

Crime in 2018: Updated Analysis

by Ames Grawert and Cameron Kimble*

In September, the Brennan Center analyzed available crime data from the nation's 30 largest cities, estimating that these cities would see a decline in crime and murder in 2018. Our report, [Crime and Murder in 2018: A Preliminary Analysis](#), concluded that crime and murder in 2018 are again declining nationwide, continuing the historic downward trend.¹

This analysis updates the September report and finds that, where data were available, rates of crime, violent crime, and murder in major American cities are estimated to decline through the end of 2018. However, murder rates in some cities remain above 2015 levels, demonstrating a continued need for evidence-based solutions to violent crime.

Tables 1 and 2 show conclusions in line with those in the initial report.[†]

- *Murder:* The 2018 murder rate in the 30 largest cities is estimated to decline by nearly 6 percent. Large decreases this year in Chicago and San Francisco, as well as moderate decreases in other cities such as Baltimore, contributed to this decline. The murder rate in Chicago — which increased significantly in 2015 and 2016 — is projected to decline by 18.1 percent in 2018. The murder rate in San Francisco is estimated to

fall by nearly 27 percent. Baltimore's 2018 murder rate is projected to decline by 7.4 percent.

Some cities are projected to see their murder rates rise, including Washington, D.C. (by 39.5 percent), and Houston (by 22.6 percent). Further study is needed to better understand the causes of these rises.

- *Crime:* The overall crime rate in the 30 largest cities in 2018 is estimated to decline slightly from the previous year, falling by 1.8 percent. While this conclusion is based on preliminary data, if the trend holds, the crime rate will fall to its lowest since at least 1990.
- *Violent Crime:* Violent crime rates are projected to decline in the majority of the 30 largest cities through the end of 2018. Overall, the violent crime rate is estimated to decrease by 2.7 percent, continuing a downward trend from 2017.

Estimates of crime and violent crime are based on data from 22 of the nation's 30 largest cities; estimates of murder include data from all 30 cities. While the estimates in this report are based on early data, previous Brennan Center reports have correctly estimated the direction and magnitude of changes in major-city crime rates.² The preliminary 2018 analysis is available [here](#).

* The authors thank Adureh Onyekwere for her research and editing assistance.

† 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 as a baseline for projections. As a result, data in Tables 1 and 2 are best compared to the previous update of this report, which can be found [here](#).

Table 1: Crime in the 30 Largest Cities (2017-18) (updated Dec. 12, 2018)

