

Criminal Justice & Mass Incarceration

Because we are followers of Jesus, we are called to be present as ambassadors of healing, restoration, and justice in jail cells, courtrooms, and detention centers.

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Fast Facts

Total Federal Inmates - Since Congress created mandatory minimum sentences for drug crimes in the 1980s, the federal prison population has grown from 24,000 prisoners to 208,963 prisoners (as of April 2015) – the largest prison system in the country.¹ Nearly half of all federal prisoners are serving prison sentences for drugs² and approximately one in every five state prisoners is serving time for a drug offense.³

The United States is the world's leader in incarceration with 2.3 million people currently in the nation's prisons or jails – a 500% increase over the past thirty years. While the U. S. comprises 5% of the total global population, it alone accounts for 25% of the world's prison population.⁴

There is no parole in the federal criminal justice system – all federal prisoners are required to serve at least 85% of their sentences.⁵ The average federal prison sentence is 9.5 years.⁶

It costs almost \$29,000 to keep one person in federal prison for one year and approximately \$26,000 for one person at a Community Corrections Center.⁷ Taxpayers spend over \$50 billion annually for state prisons.⁸ As of 2010, more than **1 million women** are in prison.⁹

In 2012 there were **10 times as many mentally ill persons** in prisons and jails than in state hospitals – Hospitals: 35,000 mentally ill patients vs. Prisons and jails: 356,000 mentally ill inmates¹⁰

Deuteronomy 16:19-20

“You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”



Children & Youth

More than 2.7 million children have a parent behind bars, or 1 in 28. For African American children the number is 1 in 9¹¹

The United States is the ONLY country in the world that sentences children to life in prison with no possibility of parole for crimes committed under age 18. Collectively the 2,570 Juvenile who are serving life without parole sentences will cost taxpayers an estimated \$6.2 billion over their lifetimes.¹²

Youth of color are more likely to be confined than white youth for similar crimes. African-American youth are 5 times more likely, Latino and American Indian youth two-three times as likely.¹³

40% of juvenile commitments and detention are due to offenses that are not clear threats to public safety.¹⁴

The monies spent on incarcerating one child for life could educate approximately 169 students for a year.¹⁵

Race & Mass Incarceration

More than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. African Americans constitute nearly 1 million of the 2.3 million incarcerated population. They are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites.

One in every 100 Adults is behind bars¹⁶

- All women – 1/355
- Caucasian women (Ages 35-39) – 1/265
- Black women (Ages 35-39) – 1/100
- Hispanic women (Ages 35-39) – 1/297
- All men (18+) – 1/54
- Caucasian men (18+) - 1/106
- Black men (18+) - 1/15
- Hispanic Men 18+ - 1/36

African Americans males comprise only 6% of the U. S. population, they make up 40% of those in prison or jail. They have a 32% chance of serving time at some point in their lives. Hispanic males have a 17% chance of serving time in prison at some point in their lives. Together, African Americans and Hispanics comprised 58% of all prisoners in 2008, even though together they make up approximately one-quarter of the U. S. population.¹⁷



¹ Federal Bureau of Prisons | ² Federal Bureau of Prisons | ³ Bureau of Justice Statistics | ⁴ International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS) | ⁵ Federal Bureau of Prisons | ⁶ Federal Bureau of Prisons | ⁷ The Federal Register | ⁸ National Association of State Budget Officers | ⁹ The Sentencing Project | ¹⁰ The Treatment Advocacy Center | ¹¹ One in 100: Behind Bars in America. Pew Charitable Trusts | ¹² Fair Sentencing of Youth Organization | ¹³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation | ¹⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation | ¹⁵ Fair Sentencing of Youth Organization | ¹⁶ One in 100: Behind Bars in America. Pew Charitable Trust | ¹⁷ U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistic