

U.S. PEACE INDEX

The inaugural United States Peace Index, created by the international think tank, Institute for Economics and Peace is the first-ever ranking of the fifty U.S. states based on their levels of peace. The U.S. Peace Index (USPI) shows Maine is the most peaceful U.S. state, while Louisiana is ranked the least peaceful.

The USPI report reveals that peace in the United States has improved since 1995 primarily driven by a substantial decrease in homicide and violent crime. **The full report can be downloaded at:**

<http://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/U.S.-Peace-Index-2011-3.pdf>

Key Findings:

- First-ever ranking of peace in the U.S. shows the nation has become more peaceful since 1995.
- Peace is significantly correlated with factors related to economic opportunity, education and health.

Economic Impact – potential to create 2.7 million jobs

The Institute for Economics and Peace estimates that at a time when states and lawmakers in Washington are struggling to balance budgets, the USPI shows reductions in violence, crime and incarcerations to the same levels as Canada would result in \$361 billion in savings and additional economic activity. This additional economic activity has the potential to create 2.7 million jobs, which would significantly reduce unemployment.

- If the U.S. could **reduce its incarceration rate to the same level as Canada** (138 per 100,000) the total correctional population would fall to 424,590 persons. This would mean that total costs of incarceration would fall to around 10 billion dollars meaning total **potential savings would exceed \$64 billion per annum.**
- The **total violent crime rate** in the U.S. is 424 incidents per 100,000 people. A reduction in this rate to the same level as Canada, which is just over 300 per 100,000 people, would have an **economic impact of approximately \$27 billion.**
- It is assumed that the total judicial and legal costs associated to related crimes is in the region of \$16 billion. **A reduction in judicial expenditure** to bring the U.S. in line with Canada **would yield \$5.8 billion in savings.**

Education and health outcomes correlate strongly with peace

The USPI also finds that a state's ranking is strongly correlated with various socio-economic factors including the high school graduation rate, access to health insurance and the rate of infant mortality. Significant economic correlants included the degree of income inequality and the rate of participation in the labor force. Meanwhile, factors such as median income and a state's political affiliation had no discernable impact on a state's level of peace.

The Index, which defines peace as “the absence of violence,” looks at a set of five indicators, including **homicide rates, violent crimes, percentage of the population in jail, number of police officers and availability of small arms** (per 100,000 people) to rank the states. The data used to construct the Index is drawn from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Centers for Disease Control.

The Index provides each state with the estimated “total cost of violence,” which reflects the cost of correctional and policing services, judicial system and medical costs

associated with violent crime and homicide, and lost productivity and wages.

The Institute for Economics and Peace estimates that **at a time when states and lawmakers in Washington are struggling to balance budgets, reductions in violence, crime and incarcerations to the same levels as Canada would result in more than \$360 billion** in savings and additional economic activity.

This additional economic activity has the **potential to create 2.7 million jobs**, which would significantly reduce unemployment. Canada was chosen because of its close geographic proximity and similar level of economic development.

“Peace translates into dollars and cents,” said IEP Founder Steve Killelea. “We have seen this in the findings of the 2010 Global Peace Index, where we found that a 25 percent reduction in global violence would free up \$1.8 trillion USD annually.”

“We are seeing the same thing with the USPI. By increasing peace, the United States can ensure that these unrealized billions are available to reduce taxes, stimulate the economy or invest in the nation’s infrastructure, schools, communities, and small businesses,” Killelea added. He noted that not only are incarceration rates a drag on the U.S. economy, but they also don’t necessarily equate to decreases in crime and violence, or an increase in a state’s peacefulness.

The USPI also found that a state’s ranking is **strongly correlated** with 15 socioeconomic factors, including **high school graduation rates, infant mortality, access to basic services, labor force participation rates, and rates of poverty and teenage pregnancy**. Meanwhile, factors such as median income and a state’s political affiliation had no discernable impact on a state’s level of peace.

“The Index underlines the negative impact of violence on our economy, and reinforces the idea that minimizing violence, through job creation programs and increased access to education and healthcare, dramatically increases the prospects for growth,” said Kerry Kennedy, President, Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

“We should be mindful of this when proposing domestic discretionary spending cuts that will not only disproportionately impact those most vulnerable to violence and poverty, but will also hinder our collective prosperity,” Kennedy added.

Additional Findings:

- The **ten most peaceful states** as identified by the USPI are (from 1 to 10) **Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Minnesota, North Dakota, Utah, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Iowa and Washington**.
- The **ten least peaceful states** are (from 50 to 40) **Louisiana, Tennessee, Nevada, Florida, Alabama, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Maryland**, respectively.
- The total cost of violence per person in a state ranges from \$656 in Maine to \$2,458 in Louisiana. The USPI estimates that the economic effect of decreasing violence in states by 25 percent ranges from \$126 million in Vermont to \$16 billion in California.