the time of publication. To minimize assumptions and ensure the most accurate possible comparison, the authors instead used raw data reported by cities for both 2016 yearend numbers and 2017 projections. Toward that end, 2016 crime data in Tables 1 and 2 of this report are reproduced from Crime in 2016: Final Year-End Data. Detailed information on that report's methodology is available in footnote 34 of that report. 65

For rate calculations, the authors projected city population assuming the average rate of population growth between 2010 and 2015 remained constant through 2017.66

ENDNOTES

¹ 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/.

² To ensure consistent comparisons through the present day, cities were only included in each graph if data were available for 2016 and 2017. For example, data on crime in San Francisco was available through 2016, but because 2017 data was not available, San Francisco is excluded from all three graphs. In addition, these cities were omitted from the overall crime series: Charlotte, Columbus, El Paso, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Memphis, Oklahoma City, and Phoenix. Where the UCR lacks pre-2016 data for cities — such as Baltimore in 1999, and Portland in 2015 — the city was omitted from this series for that year.

³ NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEP'T, COMPSTAT CITYWIDE (2017), http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cs-en-us-city.pdf.

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.

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8 E-mail from Officer Larry Hadfield, Office of Public Information, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, to author (Aug. 10, 2017, 12:38 EST) (on file with the authors).

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¹² DALLAS POLICE DEP'T, ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY (2017), http://www.dallaspolice.net/resources/CrimeReports/Crime%20Summary%20(Greensheet).pdf.

¹³ SAN JOSE POLICE DEP'T, PART I CRIMES REPORTED (2017), http://www.sipd.org/CrimeStats/updates/Part_One_Crimes_Reported_YTD.pdf?cacheID=20160503.

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¹⁵ CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG POLICE DEP'T, INDEX OFFENSE STATISTICS JANUARY-DECEMBER 2016 COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR, (2017), http://charlottenc.gov/CMPD/Safety/Documents/CrimeStats/CS16YrEnd-Summary.pdf.

16 Major Cities Chiefs Association, Violent Crime Survey – National Totals: Midyear Comparison (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.

¹⁷ The authors were unable to locate a public, reliable, government source for 2017 crime statistics, and city officials did not respond to requests for information. For 2016 data, the authors relied on previous Brennan Center reports. AMES GRAWERT & JAMES CULLEN, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUSTICE, CRIME IN 2016: FINAL YEAR-END DATA (2017), https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/crime-2016-final-year-end-data.

¹⁸ Major Cities Chiefs Association, Violent Crime Survey – National Totals: Midyear Comparison (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.

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- ²⁰ E-mail from Sharisse Burton, Public Information Specialist, Fort Worth Police Dep't, to author (Aug. 17, 2017, 10:22 EST) (on file with the authors).
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- ²² SEATTLE POLICE DEP'T, SEASTAT 3 (July 19, 2017), https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Police/SeaStat/SEASTAT_2017JUL19_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 See Louisville Metro Police Dep't, LMPD UCR Report, January-July 2017 (2017), https://louisvilleky.gov/sites/default/files/police/sop_searchable_and_reports/lmpd_ucr_combined_report_july_2017 .pdf. Previous Brennan Center reports have used Louisville CompStat data, but Louisville now makes its midyear UCR report publicly available.
- ²⁵ CITY OF DETROIT, DPD: ALL CRIME INCIDENTS DECEMBER 6, 2016-PRESENT (2017), https://data.detroitmi.gov/Public-Safety/DPD-All-Crime-Incidents-December-6-2016-Present/6gdg-y3kf.
- 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.
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- ³¹ 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).
- ³² 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
- ³³ Population estimates were created using the same methodology as previous reports. For more information, and detailed explanation of how data was compiled and analyzed, please see the methodology.
- ³⁴ NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEP'T, COMPSTAT CITYWIDE (2017), http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cs-en-us-city.pdf.
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- ⁵⁵ See Louisville Metro Police Dep't, LMPD UCR Report, January-July 2017 (2017), https://louisvilleky.gov/sites/default/files/police/sop_searchable_and_reports/lmpd_ucr_combined_report_july_2017 .pdf. Previous Brennan Center reports have used Louisville CompStat data, but Louisville now makes its midyear UCR report publicly available..
- ⁵⁶ CITY OF DETROIT, DPD: ALL CRIME INCIDENTS DECEMBER 6, 2016-PRESENT (2017), https://data.detroitmi.gov/Public-Safety/DPD-All-Crime-Incidents-December-6-2016-Present/6gdg-y3kf. This incident-level data listed offenses by "description," and by "category." To prevent double-counting, and following direction on the website, the authors summed homicides listed in the "category" column. Data was last accessed on August 25, 2017.
- ⁵⁷ 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.
- 58 BOSTON POLICE DEP'T, BPDNEWS (2017), http://bpdnews.com/?category=Crime+Stats.
- ⁵⁹ E-mail from Elizabeth Fleming, Police Data Production Control Coordinator, Metro Nashville Police Dep't (Aug. 15, 2017, 13:48 EST) (on file with the authors).

- 60 MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY NATIONAL TOTALS: MIDYEAR COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- ⁶¹ MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION, VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY NATIONAL TOTALS: MIDYEAR COMPARISON (2017) (on file with the authors). Data from this publication includes information on violent crime only.
- 62 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).
- 63 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
- 64 For data through 2014, see UNITED STATES DEP'T OF JUSTICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, UNIFORM CRIME REPORTING STATISTICS, LOCAL LEVEL REPORTED CRIME (1985-2014), https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/Local/LocalCrime.cfm (select "Single agency reported crime," and navigate to the desired agency). For crime data on 2015, see UNITED STATES DEP'T OF JUSTICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES, 2015 tbl. 8 (2016), https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crimein-the-u.s.-2015/tables/table-8/table_8_offenses_known_to_law_enforcement_by_state_by_city_2015.xls/view.
- 65 AMES GRAWERT & JAMES CULLEN, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUSTICE, CRIME IN 2016: FINAL YEAR-END DATA (2017), https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/crime-2016-final-year-end-data.
- 66 Rates of growth were derived by comparing 2010 population figures, as reported by the U.S. Census, to 2014 totals, as reported by the FBI's UCR series. See U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, AMERICAN FACTFINDER (2015), http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml; UNITED STATES DEP'T OF JUSTICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES 2014, tbl. 6 (2015), https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-theu.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/table-6.