

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

Background: The FBI Preliminary Semiannual Uniform Crime Report was released Monday, January 12th with the news that the United States experienced a 3.5 percent decline in the number of reported violent offenses and a 2.5 percent decline in the number of reported property offenses in the first half of 2008. **This drop in crime came at a time when the prison and jail growth rates fell from previous years and when state corrections spending grew at a lower rate than the previous year.**¹ 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 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 3.5 percent in 2008.² Violent and property offenses were down across cities of all sizes in the U.S. in the first six months of 2008.

Population group	Violent crime	Murder	Forcible rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Property crime
Total	-3.5%	-4.4%	-3.3%	-2.2%	-4.1%	-2.5%
1,000,000 and over	-0.8	-5.5	+3.4	-0.4	-1.2	-4.2
500,000 to 999,999	-2.7	-11.3	-5.2	-3.2	-1.9	-4.1
250,000 to 499,999	-5.2	-3.4	-2.4	-1.2	-8.2	-4.3
100,000 to 249,999	-4.8	-9.0	-3.6	-3.6	-5.6	-2.0
50,000 to 99,999	-4.0	+3.3	-3.6	-4.4	-3.9	-1.7
25,000 to 49,999	-1.7	+1.5	-5.1	-4.7	+0.2	-2.2
10,000 to 24,999	-3.0	-10.2	-6.8	-1.5	-2.9	-2.0
Under 10,000	-4.4	+9.8	-3.6	+1.2	-5.8	-3.6

Source: FBI Preliminary Semiannual Uniform Crime Report 2008, Table 1

While jails and prison populations continue to grow, the growth rate slowed in 2007, coinciding with the drop in crime.³ 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 from 2006 to 2007), possibly indicating that imprisoning fewer people can be an effective way to increase public safety.

Growth Rate	2005-2006	2006-2007
Prison	2.0%	1.3%
Jail	2.5%	1.9%

Source: FBI Preliminary Annual Crime Report 2007; Bureau of Justice Statistics, Correctional Populations at a Glance

¹ National Association of State Budget Officers, State Expenditure Report 2008, www.nasbo.org

² FBI Preliminary Semiannual Uniform Crime Report 2008, Table 1, http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/2008prelim/table_1.html

³ Note: 2008 prison and jail population numbers are not yet available. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Correctional Populations at a Glance, <http://ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/tables/corr2tab.htm>