Incarceration Trends in SOUTH CAROLINA

Vera

Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons

REGIONAL RANK
6 of 7 in total incarceration

Total people... ...locked up in South Carolina

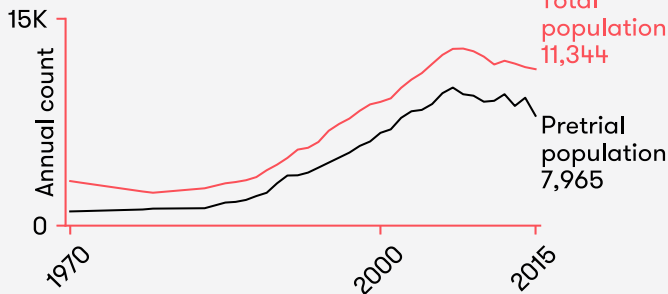**178% INCREASE**

11,424 people — 1983
31,802 people — 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 (15K)

Total population 11,344
Pretrial population 7,965

1970 — 2000 — 2015

% change in jail population
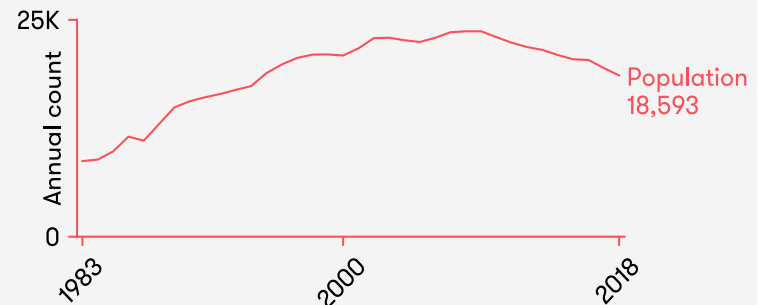
SINCE 1970	SINCE 2000
251% ↑	26% ↑

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 251%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 70% of the total jail population in South Carolina.

PRISONS

Annual count (25K)

Population 18,593

1983 — 2000 — 2018

% change in prison population

SINCE 1983	SINCE 2000
113% ↑	-11% ↓

Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 113%. In 2018, there were 18,593 people in the South Carolina prison system.

RACE
more on pg 2 →

JAILS 2015
29% of state pop. | 53% of jail pop.
Black

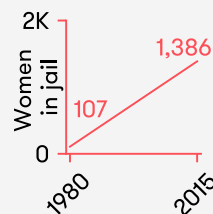**PRISONS** 2017
29% of state pop. | 60% of prison pop.
Black

In South Carolina, Black people constituted 29% of state residents, but 53% of people in jail and 60% of people in prison.
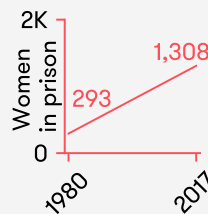
GENDER
more on pg 2 →

JAILS
1,186% ↑
Women in jail: 107 (1980) → 1,386 (2015)

PRISONS
346% ↑
Women in prison: 293 (1980) → 1,308 (2017)

Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 1,186%, and the number of women in prison has increased 346%.

