

**New crime statistics: The “safest” large city associated with a decrease in crime
Cities ranked “dangerous” have higher unemployment**

Background: The recently released 2005 Uniform Crime Reports, a Justice Department survey administered by the FBI that shows national arrests trends, have renewed concern that crime is on the rise. From 2004 to 2005, the rate of violent crime per 100,000 increased 1.3 percent. Although the FBI does not rank cities in terms of most “dangerous” or “safest”, an independent ranking using FBI data found that New York City is the “safest” of the 10 largest cities in the United States, with a 2005 crime rate of just one crime per 37 residents.

New York City exemplifies the notion that increased incarceration does not necessarily lower crime rates. In fact, the opposite was found. **Incarcerating more people does not lead to lower crime rates.** New York City also witnessed a drop in the number of people in jails during the last few years. According to the New York City Department of Corrections, between Fiscal Years 2003 and 2005 admissions to jail fell 6.1 percent, and the average daily jail population fell 6.5 percent.¹ During the same time period, New York’s prison population declined from 65,914 to 62,963, a decline of 4.7 percent.²

New York City Jail Admissions and Average Daily Population

	Admissions	Average Daily Population
FY 2005	102,772	13,576
FY 2004	107,571	13,751
FY 2003	109,445	14,533

During the same 3 year period, New York City saw a decline in its unemployment rate (down 30 percent), which coincided with the decline in the number of crimes reported (down 9 percent), and the decline in incarceration.

New York City Unemployment Rates³ and Crime Rates⁴

Year	Crimes per people	Unemployment rate
2005	1 per 37.38	5.8%
2004	1 per 35.71	7.0%
2003	1 per 34.28	8.3%

¹ New York City, Department of Corrections: <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doc/html/gnlstats.html>

² Harrison, Paige and Allen Beck. (2006). “Prisoner and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005.” Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pjim05.pdf>

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics.

⁴ FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States, 2003-2005. <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>

“Safest” ranked cities more likely to have lower unemployment, while joblessness higher in “dangerous” cities.

Morgan Quinto Press, an independent private research and publishing company, publishes six primary rankings reference books that note where cities and states rank on a variety of indicators, including education, health, and crime. Quinto’s rankings of the top ten “safest” and most “dangerous” cities of more than 500,000 people were recently cited in *The New York Times*⁵ and the *Associated Press*.⁶ (New York City was also ranked as a “safe” city).

Half of the largest cities rated to be the “safest” cities had lower unemployment rates than the national average (5.1 percent); and 8 out of the 10 cities were within 1 percent of the national rate.

Top 10 Safest Cities

Rank	City	2005 Unemployment Rate
1	San Jose, CA	6.1
2	El Paso, TX	6.6
3	Honolulu, HI	2.7
4	New York, NY	5.8
5	Austin, TX	4.4
6	San Diego, CA	4.3
7	Louisville, KY	6.2
8	San Antonio, TX	4.8
9	Fort Worth, TX	5.3
10	Jacksonville, FL	4.0

8 out of the top 10 “most dangerous” large cities had unemployment rates that were higher than the national average (5.1 percent). Increasing unemployment rates have historically coincided with increasing crime rates. Detroit, the “most dangerous” city listed, also has the highest unemployment rate amongst the 50 largest U.S. cities, at 9.1 percent higher than the national average. No other large city even comes close.

Top 10 Most Dangerous Cities⁷

Rank	City	2005 Unemployment Rate ⁸
1	Detroit, MI	14.2
2	Baltimore, MD	7.1
3	Washington, DC	6.5
4	Memphis, TN	7.1
5	Dallas, TX	5.8
6	Philadelphia, PA	6.8
7	Columbus, OH	5.4
8	Nashville, TN	4.6
9	Houston, TX	6.0
10	Charlotte, NC	4.8

The Justice Policy Institute is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank dedicated to ending society’s reliance on incarceration and promoting effective and just solutions to social problems. For more information, visit our website at www.justicepolicy.org

⁵ Gettleman, Jeffrey. *It’s the most dangerous city. But is it turning around?* *New York Times*, November 22, 2005.

⁶ *Safest and Most Dangerous Cities*, *Associated Press*, November 20, 2005.

⁷ Morgan Quinto Press. “12th Annual America’s Safest and Most Dangerous Cities”. www.morganquinto.com

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov/lau/lacilg05.htm>