

**Homicide in Rochester, NY 2012:
Comparison of Rates for a Selection of United States' and
International Cities**

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Recent events have brought discussion of homicides to the forefront of national news, and as a result, many Americans have taken an interest in local, national, and international homicide data. Since the early 1990s the overall homicide rate in the United States has steadily declined. In 2011, the national homicide rate was 4.7 per 100,000 people (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2012)¹. This rate may appear to be rather low, but it means little without a comparison. How representative is this rate of homicide rates in our nation's major cities? How do these compare to the homicide rates in metropolitan areas across the world? And how do these compare to homicide rates locally in both New York and Rochester?

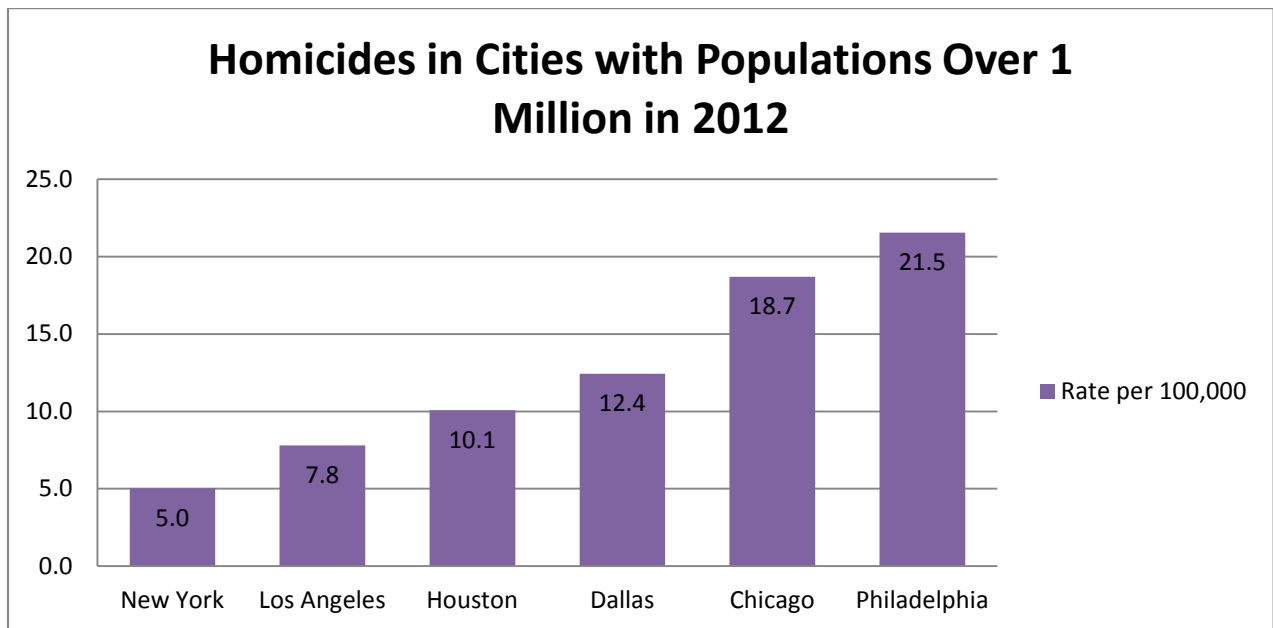
The goal of this paper is to compare homicide rates in Rochester to homicide rates in other US cities and rates in international cities. But what exactly is a homicide rate? Instead of simply comparing the total number of homicides that occur in each city, it is necessary to control for population. Comparing the frequency of any crime without mention of population differences would be misleading; therefore the rates of crimes must be compared. Most often, when comparing large metropolitan areas rates are calculated per 100,000 people. The formula used here is $[(\text{number of homicides}/\text{population}) \times 100,000]$. This way data can be analyzed between cities in a way that is practical and understandable. All data presented is available in a table at the conclusion of this paper.

Homicide rates in cities throughout the United States vary immensely. It would likely come as a surprise to many that the nation's most populous city, New York City, has a homicide rate that is much lower than most major cities across the country. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Detroit and New Orleans have two of the highest homicide rates in the US. Homicide rate comparisons have the potential to reveal many interesting characteristics about our nation's cities. For instance, why is it that Detroit, which has a population that is 12 times smaller than that of New York City, has a homicide rate that is over 10 times larger? What are the factors that influence these statistics? Is it that these cities have different poverty

¹ It is important to note that there is a technical difference between the terms "murder" and "homicide." The legal definition of homicide includes justifiable homicides, which may not necessarily be criminal in nature (Legal Dictionary, 2013). Murder is a category of criminal homicide. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report uses the term "murder" to describe "murder and nonnegligent manslaughter as the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another" (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2011). For the purpose of this paper the two terms will be used interchangeably to refer to the UCR definition of murder.

rates, population density, policing, unemployment rates, etc.? There is also a possibility that geography has an impact on homicides. It is worth examining homicides in various parts of the country to see if rates will vary by location. This data can not only reveal unexpected homicide trends, but also it can be used as a starting point to determine the underlying causes of homicides.

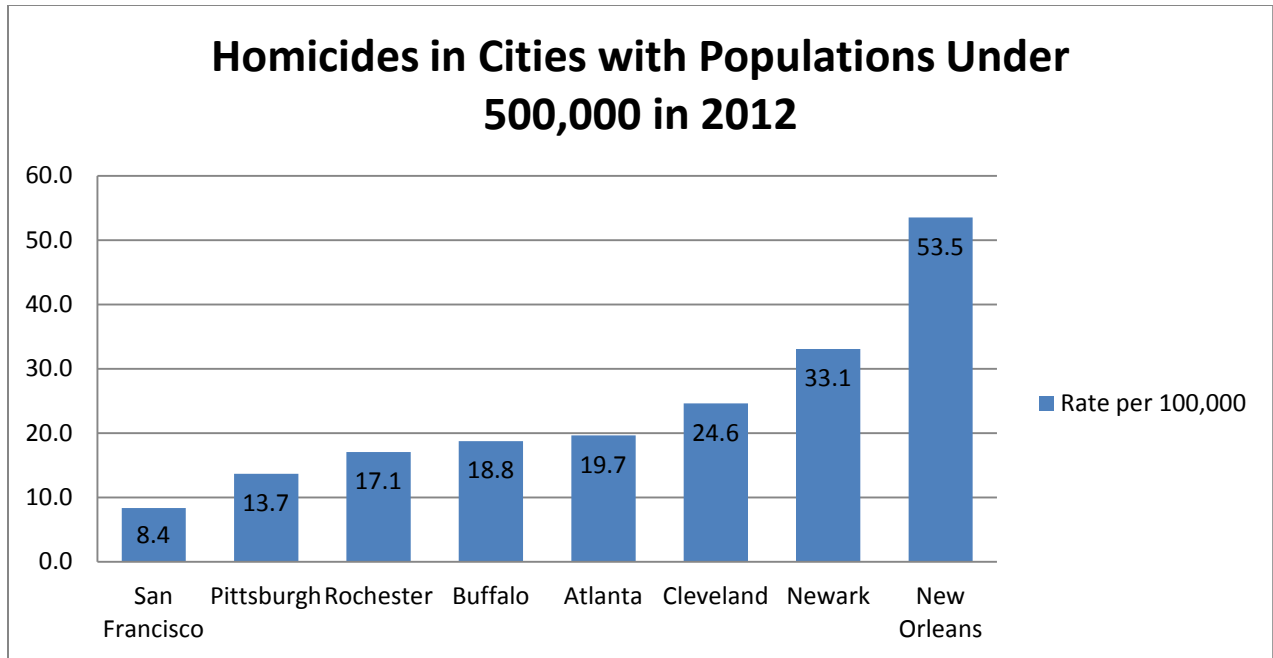
What do homicide rates look like when compared across US cities? There is no typical rate that can be assigned to an approximate population. In select cities with over 1 million people, the homicide rates differ vastly.



