

PRISON  
POLICY INITIATIVE

**2023-2024**  
ANNUAL REPORT

---

*October 2024*

# Table of contents

---

Executive Director’s letter .....	1
Who we are .....	3
Empowering the movement with facts .....	4
Campaign updates	
Exposing the harms of pretrial detention and monitoring .....	8
Showing the full reach of our nation’s mass punishment system .....	10
Revealing the perils of community supervision .....	12
Protecting our democracy from mass incarceration by ending prison gerrymandering...	14
Shining a light on the carceral experience .....	17
Building a stronger criminal justice reform movement.....	19
Supporting our work .....	22
Prison Policy Initiative budget report for 2023-2024 year.....	23

*“PPI is one of the most imaginative research groups **illuminating** the dark recesses of our carceral landscape”*

-Pete Brook  
**Prison Photography**

# Executive Director's letter

---

Dear friends,

Your investments make our work possible. I'm excited to share with you our annual report highlighting — in our usual highly-skimmable and visual form — the key pieces and context of our work and our victories to build a bigger, more robust, and more powerful movement against mass incarceration.

It is no secret that we're currently in a challenging climate for criminal legal system reform. Politicians have returned to their fearmongering tactics. They're lying about rising crime — crime is at historic lows — and doing so without shame or consequence. And unfortunately, the lies often work, with some of the hard-won reforms of recent years being rolled back.

But we're not giving up, and we're able to do this work and produce these wins because of donors like you. Your support gives us the freedom to invest in high-risk, high-impact early-stage projects that have the potential to push our movement forward. And I'm thrilled to share with you some of our most impactful new projects, including:

- Producing comprehensive data showing that, in the U.S., Black people are incarcerated at a rate six times higher than white people, with even the most “progressive” states locking Black residents up at a rate at least twice that of white residents. (See p. 6)
- Highlighting the ways that, in many states, people with felony convictions continue to be denied the ability to secure good-paying jobs and how, because of his wealth and power, Donald Trump, despite his felony conviction, will certainly be able to avoid the worst of these collateral consequences. (See p. 11)
- Providing advocates and lawmakers with research and data to push back on the so-called “tough-on-crime” legislation from the 90s that is being resurrected around the country. (See p. 20)

And despite the challenging political climate, we've also won significant victories over the last year, including:

- Working with a coalition of local advocates in Fulton County, Georgia, we produced the data and research that allowed them to successfully kill a proposal to build a massive, new \$2 billion jail. (See p. 19)
- Responding to the work of a national coalition and our pioneering research, the Federal Communications Commission announced new rules to dramatically slash the cost of prison and jail voice and video calls and to address some of the worst abuses of the carceral telecom industry. (See p. 18)
- And building on the momentum of our twenty-year campaign, we helped to end prison gerrymandering in Minnesota, adding additional pressure on the Census Bureau to end the practice nationwide. (See p. 14)

The non-profit, non-partisan Prison Policy Initiative produces cutting edge research to expose the broader harm of mass incarceration, and then sparks advocacy campaigns to create a more just society.

During the year, we were honored with an unexpected gift of \$2 million from Yield Giving, a new foundation created by MacKenzie Scott. This gift is particularly well-timed, coming as other large funders are changing priorities and cutting back on their investments in criminal legal reform. Our plan is to use this gift over the next several years to do thoughtful expansion in the areas where we are the strongest while blunting the impact of other funders leaving the space.

In the 23 years since I co-founded the Prison Policy Initiative, I continue to be humbled and emboldened by the support of all of our donors, large and small, who understand how our work producing data, analysis, and visualizations strengthens the movement to end mass incarceration in the U.S. Your contributions allow us to continue to make progress through both the good times and the tough times.

Please join me in celebrating this last year and in looking forward to what we can all accomplish as an organization, as a community, and as a movement in the year to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PW', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Peter Wagner  
Executive Director  
October 16, 2024

# Who we are

---

The non-profit, non-partisan Prison Policy Initiative **produces cutting edge research** to expose the **broader harm of mass incarceration**, and then sparks **advocacy campaigns** to create a more just society.

The Prison Policy Initiative was founded in 2001 to document and publicize how mass incarceration undermines our national welfare. Our team of interdisciplinary researchers and organizers shapes national reform campaigns from our remote workspaces and our headquarters in western Massachusetts.

## Staff

- Wanda Bertram, *Communications Strategist*
- Regan Huston, *Digital Communications Strategist*
- Aleks Kajstura, *Legal Director*
- Brian Nam-Sonenstein, *Senior Editor & Researcher*
- Emmett Sanders, *Policy & Advocacy Associate*
- Wendy Sawyer, *Research Director*
- Danielle Squillante, *Development & Communications Associate*
- Sarah Staudt, *Policy & Advocacy Director*
- Peter Wagner, *Executive Director*
- Leah Wang, *Research Analyst*
- Mike Wessler, *Communications Director*
- Emily Widra, *Senior Research Analyst*

## Volunteers and student interns

- Nell Haney, *University of Michigan Law School*
- Stephen Rahe, *Attorney and Researcher*
- Amelia Wittig, *University of Michigan Law School*

## Consultants

- Emma Peyton Williams, *Editor & Researcher*
- Rachel Corey, *Research & Advocacy Consultant*
- Bill Cooper, *GIS*
- Bob Machuga, *Graphic Design*
- Jordan Miner, *Programming*
- Andrew Mulhearn, *Graphic Design*
- Kevin Pyle, *Illustrations*
- Orion Taylor, *Jail Data Initiative, Data Analysis*

## Board of Directors\*

- Andrew Adams, *Clerk*  
*Chief of Staff & Head of Strategic Communications,*  
*Planned Parenthood Mar Monte*
- Lucius Couloute, *Treasurer*  
*Sociology, Trinity College*
- Laurie Jo Reynolds, *President*  
*Policy advocate, researcher, and artist*
- Carrie Ann Shirota, *Director*  
*Policy Director, ACLU of Hawai'i*

## Advisory Board\*

- Andrew Beveridge, *Sociology, Queens College*
- Alec Ewald, *Political Science, University of Vermont*
- Nora V. Demleitner, *President, St. John's College, Annapolis*
- Amy Fetting, *Fair and Just Prosecution*
- Alex Friedmann
- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Earth and Environmental Sciences,*  
*City University of New York*
- Barbara Graves-Poller, *City of Kingston, New York*
- Ruth Greenwood, *Professor and Director of the Election*  
*Law Clinic, Harvard Law School*
- Daniel Jenkins, *Democracy activist, plaintiff, Longway v.*  
*Jefferson*
- Eric Lotke, *Attorney, researcher, and author*
- Bruce Reilly, *Formerly Incarcerated, Convicted People and*  
*Families Movement*
- Brigitte Sarabi, *Founder, Partnership for Safety and Justice*
- Jason Stanley, *Professor of Philosophy, Yale University*
- Heather Ann Thompson, *Professor of History, University*  
*of Michigan*
- Janice Thompson, *Midwest Democracy Network*
- Angela Wessels
- Brenda Wright, *NAACP Legal Defense Fund*
- Rebecca Young, *Attorney*

\*Organizations for identification purposes only.

# Empowering the movement with facts

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/national>

*We develop powerful ways to illuminate the truth about mass incarceration, and use our data-driven analysis to make change.*

With creative research strategies, engaging graphics, and highly readable reports, we give organizers, advocates, and policymakers the facts they need to reform the criminal legal system and push for the end of mass incarceration. Highlights include:

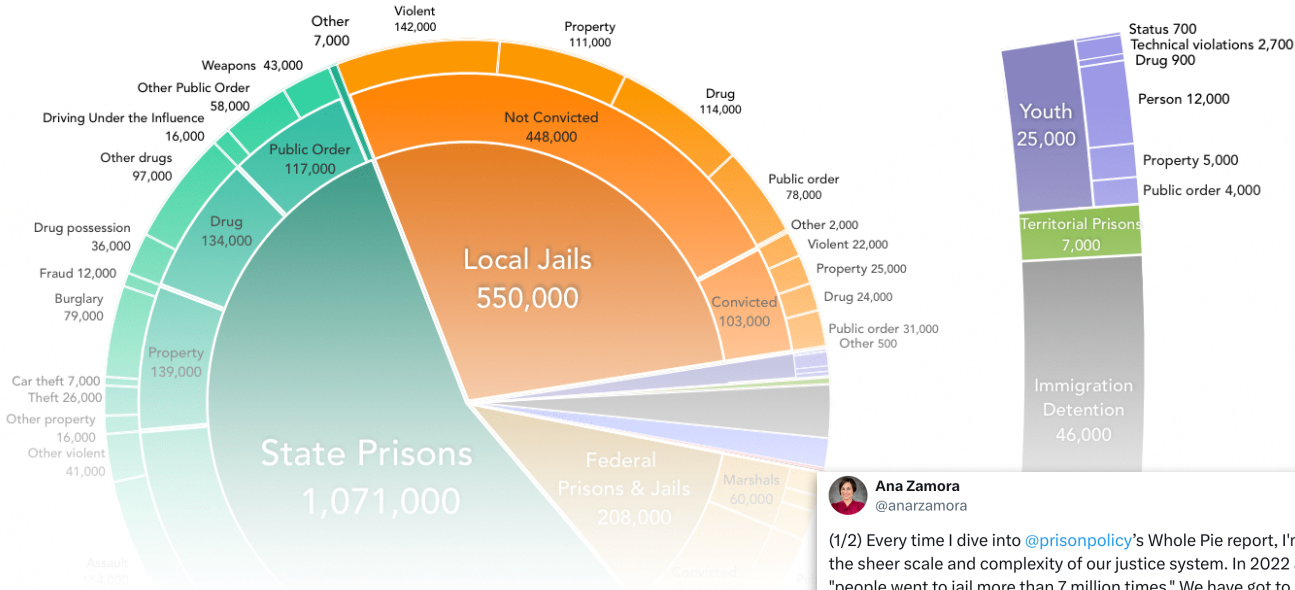
### Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2024

The 10th-anniversary edition of our flagship report provides the most comprehensive picture of how many people are locked up in the U.S., in what types of facilities, and why. In addition to showing that more than 1.9 million people are behind bars on any given day in the U.S., it busts 10 of the most persistent myths about prisons, jails, crime, and more. It includes 34 visualizations of criminal legal system data, exposing long-standing truths about some of the drivers of mass incarceration in the U.S.