City	2017 Crime Rate (per 100,000)	2018 Crime Rate Est. (per 100,000)	Percent Change in Crime Rate Est.	2017 Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000)	2018 Violent Crime Rate Est. (per 100,000)	Percent Change in Violent Crime Rate Est.
New York ³	1,959.9	1,925.7	-1.7%	511.3	494.5	-3.3%
Los Angeles ⁴	3,236.0	3,128.0	-3.3%	700.0	676.5	-3.4%
Chicago ⁵	4,297.5	4,705.9	9.5%	1,033.7	1,014.7	-1.8%
Houston ^{6*}	5,165.2	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,036.8	Unavailable	Unavailable
Philadelphia ⁷	3,936.0	3,921.1	-0.4%	872.6	818.7	-6.2%
Las Vegas ^{8*}	3,482.6	Unavailable	Unavailable	539.3	Unavailable	Unavailable
Phoenix ⁹	4,362.2	4,080.9	-6.4%	691.5	680.9	-1.5%
San Antonio ¹⁰	5,468.8	5,059.4	-7.5%	624.0	609.6	-2.3%
San Diego ¹¹	2,170.3	2,244.8	3.4%	327.4	325.1	-0.7%
Dallas ¹²	3,897.6	3,854.5	-1.1%	712.6	648.1	-9.1%
San Jose ¹³	2,789.3	2,892.4	3.7%	348.6	376.6	8.0%
Austin ¹⁴	3,518.6	3,499.3	-0.5%	372.1	396.0	6.4%
Charlotte ^{15*}	4,478.6	Unavailable	Unavailable	663.5	Unavailable	Unavailable
Jacksonville ^{16*}	4,097.9	Unavailable	Unavailable	571.2	Unavailable	Unavailable
San Francisco ¹⁷	6,841.4	6,224.5	-9.0%	673.4	655.5	-2.7%
Indianapolis ^{18*}	5,669.1	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,257.3	Unavailable	Unavailable
Columbus ^{19*}	4,353.0	Unavailable	Unavailable	408.0	Unavailable	Unavailable
Fort Worth ²⁰	3,710.4	3,261.2	-12.1%	495.0	442.7	-10.6%
El Paso ^{21*}	2,143.9	Unavailable	Unavailable	325.0	Unavailable	Unavailable
Seattle ²²	5,854.5	6,078.5	3.8%	595.8	627.5	5.3%
Denver ²³	4,243.7	4,351.5	2.5%	576.7	631.7	9.5%
Louisville ²⁴	4,743.7	4,483.4	-5.5%	621.5	563.1	-9.4%
Detroit ²⁵	6,493.4	6,023.9	-7.2%	1,952.8	1,868.5	-4.3%
Washington, D.C. ²⁶	5,041.1	4,981.2	-1.2%	884.9	796.0	-10.0%
Boston ²⁷	2,715.8	2,536.4	-6.6%	626.7	595.2	-5.0%
Nashville ²⁸	4,883.2	5,010.6	2.6%	1,065.3	1,009.8	-5.2%
Memphis ^{29*}	8,210.8	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,912.9	Unavailable	Unavailable
Oklahoma City ³⁰	4,466.7	4,726.6	5.8%	714.2	794.3	11.2%
Baltimore ³¹	6,892.8	6,045.3	-12.3%	1,964.7	1,967.3	0.1%
Portland ³²	6,125.3	6,222.5	1.6%	448.3	492.6	9.9%
AVERAGE			-1.8%			-2.7%

Source: Police department and city reports. See endnotes for specific sources. Cities are ordered by 2015 population size, consistent with past Center reports. Percentage changes in rates are calculated from unrounded estimates.

* These cities did not respond to requests for data in time for publication. Murder data were obtained from other sources and appear in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Murder in the 30 Largest Cities (2017-18) (updated Dec. 12, 2018)

City	2017 Total Murders	2018 Total Murders Est.	Percent Change in Murder Est.	2017 Murder Rate (per 100,000)	2018 Murder Rate Est. (per 100,000)	Percent Change in Murder Rate Est.
New York ³³	292	291	-0.4%	3.4	3.4	-0.9%
Los Angeles	281	253	-9.9%	7.0	6.3	-10.6%
Chicago	653	534	-18.2%	24.1	19.8	-18.1%
Houston	269	335	24.7%	11.5	14.1	22.6%
Philadelphia	316	320	1.3%	20.1	20.2	0.9%
Las Vegas †	205	163	-20.6%	12.6	9.8	-22.2%
Phoenix	157	132	-15.8%	9.5	7.8	-17.8%
San Antonio	124	106	-14.3%	8.2	6.8	-16.1%
San Diego	35	28	-20.7%	2.5	1.9	-21.7%
Dallas	167	158	-5.3%	12.5	11.6	-6.9%
San Jose	32	29	-8.3%	3.1	2.8	-9.2%
Austin	25	32	27.3%	2.6	3.2	24.2%
Charlotte	86	53	-38.2%	9.4	5.7	-39.6%
Jacksonville	109	113	3.4%	12.2	12.4	1.9%
San Francisco	56	41	-26.0%	6.4	4.6	-26.9%
Indianapolis	156	202	29.3%	17.9	23.1	28.7%
Columbus	142	114	-20.0%	16.3	12.8	-21.3%
Fort Worth	70	59	-15.5%	8.0	6.6	-17.8%
El Paso	19	38	100.0%	2.8	5.5	99.2%
Seattle	27	29	9.1%	3.7	4.0	6.1%
Denver	59	65	10.4%	8.3	9.0	8.2%
Louisville	109	83	-23.8%	15.9	12.1	-24.0%
Detroit	267	264	-1.2%	39.8	39.6	-0.5%
Washington, D.C.	116	165	41.9%	16.7	23.3	39.5%
Boston	57	53	-7.5%	8.3	7.6	-8.8%
Nashville	110	86	-22.0%	16.3	12.5	-23.0%
Memphis	181	199	10.0%	27.7	30.5	10.1%
Oklahoma City	81	59	-27.6%	12.5	8.9	-28.7%
Baltimore	342	315	-7.9%	55.8	51.7	-7.4%
Portland	24	27	14.3%	3.7	4.4	18.6%
AVERAGE			-5.1%			-5.8%