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The same seemingly unorganized rates apply when comparing cities with less than 500,000 people. There appears to be no relationship between a city's population and its homicide rates.

² (Kelleher & Allen, 2012), (Knowles, 2013), (Eisrer, 2013), (Turner, 2012), (Blumgart, 2013), (Galik, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)



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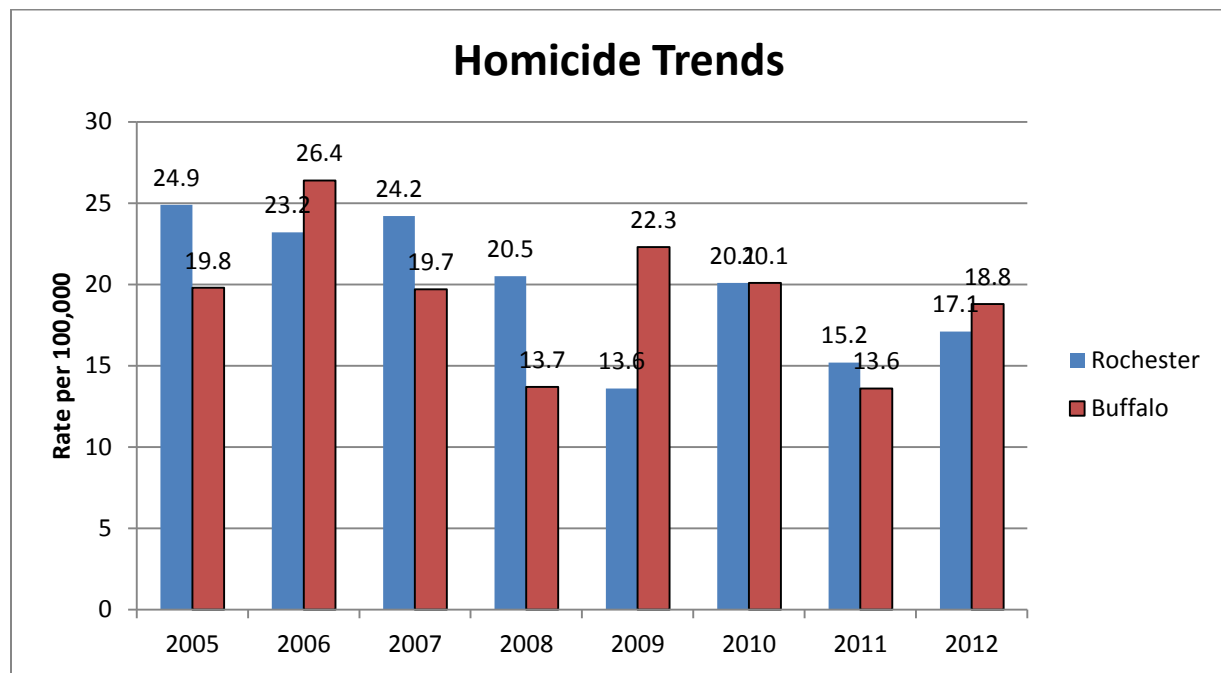
How does this apply locally in the city of Rochester? Rochester's population is 210,855, and in 2012 the city experienced 36 homicides (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013)(United States Census Bureau, 2013). This gives Rochester a homicide rate of 17.1 for the year 2012. Rochester's population and demographics closely resemble that of Buffalo (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Rochester's homicide count and rate also most closely reflect those in Buffalo. The state's smaller cities such as Syracuse and Albany, neither of which contain more than 150,000 residents, each had less than 15 homicides in all of 2012 (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013) . Aside from Buffalo, Rochester has the highest homicide rate of all cities across New York. As a community, this data is disturbing. Why is it that Rochester has a homicide rate that is over 3 times greater than that of New York City's?

³ (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (Bulwa & Berton, 2013), (Galik, 2013), (Cameron, 2013), (Sheehan, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

City	Population	Homicides	Rate per 100,000	Firearm Homicides
Albany	97660	4	4.1	2
New York	8244910	414	5.0	237
Syracuse	145151	12	8.3	9
Rochester	210855	36	17.1	28
Buffalo	261025	49	18.8	42

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Historically, Buffalo and Rochester have alternated having a higher homicide rate from year to year.



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Since 2005, Rochester's homicide rate has been higher than Buffalo's homicide rate 4 times. Buffalo's rate has been greater 3 times, and they were equivalent once in 2010. The two have been closely related throughout the years. Rochester's average homicide rate for 2005-2012 is 19.9 per 100,000, while

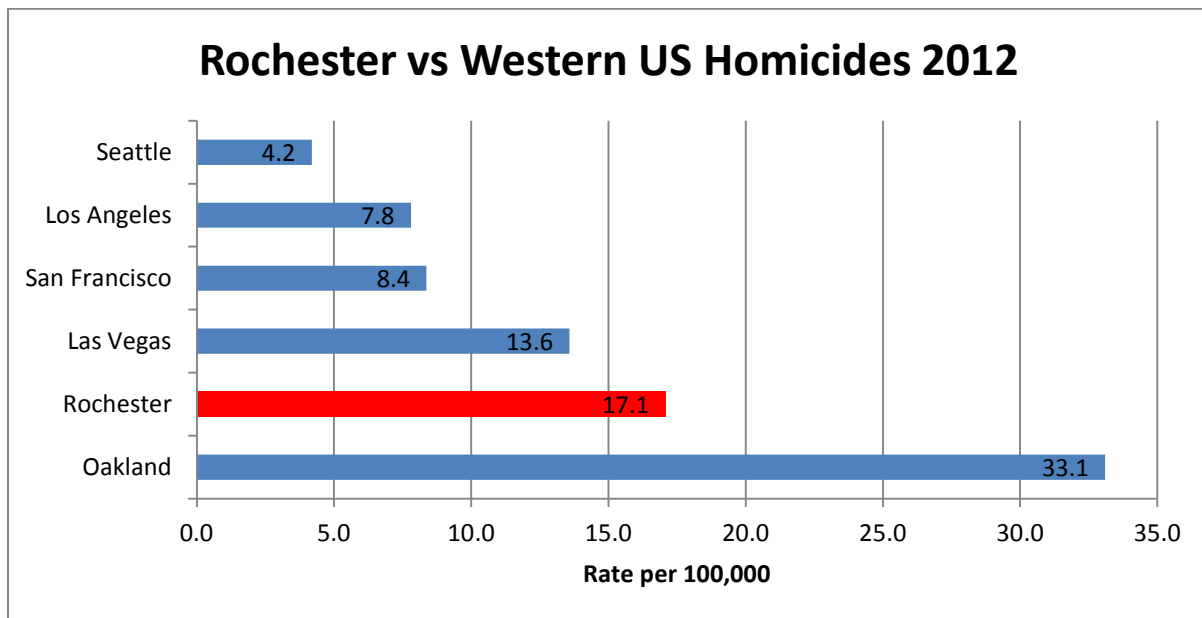
⁴ (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

⁵ (Monroe Crime Analysis Center), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

Buffalo's average homicide rate for these same years is 19.3. Identifying common characteristics of the two cities may give insight into why these cities have homicide rates that drastically differ from other cities in New York.

