

Incarceration Statistics

General Statistics

- Over 2.2 million people are currently in U.S. jails or prisons; that's more than the entire population of New Mexico.
- The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.
- Incarceration costs taxpayers almost \$70 billion annually.
- There are over 5,000 jails and prisons in the U.S. - There are more jails than colleges in the U.S.
- It is estimated that half of young black men in the U.S. can expect to serve time in prison.
- The U.S. is the world leader in incarcerating women, with 11% of the total prison population. Women are the fastest growing incarcerated population.
- Approximately 85% of incarcerated women have been raped.
- The privatization of the prison industry is a major contributor to mass incarceration.
- California incarcerates more of its youth than any other state in the nation.
- The LA County jail is the largest jail system in the world, with nearly 18,000 inmates.
- The largest mental health facility in the world is a jail - Twin Towers Correctional Facility in downtown Los Angeles.
- Suicide is the number one cause of death in county jails.
- Inmates who attend faith-based programs have reduced recidivism rates.

Impact of Three Strikes Law

California's three-strikes sentencing law has had little impact on violent crime while costing taxpayers \$8 billion (in just the first decade after being passed) to imprison tens of thousands of felons, most of them for nonviolent offenses.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2004/mar/05/local/me-strikes5>

Typical length of sentence

The average amount of time a person spends in prison has increased significantly, according to a study by Washington, D.C. think tank, Urban Institute. The study found the average amount of time served behind bars had risen by about 5 years from 2000 to 2014.

Researchers also discovered that black men, in particular, were the majority of the population of inmates serving the longest sentences.

<http://www.newsweek.com/prison-sentences-increased-2017-jail-639952>

The typical mandatory sentence for a first-time drug offense in federal court is five to ten years. By contrast, in other developed countries around the world, a first-time drug offense would merit no more than six months in jail, if jail time is imposed at all.

The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander.

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The average length of time served by federal inmates more than doubled from 1988 to 2012, rising from 17.9 to 37.5 months. Across all six major categories of federal crime—violent, property, drug, public order, weapon, and immigration offenses—imprisonment periods increased significantly (www.pewtrusts.org).

Impact on children of incarcerated

There are 2.7 million minor children who have a parent in jail or prison. In other words, 1-in-28 American children (3.6%) have an incarcerated parent.

In 2007, black and Hispanic children in the United States were 7.5 and 2.7 times more likely, respectively, than white children to have a parent in prison

The number of children with a mother in prison increased 131 percent from 1991 to 2007 while the number with a father in prison increased 77 percent (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008).

Children of incarcerated fathers tend to exhibit more problems in childhood and adolescence.

The few studies that have examined the consequences for children of incarcerated mothers tend to focus on separation from children and housing stability. These studies often find persistent disadvantage in terms of poor education and financial circumstances, substance abuse, mental illness, domestic abuse, or a combination of these (<https://www.nap.edu>).

Foster care – pipeline to incarceration

Almost half of all foster care youth end up in jail within two years of aging out of the system. www.nationswell.com, www.kids-allianc.org

A 2011 survey reported that 13 percent of all foster children run away at least once, and another 9 percent abandon their foster homes to live with friends. When 22 percent of any child population flees the system which adults have provided to keep them safe, something is wrong. <https://www.socialworkhelper.com/2015/03/26/foster-care-youth-trapped-school-prison-pipeline/>

Children as young as 14 are sent to adult prisons.

Mental illness & Incarceration

Two million adults with serious mental illness are booked into jails annually (National Association of Mental Illness - www.nami.org).

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Approximately 383,000 individuals with severe psychiatric disease were behind bars in the United States in 2014 or nearly 10 times the number of patients remaining in the nation's state hospitals (www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org).

Homelessness and incarceration

25-50% of the homeless population have a history of incarceration (National Healthcare for the Homeless Council - www.nhchc.org).

Approximately 80 percent of criminal defendants are indigent and thus unable to hire a lawyer. *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander.

Every year, more than 600,000 people exit the criminal justice system and return to their communities. A significant proportion of them were homeless when they were incarcerated. Many will return to homelessness when they leave jail or prison. And still others may experience homelessness for the first time (<https://cops.usdoj.gov>).

Important Resources

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Michelle Alexander

America's Original Sin

Jim Wallis

Locked Down, Locked Out: Why Prison Doesn't Work and How We Can Do Better

Maya Schenwar

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Bryan Stevenson

Watch the documentary **13th**, available for streaming on Netflix

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www.prismjustice.org