

Twenty-three-year-old Diana DeMayo was helping her millionaire boyfriend Peter Dabish move into his Detroit apartment last year when she was attacked, sustaining a series of blunt-force traumas to her head. After going on the run for weeks, Dabish eventually turned himself in to police and was charged with the first-degree murder of DeMayo in March.

DeMayo's killing was one of 345 murders reported in the Detroit metropolitan area (Detroit-Livonia-Dearborn) last year. The high murder rate helped make the Motor City the most violent crime-prone area in the United States in 2010, with 1,111 violent crimes reported per 100,000 residents.

To compile our list of America's most dangerous cities, we used the [FBI's uniform crime report](#) for 2010, which tallies crime data for each of the country's metropolitan statistical areas, regions that usually consist of a large city and its suburbs or clusters of closely linked smaller cities, and metropolitan divisions, which are core areas within some of the larger MSAs. Because small fluctuations in crime numbers can produce outsize jumps in rates in smaller metropolitan areas, we looked at MSAs with a population of 200,000 or more. We used the FBI's numbers for four categories of violent crimes: murder and non-negligent manslaughter; forcible rape; robbery; and aggravated assault.

It's commonly expected that crime will rise as economic conditions worsen, but that hasn't been the case in the U.S. – violent crime has fallen for the past four years. In 2010, murder was down 4%, rape fell 5%, robbery dropped 10%, and aggravated assault fell 4%, according to the FBI. "There's a complex series of forces at work behind these rates," says Tom Blomberg, dean of the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University. "The state of the economy, demographics, the number of young males at any given time, the rate of imprisonment and the number of police all factor in."

In the case of Stockton, Calif., geography plays a large part in explaining the area's high rate of violence: 805 violent crimes per 100,000 residents, ranking seventh on our list. The city is a way station on a major drug route from Mexico up the West Coast, which leads to gang competition for turf, says Megan Wolfram, an intelligence analyst at the risk assessment firm [iJET](#). "When you have competing gangs, there's a rise in violence," says Wolfram.

The nationwide drop in crime extends to several of our most dangerous cities, including the Memphis, Tenn., area, which comes in at No. 2 with 1,006 violent crimes per 100,000 residents, down from 1,146 the year before. "Many of [the bottom-most cities] are actually improving, it's just that so are other cities at a higher rate," says Wolfram, an intelligence analyst at [iJET](#).

Chronic poverty likely plays a role in Memphis' high crime rate – 19.1% of the residents of the MSA were below the poverty line in 2010, making it the most impoverished large metro area in the country, according to Census Bureau data. But detailed record keeping also plays a part in why Memphis ranks so highly on our list: the city's police department adopted a data-driven approach to policing in 2006 that relies on exhaustive and meticulous incident tracking. As a result, it may be recording crimes that in other cities would go unreported to the FBI.

The Springfield, Ill., metropolitan area ranks third on our list with 855 violent crimes per 100,000 residents in 2010. The Illinois state capital confounds analysts who try to interpret its relatively high crime rate. The unemployment rate was lower than the national average at 7% as of July so the economy wouldn't seem to play a major role in crime. The area's relatively young population – 66% of the city is under the age of 44 – may be a factor, as younger areas generally have higher rates of crime.

The FBI warns against simplistic analyses of its local crime data because the factors affecting crime rates are so complex and vary by area. "Valid assessments are possible only with careful study and analysis of the range of unique conditions affecting each local law enforcement jurisdiction," reads the warning that greets every visitor to the Bureau's website where the statistics are compiled.

What's clear, though, is that despite a foundering economy and a stubborn unemployment rate, crime in the United States continues the general downward trend that began in the 1990s. Is it because incarceration rates remain high? Because it takes time for crime trends to change? Or because there are more police on the streets using more sophisticated, data-driven methods? Experts can't say, but the trend extends even to Detroit, which saw a decrease in murders from 398 in 2009 to 345 in 2010.

#8: Tallahassee



Florida's capital city metro area leads the state in crime with 775 violent crimes per 100,000 residents. Its location on Interstate 10 makes it a node for drug runners who bring contraband north from Miami and the surrounding area. The Tallahassee Police Department has stressed the need to boost funds to interdict drugs moving north, and a high rate of aggravated assaults seems to accompany the drug trafficking. Poverty may also play a role in the high violent crime rate: The poverty rate in the Tallahassee metro area was estimated at 25.7% in 2010 by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, well above the national average of 15.1%.