United States' Comparisons

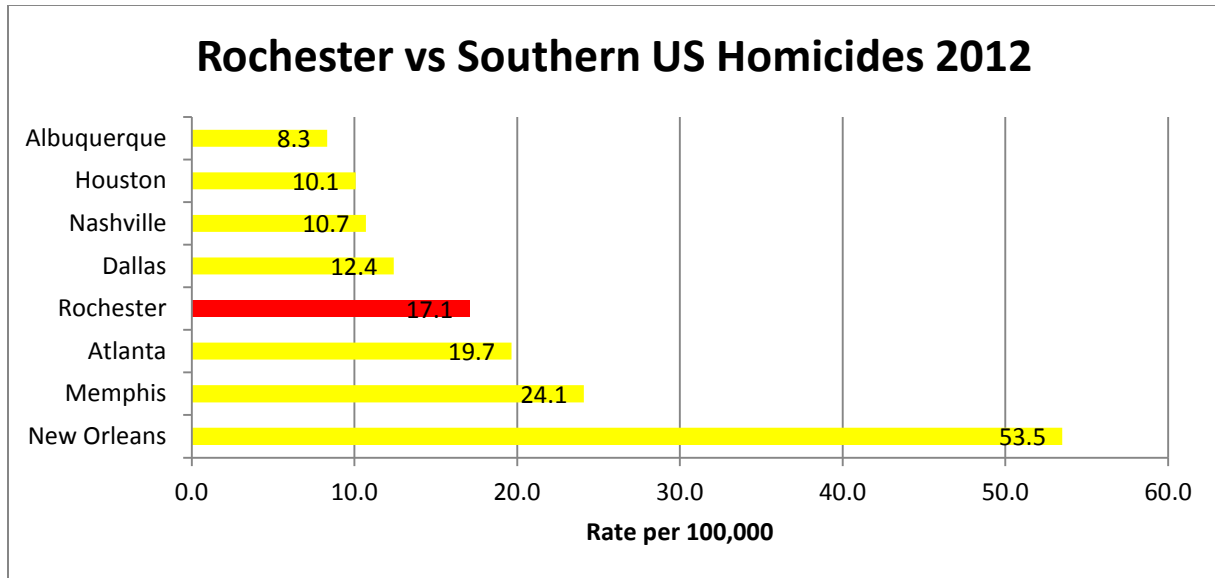
Another interesting point of comparison for homicide rates is regional. Examining homicides by geographical region may lend insight into what Rochester's homicide data really means.



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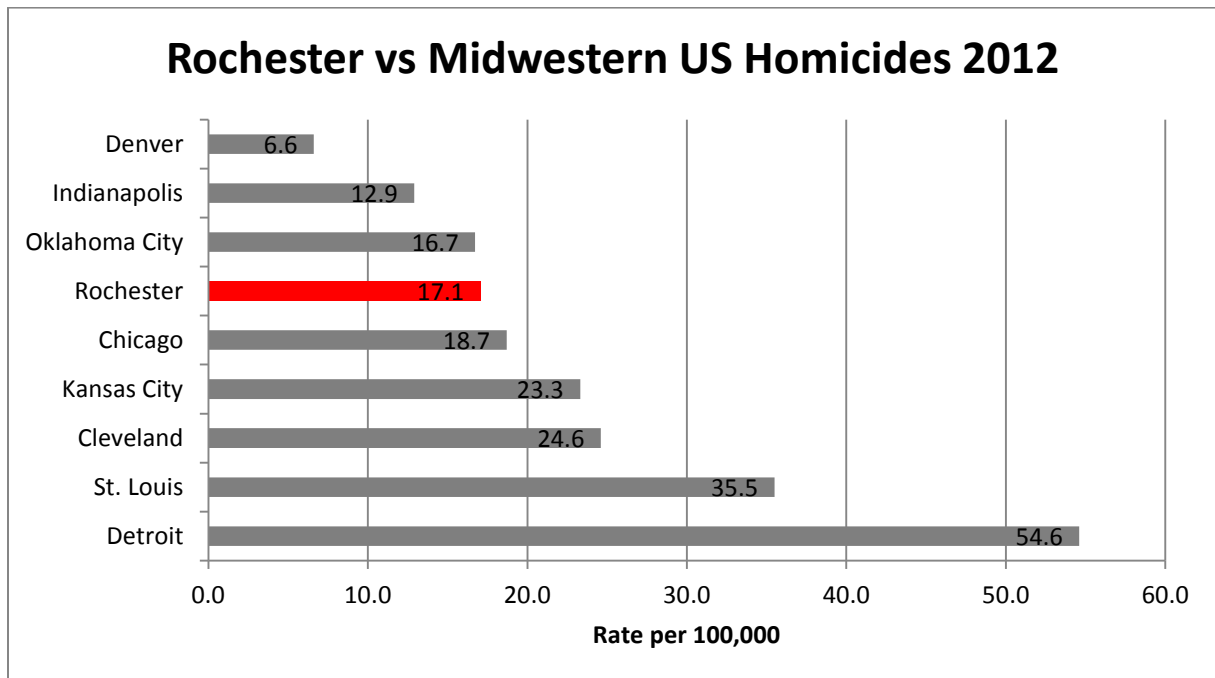
Rochester's homicide rate is relatively high compared to most cities in the Western region of the US. If it were not for the outlier Oakland, then Rochester clearly has the highest homicide rate. The average of the all these Western US cities is 13.4, but when Oakland is removed from analysis the average homicide rate becomes 8.5.

⁶ (Kiro Radio Staff, 2012), (Dean, 2013), (Bulwa & Berton, 2013), (Galik, 2013), (Knowles, 2013), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)



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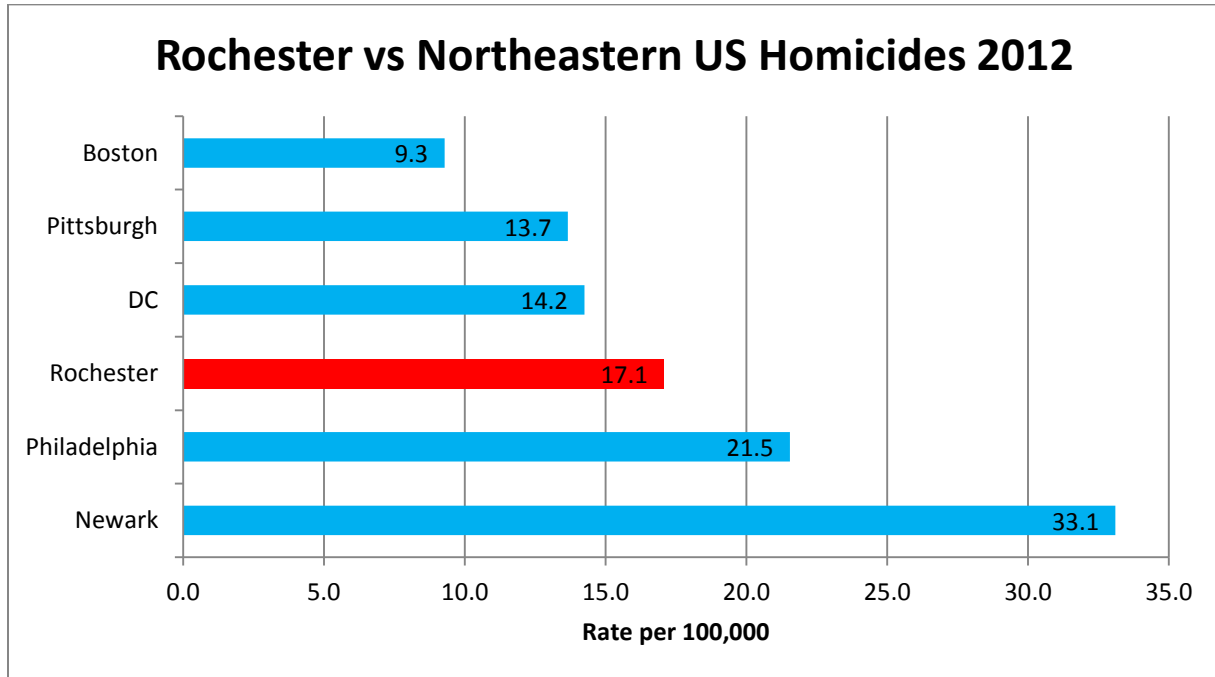
The average homicide rate of these Southern US cities is 19.8 per 100,000 residents. Rochester's 17.1 homicide rate falls slightly below this average. It seems that Rochester has slightly fewer homicides than the average Southern US city.