GEOGRAPHY
more on pg 3 →

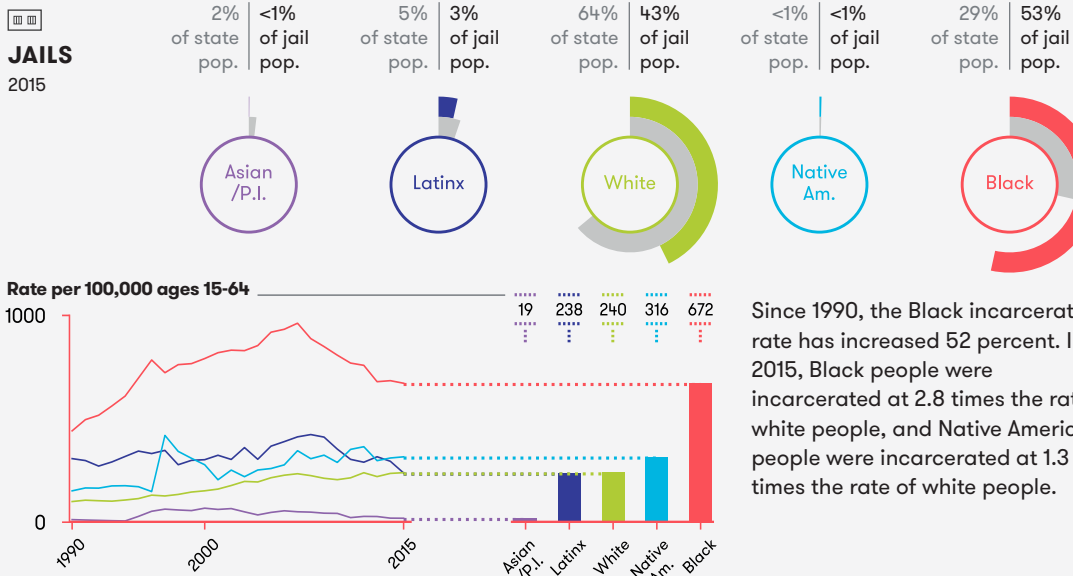**Top admission rates, 2015** (rate per 100K)

COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Union	13,266	McCormick	1,332
Bamberg	13,238	Cherokee	554
Dillon	11,370	Union	539
Allendale	11,152	Spartanburg	467
Darlington	10,657	Florence	420

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

	2% of state pop.	<1% of jail pop.	5% of state pop.	3% of jail pop.	64% of state pop.	43% of jail pop.	<1% of state pop.	<1% of jail pop.	29% of state pop.	53% of jail pop.

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

Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64

1000

19 · 238 · 240 · 316 · 672

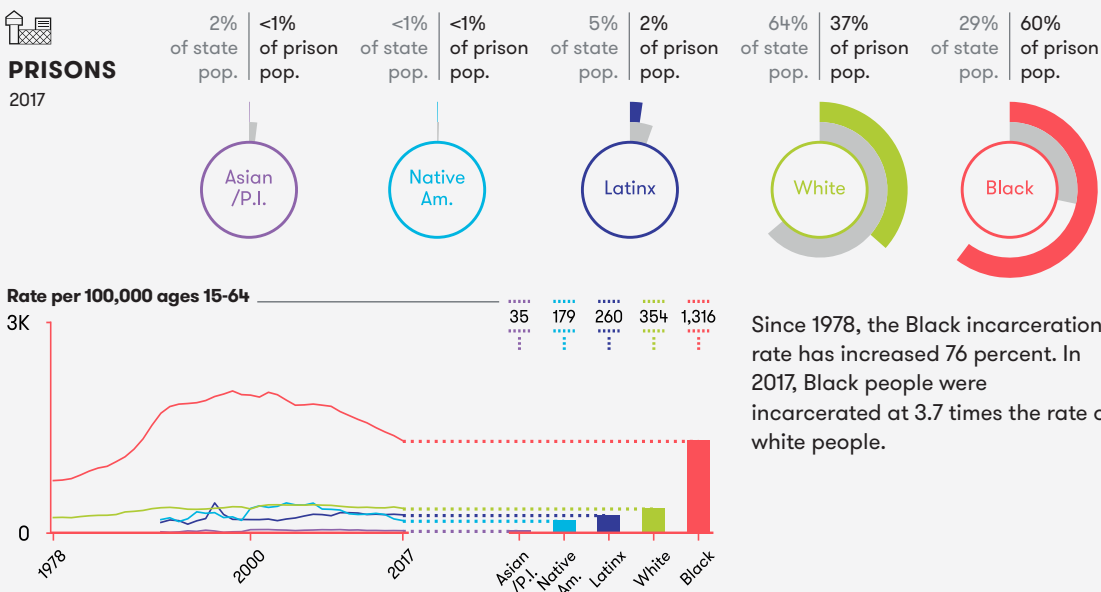Asian /P.I. · Latinx · White · Native Am. · Black

Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 52 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 2.8 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 1.3 times the rate of white people.

1990   2000   2015

PRISONS
2017

	2% of state pop.	<1% of prison pop.	<1% of state pop.	<1% of prison pop.	5% of state pop.	2% of prison pop.	64% of state pop.	37% of prison pop.	29% of state pop.	60% of prison pop.

