



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 14, 2012

Analysis: 2011 Violent Crime Dropped Nationwide, But Some Cities Saw Increase

The FBI [has announced](#) that [violent crime dropped](#) nationwide in 2011, but a closer analysis of the data, [according to](#) 24/7 Wall Street, shows that violent crime in the most dangerous American cities is worsening.

“A 24/7 Wall St. review of 2011 FBI crime data,” the [website reported](#), “shows that violent crime rose in more than half of the cities that have among the highest rates in the country. In seven of the 10 cities, murder rates increased. In eight of the 10, burglary went up.”



As well, the website reported, citing the [Police Executive Research Forum \(PERF\)](#), police budgets are dropping in cities where violent crime is the worst.

The article’s message is clear: Living in one of these cities may well mean taking your life in your hands.

Rankings

The most violent city in America, 24/7 reports, is Flint, Michigan, with 23.4 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The city’s population is 102,537 and its median income is \$22,672. The unemployment rate is 18.9 percent. It suffered 52 murders in 2011.

No. 2 on [24/7 Wall Street’s list](#) is no surprise: Detroit, which once represented the industrial might of the United States. With a population of 713,239, Detroit boasted 21.4 violent crimes per 1,000 persons. The unemployment rate is 19.9 percent and its median income is \$25,787.

Though Detroit’s violent crime rate is lower than that of Flint, in terms of raw numbers, Detroit topped Flint with 344 murders in 2011. That’s almost one per day.

St. Louis, Missouri is the third most dangerous city in the United States, with a violent crime rate of 18.6 in a population of 320,454. It suffered 113 murders in 2011. Following St. Louis are Oakland, California and Memphis, Tennessee. Oakland’s violent crime rate is 16.8 with a population of 395,317 and 104 murders, while the violent crime rate in Memphis is 15.8 for a population of 652,725. Memphis suffered 117 murders last year.

The rest [of the list](#) includes Little Rock, Arkansas (14.9/194,988/37); Birmingham, Alabama 14.8/213,258/54); Atlanta, Georgia (14.3/425,533/88); Baltimore, Maryland (14.2/626,848/196); and Stockton, California (14.9/295,136/58).

The unemployment rates in these cities run from 7.2 percent in Little Rock to 20.2 percent in Stockton.

Caveats

[According to](#) 24/7 Wall Street, “The cities with the highest crime rates tend to have particularly high poverty rates, high unemployment and low median income.” It added,

Two of the worst-off cities, Flint and Detroit, Mich., both have had well-publicized budget woes.



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Flint was taken over by an emergency city manager after failing to pay its bills in 2011. Detroit is facing similar budget problems and recently came to a temporary oversight agreement with the state.

The [website observes](#) that the FBI doesn't want anyone to draw conclusions about dangerous cities because of its crime reports, such as the idea that the cities might actually be dangerous. The FBI issues [this warning](#): "Data users should not rank locales because there are many factors that cause the nature and type of crime to vary from place to place. UCR statistics include only jurisdictional population figures along with reported crime, clearance, or arrest data. Rankings ignore the uniqueness of each locale."

"Data users" obviously ignore the FBI's admonition.

The Police Executive Research Forum, [24/7 Wall Street notes](#), laments the diminishing resources of police departments in these dangerous cities. Budgets are being cut; personnel cut back. [According to](#) PERF, of 416 agencies that answered two surveys, "51 percent reported experiencing a budget cut in their current fiscal year — a slight majority of agencies. However, a larger number — 78 percent of those same 416 agencies — had reported a budget cut in the 2010 survey."

Similarly, 40 percent of the 416 agencies reported that they were planning a budget cut for the upcoming fiscal year, compared to 61 percent of those same agencies that were planning a budget cut in 2010.

[PERF offered](#) examples of what the budget cuts mean for such cities as Detroit and Oakland, two of the 10 most dangerous cities in America:

The Detroit Police Department reported no cut in its total budget for the current fiscal year, but is planning for a 15-percent cut next year. Nearly 400 sworn officer positions have been lost through attrition, and the Police Department expects to see fewer officers on the street next year. The city did not see increases in crime in 2011, and believes that tactics such as closing district stations after 4 p.m. have helped by keeping more officers on the street for patrol.

Oakland, CA reported a 7-percent cut in its budget in the current fiscal year, and is preparing plans for an additional 5-percent cut next year. Over the last two years, Oakland reported losing 80 sworn officer positions in layoffs, and another 108 sworn positions through attrition. The Police Department has implemented a hiring freeze in sworn and civilian positions, and is reducing pensions and salaries. The department reports increases in both violent crime and property crime in 2011, and it believes that the economy and budget cuts have had an impact on crime, especially violent crime. Department officials also are concerned that officers are in greater jeopardy because there are fewer officers available to secure crime scenes.

Detroit provides an example of what may await these other cities if they don't get their finances and crime under control. The home of America's auto industry, the [Economic Collapse blog notes](#), is in utter chaos. [Once known](#) as the "Paris of the West," [Detroit](#) now nearly resembles a German city [after the Allied bombing](#) campaign of World War II, with once glorious skyscrapers that were the pride of industrial America [now abandoned](#). In 2008, *Weekly Standard* writer Matt Labash spent a week there. [His article](#) was entitled "The City Where The Sirens Never Sleep." The Mayor [recently announced](#) he would shut off half the city's street lights.

The [Economic Collapse](#) thus notes that "the largest U.S. cities are becoming cesspools of filth, decay and wretchedness."



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[24/7 Wall Street](#) reports, without explaining why, that [Congressional Quarterly](#) has stopped using descriptive words when giving statistics about crime-plagued cities. “*Congressional Quarterly*, which publishes and analyzes FBI crime statistics each year, referred to crime rate in terms of the ‘safest’ and ‘most dangerous’ cities. However, the publication recently dropped the terms ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’ due to the concerns of criminologists,” Dr. [Rachel Boba Santos](#) told 24/7 Wall Street.

24/7 Wall Street did not speculate about the nature of those concerns, although they likely mirror those on the FBI’s website.

General Stats

[Reuters and other news organizations noted](#) that the latest data show a decrease in violent crime for the fifth consecutive year.

The [FBI reported](#) that “violent crime declined in all city groups. Cities with populations of 50,000 to 99,999 saw the largest decrease (5.2 percent) in violent crime. Violent crime decreased 6.6 percent in metropolitan counties and 4.7 percent in nonmetropolitan counties.”

Violent crime decreased in all four regions of the country, the law enforcement [agency reported](#), but forcible rapes increased in cities of 500,000 to 999,999 people.

Last year, [according to CQ](#), the top 10 most dangerous cities were St. Louis, Missouri; Camden, New Jersey; Detroit, Michigan; Flint, Michigan; Oakland, California; Richmond, California; Cleveland, Ohio; Compton, California; Gary, Indiana; and Birmingham, Alabama.



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