

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/people-in-prison-in-2018>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

See our updated report, *"People in Jail and Prison in 2020,"* [here](#).

Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) researchers collected year-end 2017 and 2018 prison population data directly from state departments of corrections and the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) on the number of people in state and federal prisons on December 31, 2018, in order to provide timely information on how prison incarceration is changing in the United States. This report fills a gap until the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) releases its 2018 annual report likely in early 2020 which will include additional data, such as population breakdowns by race and sex. Specifically, Vera studied both prison populations and incarceration rates at the state and federal levels and demonstrated both the overall U.S. incarceration trend as well as trends within individual regions and states.

Adjust arrows to view the four different combinations of population trends and incarceration rate. Select any state to see detailed data.

The overall 1.8% decline in the national prison incarceration rate was driven by the large decrease in the number of people in federal prisons, as well as greater than 5% declines in incarceration rates in seven states. However, the declines were not universal. Mass incarceration is still on the rise in some states, such as Indiana, Texas, and Wyoming.

The nearly 20,000-person drop in the number of people in state and federal prisons continues a nine-year decline in the total U.S. prison population.

The total prison incarceration rate in the United States is down 15% since 2008.

As of December 2018, there were 144,200 fewer people in prison since the peak population in 2009, representing an 8.9% reduction.

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