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⁷ (Tuohy, 2013), (Galik, 2013), (Cameron, 2013), (Turner, 2012), (Eisrer, 2013), (Dean, 2013), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

When looking at Midwestern US cities, a different story is revealed. Rochester also appears to be on the low end of homicide rates when compared to these cities. These cities have an average homicide rate of 24.1, much higher than Rochester's rate.



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Rochester seems to be on par with other cities in the Northeastern US. The average homicide rate of these Northeastern US cities is 18.4, and Rochester's homicide rate falls just below this average. While not displayed on the chart, Camden, New Jersey has an astounding homicide rate of 86.7 per 100,000 people (Queally, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013). This rate is far above that of Rochester, and it is an anomaly compared to all of the other examined US cities.

Taken altogether, Rochester's homicide rate is actually lower than the average of these US cities. The average of the homicide rates in the combined regional cities and the New York cities (excluding

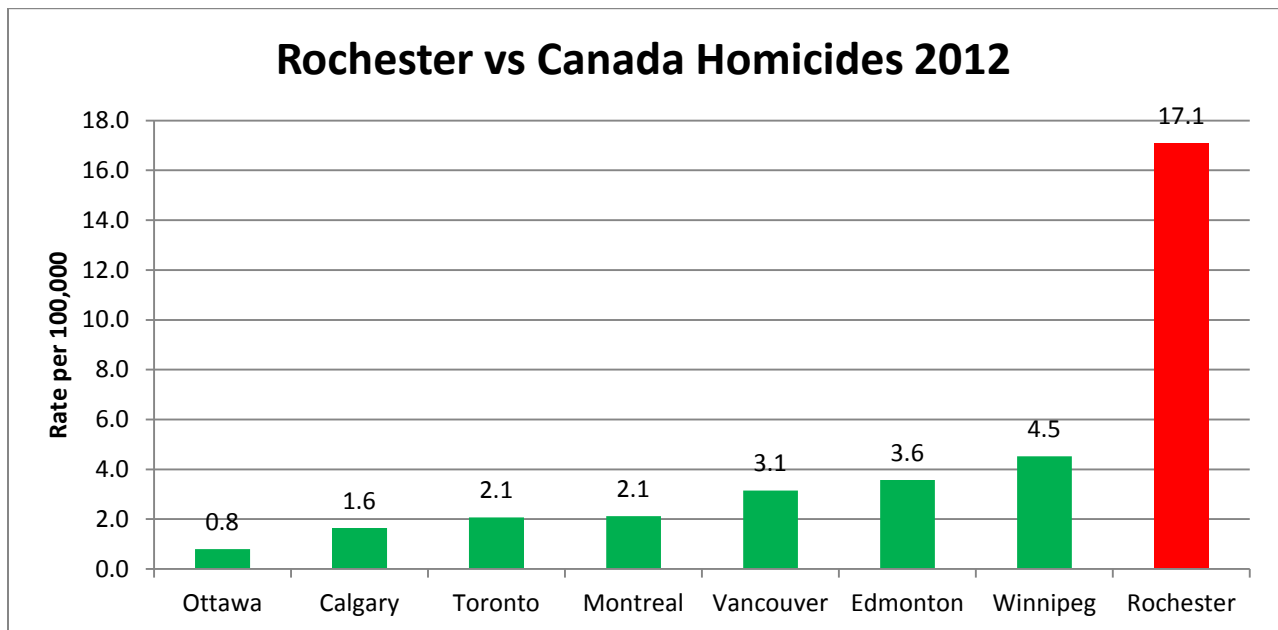
⁸ (Dean, 2013), (Tuohy, 2013), (Galik, 2013), (Kansas City Missouri Police Department, 2012), (Gurman, 2013), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

⁹ (Carroll, 2013), (Sheehan, 2013), (Blumgart, 2013), (Metropolitan Police Department, 2013), (Galik, 2013), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

Rochester), amounts to 18.7 per 100,000. Compared to other cities in New York, Rochester's homicide rate was quite high, but when examined across the entire US, Rochester's homicide rate is actually slightly lower than many cities. This illustrates the importance of making comparisons across many regions and not limiting data to specific areas.

International Comparisons

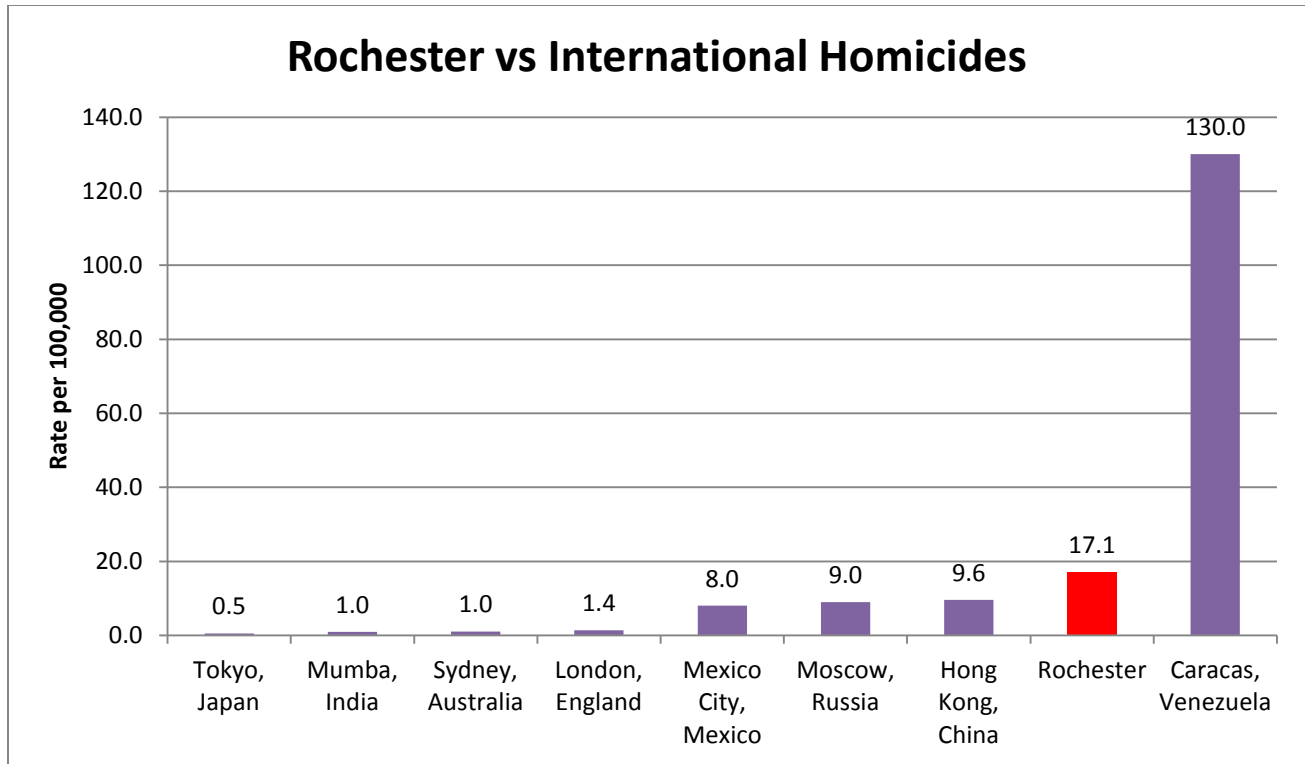
The homicide rate in Rochester may not be abnormal among US cities, but how does it relate to cities in foreign nations?



