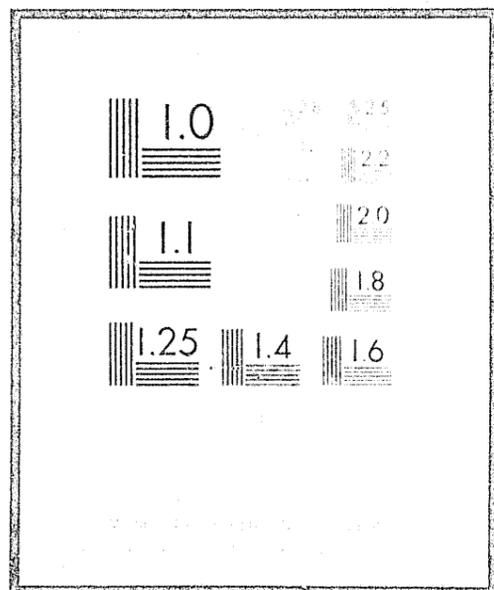


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## PLACE OF MASSACHUSETTS IN NATIONAL CRIME RATE STATISTICS FOR 1975

(Tables show each state and region rank ordered by its crime rate for each offense.)

Massachusetts Department of Correction

Frank A. Hall  
Commissioner

Compiled by:

Nelson N. Cochrane

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PLACE OF MASSACHUSETTS IN NATIONAL CRIME RATE STATISTICS FOR 1975

Comparing Massachusetts with both the national averages and national medians for each of the seven offenses that make up the Crime Index of the Uniform Crime Reports we find that Massachusetts has lower crime rates for murder, rape, aggravated assault and larceny-theft but has higher rates for robbery, burglary and larceny of motor vehicle.

The Uniform Crime Reports for 1975 were issued on August 29, 1976. As customary this report published, as one of many tables, the rates (per hundred thousand inhabitants) of every state, of nine regions of the country and of the United States for the following selected crimes: murder (including non-negligent manslaughter), forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft (including both unauthorized use and stealing for resale).

It is the Federal practice to add together the rates of all of these seven crimes to establish the "Crime Index" of an area. This index is alleged to indicate the amount of "serious" crime. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation the seven selected crimes "-- are all serious crimes, either by their very nature or due to the volume in which they occur."<sup>1</sup>

We have consistently disagreed with their notion that because an offense occurs in high volume it should be considered a serious crime. If this were really true then many minor traffic law violations should be considered serious crimes. It seems more sensible to regard minor crimes which occur in high volume as creating serious social problems, but not that high volume makes serious crimes out of comparatively minor offenses.

In earlier "Place of Massachusetts ---" annual monographs we have discussed in detail why the Crime Index of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is not a satisfactory measure of serious crime. This is chiefly because this index has always been overweighted by large numbers of comparatively minor offenses. In essence what we object to is giving each minor crime (e.g. each petty larceny) equal weight with each serious crime (e.g. each murder) when the overall Crime Index is computed - especially as there are about ten times as many crimes against property than the more serious crimes against persons. This results in inflated Crime Indices for states with comparatively few serious, violent crimes like murder and rape but with more numerous minor property crimes. These numerous minor offenses balloon their overall indices to specious high figures.

For the last three years Crime Indices have been further distorted because all larcenies are now included under the "larceny" category. Prior to 1973 only larcenies of fifty dollars and over were counted. Now the addition of all petty larcenies improperly inflates the overall index with at least double the number of larcenies. Consequently the current overall Crime Indices are now an even more inaccurate indication of the amount of serious crime. Therefore there is now more reason than ever to continue our policy of not using the Federal Bureau's overall Crime Index figures.

<sup>1</sup> For the full F.B.I. definition of these seven offenses as "serious" crimes see the first paragraph on page ten of the 1975 Uniform Crime Reports.

Since 1967 the Federal Bureau of Investigation has broken down their single index total into two additional sub-indices, one limited to the total of the rates of the four violent crimes against persons and the other totalling only the rates of the three less serious property crimes. This practice reduces the inflationary effect of the numerous minor property crimes. However, within the two separated categories the crimes still occur in unequal proportions; for example, about twenty times more robberies than murders occur within the category of crimes against persons. Nevertheless, separating the two totals is much better than grouping together over four million larcenies with less than twenty thousand murders and having each counted equally. Because the division of the overall Crime Index into two sub-indices reduces the "overweighting" problem, we do include these sub-indices in our tables. But not because we really believe these are satisfactory measures of rates of crimes. These indices are listed only because they are the least unsatisfactory nationwide measures of crime rates.

To obtain a comparison of Massachusetts with all other states we rank order all states according to their rates for each crime and according to the total rate for each sub-index. The state with the lowest rate in each column is ranked number one at the top of the list. This procedure, of course, results in the state with highest rate for any offense, or group of offenses, being ranked fiftieth at the bottom of the column.

