

The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/the-state-of-sentencing-2010-developments-in-policy-and-practice/>

Policy Issue Resources

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The scale of the correctional population results from a mix of crime rates and legislative and administrative policies that vary by state. In recent years, lawmakers have struggled to find the resources to maintain state correctional systems; 46 states are facing budget deficits in the current fiscal year, a situation that is likely to continue, according to the National Governors Association. Many states are looking closely at ways to reduce correctional costs as they seek to address limited resources. States like Kansas, Michigan, New Jersey, and New York have successfully reduced their prison populations in recent years in an effort to control costs and effectively manage prison capacity. Overall, prison populations declined in 24 states during 2009, by 48,000 persons, or 0.7 percent.

During 2010, state legislatures in at least 23 states and the District of Columbia adopted 35 criminal justice policies that may contribute to reductions in the prison population and eliminate barriers to reentry while promoting effective approaches to public safety. This report provides an overview of recent policy reforms in the areas of sentencing, probation and parole, drug policy, the prison census count, collateral consequences, and juvenile justice. Highlights include:

State policymakers enacted policy reforms for various reasons, including controlling state budgets and managing prison capacity. However, many lawmakers are also interested in reform because of their awareness that large-scale incarceration has produced diminishing returns for public safety. As a result, legislators and other stakeholders have become increasingly interested in implementing policies that strengthen public safety by providing a more appropriate balance of approaches to crime control.

To read the report, download the PDF below.

People in prison is serving a life sentence

Sentencing Policy

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