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PLACE OF MASSACHUSETTS IN NATIONAL CRIME RATE  
STATISTICS FOR 1969

An appended table shows each state rank ordered  
by its crime rates as published in the Uniform  
Crime Reports of the Federal Bureau of Investi-  
gation

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PLACE OF MASSACHUSETTS IN NATIONAL  
CRIME RATE STATISTICS FOR 1969

This paper shows how Massachusetts compares with other states in regard to crime rates. The rates of selected crimes were obtained from the Uniform Crime Reports - 1969, issued August 13, 1970 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

As customary, tables in that publication list the rates per 100,000 inhabitants of every state for each of the following crimes:

1. Murder, including non-negligent manslaughter.
2. Forcible rape.
3. Robbery.
4. Aggravated assault.
5. Burglary.
6. Larceny of over \$50.
7. Auto theft including both joyriding and stealing for resale.

The figures for the quantities of these crimes are based on the numbers of offenses known to local police and in turn forwarded by them to Washington. This is a voluntary program in which urban police officials usually cooperate better than rural police in reporting their local crimes to the F.B.I.

For many years it has been the Federal practice to add together the rates of all of the seven selected crimes to establish an overall "Crime Index" which is intended to show the amount of "serious" crime in an area. However, this index is not really a valid representation of the amount of serious crime because the variations in degree of seriousness of different crimes are not recognized. For example: ten unauthorized joyrides in an automobile have just as much weight in the index as ten premeditated murders.

As the less serious property crimes occur about seven times as frequently as the more serious crimes against persons this means that the F.B.I. index is heavily overweighted by comparatively minor offenses. In other words, instead of accurately indicating the amount of "serious" crimes the F.B.I. overall index is really a better indicator of the amount of "less serious" crime.

The following comparison of two specific states will illustrate the effect of the absence of proper weighting. Wisconsin has a low rate for murder (only 2.1 per 100,000) as well as a low rate (80.6) for the total of the four violent crimes. On the other hand Mississippi has a high murder rate (8.1) and a high total for the violent crime rates (142.1). Yet the overall crime index makes Mississippi look good with a low 740.5 rate, while Wisconsin looks bad with 1382.6. This is because the higher total of the less serious property crime rates in Wisconsin (1302.0) overbalances Mississippi's combination of a high total of rates for violent crimes (142.1) and its low total of rates for property crimes (598.4).

Another way of illustrating the fallacy of the F.B.I. index as a valid measure of serious crime is to point out that, for any typical state, a hundred per cent increase in murders could be counterbalanced by a drop of less than one per cent in burglaries. Thus a whole series of gangland murders can be counterbalanced in the statistics by a minuscule decrease in rate of burglaries.

Because the F.B.I. Crime Index does not give a true picture of the amount of serious crime we have omitted the overall "Crime Index" figures from our appended table and prefer not to use them in our comparisons. In fact the Uniform Crime Report administrators themselves have apparently recognized that their overall index is inadequate because, for the past two years, they have separated their total index into two subtotals. The Uniform Crime Reports now show a separate figure for the total of the rates for the four crimes against the person (murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault) under the heading "Violent Crime" and another separate figure for the total of the three property crimes (burglary, larceny, auto theft) under the heading "Property Crime". This division into two separate groups avoids adding together the most disparate frequencies like murder, which occurs on the average less than six times per 100,000, and burglary, which sometimes occurs over a thousand times per 100,000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, even within each of these two separated groups, frequency extremes still do exist. For example within the violent crime group, robbery occurs twenty times as often as murder. Consequently, since unweighted components are still added together in the subgroups, the results may still present a distorted picture. However, although these subtotals are less than perfect indicators of the amount of "Violent" and "Property" crimes, they are such a marked improvement over the overall "Crime Index" that we have included them in our appended table.

To obtain a better comparison of Massachusetts with other states we rank ordered the state rates for each crime. The state with the lowest rate was ranked the best, or number one, for that crime, the next lowest state number two, and so on. This of course resulted in the state with the highest rate for a crime being ranked the worst, or fiftieth, at the bottom of the column for that crime. The table appended at the end of this paper shows the resulting rank order of each state for each offense, as well as the rank of each state for two different subtotals. One subtotal shows the aggregated rates of the four crimes against persons while the other subtotal shows the total of the rates of the three crimes against property. The rank order of nine regions of the United States (See Footnote 1 below) are also shown.

