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## Akron is No. 1 in safety

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Akron remained Ohio's safest large city last year, even though it reported an increase in violent crimes, including 13 more homicides.

Akron saw about 60 violent crimes for every 10,000 residents -- a lower rate than any of the six largest Ohio cities and less than half the rate of Toledo and Cleveland, according to the FBI's preliminary Uniform Crime Report released Monday.

Its 27 homicides last year also were the least of the large Ohio cities. There were 109 slayings in Cleveland (a 38 percent increase from 2004), more than Columbus's 102 and Cincinnati's 79.

Nationally, the most murders occurred in New York (539), Los Angeles (489) and Chicago (447).

The FBI report, which tracks cities and towns with more than 100,000 residents, showed a 2.5 percent increase in violent crimes nationwide and a 1.6 percent decrease in property crimes. (The FBI's Web site -- [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov) -- has the complete preliminary report.)

The numbers in Ohio cities generally mirrored the national trends.

Ohio cities overall reported an increase of 4.5 percent in violent crimes, which include murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape and robbery.

Akron overall had 1,265 violent crimes last year, up slightly from 1,258 in 2004.

Meanwhile, property crimes in Akron decreased last year, dropping to 12,132 from 12,965 in 2004.

Statewide, the decrease was 1.5 percent in property crimes, which include burglary, car thefts and arson.

Last year's 27 murders and manslaughters were still the highest number Akron has seen in years. In 2004 there were 14 slayings.

In the last decade, the numbers typically ranged from 10 to 20 each year. But there have been exceptions, such as 1988, when there were 30 slayings.

Homicides reached their highest levels in the 1970s, with 48 in 1974, 37 in 1971 and 35 in 1975.

Akron police Lt. David Whiddon said the number of murders in Akron often fluctuates widely.

There's no rhyme or reason to murder, Whiddon said. It's impossible to know when -- or even where -- a homicide will occur, regardless of whether it's spur of the moment or planned.

Typically, Whiddon said, homicides tend to involve drugs or money, but some are domestic and others are fits of rage.

So far this year, there have been 11 homicides, and Whiddon said that number could stay the same, increase slightly or increase significantly, possibly surpassing last year's numbers.

``We've gone months without a murder, than all of a sudden there are four in one month," he said. ``Who's to say when the next homicide's going to be?"

Even though they have not always resulted in death, Whiddon said police have investigated more shootings recently.

City spokesman Mark Williamson said there are probably very few communities, especially urban communities, that are pleased with their crime figures.

``I'm not going to brag when it's low, and I'm not going to tell you it's a crime-ridden city when it's high," he said. ``These things go up and down, it's like a roller coaster."

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