

Rochester Homicide Statistics for 2016

Working Paper #2017-xx

January 2017



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ROCHESTER HOMICIDE STATISTICS FOR 2016

This report examines 2016 homicide data from Rochester, New York and includes comparisons with homicide data collected from 24 cities, including Rochester, over time.¹ The rate of homicides per 100,000 residents is reported in order to account for population differences among the various cities included within this sample. The homicide figures and rates are collected from a span of multiple years to identify the presence of any wider trends. An updated version of this paper is released annually to reflect the most current data. Since official data on homicide will not be released for some time, this paper is based on a review of year-end reports from local newspapers and police department websites. As such, we can anticipate that there will be small changes in murder counts when official data are released.

Results

Comparing Cities

In Rochester, NY, there were 42 reported homicides in 2016, with a rate of 20.02 per 100,000 residents. This was the City's highest homicide rate over the past six years (See Appendix A) and was a 30.3 percent increase in number of homicides from 2015 (See Table 1). While this sample of cities is not completely representative of national homicide trends, it is

¹ This sample contained 24 cities, selected due to their diversity in terms of both geographic location and population size. Population values for 2016 were based on 2015 U.S. Census estimates, and population values, which were recorded annually within the UCR. Homicide values were primarily gathered from news reports and police department websites, with the exception of homicide data from Dallas, Texas, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which were obtained directly from their corresponding units. In order to account for the differences in population sizes between cities, we compared homicides based upon the number of homicides per 100,000 residents within the jurisdiction.

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worth noting that more than half of the cities examined in this study showed increases compared to the number of homicides recorded for the previous year, 2015. When the number of homicides committed within each city in 2015 is compared with 2016, we are able to see that fifteen of the 24 sites experienced a comparative increase in the number of homicides, six cities experienced a decrease, and the remaining three cities exhibited no change (See Table 1).

Table 1:

Homicide Rates for 24 Cities Ranked from Lowest to Highest				
City	Homicides (2016)	Homicide Rate (2016) ²	Homicides (2015)	2015-2016 Percent Change
Albany, NY	2	2.03	5	-60.00%
New York, NY	335	3.92	352	-4.83%
San Diego, CA	67	4.8	37	+81.08%
Colorado Springs, CO	22	4.82	25	-12%
Boston, MA	47	7.05	38	+23.68%
Los Angeles, CA	294	7.4	282	+4.26%
Denver, CO	53	7.77	53	0
Hartford, CT	14	11.29	32	-56.25%
Anchorage, AK	34	11.38	26	+30.77%
Dallas, TX	172	13.23	136	+26.47%
Buffalo, NY	44	17.05	41	+7.32%
Pittsburgh, PA	59	19.38	57	+3.51%
Rochester, NY	42	20.02	33	+27.27%
Washington, DC	135	20.08	162	-16.67%
Oakland, CA	85	20.27	85	0
Syracuse, NY	30	20.81	22	+36.36%
Atlanta, GA	107	23.07	94	+13.83%
Richmond, VA	61	27.69	43	+41.86%
Chicago, IL	762	28.01	478	+59.41%
Newark, NJ	95	33.69	105	-9.52%
Cleveland, OH	136	35.045	78	+74.36%
Detroit, MI	302	44.6	295	+2.37%
New Orleans, LA	176	45.17	164	+7.32%
St. Louis, MO	188	59.55	188	0

² Based on U.S. Census population estimates for 2015

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Table 1 displays homicide statistics for each of the 24 cities within this sample. These statistics include, from left to right, the number of homicides in 2016, the rate of homicides in 2016 calculated based upon the number of homicides per 100,000 residents, the number of homicides recorded in 2015, and the percent change in number of homicides from 2015 to 2016. The cities are ranked from lowest to highest by the 2016 homicide rates. The chart supports three general conclusions: 1) there is a great deal of variation in homicide rates among cities nationwide; 2) there is a large amount of variation in terms of the change in number of homicides among cities nationwide; and 3) Rochester, NY exhibits a moderately high homicide rate compared to other U.S. cities.

