



2009 Briefing Paper

OREGON CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

Crime and Incarceration Trends

Overview

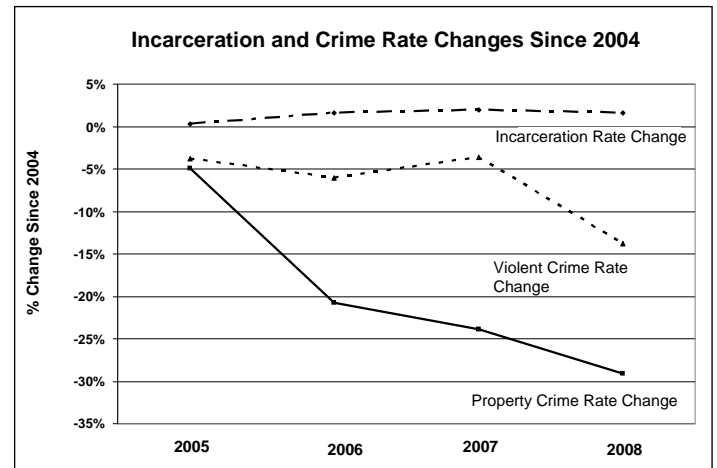
In Oregon, both property and violent crime peaked in 1995 and has substantially decreased over the past 13 years with the property crime rate falling 46 percent and the violent crime rate falling more than 50 percent. The last time the violent crime rate in Oregon was lower was 1970 and the property crime rate has not been lower since 1966. This moves Oregon down to the 40th highest violent crime rate and the 23rd highest property crime rate, both of these rankings are record lows for Oregon.

Part of the decrease in crime is likely attributable to incarceration increases that took place through the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s. In Oregon, from 1995 to 2008, the incarceration rate (including local control) increased by 65 percent. Research conducted by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission found that there is a relationship between incarceration and crime. Part of the crime decrease can be attributed to increased incarceration, but the benefits of this have decreased as we have incarcerated more offenders.

Research by Dr. William Spelman shows that every 10 percent increase in the incarceration rate leads to a two to four percent decrease in the crime rate. Oregon estimates of this relationship show that incarceration accounted for about a 15 percent reduction in the crime rate from 1995 to 2008. The total crime rate decrease was 46 percent so roughly one third of the decrease in crime can be explained by incarceration and two thirds cannot.

In recent years Oregon has experienced the largest crime decreases in the nation. In 2006 Oregon's property crime rate dropped nearly 17 percent, the largest decrease of any state. Since 2004, the property crime rate has fallen by 29 percent, again the largest decrease of any state. In 2008 Oregon's violent crime rate decreased by 11 percent and since 2004 the violent crime rate has fallen 14

percent, both are the largest decreases of any state. Were the large crime decreases over the past five years because of increased incarceration? The answer appears to be no. While the number of inmates at the Oregon Department of Corrections went up by nearly 1,000 this basically went up at the same rate as the population so the incarceration rate was constant (see table). ■



DOC Average Annual Population and Incarceration Rate			
Year	Inmates	Population	Incarceration Rate per 1,000
2004	12,624	3,582,600	3.5
2005	12,841	3,631,440	3.5
2006	13,214	3,690,505	3.6
2007	13,451	3,745,455	3.6
2008	13,576	3,791,075	3.6

The Criminal Justice Commission's purpose is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state and local criminal justice systems by providing a centralized and impartial forum for statewide policy development and planning.



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