A review of the regional rankings on this table indicates that the New England area still has the lowest rates for the crimes of murder, forcible rape and aggravated assault. It is second from lowest in robbery. With three firsts and one second in the group of four violent crimes, New England has the lowest total rate for these crimes against persons.

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Footnote 1

<u>Region</u>	<u>States Included</u>
1. New England	Conn., Maine, Mass., N.H., R.I., Vt.
2. Middle Atlantic	N.J., N.Y., Penn.
3. East North Central	Ill., Ind., Mich., Ohio, Wisc.
4. West North Central	Iowa, Kans., Minn., Mo., Neb., N. & S. Dakota,
5. South Atlantic	Del., Fla., Ga., Md., N. & S. Car., Va., W. Va.
6. East South Central	Ala., Ky., Miss., Tenn.
7. West South Central	Ark., La., Okla., Texas
8. Mountain	Ariz., Colo., Idaho, Mont., Nev., N.Mex., Utah, Wyo.
9. Pacific	Alaska, Calif., Hawaii, Ore., Wash.

However, with regard to property crimes, New England does not fare as well. Among the nine regions New England ranks sixth in burglary, fourth in larceny and ninth in auto theft. If we look at the more rural New England states of Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire, we find that even in regard to property crimes these states still have low crime rates. However, the more urban states of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts all have high rates for property crimes and drag the New England area down to sixth place in the ranking of the totals of property crime rates.

Turning to examine the individual ranking of Massachusetts and looking first at crimes against the person we find that the average ranking of Massachusetts for these four violent crimes comes close to the country wide median. More precisely the ranking for the total of these four crimes is twenty-three, a change of three from the previous better ranking of twenty. For the individual offense of murder Massachusetts ranks sixteenth, the same as the previous year. For the offense of rape it ranks thirteenth, an improvement of three places above the previous ranking of sixteen. However, for robbery there was a change of three places, from thirtieth to a poorer ranking of thirty-third. For aggravated assault there was an improvement of one place from a ranking of eighteenth last year to seventeenth in 1969.

Changing from a rank order comparison to a comparison with national averages<sup>2</sup> the picture also changes somewhat. For the violent crimes Massachusetts has a lower rate than the average for all of the United States for each offense. However, we know that an average (contrary to a median) is affected by extremely high and extremely low values. For example, five southern states with excessively high murder rates of eleven to thirteen per 100,000 have undue effect in increasing the national average rate for murder to 7.2; whereas the more typical and more acceptable figure is the median (midpoint) rate of 5.85. In other words, we should not become smug because the rates for violent crimes in Massachusetts are better than the national average because an average can be unduly increased by a few extremely high rate states.

Comparing the ranking of Massachusetts with the ranking of the other states in regard to 1969 rates of property crimes as differentiated from violent crimes is an unhappy exercise. For the crime of

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Footnote 2

National averages are listed at the top of the table of rates appended at the end of this paper.

burglary Massachusetts changed three places from thirty-third to a poorer ranking of thirty-sixth. In regard to larceny, there was an improvement from its twenty-ninth ranking the previous year to twenty-seventh place. However, for auto thefts we still are the worst state in the country. Having the very worst ranking of all fifty states for auto theft is a dubious distinction we have suffered for at least the fifth straight year. Massachusetts is consistently the least efficient state in regard to control of this offense!

With the poorest rate in the country for auto theft combined with high rates for both larceny and burglary, Massachusetts ranks thirty-eighth out of fifty states when the total of all property crime rates are added together. Nor does it help much to use national averages (instead of rankings) for a comparison of property crime rates. Contrary to the situation with regard to crimes against persons, Massachusetts, for two out of three property offenses, has higher crime rates than the country wide average. Only for larceny are we slightly better than the national average.

Pointing out the relative standing of Massachusetts as compared with either national medians or averages does not disclose the fact that the entire country, as well as our own state, is sinking deeper into a morass of crime. The national rates for every crime were higher in 1969 than they were the previous year. Although in Massachusetts the murder rate remained the same, the rates of all other crimes increased. What we learn from comparing Massachusetts with other states is that for some offenses we are sinking more slowly into the quicksand while for other offenses we are sinking faster and deeper than the rest of the country. From the retrospective view it appears that for not a single offense are we improving our position or even getting a toehold on a more stable foundation to assist us out of the crime swamp.

