

Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons



REGIONAL RANK

4 of 6 in total incarceration

Total people...

...locked up in Massachusetts

158%

INCREASE

7,836 people

20,194 people

1983

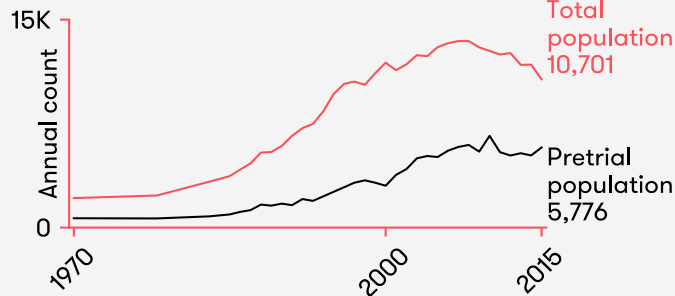
2015

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



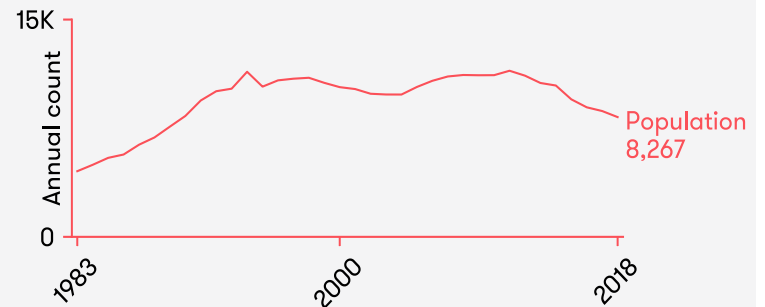
% change in jail population

SINCE 1970 SINCE 2000

403% ↑ -10% ↓

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 403%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 54% of the total jail population in Massachusetts.

PRISONS



% change in prison population

SINCE 1983 SINCE 2000

82% ↑ -20% ↓

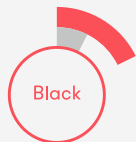
Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 82%. In 2018, there were 8,267 people in the Massachusetts prison system.

RACE

more on pg 2 →

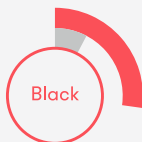
JAILS

2015
7% of state pop. | 18% of jail pop.



PRISONS

2017
7% of state pop. | 27% of prison pop.



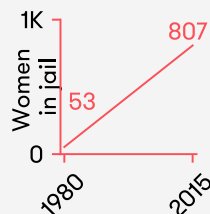
In Massachusetts, Black people constituted 7% of state residents, but 18% of people in jail and 27% of people in prison.

GENDER

more on pg 2 →

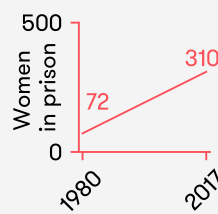
JAILS

1,417% ↑



PRISONS

331% ↑



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 1,417%, and the number of women in prison has increased 331%.

GEOGRAPHY

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Top admission rates, 2015 (rate per 100K)

COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Dukes	9,735	Essex	104
Franklin	3,632	Hampden	90
Essex	2,445	Plymouth	74
Berkshire	1,993	Bristol	65
Nantucket	1,982	Barnstable	64

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

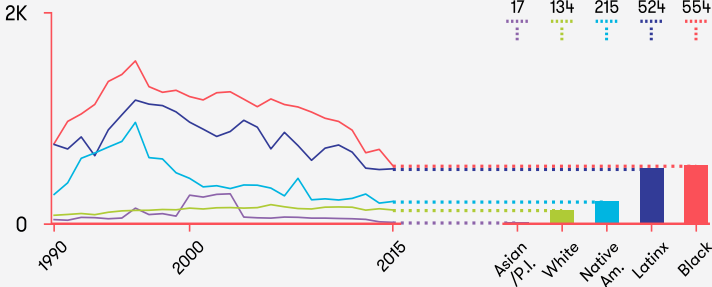


JAILS 2015

7% of state pop. | 1% of jail pop. | 74% of state pop. | 43% of jail pop. | <1% of state pop. | <1% of jail pop. | 11% of state pop. | 25% of jail pop. | 7% of state pop. | 18% of jail pop.



Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64



Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has decreased 27 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 4.1 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 1.6 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.

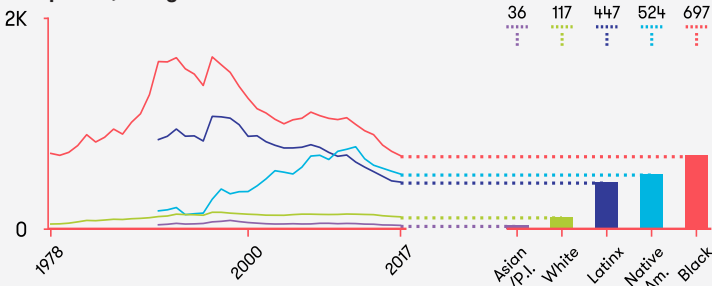


PRISONS 2017

7% of state pop. | 1% of prison pop. | 74% of state pop. | 43% of prison pop. | 11% of state pop. | 26% of prison pop. | <1% of state pop. | 1% of prison pop. | 7% of state pop. | 27% of prison pop.



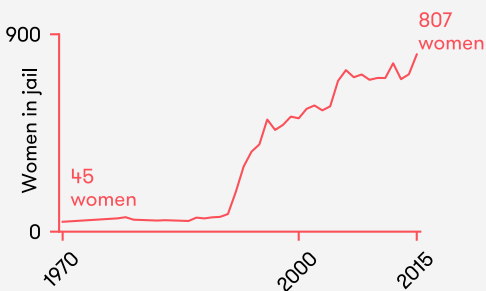
Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64



Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has decreased 3 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 5.9 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 4.5 times the rate of white people.

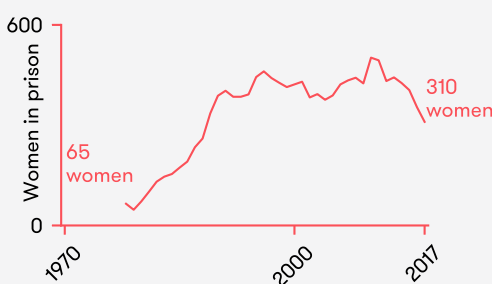
GENDER

JAILS



The number of women in Massachusetts' jails has increased more than 17-fold, from 45 in 1970 to 808 in 2015.

PRISONS



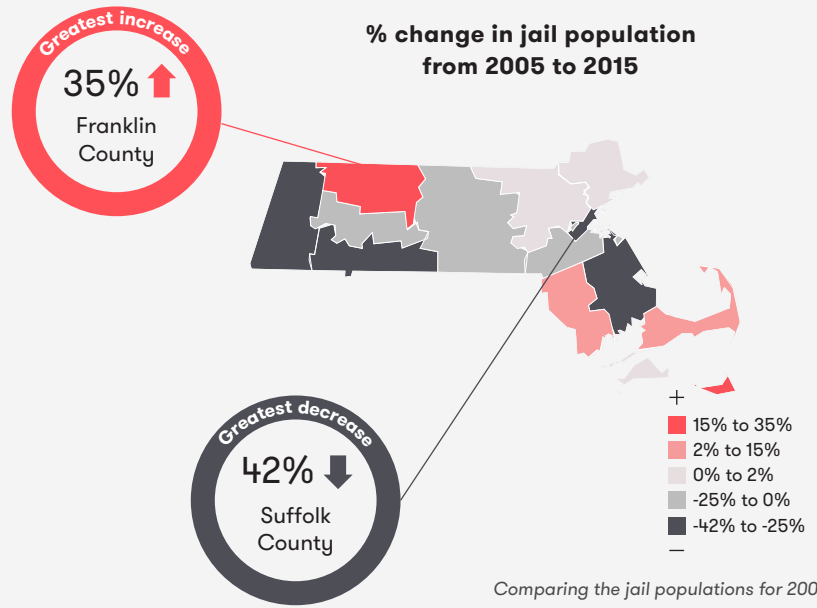
The number of women in Massachusetts' prisons has increased more than fourfold, from 65 in 1978 to 310 in 2017.

