

National Comparisons of Correctional Systems Populations

- **National Data.** There were an estimated 1,526,792 offenders incarcerated nationally on December 31, 2015. This was a decrease of 35,527 offenders compared to the previous year and was the smallest U.S. prison population since 2005. The state prison systems' population decreased by approximately 21,415 offenders during calendar year (CY) 2015. The federal prison system decreased its population by about 14,112 offenders. This was the third year in a row of population decreases. The federal system (196,455 offenders), Texas (163,909 offenders), California (129,593 offenders), and Florida (101,424) together held 38.7% of all prisoners in the country.
- **Federal System.** The federal prison system held 196,455 offenders at year end 2015, making it the largest penal system in the country. The federal prison system decreased by 14,112 offenders (6.7%) from CY 2014 to CY 2015.
- **State Prisoners.** The number of state prisoners decreased in CY 2015, for five straight years of decline. State prison populations grew every year beginning in 1978 (307,276 prisoners held in all state prisons) to a high of 1,615,487 in 2009. The estimated state prison population at year end 2015 was 1,330,337. This was a 1.6% decrease compared to the December 2014 population. The CY 2015 state prison population was 285,150 offenders (17.7%) below the CY 2009 peak.
- **Population Increases.** Prison systems with the largest percentage increases in the population included Oklahoma (3.2% increase with 28,547 offenders), West Virginia (3.2% increase with 7,118 offenders), Nevada (4.3% increase with 13,071 offenders), and North Dakota (4.5% increase with 1,795 offenders). North Dakota was the second smallest prison system in the U.S. as of year end 2015.
- **Population Decreases.** The prison population decreased in 31 states during CY 2015. Prison systems with the most decline included Utah (-7.7% with a total of 6,492 offenders), Alaska (-7.9% with a total of 5,338 offenders), and Vermont (-11.6% with a total of 1,750 offenders). The number of state and federal female prisoners decreased by 1.4% in CY 2015.
- **Largest Prison Systems.** The largest state prison populations all decreased during CY 2015. The Texas prison population decreased by 1.3% to 163,909 offenders. California's prison population decreased by 4.8% to 129,593 offenders. The Florida prison population decreased by 1.4% to 101,424 offenders.
- **Iowa Data.** Iowa's year-end 2015 federal and state prison population was 8,849 offenders; this was an increase of 0.1% compared to CY 2014. The male offender population decreased slightly, by 45 offenders (0.6%), while the female offender population increased by 56 offenders (7.4%) from 2014 to 2015. Iowa's prison population peaked in April 2011 at 9,009 prisoners. The Iowa prison population has been trending downward since that time. The state prison population on June 30, 2016, was 8,206. This is a level of 112.6% capacity.
- **Imprisonment Rates.** Imprisonment rates are calculated by the number of sentenced inmates per 100,000 residents. The national imprisonment rate in CY 2015 was 458 sentenced prisoners for all U.S. residents of all ages. This was a decrease of 2.8% from CY 2014. The federal rate was 55 prisoners per U.S. residents of all ages, while the state rate was 402 prisoners for residents of all ages. Men (863 prisoners) were incarcerated at a much higher level than women (64).
- **State Imprisonment Rates.** Based on adult residents (age 18 or older), Louisiana had the highest imprisonment rate (1,019 offenders) in CY 2015, followed by Oklahoma (948 offenders), Mississippi (803 offenders), Alabama (790 offenders), and Arizona (781 offenders). Maine (163 offenders) had the lowest imprisonment rate, followed by Massachusetts (225 offenders), Rhode Island (254 offenders), Vermont (255 offenders), and Minnesota (256 offenders). Iowa's imprisonment rate in CY 2015 was estimated to be 367 per 100,000 residents aged 18 years and older. Iowa ranked 38th in the nation in terms of the imprisonment rate as of year end 2015.