Even in regard to comparative rates of crime, Massachusetts has little to brag about. For three out of seven offenses we rank worse than half of the states. Our very best ranking is only thirteenth (for rape) and our worst ranking is as bad as it could be - fiftieth (for auto theft). Although there has been increased effort in recent years to try to improve law enforcement and correctional administration it appears that the slide towards more crime has not been halted. If it is desired that Massachusetts have less rather than more crime, then the legislature and other elected officials must give much greater support to the following areas: (1) Crime prevention (2) Measures which will result in more effective law enforcement and (3) Better programs for correction and treatment of criminals.

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September 1970

# STATES and REGIONS RANK ORDERED by CRIME RATES

## 1969 Rates per 100,000 Inhabitants

### SELECTED CRIMES vs PERSONS and vs PROPERTY

Rank Order	CRIMES vs PERSONS	Murder and non-neglig manslaughter	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	CRIMES vs PROPERTY	Burglary	Larceny (\$50 and over)	Auto Theft
	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate	Area Rate
	U.S. 324.4	U.S. 7.2	U.S. 18.1	U.S. 147.4	U.S. 151.8	U.S. 2146.7	U.S. 965.6	U.S. 749.3	U.S. 431.8
REGIONS	N. Eng 152.2	N. Eng 3.0	N. Eng 8.8	E.S. Cent 53.6	N. Eng 74.8	E.S. Cent 1267.0	E.S. Cent 591.5	E.S. Cent 445.3	E.S. Cent 230.2
	W. No. Cent 199.9	W. No. Cent 4.5	E.S. Cent 12.1	N. Eng 65.6	W. No. Cent 92.3	W. No. Cent 1717.3	W. No. Cent 753.6	W. No. Cent 612.7	W. No. Cent 320.2
	E. So. Cent 207.3	Mt'n 5.2	Mid. Atl 13.7	Mt'n 78.1	E.S. Cent 131.0	W. No. Cent 1855.0	E.N. Cent 828.9	W. No. Cent 628.8	So. Atl 332.6
	Mountain 245.2	Mid. Atl 5.8	W. No. Cent 14.9	W. No. Cent 88.2	E.N. Cent 133.4	So. Atl 1913.4	So. Atl 899.2	N. Eng 637.0	W. No. Cent 350.9
	W. So. Cent 302.0	Pacific 6.3	So. Atl 17.9	W. So. Cent 96.4	Mid. Atl 139.4	E.N. Cent 1941.8	W. So. Cent 906.1	E.N. Cent 671.0	Mt'n 383.5
	E. No. Cent 331.2	E.N. Cent 6.8	E.N. Cent 18.1	So. Atl 147.4	Mt'n 141.1	N. Eng 2166.9	N. Eng 920.5	So. Atl 681.5	E.N. Cent 441.9
	Mid. Atl 395.5	W. So. Cent 10.1	W. So. Cent 19.1	E.N. Cent 172.9	W. So. Cent 176.4	Mid. Atl 2282.6	Mid. Atl 1005.3	Mid. Atl 776.6	Mid. Atl 500.7
	So. Atl 392.7	E.S. Cent 10.6	Mt'n 20.7	Pacific 174.6	Pacific 187.8	Mt'n 2364.8	Mt'n 1029.5	Mt'n 951.8	Pacific 606.0
	Pacific 400.6	So. Atl 10.6	Pacific 31.8	Mid. Atl 226.5	So. Atl 216.9	Pacific 3395.3	Pacific 1563.1	Pacific 1226.2	N. Eng 609.4
STATES	No. Dak 35.8	N. Dak 0.2	N. Hamp 4.0	N. Dak 7.2	No. Dak 24.4	Miss 598.4	N. Dak 249.3	Miss 208.5	Miss 73.0
	N. Hamp 45.3	Iowa 1.4	R. I. 4.0	Vermt 9.1	N. Hamp 28.3	W. Va 667.6	Miss 316.9	W. Va 259.5	W. Va 85.4
	Vermt 53.3	Maine 1.6	No. Dak 4.1	N. Hamp 10.5	Vermt 32.3	N. Dak 712.5	W. Va 322.7	Vermt 261.3	No. Dak 95.1
	Iowa 69.0	Idaho 1.9	W. Va 5.1	Maine 11.3	Hawaii 35.0	N. Hamp 936.0	So. Dak 425.0	Maine 317.8	Ark 101.3
	Maine 69.6	Minh 1.9	Maine 5.9	So. Dak 12.9	Iowa 38.8	So. Dak 943.6	N. Hamp 463.3	N. Hamp 329.4	So. Dak 105.9
	So. Dak 77.4	So. Dak 2.0	Iowa 6.4	Miss 14.6	Wisc 43.1	Maine 966.1	Neb 482.3	Penn 341.0	Vermt 113.0
	Wisc 80.6	Wisc 2.1	Neb 6.8	Wyo 15.9	Minh 47.1	Vermt 973.8	Iowa 489.1	No. Dak 368.1	Idaho 131.5
	Hawaii 86.1	N. Hamp 2.5	Wisc 7.2	Idaho 16.7	Maine 50.7	Ark 1198.2	Wisc 498.5	So. Dak 412.6	Maine 137.5
	Wyo 89.4	Vermt 2.5	Conn 8.7	W. Va 19.1	So. Dak 51.4	No. Car 1200.0	Maine 510.7	Tenn 437.2	N. Hamp 143.2
	W. Va 97.1	Utah 2.5	Vermt 9.1	Mont 22.2	Wyo 51.6	Iowa 1201.8	Mont 561.8	No. Car 485.2	No Car 149.4
11	Mont 98.3	Neb 2.5	Miss 9.1	Iowa 22.4	Mont 61.4	Penn 1213.7	Wyo 565.0	Neb 490.6	Ala 171.2
12	Idaho 112.3	Conn 2.9	Idaho 10.0	Wisc 28.3	W. Va 67.3	Neb 1257.4	No. Car 565.4	Ala 498.5	Wyo 177.2
13	Utah 139.7	R. I. 3.1	MASS 10.8	Hawaii 35.5	Utah 74.2	Wisc 1302.0	Ky 569.3	So. Car 507.7	Iowa 177.5
14	Minh 142.0	Hawaii 3.4	So. Dak 11.1	No. Car 40.6	Conn 79.1	Ala 1325.5	Penn 572.4	Ark 509.7	Mont 215.9
15	Miss 142.1	Kans 3.5	Mont 11.1	Ala 41.0	Ind 79.2	Mont 1390.2	Ark 587.3	Iowa 535.1	Wisc 223.9
16	Conn 147.2	MASS 3.5	Ky 11.4	Ark 44.4	Penn 82.8	Idaho 1462.2	Idaho 590.0	Va 562.7	Kans 228.0
17	Neb 158.9	Mont 3.6	Minh 11.5	Okla 48.6	MASS 82.9	Wyo 1421.3	Vermt 599.5	Okla 565.2	So. Car 228.5
18	Kans 166.9	Wash 3.6	Penn 11.5	Utah 49.0	Idaho 83.6	Tenn 1433.8	Ala 565.8	Ga 566.4	Okla 241.3
19	R. I. 175.0	Ore 4.0	Wyo 11.6	So. Car 50.0	Ky 86.7	So. Car 1452.9	Va 669.7	Ill 566.6	Ga 273.0
20	Kent 177.8	Penn 4.1	No. Car 11.6	Neb 51.8	N. Jer 87.9	Ky 1485.1	Okla 687.6	Ky 570.0	Va 276.1
21	Okla 181.2	Ind 4.9	Hawaii 12.2	Kans 54.8	Kans 93.5	Okla 1494.1	Kans 693.3	Wisc 579.6	Tenn 281.6
22	Penn 186.8	N. Jer 5.2	Del 12.4	Conn 56.5	R. I. 94.5	Va 1508.4	La 694.6	La 584.8	Neb 284.5
23	MASS 187.9	Colo 5.3	Tenn 12.7	Ga 62.4	Neb 97.8	Ga 1540.9	Ga 701.5	Ohio 608.1	Utah 297.7
24	Ind 190.5	W. Va 5.6	N. Jer 12.8	N. Mex 63.7	Ohio 99.8	Kans 1597.7	Tenn 715.0	Ind 612.1	Penn 300.2
25	Ark 220.1	Okla 5.8	So. Car 13.4	Alask 67.4	Del 103.0	La 1603.5	So. Car 716.7	Mont 612.5	Ore 318.5