Source: Police department and city reports. See endnotes for specific sources. Cities are ordered by 2015 population size, consistent with past Center reports. Percentage changes in rates are calculated from unrounded estimates.

† Las Vegas's 2017 homicide count includes deaths due to the October 1, 2017, mass shooting outside of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino. Because this shooting was an isolated, tragic, and unanticipated occurrence, 2018 projections were calculated using 2017's baseline homicides excluding the 58 mass shooting deaths.

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 and specifically only to the rate for those cities that provided data listed in this publication.

Sources for Crime Data

Data on crime in 2017 were derived from the UCR.³⁴ For data on crime in 2018, 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, unless otherwise noted, are based on the most recent data available on December 6, 2018.

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. Based on experience indicating that data portals are often slow to update, where data was collected from such sites, estimates were based on crime data as of the end of the third quarter of the year. Where data was collected from CompStat or similar reports, the authors used the most recent report available at the time of analysis.

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.

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. Also, 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. While most city crime reports use UCR definitions of offenses, some variation between cities may exist based on state or local laws.

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2018 Projections and 2017 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, possible underreporting, and varying offense definitions.

To estimate year-end crime data for 2018 in this report, the authors divided the number of crimes that occurred in each city in 2017, according to the UCR, by the number of crimes committed year-to-date in 2017 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, 2017, according to local police data, and 70 murders between January 1 and November 1, 2018, this method would project a year-end murder count of 116.67, rounded to 117.

The rate of each offense is the number of offenses per 100,000 citizens. As in previous reports, 2018 population estimates for rate calculations were created by assuming that the average rate of population change between 2014 and 2017, as reported by the UCR, remained constant through 2018.

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 crimes committed in Houston in 2018. Thus, Houston was excluded from both the 2017 and 2018 totals used to compute the change in the overall, 30-city crime rate.

