

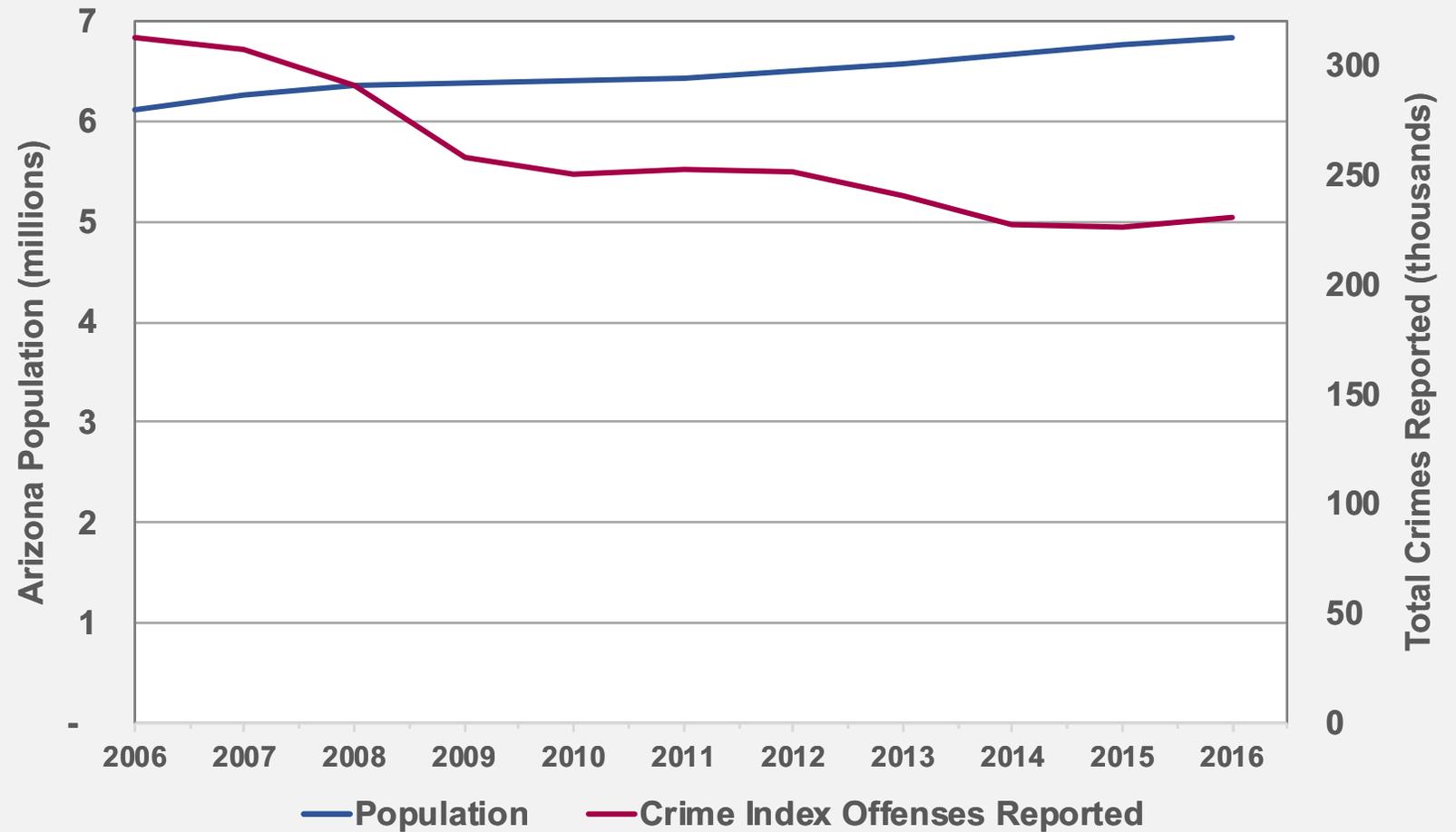
Criminal Justice in Arizona

Summary of the Arizona Town Hall Report

Dan Hunting
Senior Policy Analyst
May 2018

Crime in Arizona

Arizona's population continues to increase. But the total number of crimes has decreased.

