The West Texas Violence Index

March, 2018

The West Texas Violence Index compares data for four counties and cities on violent events that can overwhelm a community and its people. The four cities are Abilene, Midland, Odessa, and San Angelo. The corresponding counties are Taylor, Midland, Ector, and Tom Green.

Unlike snapshots of a crime spree or a rash of accidents, the Violence Index looks beyond a specific event, a single point-in-time, or a particular type of violence. It tracks six indicators of violence over five-years of available data. The six indicators are violent crime, family violence, sexual assault, child abuse and neglect, suicide, and accidental death.

Community Development Initiatives uses a scoring system to compare differences between the cities on these indicators. It ranks the most recent available data for each type of violence on a 100-point scale with higher scores representing lower rates of incidence for each indicator.

The system uses a five-year trend adjustment factor to decrease the score if a given type of violence is increasing. The adjustment factor increases the city’s score if the trend is toward less violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Level Indicators of the West Texas Violence Index</th>
<th>Abilene</th>
<th>Midland</th>
<th>Odessa</th>
<th>San Angelo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crime, 2012-2016</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Violence, 2012-2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault, 2012-2016</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Level Indicators of the West Texas Violence Index</th>
<th>Taylor County</th>
<th>Midland County</th>
<th>Ector County</th>
<th>Tom Green County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse or Neglect, 2012-2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide, 2011-2015</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidental Death, 2011-2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Texas Violence Index Score (Average of Indicators)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>66*</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Midland’s average is based on only five indicators because complete data for sexual assault is not available. The averages for the other three urban centers are based on all six violence indicators.
The table reports the current scores of the four cities or their respective counties. Lower current levels of violence and trends toward decreasing violence drive scores higher, and high current levels with increasing trends push the scores lower.

The results of these measures indicate that Abilene and Taylor County currently form the most violent urban center in this region of West Texas. Based on the most recent data, Abilene has the highest levels of family violence, sexual assault, violent crime, child abuse or neglect, and accidental death.

Generally, a comprehensive, comparative look at the six indicators reveals that the four West Texas urban centers expose their residents to higher rates of violence than the State of Texas as a whole. The following fact sheets detail each of the indicators.

Contact Kenneth L. Stewart (kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu) at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development.
Violent Crime

- Of the four West Texas urban centers, Abilene’s violent crime rate was only slightly higher than the State of Texas in 2016. Odessa’s rate was much higher.

- Rates of violent crime increased in Abilene and San Angelo between 2012 and 2016, while decreasing in the other two urban centers. The State’s rate also increased slightly.

- Odessa had the highest violent crime rate among the four urban centers. However, the city’s violent crime decreased from a rate of 1,064 per 100,000 residents in 2012 to 808 per 100,000 in 2016.

Source: Texas Department of Public Safety,
http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm

Contact Kenneth L. Stewart (kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu) at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development.
Family Violence

- Three West Texas urban centers had higher rates of family violence than the State in 2016. Abilene and San Angelo had substantially higher rates.

- Two West Texas urban areas, Midland and Odessa, reduced rates of family violence between 2012 and 2016. Odessa saw dramatic reduction from 2,252 in to 787 incidents per 100,000 between 2012 and 2016.

Source: Texas Department of Public Safety, http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm

Contact Kenneth L. Stewart (kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu) at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development.
**Sexual Assault**

- Odessa was the only West Texas city with a rate of sexual assault below the statewide benchmark in 2016.

- Abilene had the highest sexual assault rate among the four urban centers of West Texas.

- Abilene, Midland and San Angelo, along with the state, saw decreasing sexual assault rates between 2012 and 2016. The trend comparison for Midland is not possible due to missing data for 2012.

Source: Texas Department of Public Safety, [http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm)

Contact Kenneth L. Stewart (kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu) at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development.
Child Abuse or Neglect

- Three of the four West Texas urban centers have higher current rates of child abuse than the State of Texas: Taylor County (Abilene), Ector County (Odessa), and Tom Green County (San Angelo).

- Taylor County (Abilene) has the highest rate of child abuse among the four West Texas urban centers in 2016. Taylor County’s current rate is nearly three-times higher than the statewide level.

- Rates of child abuse declined between 2012 and 2016 in all four west Texas centers, as well as in the State of Texas overall.

![Child Abuse Chart](chart.png)

Source: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/default.asp)

Contact Kenneth L. Stewart ([kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu](mailto:kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu)) at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development.
Suicide

- Taylor, Midland, and Ector counties had higher rates of suicide than the State of Texas for 2015.

- Midland and Ector counties have the highest recent rates of suicide among the four urban centers of West Texas.

- Ector County’s rate of suicide increased between 2011 and 2015. The State of Texas also saw a slight increase in the suicide rate.

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services, 
http://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/Home

Contact Kenneth L. Stewart (kenneth.stewart@angelo.edu) at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development.
Accidental Death

- All four West Texas urban centers had rates of accidental death above the statewide level in 2015.
- Taylor County had the highest recent rate of accidental death among the four urban centers of West Texas.
- Three West Texas counties, Taylor, Midland, and Tom Green, saw increased rates of accidental death between 2011 and 2015. Ector County had a modest decline.

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services, [http://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/Home](http://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/Home)