

The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/a-change-of-course-developments-in-state-sentencing-policy-and-their-implications-for-the-federal-system/>

Policy Issue Resources

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While incarceration was originally conceived of as an alternative to corporal punishment, and used in the absence of other, less-intrusive measures to force compliance with community norms, the last 40 years have seen nothing less than a tectonic shift. Incarceration has moved from the option of last resort for the most recalcitrant individuals to the predominant public policy model of addressing crime. Consequently, the prison population has expanded exponentially.

In 1970, 96 out of 100,000 Americans were detained in prisons (not including local jails), or 1 in 1,042. By the middle of 2008, that figure had increased by more than 400% to 509 per 100,000, or 1 in 196. This rapid growth was not the product of unprecedented crime rates, but rather a function of deliberate decisions by policymakers to pass laws that dramatically increased prison admissions and extended the length of stay.

To read the article, download the PDF below.

Black men born in 2001 can expect to go to prison in their lifetime

Sentencing Policy

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