The 2010 State Crime Rate Rankings

ALPHA ORDER

RANK	STATE	SUM	09 RANK	CHANGE
40	Alabama	16.57	38	-2
37	Alaska	13.15	44	7
42	Arizona	17.46	43	1
41	Arkansas	16.81	40	-1
36	California	13.11	37	1
24	Colorado	(16.68)	24	0
16	Connecticut	(32.16)	10	-6
44	Delaware	28.09	34	-10
45	Florida	30.23	46	1
39	Georgia	15.62	39	0
23	Hawaii	(21.06)	23	0
5	Idaho	(46.52)	11	6
31	Illinois	3.95	31	0
26	Indiana	(12.33)	26	0
10	Iowa	(37.77)	8	-2
27	Kansas	(8.19)	29	2
22	Kentucky	(21.35)	22	0
48	Louisiana	36.24	49	1
4	Maine	(53.73)	3	-1
43	Maryland	27.12	42	-1
21	Massachusetts	(22.40)	21	0
34	Michigan	12.74	41	7
14	Minnesota	(34.04)	18	4
28	Mississippi	(5.62)	27	-1
32	Missouri	10.81	32	0
7	Montana	(44.19)	6	-1
20	Nebraska	(25.88)	19	-1
50	Nevada	51.59	50	0
1	New Hampshire	(57.61)	1	0
19	New Jersey	(29.81)	16	-3
49	New Mexico	42.64	47	-2
15	New York	(32.19)	15	0
33	North Carolina	11.98	33	0
3	North Dakota	(54.61)	4	1
30	Ohio	(2.76)	28	-2
38	Oklahoma	13.18	35	-3
17	Oregon	(30.07)	20	3
25	Pennsylvania	(15.52)	25	0
18	Rhode Island	(29.84)	9	-9
47	South Carolina	35.68	48	1
9	South Dakota	(37.84)	5	-4
46	Tennessee	30.31	45	-1
35	Texas	13.03	36	1
12	Utah	(36.77)	17	5
2	Vermont	(54.76)	2	0
13	Virginia	(35.18)	14	1
29	Washington	(4.34)	30	1
11	West Virginia	(37.33)	12	1
8	Wisconsin	(38.50)	13	5
6	Wyoming	(45.69)	7	1

RANK ORDER

RANK	STATE	SUM	09 RANK	CHANGE
1	New Hampshire	(57.61)	1	0
2	Vermont	(54.76)	2	0
3	North Dakota	(54.61)	4	1
4	Maine	(53.73)	3	-1
5	Idaho	(46.52)	11	6
6	Wyoming	(45.69)	7	1
7	Montana	(44.19)	6	-1
8	Wisconsin	(38.50)	13	5
9	South Dakota	(37.84)	5	-4
10	Iowa	(37.77)	8	-2
11	West Virginia	(37.33)	12	1
12	Utah	(36.77)	17	5
13	Virginia	(35.18)	14	1
14	Minnesota	(34.04)	18	4
15	New York	(32.19)	15	0
16	Connecticut	(32.16)	10	-6
17	Oregon	(30.07)	20	3
18	Rhode Island	(29.84)	9	-9
19	New Jersey	(29.81)	16	-3
20	Nebraska	(25.88)	19	-1
21	Massachusetts	(22.40)	21	0
22	Kentucky	(21.35)	22	0
23	Hawaii	(21.06)	23	0
24	Colorado	(16.68)	24	0
25	Pennsylvania	(15.52)	25	0
26	Indiana	(12.33)	26	0
27	Kansas	(8.19)	29	2
28	Mississippi	(5.62)	27	-1
29	Washington	(4.34)	30	1
30	Ohio	(2.76)	28	-2
31	Illinois	3.95	31	0
32	Missouri	10.81	32	0
33	North Carolina	11.98	33	0
34	Michigan	12.74	41	7
35	Texas	13.03	36	1
36	California	13.11	37	1
37	Alaska	13.15	44	7
38	Oklahoma	13.18	35	-3
39	Georgia	15.62	39	0
40	Alabama	16.57	38	-2
41	Arkansas	16.81	40	-1
42	Arizona	17.46	43	1
43	Maryland	27.12	42	-1
44	Delaware	28.09	34	-10
45	Florida	30.23	46	1
46	Tennessee	30.31	45	-1
47	South Carolina	35.68	48	1
48	Louisiana	36.24	49	1
49	New Mexico	42.64	47	-2
50	Nevada	51.59	50	0

Another, and likely the most, important consideration when interpreting crime statistics based on UCR data is that these data contain only those crimes that have been reported to or discovered by police (that is, crimes "known to law enforcement")—not all crime that has occurred. In fact, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) that violent crime is reported between 40 to 50 percent of the time and that property crime is reported between 30 to 40 percent of the time (BJS, 2008). The result of the factors discussed here is that Part I crime statistics represent only a portion of the actual crime that has occurred.

