



Crime fell in 2009, demonstrating states are safely reducing prison populations

The FBI released the full 2009 Uniform Crime Report on Monday, September 13th, 2010 which showed that the United States experienced a 5.3 percent drop in the number of reported violent offenses and a 4.6 percent decline in the number of reported property offenses in 2009. **This drop in crime came at a time when state prison populations fell for the first time in a decade¹ and when state corrections spending grew at a much lower rate than the previous year.²** As with many state-funded programs and services during the current economic crisis, corrections budgets are not growing at the same rates as previous years, and many states are looking for innovative ways to reduce the amount of money they spend on corrections while implementing more effective public safety strategies.

The Justice Policy Institute, a national organization focused on reducing incarceration and the use of the criminal justice system, has assembled 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.

The number of violent offenses reported to law enforcement fell 5.3 percent in 2009.³ While crime has been dropping nationally since 2007, this year saw a consistent drop in violent and property crimes in all four regions of the country.

Percent Change (2008-2009)	Violent crime	Murder	Forcible rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Property crime
Total	-5.3	-7.3	-2.6	-8.0	-4.2	-4.6
<i>Northeast</i>	-3.3	-8.7	-1.9	-7.5	-0.5	-5.2
<i>Midwest</i>	-4.3	-5.4	-5.1	-4.9	-3.8	-5.4
<i>South</i>	-6.6	-7.6	-1.9	-9.9	-5.4	-3.4
<i>West</i>	-5.3	-7.6	-1.6	-7.4	-4.5	-6.1

Percent change in number of reported crimes.

Source: FBI, *Crime in the United States, 2009*, Table 4, www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table_04.html

Crime is falling as states are putting fewer people in prison. As state prison populations fell, so did the violent crime rate, which provides further evidence that increased incarceration does not mean more public safety. Concurrent with the 5.3 percent fall in violent crime in 2008-2009, state prison populations decreased 0.2 percent, the first population decrease since 2000.⁴ The number of people in prison is still growing, but at a slower rate than during the last few decades and primarily due to increases in federal prison system population.⁵ The 0.2 percent growth in the total U.S. prison population during 2009 was the third year of decline in the rate of growth and the slowest growth in eight years.

Prison Population	Average annual change, 2000-2008	Percent Change, 2008-2009
Federal	4.1%	3.4%
State	1.5%	-.2%
Total	1.8%	.2%

Source: Heather C. West, *Prisoners at Yearend 2009 – Advance Counts* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010) <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/py09ac.pdf>

¹ Heather C. West, *Prisoners at Yearend 2009 – Advance Counts* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010) <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/py09ac.pdf>

² National Association of State Budget Officers, *State Expenditure Report 2008* (Washington, D.C.: 2009) www.nasbo.org

³ FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2009*, www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/offenses/violent_crime/index.html

⁴ Heather C. West, 2010

⁵ William J. Sabol and others, *Prisoners in 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009) <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/p08.pdf>