

Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons



REGIONAL RANK

5 of 7 in total incarceration

Total people...

...locked up in North Carolina

191%

INCREASE

18,986 people

55,168 people

1983

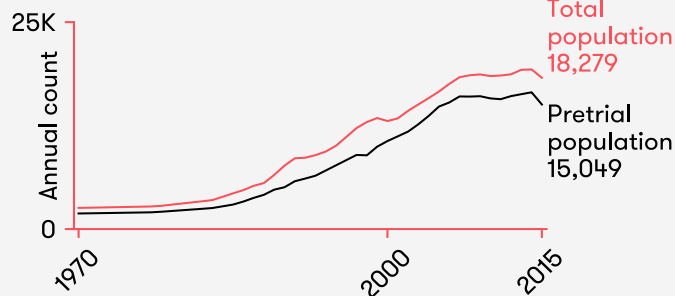
2015

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



% change in jail population

SINCE 1970

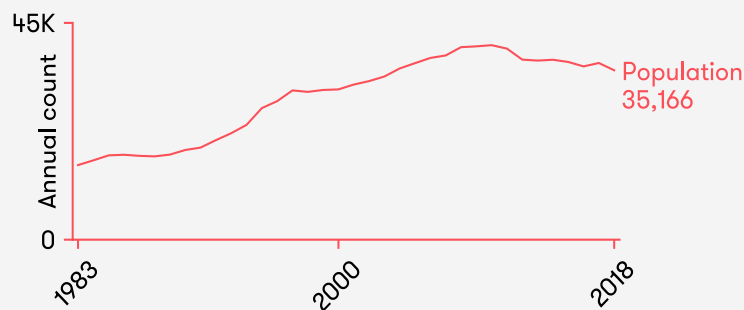
SINCE 2000

615% ↑

40% ↑

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 615%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 82% of the total jail population in North Carolina.

PRISONS



% change in prison population

SINCE 1983

SINCE 2000

127% ↑

13% ↑

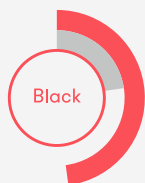
Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 127%. In 2018, there were 35,166 people in the North Carolina prison system.

RACE

more on pg 2 →

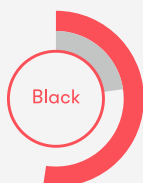
JAILS 2015

23% of state pop. | 48% of jail pop.



PRISONS 2017

23% of state pop. | 52% of prison pop.



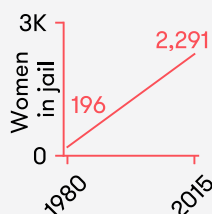
In North Carolina, Black people constituted 23% of state residents, but 48% of people in jail and 52% of people in prison.

GENDER

more on pg 2 →

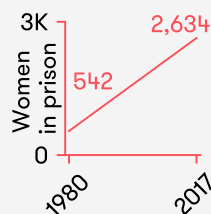
JAILS

1,067% ↑



PRISONS

386% ↑



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 1,067%, and the number of women in prison has increased 386%.

GEOGRAPHY

more on pg 3 →

Top admission rates, 2015 (rate per 100K)

COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Swain	23,346	Martin	1,093
Cleveland	14,703	Person	554
Pamlico	14,198	Lenoir	543
Martin	12,783	Rutherford	514
Lenoir	12,385	Wilkes	481

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

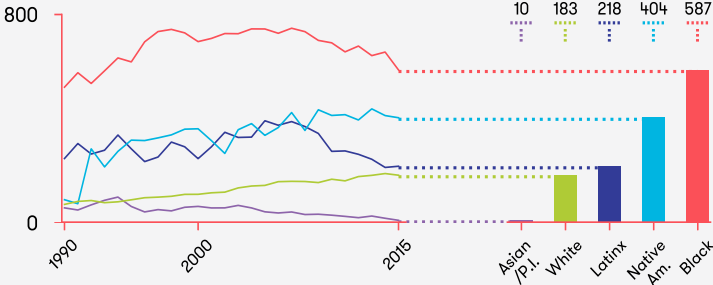


JAILS 2015

3% of state pop. | <1% of jail pop. | 65% of state pop. | 43% of jail pop. | 8% of state pop. | 7% of jail pop. | 1% of state pop. | 2% of jail pop. | 23% of state pop. | 48% of jail pop.



Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64



Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 13 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 3.2 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 2.2 times the rate of white people.

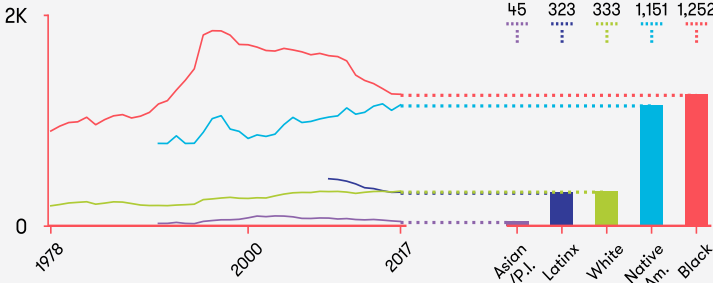


PRISONS 2017

3% of state pop. | <1% of prison pop. | 8% of state pop. | 5% of prison pop. | 65% of state pop. | 39% of prison pop. | 1% of state pop. | 3% of prison pop. | 23% of state pop. | 52% of prison pop.



Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64



Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 39 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 3.8 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 3.5 times the rate of white people.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

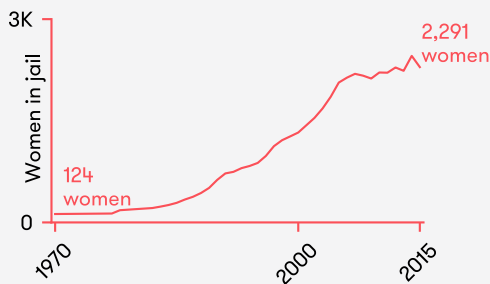
The overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system is well documented. Black men constitute about 13 percent of the male population, but about 35 percent of those incarcerated. One in five Black people born in their lifetime, compared to one in 10 Latinx people and one in 29 white people.

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.

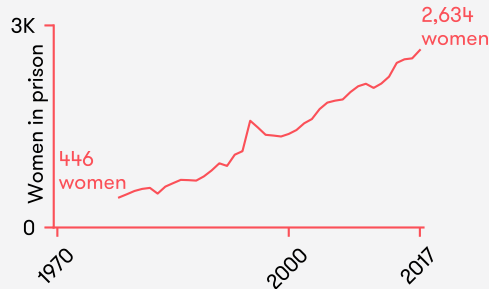
GENDER

JAILS



The number of women in North Carolina's jails has increased more than 18-fold, from 124 in 1970 to 2,291 in 2015.

PRISONS



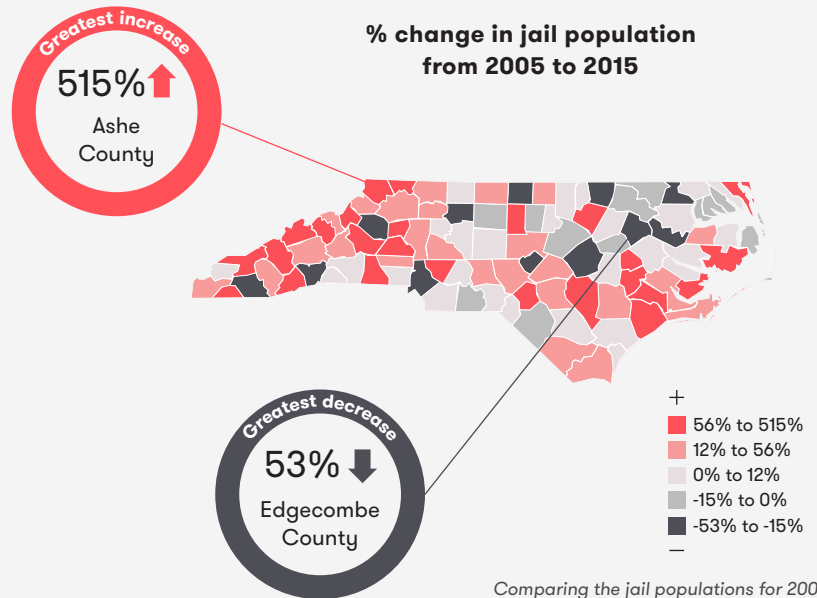
The number of women in North Carolina's prisons has increased more than fivefold, from 446 in 1978 to 2,634 in 2017.

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.

