

# Incarceration Trends in IOWA

## Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons

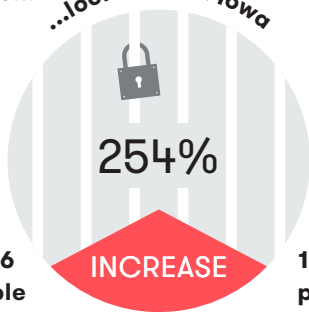


### REGIONAL RANK

6 of 8 in total incarceration

Total people...

...locked up in Iowa



3,706 people (1983) | 13,135 people (2015)

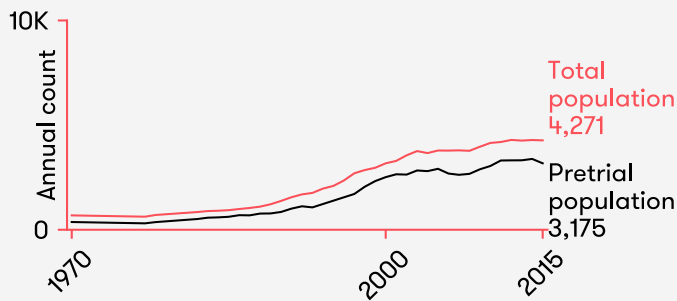
1983 | 2015

Since 1970, the rate of incarceration in America has expanded more than fourfold, and the United States leads the world in locking people up. Many places in America have begun to reduce their use of prisons and jails, but progress has been uneven. Although the number of people sent to state prisons and county jails from urban areas has decreased, that number has continued to rise in many rural places. Racial disparities in incarceration remain strikingly wide. Women constitute a rising number of those behind bars.

This fact sheet provides at-a-glance information about how many people are locked up in both state prisons and county jails and shows where the state stands on a variety of metrics, so that policymakers and the public can better determine where to target reforms.

## STATE TOTALS

### JAILS

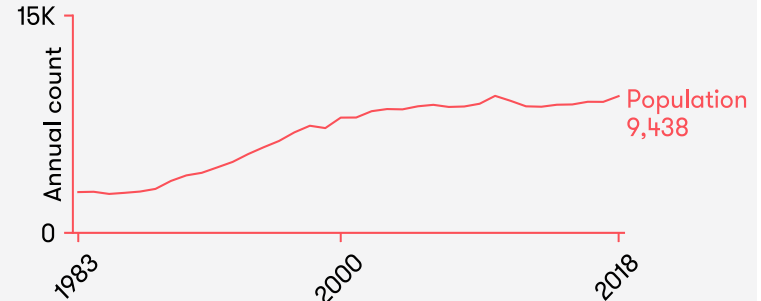


#### % change in jail population

| SINCE 1970 | SINCE 2000 |
|------------|------------|
| 522% ↑     | 35% ↑      |

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 522%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 74% of the total jail population in Iowa.

### PRISONS



#### % change in prison population

| SINCE 1983 | SINCE 2000 |
|------------|------------|
| 235% ↑     | 19% ↑      |

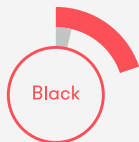
Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 235%. In 2018, there were 9,438 people in the Iowa prison system.

## RACE

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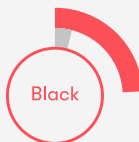
### JAILS

4% of state pop. | 20% of jail pop.



### PRISONS

4% of state pop. | 24% of prison pop.



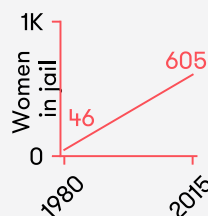
In Iowa, Black people constituted 4% of state residents, but 20% of people in jail and 24% of people in prison.

## GENDER

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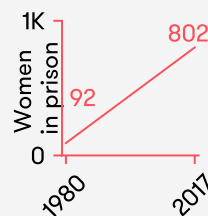
### JAILS

1,193% ↑



### PRISONS

772% ↑



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 1,193%, and the number of women in prison has increased 772%.

## GEOGRAPHY

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### Top admission rates, 2015 (rate per 100K)

| COUNTY     | JAILS  | COUNTY     | PRISONS |
|------------|--------|------------|---------|
| Washington | 38,927 | Black Hawk | 698     |
| Jefferson  | 38,741 | Woodbury   | 458     |
| Hardin     | 24,664 | Polk       | 431     |
| Clarke     | 22,601 | Fremont    | 426     |
| Wapello    | 15,375 | Marshall   | 418     |

Incarceration is not only an urban phenomenon. In fact, on a per capita basis, the most rural places in the state often lock up the most people in jail and send the most people to prison.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

