

More Mentally Ill People Go to Prison than Psych Hospitals

During the deinstitutionalization movement in the United States countless individuals with severe mental illnesses were moved out of large state institutions, with most of these institutions being shut down altogether.

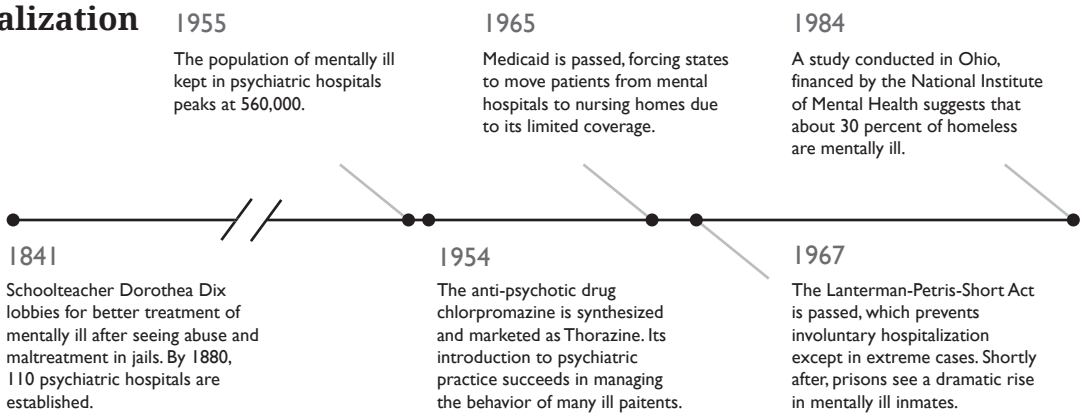
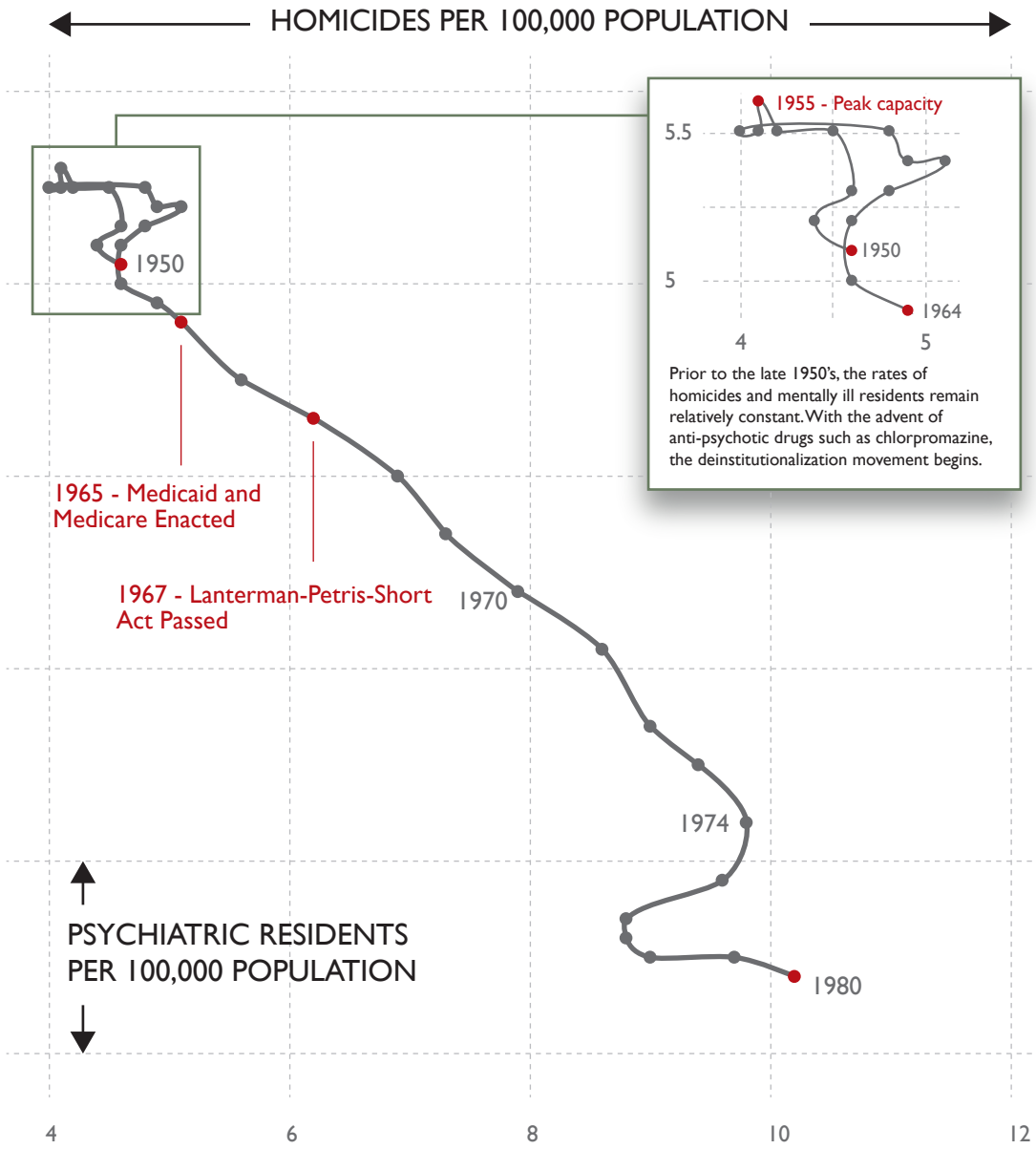
Deinstitutionalization is regarded as a systemic failure by many. Concomitant with the movement is an increase in homicide rates, prison rates, homelessness, and mental health crises.