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Rochester's homicide rate appears to be drastically greater than the rates of those across Canadian cities. The 2.1 average rate of these cities confirms that Rochester's homicide rate is over 8 times greater than the average of the Canadian cities.

¹⁰ (Cabel, 2013), (Pruden, 2013), (Bolan, 2012), (Pagliaro, 2012), (Nease, 2012), (Global News, 2013), (Walsh, 2012), (Statistics Canada, 2012), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)



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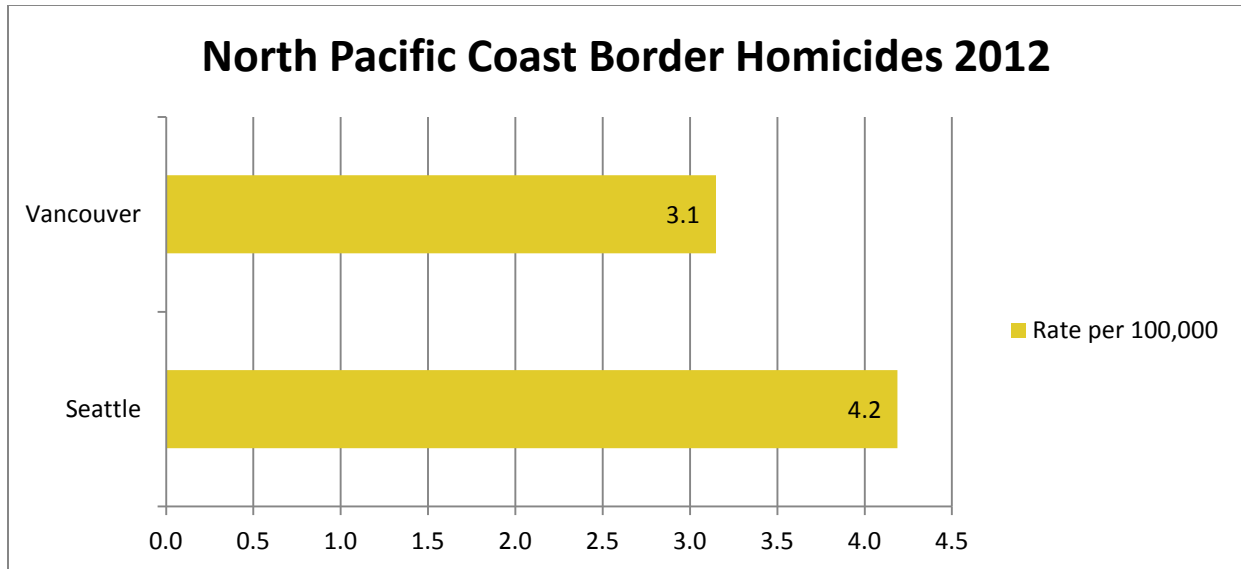
The international cities also have relatively low homicide rates. The average rate of these cities is 20.1, which puts Rochester's rate below the international cities. However, when Caracas is removed, the average rate of these cities becomes 4.4. From this perspective, Rochester's rate again sits significantly above the rates of the remaining cities.

Border City Comparisons

The data presented above seems to indicate that Rochester experiences far more homicides than many cities across the world. So how do other cities in the US compare to cities in neighboring countries? One way to examine this is by comparing the homicide rates of cities along the northern and southern US border to nearby cities in Canada and Mexico. The close proximity of these cities, despite their location in different countries, might lead one to believe that their homicide rates will be similar.

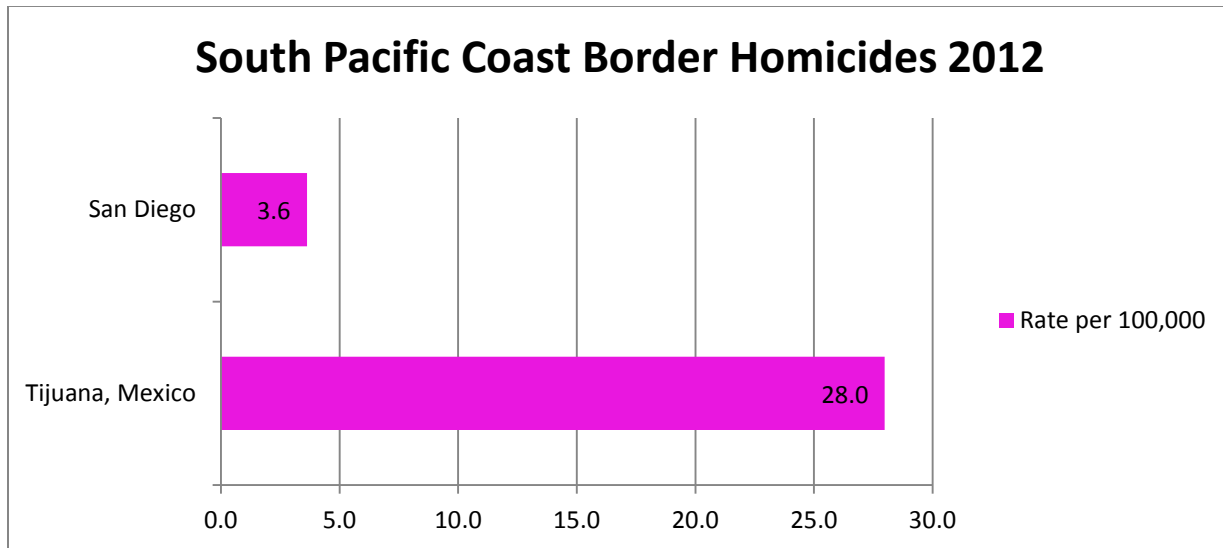
¹¹ (McClelland, 2012), ((Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013), (Indian Express, 2012), (Indian Online Pages)

¹² Data used for Mumbai, India collected from 2011.



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Seattle and Vancouver are 119 miles apart on opposite sides of the US/Canadian border (Google Maps, 2013). Seattle had a slightly higher homicide rate than Vancouver in 2012; however, the numbers are similar enough as to argue that there is no major difference between the two cities.