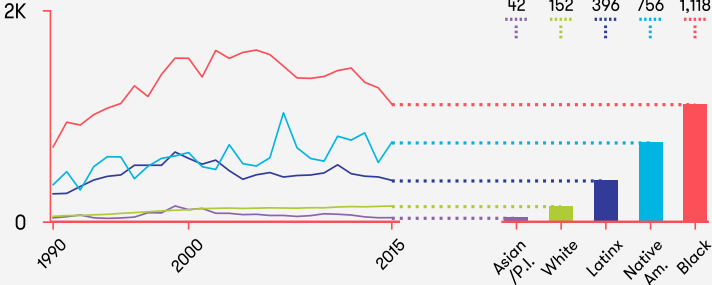


### JAILS 2015

3% of state pop. | 1% of jail pop. | 88% of state pop. | 63% of jail pop. | 5% of state pop. | 10% of jail pop. | <1% of state pop. | 1% of jail pop. | 4% of state pop. | 20% of jail pop.



#### Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64



Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 57 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 7.3 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 5.0 times the rate of white people.

### NATIONAL CONTEXT

The overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system is well documented. Black men constitute about 13 percent of the male population, but about 35 percent of those incarcerated. One in five Black people born in their lifetime, compared to one in 10 Latinx people and one in 29 white people.

Discriminatory criminal justice policies and practices at all stages of the justice process have unjustifiably disadvantaged Black people, including through disparity in the enforcement of seemingly race-neutral laws. Studies have found that Black people are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than white people—even when controlling for things like offense severity.

Nationally, Latinx people are also overrepresented in prisons and jails, yet common data misclassification leads to distorted, lower estimates of Latinx incarceration rates and distorted, higher estimates of white incarceration rates. Smaller and inconsistent data reporting make it difficult to measure the effects of racism for incarcerated people of other racial groups.

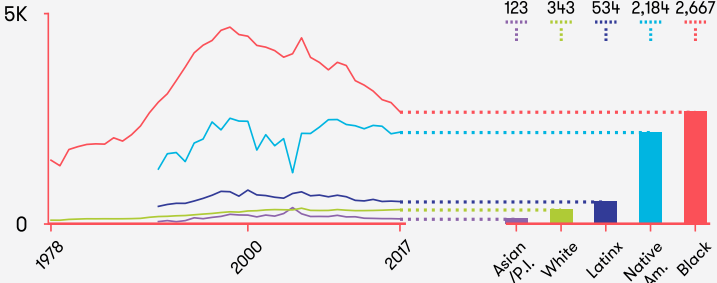


### PRISONS 2017

3% of state pop. | 1% of prison pop. | 88% of state pop. | 66% of prison pop. | 5% of state pop. | 7% of prison pop. | <1% of state pop. | 2% of prison pop. | 4% of state pop. | 24% of prison pop.



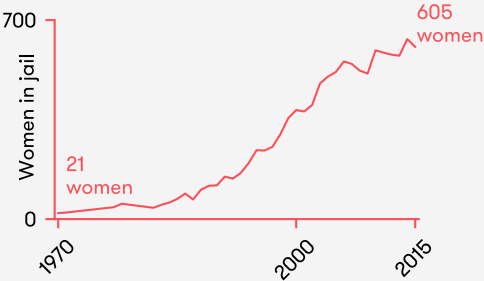
#### Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64



Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 76 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 7.8 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 6.4 times the rate of white people.

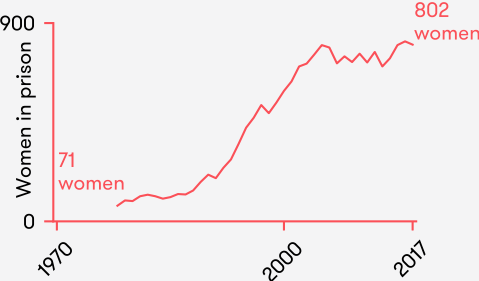
## GENDER

### JAILS



The number of women in Iowa's jails has increased more than 28-fold, from 21 in 1970 to 606 in 2015.