Endnotes

- 1 See Ames Grawert, Adureh Onyekwere, and Cameron Kimble, *Crime in 2018: A Preliminary Analysis*, Brennan Center for Justice, 2018, <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/crime-murder-2018>.
- 2 Ames Grawert, James Cullen, Inimai M. Chettiar, “Five Things to Know About the Brennan Center’s Analyses of Crime Data,” Brennan Center for Justice, Oct. 9, 2017, <https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/five-things-know-about-brennan-centers-analyses-crime-data>.
- 3 NYPD CompStat 2.0,” New York City Police Department, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cs-en-us-city.pdf.
- 4 “COMPSTAT Citywide Profile, 10/14/18 – 11/10/18,” Los Angeles Police Department, last updated November 12, 2018, <http://assets.lapdonline.org/assets/pdf/cityprof.pdf>.
- 5 City of Chicago, Crimes – 2001 to Present (2018),” Chicago Data Portal, last modified Nov. 27, 2018, last accessed Nov. 27, 2018, <https://data.cityofchicago.org/view/5cd6-ry5g>. For cities where data was collected from a data portal, the authors build in a three-month “lag time” to ensure the portals were fully updated. Therefore, for this city, the authors compiled their estimates by comparing September 2017 year-to-date figures to September 2018 year-to-date figures.
- 6 The authors were not able to obtain complete, reliable data from this city. However, the authors were able to obtain homicide data from other sources. See “American Violence,” AmericanViolence.org, Marron Institute of Urban Management, New York University, updated December 2018, <http://www.americanviolence.org>. From the main page, the authors selected a custom time interval, from January 2017 through September 2018, and compared year-to-date figures from January to September 2017 to the same period in 2018.
- 7 “Major Crimes as Reported to P.P.D. — Citywide — Week 39,” Philadelphia Police Department, last updated Oct. 1, 2018, 2018, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vb9uu5K6priz-oBhfVQNhi_M8PJEOmQP.
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- 11 “Crime and Statistics,” Automated Regional Justice Information System, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, <http://crimestats.arjis.org/default.aspx> (from the drop-down boxes, select “Jan / 2017” for “Begin Date,” “Sep / 2017” for “End Date,” and “San Diego” for “Agency”; then repeat for 2018).
- 12 “NIBRS Compstat Daily Crime Briefing - Wednesday, November 28, 2018,” Dallas Police Department, last updated November 29, 2018, http://www.dallaspolice.net/resource/dpd_crimereport.
- 13 “UCR — Part One Crimes Reported,” San Jose Police Department, last updated Oct. 24, 2018, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, http://www.sjpd.org/CrimeStats/updates/Part_One_Crimes_Reported_YTD.pdf?cacheID=20160503.
- 14 “Chief’s Monthly Report, Citywide” Austin Police Department, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Police/APD_ChiefMonthlyReport_sep_2018.xls.
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- the main page, the authors selected a custom time interval, from January 2017 through September 2018, and compared year-to-date figures from January to September 2017 to the same period in 2018.
- 17 “COMPSTAT Citywide Profile,” San Francisco Police Department, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, <http://sanfranciscopolice.org/sites/default/files/Documents/PoliceDocuments/CompStat/SFPD%20CompStat%20september%202018.pdf>.
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 - 21 The authors were not able to obtain complete, reliable data from this city. However, the authors were able to obtain homicide data from other sources. *See* “American Violence,” AmericanViolence.org, Marron Institute of Urban Management, New York University, updated December 2018, <http://www.americanviolence.org>. From the main page, the authors selected a custom time interval, from January 2017 through September 2018, and compared year-to-date figures from January to September 2017 to the same period in 2018.
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 - 24 “LMPD UCR Report, January-October 2018,” Louisville Police Department, last accessed Nov. 26, 2018, <http://www.louisville-police.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/85>.
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 - 27 “Crime Incident Reports (August 2015 – To Date) (Source: New System),” Analyze Boston, last accessed Dec. 4, 2018, <https://data.boston.gov/dataset/crime-incident-reports-august-2015-to-date-source-new-system>. For cities where data was collected from a data portal, the authors build in a three-month “lag time” to ensure the portals were fully updated. Therefore, for this city, the authors compiled their estimates by comparing September 2017 year-to-date figures to September 2018 year-to-date figures.
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 - 30 “Crime Statistics: September 2018,” Oklahoma City Police Department, last accessed Dec. 3, 2018, <https://www.okc.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=12750>.
 - 31 “BPD Part 1 Victim Based Crime Data,” Open Baltimore, last updated Nov. 27, 2018, last accessed Nov. 28, 2018, <https://data.baltimorecity.gov/Public-Safety/BPD-Part-1-Victim-Based-Crime-Data/wsfaq-mvij> (from the raw spreadsheet, data was exported and then filtered by date to remove all years other than 2017 and 2018, and then filtered again by crime type to include only Part 1 index crimes). For cities where data was collected from a data portal, the authors build in a three-month “lag time” to ensure the portals were fully updated. Therefore, for

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updated. Therefore, for this city, the authors compiled their estimates by comparing September 2017 year-to-date figures to September 2018 year-to-date figures.

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

34 United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2017* (Washington, D.C., 2018), <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017>.

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Acknowledgments

The Brennan Center gratefully acknowledges Laura and John Arnold, Joan Ganz Cooney and Holly Peterson Fund, Democracy Alliance Partners, Jason Flom, Ford Foundation, The Margaret and Daniel Loeb Foundation, The New York Bar Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Rockefeller Family Fund, Solidarity Giving, and William B. Wiener Jr. and Evolve Foundations for their generous support of this work.

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