

PRISON  
POLICY INITIATIVE  
**2019-2020**  
ANNUAL REPORT

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*October 2020*

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*“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

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Dear Friends,

The past months have been filled with a wide range of emotions for people like you and me, who are engaged in the long fight to end mass incarceration. The global pandemic and our nation's failures to respond appropriately have only raised the stakes and the urgency of this fight. Prisons and jails were a public health crisis before the pandemic hit; now, the fact that these institutions pose a dangerous risk – not only to the people living and working behind bars but to all of us – is even more evident. Some parts of the criminal justice system made incremental steps towards reducing incarcerated populations, while others have continued to stubbornly stick to the old, inefficient, and dangerous ways of doing things. But in the midst of the catastrophe unfolding, I do see reason to hope.

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 pandemic makes crystal-clear the case for immediate decarceration and the feasibility of safe, large-scale releases. In the first few weeks of the pandemic, we saw huge cuts to county jail populations — cuts that could become a permanent model for shrinking all of the criminal justice system. The Movement for Black Lives, meanwhile, has inspired an overdue reckoning with the way our country unjustly polices and punishes, activating a groundswell of support for immediate and sweeping changes.

This report covers our work over the last fiscal year (from July 2019 to June 2020), of which the pandemic is just a small part of the calendar—but it's been at the top of our all of our minds and at the center of much of our work in the four months since. Amid all of this turmoil, I am grateful for our team at the Prison Policy Initiative and for you, our larger community of supporters and friends.

I'm particularly proud of the Prison Policy Initiative staff for stepping up during this crisis, adapting to a new way of working, and stayed focused on our mission to collect and publish useful data to fuel the movement against mass incarceration. Previously, a key part of the Prison Policy Initiative's ability to produce high-impact, high-speed research was in-person collaboration in our office. We all adapted more quickly than expected, and the staff developed new ways to coordinate and train each other. (This was particularly important because when the pandemic struck, we were in the beginning stages of a long-planned expansion with three new staff members scheduled to start at various points over the summer.)

Our community gave us sustaining support along the way: to our past donors who renewed their gifts, and to the hundreds of new donors who contributed during this time of fiscal uncertainty, thank you. With your support, we were able to focus our energy not on fundraising, but on producing more and better research at this critical time.

Many of our long-term supporters know that we typically produce one or two briefings or reports a month. In the early days of the pandemic, because of the hard work of staff and the flexibility brought

on by the support of generous donors, we published as many as four briefings a week, focused on mitigating the harm to incarcerated and other justice-involved people.

It has been a challenging year, but it's been gratifying to see our work — and the work of our allies — driving state-level reforms. For example:

- Colorado, Virginia, and New Jersey ended prison gerrymandering, and legislation to end prison gerrymandering moved forward in 10 other states. (See p. 14)
- We successfully pressured all but 3 state DOCs to suspend medical co-pays for the duration of the pandemic. Copays put a huge burden on poor families and discourage people from reporting illness. We're hopeful that the policy changes will become permanent.
- Our efforts to bring phone justice to the national spotlight over the past several years paved the way for cities like Memphis to make jail phone calls free during the pandemic, and for Dallas County, Texas to negotiate the lowest jail phone rate in the country at just over a penny a minute.

At some point, hopefully soon, this pandemic will end. My hope is that all the work we're doing in the midst of this crisis is laying the groundwork for an end to mass incarceration in a post-pandemic world.

I'm proud of our accomplishments this year and honored you made it possible. I thank you for helping the Prison Policy Initiative play a vital part in the larger movement against mass incarceration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Wagner', with a stylized, cursive script.

Peter Wagner  
Executive Director

October 28, 2020

# Who we are

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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 growing team of interdisciplinary researchers and organizers, along with student interns and volunteers, shapes national reform campaigns from our remote workspaces and our headquarters in western Massachusetts.

## Staff

- Wanda Bertram, *Communications Strategist*
- Tiana Herring, *Research Associate*
- Alexi Jones, *Policy Analyst*
- Jenny Landon, *Development & Communications Associate*
- Aleks Kajstura, *Legal Director*
- Wendy Sawyer, *Research Director*
- Peter Wagner, *Executive Director*
- Emily Widra, *Research Analyst*

## Part-time staff

- Bernadette Rabuy, *Senior Policy Analyst*

## Student interns and volunteers

- Roxanne Daniel, *Smith College*
- Sage Mitchell, *Volunteer network*
- Solomon Park, *Volunteer network*
- Stephen Raher, *Volunteer network*
- Sheila Tipton, *Probono Counsel*
- Maddy Troilo, *Smith College*

## Consultants

- Mona Chalabi, *Illustrations*
- Bill Cooper, *GIS*
- Elydah Joyce, *Illustrations*
- Bob Machuga, *Graphic Design*
- Jordan Miner, *Programming*
- Kevin Pyle, *Illustrations*

## Board of Directors\*

- Nora V. Demleitner, *Director*  
*Professor of Law, Washington and Lee University School of Law*
- Daniel Kopf, *Treasurer*  
*Writer, Quartz*
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*Trial Attorney, Homicide & Major Crime Defense Unit, New York County Defender Services*

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- Barbara Graves-Poller, *Senior Counsel, NYC Law Department, Appeals Division*
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- Joseph “Jazz” Hayden, *plaintiff, Hayden v. Pataki*
- Dale Ho, *Director of Voting Rights Project, ACLU*
- 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, *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, *Dēmos: A Network for Ideas and Action*
- Rebecca Young, *Attorney*

\*Organizations for identification purposes only.

# Pulling back the curtain on mass incarceration

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

*We develop powerful ways to help the public understand that mass incarceration is both unprecedented and counterproductive.*

With creative research strategies, engaging graphics, and timely, data-rich reports, we give organizers and advocates the facts they need to push for the end of mass incarceration.

## Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020

Our annual “whole pie” chart has become the most widely used graphic in the criminal justice reform field. This year, it’s accompanied by **24 other data visuals and hundreds of key data points** to guide policymakers. For the first time, the report also includes a new section on “the high costs of low level offenses,” explaining the outsized harms of criminalizing minor infractions like jaywalking, and the massive number of people who are held on technical violations of parole—which often means they are locked up without having broken the law.

## RESOLUTION

Recognizing that the United States has a moral obligation to meet its foundational promise of guaranteed justice for all.

