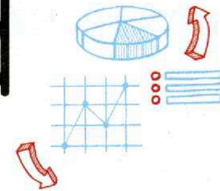


ScoreBoard

By James Trutko



Why Metro Cleveland Needs A Local Crime Monitor

Recently, WalletHub ranked Cleveland as the 12th least safe city in America. The finding is not really a surprise given that comparative crime statistics for Cleveland continually rank Cleveland among the top tier of crime cities in America. What is surprising, however, is that no local community organization seriously monitors local crime data despite the importance of crime to the public and government policy.

Compiling and interpreting local crime data is not easy. The FBI and the State of Ohio compile local data on violent crime (homicides, rape, robberies and aggravated assaults) and property crime (burglaries, larceny-thefts and motor vehicles thefts). Unfortunately, it is not mandatory for police to provide the data. The lack of data from some communities makes it difficult to see overall area crime levels or to determine trends.

A second problem is that publicly available data does not include a host of other illegal activities, such as drug sales and use, DUIs, counterfeiting, vandalism and prostitution, which seriously affect the public's perception of public safety. For example, incomplete data showed that there were at least 2,800 DUIs, 1,300 cases of identity fraud and 900 cases of credit card misuse or bad checks.

A third problem is the reported total does not include all major crimes because experts often assume that as many as half of all crimes are not even reported by victims. Crime is unreported in part because victims are skeptical about whether the crimes will be solved. In Cleveland, for example, FBI statistics show that only about 6% of reported crimes are "cleared."

Despite these limitations, it is possible to develop a picture of major crime in the area's core county. When the FBI data is combined with police data obtained by Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to local police departments, a troubling picture on crime in Cuyahoga County emerges. From 2018 to 2022, the total number of reported violent and property crimes was about 167,000. Over the four-year period, Cuyahoga County averaged about 33,800 total crimes, including 7,700 violent crimes and 26,100 property crimes.

The data shows clearly that crime is a major factor in Metro Cleveland. The lack of a research organization to collect and analyze the crime data and the lack of a mechanism to publicize their findings to community leaders contributes to poor public safety policies. It should be a simple matter for community leaders to provide adequate funding for a research organization to collect data that

would help the public formulate and support better public safety policies.

Because of the impact of COVID and some differences in data collection during the period, the conclusion is that overall crime, while still a serious problem, has neither increased nor decreased. Over time, additional crime research is needed to monitor trends and to guide efforts to reduce local areas where crime is a severe problem. ■

Publisher's Note

When *Community Leader* was born in 2016, ScoreBoard was a feature intended to be a fact-based snapshot of where Cleveland was and where it was going. Was Cleveland moving forward or backward in the things we cared about? ScoreBoard was written by Jim Trutko, a respected veteran researcher (see bio), who believed community research was essential in building better cities. For reasons neither one of us can remember, ScoreBoard was lost along the way to 2024.

Today, with the election of a new mayor and county executive, there is a feeling that we can address opportunities and solve social problems that were also lost along the way. So it gives me great pleasure to welcome back Jim Trutko to ScoreBoard, and join him in his belief that research is essential in building better communities.



James Trutko is an economist, market research professional and public policy analyst and has held positions with The Plain Dealer and the Greater Cleveland Growth Association. He writes articles for local publications and counsels entrepreneurs with Business Advisers of Cleveland. His website is cuyahogascorboard.com. He can be reached at jmtrutko@gmail.com.

CUYAHOGA REPORTED VIOLENT & PROPERTY CRIMES (2019-22)							
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average	% of Avg.	Max
Total Crimes	35,815	34,453	31,186	33,617	33,768	100%	35,815
Violent Crimes	7,323	7,982	8,008	7,430	7,686	23%	8,008
Murders	116	194	204	184	175	1%	204
Rape	679	597	632	616	631	2%	679
Robbery	2,263	1,975	1,643	1,791	1,918	6%	2,263
Aggrav Assault	4,265	5,215	5,529	4,867	4,969	15%	5,529
Property Crimes	28,492	26,471	23,178	26,187	26,082	77%	28,492
Burglary	5,710	4,854	3,945	3,864	4,593	14%	5,710
Larceny Theft	19,028	17,306	15,045	16,753	17,033	50%	19,028
Motor Veh Theft	3,754	4,311	4,188	5,566	4,455	13%	5,566

Source: FBI & Police Reports. Reported major crimes include murders, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft.

