

# Incarceration Trends in VIRGINIA

## Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons



### REGIONAL RANK

4 of 7 in total incarceration

Total people...

...locked up in Virginia



14,954 people (1983)      59,458 people (2015)

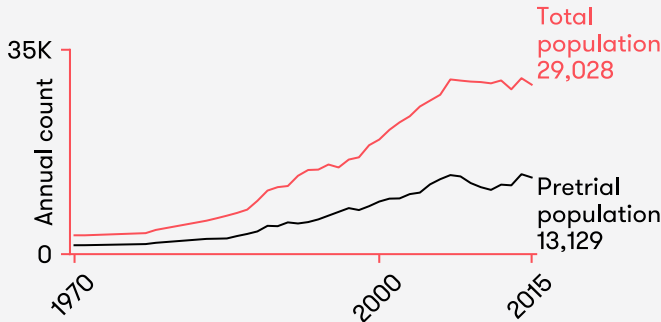
1983      2015

Since 1970, the rate of incarceration in America has expanded more than fourfold, and the United States leads the world in locking people up. Many places in America have begun to reduce their use of prisons and jails, but progress has been uneven. Although the number of people sent to state prisons and county jails from urban areas has decreased, that number has continued to rise in many rural places. Racial disparities in incarceration remain strikingly wide. Women constitute a rising number of those behind bars.

This fact sheet provides at-a-glance information about how many people are locked up in both state prisons and county jails and shows where the state stands on a variety of metrics, so that policymakers and the public can better determine where to target reforms.

## STATE TOTALS

### JAILS

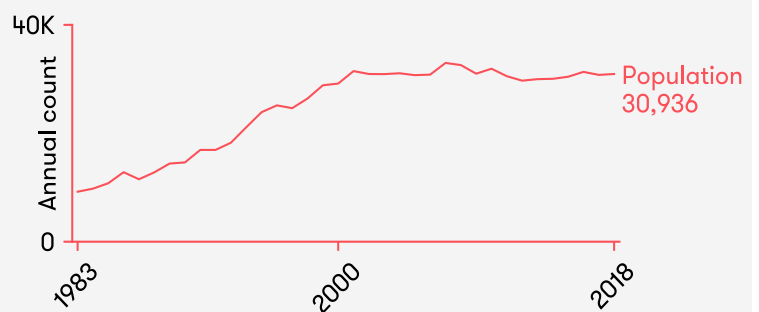


% change in jail population

SINCE 1970: 800% ↑  
SINCE 2000: 48% ↑

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 800%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 45% of the total jail population in Virginia.

### PRISONS



% change in prison population

SINCE 1983: 235% ↑  
SINCE 2000: 6% ↑

Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 235%. In 2018, there were 30,936 people in the Virginia prison system.

## RACE

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### JAILS

20% of state pop. | 43% of jail pop.

### PRISONS

20% of state pop. | 53% of prison pop.



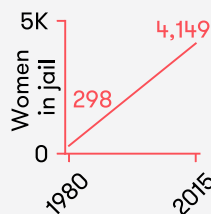
In Virginia, Black people constituted 20% of state residents, but 43% of people in jail and 53% of people in prison.

## GENDER

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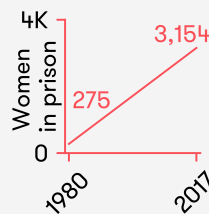
### JAILS

1,292% ↑



### PRISONS

1,047% ↑



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 1,292%, and the number of women in prison has increased 1,047%.

## GEOGRAPHY

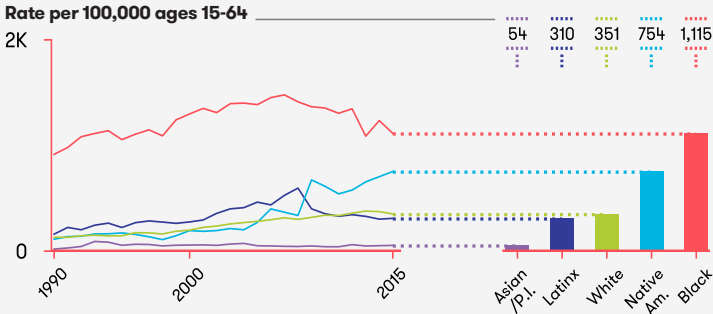
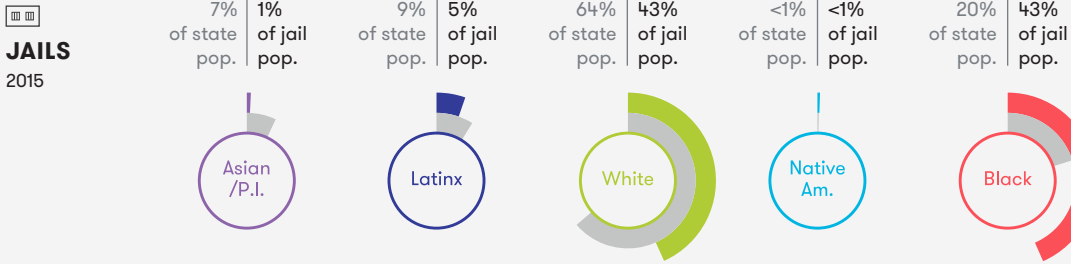
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### Top admission rates (rate per 100K)

