A 21% drop would push homicide rate to a new historic low, new CCJ analysis finds

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Contact: Brian Edsall
bedsall@councilоncj.org
845-521-9810

WASHINGTON — Crime rates continued to fall in 2025, with homicides down 21% from 2024 and 44% since a recent peak in 2021, likely bringing the national homicide rate to its lowest level in more than a century, according to an analysis of crime trends in 40 large U.S. cities released today by the Council on Criminal Justice (CCJ).

The study examined patterns for 13 crime types in cities that have consistently published monthly data over the past eight years, analyzing violent crime, property crime, and drug offenses. It found:

- Reported levels of 11 of 13 offenses were lower in 2025 than in 2024, with nine offenses declining 10% or more. Drug offenses were the only category that rose during this period, while sexual assault remained even.

- Looking at trends over a longer period, only reported motor vehicle theft and non-residential burglary remained elevated compared to levels in 2019, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide social justice protests of 2020.

- Two crimes that captured significant public attention during the pandemic era—carjacking and shoplifting—have receded from their peaks. Reported carjacking has declined 61% since 2023, while reported shoplifting is down 10% from 2024.

When nationwide data for jurisdictions of all sizes is reported by the FBI later this year, there is a strong possibility that homicide in 2025 will drop to about 4.0 per 100,000 residents. That would be the lowest rate recorded in law enforcement or public health data going back to 1900, the report's authors note, and would mark the largest single-year percentage drop in the homicide rate on record.

While the downward trajectory of crime is clear, the reasons behind it are less certain. Researchers and practitioners have pointed to a range of possible contributors, including changes in criminal justice policy and practice, shifts in routine activities and social behavior, economic conditions, technology use, and local violence prevention efforts.

To help inform this debate, the Council released a supplemental assessment featuring perspectives from leading experts on what they see as the primary drivers of the recent decline, specifically in homicides.

“We’re seeing big swings in criminal justice policies, programs, and rhetoric, big advances in crime-fighting technologies, and big social, economic, and cultural shifts all happening at the same time,” said CCJ President and CEO Adam Gelb. “It’s extremely difficult to disentangle and pinpoint what’s actually driving the drop. As a result, we have a battle of sound bites and abundant claims of credit but scarce hard evidence to back them up.”

One-Year Trends

The number of homicides in the 35 cities providing data for that crime was 21% lower when comparing 2025 to 2024, representing 922 fewer homicides in those cities. Nearly all of the study cities (31 of 35) recorded a homicide decrease last year, including drops of roughly 40% in Denver, CO, Omaha, NE, and Washington, DC. Homicide rates went up in just three cities in the sample: Little Rock, AR (+16%), Fort Worth, TX (+2%), and Milwaukee, WI (+1%). The homicide rate in El Paso, TX, remained even.

Overall, 11 of 13 offenses fell in 2025, including nine that declined by 10% or more. Reported incidents of carjackings (-43%), motor vehicle thefts (-27%), robberies (-23%), gun assaults (-22%), non-residential burglaries (-18%), residential burglaries (-17%), larcenies (-11%), shoplifting (-10%), aggravated assaults (-9%), and domestic violence (-2%) all fell in 2025 from levels seen in 2024. Sexual assaults remained even during this time period, while drug offenses increased 7%.

“The overall reduction in crime, especially homicide, is welcome news,” said CCJ Senior Research Specialist Ernesto Lopez, lead author of the report. “While the big story here is that homicide saw the largest one-year increase and the largest one-year decrease in a short period of time, we should not forget that homicides had been steadily dropping since the late 2000s. It is possible that these rates reflect a longer-term downward trend punctuated by periods of elevated homicides.”

Trends Since 2019

Examining trends over a longer period, violent crimes are at or below levels seen in 2019, the analysis found. There were 25% fewer homicides in 2025 compared to 2019, with rates dropping in 27 of 35 cities in the sample. Baltimore, MD, experienced the largest drop (-60%), while Milwaukee, WI, had the largest percentage increase (42%). In addition, robberies (-36%), carjackings (-29%), domestic violence incidents (-19%), gun assaults (-13%), aggravated assaults (-6%), and sexual assaults (-4%) were all lower in 2025 than in 2019.

Trends for non-violent crimes have been more varied over the last seven years. There were 45% fewer burglaries, 20% fewer larcenies, 19% fewer drug offenses, and 4% fewer shoplifting incidents in 2025 compared to 2019. Of the 13 offenses covered in the analysis, only motor vehicle theft (+9%) and nonresidential burglaries (+1%) remained elevated compared to 2019 levels.

Trends from Recent Peaks

Given recent volatility in crime rates, the analysis also compares 2025 levels with their most recent peaks. All major offense categories show substantial declines.

- Violent crime: Homicides (-44% from 2021 peak), aggravated assaults (-19% from 2021), gun assaults (-44% from 2021), sexual assaults (-6% from 2021), domestic violence incidents (-23% from 2018), robbery (-39% from 2018), and carjacking (-61% from 2023).

- Non-violent crimes: Residential burglaries (-51% from 2018), non-residential burglaries (-28% from 2020), larcenies (-20% from 2018), shoplifting (-10% from 2024), motor vehicle thefts (-43% from 2023), and drug offenses (-32% from 2018).

About the Report and Data

Co-authored by Lopez and Bobby Boxerman, PhD, the new analysis updates and supplements previous U.S. crime trends reports by the Council on Criminal Justice with data through December 2025. It examines yearly and monthly rates of reported crime for 13 violent, property, and drug offenses in 40 large American cities that have consistently reported monthly data over the past eight years, including Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. The smallest city in the sample was Cary, NC, with about 180,000 residents; the largest was New York, with about 8.3 million residents. The study cities are not necessarily representative of all jurisdictions in the U.S.; not all cities reported data for each offense; and figures reported here may, and often do,

differ from other sources and may by updated by the reporting jurisdictions.

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About the Council on Criminal Justice

The Council on Criminal Justice is a nonpartisan think tank and invitational membership organization that advances understanding of the criminal justice policy choices facing the nation and builds consensus for solutions that enhance safety and justice for all.