New FBI Data: Crime in New Bedford continues to decline

In 2020, property crime fell 21% and violent crime fell 5% Overall, crime down by 39% since 2016.

Crime rates in the City of New Bedford dropped again last year, according to finalized 2020 crime statistics recently released by the FBI. Last year's drop is consistent with a downward trend in New Bedford, especially evident over the past five years.

The New Bedford Police Department submitted preliminary data to the FBI earlier this year. With the recent release, the FBI made the city's crime figures official: In 2020, compared to 2019, property crime in New Bedford decreased by 21% and violent crime decreased by 5%.

The 21% drop in property crime represents a decrease from 2,130 reported incidents in 2019 to 1,684 reported incidents in 2020, from the summary section of the new FBI report. Among those totals, burglaries dropped 39% last year, from 465 reported in 2019 to 285 reported in 2020. Larceny dropped 19%, from 1,515 reported in 2019 to 1,223 reported in 2020.

In the violent crime category, robbery fell by 40% last year, from 176 reported in 2019 to 106 in 2020.

Reported rape dropped 25% in the city last year, from 68 in 2019 to 51 in 2020. Aggravated assault unfortunately increased 14% last year, from 383 reported in 2019 to 435 in 2020. There were four homicides in 2020, compared to three reported in 2019.

The pandemic had complex, mixed impacts on crime rates in 2020 both locally and nationally, according to FBI data and numerous studies, by groups including the National Commission

on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice. Mobility restrictions had a potentially positive influence, while increased levels of social unrest likely contributed negatively.

Multi-Year Decline Continuing
Across multiple categories, New Bedford has seen a continuing decline in reported incidents in recent years.

Violent crime in New Bedford dropped 26% since 2016, from 808 reported incidents that year to 596 in 2020. Property crime decreased by 42% since 2016, dropping from 2,927 reported incidents that year to the 1,684 reported in 2020. Overall, crime in New Bedford has fallen 39% since 2016.

"2020 obviously was an unusual year, but the fact that the 2020 decline is consistent with long-term trends gives us confidence that we're taking the right approach," said Police Chief Paul Oliveira.

"It's the men and women of this force who are out there on the street every day driving the sustained decline in crime rates."

Mayor Jon Mitchell likewise credited the Police Department: "We have been worked tirelessly to make New Bedford safer. Our success these past several years has been attributable to the dedication of our police officers, the efforts of our Neighborhood Task Force to address blight and disorder, and an approach to policing that emphasizes data-driven decision-making and the cultivation of community trust," he said. "We will not let up in our effort to make every neighborhood in our city safer."

Background on FBI crime reporting:
The FBI's property crimes category tracks burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Its violent crimes category tracks homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. These eight crimes serve as common indicators of national and local crime experiences because of their seriousness and frequency

of occurrence.