1) Homicide Rates

Across the 24 cities examined, there was enormous variation in homicide rates, ranging from 2.03 homicides per 100,000 residents in Albany, NY to 59.55 homicides per 100,000 residents in St. Louis, MO. This shows that, in terms of rate per 100,000, homicide violence levels among cities are not uniform and tend to differ greatly from city to city, seemingly independent of factors such as size.

2) Changes in Homicide Numbers

The cities explored within this sample also showed considerable variation in terms of their changes in number of homicides from 2015 to 2016. Percent changes for the cities ranged

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from no change at all for three of the cities to an 81.08% increase for San Diego, CA. Rochester experienced a fair increase in number of homicides from 2015 to 2016, relative to the other cities, with a percent increase of 27.27%, though it is worth noting that this change was also similar to that exhibited by the nearby city of Syracuse, NY.

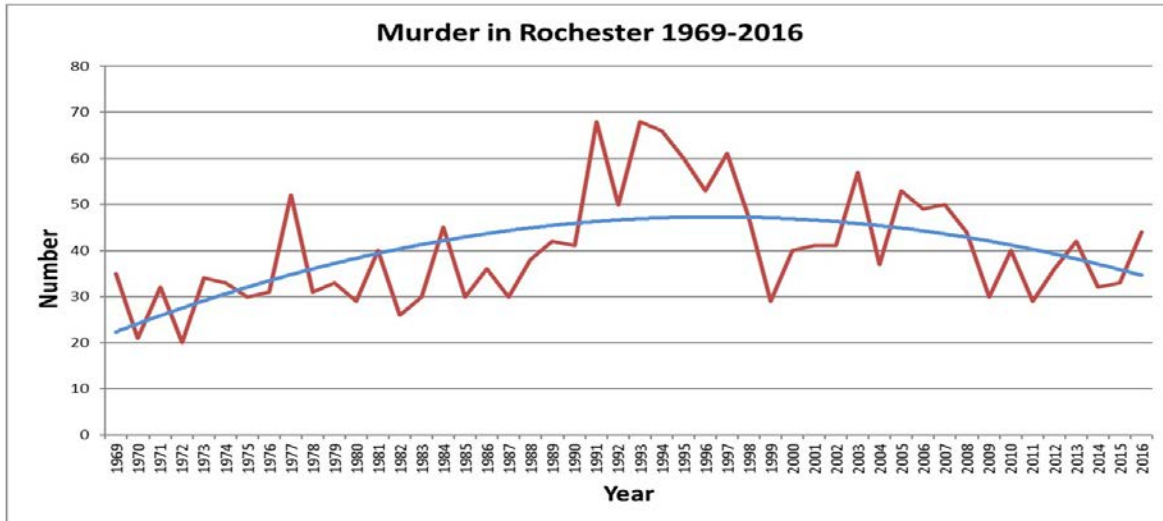
3) Rochester, NY Homicide Statistics

Rochester, NY, relative to the other cities within this sample, exhibited the twelfth highest homicide rate out of the 24 cities, indicating a moderately high homicide rate, particularly when considering how cities tend to exhibit higher homicide rates than less urbanized areas. Rochester's homicide rate was also higher than some larger cities that have often been viewed as more violent, such as Los Angeles, CA, and was very similar to that of Washington, D.C. From 2011 to 2015, Rochester possessed a homicide rate very similar to Chicago, IL (See Appendix A). In 2016, Rochester's rate was less than, but still roughly comparable to Chicago's homicide rate, in spite of Chicago being the city within this sample to experience the highest number of homicides in 2016. Additionally, Syracuse, NY, a city in close proximity to Rochester, exhibited a very similar number and rate of homicide, perhaps indicating regional influences.

