



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS  
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### U.S. IMPRISONMENT RATE AT ITS LOWEST SINCE 1996

WASHINGTON — 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, the Bureau of Justice Statistics announced today.

Across a decade, the imprisonment rate fell 15%, from 506 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents in 2008 to 431 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents in 2018. During this period, 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.

At the end of 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.

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%.

Less than 15% of sentenced state prisoners were serving time for a drug offense at year-end 2017 (4% for possession), the most recent year for which offense-related data are available. Among sentenced state prisoners at year-end 2017, an estimated 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.

Among prisoners sentenced to serve more than one year in state or federal prison, an estimated 3% were age 65 or older at year-end 2018. An estimated 5% of sentenced white prisoners and 2% each of sentenced black and Hispanic prisoners were age 65 or older.

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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. general population (6.9%, per the U.S. Census Bureau).

Two-thirds (67%) of admissions in 2018 of sentenced state prisoners were on new court commitments, while nearly a third (30%) of admissions were due to violations of post-custody supervision. (The remaining 3% were admitted for other reasons, such as other conditional release violations, returns from appeal or bond, and other types of admissions.) Five states admitted more than half of their prisoners for violating conditions of post-custody supervision: Washington (75%), Idaho (65%), Vermont (65%), Utah (52%) and New Hampshire (52%).

The report, *Prisoners in 2018* (NCJ 253516), was written by BJS statistician E. Ann Carson, Ph.D. The report, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs are available on the BJS website at [www.bjs.gov](http://www.bjs.gov).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for collecting, analyzing and disseminating reliable statistics on crime and criminal justice in the United States. Jeffrey H. Anderson is the director.

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan, provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. More information about OJP and its components is located at [www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov).

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