## How many people are locked up in the United States?

The U.S. locks up more people per capita than any other nation, at the staggering rate of 583 per 100,000 residents. But to end mass incarceration, we must first consider where and why 1.9 million people are confined nationwide.



**Ana Zamora** @anarzamora  
(1/2) Every time I dive into @prisonpolicy's Whole Pie report, I'm struck by the sheer scale and complexity of our justice system. In 2022 alone, "people went to jail more than 7 million times." We have got to narrow the funnel...

## Women's Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2024

We dove deep into the data to provide the most recent and comprehensive data on how many women are incarcerated in the U.S., in what kinds of facilities, and why. Women in the U.S. experience a dramatically different criminal legal system than men do, but data on their experiences is difficult to find and put into context. To address this gap, the report also includes rare self-reported data from a national survey of people in prison to offer new insights about incarcerated women's backgrounds, families, health, and experiences in prison.

## States of Incarceration: The Global Context 2024

We updated our report on global incarceration rates for the first time since 2021. It shows the U.S. still has the highest incarceration rate of any independent democracy on earth — worse, every single state in the U.S. incarcerates more people per capita than most nations. This report makes clear that even so-called “progressive” states continue to lock people up at more than double the rates of our closest international allies.



## New Report Looks at Women's Incarceration in America


 **Rebekah Barber**  
March 21, 2024

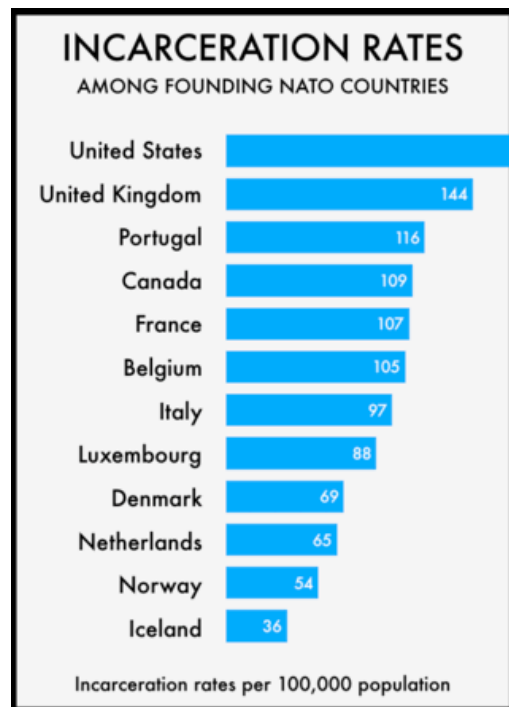
This month, as women all across the country are celebrated during **Women's History Month**, the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI) released its annual report that details the plight of some of the most marginalized women—those who are incarcerated.

*Women's Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2024*, written by Aleks Kajstura and Wendy Sawyer, details why and where women are incarcerated nationwide. The report finds that women's incarceration has grown at twice the rate of men's in recent decades.

88.5 nepm

**Study shows incarcerated women experience different conditions than men** JUNE 27, 2024 · 5:16 PM ET  
HEARD ON ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

3-Minute Listen  Meg Anderson



Source: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2024.html>

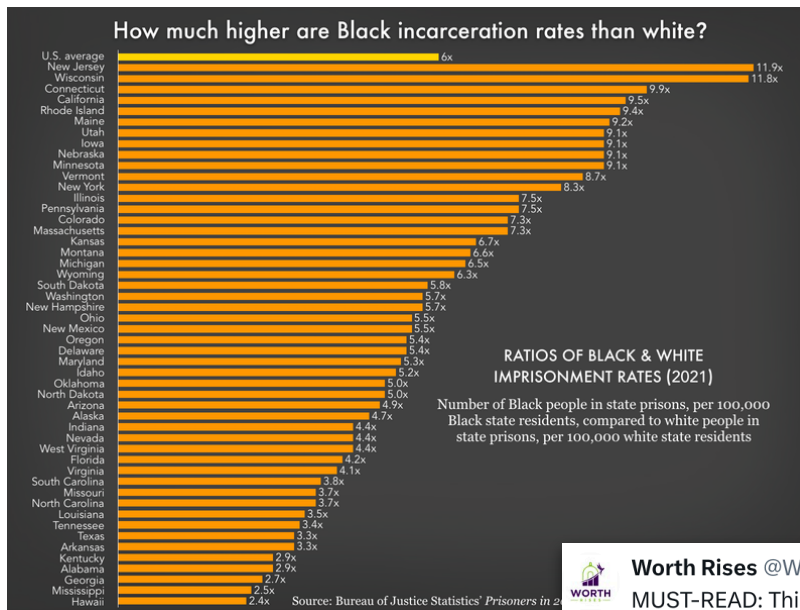
News Live **WKYT**

**Report: Kentucky's incarceration rate among highest in the world**  
By Alyssa Williams  
Published: Jun. 26, 2024 at 6:53 PM EDT

A study released by the Prison Policy Initiative says that Kentucky has a higher incarceration rate than any democratic country on earth.

## Updated data and charts: Incarceration stats by race, ethnicity, and gender for all 50 states and D.C.

We released new data visualizations and updated tables showing the national landscape of persistent racial disparities in state prisons and local jails. Unlike other datasets, ours provides apples-to-apples state comparisons in three formats: counts, rates, and percentages. Using this data, we updated over 100 of the key graphics on our State Profile pages, showing prison and jail incarceration rates by race and ethnicity, and how the racial composition of each state's prisons and jails compares to the total state population.



**Maine Morning Star**  
PART OF STATES NEWSROOM

JUSTICE

### Maine has 6th highest racial disparity within its incarcerated population, report finds

In 2021, Black Mainers were locked up at a rate 9.2 times higher than white Mainers

BY: EVAN POPP - SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 12:04 PM

Maine's incarcerated population contains startling racial disparities, according to a new data analysis, as Black residents of the state were locked up at a rate 9.2 times higher than white people as of 2021.

Information published Wednesday by the Prison Policy Initiative, a nonprofit research and advocacy group, found the racial disparities in Maine's incarcerated population to be the sixth highest in the nation. New Jersey's rate of racial disparities was the largest, with Black residents there imprisoned at a rate nearly 12 times higher than white people, followed by Wisconsin, Connecticut, California, Rhode Island and then Maine. Still, every state had such a disparity, with the smallest found in Hawaii, where Black people were 2.4 times more likely to be imprisoned.

The racial disparities in Maine's carceral settings came in well above the overall nationwide average, in which Black people were imprisoned at a rate six times higher than white people, according to the Prison Policy Initiative report. Overall, Black people in Maine accounted for 11% of those in prison in 2021 but made up only 1% of the state's overall population.

90.3fm KNBA  
A KOAHNIC BROADCAST STATION

### Racial disparities for Alaska Native and American Indian inmates: A troubling picture

KNBA | By Rhonda McBride  
Published October 2, 2023 at 3:02 PM AKDT

Worth Rises @WorthRises · May 6

MUST-READ: This important report from @prisonpolicy highlights the nefarious ways in which the carceral system steals from the poor in order to financially bolster prison operations, staff salaries, benefits, and more.

## Shadow Budgets: How mass incarceration steals from the poor to give to the prison

We explained how prisons and jails squeeze revenue out of incarcerated people and their families via kickbacks from commissary and communications services, then funnel it into "Inmate Welfare Funds" and use the money to cover the costs of incarceration. Our analysis revealed that most welfare fund policies are so vague that prison officials enjoy wide discretion to spend incarcerated peoples' money as they please — sometimes spending it on luxury perks for staff. We released an accompanying guide for journalists containing lessons learned from developing our report to encourage journalists to investigate these funds in their local prison or jail systems.

John Washington @jwbwashington · May 6

New report from @bsonenstein at @PrisonPolicy leans on, among a lot of good reporting, a couple articles from @AZLuminaria about Pinal County Sheriff Department's use of a "inmate welfare fund" to buy \$200k of guns and ammo.  
[azluminaria.org/2023/09/29/pin...](https://azluminaria.org/2023/09/29/pin...)

**SHADOW BUDGETS**  
How mass incarceration steals from the poor to give to the prison

Shadow Budgets: How mass incarceration steals from the poor to give to the pri...  
POLICY INITIATIVE

From prisonpolicy.org



## Addicted to punishment: Jails and prisons punish drug use far more than they treat it

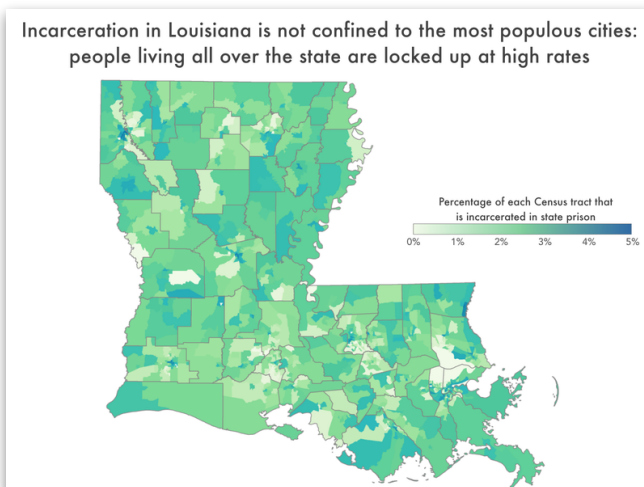
Jails and prisons are often described as de facto mental health and substance abuse treatment providers, and corrections officials increasingly frame their missions around offering healthcare. But the reality is quite the opposite: jails and prisons often punish people for using substances rather than providing evidence-based treatment options for those who want it. This includes punitive drug interdiction policies like mail scanning and visitation restrictions that are ineffective and counterproductive.



AL.com logo, Subscribe button, user profile icon, and article title: Archibald: Alabama says it's tough on drug crime. It just perpetuates it.