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Rochester Over Time

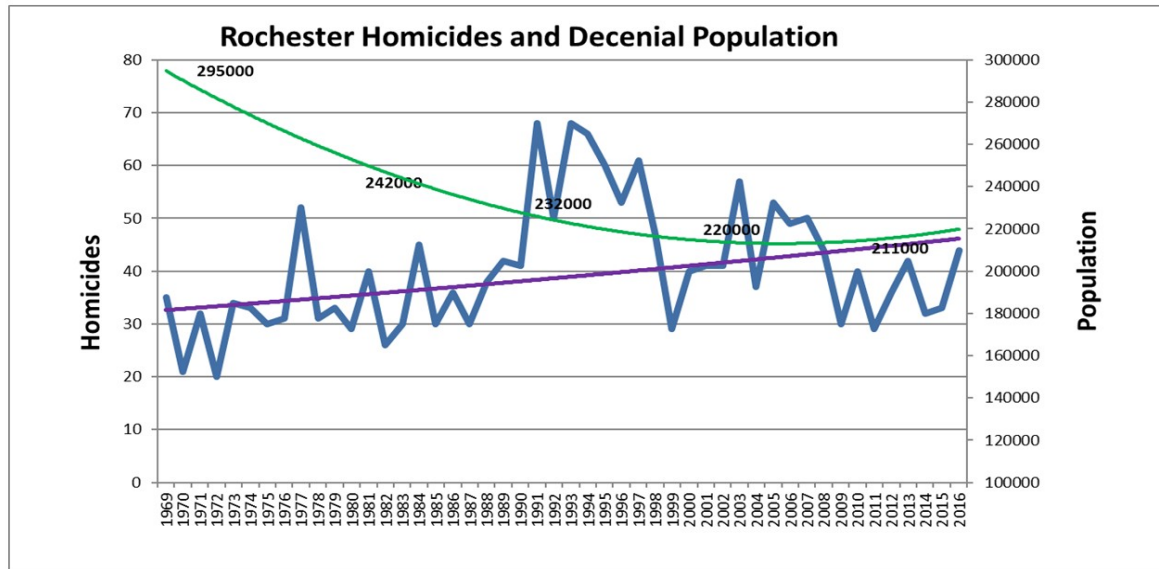
Figure 1:



As may be seen in the chart above, Rochester, NY has maintained a relatively consistent number of homicides per year since its 35 homicides in 1969, with the notable exception of the early-to-mid 1990s, in which the homicide count peaked at 68 in 1991 and 1993, and then began to slowly reduce to pre-1990s numbers after 1997. The blue line shows the overall trend in the data. The increase in violence during the 1990s experienced by Rochester was not a change exclusive to the City, and similar increases in violence were observed nationwide and were thought to be a result of the expanding crack cocaine market. The number of homicides in Rochester also decreased after this period, but then leveled out at a number similar to that which it held prior to the increase in the 1990s, with 41 recorded homicides in 1990 and 40 recorded homicides in 2000.

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Figure 2:

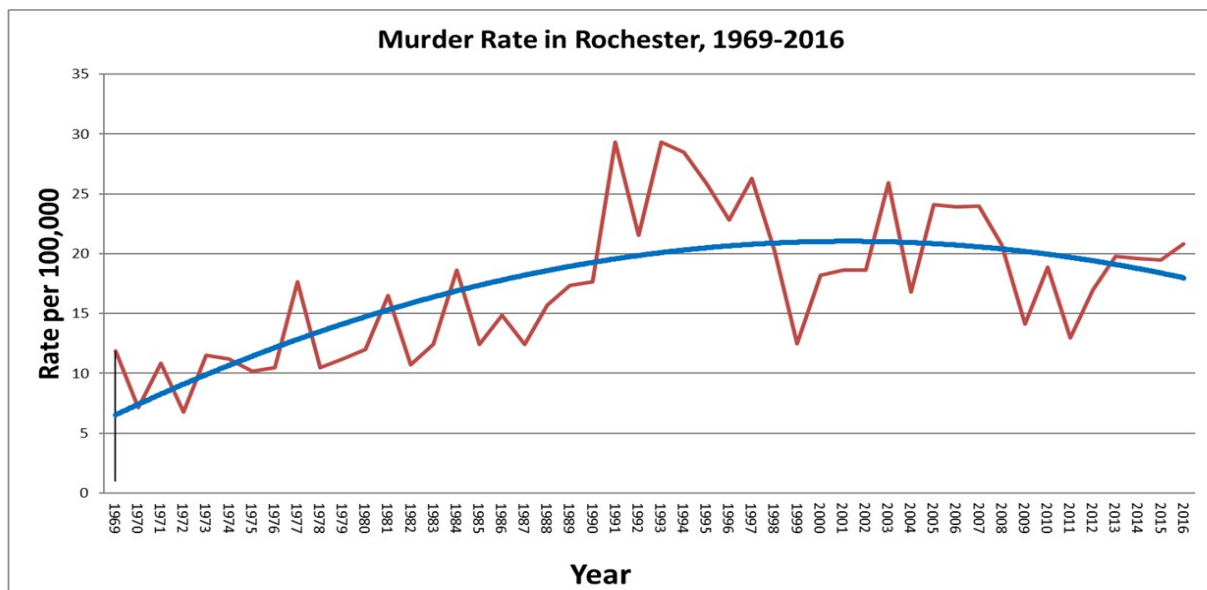


There is an increase in Rochester homicides in the post 1990s era compared to homicide figures prior to 1990. This increase in raw numbers is not in itself notable, as crime trends tend to fluctuate slightly over time due to various factors, but the trend is interesting when considering changes in population over time (See Figure 2). Since 1969, the population in Rochester has been steadily decreasing from a population of about 295,000 in the 1970 U.S. Census, to 232,000 in 1990, and, finally, an estimated 209,802 in 2015. The number of homicides in the city of Rochester has also been slightly increasing, leading to a gradual increase in the rate of homicides per 100,000 residents over time, with a rate of 11.86 in 1969 and a rate of 20.02 in 2016 (See Figure 3). There was also, unsurprisingly, a large increase in homicide rates in 1990s, with a peak of 68 murders and a rate of 29.31 in 1991 and 1993, and a subsequent decrease in homicide the rate by the early 2000s. Interestingly, the upward trend in homicide rates appeared to have picked up where it left off before the temporary increases in the 1990s, with a rate of 17.67 in

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1990 and rate of 18.18 in 2000. This would indicate that homicide rates have risen quite consistently in Rochester in spite of the City's declining population. It is the trend (the blue line) over time rather than the annual fluctuations that matters and that trend is clear; the upward trajectory of homicide rates is unchanged. Taken as a whole this means that if Rochester had the same rate of homicide in 2016 as it had in 1969 the City would have had 24 murders instead of the 42 that it experienced.

Figure 3:

