

Incarceration Trends in WISCONSIN

Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons



REGIONAL RANK

3 of 7 in total incarceration

Total people...

...locked up in Wisconsin

393%

INCREASE

7,269 people

35,835 people

1983

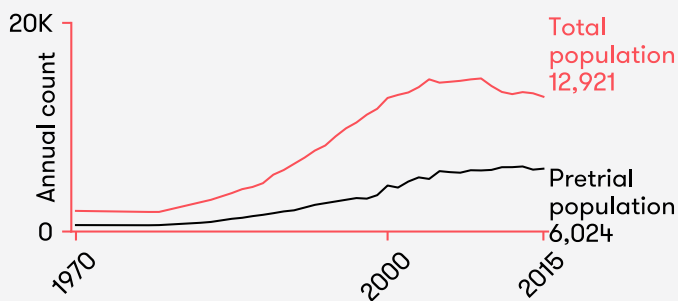
2015

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

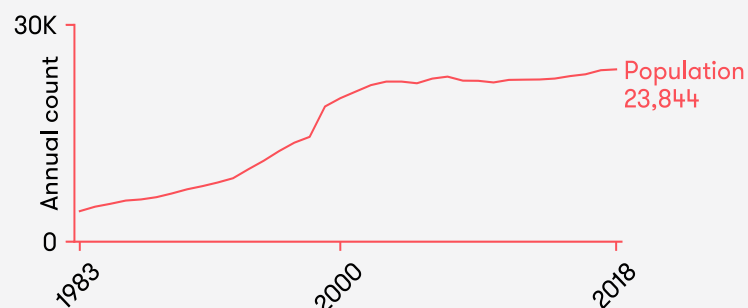
SINCE 2000

553% ↑

1% ↑

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 553%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 47% of the total jail population in Wisconsin.

PRISONS



% change in prison population

SINCE 1983

SINCE 2000

464% ↑

20% ↑

Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 464%. In 2018, there were 23,844 people in the Wisconsin prison system.

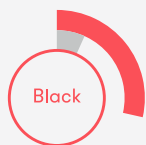
RACE

more on pg 2 →

JAILS

2015

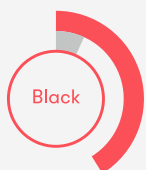
7% of state pop. | 29% of jail pop.



PRISONS

2017

7% of state pop. | 41% of prison pop.



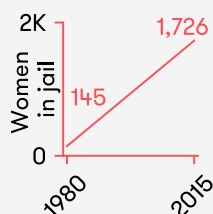
In Wisconsin, Black people constituted 7% of state residents, but 29% of people in jail and 41% of people in prison.

GENDER

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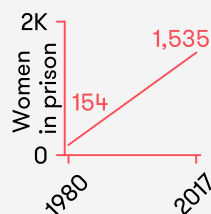
JAILS

1,088% ↑



PRISONS

897% ↑



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 1,088%, and the number of women in prison has increased 897%.

GEOGRAPHY

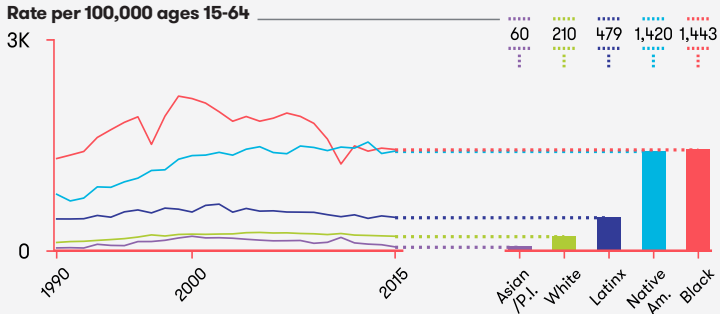
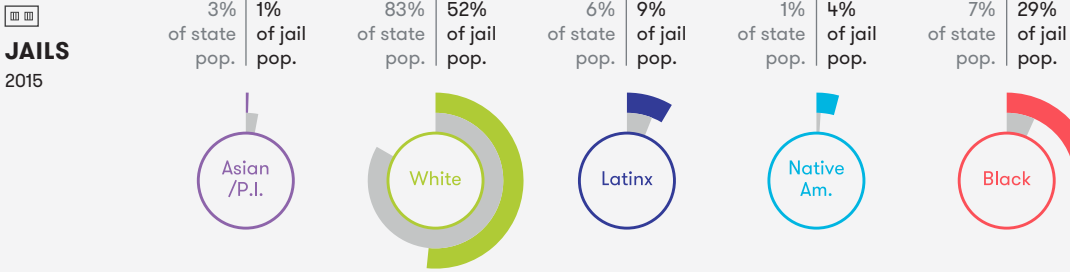
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Top admission rates, 2015 (rate per 100K)

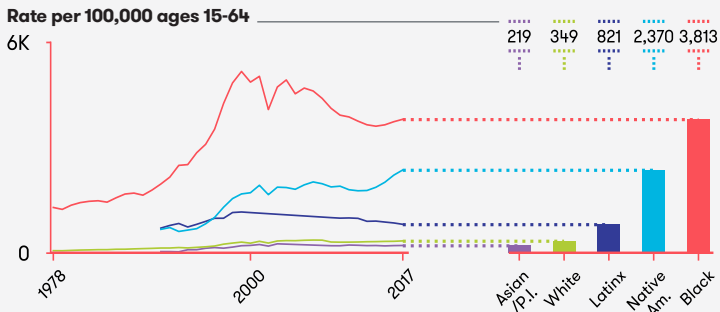
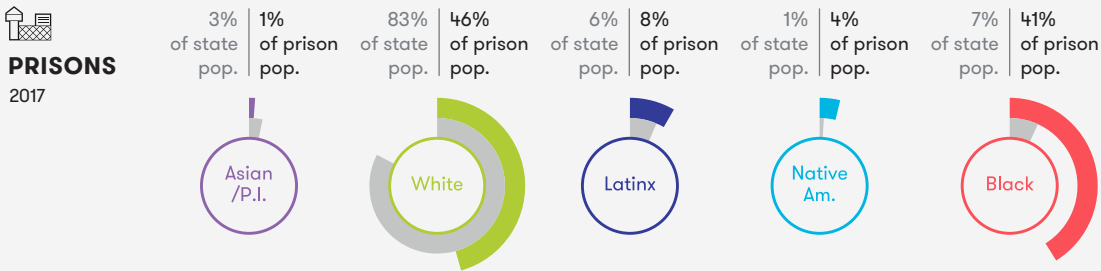
COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Forest	17,312	Florence	1,227
Shawano	16,213	Sawyer	751
Menominee	15,731	Shawano	589
Sawyer	14,831	Marinette	463
Vilas	13,047	Racine	410

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



Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 10 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 6.9 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 6.8 times the rate of white people.



Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 193 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 10.9 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 6.8 times the rate of white people.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

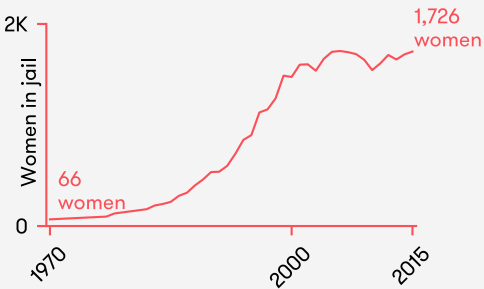
The overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system is well documented. Black men constitute about 13 percent of the male population, but about 35 percent of those incarcerated. One in five Black people born in their lifetime, compared to one in 10 Latinx people and one in 29 white people.

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.

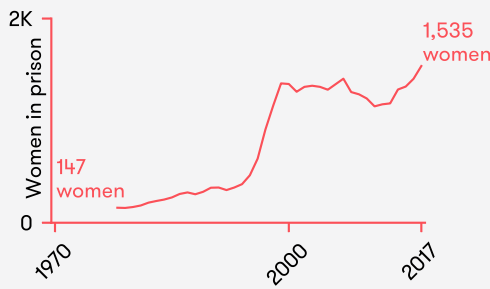
GENDER

JAILS



The number of women in Wisconsin's jails has increased more than 26-fold, from 66 in 1970 to 1,727 in 2015.

PRISONS

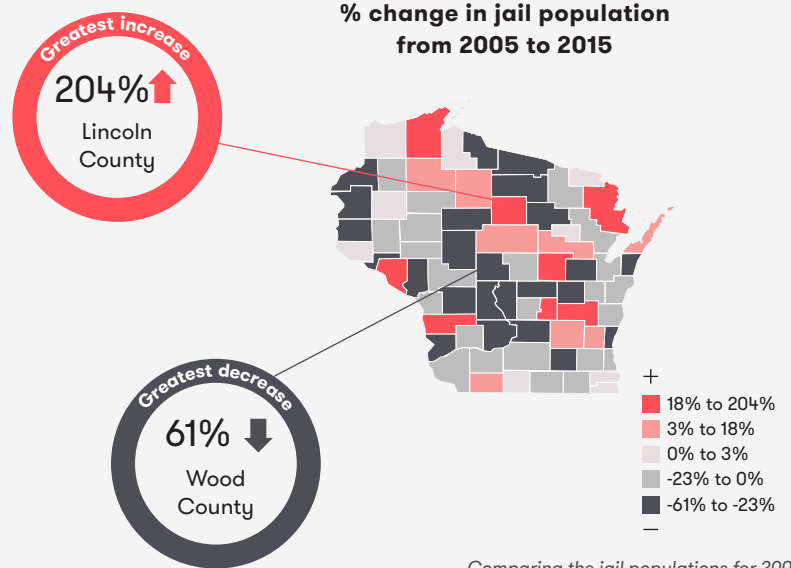


The number of women in Wisconsin's prisons has increased more than tenfold, from 147 in 1978 to 1,535 in 2017.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

