Incarceration Trends in NEBRASKA

Vera

Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons

Total people...

...locked up in Nebraska

239% INCREASE

| 2,555 people	8,662 people
1983	2015

Since 1970, the rate of incarceration in America has expanded more than fourfold, and the United States leads the world in locking people up. Many places in America have begun to reduce their use of prisons and jails, but progress has been uneven. Although the number of people sent to state prisons and county jails from urban areas has decreased, that number has continued to rise in many rural places. Racial disparities in incarceration remain strikingly wide. Women constitute a rising number of those behind bars.

This fact sheet provides at-a-glance information about how many people are locked up in both state prisons and county jails and shows where the state stands on a variety of metrics, so that policymakers and the public can better determine where to target reforms.
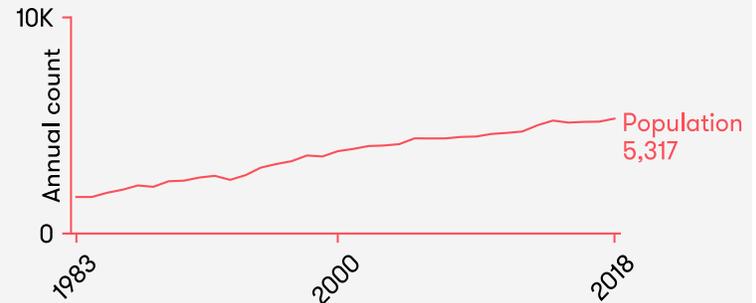
STATE TOTALS

JAILS

Annual count

Total population 3,529

Pretrial population 2,560

1970 — 2000 — 2015
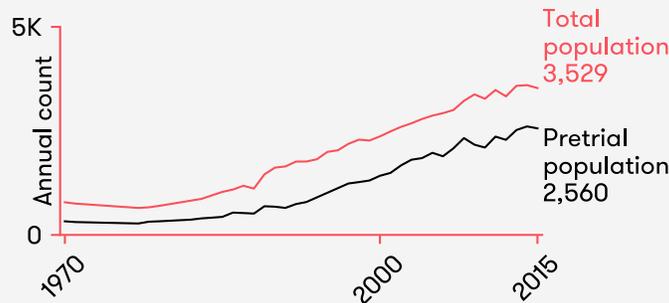
% change in jail population

SINCE 1970	SINCE 2000
350% ⬆	49% ⬆

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 350%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 73% of the total jail population in Nebraska.

PRISONS

Annual count

Population 5,317

1983 — 2000 — 2018

% change in prison population

SINCE 1983	SINCE 2000
215% ⬆	40% ⬆

Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 215%. In 2018, there were 5,317 people in the Nebraska prison system.

RACE

more on pg 2 →

JAILS 2015

5% of state pop.	21% of jail pop.

Black

PRISONS 2017
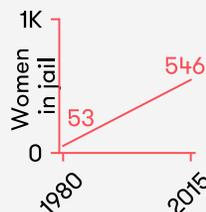
5% of state pop.	29% of prison pop.

Black

In Nebraska, Black people constituted 5% of state residents, but 21% of people in jail and 29% of people in prison.
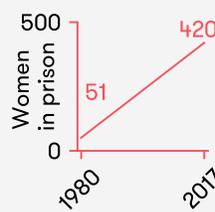
GENDER

more on pg 2 →

JAILS

932% ⬆

Women in jail

53 → 546

1980 — 2015

PRISONS

724% ⬆

Women in prison

51 → 420

1980 — 2017

Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 932%, and the number of women in prison has increased 724%.

GEOGRAPHY

more on pg 3 →

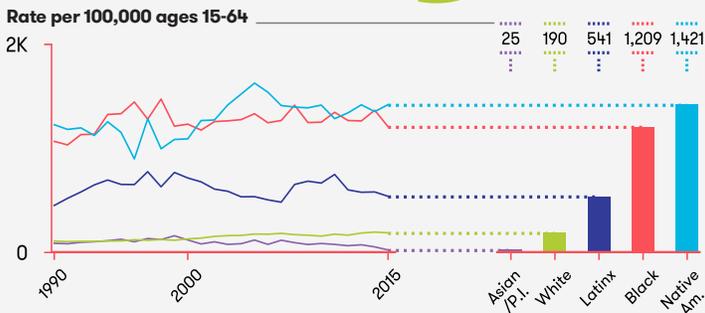**Top admission rates, 2015** (rate per 100K)

COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Saunders	17,076	Dodge	365
Gosper	14,024	Dakota	339
Dawson	13,790	Gage	331
Phelps	13,477	Jefferson	301
Dakota	12,372	Cheyenne	297

Incarceration is not only an urban phenomenon. In fact, on a per capita basis, the most rural places in the state often lock up the most people in jail and send the most people to prison.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

JAILS
2015

3% of state pop.	<1% of jail pop.	82% of state pop.	53% of jail pop.	10% of state pop.	18% of jail pop.	5% of state pop.	21% of jail pop.	1% of state pop.	4% of jail pop.

Asian/P.I. White Latinx Black Native Am.

Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64

25   190   541   1,209   1,421

Asian/P.I.   White   Latinx   Black   Native Am.

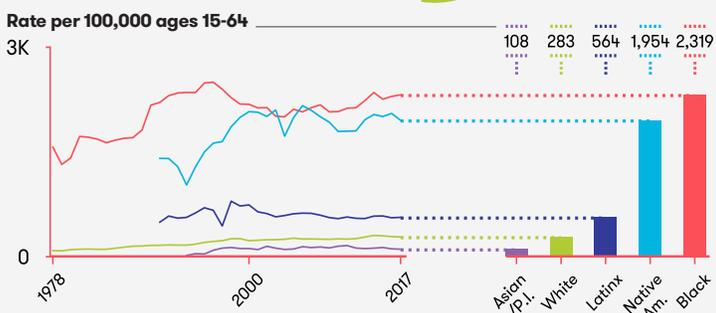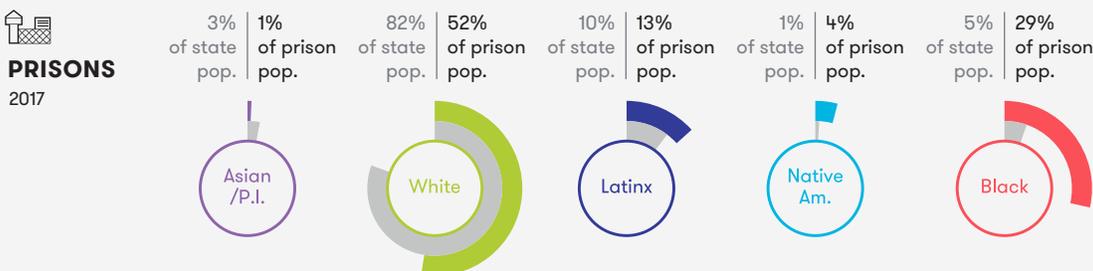*(Line chart from 1990 to 2015, with bar chart)*
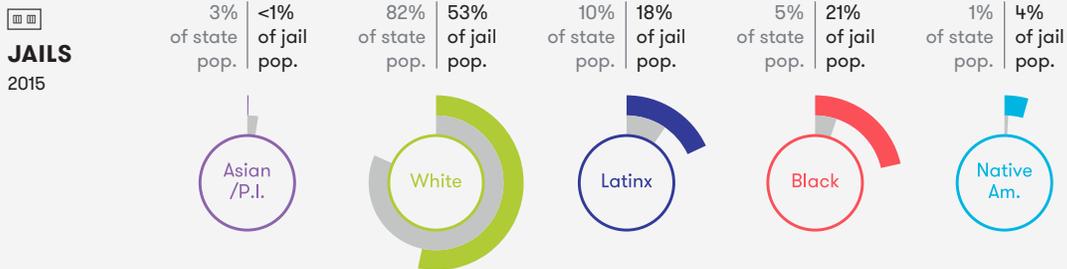
Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 13 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 6.4 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 7.5 times the rate of white people.

PRISONS
2017

3% of state pop.	1% of prison pop.	82% of state pop.	52% of prison pop.	10% of state pop.	13% of prison pop.	1% of state pop.	4% of prison pop.	5% of state pop.	29% of prison pop.

Asian/P.I. White Latinx Native Am. Black

Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64

108   283   564   1,954   2,319

Asian/P.I.   White   Latinx   Native Am.   Black

(Line chart from 1978 to 2017, with bar chart)

Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 48 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 8.2 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 6.9 times the rate of white people.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system is well documented. Black men constitute about 13 percent of the male population, but about 35 percent of those incarcerated. One in five Black people born in 2001 is likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime, compared to one in 10 Latinx people and one in 29 white people.