2015		2013	
COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Staunton City	48,466	Williamsburg City	1,087
Emporia City	42,920	Bristol City	1,041
Brunswick	30,663	Fredericksburg City	882
Martinsville City	21,593	Martinsville City	835
Westmoreland	17,582	Southampton	820

Incarceration is not only an urban phenomenon. In fact, on a per capita basis, the most rural places in the state often lock up the most people in jail and send the most people to prison.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY



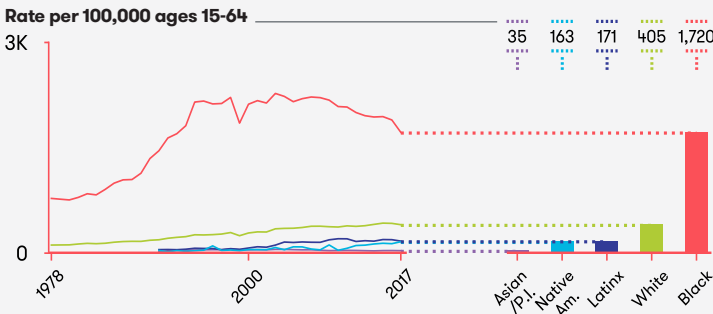
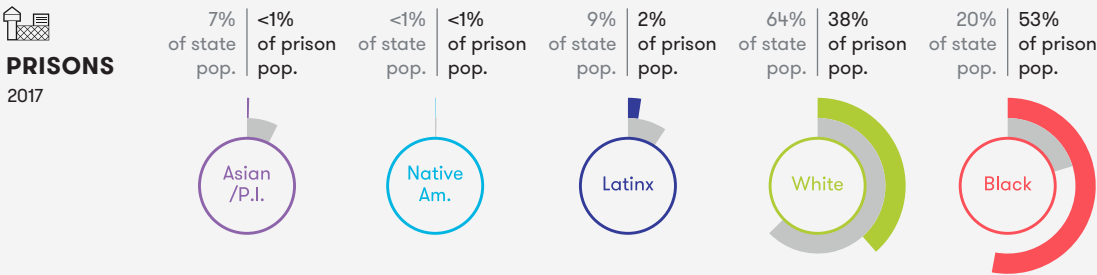
Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 22 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 3.2 times the rate of white people, and Native American people were incarcerated at 2.1 times the rate of white people.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT

The overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system is well documented. Black men constitute about 13 percent of the male population, but about 35 percent of those incarcerated. One in five Black people born in 2001 is likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime, compared to one in 10 Latinx people and one in 29 white people.

Discriminatory criminal justice policies and practices at all stages of the justice process have unjustifiably disadvantaged Black people, including through disparity in the enforcement of seemingly race-neutral laws. Studies have found that Black people are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than white people—even when controlling for things like offense severity.

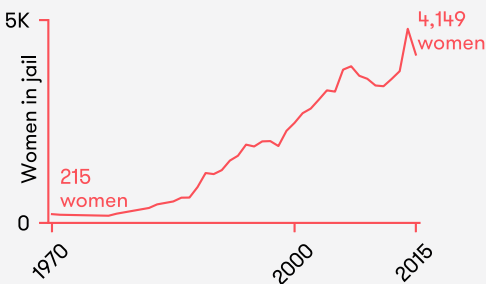
Nationally, Latinx people are also overrepresented in prisons and jails, yet common data misclassification leads to distorted, lower estimates of Latinx incarceration rates and distorted, higher estimates of white incarceration rates. Smaller and inconsistent data reporting make it difficult to measure the effects of racism for incarcerated people of other racial groups.



Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 121 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 4.2 times the rate of white people.