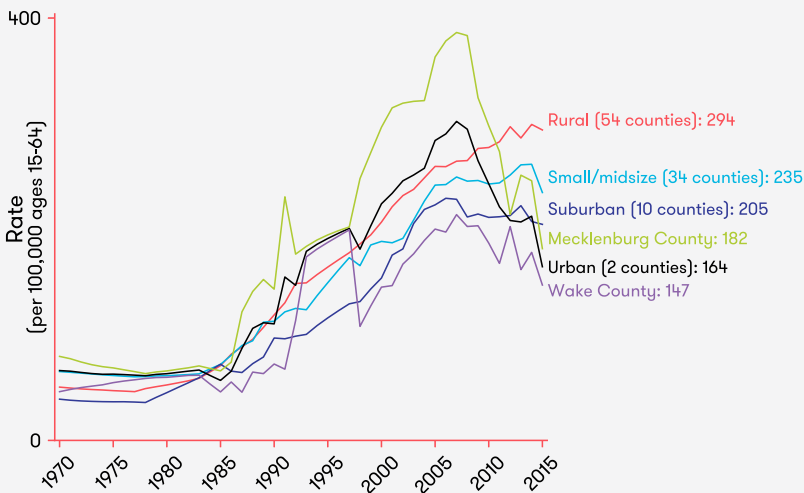
GEOGRAPHY

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.



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



Since 2000, the state's use of pretrial detention has taken different trajectories in different types of counties. The pretrial incarceration rate has increased 42% in the state's 54 rural counties, 33% in the state's 10 suburban counties, and 25% in the state's 34 small/medium counties. It has decreased 27% in the state's two urban 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

(TOP 10 OF 100 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Swain	23,346	Wake	35,314
Cleveland	14,703	Mecklenburg	25,099
Pamlico	14,198	Guilford	19,462
Martin	12,783	Buncombe	13,290
Lenoir	12,385	Gaston	12,619
Nash	12,272	Forsyth	11,952
Wilkes	11,724	Cumberland	11,672
Clay	11,364	New Hanover	11,671
Rutherford	11,342	Durham	9,910
Cherokee	11,113	Pitt	9,855

PRISON ADMISSIONS

(TOP 10 OF 100 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Martin	1,093	Wake	1,402
Person	554	Guilford	1,009
Lenoir	543	Mecklenburg	993
Rutherford	514	Cumberland	764
Wilkes	481	New Hanover	615
Madison	457	Forsyth	591
Jones	428	Durham	480
New Hanover	419	Pitt	469
Mitchell	416	Cabarrus	429
Beaufort	415	Buncombe	415

JAILS



Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Georgia	7,747	-26%
2	South Carolina	6,559	-15%
3	North Carolina	6,036	-26%
4	Virginia	5,547	-20%
5	Florida	5,166	-37%
6	West Virginia	4,071	11%
7	Maryland	2,484	-28%

Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Georgia	313	-30%
2	Florida	284	-23%
3	South Carolina	252	-17%
4	Virginia	234	2%
5	North Carolina	229	-9%
6	West Virginia	192	39%
7	Maryland	155	-27%

Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Virginia	283	0.0%
2	Georgia	242	0.3%
3	West Virginia	173	-0.1%
4	Florida	139	-0.2%
5	South Carolina	107	0.1%
6	Maryland	91	-0.2%
7	North Carolina	49	0.6%



PRISONS



Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06-'16)
1	West Virginia	302	30%
2	Georgia	258	-27%
3	North Carolina	242	36%
4	Florida	225	-26%
5	Maryland	221	-19%
6	Virginia	216	-10%
7	South Carolina	210	-35%

Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08-'18)
1	Georgia	791	-2%
2	Florida	734	-13%
3	Virginia	662	-6%
4	South Carolina	587	-26%
5	West Virginia	584	18%
6	North Carolina	518	-17%
7	Maryland	444	-25%

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.

Acknowledgments

This series would not be possible without the excellent work of researchers at the Bureau of Justice Statistics—E. Ann Carson, Todd Minton, and Zhen Zeng—who maintain the Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jails, National Corrections Reporting Program, and National Prisoner Statistics program. This report was designed by Paragini Amin and created by Christian Henrichson, Eital Schattner-Elmaleh, Jacob Kang-Brown, Oliver Hinds and James Wallace-Lee. This report was made possible by the support of Arnold Ventures. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Arnold Ventures.

Credits

© Vera Institute of Justice December 2019. All rights reserved.

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.