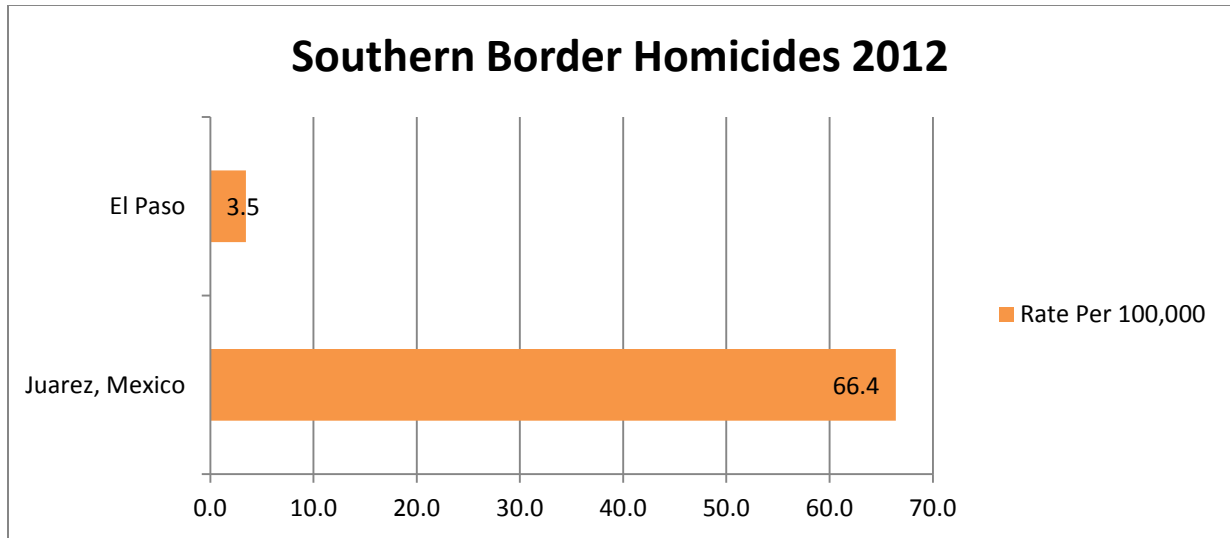


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Just 15 miles separate Tijuana and San Diego, yet Tijuana has a homicide rate that is almost 8 times greater than that of San Diego (Google Maps, 2013).

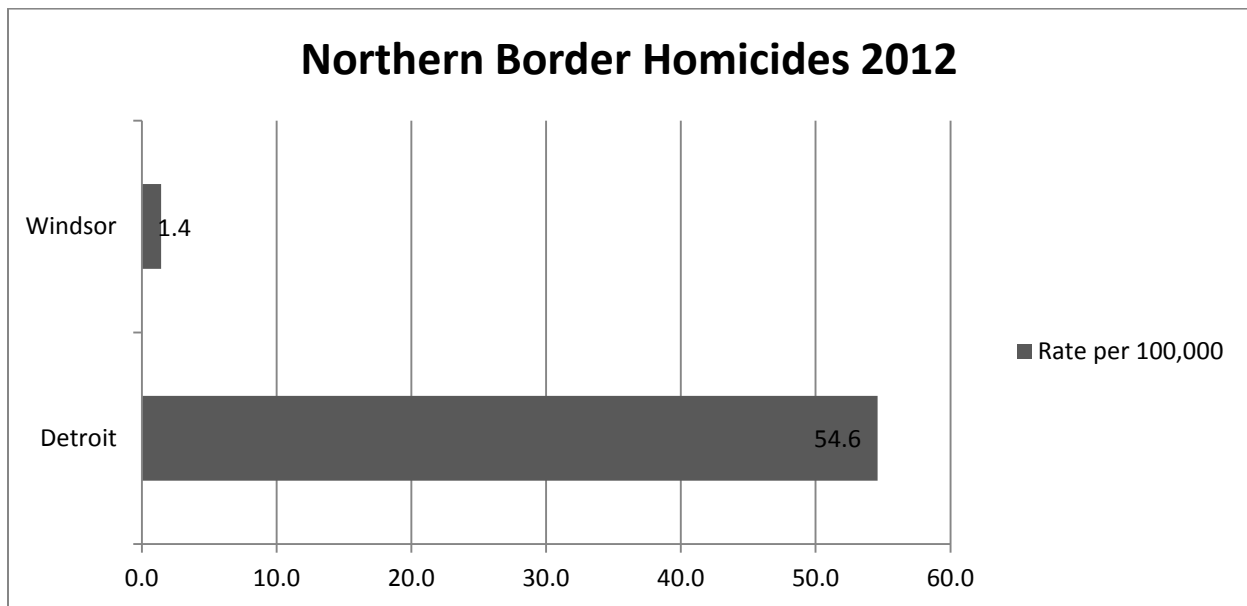
¹³ (Kiro Radio Staff, 2012), (Bolan, 2012), (United States Census Bureau, 2013) (Statistics Canada, 2012)

¹⁴ (Leigh), (Davis, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)



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El Paso and Juarez are only 2.4 miles apart, which makes the difference homicide rates seem even more remarkable (Google Maps, 2013). Juarez has a homicide rate that is 19 times larger than El Paso's homicide rate.

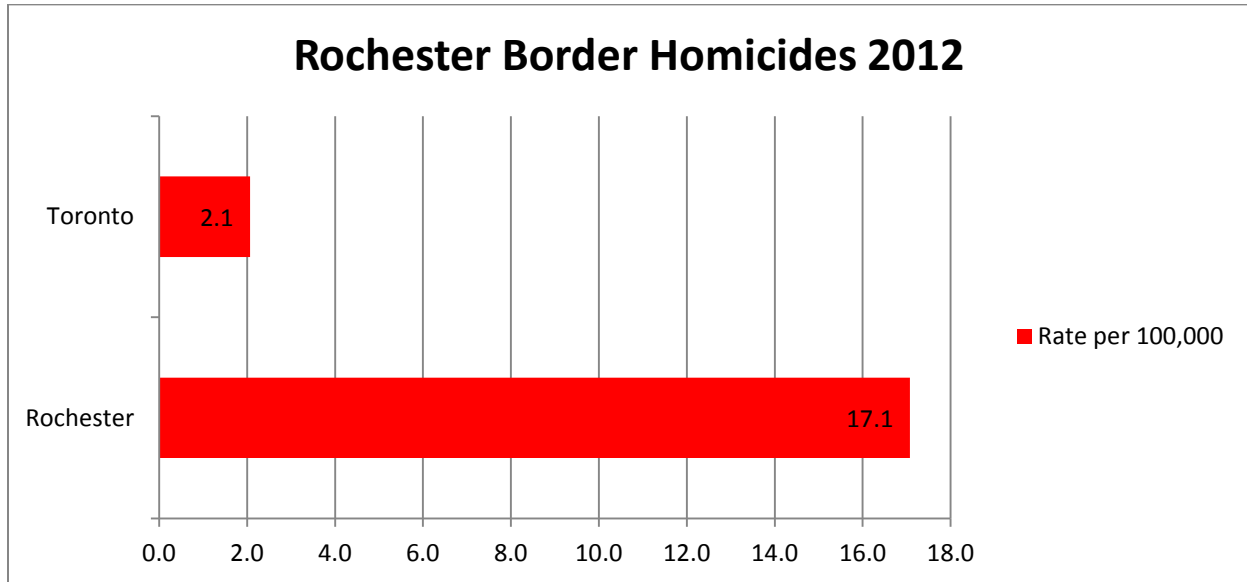


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¹⁵ (Pachico, 2013), (Macias, 2012), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

¹⁶ (Wilhelm, 2013), (Detroit Police Department, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013), (Statistics Canada, 2012)

The opposite situation seems to occur when comparing the US to Canada. The US city of Detroit has a homicide rate that is 39 times greater than the rate of the Canadian city, Windsor. The two cities are separated by 4 miles (Google Maps, 2013).



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Again, Rochester has a much higher homicide rate than the neighboring city of Toronto. The two cities are 95 miles apart, but Rochester has a homicide rate that is over 8 times larger than Toronto's rate (Google Maps, 2013).