Discriminatory criminal justice policies and practices at all stages of the justice process have unjustifiably disadvantaged Black people, including through disparity in the enforcement of seemingly race-neutral laws. Studies have found that Black people are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than white people—even when controlling for things like offense severity.
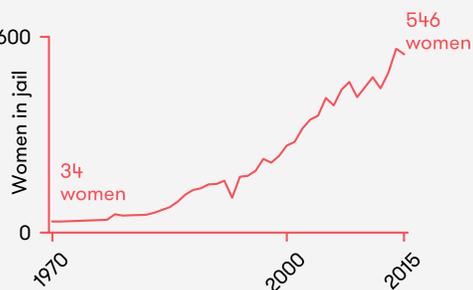
Nationally, Latinx people are also overrepresented in prisons and jails, yet common data misclassification leads to distorted, lower estimates of Latinx incarceration rates and distorted, higher estimates of white incarceration rates. Smaller and inconsistent data reporting make it difficult to measure the effects of racism for incarcerated people of other racial groups.

GENDER

JAILS

(Line chart)
546 women
34 women
1970 — 2000 — 2015

The number of women in Nebraska's jails has increased more than 16-fold, from 34 in 1970 to 547 in 2015.

PRISONS

(Line chart)
420 women
66 women
1970 — 2000 — 2017

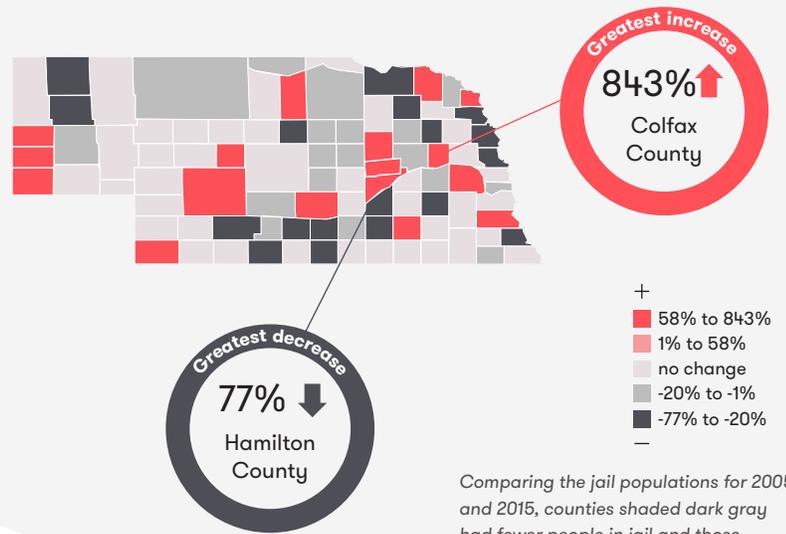The number of women in Nebraska's prisons has increased more than sixfold, from 66 in 1978 to 420 in 2017.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Although men's jail admissions have declined by 26 percent since 2008, women's admissions have increased both as a total number and as a proportion of all jail admissions. Women now make up almost one out of every four jail admissions, up from fewer than one in 10 in 1983. Since 1970, the number of women in U.S. jails has increased 14-fold—from fewer than 8,000 to nearly 110,000 in 2013—and women in jail now account for approximately half of all women behind bars in the country.

Statewide trends alone do not tell the whole story of incarceration: there is wide variation in the use of incarceration across the state. Today, the highest rates of prison admissions are in rural counties, and pretrial detention continues to increase in smaller counties even as it is on the decline in larger counties. It is critical to examine incarceration trends in every corner of the state, because although the largest counties may have the most people in jails—the highest rates of incarceration are in smaller cities and rural counties.

% change in jail population from 2005 to 2015

Greatest increase
843% ↑
Colfax County

Greatest decrease
77% ↓
Hamilton County

+
- 58% to 843%
- 1% to 58%
- no change
- -20% to -1%
- -77% to -20%
–

Comparing the jail populations for 2005 and 2015, counties shaded dark gray had fewer people in jail and those shaded dark red had more people in jail.

JAILS 🔲 Pretrial population

Rate (per 100,000 ages 15-64)

Small/midsize (13 counties): 225
Rural (80 counties): 183
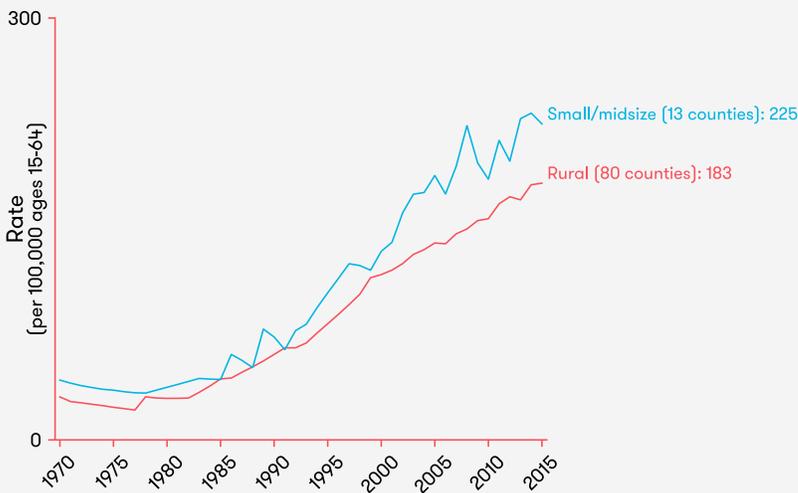
Since 2000, the state's use of pretrial detention has taken different trajectories in different types of counties. The pretrial incarceration rate has increased 68% in the state's 13 small/medium counties, and 55% in the state's 80 rural counties.

