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From Blue to Red: Analyzing the Correlation Between Crime Trends and Presidential Leadership in San Antonio

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the relationship between federal political leadership and local crime trends in San Antonio, Texas. Utilizing a quantitative methodology, the research draws on data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, population figures, presidential approval ratings, and electoral results from the Obama (2012–2016) and Trump (2016–2019) administrations. Statistical analyses—including percentage change calculations and temporal trend comparisons—were conducted using SPSS and Microsoft Excel to examine fluctuations across both violent and property crime categories. The study accounts for confounding variables such as population growth and definitional changes in crime reporting, particularly the 2014 revision of the federal definition of rape. Results indicate a discernible correlation between presidential administration transitions and variations in local crime rates, with increases observed during the latter part of the Obama presidency and relative stabilization during the Trump administration. These findings highlight the potential influence of national political leadership on localized criminal activity and reinforce the importance of contextualizing crime trends within broader governance frameworks. The research contributes to scholarly discourse on the intersection of politics, public opinion, and criminal justice, advocating for data-informed approaches to electoral decisions and public policy formulation.

KEYWORDS: crime trends, presidential leadership, political polarization, urban crime, violent crime, property crime, San Antonio, partisan politics, public safety, federal administration, political influence on crime, crime statistics, Obama administration, Trump administration, law and order

Introduction

Examining the intersection between federal political leadership and local crime trends necessitates both robust quantitative analysis and a critical appraisal of political narratives and media representations. A significant methodological challenge in this research involved the collection of political and civil unrest data specific to San Antonio, Texas. Political bias—particularly prevalent in media sources—frequently compromised the objectivity of information that otherwise appeared empirical or fact-based. Nonetheless, through careful source selection and cross-verification, the study successfully identified credible data that revealed meaningful correlations between shifts in political leadership and local crime patterns.

To establish a reliable political framework for the study, the initial phase focused on analyzing official electoral outcomes. Certified voting data for the 2012 and 2016 U.S. presidential elections were obtained from the Texas Secretary of State's (SOS) Election History Database, a nonpartisan and authoritative resource that provides comprehensive state and county-level election results. This dataset, which spans electoral records from 1992 to the present, enabled a clear understanding of voting trends in both Bexar County and the state of Texas. Analysis confirmed that although the Democratic Party consistently secured a majority in Bexar County, it did not win statewide in either election year.

Following the electoral analysis, the research turned to an exploration of the broader sociopolitical context during the Obama and Trump administrations, with particular attention to civil unrest and increasing political polarization. To capture a more comprehensive view of public sentiment and protest activity, the study consulted a diverse range of media outlets across the ideological spectrum. Acknowledging the inherent limitations of media bias, this multiperspective approach was intentionally adopted to facilitate source triangulation and mitigate interpretive distortion. Through the comparative analysis of divergent narratives, the study aimed to develop a more balanced understanding of how presidential leadership influences public order and crime dynamics at the local level in San Antonio.

Literature Review

Crime Rates and The UCR

Each year, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) compiles data submitted by local, county, and state law enforcement agencies into the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. This program offers standardized statistics on both violent crimes—including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—and property crimes such as burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (FBI, *Crime in the U.S.*, n.d.). These annual reports provide comprehensive

insights into crime trends at national, state, and local levels, enabling researchers and analysts to identify patterns over time and across jurisdictions.

The UCR is considered a foundational and authoritative resource for crime statistics, serving not only researchers but also law enforcement administrators who rely on these data to inform policy, operations, and training protocols (Uniform Crime Reporting Summary, n.d.). Although the UCR does not include a statistical margin of error for underreported or unreported crimes, the scope and consistency of its datasets provide a robust foundation for evaluating crime trends across regions. For this study, the UCR data served as the initial source from which crime metrics were extracted and organized into tables (see Table 1 and Table 2), enabling an empirical comparison of crime trends in San Antonio during the Obama (2012–2016) and Trump (2016–2019) administrations.

It is important to note that the apparent increase or decrease in reported crimes must be contextualized within broader population changes. For example, despite population growth in San Antonio during the study period, the city experienced an approximate 13% decrease in both property and violent crimes between January 2012 and December 2019 (FBI, *Crime in the U.S.*, n.d.). Property crime rates in particular demonstrated a marked decline (see figure 2).

In addition to the UCR, this study utilized the FBI's Crime Data Explorer (CDE), a digital platform designed to enhance transparency, accountability, and public access to crime data. The CDE allows users to visualize crime trends through customizable figures and interactive filters, enabling searches based on offense type (violent, property, or individual), geographic location (national, state, or city level), and specific time periods (Crime Data Explorer, 2025). The data presented on the CDE platform are drawn from both the UCR and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), ensuring a high degree of reliability and consistency across variables such as offense type, weapon use, and demographic breakdowns.

