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Ivory Tower Incidents: America's Most Dangerous Universities

DISCLAIMER: This study uses data from the FBI's 2016 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) college and university dataset. The FBI discourages ranking locales based on this data. While the choice to present UCR data in the format of a ranked list is controversial, this study does not aim to measure the effectiveness of any campus law enforcement body or assess the character of any of the students enrolled in these schools. This study lists a number of universities that have higher rates of violent crime, and acknowledges and highlights these schools' efforts at promoting campus and public safety.

Back to school season is in full swing, and hordes of eager freshmen, seasoned seniors, and bustling graduate students alike are adjusting to the rhythms of campus life.

Your college years can be a time of great self-discovery, unmatched intellectual growth, and, yes, some regrettable decisions. Within that halcyon haze of university life, it's easy to forget that your campus is still part of the "real world."

But there's a darker side to back-to-school season: it's the return of house parties, the introduction of new students unfamiliar with their surroundings, and the time of year when campus security forces might find themselves working overtime. Across the nation, many college and university campuses see violent crimes and property theft or damage: in 2016 alone, campuses saw 3,608 reported violent crimes and 67,449 reported property crimes.

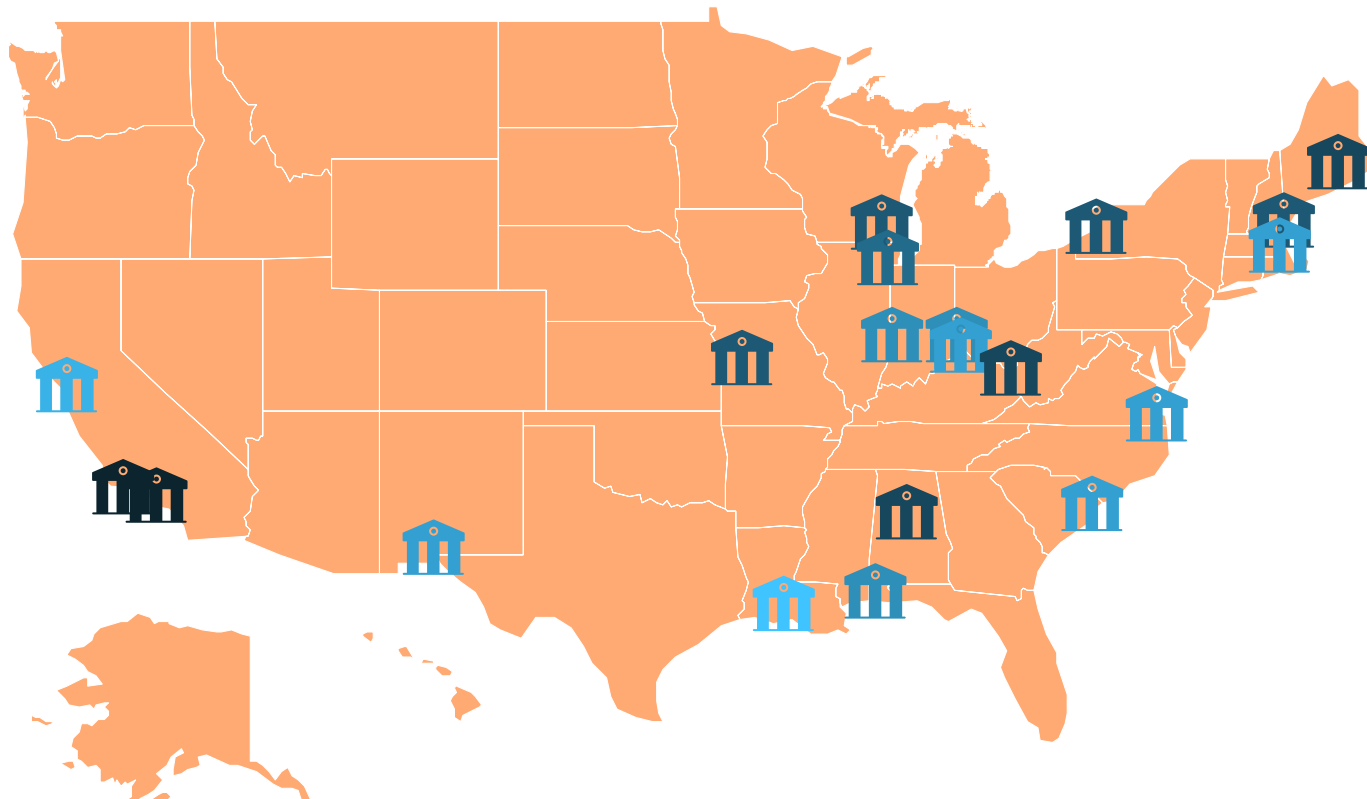
Of course, each school's crime profile is shaped by many variables, including the demographics of the college and surrounding community, campus residential policies and practices, and campus location. To better understand how crime rates vary across our nation's college campuses, Insurify's data scientists decided to delve into data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to see which campuses are home to the highest proportion of violent crimes per 10,000 students. While crimes of this type (including aggravated assault, robbery, and murder) are few and far between when indexed against every 10,000 students, property crimes are far more prevalent on university campuses.