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

Rate per 100,000 ages 15-64

3K

35 · 179 · 260 · 354 · 1,316

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

Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 76 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 3.7 times the rate of white people.

0

1978   2000   2017

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.
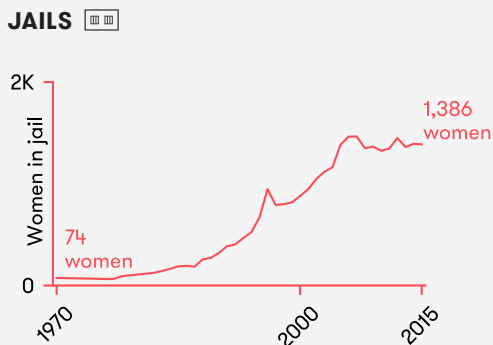
Discriminatory criminal justice policies and practices at all stages of the justice process have unjustifiably disadvantaged Black people, including through disparity in the enforcement of seemingly race-neutral laws. Studies have found that Black people are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained 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.
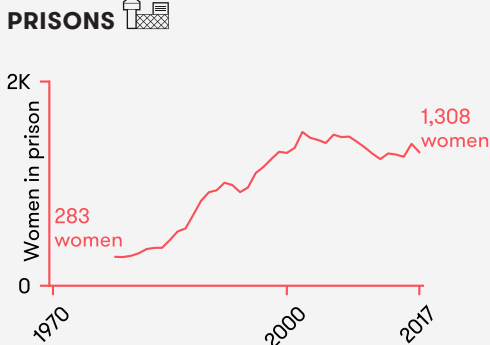
GENDER

JAILS

2K

1,386 women

74 women

1970   2000   2015

The number of women in South Carolina's jails has increased more than 18-fold, from 74 in 1970 to 1,387 in 2015.

PRISONS

2K

1,308 women

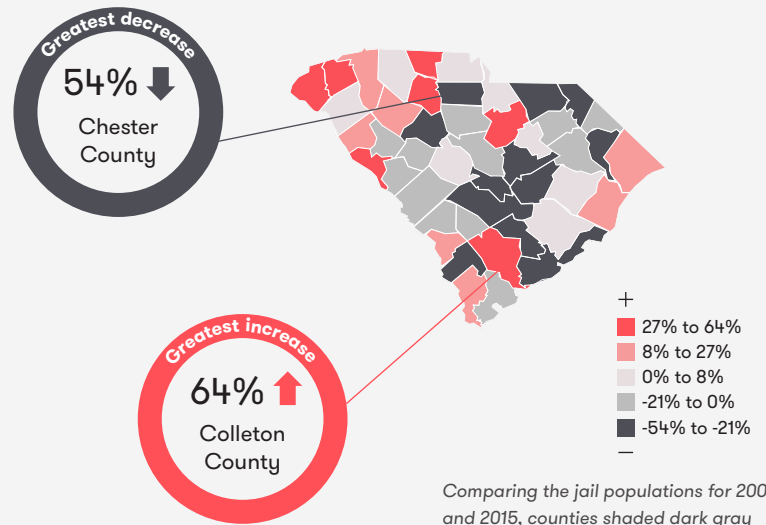283 women

1970   2000   2017

The number of women in South Carolina's prisons has increased more than fourfold, from 283 in 1978 to 1,308 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.
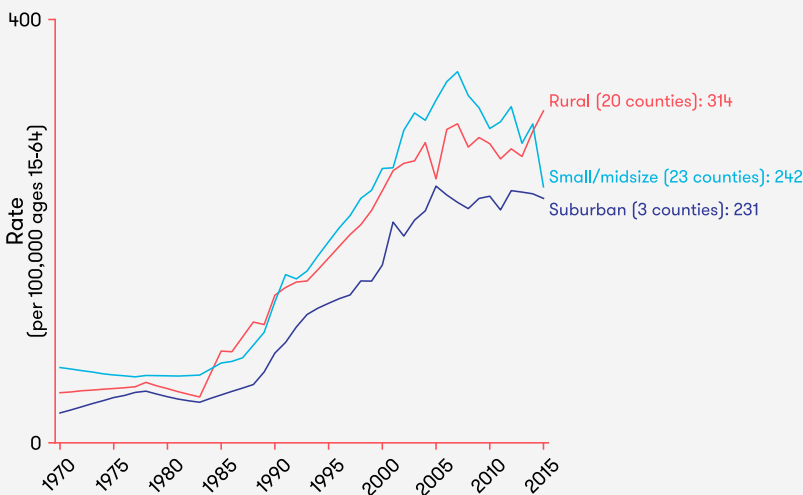
Statewide trends alone do not tell the whole story of incarceration: there is wide variation in the use of incarceration across the state. Today, the highest rates of prison admissions are in rural counties, and pretrial detention continues to increase in smaller counties even as it is on the decline 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 decrease

