

Name: Violent Crime

Short Description: Number of violent crimes reported per 100,000 people.

Data Source(s):

- **Name:** County Health Rankings (CHR), Community Violence
- **Link to Source:** <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model/health-factors/social-and-economic-factors/community-safety/violent-crime-rate>

Year(s): 2014 & 2016 (CHR usually reports data in 3-year increments, but 2015 data were not available)

Source Geographic Level: County

Stratification: Not available

Selection Rationale: Living in an area with a high rate of violent crime can negatively impact mental health, contributing to trauma exposure in a community. Witnessing community violence, as well as premature death related to community violence, has been shown to negatively impact mental health.¹ Chronic stress can also lead to long-standing physical health issues (e.g., hypertension, asthma) that in turn feed a cycle of stress.²

Strengths and Limitations:

- **Strengths:**
 - *[Importance]* Violent crime negatively influences physical and mental well-being by affecting stress levels and contributing to stress-related disorders, in addition to discouraging participation in healthy behaviors such as exercise and socialization.³ Witnessing violence has a clear and negative impact on health.⁴

¹ Williams, D. R. (2018). Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-related Stressors. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 59(4), 466–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146518814251>

² County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (n.d.). *Violent crime rate*. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model/health-factors/social-and-economic-factors/community-safety/violent-crime-rate>

³ Lorenc, T., Clayton, S., Neary, D., Whitehead, M., Petticrew, M., Thomson, H., Cummins, S., Sowden, A., & Renton, A. (2012). Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: Mapping review of theories and causal pathways. *Health & Place*, 18(4), 757–765. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2012.04.001>

⁴ Thomas, P., Duffrin, M., Duffrin, C., Mazurek, K., Clay, S. L., & Hodges, T. (2020). Community violence and African American male health outcomes: An integrative review of literature. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 28(6), 1884–1897. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13065>

- [Equity] This measure captures disparities experienced between population groups. Black populations disproportionately witness community violence compared to White populations,⁵ and the presence of violence in Black communities has been linked to a history of structural racism and segregation.⁶
- [Relevance & Usability] The CHR data are clear and concise, conveying a simple rate of incidents of violence per 100,000 population. A higher rate indicates a need to address violence as a contributing factor to poor mental health in a population.
- [Feasibility] CHR typically reports violent crime data in 3-year increments, and updates data as available. Data are pulled from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting County-Level Detailed Arrest and Offense Data report and are available in an easily understandable format.
- **Limitations:**
 - [Scientific Soundness] CHR's primary data source is the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting data. These data must be reported to the FBI by police to be included in this dataset. Therefore, there may be bias or missing data elements in the data depending on how and when police report violent crime in their areas.⁷
 - [Scientific Soundness] The smallest geographic level at which this data is available is the county level, so each Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA) in a given county will have the same value. As a result, ZCTA-level values may be less accurate because it is not possible to differentiate which ZCTAs have higher or lower rates within a county.

Calculation:

$$\text{Violent Crime per 100,000} = \frac{\text{\# of violent crimes reported}}{\text{population}} * 100,000 \text{ people}$$

Violent crimes are defined as offenses that involve face-to-face confrontation between a victim and a perpetrator, including homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Information for this measure comes from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

The denominator is the total county population covered by agencies that reported crimes.

⁵ Sheats, K. J., Irving, S. M., Mercy, J. A., Simon, T. R., Crosby, A. E., Ford, D. C., Merrick, M. T., Annor, F. B., & Morgan, R. E. (2018). Violence-Related Disparities Experienced by Black Youth and Young Adults: Opportunities for Prevention. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 55(4), 462–469.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.05.017>

⁶ Sampson, R. J., Morenoff, J. D., & Raudenbush, S. (2005). Social anatomy of racial and ethnic disparities in violence. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(2), 224-232.
<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2004.037705>

⁷ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (n.d.). *Violent crime rate*. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model/health-factors/social-and-economic-factors/community-safety/violent-crime-rate>

County Health Rankings Variables used:

- analytic_data2020.0.csv file
 - Column 234: Violent crime numerator
 - Column 235: Violent crime denominator