B’ham Crime Rate Drop: Fluke or New Leaf?

By Jim Lanier

Crime is undeniably a problem in Birmingham, Alabama. According to Neighborhood Scout’s SecurityGauge website, a citizen of Birmingham has a roughly one in 64 chance of becoming a victim of violent crime and a one in 21 chance of being a victim of property crime. But recently, it seems as if Birmingham may be turning over a new leaf. In 2024, Birmingham set a historic high of 160 homicides, but in 2025, homicides dropped by 43 percent. The trend continued this year, with 75 percent fewer homicides in January 2026 than in January 2025; other crimes also reportedly decreased in the same time period, with property crime down 14.5 percent and overall violent crime down 31.8 percent.



Socioeconomic Factors

Birmingham’s segregated history and current reality affect crime rates. People who live in economically disadvantaged, racially segregated locations often face a disproportionate risk of crime.

As Birmingham City Councilman for District 2 Hunter Williams explained, “When you look at crime from a bird’s eye view, socioeconomic factors – specifically access to education and jobs – always play a role in crime rates. They are an underlying cause that, when solved or improved, create generational opportunity, which results in a decrease in criminal activity.” So “fixing” crime would mean addressing the root causes, which are problems that don’t have easy solutions. Hunter added, “Policing is more of an *immediate* strategy in crime reduction. Education is a silver board that lifts all barriers. However, education is something that is fixed over *generations.* The need for policing definitely decreases when you have a population that has access to quality education and well-paying jobs.”

So the long-term *solution* to crime, according to Hunter, is education. But in the short term, one key *contributor* to Birmingham’s crime rate is gang affiliated activity.

Gang Violence

Gang operations in Birmingham are not just simple groups—some extend beyond the city. As reported by ABC 33/40, former Birmingham Police Chief A.C. Roper, who now advises the Birmingham Crime Commission, describes gang operations as “… combinations. There are drugs, there’s money. Some local gangs have a national nexus, some don’t.” Gang activity in Birmingham is likewise complicated. It touches many aspects of society, inside and outside of the city, and it often involves youth. In the same report, one ex-gang member who joined at 13 said, “They present themselves as family. Once you’re susceptible to that. Once you’re sucked into that through your vulnerability, it just overtakes your whole life.” Teens also gravitate

toward gangs as sources of money. Other reasons include peer pressure, protection, and sources of drugs. Once in a gang, teens are often pressured into performing violent acts, which can often carry lengthy prison sentences.

Policing and Policy Changes

The 43 percent drop in homicides hints that violence *can* be reduced. According to Hunter, "We had one individual causing a large percentage of homicides in 2024 who eventually was captured. However, the main factor is the funding and recruitment efforts at Birmingham Police Department. The police department has received the largest funding to date in the history of the department. This has allowed more officers to solve and prevent crime as well as retention and recruitment efforts to bring the department to where it needed to be from a staffing level."

Hunter's explanation presents one possible short-term solution, increased funding of the BPD. Another potential solution, already showing progress, is Chief of Police Michael Pickett's 8-Point Crime Reduction Plan, which some local leaders say has played a role in the recent crime reductions.

Birmingham also is attempting to address crime by spending $2.5+ million on violence intervention programs. Among other organizations, money is going to The Institute for Social Justice and Action ($975,435.42), Live Free USA ($130,350), Offender Alumni Association ($797,582), and Trajectory Changing Solutions ($700,000). Moreover, Birmingham is attempting reach teens through summer violence prevention initiatives. Finally, funding for a state-wide public-safety package from Governor Kay Ivey, aimed at reducing inner-city gun violence, is now flowing.

There are individual solutions, too. In the words of Councilman Hunter, "The most helpful that any citizen can be regardless of age is to be involved in their community, to know who their neighbors are, and participate in civic and social activities. Members of a tight community rarely commit crimes against each other. It's very easy to go home and not know who your neighbor or mailman or trash guy is, but when you engage with those around you, it creates an ecosystem that makes crime harder to occur."