



Prisoners in 2018

SUMMARY | NCJ 253516

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In 2018, the combined state and federal imprisonment rate was 431 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents, which was the lowest rate since 1996, when there were 427 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents. Across a decade, the imprisonment rate fell 15%, from 506 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents in 2008 to 431 per 100,000 in 2018.

From the end of 2017 to the end of 2018, the total prison population in the U.S. declined from 1,489,200 to 1,465,200, a decrease of 24,000 prisoners. This was a 1.6% decline in the prison population and marked the fourth consecutive annual decrease of at least 1%.

Imprisonment rate: race/ethnic groups and states

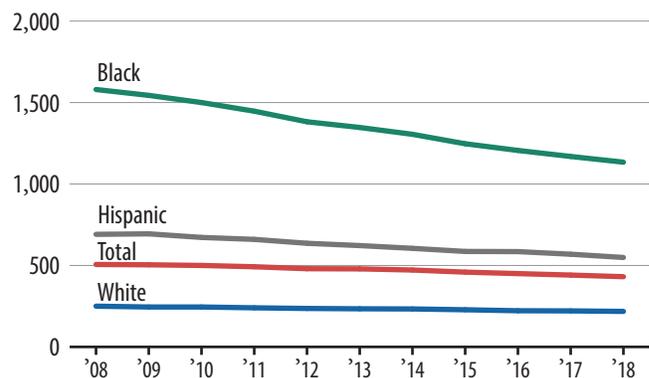
From 2008 to 2018, the imprisonment rate dropped 28% among black residents, 21% among Hispanic residents, and 13% among white residents. In 2018, the imprisonment rate of black residents was the lowest since 1989. The imprisonment rate of black males in 2018 was 5.8 times that of white males, while the imprisonment rate of black females was 1.8 times the rate of white females.

In 2018, a total of 22 states had imprisonment rates that were higher than the nationwide average. Louisiana had the highest rate (695 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 state residents), followed by Oklahoma (693 per 100,000), Mississippi (626 per 100,000), Arkansas (589 per 100,000), and Arizona (559 per 100,000). Minnesota, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont had the lowest imprisonment rates in the U.S., with each having fewer than 200 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents.

Admissions to state prisons

Two-thirds (67%) of admissions of sentenced state prisoners in 2018 were on new court commitments, while nearly a third (30%) of admissions were due to violations of post-custody supervision. The remaining 3% of admissions were for other reasons, such as returns from conditional release on appeal or bond.

Combined state and federal imprisonment rate per 100,000 U.S. residents of a given race or ethnicity, 2008-2018



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 2008-2018.

Prisoners' citizenship and age

As of 2018, non-U.S. citizens made up a similar portion of the U.S. prison population (7.7%) as they did of the total U.S. population (6.9%, per the U.S. Census Bureau). At the same time, among all sentenced state prisoners, 3% were age 65 or older.

Offenses by race and ethnicity

Among sentenced state prisoners at year-end 2017 (the most recent data available), three-fifths of blacks and Hispanics (61% each) and nearly half of whites (48%) were serving time for a violent offense. At the same time, 23% of sentenced white prisoners in state prison were serving time for a property offense, compared to 13% each of sentenced black and Hispanic prisoners. Less than 15% of sentenced state prisoners were serving time for a drug offense (4% for possession), with the percentages ranging from 13% of black prisoners (3% for possession) to 16% of white prisoners (5% for possession).

The full report (*Prisoners in 2018*, NCJ 253516), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at www.bjs.gov.