## Where People in Prison Come From: The geography of mass incarceration

As part of our report series on the geography of mass incarceration, we released two state-specific reports detailing where people in state prisons come from in Rhode Island and Louisiana. We collaborated with Common Cause Rhode Island, the ACLU of Rhode Island, and the Redistricting Data Hub to provide advocates in the state with the clearest look ever at which communities are most impacted by mass incarceration. Our Louisiana report was produced in partnership with the Voice of the Experienced (VOTE) and the Redistricting Data Hub, and it details how every single parish — and every state legislative district — is missing a portion of its population to incarceration in state prison.



## The New York Times

OPINION  
GUEST ESSAY

### How Oregon Became a Linchpin for the Country's Drug Policies

Feb. 5, 2024



By Maia Szalavitz

Ms. Szalavitz is a contributing Opinion writer who covers addiction and public policy.

In February 2021, Oregon decriminalized possession of small amounts of all drugs, via a ballot initiative known as Measure 110. The idea was to treat addiction as a public health problem, based on overwhelming evidence that jailing people for having small amounts of drugs for personal use is both [ineffective](#) and [counterproductive](#).



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## Report: Incarceration impacts every parish, but Black and poor neighborhoods are hardest-hit

by Bobbi-Jeanne Misick  
July 17, 2023



Louisiana has the highest known incarceration rate in the world, with 1,094 people locked up for every 100,000 residents, including prisons, jails, juvenile facilities and [immigration detention centers](#). But among those incarcerated here, the [largest group](#) is in [state custody](#). About 600 in 100,000 Louisianians are in the custody of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, compared to a national incarceration rate of about 350 per 100,000.

Which parishes are impacted by their residents being behind bars instead of in their communities, spending time with their families and contributing financially to their households? Pretty much all of them, according to a [newly released report and data hub](#) on people in state custody by the Prison Policy Initiative, a non-profit that advocates against mass incarceration and Voice of the Experienced, a Louisiana-based prison criminal justice reform advocacy group.

# Exposing the harms of pretrial detention and monitoring

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/jails.html>

*We put the need for jail reform directly into the national conversation, helping both lawmakers and the public understand how pretrial detention unnecessarily increases jail populations and why electronic monitoring is not a harmless alternative.*

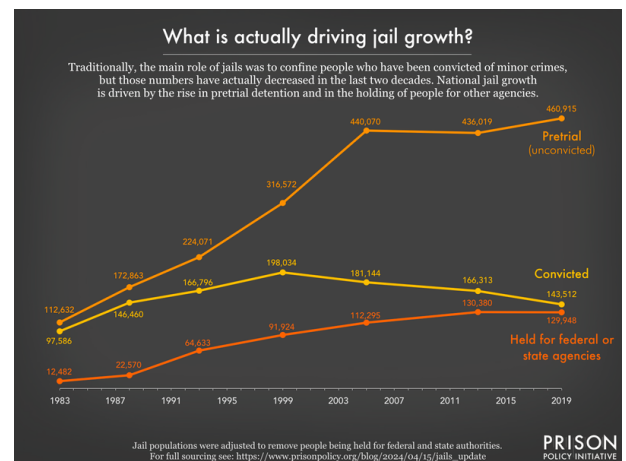
The U.S. jail population has tripled over the last 30 years, driven by an increase in pretrial detention and money bail, policies that keep legally innocent people behind bars before trial. Our work this year focused on combating misinformation that pretrial release harms public safety, stopping new jail construction, and debunking common justifications for expanding electronic monitoring as an alternative to incarceration. Highlights include:

## New data and visualizations spotlight states' reliance on excessive jailing

In 2017, we published an in-depth analysis of local jail populations in each state: *Era of Mass Expansion: Why State Officials Should Fight Jail Growth*. We updated the data tables and graphics from this report to show just how little has changed in our nation's overuse of jails: too many people are locked up in jails, most detained pretrial and many of them are not even under local jurisdiction.

## Cautionary jails: Deconstructing the three "C"s of jail construction arguments

Communities across the country have been told that investing in new jail construction is the only way to solve old policy problems, but arguments for new jails can leave them with a billion-dollar case of buyer's remorse. Drawing from examples across the country, we broke down three common arguments for jail construction, discussed how they have been used to build or expand jails, and highlighted how reinvesting in cages is not a solution to social problems like crime and substance use.



**James Kilgore** @waazn1

Great piece by @EmmettSanders75 exposing the fake arguments law and order proponents use to justify jail building. If you face jail building in your community keep Sanders' 3 c's in mind to halt the project

County	Cost 1	Cost 2	Cost 3
Lubbock County, Texas	\$94.5 million	\$464 million	\$558.5 million
Greene County, Missouri	\$19 million	\$150 million	\$169 million

From prisonpolicy.org

## Releasing people pretrial doesn't harm public safety

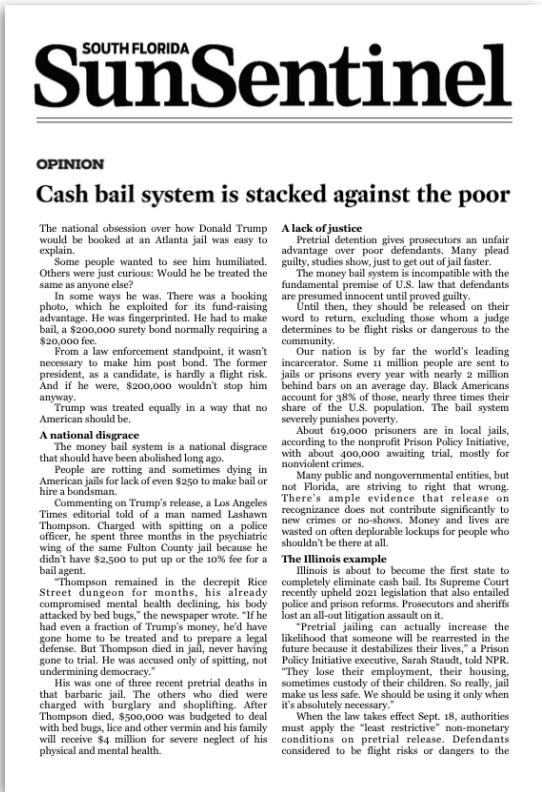
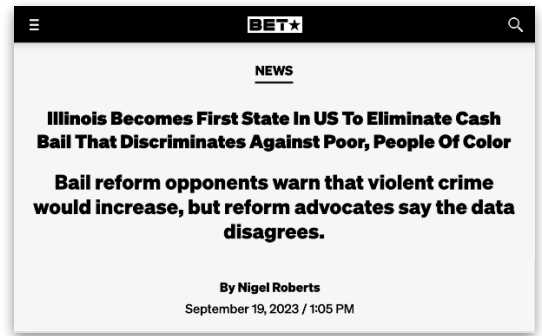
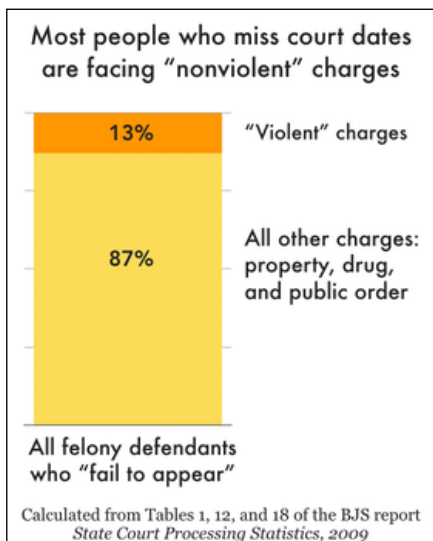
Ending or limiting the use of monetary bail has become an increasingly common criminal legal system reform across the country. Reformers and researchers have long supported such measures, but opponents — including district attorneys, police departments, and the commercial bail industry — often claim pretrial reform puts community safety at risk. We put these claims to the test and found that when it comes to public safety, these reforms are a step in the right direction.

## Not an alternative: The myths, harms, and expansion of pretrial electronic monitoring

Illinois made history by becoming the first state in the nation to end money-based pretrial detention with the implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act in September 2023. In response, the Illinois Office of Statewide Pretrial Services announced the expansion of pretrial electronic monitoring to 70 of Illinois' 102 counties, many of which did not have it before. In this briefing, we explain why electronic monitoring is not a viable alternative to incarceration despite what proponents say.

## High stakes mistakes: How courts respond to “failure to appear”

People miss court for many reasons outside of their control. Yet a cascade of negative consequences befalls those who “fail to appear”: arrest warrants, additional charges, jail and prison sentences, fines and fees, and more. We compiled research on who tends to miss court, why they miss court, and how different jurisdictions react. We also looked at how advocates are organizing to increase court attendance, reduce harm, and, importantly, question whether so many of these cases should exist in the first place.



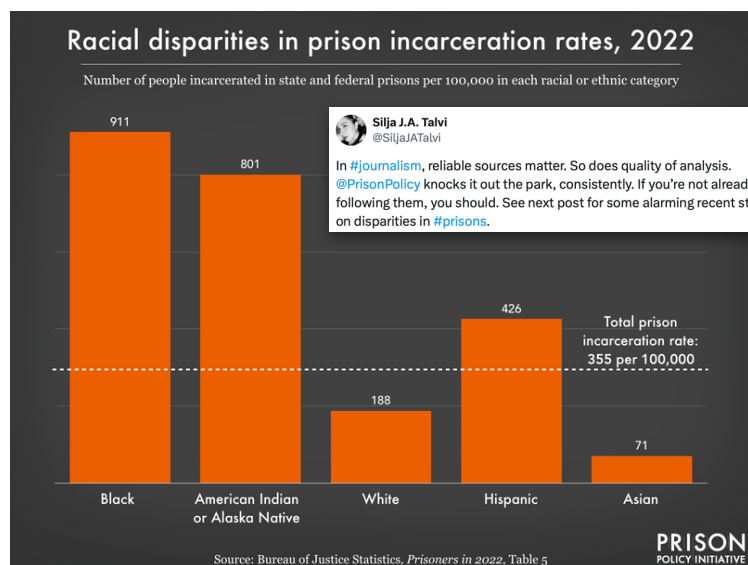
# Showing the full reach of the nation's mass punishment system

*We use data to illustrate the unprecedented size and reach of the criminal legal system and advocate for policy reforms that prevent system growth as well as expansion into other aspects of social life.*

We publish resources that advocates, lawmakers, and reporters need in order to understand the true size and scale of the mass punishment system and better determine the types of reforms that can begin to shrink its footprint. Highlights of our work include:

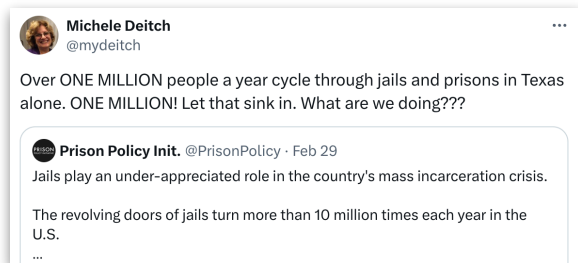
## Updated charts show the magnitude of prison and jail racial disparities, pretrial populations, correctional control, and more

We usually only update our data visualizations about mass incarceration as part of a new report or briefing. However, some graphs are so powerful that they warrant special treatment. Since new data has been released about racial disparities, probation, incarceration, and jail detention, we decided to update a few of our most comprehensive and compelling charts to equip advocates, lawmakers, and journalists with the latest information available.