54% ⬇
Chester County

Greatest increase

64% ⬆
Colleton County

+
■ 27% to 64%
■ 8% to 27%
□ 0% to 8%
■ -21% to 0%
■ -54% to -21%
−

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)

400

0

1970 1975 1980 1985 1990 1995 2000 2005 2010 2015

Rural (20 counties): 314

Small/midsize (23 counties): 242

Suburban (3 counties): 231

Since 2000, the state's use of pretrial detention has taken different trajectories in different types of counties. The pretrial incarceration rate has increased 38% in the state's three suburban counties, and 32% in the state's 20 rural counties. It has decreased 7% in the state's 23 small/medium 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 46 COUNTIES)
2015

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Union	13,266	Charleston	21,069
Bamberg	13,238	Greenville	20,931
Dillon	11,370	Richland	15,041
Allendale	11,152	Spartanburg	13,526
Darlington	10,657	Lexington	12,100
Colleton	10,443	York	12,050
Marlboro	10,382	Horry	11,411
Georgetown	10,234	Anderson	9,576
Newberry	9,982	Florence	7,821
Barnwell	9,817	Berkeley	6,737

PRISON ADMISSIONS 🏚🔳   (TOP 10 OF 46 COUNTIES)
2015

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
McCormick	1,332	Spartanburg	895
Cherokee	554	Greenville	869
Union	539	Horry	600
Spartanburg	467	Charleston	589
Florence	420	Richland	556
Lee	393	York	465
Dillon	383	Lexington	463
Saluda	353	Florence	378
Barnwell	353	Aiken	270
Sumter	341	Anderson	258

JAILS

Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05–'15)
1	Tennessee	9,609	4%
2	Mississippi	8,335	13%
3	Georgia	7,747	-26%
4	**South Carolina**	6,559	-15%
5	North Carolina	6,036	-26%
6	Alabama	5,660	-39%
7	Florida	5,166	-37%
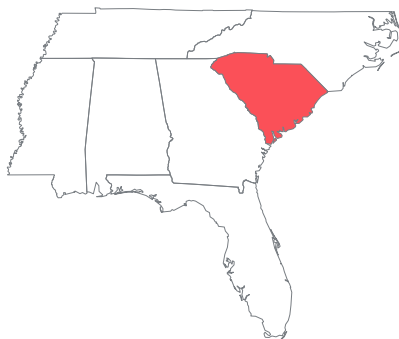
Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05–'15)
1	Mississippi	350	9%
2	Tennessee	339	18%
3	Georgia	313	-30%
4	Florida	284	-23%
5	Alabama	261	-19%
6	**South Carolina**	252	-17%
7	North Carolina	229	-9%

Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05–'15)
1	Tennessee	308	0.1%
2	Mississippi	290	0.1%
3	Georgia	242	0.3%
4	Florida	139	-0.2%
5	Alabama	113	-0.3%
6	**South Carolina**	107	0.1%
7	North Carolina	49	0.6%

PRISONS

Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06–'16)
1	Mississippi	385	-26%
2	Alabama	366	10%
3	Tennessee	298	-10%
4	Georgia	258	-27%
5	North Carolina	242	36%
6	Florida	225	-26%
7	**South Carolina**	210	-35%

Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08–'18)
1	Mississippi	1,013	-13%
2	Alabama	848	-12%
3	Georgia	791	-2%
4	Florida	734	-13%
5	Tennessee	687	5%
6	**South Carolina**	587	-26%
7	North Carolina	518	-17%

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

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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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