

## **Crime, immigration connection unclear, Justice Dept statistics suggest**

By Bryant Furlow 5/3/10 5:27 PM



The end of the U.S.-Mexico border fence in California (Photo by Bisayan lady/Flickr) Arizona Governor Jan Brewer cited “border violence and crime due to illegal immigration” as motivations for signing a controversial law requiring people in Arizona to carry proof that they are in the U.S. legally.

But FBI and U.S. Department of Justice data show that Arizona’s violent crime rate is lower than the U.S. average and has been declining more rapidly than the U.S. average, The Independent found.

Despite a growing population, violent crime rates dropped sharply in Arizona between 2002 and 2008, the latest year for which complete federal crime data are available online. According to the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arizona’s population-adjusted violent crime rate dropped from 555 reported incidents per 100,000 people in 2002 to 447 per 100,000 in 2008.

That 19.5 percent decline was much more pronounced than the U.S. average during the same time period, The Independent found.

Nationwide, the violent crime rate dropped by 7.9 percent, from 494 violent crimes per 100,000 population in 2002 to 455 in 2008, The Independent found.

New Mexico saw a 12 percent decline in violent crimes between 2002 and 2008, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics database.

But at nearly 650 violent crimes per 100,000 people in 2008, New Mexico's crime rate was considerably higher than both Arizona's and the U.S. average.

Reports by the nonpartisan Immigration Policy Center and libertarian CATO Institute both indicate crime rates fell in Arizona over the past decade.

Census data show that overall, immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S.-born people, according to both institutes.

ICE officials did not return The Independent's calls Monday, requesting illegal immigration statistics for New Mexico, Arizona and Texas.