COMMENTS:

[Dan Bigman](#), Forbes Staff

Our story attracted criticism from Tallahassee's mayor, John R. Marks III, who sent us this email:

Tallahassee is a top 10 city, but not in crime. We've been named one of the most livable cities in the world, we've been proclaimed one of the most desirable places to do business, and we're one of the least expensive and best places to retire in the U.S.

The ludicrous article in Forbes Magazine mischaracterizes Tallahassee by using the entire metropolitan statistical area, which includes 19 cities and towns that, in some cases, are 50 miles away from Tallahassee. If you look at the City of Tallahassee by itself, we average 8 homicides a year. Other cities have 8 a weekend.

People who live in Tallahassee and Leon County know the article is outrageous and irresponsible. I have spoken with local business, community and government leaders, all of whom are outraged about the potential impact of this online publication and how the rest of the country will view our city based on its misinterpretations.

I am asking Forbes Magazine to retract this online article immediately. At a minimum, it should change the headline to reflect the true nature of the data it references. A Metropolitan Statistical Area is not the same as a city, and Forbes' headline should very clearly make that distinction.

Mayor John R. Marks III
City of Tallahassee

tallahasseenative

Man, you guys sure have a surprising list this year. Tallahassee came in at number 8? Beating cities Miami, Jacksonville, New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Newark? Really? Did you use just the crimes in Tallahassee, it looks like you must've used the entire Big Bend area (look it up). I think this list needs to be looked at again. BTW: The Sheriff is pissed.

rickminor

Forbes Magazine has woefully misrepresented the UCR data compiled by the FBI. A Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is NOT the same as a city. And yet, Mr. Giuffo and Forbes use the MSA data in an article with a headline of "America's Most Dangerous CITIES".

The FBI includes the following note along with its UCR data:

"Each year when Crime in the United States is published, many entities—news media, tourism agencies, and other groups with an interest in crime in our Nation—use reported figures to compile rankings of cities and counties. These rankings, however, are merely a quick choice made by the data user; they provide no insight into the many variables that mold the crime in a particular town, city, county, state, region, or other jurisdiction. Consequently, these rankings lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting cities and counties, along with their residents."

tallahasseenative

It's obvious someone doesn't know what they are talking about Tallahassee came in at number 8 this year because the stats included counties surrounding us. I don't know why but it has. What makes this list so moronic is that Tallahassee made the list of World's Most Liveable Cities of 2011 and Top 100 Business Friendly Cities this year. And the fact that the FBI's website advises against using UCRs to rank cities. According to the FBI, rankings are made by the reporter and "provide no insight into the many variables that mold the crime in a particular town, city, county, state, region or other jurisdiction." It's clear Forbes and their editors have no clue what they are talking about.

bmnbn

John – Have you actually visited Tallahassee? If you had, you would realize it is far from the crime-ridden community you purport it to be. Your failure to objectively gather the facts necessary to paint an accurate picture of the city does a tremendous disservice to the thousands fortunate enough to call Tallahassee home and those considering it as a home. Tallahassee routinely ranks as having some of the best public (and private) schools in Florida.

It is unfortunate that you chose to mislead your readers by basing an entire feature article on "dangerous" cities when there are cities with far worse crime rates than Tallahassee. Readers often look to Forbes magazine as a reputable source on business. Sadly, ill-informed articles such as these tarnish the proud Forbes brand.

October 5, 2011

tally74

This is all crap. What about New Orleans, Oakland Ca, Chicago, Ill??? Oh and that Tallahassee is an attractive city for drug runners who bring contraband north from Miami and the surrounding area, because I-10 runs through it. First how can the drugs go North from Miami through Tallahassee? I-75 and I-95 are 100-200 miles away. Also implying that Tallahassee is this heavily segregated city and is poverty ridden is dumb. OK we have a lot of homeless people but that's beside the point. I guess having a historically black college means that we're segregated and have a lot of black people! Black people=poverty! Ummm...no. What gets me is this guy that is a source for this info, is a professor at FSU. Does he know the city he lives in? I guess he just goes by what he sees on his way to work. Student ghettos and French town!

weluvtally

Tallahassee is one of the most dangerous cities? Seriously? I moved to Tallahassee 12 years ago, from Miami, because my neighbors house had been broken into 3 times and once their 5 year old daughter woke up to a man that had climbed into her window.

At that time, my oldest daughter was 5. She wasn't allowed to go outside and play, not even in my fenced back yard, unless someone was with her. It was common for elementary students to be offered and to use drugs in Miami.

Here in Tallahassee, my youngest daughter who is 9, rides her bike in the neighborhood by herself. She plays in both the front and back yard, without me watching her. She walks with her oldest brother from school to the city bus stop and rides the bus to my office. Not in a million years would I have let that happen in Miami.

