



# interoffice

## MEMORANDUM

---

**To:** Lee D. Garrity, City Manager  
**From:** Scott A. Cunningham, Chief of Police  
**Date:** June 28, 2010  
**Subject:** Crime Comparison Information

City Council had recently asked for information comparing our crime rates (and changes) to other communities. Contained herein is information relevant to that request.

It must be understood that a police department is not solely responsible for decreases or increases in crime rates. Crime is a very complex societal issue. Comparing the quality of life in cities and the performance of police departments based on crime changes is a dangerous path. Great care must be used as there are so many factors that impact crime levels. Most are out of the control of local governments and police departments. However, the Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) believes that police departments can have an impact on crime levels.

The WSPD intends to positively impact crime levels and the fear of crime through enforcement, prevention, and partnerships with the community. Crime rates and annual fluctuations and changes are critically important to any community and its citizens. The question was asked if Winston-Salem's drop in crime was just because of the general trend or was it something else, and was the drop more or less than other communities.

Recently, it was reported the City of Winston-Salem had experienced a 9.11% drop in crime when comparing 2009 to 2008. While this is an excellent change in one year, many communities experienced some level of decline. Some, however, experienced increases. The City of Winston-Salem experienced greater reductions in crime than most cities in 2009. Some facts to support this include:

- Violent crime in Winston-Salem dropped 16.35% in 2009 compared to the national average drop of 5.5%.
- Property crime in Winston-Salem dropped 8.05% in 2009 compared to the national average drop of 4.9%.
- For cities with a population of 100,000 to 249,999, violent crime in Winston-Salem dropped 16.35% compared to the national average of 6.1%.
- For cities with a population of 100,000 to 249,999, property crime in Winston-Salem dropped 8.05% compared to the national average of 3.7%.
- Of the eight largest cities in North Carolina, Winston-Salem:
  - Had the second largest drop in violent crime
  - Had the third largest drop in property crime
  - Had the third largest drop in overall crime
  - Was one of four cities with drops in both categories

This information clearly points out that the decreases in crime in Winston-Salem were more than the drops in those cities that experienced decreases. In many cases, the decreases here were multiple times the averages. It is believed that a variety of factors have helped create these decreases. These include:

- A change to permanent shifts
- A change to long term assignment to specific beats
- An increase in the number of beats
- An increased focus on enhanced officer-citizen interactions
- An increased level of trust and partnership among the citizens
- An increased focus on crime prevention.

There are also most likely other reasons that have helped the decline, but without appropriate study, it is difficult to pinpoint which factors contributed to the decreases and to what degree.

The men and women of the Winston-Salem Police Department will continue to focus their energies and resources on improving citizen trust and interactions, reducing the fear of crime, and reducing the levels of crime.



Scott A. Cunningham, Ph.D.  
Chief of Police