

55 facts about mass incarceration

The Prison Policy Initiative is a research and activist organization focused on issues related to mass incarceration. Below we list some of the most important statistics about the U.S. criminal legal system, for use in your reporting. (All data below are the most recent statistics available as of April 2023. Statistics before 2018 are noted.) You can see all of these statistics and more on our website at www.prisonpolicy.org. You can also write to us with questions at 69 Garfield Ave. Fl. 1, Easthampton MA 01027.

The big picture

- Number of people locked up in the U.S. on any given day, anywhere: **1.9 million**
- Number of people in state and federal prisons: 1.26 million
- Number of people in local jails: 514,000
- U.S. incarceration rate: 664 per 100,000 people (the highest of any country in the world)
 - State with the highest incarceration rate: Louisiana (1,094 per 100,000 people)
 - State with the lowest incarceration rate: Massachusetts (275 per 100,000 people)
 - Canada's incarceration rate, for comparison: 104 per 100,000 people

Facts about prisons (state and federal)

- Over the last 50 years the state + federal prison population has grown by about 700%
- Prison incarceration rate for:
 - Black people: 1,096 per 100,000 people
 - White people: 214 per 100,000 people
- Of people in state prisons (2016):
 - The average person has been arrested 9 times
 - 68% were 18 or younger at the time of their first arrest
 - 33% had a parent incarcerated while they were kids
 - 12% were homeless before age 18
 - 22% were homeless or housing insecure shortly before incarceration
 - 42% received public assistance before age 18
 - 19% lived in public housing before age 18
 - 49% have substance use disorder
- Fraction of people in state prisons at the end of 2015 who had already served over 10 years: 1 in 6
- Percent of the *growth* in new state prison admissions 2001-2015 driven by sentences 5 years or longer: 99%
- 37% of people in state and federal prison have been diagnosed with a mental illness (2017)
- Other chronic illnesses more common in prison than in the general U.S. population: diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, hep C, heart disease, asthma (2016)
- Unemployment rate of formerly inc. people: 27% (2009)
- Formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to be homeless than the average person in the U.S. (2009)

Mortality in prisons

- Percent that state prison deaths rose 2001-2018: 44%
 - Percent by which deaths from **illness** rose: 27%
 - **Suicide**: 85% **Homicide**: 208% **Drug/alcohol intoxication**: 611%
- Percent by which the national state prison population rose in that same time period: 1%
- Time that each year of incarceration takes off the average person's life expectancy: 2 years (2016)
- Percent by which prison deaths increased in 2020: 46%

Facts about local jails

- Between 1983 and 2019, local jail populations grew by approximately 195% (i.e. nearly tripled)
 - Main reason for jail population growth: Increased use of pretrial detention
- About 5 million individuals cycle through local jails every year (2017)
- 71% of people in local jails are being held pretrial
- Median bail bond for a felony: \$10,000 (2009)
- Average income of a person in jail: \$15,109 (2015)
- Ann'l nat'l cost of pretrial detention: \$13.6 bn (2017)
- Jail incarceration rate for:
 - Black people: 600 per 100,000 people
 - White people: 184 per 100,000 people
- Of people booked in jail **once** in a typical year: (2017)
 - 12% were unemployed before arrest
 - 36% had annual incomes under \$10,000
 - 22% had a serious/moderate mental illness
 - 36% had a substance use disorder
 - 23% had no health insurance
- Of people booked in jail **2 or more times** in a typical year: (2017)
 - 15% were unemployed before arrest
 - 49% had annual incomes under \$10,000
 - 25% had a serious/moderate mental illness
 - 52% had a substance use disorder
 - 27% had no health insurance

Following the money of mass incarceration

- Cost of running the criminal legal system every year: \$182 billion (2017)
 - Cost of prisons, jails, probation and parole: \$81bn
 - Cost of court systems: \$29bn
 - Cost of policing: \$63.2bn
 - Costs paid by incarcerated people and their families (for things like phone calls): \$2.9bn
- Number of companies profiting from mass incarceration today: 4,100
- Share of incarcerated people held in a private prison or jail: 8%