

CRIME, INCARCERATION DOWN IN 2010: States are safely reducing prison populations

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The FBI released the 2010 Uniform Crime Report on Monday, September 19th, 2011 stating that the United States experienced a 6 percent drop in the number of reported violent offenses and a 2.7 percent decline in the number of reported property offenses in 2010.¹ This drop in crime came at a time when state prison populations are falling for the first time in a decade and when state corrections spending is declining. As with many state-funded programs and services during the current economic times, corrections budgets are not growing at the same rates as previous years,² 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 nonprofit organization that changes the conversation around justice reform and advances policies that promote well-being and justice for all people and communities, 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 6 percent in 2010.³ 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.

Crime is falling as states are putting fewer people in prison. The total number of people in prison is still growing, but at a slower rate than the last few decades.⁴ 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. The state prison population fell 0.2 percent from 2008-2009, followed by a 6 percent drop in violent crime in 2010. While any number of factors can impact crime rates, these numbers seem to indicate that putting and keeping fewer people in prison could have a positive effect on public safety.

CRIME IS FALLING ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Region	Violent crime	Murder	Forcible rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Property crime
Total	-6.0	-4.2	-5.0	-10.0	-4.1	-2.7
Northeast	-0.6	+8.8	-1.1	-2.4	+0.3	-0.3
Midwest	-6.5	-4.9	-6.0	-10.7	-4.3	-2.3
South	-7.9	-6.4	-6.4	-13.0	-5.8	-3.8
West	-5.6	-7.6	-3.8	-10.0	-3.6	-2.3

Percent Change in Number of Reported Offenses. Source: FBI, *Crime in the United States, 2010*, Table 4.

¹ FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2010*, www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010

² National Association of State Budget Officers, *State Expenditure Report 2009* (Washington, D.C.: 2010) www.nasbo.org

³ FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2010

⁴ Heather C. West, William J. Sabol, and Sarah J. Greenman, *Prisoners in 2009* (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington, DC: 2010). <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf>