

Is Camden Really the Most Dangerous City in America?

On November 21, 2004, Camden was deemed the most dangerous city in America, according to rankings released by Morgan-Quitno Press. Morgan-Quitno ranks cities with over 75,000 people each year to determine the "safest" and "most dangerous" city. Since Camden was included in the rankings in 1998, it has consistently ranked among the six most dangerous cities, although it was never before deemed the most dangerous. In 2003, Camden was ranked 4th most dangerous.

According to Morgan-Quitno, "the 2003 crime rates per 100,000 population for six basic crime categories - murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft - were plugged into a formula that measured how a particular city compared to the national average for a given crime category...Each of the six crimes was given equal weight." (www.morganquitno.com/methodology05.htm). Because of this explanation of methodology, CAMConnect determined Camden's rank for these crimes relative to other cities with over 75,000 people for the past three years. This research was done to get a better sense of how Morgan-Quitno derived their analysis, and to see which crime statistics contributed most to Camden's designation as most dangerous. The findings of this analysis are incorporated into the table below.

Without knowing the proprietary Morgan-Quitno formula to provide definitive explanations, there are a number of possibilities as to why Camden became the most dangerous city in 2003. Camden had the highest rate of robberies in 2003 among cities with over 75,000 people, and the number of robberies increased 41% from 2002 to 2003. **Camden's robbery rate in 2003 was 24% higher than the next city, Atlanta.** Camden also moved from 15th to 3rd in the rate of aggravated assaults. A comparison of Camden's demographics with the other "most dangerous" cities can be found on the following page.

Camden's trends stand in contrast to other New Jersey cities. According to a *Courier-Post* editorial from November 16, 2004, the number of crimes in Camden increased 17.5% in 2003, as reported in the NJ State Police Uniform Crime Report. Other cities in the state, such as Elizabeth, Newark, and Paterson, actually saw crime decrease in 2003.

Offenses Known to Law Enforcement, 2001-2003, City of Camden, New Jersey

	2001			2002			2003		
	Number	Rate	Rank	Number	Rate	Rank	Number	Rate	Rank
Murder	25	31	15	33	40	6	41	51	3
Rape	58	72	37	45	55	96	56	70	45
Robbery	715	887	3	607	744	4	856	1,068	1
Aggravated Assaults	909	1,128	13	797	977	15	972	1,213	3
Total Violent Crimes	1,707	2,119	7	1,482	1,817	10	1,925	2,402	1
Burglary	1,374	1,705	30	1,155	1,416	61	1,459	1,821	21
Motor Vehicle Theft	1,262	1,566	18	1,081	1,325	33	1,149	1,434	27

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigations, Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), 2001-2003. Accessed at www.fbi.gov, November 22, 2004. Derived from Table 8 - "Offenses Known to Law Enforcement by City 10,000 and Over in Population." Rates are derived by calculating the incidence per 100,000 people. Rankings are based on cities with over 75,000 people, according to Census Bureau estimates for July 1, 2003. In 2003, there were 364 cities with over 75,000 people.

For instance, in 2003 in Camden, there were 856 robberies known to law enforcement. This number translates to a rate of 1,068 robberies per 100,000 people. Camden's rate of 1,068 robberies per 100,000 residents is higher than the rate of each of the other 363 cities (when calculated per 100,000 residents). By comparison, the next highest rate of robberies was Atlanta, which had a rate of 859 robberies per 1,000 residents.

The 5 Most Dangerous Cities in America, According to Morgan-Quitno Press

1. Camden, NJ
2. Detroit, MI
3. Atlanta, GA
4. St. Louis, MO
5. Gary, IN

	Camden	Detroit	Atlanta	St. Louis	Gary	New Jersey
2000 Population	79,904	951,270	416,474	348,189	102,746	8,414,350
Percent White Non-Hispanic	7%	11%	31%	43%	10%	66%
Percent Black Non-Hispanic	49%	81%	61%	51%	84%	13%
Percent Hispanic	39%	5%	4%	2%	5%	13%
Percent Under 18	35%	31%	22%	26%	30%	25%
Percent Under 25	47%	41%	36%	36%	40%	33%
Median Household Income	23,421	29,526	34,770	27,156	27,195	55,146
Percent Living in Poverty	36%	26%	24%	25%	26%	8%
Under 18 Living in Poverty	46%	35%	39%	37%	38%	11%
Percent Over 25 with H.S. Diploma	51%	70%	77%	71%	73%	82%
Unemployment Rate, 2003	16.9%	14.6%	7.9%	10.1%	12.0%	5.9%
Percent of Out of School Youth Ages 16 to 19 who are Jobless (1)	68%	61%	62%	61%	67%	48%
Female-Headed Families (2)	58%	54%	51%	48%	55%	18%

Source: All data from US Census 2000, except for Unemployment Rate, which is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- (1) Population ages 16 to 19 that is not enrolled in school and is classified as either Unemployed or Not in Labor Force.
- (2) Percent of families with own children under 18 that are headed by females.