

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/publications/for-the-record-measuring-public-safety-statistics-violent-crime>**

## Policy Issue Resources

Publication

[\*For the Record Evidence Brief Series\*](#)

With a few hyper-localized exceptions that require targeted attention, violent crime rates are lower today than they have been at any point over the past four decades. However, this era of public safety has been misrepresented by some media reports and public commentary concluding that violent crime increases in a few cities equal a sweeping national problem. This brief examines those erroneous conclusions about current crime trends using both existing and original research and describes how to avoid common pitfalls when interpreting statistics on violent crime.

Violent crime remains near its lowest point in decades and fears of a new violent crime wave are unfounded. Crime rates fluctuate over time and it is important that any discussion of statistics on violent crime takes account of these natural variations.

One or two annual increases is not sufficient to call a change a new trend: it is normal for crime rates to fluctuate from year to year.

Recent increases in crime rates have been concentrated mostly among gun-related homicides in a few neighborhoods in a few major cities, where violent crime rates were already persistently high.

The conditions and events that contribute to violent crime vary from place to place and require locally tailored crime prevention and law enforcement strategies.

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