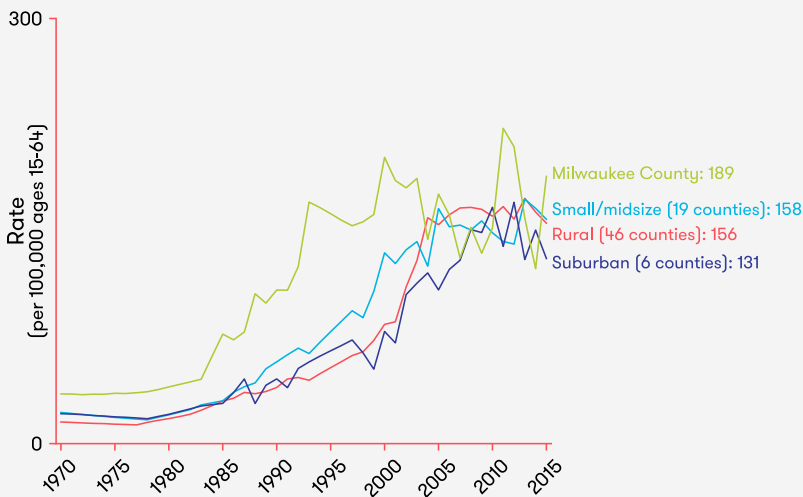
Although men's jail admissions have declined by 26 percent since 2008, women's admissions have increased both as a total number and as a proportion of all jail admissions. Women now make up almost one out of every four jail admissions, up from fewer than one in 10 in 1983. Since 1970, the number of women 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.



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 85% in the state's 46 rural counties, 65% in the state's six suburban counties, and 18% in the state's 19 small/medium counties. It has decreased 7% in the state's one urban county.

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 72 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Forest	17,312	Milwaukee	31,171
Shawano	16,213	Dane	13,401
Menominee	15,731	Brown	10,001
Sawyer	14,831	Racine	9,090
Vilas	13,047	Kenosha	7,926
Burnett	11,460	Waukesha	6,747
Ashland	11,141	Outagamie	5,909
Oneida	9,739	Rock	5,894
Langlade	9,653	Winnebago	5,515
Lincoln	9,505	Dodge	5,266

PRISON ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 72 COUNTIES)

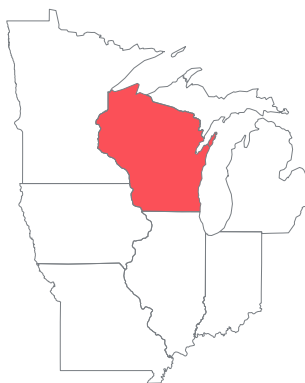
COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Florence	1,227	Milwaukee	2,459
Sawyer	751	Dane	544
Shawano	589	Racine	524
Marinette	463	Brown	441
Racine	410	Waukesha	434
Milwaukee	382	Kenosha	364
Forest	358	Rock	316
Kewaunee	341	Winnebago	239
Langlade	336	Outagamie	223
Lincoln	325	Washington	212

JAILS



Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Iowa	6,216	-11%
2	Wisconsin	5,352	-18%
3	Missouri	5,315	-11%
4	Minnesota	5,268	-6%
5	Indiana	5,247	-24%
6	Michigan	4,680	-21%
7	Illinois	3,808	-17%



Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Indiana	272	8%
2	Missouri	226	16%
3	Wisconsin	158	1%
4	Iowa	158	5%
5	Illinois	157	-19%
6	Michigan	126	-4%
7	Minnesota	111	5%

Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Wisconsin	181	-0.2%
2	Michigan	119	-0.2%
3	Indiana	114	-0.3%
4	Minnesota	75	-0.2%
5	Illinois	64	0.5%
6	Missouri	60	-0.2%
7	Iowa	54	0.2%

PRISONS



Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06-'16)
1	Missouri	465	-7%
2	Illinois	299	-36%
3	Iowa	298	-11%
4	Indiana	297	-29%
5	Minnesota	223	6%
6	Michigan	192	-12%
7	Wisconsin	175	-24%

Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08-'18)
1	Missouri	768	0.2%
2	Wisconsin	637	3%
3	Indiana	620	-6%
4	Michigan	594	-18%
5	Illinois	472	-10%
6	Iowa	469	5%
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.

Acknowledgments

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Credits

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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.