

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT INITIATIVE (JRI)

Alabama

Leah Sakala and Samantha Harvell

In 2014, Alabama’s prison system was one of the most overcrowded in the country, operating at 195 percent of its capacity and costing the state more than \$370 million every year. With technical assistance through JRI, the state enacted Senate Bill 67 with overwhelming bipartisan support in 2015 to reduce prison overcrowding, improve public safety, and strengthen community-based supervision.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through SB 67, Alabama:

Reduced Prison Overcrowding, Adjusted Sentence Severity, and Invested in Strategies to Reduce Recidivism

Reduced prison sentences for lower-level offenses by 42 percent between FY 2014 and FY 2016, diverting these individuals to probation or a Community Corrections Program (CCP) and contributing to a 16 percent decrease in the state’s prison population between June 2015 and September 2017.

Incorporated risk assessments and structured guidelines into the parole process, resulting in a higher parole grant rate for people who are considered low-risk or who have committed a less serious offense.

Mandated a period of supervision for everyone exiting prison to better connect them to treatment and reentry programming.

Strengthened and Standardized Probation and Parole Supervision

Decreased average parole caseload sizes from a high of nearly 200 to 110 by September 2017.

Revised minimum standards for CCPs and offered trainings for staff.

Authorized intermediate responses including short jail or prison stays and reduced the proportion of probation revocations for technical violations from 33 percent in FY 2015 to 21 percent in FY 2017. Over the same period, the percentage of parole revocations for technical violations fell from 28 percent to 13 percent.

Improved Access to Treatment

Invested \$28 million to expand community-based behavioral health treatment for people on community supervision.

Established a network of Day Reporting Centers, including in rural areas, to improve access to programming and services.

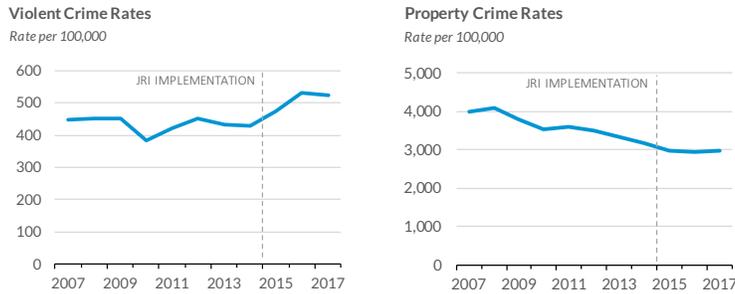
LASTING IMPACT OF JRI

Alabama took a comprehensive approach to criminal justice reform for the first time in state history.

Through SB 67, Alabama changed many process points in its criminal justice system in a comprehensive effort to reduce prison overcrowding and improve public safety. Alabama created a new felony class for the least serious felony offenses and diverted people convicted of such crimes to CCPs, raised felony thresholds for some property and drug crimes, adopted guidelines to inform parole release decisions, and implemented changes to strengthen community supervision. The state also standardized supervision and treatment practices for CCPs statewide and required them to measure outcomes. As of 2018, Alabama had reinvested nearly \$100 million in public safety efforts, including expanding community-based behavioral health treatment for people on community supervision and alleviating overburdened community supervision caseloads by hiring additional community corrections staff.

SAVINGS/ REINVESTMENT	
Savings/averted costs	State JRI investment
\$170,000,000	\$95,600,000

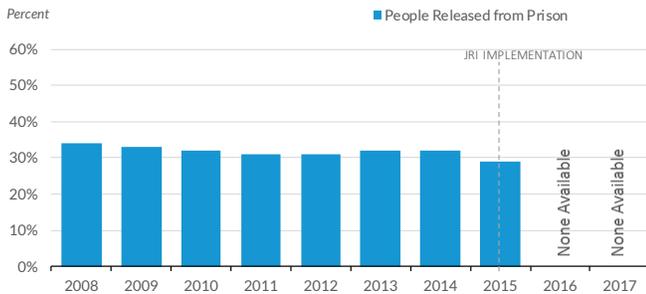
Violent and Property Crime Rates, 2007–17



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program (2007-2017).

- ↑ Violent crime rates were increasing before JRI and continued to increase after reform.
- ▬ Property crime rates were declining before JRI and leveled off after reform.

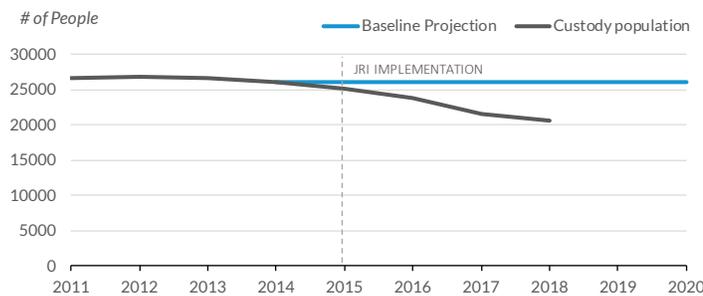
Recidivism Rate: Reincarceration within Three Years



Source: CSG 50 State Report; Alabama Department of Corrections Annual Report Fiscal year 2018.
Note: Intermediate short jail or prison stays were not counted as recidivism for people released in 2015.

- ↓ Between 2008 and 2015, recidivism rates declined for people released from prison.

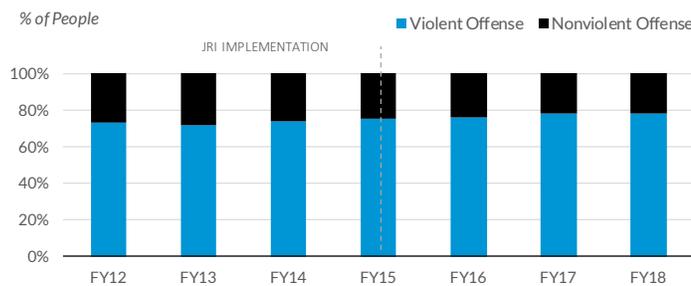
Prison Population



Source: Alabama Department of Corrections Annual Reports 2012; 2018; Baseline prison projection calculated by the Council of State Governments Justice Center.
Note: The custody population in Alabama includes all people sentenced to the Alabama Department of Corrections and under the agency's day-to-day control. It does not include people in community corrections, those housed in the federal system, other states, or county jails.

- ↓ In 2018, there were 5,400 fewer people in Alabama prisons than was projected before reform.

Prison Composition



Source: Alabama Sentencing Commission Annual Reports FY 2013-19; FY 2017 rate provided by the Alabama Department of Corrections.
Note: Based on in-house custody population which includes all people sentenced to the Alabama Department of Corrections and supervised in a major facility. Between FY 2012 and FY 2015, this number excluded approximately 1,000 people housed in private facilities.

*The data in this summary describe trends and provide additional context on system changes pre- and post-reform. Indicators shown here track high-level changes in state justice systems and do not necessarily demonstrate the impact of any specific reform, including JRI policy and practice changes. Visit urban.is/jri to see detailed sources for information in this fact sheet.

- ↑ Alabama is focusing prison space on people convicted of serious offenses. In 2018, 78 percent of people in prison were there for a violent offense, up from 73 percent in 2012.