## Since you asked: How many women and men are released from each state's prisons and jails every year?

Journalists, advocates, and other users of our website frequently ask if we know the total number of people released from prisons and jails in their state each year. To answer this question, we drilled down into 2019 data to show prison and jail releases by sex in each state and made our best estimates of how many women and men were released from prisons and jails nationwide in 2022.



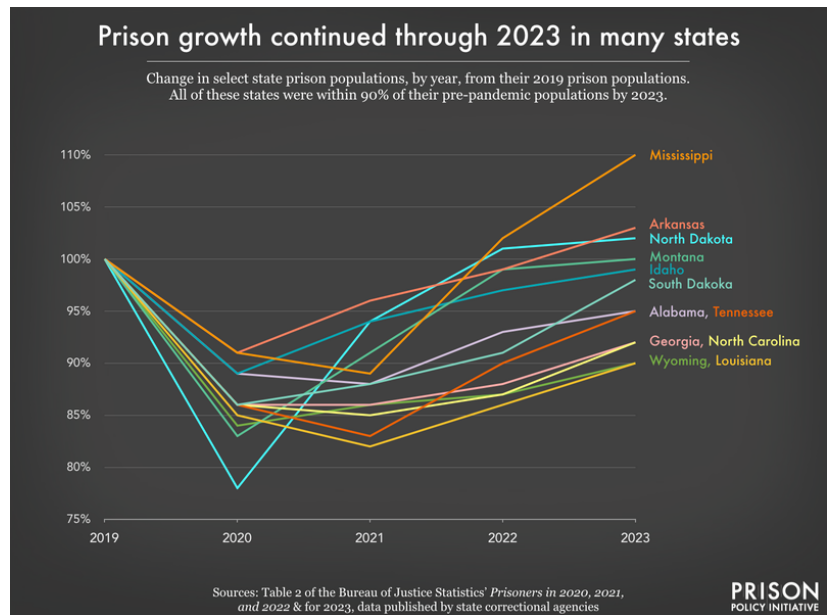
### Estimated releases from prisons and jails, by sex, in 2022

	Men	Women	Total
Releases from state and federal prisons (excluding deaths)	388,355	55,179	443,534
Releases from local jails	5,537,103	1,678,855	7,215,958
Releases from all prisons and jails	5,925,457	1,734,034	7,659,492

*With the exception of the total releases from prisons, all numbers are estimates based on 2019 data and should be used with caution. Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.*

## Why did prison and jail populations grow in 2022 and what comes next?

The Bureau of Justice Statistics released its annual reports on prison and jail populations in 2022, noting that the combined state and federal prison populations had increased for the first time in almost a decade. But what's behind these trends? We analyzed the data and found this growth has little to do with crime and instead reflects the court systems' slow return to "business as usual" and lawmakers' resurrection of ineffective "tough on crime" strategies.

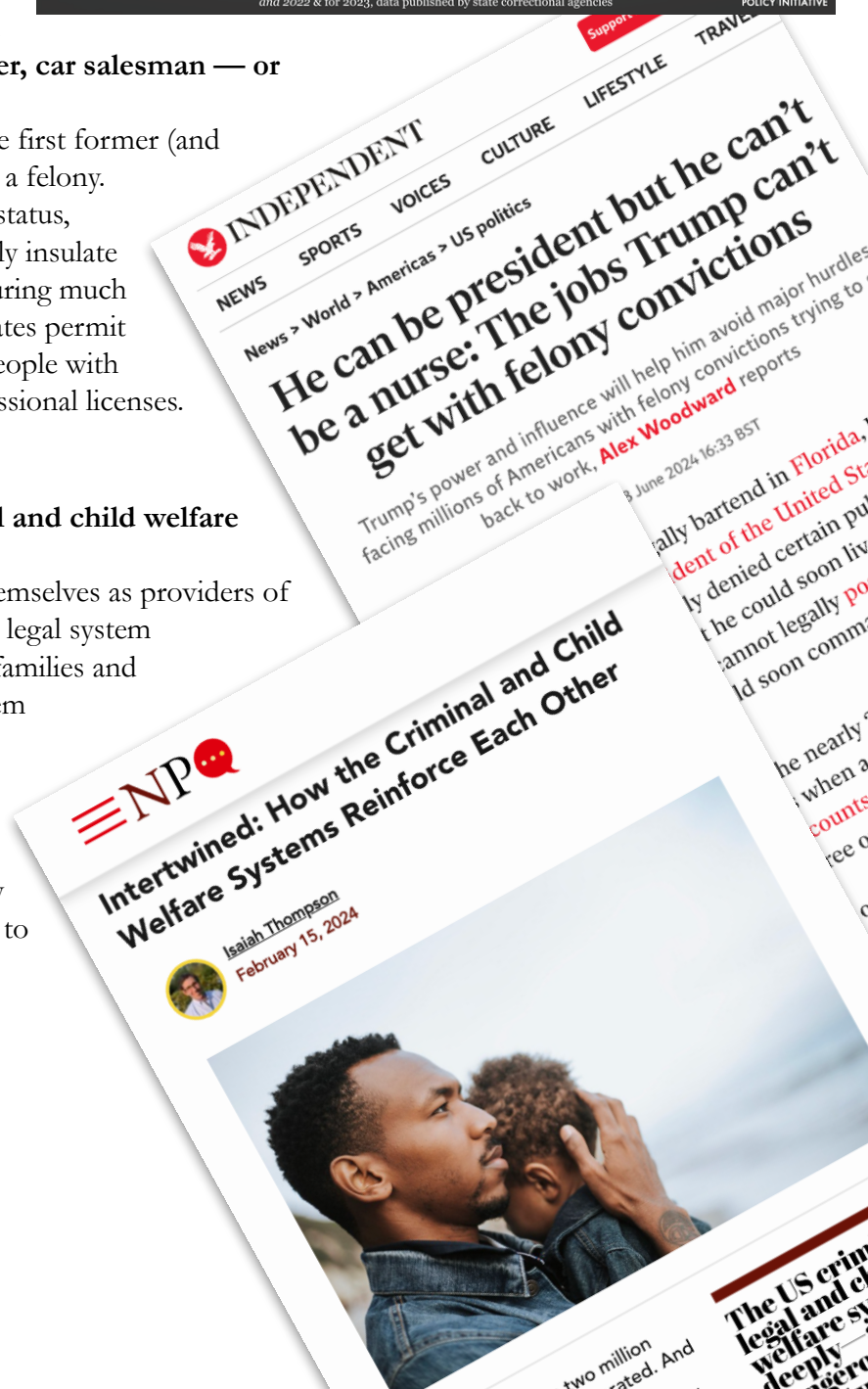


## Donald Trump can still be president, but he could be barred from being a bartender, car salesman — or real estate developer

Former President Donald Trump became the first former (and perhaps future) president to be convicted of a felony. Unlike the vast majority of people with this status, Trump's immense wealth and power will likely insulate him from the struggles most will face in securing much less prestigious jobs. That's because many states permit if not outright facilitate bias against hiring people with records — especially roles that require professional licenses.

## Force multipliers: How the criminal legal and child welfare systems cooperate to punish families

Child protective service agencies position themselves as providers of welfare, but their relationship to the criminal legal system demonstrates their shared role in punishing families and exacerbating the conditions that lead to system involvement in the first place. A growing number of advocates and experts are bringing these connections to light and are organizing for momentous change. We draw attention to their work to argue that, by expanding our view beyond jails and prisons to include these related systems, advocates and policymakers can safeguard against creating prisons by another name.



