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Overall Crime Rates Down in Texas According to 2016 National Crime Report Released Today

AUSTIN, TX – The FBI released its [*2016 Crime in the United States*](#) report today and, although there are pockets of increased crime, the data indicates that Texas crime rates have dropped statewide. Most Texans are safer today than in prior decades and, according to the annual report, violent crime remains at a record low despite recent year increases in some cities.

“You have to look beyond the relatively small differences in the number of violent crimes,” said Meme Styles, President of Measure, a Texas data and research organization. “The overall trend is clear, and this year’s data has not changed that trend. We are living in a safe society. We should be doing everything we can to push evidence-based policies that will retain those gains by strengthening families and getting people back to work.”

Following key criminal justice reforms that began a decade ago, Texas has experienced a 20 percent reduction in the incarceration rate while the overall crime rate has fallen 30 percent to a level not seen since the 1960s. It is time Texas took the next big steps to safely address the public safety problems – addiction, mental illness, economic fragility – that cannot be solved by an endless cycle of arrest, incarceration, release, and re-arrest.

In an effort to continue to make Texas communities safer, the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) urges support from legislators and local officials for: 1) expanded access to pretrial intervention and treatment for low-level drug possession, coupled with sentencing reforms to ensure that people have access to jobs and housing after treatment; 2) the removal of children from the adult criminal justice system, and improved juvenile justice programs, which can provide rehabilitation, treatment, and education to prevent re-arrest; 3) improved first response and local treatment options so people with mental illness do not end up in jail; and 4) improved access to critical programs to help address the needs of those who are on probation or parole so they can be successful in our communities. These steps and more would have a profound ability to further reduce crime.

“Smart criminal justice reforms shift dollars from prisons and jails into more effective strategies that cost less and reduce recidivism,” said Doug Smith, Policy Analyst for TCJC. “We’re grateful to those policy makers and local officials who have championed successful justice reforms over the years, and we urge Texas legislators to continue on the path of safely reducing incarceration and investing in community-based programs that just work better.”

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“We know that crime rates vary among cities,” says Jake Lilly, who served as Assistant District Attorney in Fort Worth, “and as crime is most often a local problem, we should take a closer look at the communities that are succeeding and figuring out what's working. Investing in community-based prevention and diversion programs that help people into treatment is proven to reduce crime and keep neighborhoods safer.”

Chair Senfronia Thompson, Local and Consent Calendars Committee, asserts, “We’re seeing good news in the crime trend data for Texas overall. Our efforts to reduce the mass incarceration of previous decades is paying off. People are better served in their communities where they have the support of their families. We must continue to strengthen local opportunities for diversion and treatment that have more effective outcomes, save money in lower incarceration rates, and help our fellow Texans fulfill their potential.”

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition agrees. According to Leah Pinney, Executive Director for TCJC, “Each dollar we spend on incarceration is a dollar we don’t have for effective strategies that make our communities safer and stronger. The research is clear that meaningful community-based solutions will have a bigger impact on crime at a lower cost.”

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The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition works with peers, policy-makers, practitioners, and community members to identify and promote smart justice policies that safely reduce the state’s costly over-reliance on incarceration – creating stronger families, less taxpayer waste, and safer communities.