Furthermore, these rankings in no way imply the effectiveness of campus police forces or the character of students enrolled. In fact, the data scientists at Insurify—ever committed to promoting safety for all—decided to explore how these universities are ensuring a safe environment and staving off crimes of all types through student-led and institutionally originated initiatives.

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Most Dangerous Universities in America





Violent Crimes per 10k Students

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

Source: Insurify analysis of the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) 2016 data

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- **UC blues.** The list does not necessarily bode well for the University of California school system. Three campuses in the prestigious public university consortium occupy the top 20.
- **Eastern offenders.** The eastern half of the contiguous United States is home to most of the schools in the top 20. There is a strong showing of schools in the Midwest and on the East Coast, where a higher proportion of colleges and universities are located.
- **Where there's crime, there's...crime.** Insurify data scientists found that for all universities of over 10,000 students for which FBI data was available, there is a moderate positive correlation between the proportions of violent crimes and property crimes per 10,000 students. Irrespective of enrollment numbers, then, campuses with a higher number of property crimes are likely to see violent crimes as well, and vice versa.
- **Mobile solutions.** All of the schools on this list have robust security measures in place. Most notably, however, many schools have adopted or developed mobile apps to alert students of dangers or allow streamlined communication between students and police. In an increasingly digital universe, universities are taking advantage of students' technological literacy to keep the campus interconnected and prevent dangerous situations.

Methodology

The data scientists at Insurify, an insurance quote comparison website, compiled data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/>) data from 2016, the most recent data of this type available. (The FBI compiles data on violent and property crimes on college and university campuses on an annual basis.) Insurify's data scientists then filtered the list by schools with an enrollment of 10,000 students or higher. The final list is ordered by the 20 schools with the highest proportion of violent crimes per 10,000 students (that is, the proportion of students likely to somehow be involved, in any capacity, in a violent crime on campus). Violent crimes include murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Data on student enrollment and the proportion of property crimes per 10,000 students were noted as well. Property crimes include burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Top 20 Most Dangerous Universities



20. University of Louisiana at Lafayette

- **Location:** Lafayette, Louisiana
- **Student enrollment:** 17,508
- **Violent crime rate:** 11.4 per 10k students

- **Property crime rate:** 126.2 per 10k students

UL Lafayette, the southernmost school on this list, has an extensive campus safety infrastructure. This includes institutional promotion of the Rave Guardian app, which allows users to virtually walk their friends home. Campus police are registered officers in the state of Louisiana.