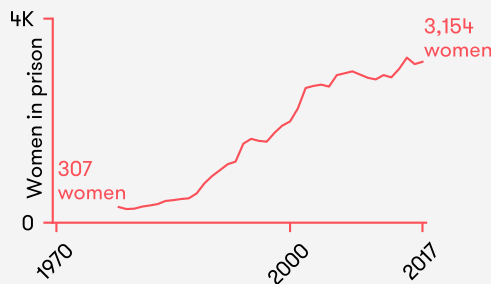
## GENDER

### JAILS



The number of women in Virginia's jails has increased more than 19-fold, from 216 in 1970 to 4,150 in 2015.

### PRISONS



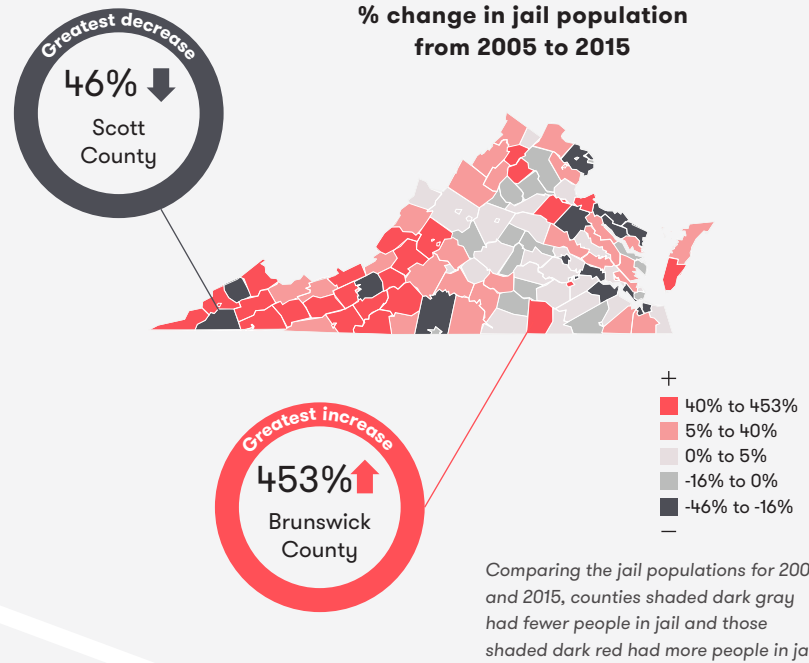
The number of women in Virginia's prisons has increased more than tenfold, from 307 in 1970 to 3,154 in 2017.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT

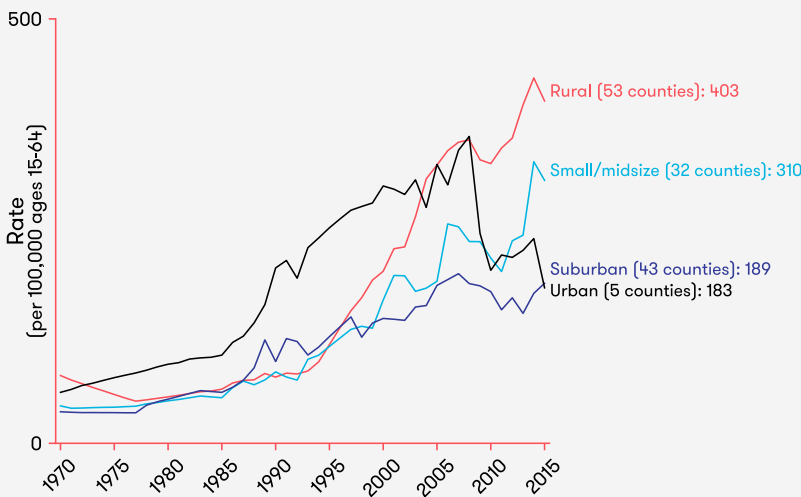
Although men's jail admissions have declined by 26 percent since 2008, women's admissions have increased both as a total number and as a proportion of all jail admissions. Women now make up almost one out of every four jail admissions, up from fewer than one in 10 in 1983. Since 1970, the number of women in U.S. jails has increased 14-fold—from fewer than 8,000 to nearly 110,000 in 2013—and women in jail now account for approximately half of all women behind bars in the country.

# GEOGRAPHY

Statewide trends alone do not tell the whole story of incarceration: there is wide variation in the use of incarceration across the state. Today, the highest rates of prison admissions are in rural counties, and pretrial detention continues to increase in smaller counties even as it is on the decline in larger counties. It is critical to examine incarceration trends in every corner of the state, because although the largest counties may have the most people in jails—the highest rates of incarceration are in smaller cities and rural counties.