Without being forced to reside in psychiatric hospitals, many mentally ill people chose to live homeless and ended up in jail. Alarminglly, mentally ill people are many times more likely to end up in jail or prison than a mental hospital.

The terms “transinstitutionalization” or “reinstitutionalization” are sometimes used to acknowledge the fate of many mentally ill persons: incarceration. With the closure of state mental hospitals, mentally ill individuals are not held involuntarily, and rarely comply with medication requirements. As a result, many of them eventuate in prisons, which are ill-equipped to provide the proper care they need.

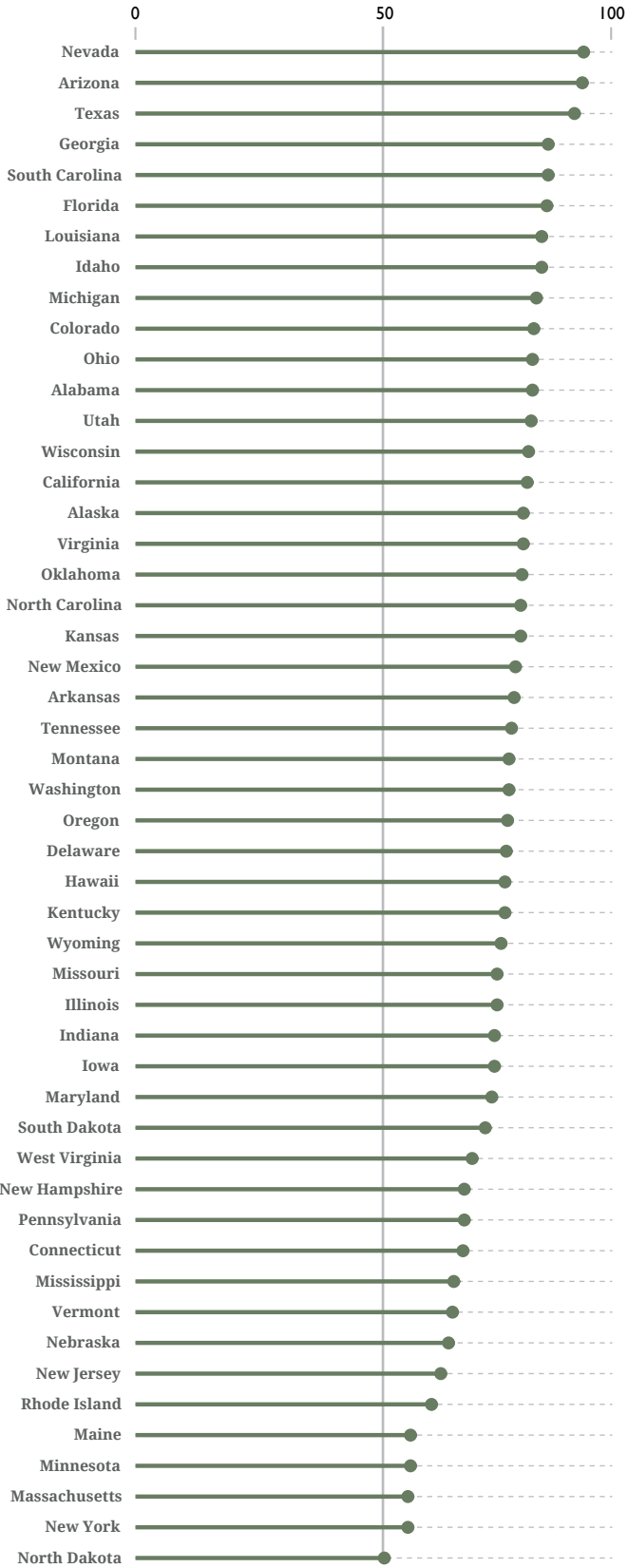
Timeline of Deinstitutionalization

Certain events played an integral role in the establishment and disestablishment of mental institutions. This timeline indicates key events and legislative activity that contributed to the process of deinstitutionalization