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19. University of California, Berkeley

- **Location:** Berkeley, California
- **Student enrollment:** 38,189
- **Violent crime rate:** 11.5 per 10k students

- **Property crime rate: 183.0 per 10k students**

Berkeley's storied campus is no stranger to intra-campus strife. But perhaps it earns its spot on this list for more covert crimes: in terms of number of offenses in 2016, it ranks highest for larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson among the top 20. But the university is more than equipped to respond to any incident: UCPD Berkeley includes a bomb team with a K-9 unit and an anonymous tip line for students who feel unsafe.



18. University of Cincinnati

- **Location:** Cincinnati, Ohio
- **Student enrollment:** 36,042
- **Violent crime rate:** 12.5 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 70.5 per 10k students

The University of Cincinnati's Department of Public Safety developed the Bearcat Guardian app to enhance communication between its police force and the greater campus community. The app provides access to free day and evening transportation, emergency notifications, and safety tips. Recent reports claim that the university is also adding new features to its 911 dispatch service.

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17. Northeastern University

- **Location:** Boston, Massachusetts
- **Student enrollment:** 19,940
- **Violent crime rate:** 12.5 per 10k students

- **Property crime rate: 126.9 per 10k students**

This prestigious Boston university sees approximately ten times more property crimes than violent ones. That doesn't reflect on its campus police force and safety initiatives, which include a series of safety videos through NUPD's "A Quick Heads Up" program.



16. Old Dominion University

- **Location:** Norfolk, Virginia
- **Student enrollment:** 24,672
- **Violent crime rate:** 12.6 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 149.2 per 10k students

Among ODU's safety initiatives is the LiveSafe App, which lets users track friends' locations, view safety incidents on a campus map, and report tips.

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15. Coastal Carolina University

- **Location:** Conway, South Carolina
- **Student enrollment:** 10,263

- **Violent crime rate:** 12.7 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 230.0 per 10k students

This beachside institution (the smallest by enrollment on this list) employs a comprehensive emergency management program, a text messaging notification system, and a professionally trained CHANT Intervention Team tasked with dealing with potential safety disruptions. Nevertheless, CCU has the second-highest number of property crimes per 10,000 students on this list.



14. New Mexico State University

- **Location:** Las Cruces, New Mexico
- **Student enrollment:** 15,940

- **Violent crime rate:** 12.9 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 172.4 per 10k students

A public university, NMSU boasts a high number of programs devoted to women's empowerment and safety through its police department, including classes titled "Fight Like a Girl," "Girls on Guard," and "Weapons for Women."

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13. University of South Alabama

- **Location:** Mobile, Alabama
- **Student enrollment:** 16,211

- **Violent crime rate:** 13.6 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 73.4 per 10k students

University of South Alabama also employs the LiveSafe mobile app for students, and a guaranteed-anonymity Silent Witness Program for community members wishing to provide information on campus crime.



Credit: Chris Light at English Wikipedia

12. Miami University

- **Location:** Oxford, Ohio
- **Student enrollment:** 19,076
- **Violent crime rate:** 13.6 per 10k students

- **Property crime rate: 121.6 per 10k students**

In February 2018, Miami University students working for its campus newspaper, The Miami Student, held a public forum on safety and security. In citing statistics indicating that local emergency services disproportionately serve incapacitated students, the forum indicated that students are focused on improving public safety in the greater Oxford area and updating educational initiatives on emergency processes.



11. Indiana State University

- **Location:** Terre Haute, Indiana
- **Student enrollment:** 13,584
- **Violent crime rate:** 14.0 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 119.3 per 10k students

Like many other large universities, ISU has implemented the Rave Guardian mobile app with the aim of raising campus security standards.



10. Loyola University of Chicago

- **Location:** Chicago, Illinois
- **Student enrollment:** 16,437

- **Violent crime rate:** 15.8 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 68.1 per 10k students

This Chicago-area Catholic university has seen some recent controversy in terms of its campus police practices. The school's stop and frisk policy has been accused of perpetuating racial profiling, and as a result, mistrust has grown between students and the school's campus safety office, which is currently withholding body camera footage from the public.