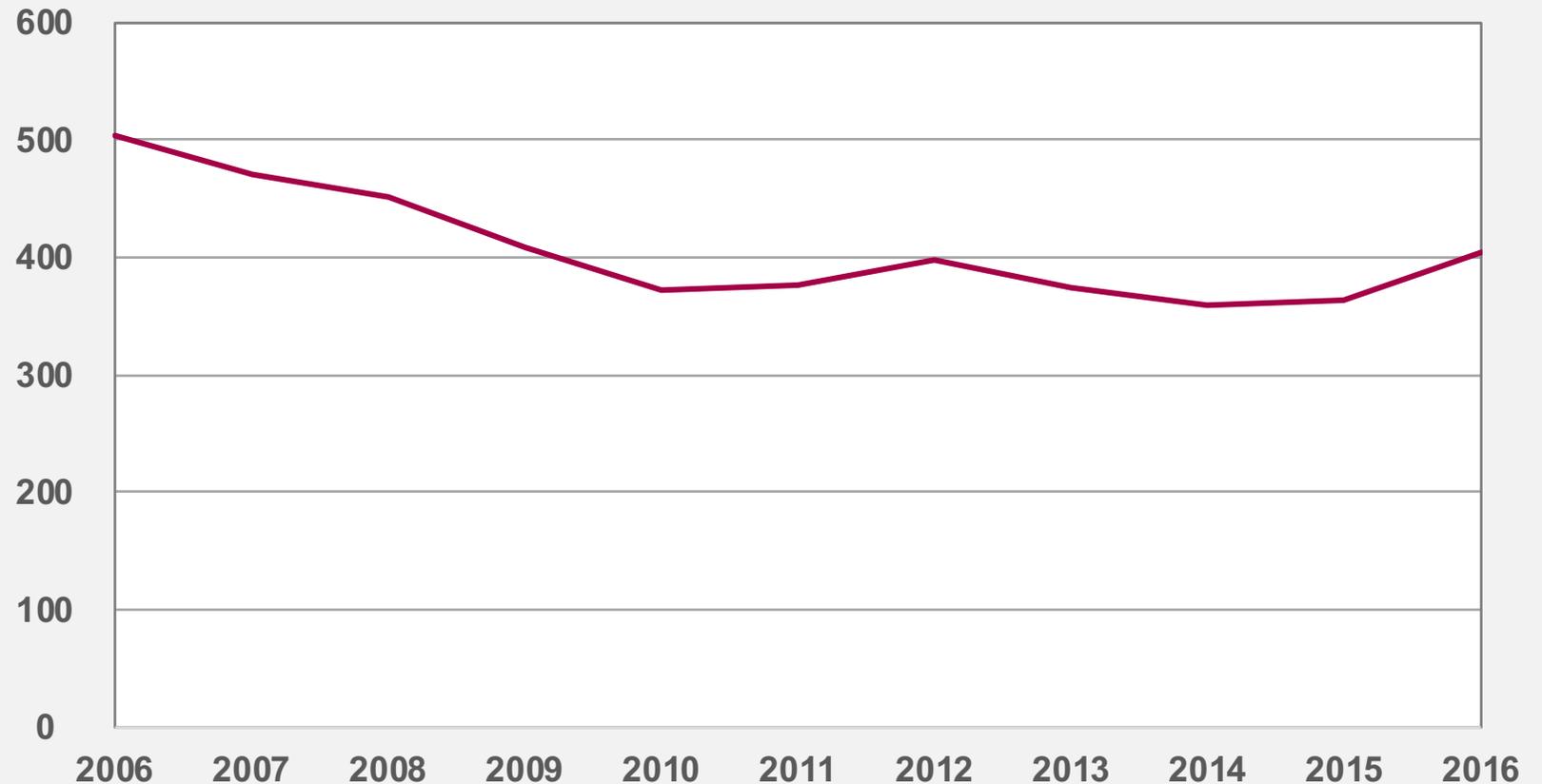


Crime in Arizona

Increased population and fewer crimes has resulted in a dramatically lower crime *rate*.

Violent crime is down by 20% since 2006.

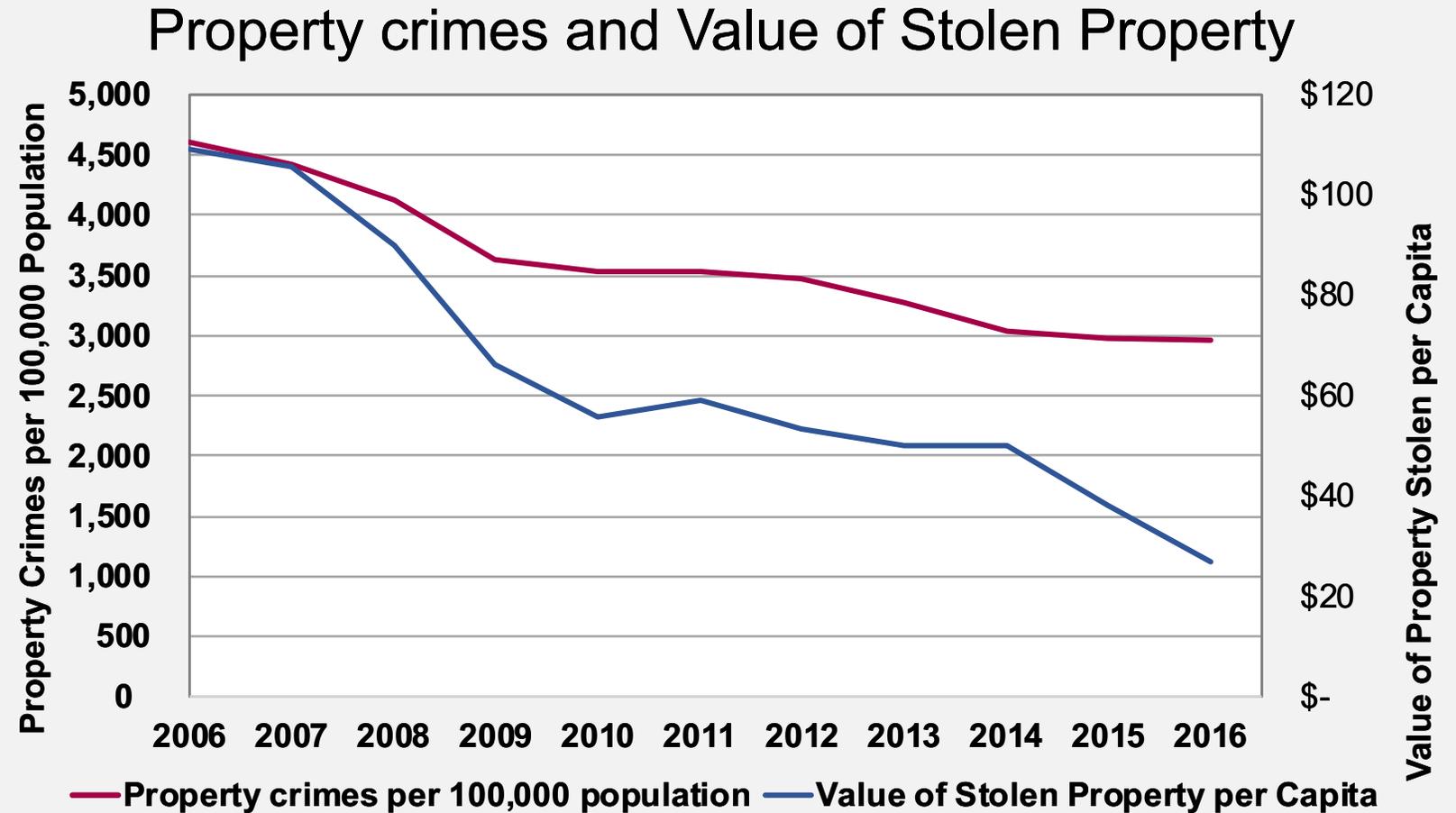
Violent crimes per 100,000 population



Crime in Arizona

The drop in the property crime rate has been even more dramatic (36%).

The value of property stolen per capita has dropped by 72% since 2006, probably due to increased theft-resistance of cars.

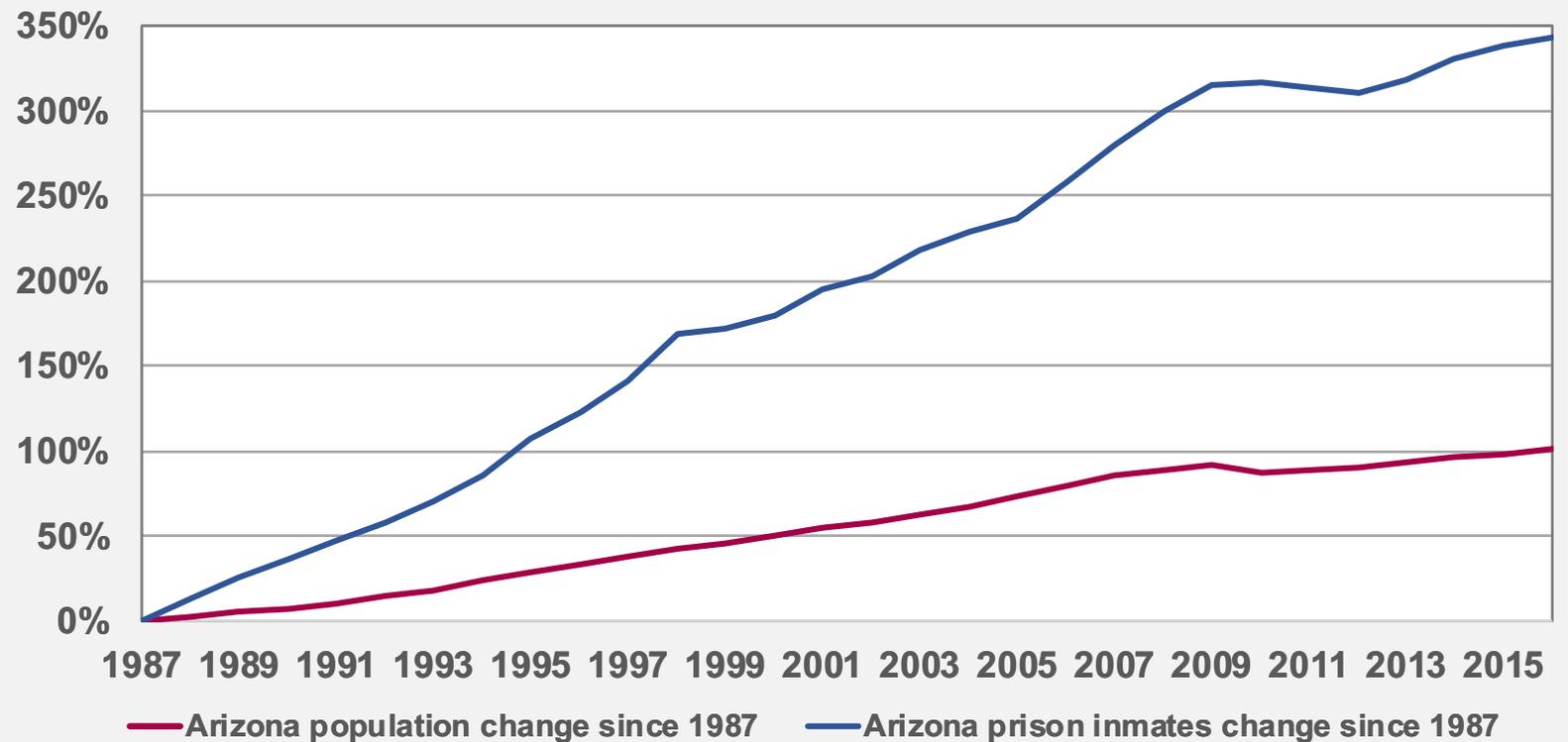


Size and Scope

The incarceration has gone up as the crime rate has gone down.

It is not clear exactly how these two events are related.

Total population and prisoner population change since 1987



Size and Scope

What does all this cost?

- Department of Corrections is \$1 billion annually for state prisons.
- \$300 million in other state expense for courts, Juvenile Corrections and Department of Public Safety.
- Counties pay for Sheriff's Departments and county jails.
- Cities fund police and municipal courts.
- *Estimated cost of the CJS system: \$525 per person per year in Arizona.*

Size and Scope

- There are over 12,000 police officers in the state including municipal, county, tribal and DPS.
- Federal officers also protect federal lands, e.g. national parks.
- Approximately 500 judges handle 2 million civil and criminal cases.
- The majority of cases are minor traffic offenses.
- 42,000 prison inmates plus about 14,000 in county jails, 85,000 on probation.

Vulnerable Populations

- One in 10 prisoners in Arizona are over age 54.
- Prisoners are considered elderly at age 55 and above, due to their poor health condition.
- More than a quarter of inmates suffer from mental illness.
- Treating mentally ill inmates is often a strain on a prison's staff and resources.
- Ninety percent of female inmates experienced physical or sexual violence prior to prison.
- Offenders with developmental disabilities, chronic illnesses, and substance abuse issues present special difficulties both while in prison and when making the transition back to society upon release.

Native American Issues

- Tribal sovereignty influences the criminal justice system on reservations.
- Crime on tribal land involves a complex web of overlapping jurisdictions that change with the severity of the crime and the ethnicity of both victim and offender.
- In recent years, the Tribal Law and Order Act and the Violence Against Women Act have given tribes increased sentencing and jurisdiction over domestic violence.

