

## Violent crime fell in 2008; Prison and jails experienced less growth than previous years

**Background:** The full 2008 FBI Uniform Crime Report was released Monday, September 14, 2009 with the positive news that the United States experienced a 1.9 percent decline in violent crimes and a 0.8 percent decline in property crimes reported in 2008. 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 some 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 1.9 percent in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

The number of violent crimes fell in three of the four regions of the country. The number of property crimes fell in two of the four regions of the country; both the Northeastern and Southern regions experienced an increase of less than 3 percent in the number of property crimes.

Region	Violent crime	Murder	Forcible rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Property crime
<b>Total</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-3.9</b>	<b>-1.6</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	<b>-0.8</b>
Northeast	*	+1.4	+1.5	+1.0	-0.8	+2.5
Midwest	-2.5	-0.8	-1.0	-0.3	-3.8	-2.6
South	-1.7	-5.3	-3.1	-1.1	-1.7	+0.6
West	-2.9	-6.8	-1.1	-1.6	-3.7	-3.2

Percent Change in Number. Source: FBI, *Crime in the United States, 2008*, Table 4, [www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_04.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_04.html)

\*Less than one-tenth of 1 percent.

### While jails and prison populations continue to grow, the growth rate slowed in 2008, coinciding with the drop in crime.<sup>2</sup>

From 2007-2008, violent crime fell 1.9 percent while the growth rates of prisons and jails slowed, possibly indicating that decreasing the number of people incarcerated can be part of an effective public safety strategy.

Growth Rate	2006-2007	2007-2008
<b>Prison</b>	1.6%	1.0%
<b>Jail</b>	1.9%	0.7%

Source: William J. Sabol and Todd D. Minton, *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2008* and William J. Sabol and Heather C. West, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009), [www.ojp.gov/bjs/](http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/)

<sup>1</sup> FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2008*, [www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/offenses/violent\\_crime/index.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/offenses/violent_crime/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> William J. Sabol and Todd D. Minton, *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009), [www.ojp.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/jim08st.pdf](http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/jim08st.pdf); William J. Sabol and Heather C. West, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009), [www.ojp.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pim08st.pdf](http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pim08st.pdf)