26	Alask 221.3	Va 5.9	Ala 14.0	Ky 69.2	Wash 106.3	Ind 1748.5	Ill 738.7	Mo 642.8	La 324.2
27	Ore 222.8	Ariz 6.0	Utah 14.1	R. I. 73.4	Miss 110.3	Ill 1779.8	Ohio 740.1	MASS 661.0	Ky 345.9
28	Va 228.6	N. Mex 6.1	Okla 14.3	Tenn 75.2	Okla 112.5	Ohio 1830.3	Ind 760.7	Kans 676.5	Ind 375.7
29	Tenn 231.7	Ohio 6.4	Va 14.8	Va 78.1	Alask 113.8	Minh 1880.8	Minh 779.4	Wyo 679.1	Tex 376.0
30	Del 236.3	Cal 7.1	Kan 15.1	Minh 81.5	Ore 113.9	Del 1979.6	Del 813.1	Tex 679.4	Wash 380.7
31	So. Car 238.8	Del 7.2	Ind 15.2	Ore 86.6	Va 129.2	Utah 2038.5	Utah 848.5	Idaho 680.8	Fla 382.9
32	N. Jer 241.0	N. Y. 7.2	Ohio 15.3	Penn 88.4	Tenn 134.3	Tenn 2139.4	Alask 870.6	Del 708.1	Minh 384.3
33	Ga 242.1	Miss 8.1	N. Y. 15.6	MASS 90.6	Ark 148.4	Conn 2187.8	N. Jer 953.0	Minh 717.1	N. Mex 403.1
34	Wash 242.3	Mich 8.3	Ga 17.1	Ind 91.2	Ga 150.7	N. Jer 2217.3	R. I. 982.4	N. Jer 743.3	Conn 427.8
35	Ohio 248.1	Ill 8.6	Ark 17.4	Ariz 99.9	Colo 154.8	Miss 2340.1	Conn 987.5	Conn 772.5	Ariz 438.6
36	Ala 250.4	Nev 9.0	Ore 18.3	La 102.6	Nev 158.9	Alask 2421.3	MASS 1032.6	R. I. 812.8	Del 458.3
37	N. Mex 278.9	Md 9.3	Ill 19.1	Colo 110.7	So. Car 163.0	Ore 2428.6	Tenn 1083.9	Utah 892.2	Ill 474.5
38	Colo 298.8	La 9.5	Wash 19.4	Wash 113.0	Mo 172.5	MASS 2552.3	Md 1114.7	Md 929.0	Ohio 482.1
39	Tex 324.8	Tenn 9.6	Tex 19.4	Del 113.7	Tex 179.4	N. Mex 2594.6	Mo 1118.8	Mich 958.1	Mich 495.7
40	Ariz 339.2	Ark 9.9	Nev 20.6	Tex 114.6	Ala 181.7	R. I. 2618.4	Ore 1124.7	Alask 959.2	Colo 507.0
41	No. Car 341.1	Wyo 10.3	Fla 21.2	Ohio 126.7	Ill 184.0	Md 2636.3	Colo 1133.2	Fla 961.8	N. Jer 521.0
42	Nev 359.3	Ky 10.4	La 22.1	N. Jer 135.1	N. Mex 184.7	Fla 2703.0	N. Mex 1174.2	Hawaii 981.7	Hawaii 535.9
43	La 360.3	Mo 10.4	Ariz 23.0	Fla 162.8	Mich 186.0	Mich 2704.6	Mich 1250.8	Ore 985.5	Nev 560.2
44	Mo 392.6	Alask 10.6	N. Mex 24.3	Nev 170.9	N. Y. 195.8	Colo 2726.5	Wash 1296.5	Ariz 1004.8	Mo 578.5
45	Ill 448.5	No. Car 10.7	Mo 27.3	Mo 182.4	Ariz 210.2	Wash 2741.4	Ariz 1302.6	N. Mex 1017.2	Alask 591.5
46	Cal 462.3	Tex 11.3	Mich 27.4	Calif 201.8	Calif 217.0	Ariz 2746.1	N. Y. 1304.5	Wash 1064.3	Md 592.6
47	Fla 462.9	Fla 11.3	Colo 28.8	Ill 236.7	La 226.8	Hawaii 2822.4	Hawaii 1304.8	N. Y. 1070.2	N. Y. 622.0
48	Mich 488.2	Ga 11.9	Alask 29.4	Mich 266.5	Fla 267.5	N. Y. 2996.6	Fla 1358.3	Colo 1086.3	Calif 678.6
49	N. Y. 569.8	So. Car 12.5	Md 29.9	Md 294.4	N. Car 341.1	Nev 3190.2	Nev 1366.5	Nev 1263.5	R. I. 823.2
50	Md 645.3	Ala 13.7	Calif 36.3	N. Y. 351.2	Md 311.7	Calif 3648.2	Calif 1676.1	Calif 1293.5	MASS 858.8