### PRISONS



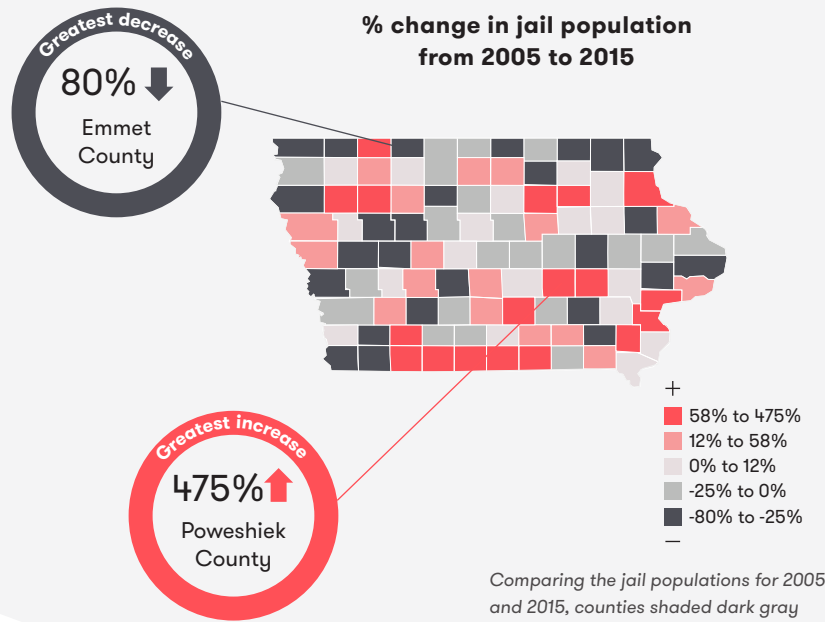
The number of women in Iowa's prisons has increased more than 11-fold, from 71 in 1978 to 802 in 2017.

### NATIONAL CONTEXT

Although men's jail admissions have declined by 26 percent since 2008, women's admissions have increased both as a total number and as a proportion of all jail admissions. Women now make up almost one out of every four jail admissions, up from fewer than one in 10 in 1983. Since 1970, the number of women in U.S. jails has increased 14-fold—from fewer than 8,000 to nearly 110,000 in 2013—and women in jail now account for approximately half of all women behind bars in the country.

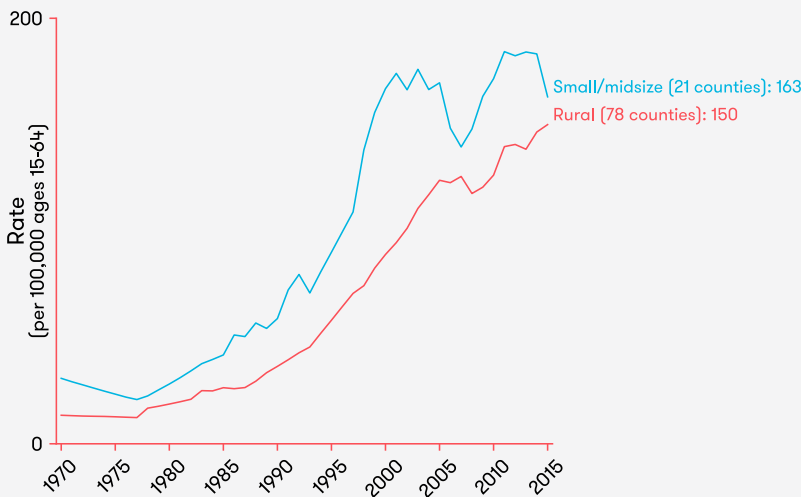
# GEOGRAPHY

Statewide trends alone do not tell the whole story of incarceration: there is wide variation in the use of incarceration across the state. Today, the highest rates of prison admissions are in rural counties, and pretrial detention continues to increase in smaller counties even as it is on the decline in larger counties. It is critical to examine incarceration trends in every corner of the state, because although the largest counties may have the most people in jails—the highest rates of incarceration are in smaller cities and rural counties.



Comparing the jail populations for 2005 and 2015, counties shaded dark gray had fewer people in jail and those shaded dark red had more people in jail.

## JAILS Pretrial population



Since 2000, the state's use of pretrial detention has taken different trajectories in different types of counties. The pretrial incarceration rate has increased 69% in the state's 78 rural counties. It has decreased 2% in the state's 21 small/medium counties.

Vera's analysis of the urban-rural continuum changes the six categories defined by the National Center for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties to four. A county is labeled "urban" if it is one of the core counties of a metropolitan area with 1 million or more people and is labeled "suburban" if it is within the surrounding metropolitan area. Vera turns the remaining four categories into two by combining small and medium metropolitan areas ("small and midsize metro") and micropolitan and noncore areas ("rural").

## JAIL ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 99 COUNTIES)

| COUNTY      | Rate (per 100K) | COUNTY        | Annual count |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Washington  | 38,927          | Polk          | 17,301       |
| Jefferson   | 38,741          | Linn          | 10,321       |
| Hardin      | 24,664          | Woodbury      | 7,995        |
| Clarke      | 22,601          | Scott         | 7,276        |
| Wapello     | 15,375          | Washington    | 5,226        |
| Marshall    | 14,544          | Jefferson     | 4,690        |
| Woodbury    | 12,173          | Pottawattamie | 4,193        |
| Montgomery  | 11,897          | Dubuque       | 4,072        |
| Cerro Gordo | 11,821          | Marshall      | 3,650        |
| Muscatine   | 11,209          | Story         | 3,603        |