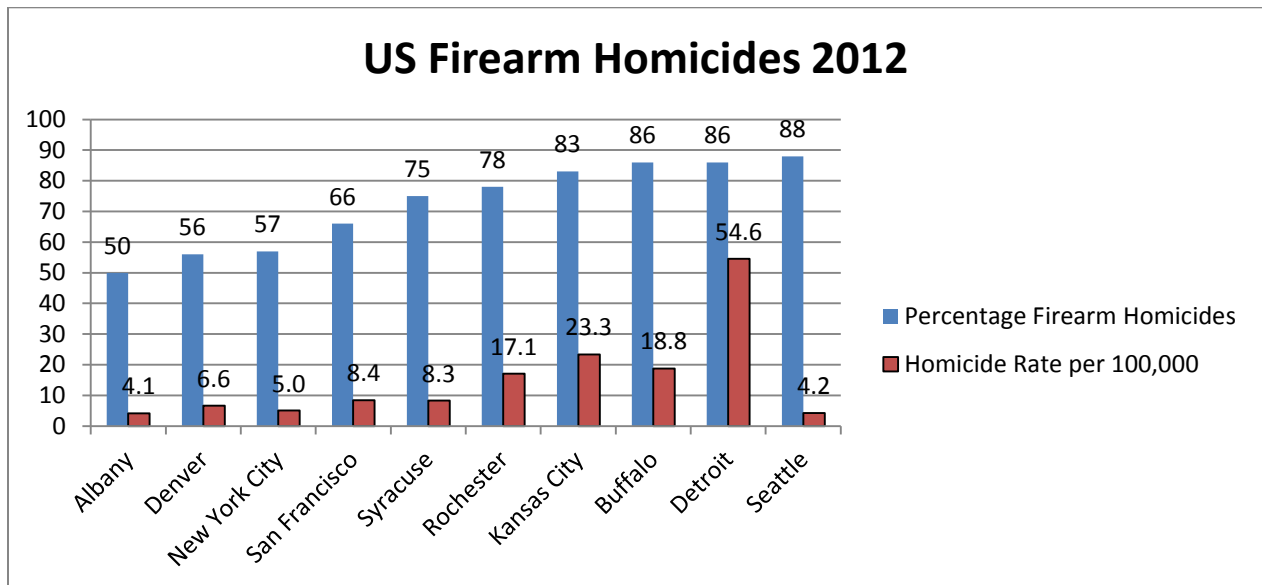
Comparing US cities to nearby cities in bordering countries reveals an interesting pattern. The selected cities in the US seem to have a much lower homicide rate than those in Mexico, but the US cities have much higher homicide rates than that of the cities in Canada. The one exception may be Seattle and Vancouver, as Seattle's rate is only slightly larger than Vancouver's rate. These observations could have multiple implications. Does this mean that the Mexican and Canadian border cities represent two extremes, while the US border city rates lie in the middle? Or perhaps the selected cities are anomalies, and the situation between Seattle and Vancouver is more representative of all cities. Regardless, the large

¹⁷ (Pagliaro, 2012), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (Statistics Canada, 2012), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)

differences between rates at the northern and southern borders raise some interesting questions about homicide rates in North American cities.

Firearm Homicides

In the United States, firearms account for the majority of homicides, therefore, looking at homicides by firearm can be useful.

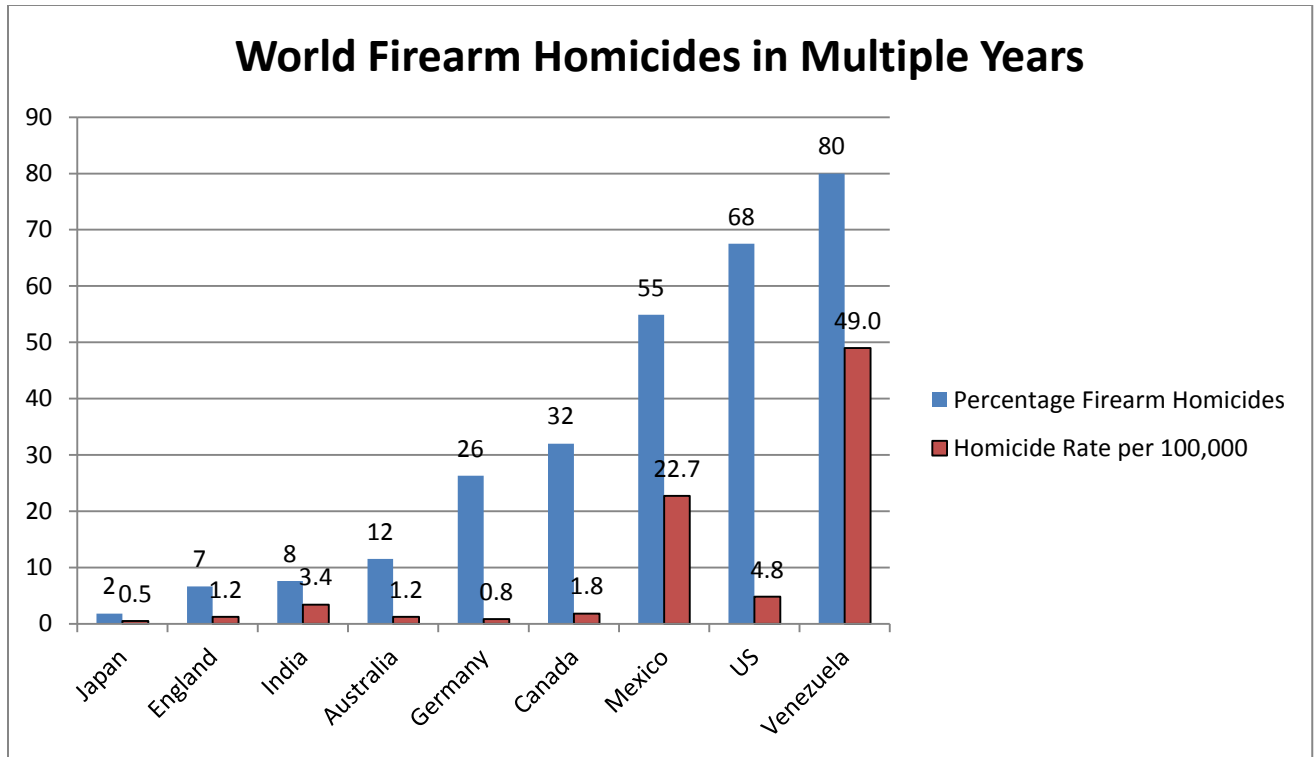


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Data collected on firearm fatalities implicates that guns have a large impact on homicides in cities across the US. In each city, at least half of all homicides were committed with a firearm of some type. Excluding Rochester, the average percentage of homicides committed with a firearm is 72. In 2012, Rochester experienced 36 homicides, 28 of which were due to a shooting (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013). Rochester's 78 percent of homicides due to firearms is slightly higher than the average of these other cities.

On a larger scale, it is interesting to compare the frequency of firearm homicides amongst nations. Does the United States have more firearm homicides than nations around the world? Due to the limited availability of data, statistics used to compare different countries ranges from 2008 to 2010.