Whereas throughout the United States—

- (1) nearly 5 million people are arrested and jailed every year;
- (2) almost 2.2 million people are incarcerated, including 176,824 people in Federal jails and prisons;
- (3) collectively, 1,273,605 people are locked in State prisons and another 745,200 people are detained in a local jail on any given night;
- (4) 500,000 immigrants are incarcerated in immigrant jails and prisons annually, marking a 75 percent increase in immigration detention over the last decade;
- (5) 4.5 million people are under some form of com-

Rep. Ayanna Pressley cites Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie in her “People’s Justice Guarantee” resolution in Congress.

**THE BAIL PROJECT**  
The Bail Project  
@bailproject

Every year, over 600,000 people enter prison gates, but people go to jail \*10.6 million\* times each year.

.@PrisonPolicy with their latest dive into the whole pie of mass incarceration in the US, 2020 edition:

### Local Jails: The real scandal is the churn

When talking about the societal impact of jails, the average daily population of 612,000 is far less important than the staggering number — 10.6 million — admitted to jails each year.

### What does 10.6 million jail admissions look like?



**Chris Geidner**  
@chrisgeidner

With today's new 2020 reports, we have new (depressing) charts. But, in the midst of the need to decarcerate to save lives due to #COVID19, this information is all the more important. Check them out.

**deray**  
@deray

The folks at @PrisonPolicy do such incredible work re: decarceration.

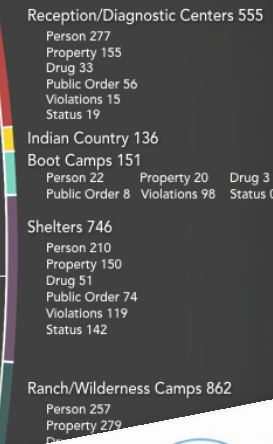
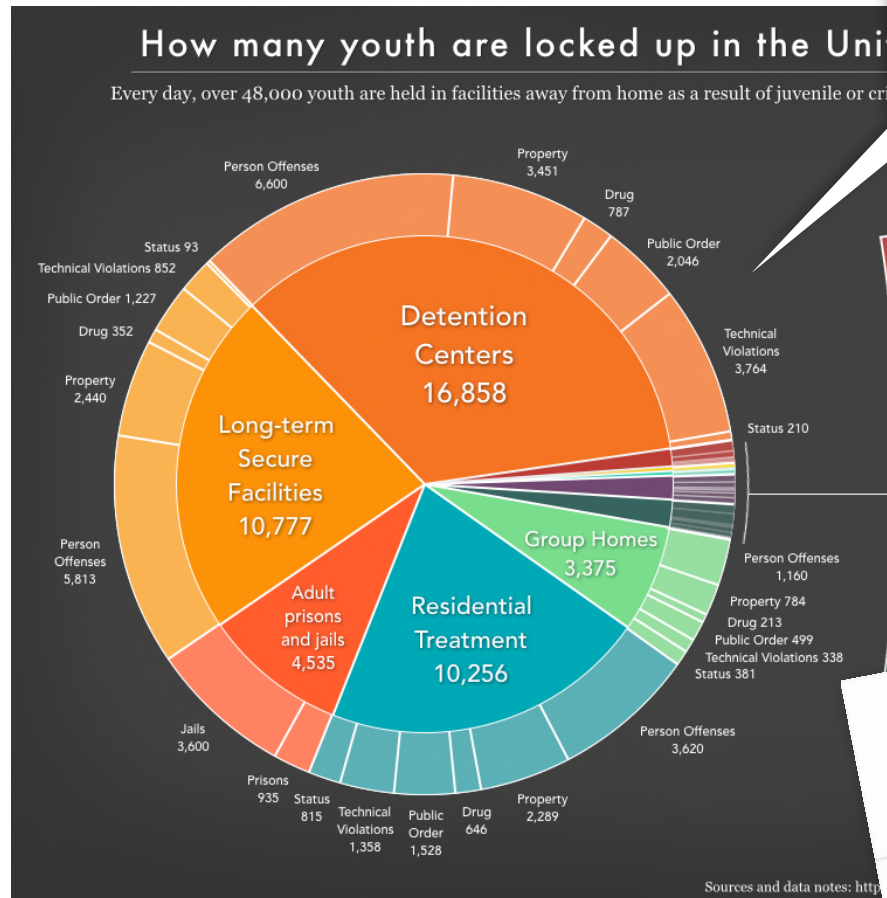
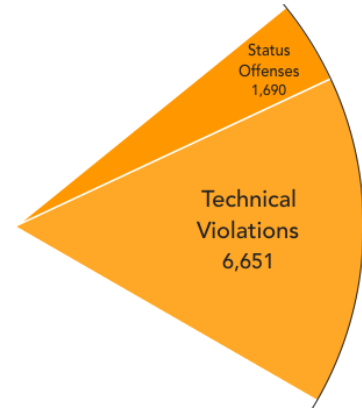
You should follow them if you don't already. They are a gold-standard in the end-mass-incarceration space.

## Youth Confinement: The Whole Pie

The number of youth in confinement has dropped by an astonishing 60% since 2000. But that number is still too high: Over 48,000 youth are held in detention facilities across the country. Our report answers some basic questions: **Where are these youth incarcerated, and why?** We highlight problems in the adult criminal justice system that are mirrored in the juvenile system, including racial disparities, punitive conditions, needless pretrial detention, and overcriminalization.

## How many youth are locked up for the most minor offenses?

8,341 youth are held for probation violations or status offenses



**Study Shows Youth Incarceration Trending Down Nationwide**  
 By Jimmy Jenkins  
 Published: Thursday, December 19, 2019 - 5:40pm

The one-day count of youth in juvenile justice "residential placement" facilities has dropped by over 60 percent since 2000.

A new report aggregating data from across the country shows youth incarceration is trending down, but racial disparities among youth in confinement are on the rise.

