Assessing the 2015 Homicide Rise*

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Overview

- Debate over significance and causes of 2015 homicide increase
- Documenting the increase
- Explaining the increase
  - Expanding drug markets
  - Returning prisoners
  - “Ferguson effect”
    - De-policing?
    - Police legitimacy crisis?
- Evaluating the explanations
  - Key indicators
  - Data needs
Documenting the Increase

56 City Sample*

*Thanks to Max Ehrenfreund of the Washington Post and Darrel W. Stephens of the Major Cities Chiefs Police Association for providing the crime data used in this presentation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Sample (N = 56)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Jose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How Representative is the Sample?

- Sample accounted for 92% of homicides in UCR Group I cities with populations greater than 250,000 in 2014 (4,873 v. 5,305)
- Close correspondence between sample and UCR Group I homicide trends between 1995 and 2014 ($r = .96$)
- Homicides in sample cities increased by 16.8% in 2015; homicides in Group I cities increased by 10.5% in first half of 2015 (prelim. UCR)
- Predicted UCR Group I homicide increase for 2015 = $\sim$14%
Figure 2. Percentage Change in Homicide in 56 Cities, 2014-2015

Average Change = 16.8%
40 Cities Up
18 > 25%
12 > 50%
16 Down or Even
The Top Ten

- Increase in top ten accounted for two-thirds of total homicide increase (548/821)
- Avg. percent increase $= 33.3\%$
  - Max $= 90.5\%$ (Cleveland)
  - Min $= 12.9\%$ (Philadelphia)
- 2015 homicide rise $> 95\%$ of one-year increases since 1985 (14/290)
## Ten Cities With Largest Absolute Homicide Increases, 2014 - 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Absolute Increase</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
<th>Cum % of Total Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do the Top Ten Differ From Other Cities?
Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Top Ten and Other Cities

Source: American Community Survey, 2010 - 2014
Explaining the Increase: Three Hypotheses

1. Expanding Drug Markets
2. Returning Prisoners
3. Ferguson Effect
   - De-policing
   - Legitimacy Crisis
Heroin Epidemic
Number of Drug Deaths by Drug Type, 1999 - 2014

Source: MMWR (January 1, 2016)
Returning Prisoners
US Imprisonment Rate per 100,000 Population, 1978 - 2014

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics
## Net Prisoner Increase: Releases Minus Admissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>19,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>28,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-5,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>9,702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ferguson Effect

De-policing?
Legitimacy Crisis?
Percentage of Adults With "a Great Deal/Quite a Lot" of Confidence in the Police (2011 - 2014)

Source: Gallup Poll
Are Blacks Treated Less Fairly Than Whites by the Police? (% Yes)

- 1997: 60% (Blacks) 30% (Whites)
- 2007: 73% (Blacks) 31% (Whites)
- 2015: 73% (Blacks) 34% (Whites)

Source: Gallup Poll
Is the Justice System Biased Against Black People? (% Yes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Whites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gallup Poll
Evaluating the Explanations: Key Indicators

- Ferguson effect
  - De-policing: Arrest rate for serious offenses
  - Police legitimacy
    - Local surveys and ethnographies
    - Social media chatter on police
    - Assaults on police officers
    - Resisting arrest
- Expanding drug markets
  - Drug arrest rates
  - % homicides drug-related
- Returning prisoners
  - % homicides by ex-prisoners on parole
Data Needs

• FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports disseminates crime and arrest data 9-10 months after the collection year – too late to add address emerging crime problems
• Contrasts with dissemination of economic data
• FBI should return to a practice it abandoned 80 years ago and release monthly crime and arrest data
Conclusions

• Homicide rise in large cities is real and nearly unprecedented
• Rise concentrated in cities with larger black populations
• Explanations
  – Why the time lag in drug market and prisoner effects?
  – De-policing claims attribute too much significance to policing effects on homicide
Conclusions, cont.

• Circumstantial evidence favors police legitimacy hypothesis
  – Timing is right
  – Squares with evidence on cities with largest homicide increase
  – Abrupt crime increases imply “exogenous shock”
  – Reservoir of minority mistrust of the police activated by recent events
We should not have to wait until the fall of 2016 for the data needed to evaluate the scope of and reasons behind the homicide rise of 2015. Monthly UCR crime and arrest data should be released one-to-two months after collection.