



**Violent crime fell in 2007;  
Prison and jails experienced less growth than previous years;  
Areas with lower incarceration rates experienced greater crime reductions**

**Background:** The FBI Uniform Crime Report was released Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup> with the news that the United States experienced a 1.4 percent decline in the violent crime *rate* and a 2.1 percent decline in the property crime *rate* in 2007. This drop in crime came at a time when the prison and jail growth rates fell from previous years. The Justice Policy Institute (JPI), a Washington, D.C.-based policy group that promotes fair and rational justice policies, cautions that no single factor can explain changes in crime across the nation, or within a jurisdiction. We have assembled a couple of key findings from these new crime and prison surveys to put the new figures in their appropriate context. For a more in-depth analysis of crime trends, and information on effective public safety practices, please visit our website at [www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org).

**The number of violent offenses reported to law enforcement fell 1.4 percent in 2007.<sup>1</sup>**

Both violent and property crimes fell in three of the four regions of the country. Only the southern region experienced an increase in these two categories.

Region	Violent crime	Murder	Forcible rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Property crime
<b>Total</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>-1.4</b>
Northeast	-5.1%	-7.9	-4.3	-9.0	-2.4	-3.0
Midwest	-1.7%	-2.5	-3.6	-3.2	-0.6	-3.2
South	+1.6%	+5.3	-1.7	+4.9	+0.3	+1.8
West	-1.0%	-5.6	-1.8	-0.4	-1.2	-4.4

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2007*, Table 4, <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/index.html>

**While jails and prison populations continue to grow, the growth rate slowed in 2007, coinciding with the drop in crime.<sup>2</sup>**

From 2005-2006, violent crime increased slightly (1.9 percent) while prison and jail populations increased 2 and 2.5 percent, respectively. As the growth rates of prisons and jails fell, so did the violent crime rate (down 1.4 percent), possibly indicating that lowering the number of people imprisoned can be an effective way to increase public safety.

Growth Rate	2005-2006	2006-2007
<b>Prison</b>	2.0%	1.6%
<b>Jail</b>	2.5%	1.9%

Source: FBI Preliminary Annual Crime Report 2007; William J. Sabol and Todd D. Minton, *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2007* and William J. Sabol and Heather Couture, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2007* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008)

<sup>1</sup> FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2007*, Table 1A, <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Crime in the United States, 2007*; William J. Sabol and Todd D. Minton, *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2007* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008); William J. Sabol and Heather Couture, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2007* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

**Regions with the lowest incarceration rates experienced the largest drops in violent crime.<sup>3</sup>**

The Northeast region experienced the greatest drop in violent crime, and also has the lowest incarceration rates in the country. The southern region has the highest incarceration rates and witnessed a rise in violent crimes—the only part of the country to not experience a drop in crime.

Region	Violent crime change	Incarceration Rate (per 100,000)
<b>Total</b> (State and Federal)	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>509</b>
Northeast	-5.1	309
Midwest	-1.7	395
South	+1.6	555
West	-1.0	441

**Adults are responsible for the majority of violent offenses—punitive practices aimed at youth should be abandoned for more effective alternatives.**

Adults are responsible for 89.7 percent of all murder arrests, 84.6 percent of rape arrests, 73 percent of robbery arrests and 87.1 percent of aggravated assault arrests.<sup>4</sup>

**Adults represent 84.1 percent of all violent crime arrests.**

	2007	
	Youth	Adults
Murder	10.3%	89.7%
Rape	15.4%	84.6%
Robbery	27.0%	73.0%
Aggravated assault	12.9%	87.1%
<b>Total violent arrests</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>84.1%</b>

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2007*, Table 32.

The relatively small youth representation in the country’s violent crime data is corroborated by a 2006 study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Violent Felons in Large Urban Counties*, which analyzes violent felony cases from jurisdictions that together accounted for half of the reported violent crime in the nation.<sup>5</sup> According to this report youth under the age of 18 represented 10 percent of homicide convictions, 12 percent of robbery convictions, and 4 percent of rape and assault convictions.

<sup>3</sup> William J. Sabol and Heather Couture, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2007* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008); *Crime in the United States, 2007*

<sup>4</sup> FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2007*, Table 32, [www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Brian A. Reaves, *Violent Felons in Large Urban Counties* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006).