

## ARE MURDER AND ROBBERY ON THE INCREASE IN GHANA? ANALYSIS OF POLICE CRIME STATISTICS

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### ABSTRACT

*In this research brief, we analyse trends in violent crimes in Ghana between 2012 and 2018. The results show robbery rates are at their highest in seven years; however, murder rates are the lowest over the period covered. Understanding where and when these violent crimes are concentrated can help police target their limited resources more effectively.*

On 17 January 2019, the investigative journalist Mr Ahmed Hussein-Suale was murdered in Madina (Greater Accra Region) in what has been described as a ‘contract killing.’ Media reports documents other cases that appear to fit that description. These murders have generated intense public discussion, with concerns that Ghanaians are living in a state of heightened insecurity, with an increased risk of becoming victims of violent crimes, especially robberies and murders.

In many cases, the media discussions have not referred to the available data on recorded crime. Where such references have been made, commentators have drawn comparisons to the preceding two or three years. More crucially, these comparisons rely entirely on absolute figures; for example, 549 murders in 2016 are compared to 609 in 2017, with the consequent conclusion of increased risk of murders. These approaches are misleading; we require a relatively longer period of comparison to establish trends in violent crimes. More importantly, since Ghana’s population has not remained stagnant, any credible comparisons over time cannot rely on absolute figures because that will result in misleading conclusions. What is required is a more standardised computation, such as crime rates. That is the aim of this brief.

**Table 1: Absolute Murder and Robbery Cases from 2012 to 2018**

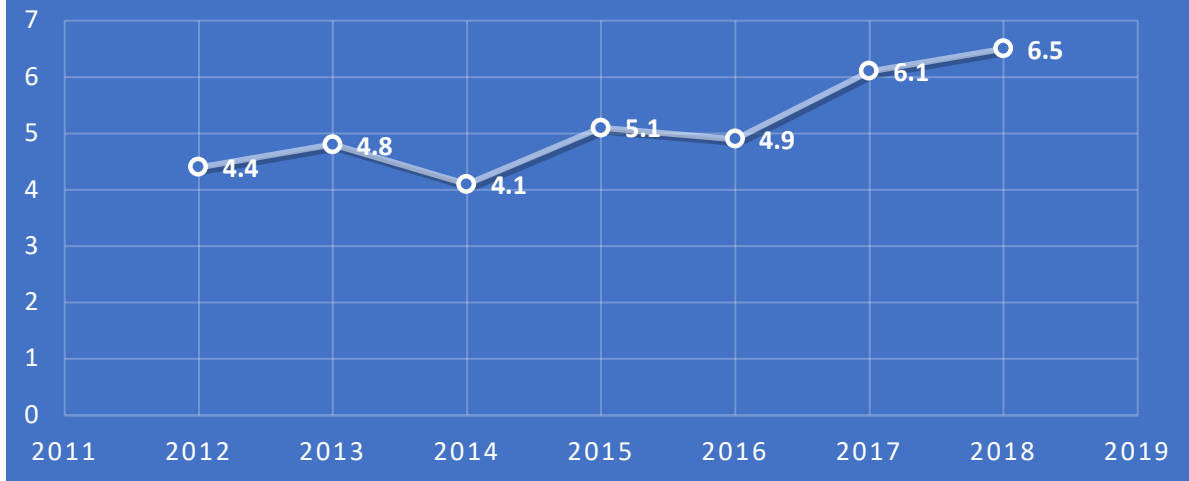
Year	Robbery	Murder
2012	1126	560
2013	1257	551
2014	1116	543
2015	1411	525
2016	1397	549
2017	1772	609
2018	1919	500

Source: Ghana Police Service

In the analysis presented below, we compute the rates of violent crime per 100,000 population. We focus specifically on murders and robberies as these have dominated the concerns about increased insecurity. To obtain the rate for any year, we divide the number of cases by the total population of Ghanaians for that year. The result is then multiplied by 100,000. We do this for each of the seven years covered.

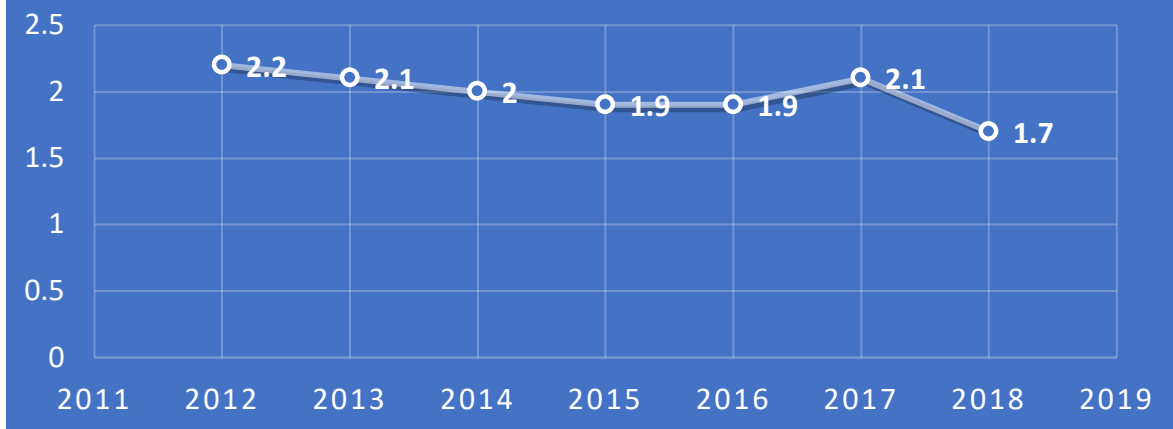
Starting with robberies (see Figure 1), our analysis shows there were 6.5 robberies per 100,000 population in 2018, making it the highest robbery rate in 7 years. The lowest robbery rate was recorded in 2014: 4.1 per 100,000 population. Although there was an increase from the 2014 figure to 5.1 per 100,000 in 2015, that increase was short-lived; robbery rates declined in 2016 to 4.9 per 100,000. A final observation that can be made is that the two elections years covered are both followed by an increase in robbery rates. However, the increase between 2016 and 2017 was far greater than that between 2012 and 2013. Moreover, while there had been a drop in the second year after elections in 2012, the trend after 2016 had been upwards.

**Figure 1: Robbery Rates Per 100, 000 Population, 2012-2018**



Next, we consider the murder rates. As shown in Figure 2 below, murder rate of 1.7 per 100,000 for 2018 is the lowest in 7 seven years. Thus, on this measure, Ghanaians are at their lowest risk of murder in the period covered. The data further show that the highest murder rate was in 2012; this remained largely stable for 2013 and 2014, decreasing to 1.9 per 100,000 population in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, the murder rate returned to the 2013 rate but has since declined to its lowest in 7 years.

**Figure 2: Murder Rates Per 100, 000 Population, 2012-2018**



In conclusion, do Ghanaians have grounds to feel a sense of insecurity? Our answer, based on our analysis of two violent crimes, is mixed: Ghana is experiencing its highest rate of robberies in 7 years. However, it also has its lowest murder rate during the same period. Thus, any feelings of insecurity are likely to be driven by robberies than murders. It is important to note that, whether robberies or murders, violent crimes are not randomly distributed. They tend to concentrate at specific places and times in any city. Additional analysis to establish ‘hotspots’ and ‘hot times’ of violent crimes can help the police target their resources more effectively to prevent these crimes.