## Mapping Disadvantage:

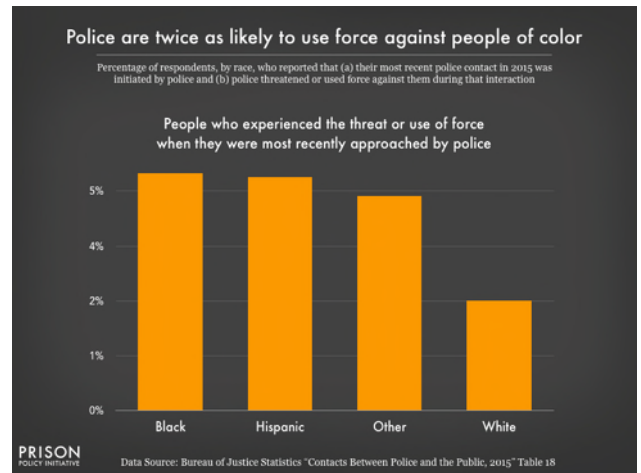
### The geography of incarceration in New York

Have you ever wondered which neighborhoods send the most people to prison? Or how these neighborhoods compare to others when it comes to things like poverty and public health? In a groundbreaking report, we teamed up with VOCAL-NY to map, down to the neighborhood level, where people in New York state prisons are from. The report provides an invaluable new resource for examining the correlations between community health factors and incarceration, using data generated by New York's landmark law ending prison gerrymandering.



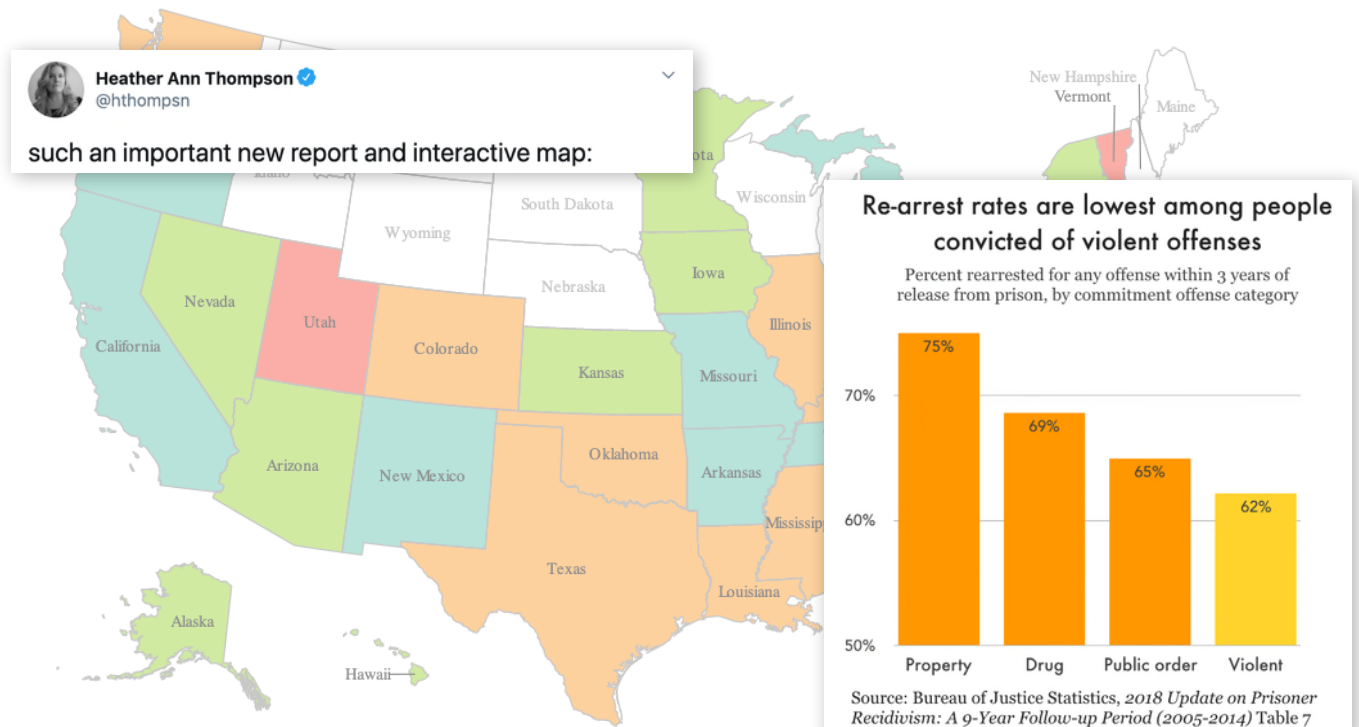
## Ten key facts about policing

Many of the worst features of mass incarceration (like racial disparities in prisons) can be traced back to policing. We compiled our key work about policing into one briefing—and our powerful data reinforces the message of protestors across the country: Police disproportionately target Black and other marginalized people in stops, arrests, and use of force, and are increasingly called upon to respond to problems unrelated to public safety, such as homelessness.

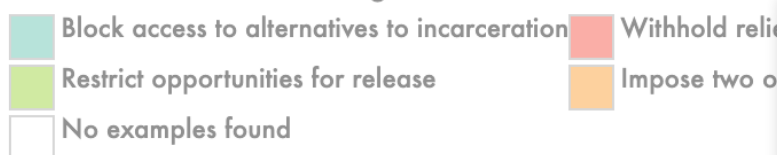


## Reforms Without Results: Why states should stop excluding violent offenses from criminal justice reforms

We make the case that states should include people convicted of violence in criminal justice reforms, explaining that as states have passed laws to reduce their prison populations, they've undermined the effectiveness of those laws by excluding anyone with a "violent" offense. Our report includes an interactive map showing which state laws "carve out" people convicted of violence, and digs into six reasons why it's unjust — and illogical — to exclude them.



## We found states that single out violent offenses:



**Rebecca McCray** @rebeccamccray  
 Vital new report from @PrisonPolicy on the pitfalls of categorically excluding "violent offenders" from reforms (an inhumane exclusion we are seeing a lot of w/ COVID-19 releases)



# Advocating for a humane response to COVID-19

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

*We're using data and advocacy to push for reforms that help minimize the harms to incarcerated people, correctional staff, and their communities during the pandemic.*

Even before the news broke of the first coronavirus death behind bars, we were sounding the alarm about the imminence of a human tragedy inside prisons and jails. Since the start of the pandemic, we've been publishing critical resources that advocates, community leaders, lawmakers, and reporters need to demand that elected officials put public health before punishment, and prioritize saving the lives of justice-involved people.

## Failing Grades: States' Responses to COVID-19 in Jails & Prisons

In a 50-state report, we worked with the ACLU to evaluate the actions each state has taken to save incarcerated people and facility staff from COVID-19. We graded states on a few basic criteria, including whether they are testing incarcerated people and staff, supplying PPE, and depopulating crowded facilities to slow the transmission of the virus. We found that most states have taken appallingly little action — and that their negligence of people behind bars has had tragic consequences.