To further account for the limitations inherent in crime data collection, this study also incorporated findings from John Gramlich of the Pew Research Center. Gramlich's research highlights challenges in data accuracy, including reporting biases, geographic and demographic influences, and the subjective nature of crime reporting behavior (Gramlich, 2024). His findings underscore the importance of interpreting FBI data with caution, particularly considering that many crimes go unreported due to factors such as embarrassment, distrust in law enforcement, or perceptions of low severity.

Together, the FBI UCR, the Crime Data Explorer, and supplemental analysis from Gramlich provide the empirical backbone for this study. While acknowledging the limitations in reporting accuracy, these sources collectively offer reliable and transparent datasets essential to the evaluation of the relationship between presidential leadership and crime trends. The compilation, analysis, and

contextualization of this data marked the foundational phase of this research project, upon which further theoretical and political analyses were built.

Empirical Observation

Researching crime rates in San Antonio alongside the political outcomes of national elections serves a critical function in understanding the broader implications of governance, public sentiment, and public safety. Identifying the potential correlation between presidential leadership, public opinion, and local crime trends is essential for informing law enforcement strategies and fostering responsive governance. San Antonio, Texas—home to approximately 1.5 million residents as of 2025—represents a significant case study due to its growing population and complex social dynamics (San Antonio, Texas Population, *2025*). Within the city, over 2,500 sworn law enforcement officers and more than 500 trained civilian personnel are tasked with maintaining public safety and order (Careers, Academy & Recruiting, *2025*).

As the city's population continues to expand, the demand for effective and proactive public safety measures grows in tandem. The first step in enhancing public protection is to analyze historical crime data in order to anticipate and mitigate future crime patterns. Assessing whether presidential administrations correlate with fluctuations in crime rates—particularly during politically charged periods—is critical for law enforcement agencies seeking to prepare for potential civil unrest and community instability during election cycles.

Moreover, this study not only investigates whether there is a general relationship between presidential leadership and crime but also considers whether specific categories of crime—violent or property-related—are disproportionately affected. It is equally important to examine whether rising crime rates are independently linked to population growth or if they exhibit a more direct association with national political leadership and public perception.

While the primary objective of this project was to explore the relationship between presidential leadership and local crime rates, the research also revealed an underlying complexity: the influence of political bias on public interpretations of crime data. A recurring finding throughout the study was that individuals often interpret crime statistics through the lens of their political beliefs. Despite the presence of empirical evidence, public perception frequently diverged from objective data, highlighting the role of confirmation bias and partisan media narratives. This observation underscores the importance of promoting data literacy and critical thinking when engaging with crime statistics, particularly in politically polarized environments.

In sum, while the study aimed to identify empirical correlations between national leadership and local crime, it also illuminated broader concerns related to

media reliability, political bias, and the challenges of fostering an informed public discourse on crime and governance.

Data Analysis

Independent Variables

In this study, the independent variables are defined as (1) the political party of the sitting U.S. president during the observed timeframes and (2) the classification of violent and property crimes. These variables are considered independent because they remain constant within the designated periods and serve as the basis upon which the dependent variables are analyzed. The identification and interpretation of these variables required careful scrutiny of definitional consistency and classification standards applied to crime data.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this research are those which are expected to vary as a function of the independent variables. Specifically, these include the crime rates for both violent and property crimes and their respective subcategories, as well as instances of civil unrest. Crime rates are classified as dependent variables because the central research question asks whether there is a measurable correlation between the political party in office and changes in crime trends. These rates are also indirectly influenced by additional factors such as population growth and socioeconomic shifts, which were considered during the data interpretation process.

Methodology

This methodological approach is grounded in the study's central objective: rather than exploring electoral causality or patterns in voter behavior, the analysis aims to evaluate the potential influence of the governing political party on fluctuations in crime rates and occurrences of civil unrest. For the purposes of this investigation, the political party in power—Democratic or Republican—is treated as a fixed contextual variable to facilitate the examination of correlations between governance and crime trends.