## PRISON ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 99 COUNTIES)

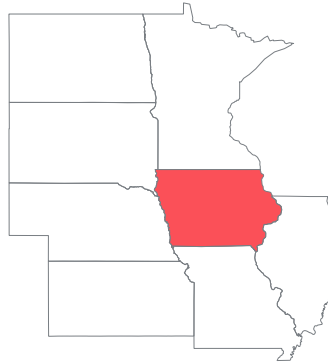
| COUNTY        | Rate (per 100K) | COUNTY        | Annual count |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Black Hawk    | 698             | Polk          | 1,327        |
| Woodbury      | 458             | Black Hawk    | 623          |
| Polk          | 431             | Scott         | 309          |
| Fremont       | 426             | Woodbury      | 301          |
| Marshall      | 418             | Pottawattamie | 223          |
| Appanoose     | 384             | Linn          | 190          |
| Mahaska       | 382             | Dubuque       | 136          |
| Webster       | 374             | Marshall      | 105          |
| Pottawattamie | 371             | Johnson       | 99           |
| Union         | 369             | Cerro Gordo   | 98           |

## JAILS



## Jail admissions

| Rank | State        | Rate (2015) | Rate change ('05-'15) |
|------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1    | South Dakota | 11,426      | -3%                   |
| 2    | North Dakota | 8,529       | 10%                   |
| 3    | Kansas       | 7,764       | -10%                  |
| 4    | <b>Iowa</b>  | 6,216       | -11%                  |
| 5    | Nebraska     | 5,820       | -28%                  |
| 6    | Missouri     | 5,315       | -11%                  |
| 7    | Minnesota    | 5,268       | -6%                   |
| 8    | Illinois     | 3,808       | -17%                  |



## Jail pretrial population

| Rank | State        | Rate (2015) | Rate change ('05-'15) |
|------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1    | South Dakota | 231         | 58%                   |
| 2    | Missouri     | 226         | 16%                   |
| 3    | Nebraska     | 211         | 23%                   |
| 4    | Kansas       | 205         | 6%                    |
| 5    | North Dakota | 201         | 68%                   |
| 6    | <b>Iowa</b>  | 158         | 5%                    |
| 7    | Illinois     | 157         | -19%                  |
| 8    | Minnesota    | 111         | 5%                    |

## Jail sentenced population

| Rank | State        | Rate (2015) | Rate change ('05-'15) |
|------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1    | Kansas       | 125         | -0.1%                 |
| 2    | North Dakota | 90          | 0.0%                  |
| 3    | Nebraska     | 80          | 0.0%                  |
| 4    | South Dakota | 77          | -0.5%                 |
| 5    | Minnesota    | 75          | -0.2%                 |
| 6    | Illinois     | 64          | 0.5%                  |
| 7    | Missouri     | 60          | -0.2%                 |
| 8    | <b>Iowa</b>  | 54          | 0.2%                  |

## PRISONS



## Prison admissions

| Rank | State        | Rate (2016) | Rate change ('06-'16) |
|------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1    | South Dakota | 552         | 15%                   |
| 2    | Missouri     | 465         | -7%                   |
| 3    | Kansas       | 345         | 23%                   |
| 4    | North Dakota | 325         | 28%                   |
| 5    | Illinois     | 299         | -36%                  |
| 6    | <b>Iowa</b>  | 298         | -11%                  |
| 7    | Minnesota    | 223         | 6%                    |
| 8    | Nebraska     | 192         | 12%                   |

## Prison population

| Rank | State        | Rate (2018) | Rate change ('08-'18) |
|------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1    | Missouri     | 768         | 0.2%                  |
| 2    | South Dakota | 713         | 11%                   |
| 3    | Kansas       | 547         | 18%                   |
| 4    | Illinois     | 472         | -10%                  |
| 5    | <b>Iowa</b>  | 469         | 5%                    |
| 6    | Nebraska     | 446         | 16%                   |
| 7    | North Dakota | 345         | 4%                    |
| 8    | Minnesota    | 279         | -0.7%                 |

## Data

This fact sheet uses data from four U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data series and is supplemented with data obtained directly from state governments for the more recent years for which BJS data is not yet available, when available. The Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jails, and National Corrections Reporting Program provides data through 2016; the National Prisoner Statistics program provides data through 2017, and 2018 data is sourced from state agencies. Rates are per 100,000 residents aged 15 to 64. See *Data and Methods for Vera's State Fact Sheets*: [www.vera.org/incarceration-trends-fact-sheets-data-and-methods.pdf](http://www.vera.org/incarceration-trends-fact-sheets-data-and-methods.pdf) for complete details. County-level data is available at [trends.vera.org](http://trends.vera.org).

## Acknowledgments

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## Credits

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## For more information

For more information, visit [www.vera.org](http://www.vera.org). For more information about this fact sheet, contact Jacob Kang-Brown, senior research associate, at [jkangbrown@vera.org](mailto:jkangbrown@vera.org).