## Tracking state and local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, minute by minute

Which states and counties are actually taking meaningful steps to keep justice-involved people safe? On our website, we've been monitoring the news and tracking the most significant policy shifts taking place around the country. Our virus response page, which we update **multiple times a day**, helps reporters and advocates keep track of where change is happening.

**CNN health**

### States engaged in 'gross negligence' in Covid-19 response in jails and prisons, new report finds

By **Jen Christensen, CNN**  
Updated 7:55 AM ET, Thu June 25, 2020

**(CNN)** — States have responded to the threat of Covid-19 in jails and prisons with "gross negligence," according to the ACLU and the Prison Policy Initiative.

The organizations published a report Thursday on conditions for the incarcerated.

As of June 22, more than 570 incarcerated people in the US and more than 50 corrections officers have died due to Covid-19, the report said. Jails and prisons have become hotspots for new cases.

Early in the pandemic, experts warned states that the prison system could become "petri dishes" for Covid-19. Good hand hygiene is difficult when sanitation in these jails and prisons is typically poor. Medical resources are scarce. Social distancing is not possible.

**Evaluating state efforts to prevent COVID-19 deaths behind bars**

## Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

Last update: July 08, 2020

### Newest page updates:

- The New Mexico Corrections Department announced that 71 people have been released early due to COVID-19. (See [prison releases](#) section.)
- In Louisiana, the review panel created to consider up to 1,100 people for temporary medical release have been suspended after only reviewing fewer than 600 cases and releasing only 63 people. (See [prison releases](#) section.)
- Oregon Governor Brown approved the release of only 57 people identified as medically vulnerable. (See [prison releases](#) section.)
- Only two states have *not* suspended medical co-pays for people in state prisons: Nevada and Hawaii. (See [medical co-pays](#) section.)

**Can't find what you're looking for on this page?**  
See our [main coronavirus](#) page for other resources.

Prisons and jails are **amplifiers of infectious diseases** such as the coronavirus, because social distancing is impossible inside and movement in and out of facilities is

### Sections

[Jails releasing people](#)

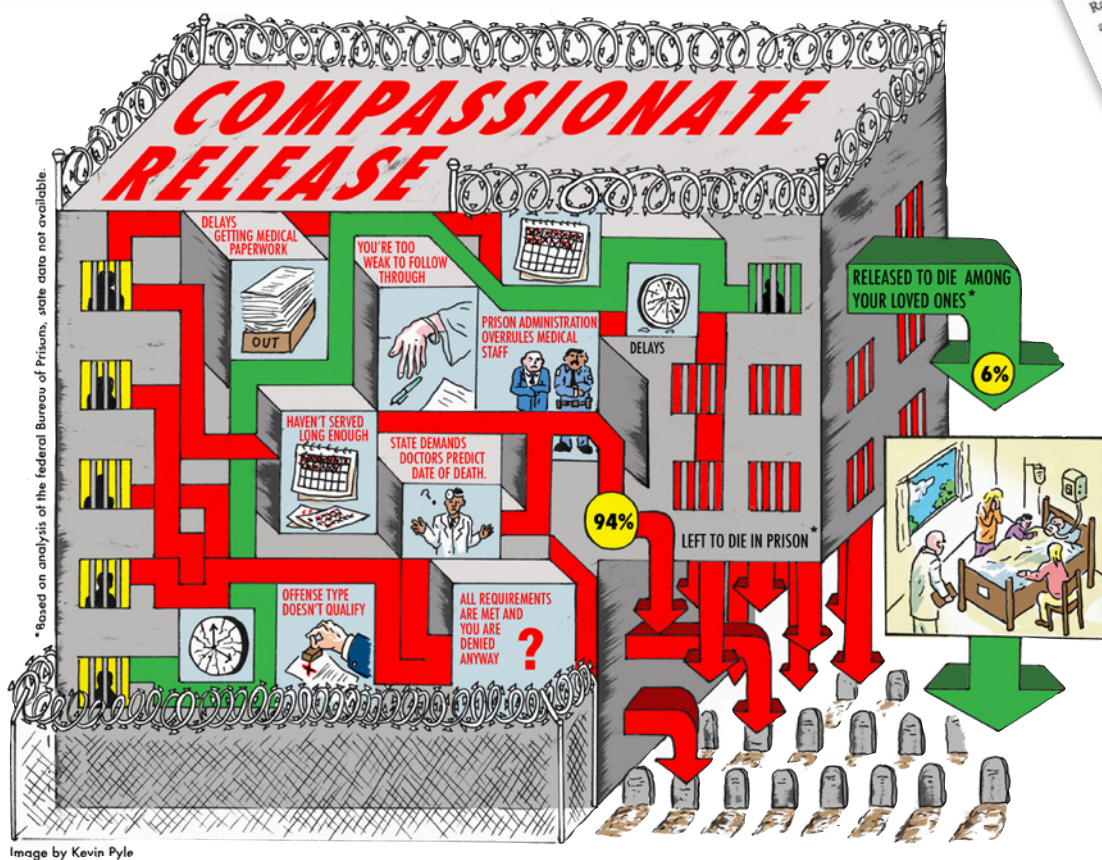
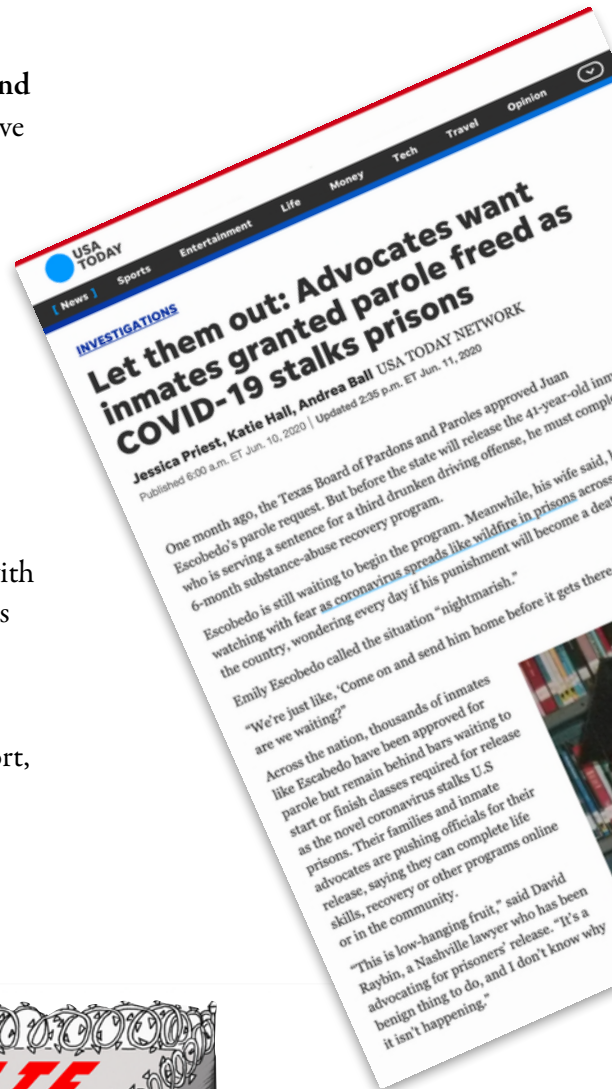
[Prisons releasing people](#)