# Revealing the perils of community supervision

[https://www.prisonpolicy.org/probation\\_parole.html](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/probation_parole.html)

*Probation and parole systems are plagued with injustices, setting people up to fail with long supervision terms, onerous restrictions, and constant surveillance.*

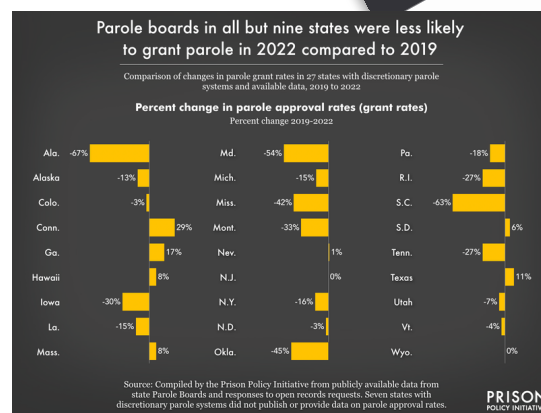
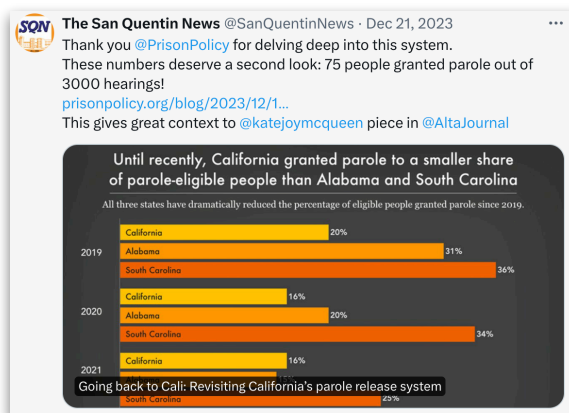
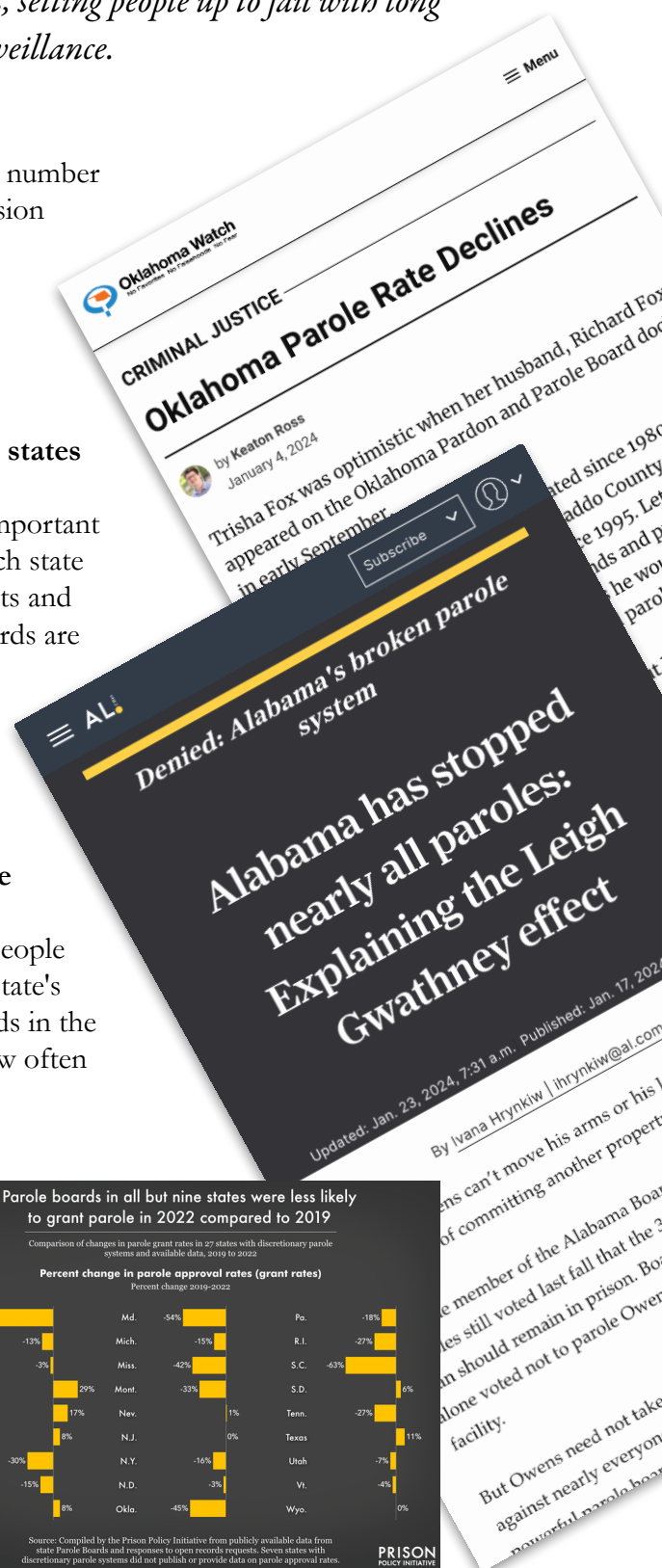
Probation and parole are important tools that can reduce the number of people in prisons and jails. Far too often, though, supervision conditions are difficult to satisfy and result in people being funneled back behind bars. Our research illuminates the problems of these systems and the hardships people experience when navigating reentry.

## No Release: Parole grant rates have plummeted in most states since the pandemic started

With parole board practices in the news, we thought it was important to look around the country and evaluate the direction in which state parole boards are moving. We filed dozens of records requests and curated the best research to explore whether state parole boards are helping reduce mass incarceration or whether they are disregarding the hard-learned lessons of the pandemic when, as people were dying behind prison walls, they released even fewer people than before the crisis.

## Going back to Cali: Revisiting California's parole release system

With parole grant rates among the lowest in the nation and people forced to wait up to 15 years between hearings, the Golden State's parole system is far from glittering. We examined recent trends in the state's parole process to see how it is being (mis)used and how often parole hearings actually result in release.



## Two years after the end of *Roe v. Wade*, most women on probation and parole have to ask permission to travel for abortion care

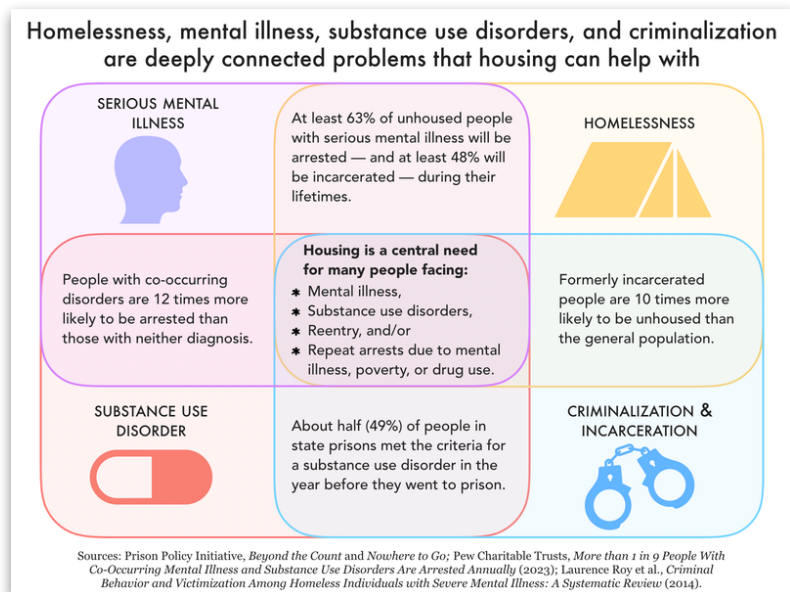
Since the 2022 *Dobbs* decision, 21 states have restricted abortions earlier in the gestational period than the *Roe v. Wade* standard. To understand how this post-*Dobbs* landscape impacts women under the U.S.' massive system of probation and parole, we examined standard supervision conditions in each state, along with the number of women who must comply with them.

### Guilty by association: When parole and probation rules disrupt support systems

Requiring people on supervision to avoid others with criminal legal system contact can actually hinder their success in the community. We found that it's common for probation and parole agencies to impose these "association" restrictions, tearing apart critical social networks and threatening to lock people up for harmless — and even helpful — interactions.

### Seeking shelter from mass incarceration: Fighting criminalization with Housing First

Housing is one of our best tools to end mass incarceration. We analyzed over 50 studies and reports, covering decades of research on housing, health, and incarceration, to pull together the best evidence that ending housing insecurity is foundational to reducing jail and prison populations.





**Roe v Wade**

### Over half of US women on probation or parole need permission to travel for abortion - study

Policies are 'one-two punch' for women caught in criminal justice system, report's author says


**Jessica Glenza**  
Mon 24 Jun 2024 07:50 EDT

The number of women on probation or parole who must seek permission to travel for an abortion more than doubled to 635,000 in two years since the supreme court

## Context

### Abortion care almost impossible for women in US prison system

Anastasia Moloney, David Sherfinski  
Published: June 21, 2024



**NEWS**

### Report: Here's why Mass.' tough parole rules do more harm than good

Updated: Nov. 13, 2023, 2:52 p.m. | Published: Nov. 13, 2023, 2:51 p.m.

By [John L. Micek](#) | [jmicek@masslive.com](mailto:jmicek@masslive.com)

In Massachusetts, like other states, if you're on parole, and you hang around with the wrong people, you could end up writing yourself a ticket straight back to jail.

But because the Bay State has some of the toughest rules in the nation governing who people on parole can — and can't — spend their time with, new research suggests they serve the opposite of their intended purpose.

And that makes it harder for parolees to stay out of trouble.

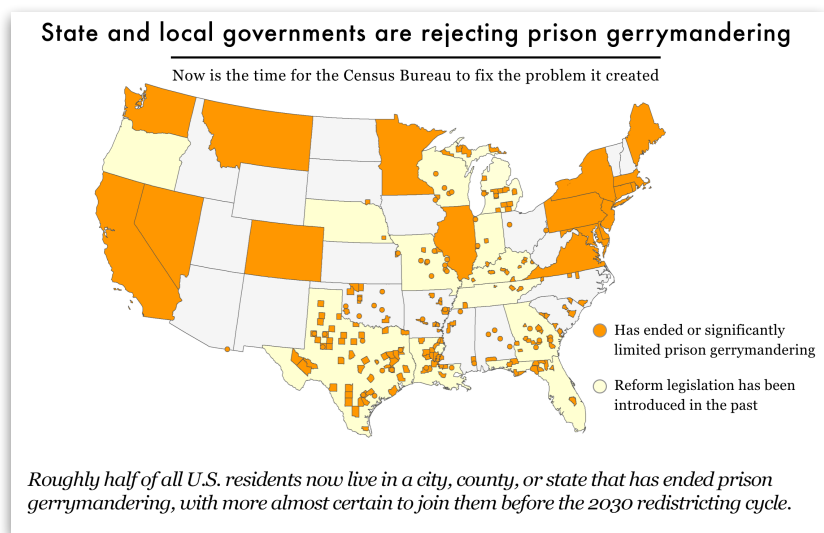
All told, [3.7 million](#) people are on parole or probation in the United States, according to research by the Northampton-based [Prison Policy Initiative](#).

# Protecting our democracy from mass incarceration by ending prison gerrymandering

<https://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/>

*When states and local governments draw political districts using Census data that counts incarcerated people in prisons, they unintentionally enhance the representation of people who live near prisons while diluting the representation of everyone else.*

We launched the movement to end prison gerrymandering in 2001 and have been a national leader of this campaign ever since. Roughly half the country now lives in a place that has addressed prison gerrymandering, with more than 200 local governments and 19 states tackling the issue. Progress on this issue has been so rapid that last year the National Conference of State Legislatures called state efforts to end prison gerrymandering “the fastest-growing trend in redistricting.” This year, Maine and Minnesota both passed legislation ending prison gerrymandering.



## Maine and Minnesota end prison gerrymandering

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz signed HF 4772 into law in May, officially ending prison gerrymandering in the state, following Maine’s Governor Janet Mills, who signed LD 1704/HP 1093 into law for her state last July. With those actions, Maine and Minnesota joined the rapidly growing list of states that have taken action on this issue. Continued inaction by the Census Bureau to end prison gerrymandering has forced states like these to pass reforms and shoulder the burden of correcting flawed Census redistricting data to count incarcerated people at home.





## Most incarcerated people will return home; the Census Bureau should count them there

Incarcerated people return to their home communities after release. Yet when states seek to end prison gerrymandering by counting incarcerated people at home for redistricting purposes, some people ask why we should use someone's home address — concerned that they might not return to that exact place after release or even might stay in the prison town. We collected several unique datasets to respond to this concern and provide the best evidence possible of where people go after being released from prison.

## States were incredibly successful at reallocating incarcerated people to their home addresses in 2020: A review of the data

During the 2020 redistricting cycle, more than a dozen states took it upon themselves to do what the Census Bureau has refused: end prison gerrymandering. We reviewed redistricting reports and data from 13 states that addressed prison gerrymandering after the 2020 census to understand how many people in state prisons they attempted to count in their home communities and how many they were able to reallocate successfully.

## Federal judge's ruling clears the way for Louisiana to end prison gerrymandering without waiting until 2030

In February, U.S. District Judge Shelly Dick struck down Louisiana's state legislative districts, noting that they unfairly deprived Black residents of political representation in violation of the Voting Rights Act. This decision provides policymakers with an opportunity to end prison gerrymandering, a practice that has a particularly dramatic impact on political representation in Louisiana, given it has the highest incarceration rate of any state in the country.

## What the ten worst prison gerrymanders of the 2020 redistricting cycle tell us about how the problem is changing

We previously looked at the experiences of states that have addressed prison gerrymandering after the 2020 Census. We wanted to see what happened in states that haven't fixed this problem and found that it is increasingly harming residents of rural states and defying some of the preconceived notions about partisan impacts.

**PRISON**  
POLICY INITIATIVE

For more information about prison gerrymandering, see <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org>

**COUNTING INCARCERATED PEOPLE AT HOME:  
WHY USING LAST KNOWN ADDRESS WORKS**

**Using last known home address records to count incarcerated people at home gives an accurate picture of where people reside and will return after incarceration**

Population equality among legislative districts enables everyone to have equal representation from elected officials. However, the Census frustrates this goal by counting nearly 2 million incarcerated people as residents of the places in which they are detained instead of at their home addresses. The Bureau does this even though (1) people in prison typically lack a consistent relationship with the elected officials serving their districts, and (2) most incarcerated people remain legal residents of their home addresses while imprisoned and return home upon release.

The resulting Census data lead to the creation of state and local districts that are distorted by correctional facilities; this "prison gerrymandering" skews representation in favor of districts with prisons and other correctional facilities.

**People are incarcerated far from home.**  
Over 60% of incarcerated people are held in a prison 100 miles or farther from home.

**People move around while incarcerated.**  
People who are incarcerated on Census Day are at home most of the time. The median time served by people in state prisons is 15 months. Even shorter stays in prison are common. For example, in Rhode Island, the median length of stay for people serving a sentence in the state's correctional facilities is only 99 days.

Even people away from home for a year or longer are not in one place. They often move between multiple facilities. Nationally, 75% of people serve time in more than one prison facility; 12% of people serve time in at least five facilities before returning home.

**People leave prison towns after release.**  
Mass incarceration so disproportionately impacts Black and Latino Americans that we can compare the race and ethnicity of correctional facilities and easily tell that

incarcerated people do not live in communities where prisons are located. About half a million people enter and leave the prison systems every year. If even a small portion of people stayed near the prison after release, then the populations surrounding the facilities would look similar to those on the inside, but that is very much not the case.

**People go home after release.**  
Prison systems keep people's home addresses on file, but don't track whether someone returns to that address upon release. So, we compared where people end up on probation and parole with home addresses reported by incarcerated people. We found that people came and returned to the cities and towns proportionately across the state.

**More correct than facility address.**  
The home address someone has on file may not end up being the exact place they return to after incarceration. But it is a close approximation of where they reside through and after incarceration. While some of these address records may vary in precision, the one address we know is wrong in the facility address.

States that adjust their redistricting data to count incarcerated people at home use the home addresses contained in their Departments of Corrections records. This practice creates redistricting data that better reflects the population of communities hardest hit by mass incarceration as well as counties that contain large prison populations. The Census Bureau should count incarcerated people at home in the 2030 Census using home address data as the states have done.

For more info and details, check out the full briefing at <https://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/news/2024/05/14/home-addresses/>

5/14/24

### Louisiana Record

## Federal judge rejects Louisiana legislative districts, saying they dilute Black voting strength

By Michael Carroll  
Apr 4, 2024

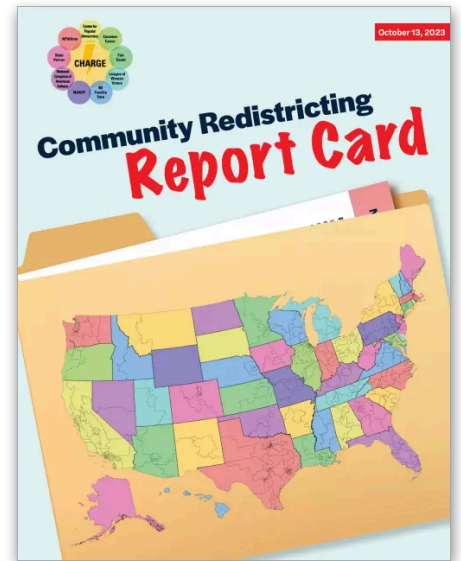
FEDERAL COURT

The 10 Worst Prison Gerrymanders After 2020 Redistricting

State	District	Percent of district's Census population incarcerated	What party holds the seat?
New Hampshire	House District Merrimack 17	49.5%	Democratic
West Virginia	House District 83	18.4%	Republican
Mississippi	House District 47	17.7%	Democratic
Mississippi	House District 68	16.6%	Democratic
Oklahoma	House District 56	14.0%	Republican
Wyoming	House District 2	13.6%	Republican
Mississippi	House District 26	13.6%	Democratic
Arkansas	House District 65	13.5%	Democratic
West Virginia	House District 45	12.6%	Republican
South Carolina	House District 73	12.0%	Democratic

## Making the grade: New report grades states on their 2020 redistricting processes including whether they ended prison gerrymandering

A September 2023 report from the Coalition Hub for Advancing Redistricting & Grassroots Engagement makes clear that ending prison gerrymandering has quickly gone from an emerging issue done by only a handful of states, to being among the gold-standard redistricting practices. While the best way to address prison gerrymandering is for the Census Bureau to change how it counts incarcerated people, this report shows that states can and should take action to address the problem on their own.



## Montana legislators call for Census Bureau action on “clear, bipartisan consensus” for ending prison gerrymandering

The need to end prison gerrymandering is “obvious to anyone who looks at the facts.” That’s the conclusion of a bipartisan duo of Montana lawmakers, Sen. Shane Morigeau and Sen. Jason Small, who authored a national op-ed published in August 2023 showing the growing bipartisan calls for the Census Bureau to finally fix how it counts incarcerated people.

## In their own words: Incarcerated people, their families, governments, and advocates tell the Census Bureau to end prison gerrymandering

In the first public comment period about the 2030 Census count, dozens of people called on the Bureau to end prison gerrymandering. We poured through their comments to understand what people were saying about how the Bureau’s flawed way of counting incarcerated people exacerbates racial disparities, undermines our democracy, burdens state and local governments, and treats incarcerated people in a unique and unfair way.

California’s independent redistricting commission voted unanimously to respond to the Federal Register Notice and request that data be provided that counts incarcerated people at their last-known residence instead of the address where they are incarcerated.

Please end Prison Gerrymandering and count people for the next census in their homes, not where they serve in prison.... My loved one was in 3 prisons in 5 years. It is inaccurate to say he lived in any of them. He lived and now lives again home with his family.



# Shining a light on the carceral experience

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/briefings/>

*Contrary to popular belief, prisons and jails are not rehabilitative. Our research reveals that rather than giving people opportunities to grow, these systems allow incarcerated people to languish inside.*

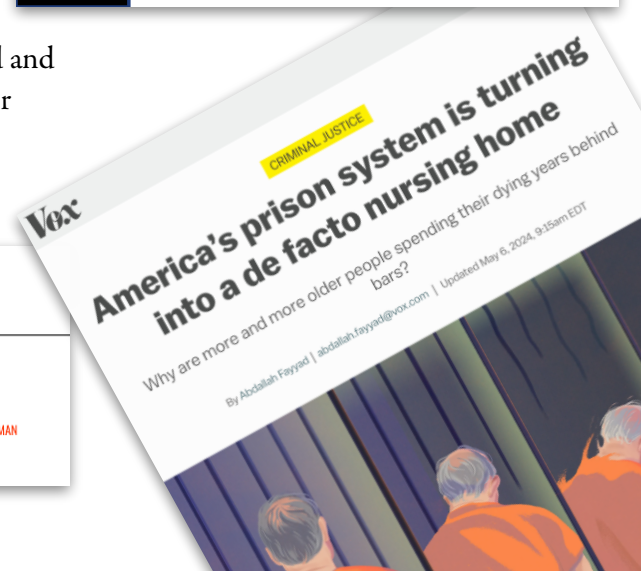
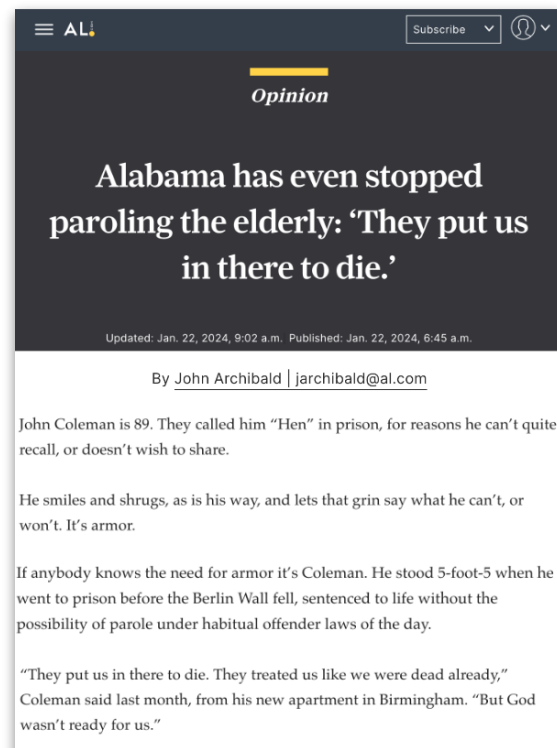
Our past work on the carceral experience examined the public health crisis behind the walls, exposed the financial exploitation of incarcerated people and their families by for-profit companies, and illuminated the violence and neglect that incarcerated women and LGBT people experience. This year, we touched on a range of issues, the highlights of which include:

## Prison disciplinary fines only further impoverish incarcerated people and families

In yet another example of how the criminal legal system extracts wealth from the poorest families, at least one-third of prison systems nationwide charge fines as a punishment for a rule violation. Prison administrators claim that imposing disciplinary fines, along with other punishments, helps to maintain order and reduce violence in correctional facilities. We explained why these fines and fees are bad policy, putting excessive hardship on incarcerated people and their loved ones.

## The aging prison population: Causes, costs, and consequences

We examined the inhumane, costly, and counterproductive practice of locking up older adults. The U.S. prison population is aging at a much faster rate than the nation as a whole — and older adults represent a growing portion of people who are arrested and incarcerated each year. And while prisons and jails are unhealthy for people of all ages, older adults' interactions with these systems are particularly dangerous, if not outright deadly.



## Heat, floods, pests, disease, and death: What climate change means for people in prison

We presented new findings from a nationwide epidemiological study showing a strong relationship between extreme heat and deaths in prisons — especially in the Northeast. We also explained why extreme heat isn't an isolated danger — it's wrapped up in other hazards like pests and diseases guaranteed to make prison life miserable, if not fatal.

## Calling on the FCC to make the most of its upcoming rulemaking authority on prison and jail telecom rates

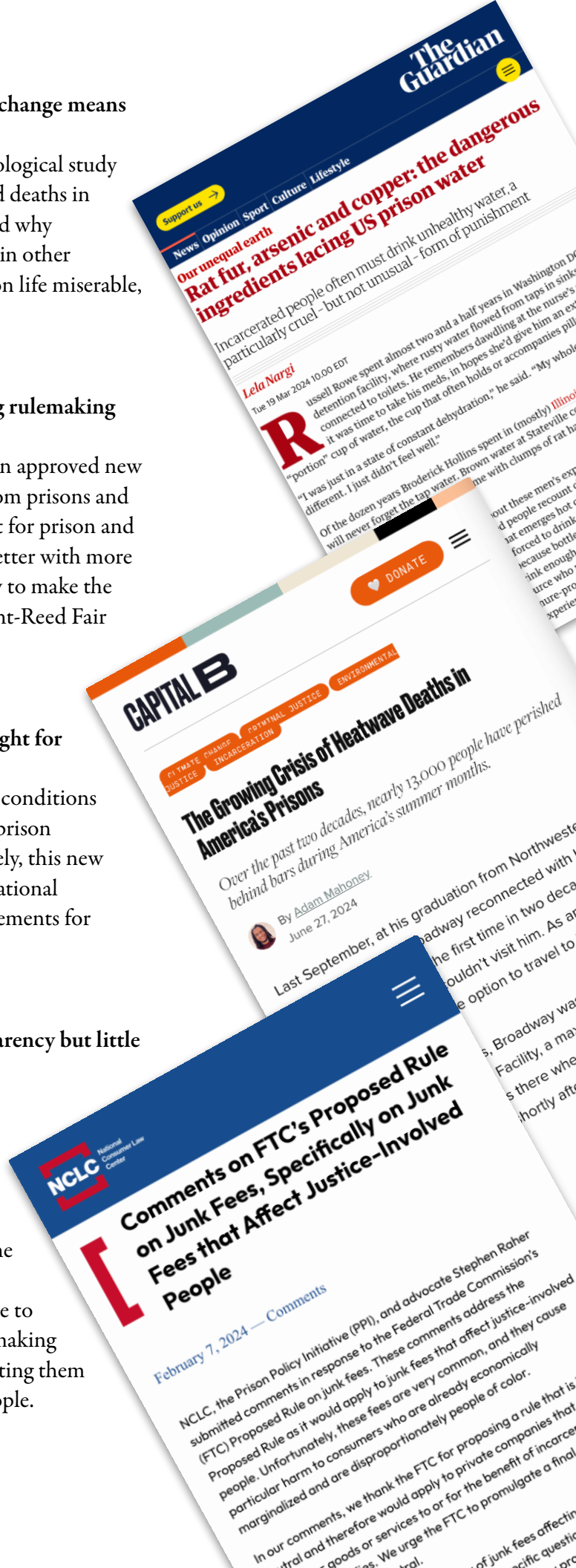
This summer, the Federal Communications Commission approved new rules that dramatically reduce the cost of phone calls from prisons and jails. This marks the culmination of a multi-decade fight for prison and jail phone justice. Ahead of the vote, we signed onto a letter with more than 200 civil rights organizations calling on the agency to make the most of its authority granted by the 2023 Martha Wright-Reed Fair and Just Communications Act.

## Research spotlight: PrisonOversight.org equips the fight for accountability in jails and prisons

Millions of incarcerated people face deadly and abusive conditions every day in the United States because most jailers and prison administrators have free reign over their lives. Fortunately, this new resource aims to change that by centralizing news, educational resources, legislative updates, and more to support movements for independent corrections oversight.

## Proposed Biden junk fees rule provides lots of transparency but little protection for incarcerated people

In 2023, President Biden announced a new initiative to crack down on “junk fees” — the mandatory but often hidden fees consumers pay for a service. In response, we joined 28 other groups in calling on his administration to put the junk fees that harm incarcerated people and their loved ones at the top of the list of things to be addressed. Unfortunately, while the Federal Trade Commission released a new proposed rule to crack down on junk fees, the rule primarily focuses on making these junk fees more transparent — rather than prohibiting them altogether — a change unlikely to help incarcerated people.



# Building a stronger justice reform movement

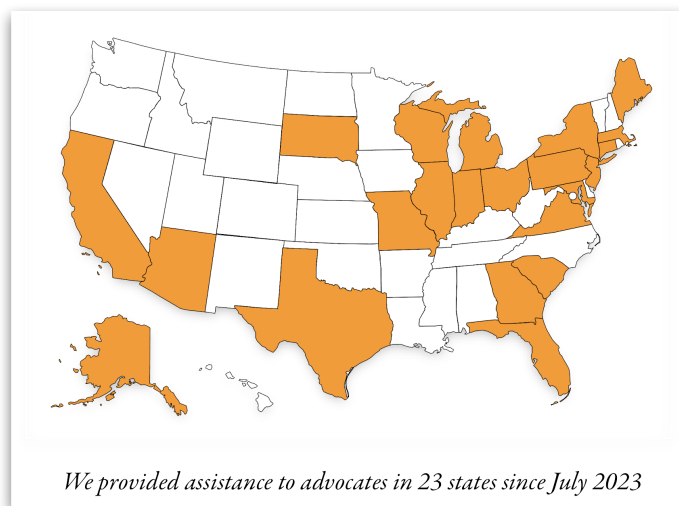
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/trainings/> & <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research.html>

Our Advocacy Department works with groups across the country to identify gaps where new research would support reform efforts, provide technical assistance in reviewing legislation, policy documents, and official reports, and connect partners working in similar spaces across the country. We also produce trainings and webinars that cover the issues that we encounter across the country.

We prioritize providing support to state and local groups with limited resources, those in areas without strong organizing networks, and those led by directly impacted people. Since July 2023, we have worked with advocates in 23 states on issues including fighting jail expansion and parole reform.

Here are some examples of the kinds of projects we have worked with state and local organizations this year:

- We filed an Amicus Curiae brief in a suit filed by Rights Behind Bars, who are representing a man incarcerated in Virginia's Red Onion State Prison who was charged a \$15 disciplinary fine for failing to wear a mask while getting a haircut and shave. In our brief, we drew on our years of work studying the economics of life behind bars to help the fourth circuit understand that \$15 inside doesn't mean the same thing as \$15 does on the outside.
- We provided technical support to advocates in multiple states that are fighting new jail construction. Decarcerate KC in Kansas City, Mo. asked us to review the city's plans to build a new jail. We found the community doesn't actually need more jail beds and most people currently in its custody are there for minor offenses. In February, the Lancaster Bail Fund contacted us to review the Lancaster County jails needs assessment and provide recommendations for alternatives to incarceration. At the request of the Georgia-based Community Over Cages Coalition, we examined a proposal for a new \$2 billion jail in Fulton County and found serious shortcomings. The county scrapped the plans to build a new jail in July.



