



Department of Justice



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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
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IN 2016 STATE AND FEDERAL PRISON POPULATIONS DECLINED FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR

WASHINGTON — The number of prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities fell by 1 percent from year-end 2015 to 2016, the Bureau of Justice Statistics announced today. This was the third consecutive year that the U.S. prison population declined.

State and federal prisons held an estimated 1,505,400 prisoners in 2016, 21,200 fewer than in 2015. The population of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) accounted for more than a third (34 percent) of the total change in the prison population, dropping by 7,300 prisoners, from 196,500 to 189,200 prisoners. Although the overall prison population decreased, the number of prisoners held in private facilities increased 2 percent in 2016.

State and federal prisons admitted 2,300 fewer prisoners in 2016 than in 2015. The BOP accounted for the majority (96 percent) of the decline, down 2,200 admissions.

More than half (54 percent) of state prisoners were serving sentences for violent offenses at year-end 2015, the most recent year for which data were available. Nearly half (47 percent) of federal prisoners had been sentenced for drug offenses as of Sept. 30, 2016, the most recent date for which federal offense data were available. More than 99 percent of those drug sentences were for trafficking.

In 2016, the rate at which people were sentenced to more than one year in state or federal prison (imprisonment rate) was the lowest since 1997. There were 450 prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents held in state and federal prisons in 2016, compared to 444 prisoners per 100,000 in 1997.

The imprisonment rate decreased for non-Hispanic adult black, non-Hispanic adult white and adult Hispanic prisoners from 2015 to 2016. The rate of imprisonment decreased 4 percent for black adults (from 1,670 to 1,608 per 100,000), 2 percent for white adults (from 281 to 274 per 100,000) and 1 percent for adult Hispanic prisoners (from 862 to 856 per 100,000).

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During the decade between 2006 and 2016, the rate of imprisonment decreased 29 percent for black adults, 15 percent for white adults and 20 percent for Hispanic adults.

Other findings include—

- At year-end 2016, more than 21 percent of federal prisoners (39,956 of 189,192) were non-U.S. citizens (excluding persons detained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security).
- On December 31, 2016, states held fewer than 1,000 prisoners age 17 or younger in adult facilities.

Findings are based on data from BJS’s National Prisoner Statistics program, which collects data from state departments of correction and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. BJS also released 2016 data in the online data tool, Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool – Prisoners.

[Prisoners in 2016 \(NCJ 251149\)](#) was written by BJS Statistician E. Ann Carson. The report, related documents, and additional information about BJS’s statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at www.bjs.gov.

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The Office of Justice Programs, headed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Alan R. Hanson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation’s capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.