

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT INITIATIVE (JRI)

Massachusetts

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Despite having one of the lowest incarceration rates nationwide, Massachusetts struggled with high recidivism rates. Three-quarters of new sentences in 2013 were given to people with prior convictions. Furthermore, more than half of people leaving prisons in 2011 were rearraigned within three years of release. With technical assistance through JRI, the state enacted two laws in April 2018—one stemming directly from JRI (H. 4012) and one informed by JRI (S. 2371)—to address high recidivism rates and avert nearly \$10 million in corrections spending by 2023.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through H. 4012 and S. 2371, Massachusetts:

Focused Incarceration on Serious Offenses and Supported Diversion and Pretrial Services

- Eliminated mandatory minimum sentences for certain less-serious drug crimes and imposed mandatory minimum sentences for more-serious ones, such as trafficking synthetic opioids.

- Expanded earned-time credits for people in prison who complete recidivism-reduction programming and treatment, focusing prison resources on people at greater risk of recidivism.

- Required district attorneys to develop programs to divert veterans and people with behavioral health needs from jail, when appropriate.

- Created a pretrial service program as an alternative to jail and allowed judges to require participation in the program within the office of community corrections.

Strengthened Community Corrections and Improved Access to and Quality of Treatment

- Improved probation caseload management and data-tracking capacity to capture key probation measures, and required all law enforcement agencies to report crime and arrest data quarterly.

- Launched a public-private pilot program in 2019 to provide specialized treatment services to people involved in the criminal justice system who have serious mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders and are at high risk of reoffending.

- Established a grant program in 2020 that funded 184 transitional housing beds and community-based services for people returning from prison, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, substance use treatment, and workforce development programming.

INNOVATION THROUGH JRI

Through JRI, Massachusetts is providing **comprehensive and targeted supports for justice-involved young adults at high risk of recidivating.**

As Massachusetts looked to proven and promising strategies to reduce recidivism, state leaders identified an opportunity to address the unique needs of transitional-age youth (i.e., youth ages 18 to 25), who often have high recidivism rates. In FY 2018, it invested \$637,500 of the JRI funding package to pilot a transitional-youth probation strategy. Massachusetts’s probation agency and courts collaboratively designed and launched the Transitional Youth Early Intervention Probation Pilot in 2018. The state awarded a grant to a local service provider, UTEC, to partner with local probation offices in three jurisdictions: Haverhill, Lawrence, and Lowell. UTEC provides recidivism-reduction programming as well as education and employment services to young adults at highest risk of future offending. In FY 2019, Massachusetts invested an additional \$1.2 million to scale the pilot program, as well as \$2 million for a new grant to support both pre- and postrelease reentry services for young adults returning home from state prisons or county correctional facilities. These programs are just beginning and it will be some time before we capture their impact, but these innovative JRI investments place Massachusetts at the forefront of efforts to address the unique needs of justice-involved young adults.

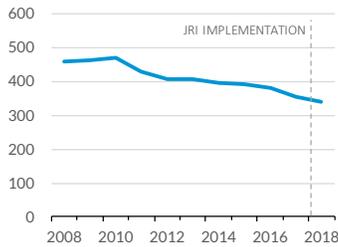
SAVINGS/ REINVESTMENT

Savings/averted costs	Reinvestment
Unknown	Unknown

Violent and Property Crime Rates, 2008–18

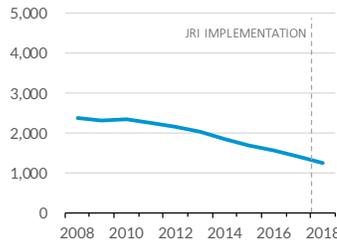
Violent Crime Rates

Rate per 100,000



Property Crime Rates

Rate per 100,000



Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reporting Program (2008–2018).



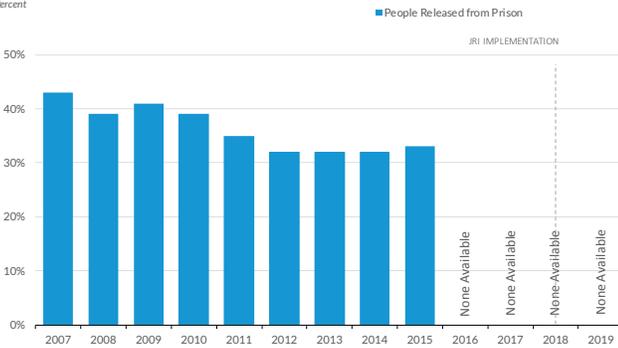
Violent crime rates were decreasing before JRI and continued decreasing after reform.



Property crime rates were decreasing before JRI and continued decreasing after reform.

Recidivism: Reincarceration within Three Years

Percent



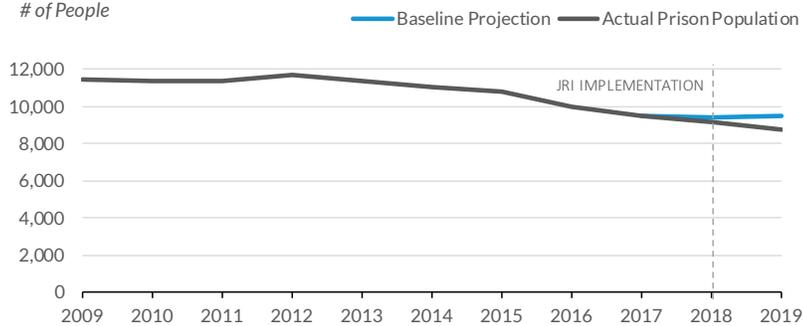
Source: Massachusetts Department of Corrections, Prison Population Trends 2018.



Recidivism rates fell significantly for people released from prison between 2007 and 2015.

Prison Population

of People



Source: Massachusetts Department of Corrections, Inmate and Prison Research Statistics (January 1 of a given year).

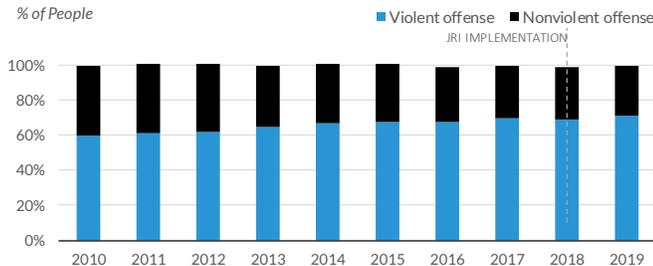
Note: Baseline projection data project prison populations on December 31 of a given year, meaning this figure reflects projections from December 31 of the prior year.



In 2019, there were approximately 686 fewer people in Massachusetts prisons than was projected prereform.

Prison Composition

% of People



Source: Massachusetts Department of Corrections, Inmate and Prison Research Statistics (January 1 of a given year).

Notes: Violent offenses include all person and sex offenses. Nonviolent offenses include all drug, property, and other offenses.



Massachusetts is increasingly targeting prison beds to the most serious offenses. In 2019, 71 percent of people in prison were there for a violent offense, up from 60 percent in 2010.

*The data in this summary describe trends and provide additional context on system changes pre- and postreform. 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.

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