¹⁸ (Kansas City Missouri Police Department, 2012), (Detroit Police Department, 2013), (Kiro Radio Staff, 2012), (Gurman, 2013), (Bulwa & Berton, 2013), (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013), (United States Census Bureau, 2013)



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Looking at this data, the US seems to rank near the top for both homicide rate and percentage of firearm homicides. The average homicide rate for these countries, excluding the United States, is 10.1 per 100,000 people. When Venezuela is eliminated the average homicide rate becomes 4.5, and when Mexico is removed, the average rate is 1.5. The US homicide rate of 4.8 ranks towards the higher end in each scenario. The average percentage of firearm deaths for all of the countries, excluding the US, is 28 percent. If Venezuela's 80 percent is removed the new average is 20 percent, and when Mexico's 55 percent is excluded the average becomes 14 percent. In the US, the percentage of homicides committed with a firearm was 68 percent. The US percentage of firearm homicides ranks above every country's percentage except Venezuela, and while being somewhat comparable to Mexico, the percentage of homicides due to firearms in the US was far above that of the remaining countries.

¹⁹ (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011)

Availability of Data

News outlets and politicians have barraged the public with homicide statistics in order to argue their views. Many have attempted to confirm this data only to find that it is much harder than expected to find recent, reliable homicide statistics. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports²⁰ offer a comprehensive crime data for the country based on police reports, however, data for 2012 will likely not be released for several months. Some police departments make their statistics easily accessible to the public through their websites, but often the data is not made available until months later. As a result, many independent organizations and individuals have taken the initiative to track homicides throughout their community and the nation. One of these is the Los Angeles Times Homicide Report²¹ which tracks homicides in Los Angeles County. The website allows users to view the victim's photo, their name, and the circumstances surrounding their death. It is also possible to locate the place of their murder on a map of the county. Data from 2007-2012 is also compiled to compare causes of death, characteristics of victims, and more (Ardalani, et al., 2013). Another source has compiled a database which has tracked gun deaths in the US since December 14, 2012, when 26 people were killed by firearm in Newton, Connecticut.²² The homicides are mapped across the country and information on each individual victim can also be viewed. It is also possible to search for victims by location, gender, age, and date of the victim's death (Kirk & Kois, 2013). Rochester also has a similar resource available through the *Democrat and Chronicle*.²³ Homicides in the Rochester area are tracked and mapped; in addition, information about victim and the circumstances surrounding the death are available. Once an incident is selected, it is even possible to track whether an arrest and conviction were made for the homicide. Data includes homicides from 2007 to present (Democrat and Chronicle, 2013).

²⁰ <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr>

²¹ <http://projects.latimes.com/homicide/blog/page/1/>

²²

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2012/12/gun_death_tally_every_american_gun_death_since_newtown_sandy_hook_shooting.html

²³ <http://rocdocs.democratandchronicle.com/map/rochester-homicides?keywords=homicide>

Comparing Rochester's homicide statistics to those in other cities allows one to gain some perspective on homicides in the city. In comparison to cities across the US, Rochester's rates are nothing alarming, but when examined next to other cities in New York, Rochester's rate stands as one of the highest. Having one of the highest homicide rates in the state is certainly concerning, but when it comes to homicides, even being average compared to the rest of the country is unsettling for residents of any city. This data can be used to make public officials aware of the need make efforts to discover why these homicides are occurring. In order to lower the number of homicides committed in the area, the underlying causes of these deaths must first be determined. Only after this occurs can law enforcement develop police practices that will have the greatest chance at reducing homicides.

Conclusion

This paper presents a straightforward look at homicide rates across a selection of cities. Assembling the data began simply as a way of filling time between Bowl Games in a New Year, but now it seems that considering the information carefully can have much more profound implications.

First, it makes us confront the great variation in rates of homicide across cities in the US and around the world. The significance of that finding cannot be overstated. Variability is the essential element to all of science. Without it there is nothing to explain.

That gets us to the second major point to be drawn from the data presented here: We should seek to explain the large variation we find in homicide rates. Our focus on murder as an act of individuals may sometimes distract us from trying to understand the large variation across communities. But those explanations, important as they are, are not likely to come easily. That much is clear from the many explanations of murder's decline in New York City since the mid-1990s. But science dictates that we should not be deterred by complexity.

Finally, if we can explain it or even some of it, it may follow that we can change it, and it certainly follows that we should try. That of course, converts the great mystery to the great purpose and sets an agenda for which the New Year's Day homicide tally has more significance than may have been immediately evident as we collected this information.

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City Data

City	Population	Homicides	Rate per 100,000	Firearm Homicides	Percentage Firearm Homicides
Albany	97,660.00	4	4.1	2	0.50
Albuquerque	552,804.00	46	8.3		
Atlanta	432,427.00	85	19.7		
Baltimore	619,493.00	217	35.0		
Boston	625,087.00	58	9.3		
Buffalo	261,025.00	49	18.8	42	0.86
Calgary	1,096,833.00	18	1.6		
Camden	77,283	67	86.7		
Chicago	2,707,120.00	506	18.7		
Cleveland	393,806.00	75	24.6		
Dallas	1,223,229.00	152	12.4		
DC	617,996.00	88	14.2		
Denver	619,968.00	41	6.6	23	0.56
Detroit	706,585.00	386	54.6	333	0.86
Edmonton	812,201.00	29	3.6		
El Paso	665,568.00	23	3.5		
Guatemala City, Guatemala		1,253	116.6		
Hong Kong, China			9.6		
Houston	2,145,146.00	216	10.1		
Indianapolis	827,609.00	94	12.9		
Juarez, Mexico	1,200,000.00	797	66.4		
Kansas City	463,202.00	108	23.3	90	0.83
Las Vegas	589,317.00	80	13.6		
London, England			1.4		

Los Angeles	3,819,702.00	298	7.8		
Memphis	652,050.00	157	24.1		
Mexico City, Mexico			8.0		
Montreal	1,649,519.00	35	2.1		
Moscow, Russia			9.0		
Mumbai, India	20,500,000.00	202	1.0		
Nashville	609,644.00		10.7		
New Orleans	360,740.00	193	53.5		
New York City	8,244,910.00	414	5.0	237	0.57
Newark	277,540.00	92	33.1		
Oakland	395,817.00	131	33.1		
Oklahoma City	591,967.00	99	16.7		
Ottawa	883,391.00	7	0.8	3	0.43
Philadelphia	1,536,471.00	331	21.5		
Pittsburgh	307,484.00	42	13.7		
Rochester	210,855.00	36	17.1	28	0.78
San Diego	1,326,179.00	48	3.6		
San Francisco	812,538.00	68	8.4	45	0.66
Seattle	620,778.00	26	4.2	23	0.88
St. Louis	318,069.00	113	35.5		
Sydney, Australia			1.0		
Syracuse	145,151.00	12	8.3	9	0.75
Tijuana, Mexico	1,300,983.00	364	28.0		
Tokyo, Japan			0.5		

Toronto	2,615,060.00	54	2.1	33	0.61
Vancouver	603,502.00	19	3.1		
Windsor	210,891.00	3	1.4		
Winnipeg	663,617.00	30	4.5		

Country Data

Country	Firearm Homicides	Percentage	Rate per 100,000	Year	Homicide Rate
Japan	11	2	0.1	2008	0.5
England	41	7	0.1	2009	1.2
India	3093	8	0.3	2009	3.4
Australia	30	12	0.1	2009	1.2
Germany	158	26	0.2	2010	0.8
Canada	173	32	3.3	2009	1.8
Mexico	11309	55	10	2010	22.7
US	9960	68	3.2	2010	4.8
Venezuela	11,115	80	39.0	2009	49.0

Upstate New York Homicide Rates (per 100,000 population)

City	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rochester	24.9	23.2	24.2	20.5	13.6	20.1	15.2	17.1
Buffalo	19.8	26.4	19.7	13.7	22.3	20.1	13.6	18.8