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## El Paso homicide rate low in study

EL PASO -- El Paso is in the bottom 10 in a new homicide ranking that includes socio economic factors such as poverty rates, male unemployment and median household income.

El Paso has a lower homicide rate than would be expected from its levels of poverty, unemployment and other factors that make a community more prone to violence, according to the Improving Crime Data project.

El Paso was ranked 55th out of 63 major cities in the "adjusted" rankings, which looked at data from 2007.

The adjusted number is a small drop from the rank of 62 (which would make El Paso the second-safest major city behind Honolulu in 2007) if the rankings counted only homicides per 100,000 population. El Paso came in 64th out of 65 cities the previous year.

The study by criminologists Richard Rosenfeld of the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Robert Friedmann of Georgia State University measured rates for poverty, male unemployment, median household income, the percentage of black population and percentage of women-headed families with children.

The criminologists conclude that the socioeconomic factors provide a better comparison of homicide rates among cities.

In a past interview with the El Paso Times, Friedmann explained that the factors measured are those that are likely to make a city less stable and more prone to conflict.

A city's percentage of black population was a factor because blacks are more likely to be homicide victims, Friedmann said. The Hispanic population percentage was not a factor, he said, because researchers had found that it did not make a difference on a city's homicide rate.

El Paso, which had 18 homicides last year, has been ranked among the top three safest large cities for a decade.

Lt. Alfred Lowe, who heads the El Paso Police Crimes Against Persons Unit, said that half of the city's slayings last year were linked to family violence, which can be influenced by educational and economic factors.

"Domestic violence is always tied back to education," Lowe said.

So far this year, El Paso has had one homicide, and the rampant killings in Juárez have not spilled over.

"In a nutshell, if you do it over here, you will get caught," Lowe said. "El Paso has been consistent for years in our solvability (of murders). I think it has a big impact as a deterrent."

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### Homicide rankings

Five top and lowest homicide rankings for 63 major cities in 2007 adjusted with socioeconomic factors. The top cities had more homicides than expected.

Highest 5 cities

1. Newark, N.J.
2. Baltimore.
3. St. Louis.
4. Oakland, Calif.
5. Phoenix.

Lowest 5 cities

59. Raleigh, N.C.
60. New York.
61. Cleveland.
62. Memphis, Tenn.
63. Toledo, Ohio.

Source: Improving Crime Data project.