Tallahassee averages 8 homicides a year. 8 – on average. It's a slow day in Miami if there are only 8 a day. To say that Tallahassee is more dangerous than Miami or New York City is ludicrous.

Congratulations – Forbes magazine just lost all credibility with me. And based on the comments and the absurdity of some of the other cities listed, I'm guessing you've lost credibility across the country.

xhereafternow

Little old Tallahassee more dangerous than Las Vegas? That's just crazy.

I've either lived in or visited many cities on your list and I can assure you that Tallahassee doesn't belong there. Yes, the city does have some (petty) crime and, yes, the city does have some poverty. But, does it ever occur to anyone there that this might be due to the fact that the city has about 50,000 COLLEGE STUDENTS living here?

About a quarter of our population typically attends either FSU or FAMU—many of whom are “poor college student” types and subject to college student-type crime—missing Ipods, etc.

I came to town with an FSU student and we were immediately knocked out by its beauty and Southern charm. Everyone here has been polite and friendly. The cost of living is comparatively low and the weather is great. It doesn't snow here. With just a few exceptions, the public schools are very good. The beach is less than an hour away with Orlando about a 6 hour drive.

In short, I wish I'd lived here all my life.

But, if you ever make a list of cities of pedestrians who are in danger of being hit by cars, then you can count Florida in on that one.

Or, states governed by those who formerly ran companies that committed record Medicare fraud, (ala Rick Scott) sadly, we qualify for that, too.

We are hoping to rectify those problems by the next election.

jedil6493

Tallahassee as #8... when this came out, our corrupt mayor called Forbes all outraged, and convinced Forbes to make edits. He also encouraged us to get on here and make comments about how unfair the ranking was... now this was all on the wctv dot tv website. Funny thing is, if you look at the comments on the WCTV website, they are almost 100% in agreement with Forbes.

Tallahassee is a dangerous place to live, and the whole region is extremely corrupt. You keep doing what you're doing Forbes, don't let our chump politicians try and coerce you otherwise.

October 5, 2011

christadmo

As every other commenter that I have read on here has stated, your “facts” are very questionable. I lived in Tallahassee for 12 years. Yes, Tallahassee has it’s problems just like every other community and there are “pockets of poverty” like every other community, but really to be ranked number 8 is quite preposterous and a little on the absurd side. My family moved to Mobile, AL due to work, and I can state without a doubt in my mind that Mobile is a MUCH more violent area. There are more murders, raping, robberies, etc. on a daily basis than Tallahassee has in a whole month. Yes, I 10 does run through Tallahassee and with that comes trafficking issues, but I 75 which runs north from Miami up through Georgia and the rest of the eastern seaboard has a much more severe problem with trafficking because it is a direct route from Miami. You need to reconsider your statistics work on this piece and how “communities” are grouped. I would gladly take Tallahassee ANYDAY over where I presently live due to the general safety of the area. How can Tallahassee also be one of the top livable cities for 2011 and be so crime ridden?

<http://usmayors.org/79thAnnualMeeting/documents/CITYLIVABILITYAWARDS0611.pdf>

As well as many other awards and mentions

<http://talchamber.com/our-community/awards-honors/>

tworden52

Tallahassee, really? Consider the fact that 30,000+ people who reside in Tallahassee at least 8 months out of the year are not considered residents, because they are students. Then consider the fact that most of the drug trafficking and aggravated assault you speak of is a result of this younger group of people, making money and protecting their egos. Giuffo, I’m going to start reading more of your articles for a good laugh.

jedil64931

No, the transient students might consume drugs and be loud from partying, but by and large they are the ones that graduate and make themselves useful to society. The LOCAL youth are the ones making the drugs, holding up banks, etc etc etc. It’s the Leon county natives that are destroying Leon county.

lar19

Your article listing Tallahassee, FL as a dangerous crime city is completely off base. I don’t know where you get your information but perhaps you should reevaluate your sources and contributor. Tallahassee is a beautiful city with an average of 8 homicides per year. Living in Tallahassee for over 30 years should give some credibility to my comment. If you truly research, Tallahassee has been voted one of the most desirable cities to live in the US. This entire article needs to be retracted and an apology needs to be made to Tallahassee.

tallahasseenative

You guys really put a bad taste in the mouths of Tallahasseeans this morning. The Sheriff, Chief of Police, and City officials have the hairs’ on their back standing up because of this story. And I didn’t look at the complete list, after seeing Tally on there I knew it was full of shit. I wouldn’t be surprised if other cities look at this and laugh them way I did.