



Public Safety

the **Ochs Center**
for metropolitan studies

The State of the Region **2010**

the Ochs Center for metropolitan studies

The State of the Region 2010 Public Safety

Data Sources

Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Data

This data is used for comparing crime across multiple jurisdictions. It is compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from over 17,000 enforcement agencies representing 93% of the population of the United States. UCR data is limited to a select number of serious violent and property offenses; for example, the UCR does not include data on white collar offenses or less serious offenses. This report utilizes UCR data from 2008 for the counties and municipalities in the Chattanooga Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The report also uses some data from 2009 for the City of Chattanooga. The 2009 UCR was preliminary, meaning it is subject to change, and was only available for cities with populations over 100,000 at the time of publication.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) Data

TBI data was used for non-incorporated areas and cities in Hamilton County. All local law enforcement agencies in the State of Tennessee are required by law to report complaints to the TBI. TBI data includes more offenses than those in the UCR, but still does not address the issue of crimes that may occur but are never reported to law enforcement. Data on crime incidents is continually updated in the TBI database, even for past years, so the numbers used at the time of publication may not reflect the most recent numbers available.

Chattanooga Police Department and Hamilton County Sheriff

Both departments provided address level data on all reported incidents and arrests in 2008 and 2009. This data was used to calculate subregional crime rates within the City of Chattanooga and unincorporated parts of Hamilton County. Ninety-five percent of the addresses were geocoded based on the data provided, meaning that 5% of addresses for crime incidents could not be found, and thus were not included in our calculation of subregional crime rates.

Data from the Hamilton County Sheriff was also used to determine the demographics of those admitted to jail and length of jail stay for 2009.

Tennessee Department of Corrections

Data from the Department of Corrections was used to calculate the prison population and demographics for Hamilton County.

United States Census

When possible, American Community Survey (ACS) population estimates for corresponding years were used in determining the crime rates per 100,000 population for counties and municipalities in the MSA. For example, the ACS population estimate for the year 2005 was used when calculating the 2005 crime rates for the MSA. The most recent demographic estimates at this time are for 2008, and this information was used where noted.

The most recent population data available at a subregional level is from the 2000 Census. This information was used to calculate the crime rates for Hamilton County subregions per 100,000 people across all years, 2005 to 2009. Therefore crime rates calculated at the subregional level in Hamilton County do not take in to account possible – even probable – changes in population in the past nine years.

Executive Summary

In 2006 (87%), 2008 (90%) and 2010 (91%), more Hamilton County residents identified safety from crime as very important to quality of life than any other factor rated.

Within the region, crime is concentrated in the City of Chattanooga. In 2008, Chattanooga accounted for one-third of the population of the metropolitan area, but 58% of property crime and 61% of violent crime.

Still, crime in the region committed outside of Chattanooga has increased. Between 2003 and 2008, violent crime decreased by 5% in Chattanooga and increased by 2.8% in the rest of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Property crime declined by 1.7% in Chattanooga and increased by 4.6% in the rest of the MSA.

While Hamilton County accounted for 64.3% of the MSA population, it accounted for 48.4% of offenders in the region sent to state prison.

Between 2005 and 2009, the crime rate for nine selected TBI Group A offenses increased in Red Bank (16.7%), Soddy-Daisy (39.8%), and slightly in Chattanooga (0.3%). TBI Group A offenses declined in East Ridge by 1.4%

Victimization and population data suggest that African Americans and 18 to 44 year olds are overrepresented among crime victims in Hamilton County.

A higher percentage of African American crime victims in Hamilton County are younger, when compared to white crime victims. Among African Americans, 58% of crime victims were 34 years old or younger, compared to 47% of white crime victims. Additionally, while African Americans represented 31% of all crime victims countywide, they represented 41% of all crime victims under the age of 18.

Since 2006, arrests in Hamilton County have decreased by 16% to 18,068 in 2009. Ten offenses account for more than half of all arrests in Hamilton County: drug/narcotic violations, simple assault, shoplifting, DUI, family non-violent offenses, aggravated assault, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, bad checks, and burglary.

Arrestees were disproportionately African American, men and between the ages of 18 and 44.

In April 2010, there were 1,443 individuals in Silverdale or Hamilton County jail. In 2009, 349 individuals went to state prison from Hamilton County. Most individuals going to prison were men (89%), African American (53%) and between 25 and 44 years old (55%).

At the MSA level, Chattanooga had the third highest property crime rate among benchmarks, behind Memphis and Winston-Salem. The Chattanooga MSA property crime rate was 15% higher than the average for all of the benchmark MSAs. The Chattanooga MSA murder rate was the fifth highest out of eleven benchmark MSAs.

At the city level, Chattanooga had the highest overall property crime rate among eleven benchmark cities, followed by Memphis and Knoxville. Chattanooga's property crime rate was 40% higher than the average rate for all eleven benchmark cities. Chattanooga had the fourth highest violent

crime rate and sixth highest murder rate among the eleven benchmark cities.

The City of Chattanooga had the 11th highest crime rate in the nation among cities with populations of 100,000 or more.

There are significant differences in crime by subregion within Hamilton County. Five subregions (Ridgedale/Oak Grove/Clifton Hills, Bushtown/Highland Park, South Chattanooga, Downtown and Amnicola/East Chattanooga) accounted for 14.2% of the County population, but 40% of robberies, 41% of aggravated assaults, 32% of simple assaults, 31% of burglaries and vandalism, and 40% of drug offenses. These five subregions are frequently ranked as having among the five highest crime rates in Hamilton County.

Other subregions have experienced increases in crime rates over the last five years, placing them in the top five highest crime rates for specific offenses: Dupont/Murray Hills and Woodmore/Dalewood for robbery; Brainerd for burglary; and Soddy-Daisy for drug offenses.

In four Hamilton County subregions, one out of every fifty males has just returned to the community from prison within the last two years. These subregions – Amnicola/East Chattanooga, Ridgedale/Oak Grove/Clifton Hills, Glenwood/Eastdale and Bushtown/Highland Park – account for nearly 25% of all inmates released from prison back to communities in Hamilton County in 2008 and 2009.

Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies
739 McCallie Avenue
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37403
423.425.5610 | ochscenter.org

Acknowledgments

The State of Region 2010: Public Safety report was made possible by generous support from the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Benwood Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga and the United Way.