9. Marquette University

- **Location:** Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- **Student enrollment:** 11,491

- **Violent crime rate:** 16.5 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 232.4 per 10k students

This Wisconsin school has the highest number of property crimes per 10,000 students on this list. It also has been amping up its active shooter training, according to recent reporting.



8. University of New Hampshire

- **Location:** Durham, Manchester, and Concord, New Hampshire
- **Student enrollment:** 15,351
- **Violent crime rate:** 16.9 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 68.4 per 10k students

The eighth-highest proportion of violent crimes among large universities goes to UNH's three campuses. Its police department is nationally accredited, and possesses communications and social services divisions.



7. University of Central Missouri

- **Location:** Warrensburg, Missouri
- **Student enrollment:** 14,395
- **Violent crime rate:** 17.4 per 10k students

- **Property crime rate: 101.4 per 10k students**

UCM was the country's first university campus to employ the Campus Eye safety app. It also transmits emergency and weather notifications through TextCaster®.



6. State University of New York, Buffalo

- **Location:** Buffalo, New York
- **Student enrollment:** 10,330
- **Violent crime rate:** 17.4 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 150.0 per 10k students

Between its UB Alert system, official safety escorts, and a nationally recognized university police force, SUNY Buffalo students' safety is very much accounted for.



5. University of Alabama at Birmingham

- **Location:** Birmingham, Alabama
- **Student enrollment:** 18,333
- **Violent crime rate:** 17.5 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 192.5 per 10k students

This university is one among several sponsors of Birmingham's Smart Cities Readiness workshop, whose goals include more effective citywide interconnectivity and the use of smart technology to improve crime prevention and law enforcement processes.



4. University of Maine

- **Location:** Orono, Maine
- **Student enrollment:** 10,922
- **Violent crime rate:** 18.3 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 126.4 per 10k students

The northernmost campus on this list, UMaine also has a less involved and multifaceted police force than most other schools on this list. It has a “Campus Eyes” anonymous tip program, but few other distinctive offerings.



3. Marshall University

- **Location:** Huntington, West Virginia
- **Student enrollment:** 13,621

- **Violent crime rate:** 18.4 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 16.2 per 10k students

By a wide margin, Marshall University boasts the lowest number of property crimes per 10,000 students on this list. However, it ranks third for violent crimes by the same proportion.



2. University of California, Los Angeles

- **Location:** Los Angeles, California
- **Student enrollment:** 41,908
- **Violent crime rate:** 20.0 per 10k students
- **Property crime rate:** 183.3 per 10k students

UCLA has the highest number of burglaries among all universities of 10,000 students or more, at 84 total reported incidents in 2016. By sheer numbers, UCLA is #1 for campus-related violent crimes. However, it comes in at second on this list, because it has a student enrollment nearly twice that of the top-ranked most dangerous school.



1. University of California, Santa Barbara

- **Location:** Santa Barbara, California
- **Student enrollment:** 23,497
- **Violent crime rate:** 20.4 per 10k students

- **Property crime rate:** 122.6 per 10k students

At #1 on the list of the most dangerous universities is the University of California, Santa Barbara. With 20.4 violent crimes per 10,000 students, UCSB may possess this dubious distinction, but not for lack of passion in community engagement. Student involvement in the betterment of Isla Vista at the UCSB campus has been steadily growing, in part thanks to the student-led establishment of I Heart UCSB in 2013.

School Danger Superlatives

- **Most Violent Crimes:** University of California, Los Angeles, at 84
- **Most Property Crimes (all types):** Arizona State University, at 902
- **Most Burglaries:** University of California, Los Angeles, at 127
- **Most Larceny-Thefts:** Arizona State University, at 803
- **Most Motor Vehicle Thefts:** University of New Mexico, at 124
- **Most Arson Incidents:** Pennsylvania State University and Colorado State University (tied), at 7

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