We also published important research related to the pandemic on:

- **The senseless “program requirements” keeping people behind bars during a pandemic.** Thousands of people nationwide have been approved for parole, but are still locked up because they haven’t yet participated in a mandatory program (often for drug or alcohol treatment). We explained why it makes absolutely no sense to make people wait behind bars for classes which, due to the virus, are suspended indefinitely.
- **The failures of “compassionate release.”** With COVID-19 threatening to turn prison sentences into death sentences, we worked with artist Kevin Pyle to explain why very few people are approved for compassionate release. (See below.)
- **The myth of social distancing behind bars.** We teamed up with data illustrator Mona Chalabi to show that social distancing is even harder behind bars than in nursing homes or on cruise ships.
- **Large-scale prison releases and public safety.** In a short report, we made the case that releasing hundreds or thousands of people from prison during a pandemic need not be “impractical” or unsafe, based on 14 examples of recent large-scale prison releases that did not cause spikes in crime.



# Measuring the impact of mass incarceration on women

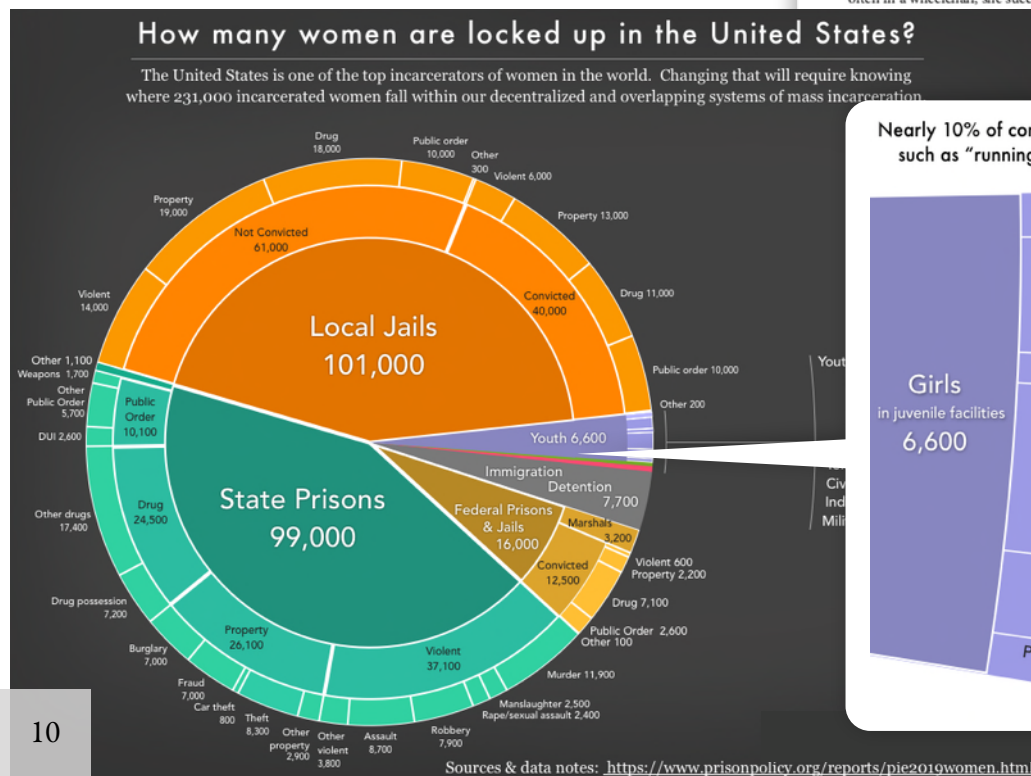
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/women.html>

*Even as the incarceration rate of men drops, women's incarceration rates have stagnated and are even rising in many places. We use data to expose the injustice of their experiences.*

Women's incarceration has grown at **twice the pace of men's incarceration** in recent decades, and has disproportionately been located in local jails. Understanding the specific gendered experiences of incarcerated women is key to ending the enormous harms of mass incarceration.

## Women's Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019

In a snapshot view of the 231,000 women and girls who are incarcerated in the U.S, we find that the number of women in local jails is growing, with more women now behind bars in local jails than in state prisons. And on any given night, 4,500 immigrant women are held for ICE in local jails – over half of all women held in immigration detention. The takeaway? If we're serious about reducing the number of women behind bars, counties and cities — not just states — must make serious changes to their criminal justice systems.



**Mother Jones**

CRIME AND JUSTICE MAY 28, 2020

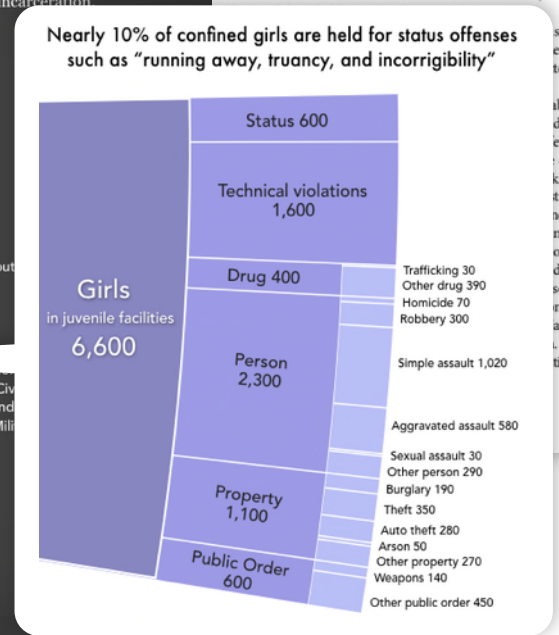
### They Suffered Years of Abuse. They're Trapped Behind Bars in Pandemic.