Data Collection/Analysis/Procedures

The research design employed in this study was methodologically straightforward: compile relevant crime and population data, convert it into visual and statistical representations, and analyze the observed trends to evaluate the central hypothesis. The core objective was to determine whether a correlation exists between presidential political leadership and fluctuations in crime rates in San Antonio, Texas. For analytical clarity, violent and property crimes were categorized

according to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) standards. Property crimes included burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson, while violent crimes encompassed murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Due to this definitional shift, crime data for rape from 2014 onward reflects a broader scope and likely contributed to the apparent statistical increase. Accordingly, both the legacy and revised definitions were considered throughout the data collection process to account for potential inconsistencies in agency reporting during the transition. This ensured accuracy and mitigated the risk of underreporting or misclassification, particularly in the early years following the definitional change. Following the acquisition of crime data specific to San Antonio, Texas, the information was compiled and analyzed to facilitate a structured and interpretable statistical analysis. This included comparisons of population growth rates, property versus violent crime rates, and intra-category fluctuations in specific offenses over time. Line graphs, tables, figures, and other visual aids were then generated to enhance interpretability and support trend analysis.

In tandem with crime rate analysis, population data from the FBI UCR was utilized to assess whether crime trends aligned proportionally with population changes. Charting these figures allowed for the calculation of crime rates per capita and aided in discerning whether increases or decreases in crime were absolute or relative to population shifts (see figure 1). These population-adjusted trends were critical for evaluating whether crime growth corresponded with population increases or reflected anomalous fluctuations. Subsequently, the study integrated political data to examine the potential impact of presidential leadership on crime. Political data was primarily sourced at the county level due to the structure of electoral reporting. As San Antonio is located within Bexar County, county-level presidential election results from 2012 and 2016 were used for comparison. These political data points were then contextualized against the crime trends, allowing for the evaluation of potential correlations between shifts in political leadership and fluctuations in crime rates.

Scoring and Data Management

The approach to establishing a connection between political party leadership and crime rates was grounded in quantitative analysis. Datasets were compiled from reputable news outlets and law enforcement databases that tracked protest activities and related criminal incidents, with the aim of validating the study's hypothesis regarding a correlation between political governance and crime. The data, including reports of assaults and other crimes, revealed discernible patterns that suggested notable trends aligned with shifts in political leadership. Through the systematic comparison of civil unrest, fluctuations in crime rates, and media reporting, the study identified meaningful correlations in specific crime categories,

though not across all types. The process of numerically and statistically deconstructing the data proved to be the most effective method for drawing evidence-based conclusions. Although Bexar County voted for the Democratic candidate in both the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, verifying this information through the Office of the Secretary of State, identifying a correlation between crime rates and political affiliation necessitated a deeper level of analysis and a comprehensive review of related reports.

Statistical Analysis

Following the collection of political and criminal data, additional insights were gathered from credible news outlets that reported on presidential approval ratings during both administrations. The quantitative data—comprising crime rates, population figures, and political approval statistics—were subjected to statistical analysis to facilitate a comparative assessment and identify notable correlations. The processed data were then imported into Microsoft Excel to generate trend visualizations, including tables and figures that clearly illustrated changes over time in key variables. These visual representations allowed for more precise pattern recognition, enhancing the clarity and comprehensibility of the findings. The resulting charts and tables provided the analytical basis for drawing conclusions, serving as the foundation for evaluating the study's hypothesis regarding the relationship between presidential leadership and crime trends in San Antonio. This final stage of the research process enabled a thorough comparison of data trends, thus supporting the assessment of the proposed correlation.

Results

Numerical Data

Utilizing the numerical data collected, the study employed standard statistical formulas to calculate the percentage change in key variables across the designated presidential terms. Specifically, the formula for percentage change — **Percentage of Change = [(Final Value - Initial Value) / |Initial Value|] × 100** — was applied to assess shifts in population, property crimes, violent crimes, and their respective subcategories during the periods of 2012–2016 and 2016–2019 (see Tables 3, 4, and 5). This analytical approach enabled the identification of quantifiable differences in crime rates between the Obama and Trump administrations, independent of general population growth. Although population growth persisted throughout both administrations, it occurred at nearly half the rate under President Trump compared to President Obama (see Table 5). This distinction in demographic expansion provides additional context for interpreting fluctuations in crime statistics. While immigration trends were not explicitly analyzed in this study, it is reasonable to infer that federal immigration policies and

enforcement strategies may have influenced population dynamics in San Antonio during the respective terms.