Table 1 shows the resulting rank order for 1975 of each state for each crime and for each of the two sub-indices, as well as providing the rank order for each of the nine regions<sup>2</sup> (See Footnote) for each crime and sub-index.

Table 2 shows the trends in national average rates for each crime and sub-index for each year from 1968 through 1975.

Table 3 shows the yearly fluctuations in New England crime rates and the rankings of this region for the same eight year period.

Table 4 provides similar listings of Massachusetts crime rates and rankings for each crime and sub-index for each year from 1968 through 1975.

Inspection of the regional rankings at the top of Table 1 shows that in regard to the four crimes against persons New England has the lowest rates of any area in the country for murder and rape, the fifth lowest for robbery and the second lowest for aggravated assault. In regard to the sub-total of all four crimes against persons, New England ranks second best of

<sup>2</sup> Region	States Included
1. New England	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
2. Middle Atlantic	New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
3. East North Central	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
4. West North Central	Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota
5. South Atlantic	Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
6. East South Central	Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
7. West South Central	Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
8. Mountain	Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming
9. Pacific	Alaska, Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington

all of the nine regions of the country.

In regard to property crimes New England ranks sixth in burglary, third in larceny-theft and ninth in motor vehicle theft. By looking at the bad rankings in motor vehicle theft of the three more urban states (see the lower section of Table 1) it becomes clear that they pulled New England down to the bottom rank despite the small rate of motor vehicle theft in the three northern more rural states. In regard to the aggregate rate for the three property crimes, New England ranks seventh among the nine regions.

The lower section of Table 1 listing the comparative rankings of all states shows that in regard to the violent crimes against persons Massachusetts among the fifty states is ranked twelfth in murder, twenty-third in rape, forty-second in robbery, and twenty-fifth in aggravated assault. When the rates of these four offenses are combined the Massachusetts ranking is thirty-fifth in regard to these violent crimes.

In regard to the less serious property crimes Massachusetts ranks thirty-eighth in burglary, seventeenth in larceny and, as usual, fiftieth - dead last - in larceny of motor vehicles. When the rates of these three offenses are combined and resulting ranking for Massachusetts for property crimes is thirty-nine.

Examining Table 2, which shows the trends from year to year in national crime rates for the past eight years, we see that the national averages of the six offenses of rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and theft of motor vehicle show a steady, continuous climb but, reversing this seven year trend, the average rate of murder in the United States decreased this past year for the first time.

Table 3 listing the eight year rates and ranking of the New England region shows that New England continued to maintain good rankings in regard to the more serious crimes. The New England area has enjoyed the lowest rates in the country for murder and rape for at least the past eight years. For four years it has ranked second best in aggravated assault. Unfortunately, in regard to the offense of robbery, it skidded to fifth place after three years of ranking third. For the combined total of the four violent crimes against persons New England ranks second for the fourth year.

However, in regard to the less serious property crimes New England does not compare as favorably. For the combined total of the three property crimes it has always ranked sixth or seventh. Although it continues it's better than average ranking for larceny it also continues it's poorer than average ranking for burglary. New England always ranks poorest in larceny of motor vehicles due to the consistently poor ratings of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut which counteract the consistently good low rates of auto thefts in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

Table 4 compares the rates and rankings of Massachusetts for the past eight years. In regard to the combined total of crimes against the person there has been a steady worsening of rates which results in a continuing drop in the ranking of Massachusetts from twentieth to thirty-fifth. The brightest spot is that the Commonwealth compares best in murder achieving a new rank of twelfth in contrast to its usual ranking between thirteen and sixteen. However, in regard to rape it dropped to twenty-third after ranking twelfth in 1972. For robbery it has remained between the fortieth and forty-second rank for four years. For aggravated assault it ranked twenty-second four years ago and now ranks twenty-fourth.

In regard to the Commonwealth ranking for the combined three property crimes it climbed to thirty-ninth from last year's rank of fortieth. This is chiefly due to the change in it's rank for larceny from twenty-ninth eight years ago to the seventeenth rank last year. For burglary Massachusetts climbed back to its usual ranking of thirty-eight after dropping to forty in 1973. For motor vehicle thefts the Massachusetts rate increased over fifteen percent from 1365.1 thefts in 1974 to 1571.1 thefts per hundred thousand in 1975. Consequently, as it always has been for at least eight years, Massachusetts is the worst state in the country in regard to the rate of motor vehicle thefts.

To summarize briefly the place of Massachusetts in national crime rates we can report that the Commonwealth compares very favorably in regard to murder, is better than average in regard to forcible rape, aggravated assault and larceny but poorer than average for robbery, burglary and larceny of motor vehicles.



**END**

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