



# **The Punitive State: Crime, Punishment, and Imprisonment across the United States (Criminal Justice Recent Scholarship)**

*Natasha A. Frost*

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Over the past several decades, punishment policy in the United States has taken a decidedly punitive turn. The U.S. incarceration rate is currently the highest in the world and far exceeds that of comparable Western European nations. Although the United States has a reputation as being among the most punitive nations, there is a great deal of variation in imprisonment across the states. Some have addressed these variations, but most have done so by reference to imprisonment rates per capita. In this book, I argue that the imprisonment rate ultimately reflects the cumulative outcome of two different punitive approaches. Analyses of variations in imprisonment risk and average time-served in prison demonstrate that states with high imprisonment rates are not necessarily the most punitive. Remarkably, some of the states with the lowest imprisonment rates have the highest risk of imprisonment or highest average time-served.

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