Why women convicted of killing their alleged tormenters can't get out during the coronavirus crisis.

NATALIE SCHREYER  
Bio

Susan Farrell was 74 when she died last month at the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility in Michigan. Ailing and often in a wheelchair, she succumbed to COVID-19 after being held behind bars for allegedly killing her alleged abuser, Michael Avenatti, who had abused her. Farrell, 47, had fought to have Avenatti released until the end, but her request was denied in 2018.

Government officials have released thousands of nonviolent offenders and those with underlying mental health issues from prisons during the pandemic, and just as the pandemic is ending, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. Farrell was convicted of crimes, such as murder, in 2011. Michael Avenatti and former attorney Paul Manafort, have won re-







# Shining a light on local jails

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

*One out of every three people who were behind bars last night was confined in a jail, two out of every three correctional facilities are jails, and almost every person (95%) released from a correctional facility today was released from a jail: we make sure that their stories make it into the national criminal justice dialogue.*

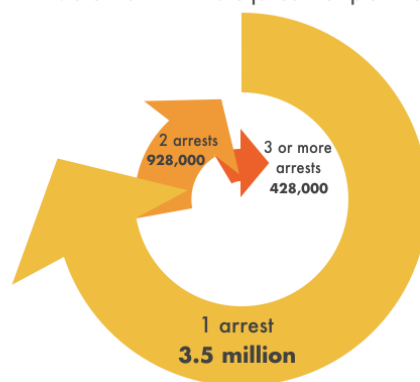
Despite the harsh conditions and sprawling impact, jails are often overlooked when it comes to criminal justice reform. We're putting the need for jail reform directly into the national conversation.

## Arrest, Release, Repeat: How police and jails are misused to respond to social problems

How many people go to county jails every year, and how many times do they go? In this groundbreaking report, we expose the shocking answer: At least **5 million individuals go to county and city jails every year**, and of those, more than 1 in 4 go to jail multiple times in the same year. (In a follow-up analysis, we show how these 5 million individuals are distributed throughout the U.S., breaking down our national findings by state.) Our demographic analysis finds that people who are jailed have **much higher rates of social, economic, and health problems**.

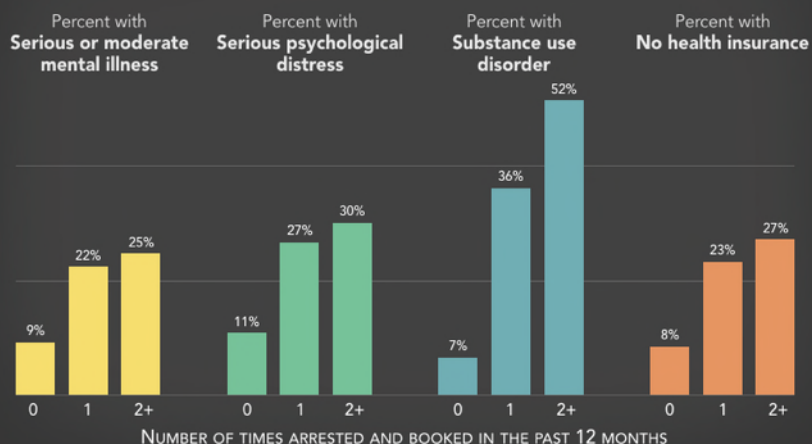
Our conclusion: counties are misusing local jails to avoid addressing problems of public health and income inequality by incarcerating people who need social and support services. Our report offers policy recommendations for counties hoping to change how their jails are used.

At least **4.9 million people** are jailed each year  
More than 1 in 4 are jailed multiple times



## People with multiple arrests have serious health needs

Percentage of individuals who were not arrested and booked in the past 12 months, compared to those arrested and booked once, and those arrested and booked multiple times, that reported having a serious or moderate mental illness (SMMI), serious psychological distress, a substance use disorder, or no health insurance in the past 12 months



PRISON  
POLICY INITIATIVE

Compiled by the Prison Policy Initiative from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2017



## The “services” offered by jails don't make them safe places during a pandemic

As jails considered major policy changes in response to COVID-19, we saw a troubling question from allies with a little less experience on criminal justice issues: Given that jails provide social services, wouldn't it be bad to release people who need those services? We explain that while jails are filled with people who need access to substance use treatment, mental health care, and other kinds of assistance, jails themselves have an abysmal track record as social service providers. Jails are not the place for people to receive these services, especially in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

### More highlights of our work on jails include:

- A report showing how race impacts someone's likelihood of being detained pretrial. **Black and brown defendants** are at least 10-25% more likely than white defendants to be detained pretrial or to have to pay money bail, and young Black men are 50% more likely than white defendants to be detained.
- | Race     | Pretrial jail population (%) | Total U.S. population (%) |
|----------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Other    | 6.4%                         | 6.2%                      |
| White    | 31%                          | 68.1%                     |
| Hispanic | 19.6%                        | 13.4%                     |
| Black    | 43%                          | 12.2%                     |
- An analysis of the **1,000 deaths** that occurred in local jails in 2016, revealing that over half were preventable — the consequence of suicide, accident, homicide, drug or alcohol intoxication, or abysmal health care.
  - A short report explaining “detainers,” which are one of the most common reasons that people are locked up for minor offenses. As we explain, detainers allow ICE, probation and parole offices, and other agencies to keep people in jail without bail, and they account for up to one-third of some jail populations.



# Protecting our democracy from mass incarceration by ending prison gerrymandering

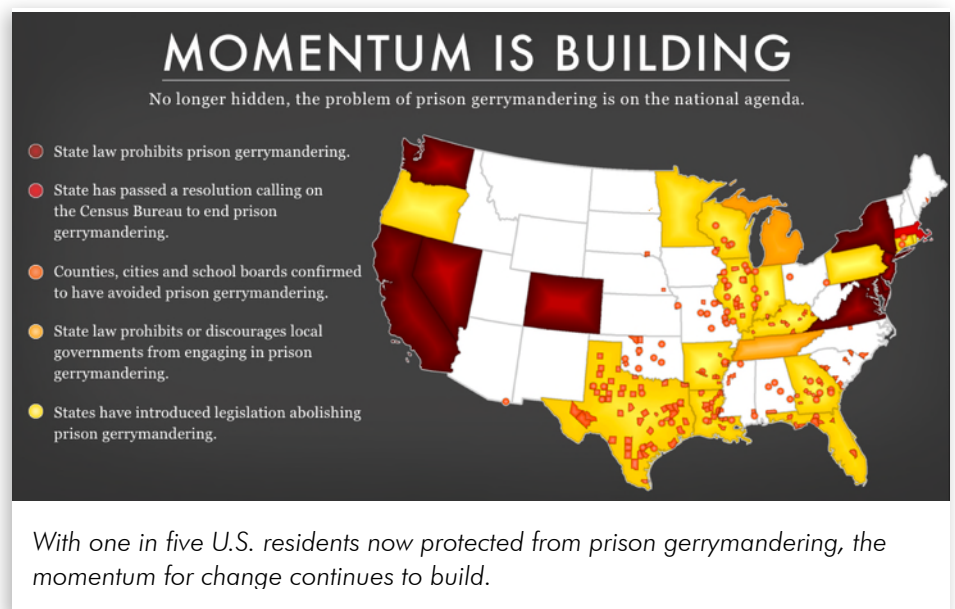
<https://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/>

