Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Crime Briefing Report

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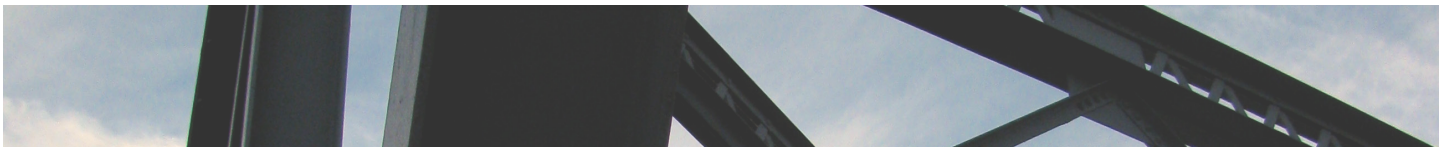
This crime briefing report contains a summarized description of violent and property crime trends that occurred in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for a span of ten years (2000-2010). Further, the report breaks down these two categories into the specific crimes that each entails. All of the statistics used within this report were found on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's United Crime Report website. This data was not altered in any way and appears 'as is' on the website. UCR statistics are somewhat questionable for two reasons; the dark figure of crime and the reliability of police departments. The dark figure of crime refers to all of the crimes that are not reported to police agencies. It is unknown how many are not reported and what kind of difference these failed reports would have upon statistics. Another liability of the UCR is the reliability of police departments reporting accurate statistics and supplying at least 11 months of data, which is required for publishing in UCR. Along with the UCR statistics, this report will offer explanations for the recent trends within the city. For the past five years, Pittsburgh has seen a steady decline in violent and property crimes. Much of the recent success is due to the implementations of new programs; the biggest of these is the *Pittsburgh Initiative to Reduce Crime* (PIRC). The recent success of the PIRC gives hope to the further reduction of crime and the lowest crime rate in a decade (Pittsburgh Police Department, 2010).



Property crime rates in Pittsburgh have been on the decline for most of the ten years that were observed. There were two spikes in 2001 and 2003 and a minor rise in 2005. Since then, it has declined each year (see Figure 1). Property crime is at an all-time low for the decade in question, with a 26% change from 2002 to 2010. Motor-vehicle theft has had the biggest drop at a 73% decrease. Motor-vehicle theft has dropped from a rate of 800 to 210 per 100,000 people from 2002 to 2010. This is the most dramatic change of any property crime (see Figure 2). Similar to motor-vehicle theft, larceny has also seen a substantial drop from 3,164.3 to 2455.1 per 100,000 people from 2004 to 2010. This is a 28% change over the decade. Both of these two particular forms of property crime show the same spikes in 2001 and 2003 (see Figure 3). Burglary and arson do not fit the trend of property crime as a whole, nor of motor-vehicle or larceny. Arson exercises a sharp rise, then a dramatic fall to a five year low of 18 per 100,000 people in 2005. Almost mirroring its drop, arson takes a steep upward turn to 49 from 2005 to 2010. This is a 172% change in five years (see Figure 4). Burglary is just about the same at the end of the decade as it was in 2000. It has a sudden spike from 2005 to 2006. It continued to fall until it leveled out at 942 per 100,000 people in 2010. Burglary and arson do not mimic the spikes of the overall property crime rates and drop from 2009 to 2010 (see Figure 5). Property crime in Pittsburgh is higher overall than the national property crime rate; it does however follow the similar spikes and declines of the national property crime trend as a whole (see Figure 6).

Violent crime rates in Pittsburgh show a rise in 2001, but then began a steady decrease in 2006 to 899 per 100,000 people in 2010 (see Figure 7). Three of the four violent crime types, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, all show a decline starting around 2006-2007 (see Figure 8). However, the murder rate is marked by a steep rise from 2009 to 2010, a 50% change (see Figure 9). The violent crime rate of Pittsburgh exceeds the national violent crime rate trend, but it follows the trend's rise and falls (see Figure 10).

The trends in property crime rates can be explained by a few key reasons. The two spikes seen in motor-vehicle theft and larceny during 2001 and 2003 have no real explanation. The significant drop in motor-vehicle theft and larceny can be attributed to their overwhelming report

to police officers. More attention is being paid to motor-vehicle theft and in particular, larceny, since their peak rates in 2005. Thus, these rates have had the most effect upon the property crime statistics. In 2005, the Pittsburgh Police Department released a crime report, focusing on the themes of property crime and the city's high crimes rates in motor-vehicle and larceny theft. Following this report the Pittsburgh Police Department aimed to hire more patrolmen. An increase in officers of 12% (International Association of Police Chiefs, 2005) was recommended. The following year they implemented the recommendation and began to hire more patrolmen. This increase in patrolmen could be a reason for the decline in motor-vehicle and larceny theft. Arson's sporadic rates over this decade have no real reason, but within the UCR statistics for Pittsburgh arson rates seem to have a sporadic report from the police. One can assume that the lack of UCR and police interaction can explain some of the inconsistent rates.

In 2003, a record high of 70 homicides raised fears in the city. This was a 49% increase from 2002 (Wilson, Chermak, McGarrell, 2011). A program was initiated in response to the alarming murder rates. The program, *One Vision One Life*, stressed community-policing and gun control efforts. The report pointed to three particular regions of the city: Hill District, Northside, and Southside. Further, it points out the region's susceptibility to the drug markets (Wilson et al., 2011). The rise in violent crime rates, in particular aggravated assault and murder rates, can be associated with the drug trade. The drop in violent crime from 2006 on is a promising sign. However, a more recent spike in 2007 has not been addressed by the police department. Since 2007 the murder rate was on the decline; unfortunately, the spike in murders from 2009-2010 (see Figure 9) is marked by a shooting involving three police officers on April 4, 2009 (Robbins, 2009). The shooting in April, along with recent gang-violence can explain the spike in murder rates from 2009-2010 (Pittsburgh Police Department, 2010). Forcible rape and aggravated assault show a random, sporadic fluctuation in the beginning of the decade, but a steady decline in the later years.

In response to the recent increased murder rate and declining violent crime rate overall, Pittsburgh has initiated a new program thatfocuses on community relations and community policing. The *Pittsburgh Initiative to Reduce*

Crime was implemented in 2010. Since its establishment, overall violent crime is on the decline. It focuses on gang/youth violence and offers assistance to gang members who wish to remove themselves from the streets. A hotline number is available to those who wish to take on an “employment based lifestyle” (Pittsburgh Police Department, 2012). A recent 2011 assessment showed a 20% reduction in homicides from 2010 to 2011, a 16% reduction in gun assaults from 2010 to 2011, and 41 calls into the PIRC service hotline during 2011 (Pittsburgh Police Department, 2012).

Recommendations stressing an increase the number of patrolmen, shortening response time, continuance of the PIRC program, community outreach, and community policing for the 2012 year and the following years would allow for a further reduction of overall crime. Increasing the police presence in the crime ridden areas of the city though the hiring of new patrolmen, as suggestion in the *One life One Vision* program in 2006. The 2006 increase in police aided in the reduction of crime (International Association of Police Chiefs, 2005). In addition, *One Life One Vision* also aimed to reduce the response times to calls. The combination of these two implements aided in reducing crime in 2006, and can be implemented again to further the reduction in crime in 2012. The PIRC focuses on community based policing and interactions, and has recently shown to decrease gang violence and violent crime rates in Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh Police Department, 2012). PIRC is proving to be a valuable resource in crime prevention and in reducing crime rates. Continuing this program is imperative in 2012 and the following years.

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