

The United States held an estimated 1,561,500 prisoners in state and federal custody at the end of 2014, down 1% from the previous year. This was the smallest total prison population since 2005 and the second largest decline in more than 35 years. More than a third (34%) of the decrease was attributed to the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) population, which declined for the second consecutive year.

Demographics and offenses

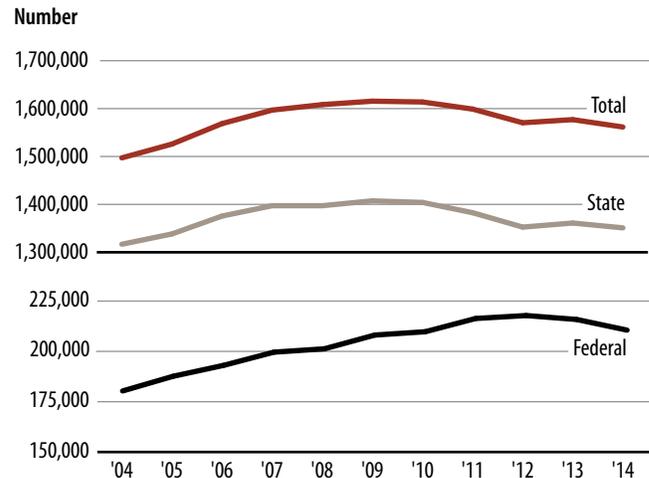
Nearly 3% of non-Hispanic black males and 1% of Hispanic males were serving sentences of at least 1 year in prison at yearend 2014, compared to less than 0.5% of non-Hispanic white males. An estimated 516,900 black males (37%), 453,500 white males (32%), and 308,700 Hispanic males (22%) were in custody. Black men had the highest imprisonment rate in every age group and were in state or federal facilities 3.8 to 10.5 times more often than white men and 1.4 to 3.1 times more often than Hispanic men.

Fifty percent of federal inmates and 16% of state prisoners were convicted drug offenders. In comparison, 53% of state prisoners and 7% of federal prisoners were serving time for violent offenses. A smaller percentage of whites were in state prison for violent offenses (48%) than blacks (57%) and Hispanics (59%). Among Hispanics, 57% of federal inmates were convicted drug offenders, and 26% were sentenced for immigration offenses. The number of white inmates (78,500 prisoners) serving time in state prison for rape or other sexual offenses was more than the combined total of blacks (39,700) and Hispanics (37,300).

Female prisoners

Females accounted for approximately 7% of the total prison population. The number of females in state or federal custody increased more than 1% between 2013 and 2014. This was the largest number of female prisoners since 2009, and much of the growth took place in states with smaller prison systems. Fifty percent of the female prison population was white and 21% was black. However, black females were between 1.6 and 4.1 times more likely to be imprisoned than white females across all age groups. Among females in state prisons, 24% were convicted drug offenders and 37% were serving sentences for violent crimes at yearend 2013.

Total, state, and federal U.S. prison population, 2004–2014



Note: Counts based on all prisoners under the jurisdiction of state and federal correctional authorities.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 2004–2014.

Private prisons

Seven states housed at least 20% of their inmate population in private facilities at yearend 2014. A total of 131,300 inmates were held by private prison facilities in 30 states and the BOP, which was a decrease of 2,100 prisoners from 2013. Since 1999, the size of the private prison population grew 90%, from 69,000 prisoners in 1999 to 131,300 in 2014. The use of private prisons was at a maximum in 2012, when 137,200 inmates (almost 9% of the total U.S. prison population) were housed in private facilities.

Imprisonment rates

At yearend, 471 people per 100,000 residents of all ages and 612 people per 100,000 residents age 18 or older were imprisoned. Louisiana had the highest imprisonment rate for people of all ages (816 per 100,000 state residents) and adults (1,072 inmates per 100,000 state residents age 18 or older). Maine imprisoned the fewest residents per capita (153 per 100,000 state residents of all ages and 189 per 100,000 adults).

The full report (*Prisoners in 2014*, NCJ 248955), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics can be found at www.bjs.gov.

