



## U.S. border cities again see low violent crime rates

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Reported violent crime in the United States rose in 2020 for the first time in four years, but violent crime rates in 11 of the largest communities along the U.S.-Mexico border stayed below the national average, an Axios analysis found.

**Why it matters:** Year after year, data showing low violent crime rates in majority-Mexican American and Mexican immigrant border communities dispels myths of the U.S.-Mexico border as a region filled with crime and chaos.

**By the numbers:** The Axios analysis using FBI data and the 2020 census found 11 border communities had a violent crime rate of 340.2 per 100,000 residents, around 15% lower than the national average of 398.5.

- In addition, the murder rates in the 11 communities from San Diego to Brownsville, Texas, were 4.1 per 100,000 residents — well below the FBI's reported national average of 6.5.

**The intrigue:** The disparity in violent crime rates is starker when comparing the 11 border communities with similar-size cities with similar poverty demographics further north.

- El Paso, Texas, a city of 681,000, had a violent crime rate of 318 per 100,000 residents. Memphis, a city of 650,00, has a violent crime rate of 2,356.5 — more than seven times higher.
- Del Rio, Texas — a city of nearly 36,000 people, where mounted Border Patrol agents on horseback were seen charging Haitian migrants last month — had a violent crime rate of 162.4. Lima, Ohio, a city nearly the same size in population, had a violent crime rate of 688.8.
- Calexico, California; Nogales, Arizona; and the Texas cities of Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and McAllen all had violent crime rates below 190.

**Yes, but:** The U.S. State Department during the summer issued an advisory cautioning U.S. citizens against travel to the Mexican state of Tamaulipas along the U.S. border due to high crime and kidnapping.

- Ciudad Juárez, the Mexican city that borders El Paso, also has seen a jump in violence due to fighting among cartels and gangs.

- Yuma, Arizona, a farming community near the California state line, was the only border community with a violent crime rate near 500 and a murder rate approaching twice the national average.

**But, but, but:** According to FBI crime data, 10 of the 11 U.S. border communities maintained low rates of violent crime over the last five years.

- Alex Nowrasteh, director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute, told Axios the presence of the U.S. Border Patrol, one of the largest federal law enforcement agencies, along the border likely contributes to lower violent crime numbers.
- In addition, he said the research-supported fact that various studies show immigrants are less likely to commit crimes overall helps explain the region's consistently low murder rates.

**The bottom line:** Crime and the migrant crisis along the border will likely be among the issues defining the 2022 Midterm elections but data show the two are not linked as some candidates might claim.