Additional criticisms of the UCR data include inaccuracy due to inputting errors and handling of missing data (Lynch & Jarvis, 2008; Maltz, 1999); pressure on some law enforcement agencies to "doctor" the numbers; and the use of aggregate numbers that mask other factors such as time of day, location, and circumstance of the crime. Yet, the UCR data are the most comprehensive and consistently collected data on crime in our country. Examining these data at the state level provides a birds-eye view of crime, as states themselves are diverse in their characteristics (for example, population density, rural versus urban areas, and topography), and levels of crime vary within states. In most cases, analysis of UCR data begins the conversation about crime issues, and additional in-depth analysis in metropolitan areas, cities, and neighborhoods is required to truly understand the nature and context of crime problems (Boba, 2008).

Methodology

The methodology used to produce the statistics presented in this book is fairly straightforward. In the first analysis—unique to this book—a comparison score is calculated for each state that is a summary of the percent differences of the reported crime rate from the national rate of six crime types (the formula is described below). The rest of the analyses are simple calculations of frequency, percent, rate, and percent change of reported crime and other criminal justice information.

In each analysis, the states are presented in alphabetical order as well as by their rank from highest to lowest for each variable under examination. In the case of a tie, rankings are listed alphabetically. Parentheses indicate negative numbers and rates (except in the data distribution charts in which negative signs are used). Data reported as "NA" are not available or could not be calculated. The national totals and rates appearing at the top of each table are for the entire United States.

"Comparison Score" Methodology

The methodology for determining the state comparison crime rate rankings involves a multistep process in which the reported crime across six crime categories—murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft—per 100,000 population rates are compared to the national reported crime per 100,000 population rates and then indexed to create a summary score and ranking across six areas of reported violent and property crime. Larceny-theft is not included in this analysis because the FBI and an advisory board of criminologists concluded in 2004 that the Crime Index (the six crimes listed above and larceny-theft) was inflated by the high number of larceny-thefts and was no longer a true indicator of crime. Although the FBI has not yet developed a solution, our methodology considers the listed six crimes only. Please note that in 2008, larceny-theft comprised 59 percent of all reported crimes.

The following are steps for the "comparison score" calculation and an example that illustrates the calculations:

1. For each of the 6 categories of reported crime, the crime rate per 100,000 residents of a state is calculated from the reported crime and population data provided to the FBI by local law enforcement agencies. For example, the per capita reported murder rate per 100,000 persons for Nevada is 6.3: Nevada's murder count for 2008, 163, is divided by its population, 2,600,167, and then multiplied by 100,000 to arrive at 6.3.
2. The percent difference between the state rate and the national rate for each of the six crimes is then computed. The use of percent difference for each crime separately eliminates weighting more frequent crimes more heavily (that is, typically there are many more property crimes than violent crimes). The formula for this calculation is:

$$\frac{\text{State Rate} - \text{National Rate}}{\text{National Rate}} \times 100$$

3. The number is then scaled to be one-sixth (.1667) of the index to make it comparable to scores in the previous editions of this book. A number of years ago, we weighted each of the six crimes based on the results of a telephone survey that determined which crimes were of greatest concern to Americans. The polls indicated that most Americans believed crimes such as burglary are more likely to happen in their lives than more heinous crimes such as murder. Thus, burglary received the highest weight, and murder received the lowest weight in the formula. However, we discontinued the polling and consequently eliminated the weights. We left this stage in the methodology, however, giving each crime equal weight so that future scores would be more closely comparable to the scores with the weighted factors.
4. The final comparison score for each state is the sum of its individual scores for the six crimes. In this example, Nevada's final comparison score is 51.6. The interpretation of these scores is that the higher a state comparison score, the further it is above the national score; the lower the comparison score, the further it is below the national score; and a comparison score of zero is equal to the national score.

Example: Nevada

	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Motor Vehicle Theft
State Rate	6.3	42.4	248.9	426.9	929.0	611.6
National Rate	5.4	29.3	145.3	274.6	730.8	314.7
Percent Difference	16.7%	44.7%	71.3%	55.5%	27.1%	94.3%
Weighting Factor	.1667	.1667	.1667	.1667	.1667	.1667
Resulting Score	2.8	7.5	11.9	9.2	4.5	15.7