## JAILS Pretrial population



Since 2000, the state's use of pretrial detention has taken different trajectories in different types of counties. The pretrial incarceration rate has increased 99% in the state's 53 rural counties, 83% in the state's 32 small/midsize counties, and 28% in the state's 43 suburban counties. It has decreased 40% in the state's five urban counties.

Vera's analysis of the urban-rural continuum changes the six categories defined by the National Center for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties to four. A county is labeled "urban" if it is one of the core counties of a metropolitan area with 1 million or more people and is labeled "suburban" if it is within the surrounding metropolitan area. Vera turns the remaining four categories into two by combining small and medium metropolitan areas ("small and midsize metro") and micropolitan and noncore areas ("rural").

## JAIL ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 93 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Staunton City	48,466	Virginia Beach City	23,856
Emporia City	42,920	Fairfax	18,880
Brunswick	30,663	Chesterfield	14,163
Martinsville City	21,593	Henrico	13,742
Westmoreland	17,582	Spotsylvania	10,810
Northumberland	17,567	Prince William	10,326
Richmond	17,382	Chesapeake City	9,033
Danville City	15,512	Newport News City	8,604
Hopewell City	15,062	Norfolk City	8,129
Colonial Heights City	15,008	Staunton City	7,550

## PRISON ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 93 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Williamsburg City	1,087	Norfolk City	675
Bristol City	1,041	Richmond City	613
Fredericksburg City	882	Virginia Beach City	575
Martinsville City	835	Chesapeake City	568
Southampton	820	Fairfax	389
Greensville	788	Henrico	372
Danville City	772	Prince William	347
Tazewell	770	Chesterfield	337
Lee	608	Newport News City	305
Pulaski	588	Portsmouth City	305

## JAILS



## Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Georgia	7,747	-26%
2	South Carolina	6,559	-15%
3	North Carolina	6,036	-26%
4	<b>Virginia</b>	5,547	-20%
5	Florida	5,166	-37%
6	West Virginia	4,071	11%
7	Maryland	2,484	-28%

## Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Georgia	313	-30%
2	Florida	284	-23%
3	South Carolina	252	-17%
4	<b>Virginia</b>	234	2%
5	North Carolina	229	-9%
6	West Virginia	192	39%
7	Maryland	155	-27%

## Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	<b>Virginia</b>	283	0.0%
2	Georgia	242	0.3%
3	West Virginia	173	-0.1%
4	Florida	139	-0.2%
5	South Carolina	107	0.1%
6	Maryland	91	-0.2%
7	North Carolina	49	0.6%

## PRISONS

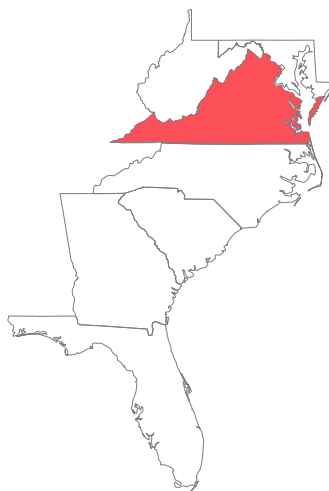


## Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06-'16)
1	West Virginia	302	30%
2	Georgia	258	-27%
3	North Carolina	242	36%
4	Florida	225	-26%
5	Maryland	221	-19%
6	<b>Virginia</b>	216	-10%
7	South Carolina	210	-35%

## Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08-'18)
1	Georgia	791	-2%
2	Florida	734	-13%
3	<b>Virginia</b>	662	-6%
4	South Carolina	587	-26%
5	West Virginia	584	18%
6	North Carolina	518	-17%
7	Maryland	444	-25%



## Data

This fact sheet uses data from four U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data series and is supplemented with data obtained directly from state governments for the more recent years for which BJS data is not yet available, when available. The Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jails, and National Corrections Reporting Program provides data through 2016; the National Prisoner Statistics program provides data through 2017, and 2018 data is sourced from state agencies. Rates are per 100,000 residents aged 15 to 64. See *Data and Methods for Vera's State Fact Sheets*: [www.vera.org/incarceration-trends-fact-sheets-data-and-methods.pdf](http://www.vera.org/incarceration-trends-fact-sheets-data-and-methods.pdf) for complete details. County-level data is available at [trends.vera.org](http://trends.vera.org).

## Acknowledgments

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## For more information

For more information, visit [www.vera.org](http://www.vera.org). For more information about this fact sheet, contact Jacob Kang-Brown, senior research associate, at [jkangbrown@vera.org](mailto:jkangbrown@vera.org).