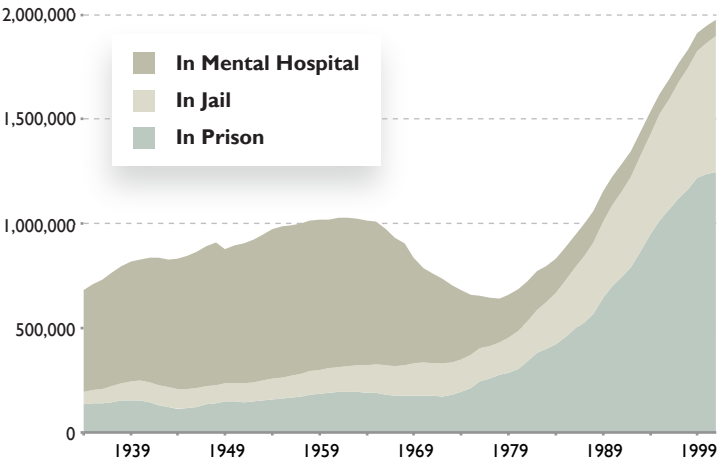
Percentage of Institutionalized Mentally Ill in Prisons

This chart demonstrates the distribution of institutionalized mentally ill people between hospitals and prisons. It is abundantly clear that the mentally ill have a much greater propensity towards prison than any kind of medical care.



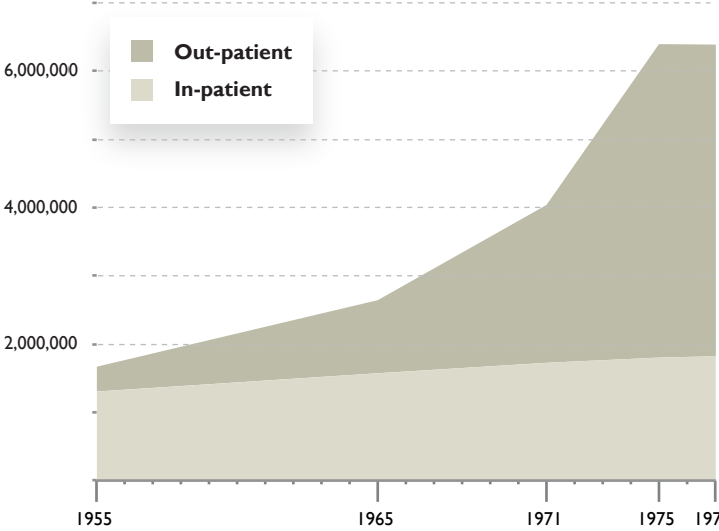
Distribution of Mentally Ill in Prisons, Jails, and Mental Hospitals

Prior to the deinstitutionalization movement, the majority of mentally ill were kept in mental hospitals. After the late 1950's, the mentally ill population shifts staggeringly towards jails and prisons.



Number of Patient Care Episodes

Deinstitutionalization was intended to replace in-patient stays with out-patient services. Data suggests however, that in-patient episodes of care have not changed substantially, while out-patient services have increased twelvefold.



Sources

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