



Prisoners in 2021 – Statistical Tables

SUMMARY | NCJ 305125

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The number of persons in prison in the United States decreased 1% from 2020 to 2021. This was the eighth consecutive year that the number of persons in U.S. prisons declined, dropping from 1,221,200 at yearend 2020 to 1,204,300 at yearend 2021. Over the 10-year period from 2011 to 2021, the adult imprisonment rate declined 30%. The imprisonment rate for adult U.S. residents in state or federal prison serving a sentence of more than one year also declined (down 2%) from yearend 2020 to 2021, from 460 to 449 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 adult U.S. residents.

State prison populations varied

The national decline in the prison population from 2020 to 2021 reflected a decrease in prison populations in 32 states that was offset by an increase in 17 states and the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). This state variance differs from 2019 to 2020, when 49 states (data for Idaho are not comparable) and the BOP had a decrease in the number of persons in prison, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

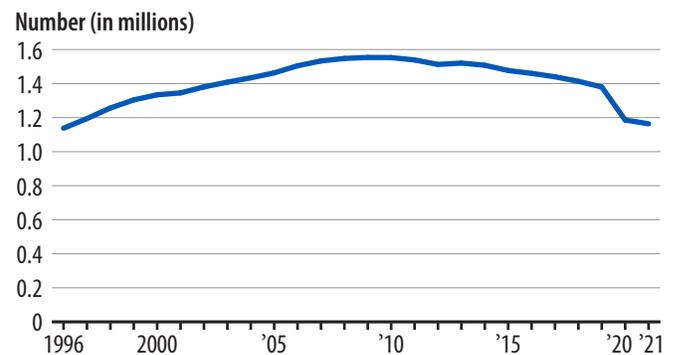
Demographic data

Among racial and ethnic groups, black persons had the highest imprisonment rate in 2021 (1,186 per 100,000 adult black residents), followed by American Indians and Alaska Natives (1,004 per 100,000); Hispanics (619 per 100,00); white persons (222 per 100,000); and Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Other Pacific Islanders (90 per 100,000). Compared to 2011, adult imprisonment rates declined for all racial and ethnic groups in 2021, including a 40% decrease for black persons; 37% for Hispanics; 34% for Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Other Pacific Islanders; 27% for white persons; and 26% for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Incarceration rates by offense type

More than 651,800 persons (62% of all state prisoners) were serving sentences in state prison for a violent offense at yearend 2020, the most recent year for

Sentenced prisoners under the jurisdiction of state or federal correctional authorities, 1996–2021



Note: Jurisdiction refers to the legal authority of state or federal correctional officials over a prisoner, regardless of where the prisoner is held. Counts are for December 31 of each year and are based on prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year. As of December 31, 2001, persons sentenced for a felony in the District of Columbia were the responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Counts for 2019 and earlier may have been revised from previous reports.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 1996–2021.

which offense data were available. Forty-seven percent (66,500) of all persons in federal prison were serving time for a drug offense on September 30, 2021 (the most recent date for which federal prison offense data were available), and an additional 20% (28,500) of persons sentenced to federal prison were serving a sentence for a weapons offense.

Private and local facilities

At yearend 2021, private facilities contracted to state departments of corrections or the BOP held 96,700 persons, a 3% decrease from yearend 2020. Local jail facilities held an additional 65,400 state or federal prisoners, down 11% from yearend 2020. Together, private and local facilities housed more than 13% of the total U.S. prison population in 2021.

The full report (*Prisoners in 2021 – Statistical Tables*, NCJ 305125), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at www.bjs.ojp.gov.