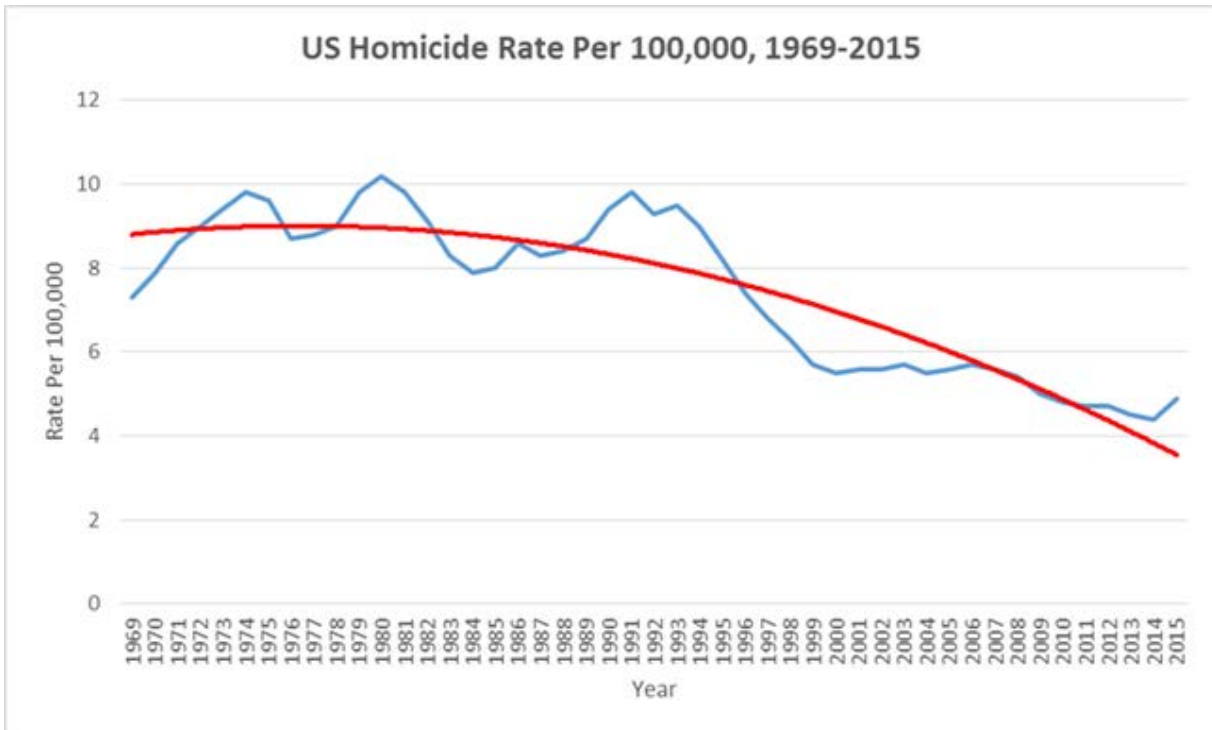


The figure (4) below shows the homicide rate for the nation as a whole. Over the same time period as shown above, the national rate fell from 7.3 to 4.9 homicides per 100,000 people. That shows a decline of over one third in the national murder rate while Rochester's rate increased by 64% from 11.86 to 19.5 per 100,000. Had Rochester experienced the same level of

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declines in murder rates as the nation since 1969, the city would had 16 murders in 2016 rather than 42.

Figure 4:



Conclusion

By any way it is measured, Rochester has a serious violence problem and has had it, uninterrupted, for nearly 50 years. The uniformity of the trend means that no city administration or associated law enforcement agency has fared better or worse, and there is no justified criticism of one more than another. This raises two important points. First, it should be recognized that the violence problems have grown along with increases in a wide range of problematic social conditions. Second, looking across jurisdictions suggests the potential value of a serious and significant community wide plan and effort to address the escalating violence.

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For the U.S. as a whole, homicide counts have generally been declining since the early 1990s (Siegel, 2011). Over the past year, though, there has been considerable public questioning as to whether that trend is continuing. It is worth noting, however, that for many cities, 2016 did not show a large increase in homicide number or in the homicide rate compared to other years (See Appendix A), in fact, several of the cities within our sample saw a decrease in homicides.

One city on our list has gotten a great deal of attention this past year. The City of Chicago garnered national attention over the course of 2016 due to its high level of violence and its large number of homicides, reaching 762 homicides by the end of the year. High levels of violence also appear to be continuing in the new year. When Chicago's population is taken into account, however, this seemingly high murder number translates into a rate of 28.01 homicides per 100,000 residents, a rate less than half that of St. Louis, Missouri's rate of 59.55, and not much larger than Rochester's rate at 20.5. St. Louis and Rochester had many fewer homicides in 2016 than Chicago, but, when population size is considered, it becomes apparent that homicides were a much more serious problem in St. Louis than in Chicago, and that Rochester was not as different as it seemed from the city that dominated headlines with its murder count. If Rochester had an additional thirteen homicides in 2016, it would have had a rate equal to that of Chicago, but it would have had to have a total of 120 homicides, instead of its actual 43, to match the rate in St. Louis. On the other hand, if it had the same rate of homicide as New York City, Rochester would have had a total of only eight murders.

In 2016, Rochester experienced four more homicides than its average number since the year 2000. However, that level of fluctuation in a city the size of Rochester does not indicate a change in pattern or trend over time. Instead, when you focus on trends rather than year-to-year fluctuations, Rochester's number of homicides has remained relatively consistent since 1996.

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Since the 1950 Census though, Rochester's population has fallen by a third. The result has been an increasing homicide rate for the City.