Table 1. Violent Crime Statistics in San Antonio, Texas (2012–2019)

Year		Population	Total	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Ag. Assault
2012		1380123	6943	89	549	1864	4441
2013		1399725	8828	72	663	2192	5901
2014		1428465	7704	103	1077	1777	4747
2015		1463586	8594	94	1049	1986	5465
2016		1498642	10754	149	1190	2232	7183
2017		1520712	10759	124	1270	2298	7067
2018		1539328	9647	107	1346	1767	6427
2019		1559166	11046	105	1630	1965	7346

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR). (2012–2019). FBI-UCR

Table 2. Property Crime Statistics in San Antonio, Texas (2012–2019)

Year	Population	Total	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Theft	Arson
2012	1380123	82668	15668	60633	6367	245
2013	1399725	79994	14850	58567	6577	315
2014	1428465	77392	12344	57908	7140	298
2015	1463586	73611	11632	55803	6176	261
2016	1498642	77786	12235	58318	7233	254
2017	1520712	73676	11722	55090	6864	207
2018	1539328	61478	9118	46271	6089	186
2019	1559166	67422	8172	51469	7781	181

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR). (2012–2019). FBI-UCR

Table 3. The calculated percent change in property crimes between Obama's and Trump's presidencies

Years	Total	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault
2012-2016	54.89% ↑	67.42% ↑	116.76% ↑	19.74% ↑	60.73% ↑
2016-2019	2.72% ↑	29.53% ↓	36.97% ↑	11.96% ↓	2.91% ↑

Table 4. The calculated percent change in property crimes between Obama's and Trump's presidencies

Years	Total	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft	Arson
2012-2016	5.91% ↓	21.91% ↓	3.82% ↓	13.6% ↑	3.67% ↑
2016-2019	13.32% ↓	33.21% ↓	11.74% ↓	7.58% ↑	28.75% ↓

Table 5. The population percent change between the presidential terms from 2012-2016 and 2016-2019

Year	Population
2012-2016	8.59% ↑
2016-2019	4.04% ↑

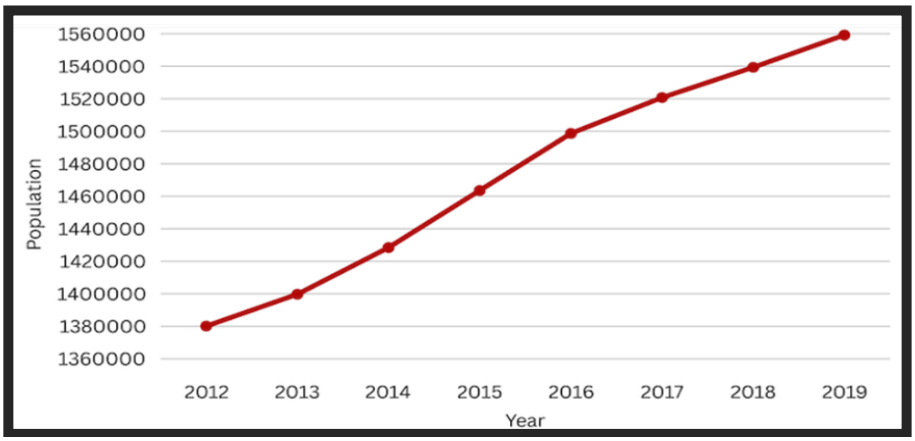

Figure 1. Population growth seen in Table 1 and Table 2 as presented by the FBI UCR (2012–2019)

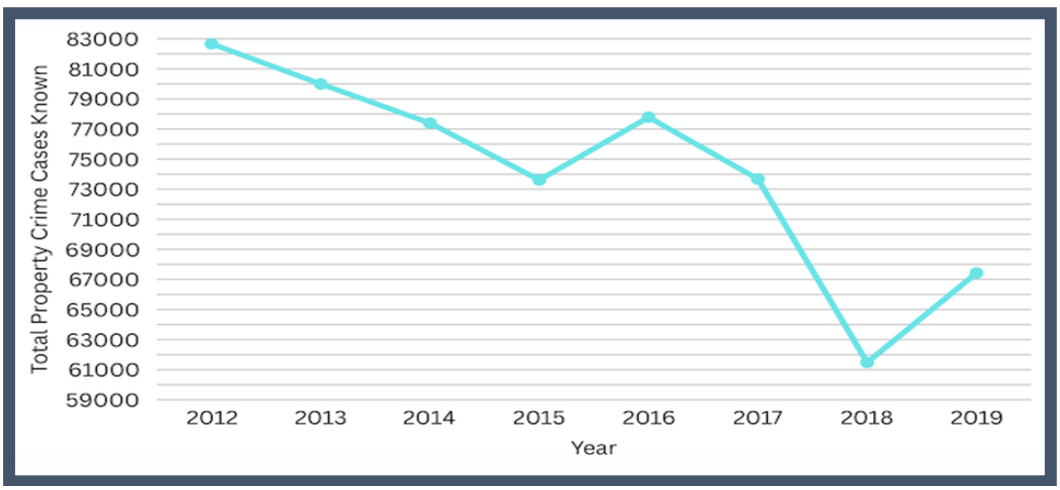

Figure 2. Visual representation of the total number of property crimes as presented in Table 2