A Journey Through the System



- **Police**
- **Bail, Jail, Fines and Fees**
- **Charging**
- **Sentencing and Incarceration**
- **Release and Recidivism**

Police

- Although the number of officers per 1,000 residents in Phoenix has gone down since 2008, crime rates have also gone down.
- The connection, if any, between these statistics is unclear.
- Research suggests that when citizens view police actions as legitimately and procedurally just, they are more likely to obey the law and cooperate with police.
- The public has shown increased interest in policing practices in recent years.
- Use of body-worn cameras by police may lead to a reduced number of complaints from citizens.



Bail, Jail, Fines and Fees

- Low-income people often have difficulty paying bail forcing them to await trial in jail.
- Research indicates that bail does little to ensure that defendants return for trial.
- Fees imposed upon those convicted in court often support programs such as domestic violence shelters. These programs may face lower funding as crime rates continues to drop.
- Reforms are being implemented to make the imposition of bail more equitable and to reduce the population awaiting trial in jail.

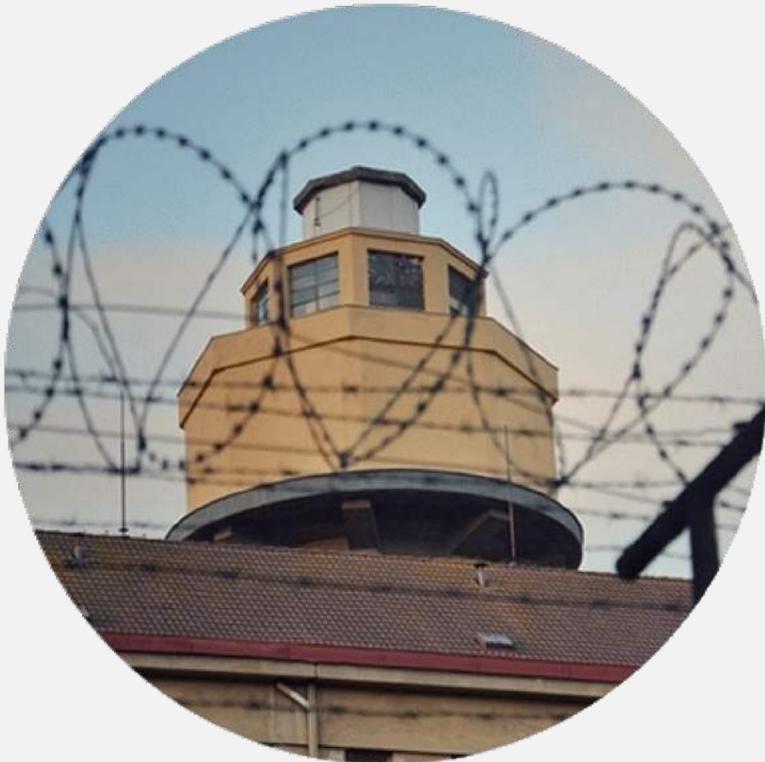


Charging

- Prosecutors have wide discretion in deciding what charges to press against a defendant.
- The decision not to charge the person may be the most powerful tool of the prosecutor.
- Although the initial charges filed may not be the ones that are eventually brought to trial, they influence key decisions on bail, plea bargaining, and sentencing.
- The development of charging guidelines could reduce seemingly arbitrary charges.



Sentencing and Incarceration



- Most jurisdictions now have some sort of “determinate sentencing,” including mandatory minimum sentences and “three-strikes-and-you’re-out” rules.
- This has resulted in a transfer of power from judges to prosecutors, as the charges filed by the prosecutor now largely determine the sentence.
- Sentencing guidelines are based on whether the conviction is for a dangerous, or non-dangerous, felony and the offender’s prior criminal record.
- Arizona has the fourth highest incarceration rate in the country at 585 per 100,000 population.
- Minimum sentencing laws have been modified in some states recently, indicating a shift away from determinate sentencing.

Re-entry and Recidivism



- Eighteen percent of those released return to prison within six months.
- Arizona's three-year recidivism rate of 39 percent is lower than the national average of 50 percent.
- Those returning to society after prison often lack the resources to establish themselves in the outside world.
- Access to transportation, employment and health care may help reduce recidivism.

For a PDF copy of the report:

MorrisonInstitute.asu.edu