



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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THE NATION'S PRISON POPULATION CONTINUES ITS SLOW GROWTH **Up 1.9 Percent Last Year**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The number of prisoners in the United States rose 1.9 percent during 2004, the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. This was lower than the average annual rate of growth during the last decade (3.2 percent) and just below the growth rate in 2003 (2.0 percent).

The number of inmates under state jurisdiction increased by 20,759 inmates (1.6 percent) and the number under federal jurisdiction by 7,269 (4.2 percent). The total increase in the number of inmates in 2004 was nearly identical to 2003 and about 8,000 fewer than in 2002.

As of December 31, 2004, there were 2,267,787 people behind bars in the United States, of which 1,421,911 were held in federal and state prisons (not including the 74,378 state and federal inmates incarcerated in local jails), 713,990 in local jails, 102,338 in juvenile facilities, 15,757 in U.S. Territory prisons, 9,788 in Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities, 2,177 in military prisons and 1,826 in Indian country jails (as of June 30, 2003).

The Federal Bureau of Prisons operated the largest prison system at year-end 2004 (180,328 inmates), followed by Texas (168,105), California (166,556), Florida (85,533), and New York (63,751).

Ten states reported population increases of at least 5 percent during 2004. Minnesota led the nation with 11.4 percent growth, followed by Idaho (up 11.1 percent) and Georgia (up 8.3 percent). Eleven states experienced declines, led by Alabama (down 7.3 percent), followed by Rhode Island (down 2.8 percent) and New York (down 2.2 percent).

The nation's incarceration rate rose from 411 sentenced inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents in 1995 to 486 inmates per 100,000 at the end of last year — an 18 percent increase. (A "sentenced" prisoner is an inmate serving a sentence of more than a year.)

The states with the highest incarceration rates in 2004 were Louisiana (816 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 state residents), Texas (694), Mississippi (669), Oklahoma (649) and Georgia (574). The states with the lowest incarceration rates were Maine (148 sentenced inmates per 100,000 state residents), Minnesota (171), Rhode Island (175), New Hampshire (187) and North Dakota (195).

On December 31, 2004, 24 state prison systems were operating at or above their highest capacity. The federal system was 40 percent over capacity.

At the end of last year 98,901 prisoners were held in privately operated facilities (6.6 percent of all inmates). New Mexico had the highest percentage, 42 percent, followed by Alaska, 31 percent and Montana, 30 percent.

Half of state prison inmates were serving time for violent crimes, 20 percent for property crimes and 21 percent for drug crimes. Females were more likely to be in prison for a drug offense (32 percent) than were males (21 percent). Males were more likely to be in prison for a violent offense (52 percent) than were females (33 percent).

As of December 31, 2004, 104,848 women were held in state and federal prisons – up from 68,468 in 1995. Women constituted 7.0 percent of all inmates — up from 6.1 percent in 1995.

About 8.4 percent of all black male U.S. residents between 25 and 29 years old were in a state or federal prison in 2004, compared to 2.5 percent of Hispanic males in the same age group and 1.2 percent of white males. Among male and female prisoners combined, 41 percent were black, 34 percent were white, 19 percent Hispanic and the rest were other races or two or more races.

The report, “Prisoners in 2004” (NCJ-210677) was written by BJS statisticians Paige M. Harrison and Allen J. Beck. Following publication, the report can be found at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/p04.htm

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics statistical reports programs, please visit the BJS website at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and two offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Office of the Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education and the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed strategy and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

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