*The Census Bureau's practice of counting more than two million incarcerated people where they are imprisoned awards undue political clout to people who live near prisons at the expense of everyone else. We're at the center of the national movement to end prison gerrymandering.*

When our work began in 2001, no one knew what prison gerrymandering was, never mind how it distorts our democracy and criminal justice system. Today our work is sparking legislation, winning victories in the courts, and making the problem of prison gerrymandering a key issue for lawmakers, voting and civil rights advocates, researchers, and journalists.

## This year's highlights:

- From 2019-2020, we helped three new states pass laws to end prison gerrymandering. From now on, **Virginia, Colorado, and New Jersey** (along with California, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, New York, and Washington) will count incarcerated people as residents of their hometowns for redistricting, not as residents of the places where they are held in prison cells.
- We continue our work to end prison gerrymandering state by state in the legislatures. **Florida, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin** all considered bills to end prison gerrymandering this year.
- We continue to explain how prison gerrymandering impacts political representation and not federal funding, a common misconception that holds back efforts to eliminate the practice.



# Fighting for a fair deal for incarcerated people and their families

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

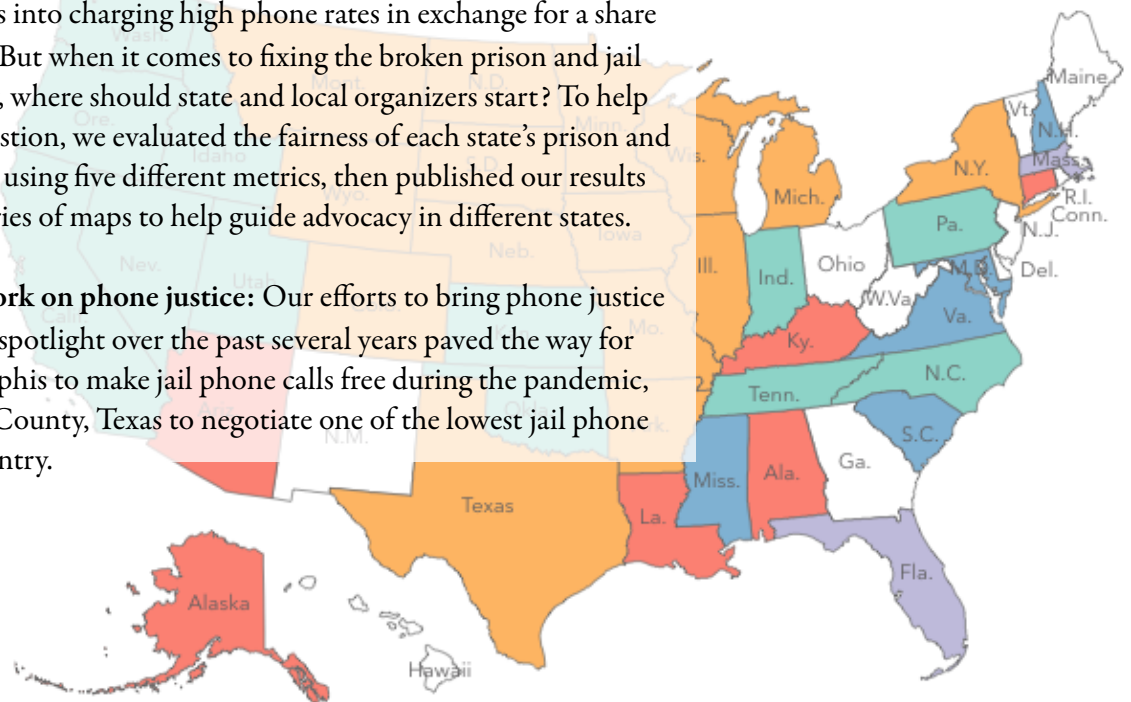
*Our reports uncover the true economic costs of mass incarceration—and how our criminal punishment system sucks money out of the pocketbooks of the country’s poorest residents.*

From phone calls to the commissary, we expose the many avenues of the criminal justice system where incarcerated people and their families are getting ripped off or underserved—and advocate for a better deal.

## The biggest priorities for prison and jail phone justice in 40 states

At a time when the cost of a typical phone call is approaching zero, people behind bars in the U.S. are often forced to pay astronomical rates to call their loved ones or lawyers. Why? Because phone companies bait prisons and jails into charging high phone rates in exchange for a share of the revenue. But when it comes to fixing the broken prison and jail phone industry, where should state and local organizers start? To help answer this question, we evaluated the fairness of each state’s prison and jail phone rates using five different metrics, then published our results along with a series of maps to help guide advocacy in different states.

**More of our work on phone justice:** Our efforts to bring phone justice to the national spotlight over the past several years paved the way for cities like Memphis to make jail phone calls free during the pandemic, and for Dallas County, Texas to negotiate one of the lowest jail phone rates in the country.





## The IRS is wrong: Incarcerated people should be receiving stimulus checks

In a report that sparked national investigations and a lawsuit, we showed that some correctional authorities — responding to guidance from the IRS — have been intercepting and returning stimulus checks for incarcerated people. But the IRS’s legal rationale for denying the checks is flimsy, at best — and flies in the face of our country’s moral obligations to marginalized people during a pandemic. As we write **this in October**, a judge has ruled that the IRS must process stimulus payments for incarcerated people.