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.

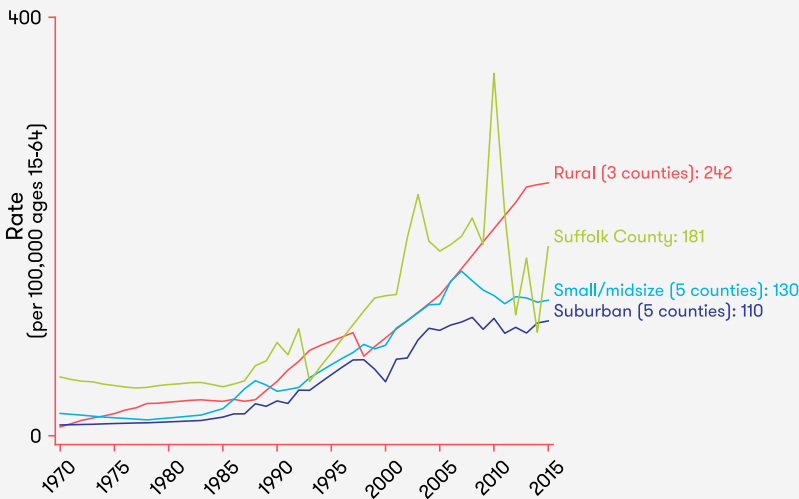
GEOGRAPHY

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 50% in the state's five small/medium counties, 35% in the state's one urban county, 158% in the state's three rural counties, and 112% in the state's five suburban 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 14 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Dukes	9,735	Essex	12,531
Franklin	3,632	Suffolk	10,958
Essex	2,445	Hampden	5,724
Berkshire	1,993	Middlesex	5,634
Nantucket	1,982	Bristol	4,589
Barnstable	1,976	Plymouth	4,458
Suffolk	1,907	Worcester	4,231
Hampden	1,835	Barnstable	2,516
Plymouth	1,341	Norfolk	2,430
Bristol	1,232	Franklin	1,726

PRISON ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 14 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Essex	104	Essex	533
Hampden	90	Middlesex	380
Plymouth	74	Suffolk	311
Bristol	65	Hampden	282
Barnstable	64	Worcester	262
Berkshire	61	Plymouth	245
Suffolk	54	Bristol	243
Franklin	51	Norfolk	209
Worcester	47	Barnstable	81
Norfolk	45	Berkshire	51

JAILS



Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Maine	4,520	-2%
2	New Hampshire	2,329	10%
3	Massachusetts	1,274	-37%
4	Vermont	408	-25%
5	Connecticut	232	-19%
6	Rhode Island	89	-31%

Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Connecticut	137	-13%
2	Maine	126	12%
3	Massachusetts	126	7%
4	New Hampshire	124	7%
5	Vermont	87	-2%
6	Rhode Island	86	-16%

Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Massachusetts	107	-0.4%
2	Maine	79	0.2%
3	New Hampshire	78	0.0%
4	Rhode Island	67	-0.5%
5	Connecticut	54	-0.5%
6	Vermont	23	-0.4%

PRISONS

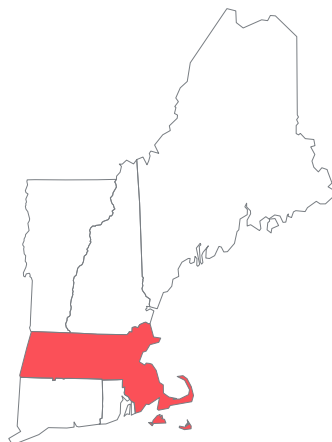


Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06-'16)
1	New Hampshire	173	-41%
2	Maine	79	14%
3	Massachusetts	45	-26%

Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08-'18)
1	Connecticut	400	-33%
2	Vermont	298	-20%
3	New Hampshire	293	-1%
4	Maine	282	15%
5	Rhode Island	255	-27%
6	Massachusetts	188	-27%



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 for complete details. County-level data is available at trends.vera.org.

Acknowledgments

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Credits

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For more information

For more information, visit www.vera.org. For more information about this fact sheet, contact Jacob Kang-Brown, senior research associate, at jkangbrown@vera.org.