Trends in U.S. Corrections

U.S. State and Federal Prison Population, 1925-2014

2014: 1,508,636

International Rates of Imprisonment per 100,000

United States 698
Rwanda 492
Russia 446
Brazil 301
Australia 151
Spain 139
China 119
Canada 106
France 100
Austria 96
Germany 78
Denmark 61
Sweden 60
India 30

MASS INCARCERATION

The United States is the world’s leader in incarceration with 2.2 million people currently in the nation’s prisons and jails — a 500% increase over the last forty years. Changes in sentencing law and policy, not changes in crime rates, explain most of this increase. These trends have resulted in prison overcrowding and fiscal burdens on states to accommodate a rapidly expanding penal system, despite increasing evidence that large-scale incarceration is not an effective means of achieving public safety.

State Expenditures on Corrections in Billions, 1985-2013


Population Under Control of the U.S. Corrections System, 1980 and 2013

The Sentencing Project • 1705 DeSales Street NW, 8th Floor • Washington, D.C. 20036 • sentencingproject.org

FACT SHEET: TRENDS IN U.S. CORRECTIONS

Number of People in Prisons and Jails for Drug Offenses, 1980 and 2014

1980: 40,900 individuals
2014: 488,400 individuals


DRUG POLICY

Sentencing policies of the War on Drugs era resulted in dramatic growth in incarceration for drug offenses. Since its official beginning in the 1980s, the number of Americans incarcerated for drug offenses has skyrocketed from 41,000 in 1980 to nearly a half million in 2014. Furthermore, harsh sentencing laws such as mandatory minimums keep many people convicted of drug offenses in prison for longer periods of time: in 1986, people released after serving time for a federal drug offense had spent an average of 22 months in prison. By 2004, people convicted on federal drug offenses were expected to serve almost three times that length: 62 months in prison.

At the federal level, people incarcerated on a drug conviction make up half the prison population. At the state level, the number of people in prison for drug offenses has increased ten-fold since 1980. Most of these people are not high-level actors in the drug trade, and most have no prior criminal record for a violent offense.

Number of People in Federal Prisons for Drug Offenses, 1980-2014

WOMEN

The number of women in prison has been increasing at a rate 50 percent higher than men since 1980. Women in prison often have significant histories of physical and sexual abuse, high rates of HIV, and substance abuse problems. Women’s imprisonment in female-led households leads to children who suffer from their mother’s absence and breaks in family ties.

Number of Women in State and Federal Prisons, 1980-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women in State Prisons</th>
<th>Women in Federal Prisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>13,258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>23,099</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>43,845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>68,544</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>85,044</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>98,688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>104,629</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>106,232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Highest and Lowest State Incarceration Rates (per 100,000), 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall (National = 471)</th>
<th>Women (National = 65)</th>
<th>Men (National = 890)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGHEST</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>Manitoba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOWEST</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Prisons and jails form one integrated system. Data include total jail and prison populations.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

More than 60% of the people in prison today are people of color. Black men are nearly six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men and Hispanic men are 2.3 times as likely. For black men in their thirties, 1 in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day.

People in State and Federal Prisons, by Race and Ethnicity, 2013/2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>520,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>568,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>337,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Rate of Incarceration per 100,000, by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White women</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black women</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina women</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White men</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black men</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino men</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1,091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment of U.S. Residents Born in 2001

All Men

- 1 in 9

White Men

- 1 in 17

Black Men

- 1 in 3

Latino Men

- 1 in 6

All Women

- 1 in 56

White Women

- 1 in 111

Black Women

- 1 in 18

Latina Women

- 1 in 45

YOUTH

Over the past 15 years, commitment to secure juvenile facilities for youth who have been adjudicated delinquent has been steadily declining from a high point of 77,800 in 1999 to 35,200 in 2013. Still, troubling problems remain. Youth of color enter the system much more frequently than white youth and are more likely to be sentenced to harsher terms of punishment. In addition, thousands of young people are transferred to the adult system each year, and many are sent to adult prisons and jails to serve their sentences.

Number of Youth Committed to Juvenile Facilities, 1997-2013


Rate of Youth in Residential Placement per 100,000, by Race and Ethnicity, 2013


Number of Youth Held in Jails and State Prisons, 1985-2014

In 48 states, a felony conviction can result in the loss of an individual’s voting rights. The period of disenfranchisement varies by state, with some states restoring the vote upon completion of a prison term, and others effectively disenfranchising for life. As a result of the dramatic expansion of the criminal justice system in the last 40 years, felony disenfranchisement has affected the political voice of many communities. Today, 5.85 million Americans are unable to vote due to state felony disenfranchisement policies.

Rate of Disenfranchisement, by Race, 2010

- **White**: 2.5%
- **Black**: 7.66%


Disenfranchised Population by Incarceration Status, 2010

- **In prison or jail**: 25%
- **On probation or parole**: 30%
- **Completed sentence**: 45%

LIFE SENTENCES

The number of people serving life sentences continues to grow even while serious, violent crime has been declining for the past 20 years and little public safety benefit has been demonstrated to correlate with increasingly lengthy sentences. The lifer population has more than quadrupled since 1984. One in nine people in prison is now serving a life sentence and nearly a third of lifers have been sentenced to life without parole.

Number of People Serving Life Sentences, 1984-2012


People Serving Life Sentences, by Race and Ethnicity, 2012


Updated November 2015