Vera's analysis of the urban-rural continuum changes the six categories defined by the National Center for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties to four. A county is labeled "urban" if it is one of the core counties of a metropolitan area with 1 million or more people and is labeled "suburban" if it is within the surrounding metropolitan area. Vera turns the remaining four categories into two by combining small and medium metropolitan areas ("small and midsize metro") and micropolitan and noncore areas ("rural").

JAIL ADMISSIONS 🔲

2015 (TOP 10 OF 93 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Saunders	17,076	Douglas	16,481
Gosper	14,024	Lancaster	11,159
Dawson	13,790	Sarpy	4,314
Phelps	13,477	Hall	4,062
Dakota	12,372	Scotts Bluff	2,491
Saline	11,828	Platte	2,366
Platte	11,575	Saunders	2,220
Colfax	11,380	Buffalo	2,197
Scotts Bluff	11,113	Dawson	2,043
Banner	11,066	Lincoln	1,988

PRISON ADMISSIONS 🏠

2015 (TOP 10 OF 93 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Dodge	365	Douglas	702
Dakota	339	Lancaster	423
Gage	331	Sarpy	125
Jefferson	301	Hall	114
Cheyenne	297	Dodge	82
Hall	295	Scotts Bluff	61
Burt	290	Buffalo	58
Adams	274	Adams	55
Scotts Bluff	272	Madison	53
Hitchcock	241	Dakota	44

JAILS

Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05–'15)
1	South Dakota	11,426	-3%
2	North Dakota	8,529	10%
3	Kansas	7,764	-10%
4	Iowa	6,216	-11%
5	**Nebraska**	5,820	-28%
6	Missouri	5,315	-11%
7	Minnesota	5,268	-6%

Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05–'15)
1	South Dakota	231	58%
2	Missouri	226	16%
3	**Nebraska**	211	23%
4	Kansas	205	6%
5	North Dakota	201	68%
6	Iowa	158	5%
7	Minnesota	111	5%

Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05–'15)
1	Kansas	125	-0.1%
2	North Dakota	90	0.0%
3	**Nebraska**	80	0.0%
4	South Dakota	77	-0.5%
5	Minnesota	75	-0.2%
6	Missouri	60	-0.2%
7	Iowa	54	0.2%

PRISONS

Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06–'16)
1	South Dakota	552	15%
2	Missouri	465	-7%
3	Kansas	345	23%
4	North Dakota	325	28%
5	Iowa	298	-11%
6	Minnesota	223	6%
7	**Nebraska**	192	12%

Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08–'18)
1	Missouri	768	0.2%
2	South Dakota	713	11%
3	Kansas	547	18%
4	Iowa	469	5%
5	**Nebraska**	446	16%
6	North Dakota	345	4%
7	Minnesota	279	-0.7%

Data

This fact sheet uses data from four U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data series and is supplemented with data obtained directly from state governments for the more recent years for which BJS data is not yet available, when available. The Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jails, and National Corrections Reporting Program provides data through 2016; the National Prisoner Statistics program provides data through 2017, and 2018 data is sourced from state agencies. Rates are per 100,000 residents aged 15 to 64. See *Data and Methods for Vera's State Fact Sheets*: www.vera.org/incarceration-trends-fact-sheets-data-and-methods.pdf for complete details. County-level data is available at trends.vera.org.

Credits

An electronic version of this report is posted on Vera's website at www.vera.org/state-incarceration-trends. The Vera Institute of Justice is a justice reform change agent. Vera produces ideas, analysis, and research that inspire change in the systems people rely upon for safety and justice, and works in close partnership with government and civic leaders to implement it. Vera is currently pursuing core priorities of ending the misuse of jails, transforming conditions of confinement, and ensuring that justice systems more effectively serve America's increasingly diverse communities.

For more information

For more information, visit www.vera.org. For more information about this fact sheet, contact Jacob Kang-Brown, senior research associate, at jkangbrown@vera.org.

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