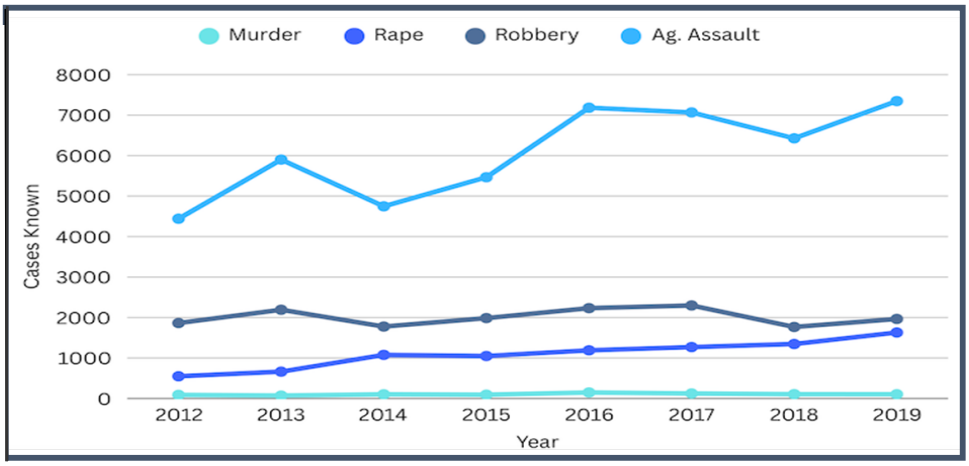

Figure 3. Visual representation of the data that is presented in Table 1 for each type of violent crime

Discussion

The findings of this research support the hypothesis that crime rates vary in relation to presidential leadership. Several factors may contribute to this variation, including public dissatisfaction, political protests, policy shifts, and broader sociopolitical dynamics. During President Obama's second term, his popularity declined significantly in Texas, where disapproval ratings exceeded 50% (Ramsey, 2015). According to polling data, only 35% of Texas voters approved of Obama's performance, while 55% expressed disapproval. Congressional approval ratings were even lower, with just 15% approval and 62% disapproval, further signaling widespread political dissatisfaction (Ramsey, 2015). This discontent contributed to a shift in voter preference, with Texas ultimately supporting Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, despite San Antonio and Bexar County remaining Democratic strongholds. This political misalignment between urban centers and the broader state electorate intensified feelings of marginalization among residents in Democratic-leaning areas. As Trump's first term concluded, partisan divisions in approval ratings were stark: 79% of Republicans expressed a favorable view of the president, compared to only 7% of Democrats, with an 89% disapproval rate among the latter (Henson & Blank, 2023). The data presented in the results section underscore the statistically significant correlation between presidential leadership and fluctuations in crime rates, affirming the central hypothesis of this study.

Conclusion and Future Scope

From Blue to Red undertook a critical analysis of a politically sensitive and increasingly relevant issue. The United States is currently experiencing heightened political polarization, and this division has notable implications for public safety and crime. In San Antonio, crime rates increased during a Democratic

administration, though public perceptions of crime and its causes remain complex. Research suggests that Republicans and independents are significantly more likely than Democrats to prioritize crime reduction at the national level—with 68% of Republicans and only 47% of Democrats viewing it as a top priority for the president and Congress (Gramlich, 2024). Public attitudes toward crime were integral to shaping this study, which intentionally relied on empirical, statistical data to reduce interpretive bias.

The findings demonstrate that crime rates are influenced by presidential leadership and should be an important consideration in future electoral decisions. When selecting the next president, American voters may benefit from examining crime trends and policy impacts—such as those presented in this study—rather than relying on partisan loyalty alone. Although President Trump's administration faced strong disapproval from Democrats, data indicated that San Antonio experienced a decline in crime rates during his tenure. Conversely, the city recorded significant increases in both property and violent crimes during the final years of the Obama administration, adversely affecting many residents. These trends underscore the study's core conclusion: presidential leadership has a measurable effect on crime rates, both nationally and within specific localities such as San Antonio, Texas. The analysis affirms the hypothesis that political leadership correlates with crime trends and highlights the value of informed, data-driven voting. Moving forward, voters should prioritize evidence-based decision-making over partisan narratives, recognizing that nuanced analysis—beyond media soundbites or generalized summaries—is essential to understanding the complex relationship between politics and public safety.

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