In addition to providing strategic support to the broader movement, we produce publications that fill key messaging gaps that strengthen the work of local and state advocates, journalists, policymakers, and all those working to transform the legal system. Highlights from our recent work include:

### Winnable criminal justice reforms in 2024

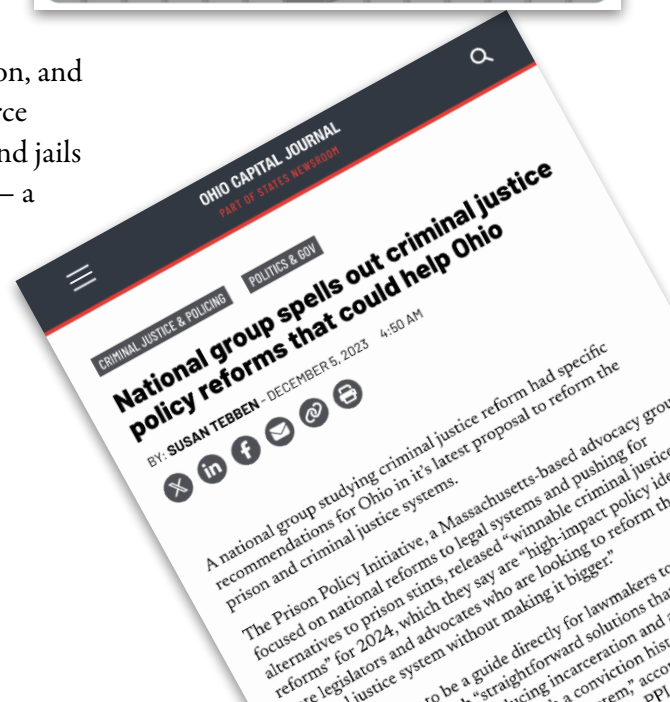
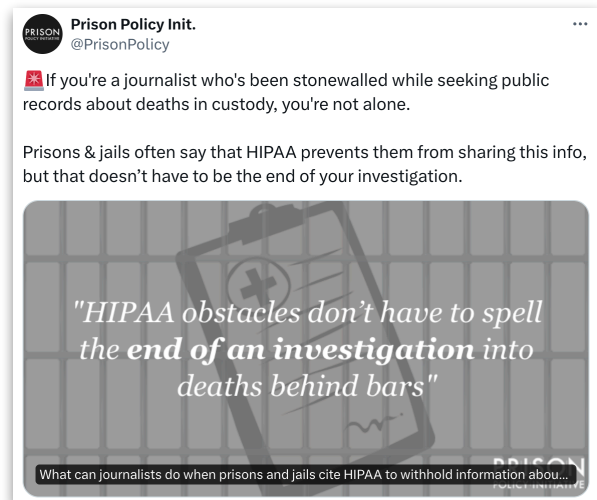
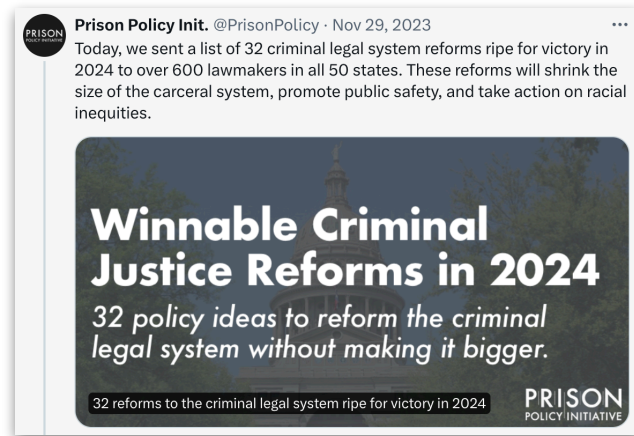
We curated a list of high-impact policy ideas for state legislators and advocates looking to implement criminal legal system reforms that would have the greatest impacts on reducing incarceration and ameliorating harms experienced by those with a conviction history — without further investments in the carceral system. In this year's guide, we've added information on how Medicaid and Medicare laws can be changed to better serve people in reentry, and we've added a section on efforts around the country to legalize marijuana and decriminalize other drugs.

### Zombie politics: The return of failed criminal legal system policies in 2023 and how to fight back

For the first time in over a decade, prison and jail populations increased in 2022. Although there are many reasons for this, at least some of this rise was the direct result of regressive policy choices made by state legislatures. We presented some of the most common kinds of tough-on-crime laws passed in 2023 and the best arguments against them, so that advocates can be ready if these trends appear in their state.

### What can journalists do when prisons and jails cite HIPAA to withhold information about deaths in custody?

Journalists are often partners in the fight to end mass incarceration, and their investigations into deaths behind bars, in particular, can force lawmakers to hold prisons accountable. Unfortunately, prisons and jails stonewall many critical investigations by claiming that HIPAA — a healthcare privacy law — shields them from transparency, even when the law does not apply. Our press guide explains the legal context and lays out tips for journalists to overcome these obstacles.



## Oregon shouldn't go backwards on drug decriminalization

In 2020, Oregon adopted Measure 110, a transformational change to the way drug possession and addiction were treated by the criminal legal system. Unfortunately, legislators recently recriminalized drug use and repealed one of the most important criminal legal system reforms of recent years. Before their votes, we explained why the state should have kept Measure 110 intact.

## Collection of discipline policies for all 50 state prison systems

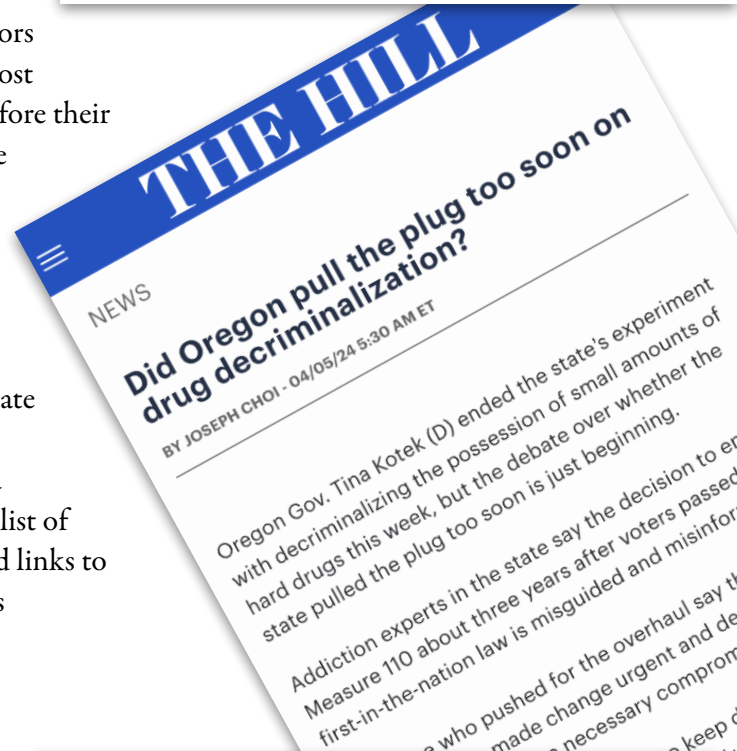
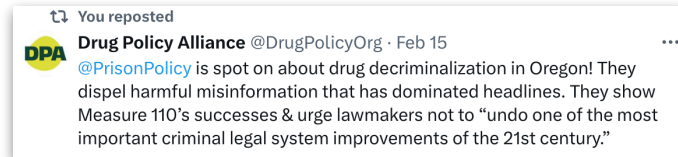
We published a collection of discipline policies for all 50 state prison systems, the Washington, D.C. Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons in our Data toolbox. It includes the discipline policy for each system, a list of offense severity classifications from most to least severe, and links to additional documents to help you understand each system's classification scheme.

## Research Library

Our mission is to empower activists, journalists, and policymakers to shape effective criminal legal policy, so we go beyond our original reports and analyses to curate a database of virtually all the empirical criminal legal research available online. Our searchable Research Library contains 4,306 entries on issues ranging from mental health, women's incarceration, to pretrial detention. It often serves as a reference for journalists doing criminal legal reporting. In the last year, we've added 192 new entries with the most recent cutting-edge research. You can get the newest additions delivered right to your email inbox by signing up at [www.prisonpolicy.org/subscribe](http://www.prisonpolicy.org/subscribe).

## Webinar: Combating "carveouts" in criminal justice reforms

In November, we were joined by a panel of criminal justice experts to discuss how advocates for reform can talk to policymakers about carveouts. Jeannette Zanipatin from the Drug Policy Alliance and Professor Laurie Jo Reynolds from the University of Illinois at Chicago helped focus the discussion on addressing fentanyl and sex offense-related charges in particular.



# Supporting our work

---

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/donate>

The Prison Policy Initiative is known for delivering big results on a small budget. Since our founding in 2001, we've grown into an innovative and efficient policy shop at the forefront of the criminal justice reform movement.

Alongside foundation partners, our work is supported by a network of generous individuals who allow us to produce groundbreaking material that reshapes the movement for criminal justice reform.

We welcome you to join our community of supporters working to end mass incarceration. To contribute to our work, you can donate online at [prisonpolicy.org/donate](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/donate) or send a paper check to PO Box 127 Northampton, MA 01061.

If you have any questions about how to contribute or how we would put your financial support to use, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at 413-527-0845 ext. 306.

We thank you for making our work — and our successes — possible.

*"I depend on your deep research in so many ways as an artist and as someone doing **legislative campaign work** and education about prison abolition. Thank you, thank you!"*

*"Thank you for your important work. We know that structural poverty and racism determine much of who winds up in our jails and prisons. Seeing the facts in black-and-white is very helpful for our work as criminal injustice system activists."*

*- Micky Duxbury, **donor since 2022***

*"Thank you (T'igwicid in Coast Salish Lushootseed) for all you do to end our inhumane and criminally carceral U.S. system. In particular, I say T'igwicid for ensuring that American Indians/Alaska Native incarceration is addressed and data included in your research and reporting. Lifting my hands in gratitude."*

*- Kyle Taylor Lucas, **donor since 2020***

*- Jo Kreiter  
**Donor since 2018***



# Prison Policy Initiative budget report for 2023-2024 year

---

## Income

### Grants & Gifts

Large Foundations*	\$3,335,000
Individual Donors and small foundations	\$563,164

### Earned Revenue

Honoraria and consulting fees	\$6,500
Interest	\$262,457

**Total Income** **\$4,167,121**

## Expenses

Salaries and benefits, including fringe	\$1,484,829
Consultants	\$132,061
Computers	\$14,466
Rent	\$12,654
Supplies	\$6,525
Internet hosting, telephone, etc.	\$7,602
Printing and postage	\$6,838
Travel	\$7,760
Other (Accounting, Bank charges, insurance, Dues, Taxes, Advertising, Research tools, FOIA fees, Staff development)	\$22,779

**Total Expenses** **\$1,695,515**

\*Several of these foundation grants are for work that extends outside of the fiscal year and/or for long-term expansion of our work.