



PRIVATE PRISONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Private for-profit prisons incarcerated 90,873 American residents in 2022, representing 8% of the total state and federal prison population. Since 2000, the number of people housed in private prisons has increased 5%.

Harmful crime policies of the 1980s and beyond fueled a rapid expansion in the nation’s prison population. The resulting burden on the public sector led to the modern emergence of for-profit prisons in many states and the federal system. Of the 1.2 million people in federal and state prisons, 8%, or 90,873 people, were in private prisons as of year end 2022.¹

States show significant variation in the use of private prisons. At one end of the spectrum, Montana incarcerates almost half of its prison population in privately run facilities, but in another 23 states, private prisons are not used at all. A total of 27 states and the federal government use private corporations like GEO Group, Core Civic,² LaSalle Corrections, and Management and Training Corporation to run some of their corrections facilities.

Montana is not alone in its heavy reliance on private prisons. Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Tennessee rely considerably on private prisons for housing sentenced people. In these states, between 20% and 39% of the prison population resides in a for-profit prison (See Table 1).

The proportion of imprisoned people in private facilities compared to public facilities has not changed considerably in the past 20 years. In 2000, 8% of the imprisoned population was also in private facilities; but fluctuations in the total number of people imprisoned over 20 years

TABLE 1. Private Prison Populations, 2000 and 2022

Jurisdiction	2000	2022	% Private 2022	% Change 2000-2022
Alabama	0	253	1%	*
Alaska	1,383	300	20%	-78%
Arizona	1,430	9,738	29%	581%
Arkansas	1,540	0	0%	-100%
California	4,547	0	0%	-100%
Colorado	2,099	2,677	16%	28%
Connecticut	0	0	0%	*
Delaware	0	0	0%	*
Florida	3,912	11,728	14%	200%
Georgia	3,746	7,284	15%	94%
Hawaii	1,187	966	39%	-19%
Idaho	1,162	861	10%	-26%
Illinois	0	335	1%	*
Indiana	991	3,906	16%	294%
Iowa	0	0	0%	*
Kansas	0	0	0%	*
Kentucky	1,268	814	4%	-36%
Louisiana	3,068	0	0%	-100%
Maine	11	0	0%	-100%
Maryland	127	0	0%	-100%
Massachusetts	0	0	0%	*
Michigan	449	0	0%	-100%
Minnesota	0	0	0%	*
Mississippi	3,230	2,252	12%	-30%
Missouri	0	0	0%	*
Montana	986	2,319	49%	135%
Nebraska	0	0	0%	*
Nevada	508	0	0%	-100%
New Hampshire	0	0	0%	*
New Jersey	2,498	834	7%	-67%
New Mexico	2,155	1,522	31%	-29%
New York	0	0	0%	*
North Carolina	330	29	0%	-91%
North Dakota	96	292	16%	204%
Ohio	1,918	6,540	14%	241%
Oklahoma	6,931	4,282	19%	-38%
Oregon	0	0	0%	*
Pennsylvania	0	447	1%	*
Rhode Island	0	0	0%	*
South Carolina	0	78	0%	*
South Dakota	45	45	1%	0%
Tennessee	3,510	6,828	29%	95%
Texas	13,985	11,030	8%	-21%
Utah	208	0	0%	-100%
Vermont	0	110	14%	*
Virginia	1,571	1,278	5%	-19%
Washington	0	0	0%	*
West Virginia	0	0	0%	*
Wisconsin**	4,337	0	0%	-100%
Wyoming	275	291	14%	6%
Federal***	15,524	13,834	9%	-11%
Total	85,027	90,873	8%	5%

Notes:
 * = Growth began at zero.
 ** = Wisconsin does not have anyone housed at private facilities. However, when a person is housed out of state under the Interstate Corrections Compact or the Intergovernmental Agreement, Wisconsin does not track if the facility is a private facility or state or federally owned facility.
 *** = The Federal count includes Washington, DC residents convicted of a felony. As of December 31, 2001, DC residents convicted of a felony are the responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Prisons.
 Source: Carson, E. A., & Kluckow, R. (2023). *Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical Tables*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. See Table 4 and Table 14.

Under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, there is an average of 28,289 people held daily in immigrant detention, and it is estimated 79% of this population is held in privately run facilities.⁴

Political influences have been instrumental in securing the growth of for-profit private prisons. Because the prison population grew in 2022 for the first time in almost a decade, the privatization debate will likely intensify as opportunities for the prison industry may increase as corporations seek to make profits in related corrections areas.

ENDNOTES

¹ The counts presented in this fact sheet are primarily obtained from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' *Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical Tables* report, with the exception of Connecticut, which provided its own figures.

² Formerly Corrections Corporation of America.

³ Federal private facilities include prisons, halfway houses, and systems of home confinement.

⁴ ACLU. (2021). *More of the same: Private prison corporations and immigration detention under the Biden Administration.*; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2023). *FY 2023 detention statistics - ICE average daily population EOFY2023.* <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention/FY21-detentionstats.xlsx>



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The Sentencing Project promotes effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice.

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