

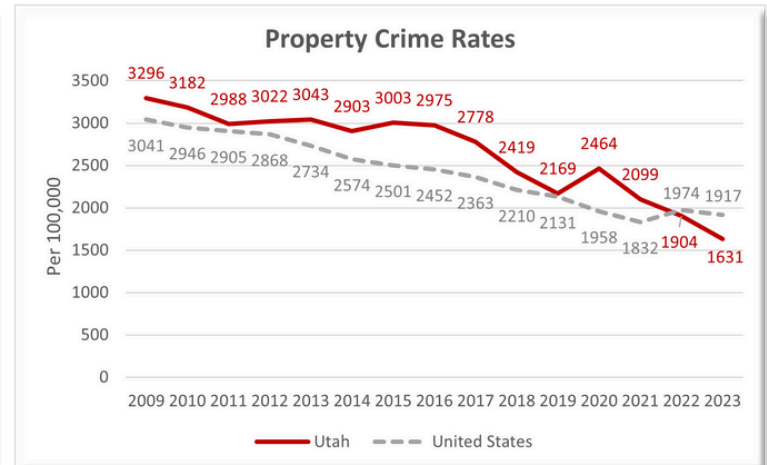
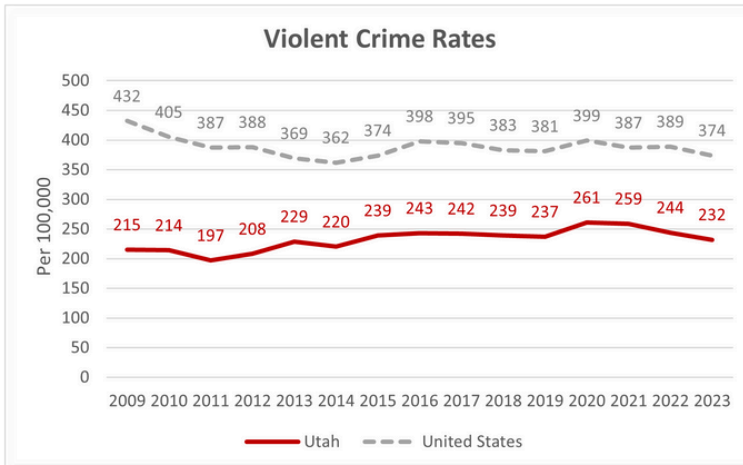
# Criminal Justice Research Summary



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH  
Utah Criminal Justice Center

## Crime Trends

Violent crime rates have decreased substantially, both nationally and in Utah, from historic highs. There was a rise in violent crime in the post-Covid era but it has begun to decline again since 2022. Property crime rates have experienced even steeper drops!



*Crime prevention approaches rely on some combination of three primary strategies: incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation.*

## Incapacitation

Incapacitation refers to those strategies that prevent crime by incarcerating individuals who have broken the law.

- Incarceration is associated with time-limited reductions in offending, due to the incapacitation of individuals while they are in prison or jail.<sup>2</sup>
- Incarceration is not associated with reduced offending in the long-term.<sup>2</sup>
- Incarceration can increase an individual's risk of recidivism, due to exposure to environments that model and reward antisocial attitudes and behaviors and desensitization to incarceration once an individual has experienced it.<sup>3</sup>
- When compared with non-custodial sanctions, such as probation, custodial sanctions have no impact on long-term recidivism.<sup>2</sup>

# \$56K

To incarcerate an individual in a Utah prison for 1 year (\$153.28/day)<sup>4</sup>

# \$50K

To incarcerate an individual in a Utah jail for 1 year (\$137.95/day)<sup>4</sup>

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## Deterrence

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Deterrence refers to those strategies that prevent crime by increasing the perceived consequences of breaking the law.

- Increased sentence lengths are not associated with reductions in crime, in part because most individuals do not know the precise consequences for violating the criminal code.<sup>5</sup>
- Immediacy and certainty of sanctions are more important than their severity for deterring criminal behavior.<sup>6</sup>
- The certainty of detection/punishment is a crime deterrent. This includes increased police presence in areas that experience higher levels of crime. For example, burglars are more likely to avoid neighborhoods with higher police presence.<sup>7</sup>
- The solve rates for many types of crime are relatively low. For example, the solve rate for violent crime in Utah is 54%, which means nearly half of individuals who committed a violent crime did not experience the intended punishment.<sup>8</sup>

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## Rehabilitation

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Rehabilitation refers to those strategies that prevent crime through changing the attitudes, skills, and motivations of those who have committed a crime.

- Treatment programs reduce recidivism when they target identified criminogenic needs: education, employment, antisocial attitudes and values, family and peer relationships, substance use, and isolation from pro-social activities. Programs that do not target these factors have no impact on recidivism.<sup>9</sup>
- Community supervision is more likely to achieve long term behavioral change when combined with evidence-based treatment interventions and when supervision activities focus on ensuring compliance with treatment goals.<sup>9</sup>

*Programs that address 4-6 risk factors are associated with a*

**35%**

**reduction in recidivism<sup>9</sup>**

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## References

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4. Mottishaw, J. Utah Department of Corrections Budget and Finance Director (personal communication, December 20, 2024).; \$153.28/day to house an individual in prison includes treatment, whereas \$137.95/day to house an individual in jail does not include treatment costs.
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For more information, go to <https://socialwork.utah.edu/research/ucjc/>

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