Comparing homicide rates, rather than raw numbers, across cities and over time provides important context for understanding what is happening in Chicago and Rochester and in other communities. It is also true, however, that comparisons across cities or time must be done with care and cannot ignore different social and economic conditions and other community characteristics. Even with that caveat, the value of rates is clear: They provide far more information than raw numbers and are, thus, consistent with transparency goals. They help temper characterizations that may be influenced by bias or political interest, and they help focus attention on how to understand the differences that are found and on what to do about the problem of lethal violence.

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Appendix A

City	2011	2012	Change	2013	Change	2014	Change	2015	Change	2016	Change
Atlanta, GA	20.68	18.99	-1.69	18.62	-0.37	20.47	+1.84	20.23	-0.24	23.07	+2.84
Detroit, MI	48.23	54.59	+6.36	45.15	-9.44	43.52	-1.63	43.82	+0.30	44.60	+0.78
New Orleans, LA	57.64	38.31	-19.34	41.38	+3.07	38.75	-2.63	51.72	+12.97	45.17	-6.55
Newark, NJ	33.81	34.42	+0.62	40.25	+5.83	37.33	-2.92	-	-	33.69	-
St. Louis, MO	35.26	35.46	+0.20	37.67	+2.21	49.91	+12.24	59.29	+9.38	59.55	+0.26
Los Angeles, CA	7.74	7.76	+0.02	6.47	-1.28	6.66	+0.18	7.12	+0.46	7.40	+0.29
Oakland, CA	26.31	67.84	+41.53	22.28	-45.55	19.51	-2.77	20.26	+0.75	20.27	+0.01
Pittsburgh, PA	14.26	13.14	-1.12	14.63	+1.49	22.43	+7.80	18.57	-3.86	19.38	+0.81
Richmond, VA	17.42	20.21	+2.79	17.38	-2.83	18.92	+1.53	19.47	+0.56	27.69	+8.22
Washington, DC	17.48	13.92	-3.56	15.93	+2.02	15.94	0.00	24.10	+8.16	20.08	-4.02
Chicago, IL	15.94	18.46	+2.52	15.22	-3.24	15.09	-0.13	17.52	+2.43	28.01	+10.49
Albany, NY	4.07	4.07	0.00	8.17	+4.09	8.11	-0.05	5.06	-3.05	2.03	-3.03
Buffalo, NY	13.72	18.29	+4.58	18.16	-0.13	23.22	+5.06	15.89	-7.33	17.05	+1.16
New York, NY	6.27	5.05	-1.22	3.99	-1.06	3.93	-0.06	4.12	+0.19	3.92	-0.20
Rochester, NY	14.66	16.98	+2.33	19.95	+2.96	12.84	-7.11	15.72	+2.88	20.02	+4.30
Syracuse, NY	7.54	9.59	+2.05	14.60	+5.01	13.84	-0.76	15.27	+1.44	20.81	+5.54
Cleveland, OH	18.63	21.33	+2.70	14.13	-7.20	16.21	+2.08	-	-	35.05	-
Dallas, TX	10.87	12.40	+1.53	11.39	-1.01	9.12	-2.28	10.45	+1.33	13.23	+2.78
Boston, MA	10.14	9.04	-1.10	6.06	-2.98	8.10	+2.04	5.71	-2.39	7.05	+1.33
Anchorage, AK	4.38	5.01	+0.64	4.68	-0.34	3.98	-0.69	8.63	+4.65	11.38	+2.75
Hartford, CT	21.60	18.37	-3.23	18.41	+0.04	15.21	-3.20	25.69	+10.48	11.29	-14.40
Colorado Springs, CO	6.61	4.16	-2.44	5.96	+1.80	4.49	-1.47	5.53	+1.03	4.82	-0.71
San Diego, CA	2.90	3.56	+0.66	2.94	-0.62	2.38	-0.56	2.70	+0.33	4.80	+2.10
Denver, CO	6.06	6.20	+0.15	6.16	-0.04	4.66	-1.50	7.77	+3.11	7.77	0.00

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