Serious Crimes

Violent serious crimes, which are defined, as murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery and assault are a threat to society. They undermine the fabric of civilized life and their incidence makes us all more fearful. The national average for these crimes is approximately 500 crimes per 100,000 population. A significant feature at first glance of the map of Megalopolis is the size of the circles, indicating percentage below or above the national average. This is indicative of wide variation from the national mean across the region. The large green-circled areas are areas with a serious crime rate well below the national average. They tend to cluster in the more affluent suburban areas as well as the more peripheral rural areas. In much of suburban and rural Megalopolis serious crime rates are well below the national average. Across the entire state of Connecticut, for example, serious crime rates are between 22% and 91% below the national average.

What stands out are the large red circles of the central city areas that tend to have serious crime rates significantly above the national average. Baltimore for example, leads the pack with a staggering rate of 405% above the national average. Philadelphia comes in second with 205% rate, closely followed by Washington DC at 201%. These three cities are the spikes in serious crime rates, with murder totals of 261, 319 and 239 respectively. In 2000 alone 819 people were murdered in these three cities. The high crime reflects a context of poverty and unemployment and a particularly virulent drug trade that sets the scene for murder, manslaughter and assaults. In these cities with limited employment opportunities for poorly educated, low-income groups a culture of crime has taken hold in the most impoverished communities. The significant threat of serious crime becomes one more burden faced by the most disadvantaged. Serious crime is more of a reality for low income communities and especially low income black communities than for higher-income neighborhoods. The high crime rate of Baltimore has led to televised and film accounts including Homicide, The Corner and The Wire that all draw upon the high crime rates in the city as their dramatic background.

The New York City area has somewhat low rates than what popular misconceptions would tend to support. There are also significant serious crimes centers away from the major cities. In some cases this is simply a spill over effect as with Prince George's County in Maryland alongside Washington DC; some of the poorer crime-ridden neighborhoods spill across the state line. In others, such as a group of counties in central Massachusetts, the relatively small red circles are indicative of a culture of criminality arising in deindustrializing small cities. There is a change, economic opportunity and crime. This map of Megalopolis reflects many things but we can see the influence of urban industrial decline, mediated through numerous factors resulting in high crime rates.

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NOTE: Data show the percent above or below the national mean violent crime rate. The national mean violent crime rate is 500.017 crimes per 100,000 population. Violent crimes are defined as murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Data Source: US Department of Justice, FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 2000. Data obtained through University of Virginia Library Geospatial and Statistical Data Center (http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/crime/).