## The Company Store and the Literally Captive Market: Consumer Law in Prisons and Jails

Incarcerated people are consumers too, and often have to pay for basics such as phone calls, soap, and medicine, to say nothing of “luxury” items such as books. Our volunteer attorney Stephen Rahe published a report investigating how consumer rights and protections are different for people behind bars, and proposing ways to ensure that incarcerated people and their families are protected from unfair and oppressive commercial transactions.

## Will the Postal Service ignore its most vulnerable customers?

In 2019, the U.S. Postal Service proposed to ignore a federal court ruling and increase the cost of postage. We sent a comment to the Postal Service urging them to rethink the price hike, explaining that while it might not hurt the average household, it will hurt people behind bars, who are overwhelmingly poor and rely on postal mail to stay in touch with their loved ones.

## Last Week Tonight uses our research to expose the high fees and low wages in prisons

On his show *Last Week Tonight*, John Oliver used our research on phone justice and video calling, as well as our 2017 survey of prison wages, to help viewers understand the exorbitant everyday charges prisons impose on incarcerated people and their families. The episode shines a light on the unfairness of charging incarcerated people for things like hygiene products, medical copays, and staying in touch with their loved ones.



# Helping journalists and advocates expose the truth about mass incarceration

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

*Concerned citizens need hard-to-find data to shed light on injustice. Every day, we help them track it down.*

The Prison Policy Initiative doesn't just release original reports. We also answer daily data questions from reporters and activists, helping them find the statistics they need to publish powerful news investigations, editorials, fact sheets, and demand letters. This "data mentorship" is reshaping the national conversation about mass incarceration — and this year we assisted more people than ever.

We released our new "Data toolbox," a webpage curating all of the raw data we've used to produce our major reports. We also started a new series called "Since You Asked," in which we answer the most common questions we get from reporters and activists, so that anyone can learn. Highlights include:

## What data exists about Native American people in the criminal justice system?

The scarcity of data on Native Americans in the U.S. criminal justice system comes up a lot in our conversations with activists and reporters, who rightly wonder why Native populations are often excluded from comparisons with other racial and ethnic groups. We explain what data there is—and why there is so little.

## How should crime trends be interpreted during the coronavirus pandemic?

As crime rates fell with most of the country under "stay at home" orders, we published a handy guide for journalists explaining how to find local crime data, and how to interpret apparent trends with caution.

## Is it me, or is the government releasing less data about the criminal justice system?

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is tasked with collecting, analyzing, and publishing data about the criminal justice system. But its data releases are slowing down, we explained, and becoming newly politicized. Possible reasons for these changes and delays? BJS funding issues, staff shortages, and changes in leadership.

Since you asked: Is it me, or is the government releasing less data about the criminal justice system?

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is tasked with collecting, analyzing, and publishing data about the criminal justice system. But its reports are slowing down - and its framing of criminal justice issues is becoming more punitive.

by Wendy Sawyer, November 14, 2019

We've heard this question from a few advocates and journalists who, like I do, depend on the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and other government data sources for timely information about the justice system. And while monitoring changes in federal data collections isn't a core part of our work, we have observed a troubling trend: Since 2017, data releases are slowing down.

We aren't the only ones who have noticed. Last month, a coalition representing thousands of academic and nonprofit researchers and advocates wrote the Office of Justice Programs with questions about missing and delayed releases as well.

I probably don't have to convince our regular readers that timely data is essential for identifying both social problems and effective policy solutions, and that it's especially important in the context of criminal justice, where human costs are so high. And admittedly, it's not news that government data has long been less well-funded, less timely, and less comprehensive, say, labor statistics.

Ames Grawert  
@AmesCG

The paucity of data on our criminal justice system would be funny if lives didn't hang in the balance. A point that I've heard @JohnFPfaff make is that we choose to invest substantially in some government data collection (like that of Labor Statistics), just not in this. He's right.

Even so, these publications have slowed even further — and that's under the current administration. To see the extent of this, I went through the BJS' list of publications since 2000 and compared the data collection reference dates and the corresponding report dates for six annual report series. I found that there has been a significant change in the past several years:





# Supporting our work

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

The generous support of visionary foundations and individual donors has allowed the Prison Policy Initiative to grow from the idea of three enterprising students in 2001 into an innovative and efficient policy shop at the forefront of the criminal justice reform movement in 2020.

Our work is supported by a handful of foundations and a network of generous individuals who allow us to seize timely new opportunities, like our work advocating for a humane response to COVID-19 (p. 7), and to produce groundbreaking material that reshapes the movement for criminal justice reform, like our *Whole Pie* series (p. 4) which presents the essential big picture view of the disparate systems of confinement that make the U.S. the number one incarcerator in the world.

If you would like to contribute to our work, you can donate online or send a paper check to PO Box 127 Northampton, MA 01061.

If you are a current supporter of our work, we ask you to allow us to count on your support in the future by becoming a monthly sustainer. Just go to <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/donate>, select an amount and then how often you'd like it to repeat.

And if you ever have any questions about how to support our work or how your gift is being used, please don't hesitate to contact us at (413) 527-0845.

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

# Prison Policy Initiative budget report for 2019-2020 year

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## Income

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Small Foundations  | \$145,000          |
| Large Foundations* | \$765,000          |
| Individual Donors  | \$222,913          |
| Consulting         | \$22,000           |
| Honoraria          | \$1,482            |
| Interest           | \$29,378           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>\$1,185,773</b> |

## Expenses

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Salaries, benefits, employment taxes for 7 FTE staff | \$593,722 |
|--|-----------|

## Consultants

|                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Graphic/information design   | \$3,888         |
| Research                     | \$21,820        |
| <b>Subtotal, consultants</b> | <b>\$25,708</b> |

## Other expenses

|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Computer equipment                | \$13,881         |
| Insurance                         | \$2,271          |
| Legal/Accounting services         | \$591            |
| Postage                           | \$4,102          |
| Printing                          | \$363            |
| Promotion & conference fees       | \$1,112          |
| <br>                              |                  |
| Rent & utilities                  | \$14,174         |
| Research tools                    | \$503            |
| Staff development                 | \$1,182          |
| Supplies                          | \$9,560          |
| Taxes                             | \$19             |
| Telephone, fax & internet service | \$2,684          |
| <br>                              |                  |
| Travel                            | \$7,795          |
| Website & newsletter hosting      | \$4,193          |
| <br>                              |                  |
| <b>Subtotal, other expenses</b>   | <b>\$62,428</b>  |
| <br>                              |                  |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>\$681,858</b> |

\*Several of these large foundation grants are for work that extend outside the current fiscal year.