City Crime Rankings 2008-2009

An Important Note about New Orleans

Readers are urged to use caution in interpreting crime rates for New Orleans, as the city's population has changed dramatically since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that New Orleans's population was 453,726 in 2005; 210,198 in 2006; and 239,134 in 2007.

The FBI's population data for cities differ from that of the Census Bureau. There are a couple of reasons for this, including the fact that the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports and the Census Bureau population estimates are released at different times of the year. As a result, the FBI takes the Census estimate from the previous year and adjusts it based on an estimate of statewide population change for all cities in that state. Using this method, the FBI reported a 2006 population of 451,153 for New Orleans (versus the Census estimate of 210,198 for the same year) and a 2007 population estimate of 220,614 (versus the later Census estimate of 239,124).

Some readers have suggested that the authors use the more current Census estimates, but the Census tracks population by cities, while the UCR reports crime by police departments. While most police department jurisdictions are the same as the city limits, not all are (e.g., Las Vegas Metropolitan Police cover areas that extend beyond the principal city). If the authors were to use the Census population estimate in relation to the LV Metropolitan Police, the calculation would not count population outside of the city, thereby skewing the crime rate. The FBI population estimates do account for this population.

Because of the year-to-year differences in New Orleans's population*, City Crime Rankings* reports the city's crime numbers and rates for 2007 but does not compare those rates to 2006 or 2003. Finally, it should be noted that New Orleans would have the highest city crime comparison score even if the 2007 Census Bureau population estimates were the basis for the scoring.