

## Texas Is Still Tough on Crime, But Now More Effective

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In recent years, Texas has broken new ground in combating and preventing crime, reaching its lowest crime rate in recent history while also controlling costs to taxpayers.

Beginning in 2005, the Legislature focused its resources on proven strategies to enhance the public safety, such as targeted funding for probation and prison alternatives, which included substance abuse and mental illness treatment beds. Given that Texas has not lowered the potential sentences for crimes, decisions to utilize increasingly available alternatives for nonviolent offenders in appropriate cases are being made by judges and prosecutors at the local level who are most familiar with the case.

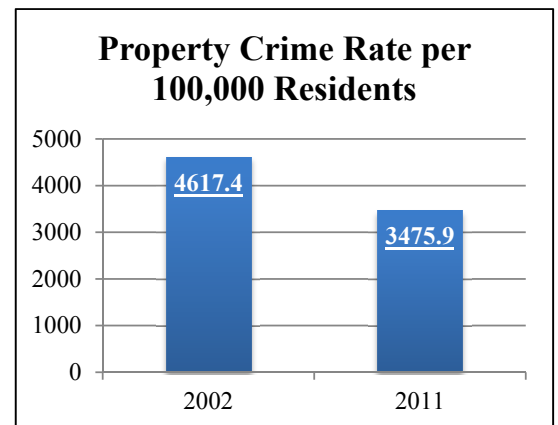
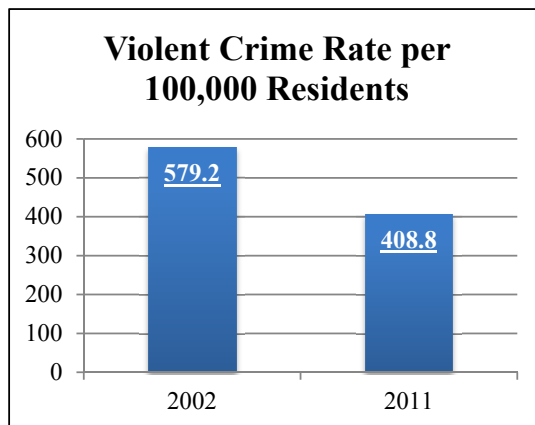
This has enabled the state to avoid over \$2 billion in prison construction and operating costs, even as crime has plummeted and violent offenders serve longer terms than ever before.

**Crime Rates:** Violent crime is down 29 percent since 2002, and property crime is down 25 percent since 2002. In fact, violent crime in Texas is at the lowest rate since 1977, and property crime rates are the lowest since 1968.

**Fewer Probation and Parole Revocations:** Texas' turn towards effective probation and parole supervision has decreased the number of offenders who commit new offenses or are revoked from community supervision. More felony offenders are under direct supervision, up six percent between 2005 and 2012, a change of 10,193 offenders.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, only 10.04 percent of felony offenders on community supervision were revoked.<sup>2</sup>

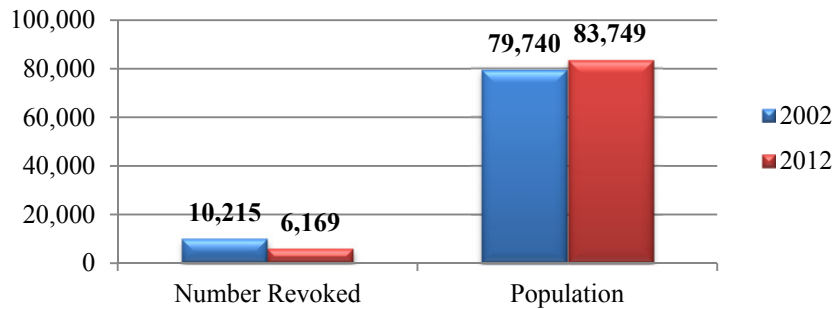
Texas' parole supervision is making gains as well, through policies such as instant drug testing and referrals to treatment, graduated sanctions, and the restoration of parole chaplains.

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Source: Texas Department of Public Safety

## Parole Revocations and Population



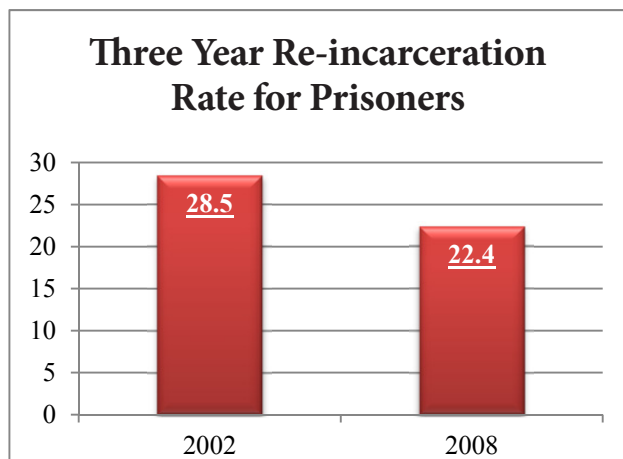
Source: Legislative Budget Board

Even as the parole population increased, revocations decreased between 2002 and 2012, resulting in a drop from a 12.8 percent revocation rate to a 7.4 percent revocation rate. In addition, the rate of new convictions for parolees is down from 7 percent to 4.42 percent.<sup>3</sup>

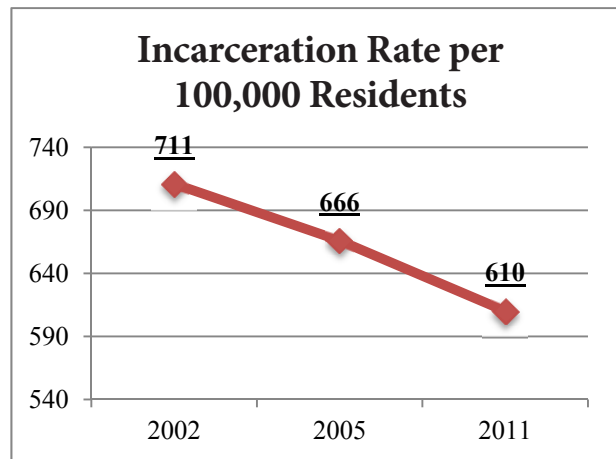
**Effective Incarceration:** Texas' reforms have allowed the state to incarcerate the most dangerous offenders for longer periods of crime. Even as crime has gone down, incarceration rates have dropped 14 percent, and vio-

lent offenders are serving 85 percent of their sentences, up from 75 percent just six years ago.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, following budgetary changes that bolstered in-prison treatment programs, more discharged inmates are not coming back: re-incarceration is down 21 percent.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, Texas has redefined effective crime control by moving away from one-size-fits all correctional policies and towards targeted approaches that cut recidivism and cut costs simultaneously. ★



Source: Legislative Budget Board



Source: Texas Department of Criminal Justice

<sup>1</sup> Legislative Budget Board, Adult and Juvenile Correctional Populations Monthly Reports, 2005 and 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, "Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015" (30 Aug. 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, "Agency Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2007-2011" (28 June 2006); Texas Department of Criminal Justice, "Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015" (30 Aug. 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, "Agency Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2013-2017" (6 July 2012); Texas Department of Criminal Justice, "Agency Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2007-2011" (28 June 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Legislative Budget Board, "Statewide Criminal Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates" (Jan. 2013).

