

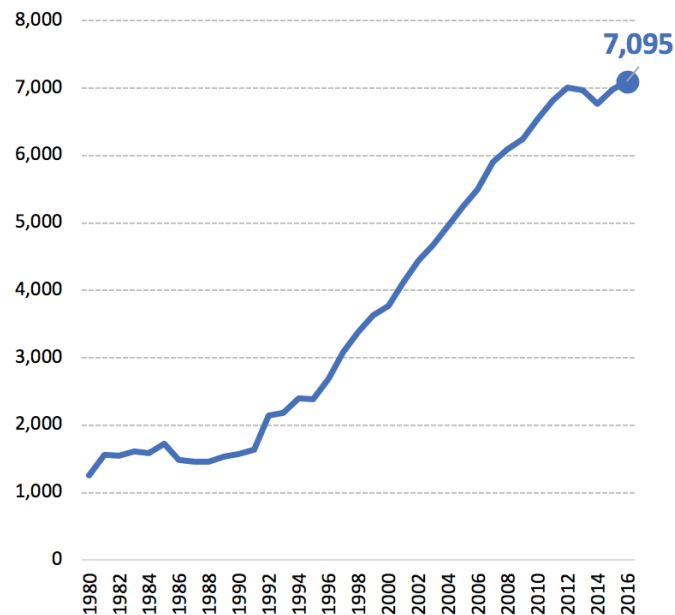


# The High Cost of Mass Incarceration in West Virginia

Over the last 30 years, the number of West Virginians incarcerated has grown nearly five-fold despite a decline in the state's population over this time. This steep rise is not due to rising crime rates in West Virginia, but the policy choices made by lawmakers to use imprisonment as a response to crime.

## Incarceration Growth in West Virginia

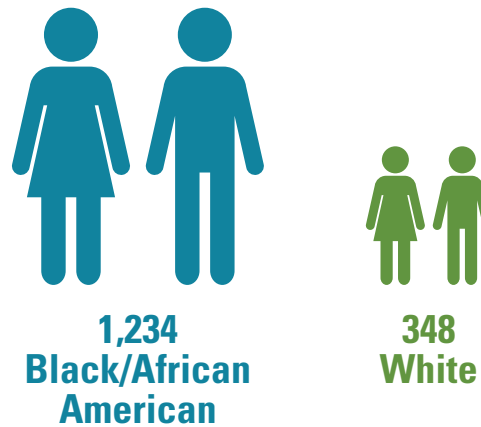
Annual average inmate population in West Virginia (prisons, jails, contracted)



Source: WV Division of Corrections Annual Reports and U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics

## People of Color Overrepresented in Prisons and Jails in West Virginia

Number of incarcerated by race per 100,000 people, 2014

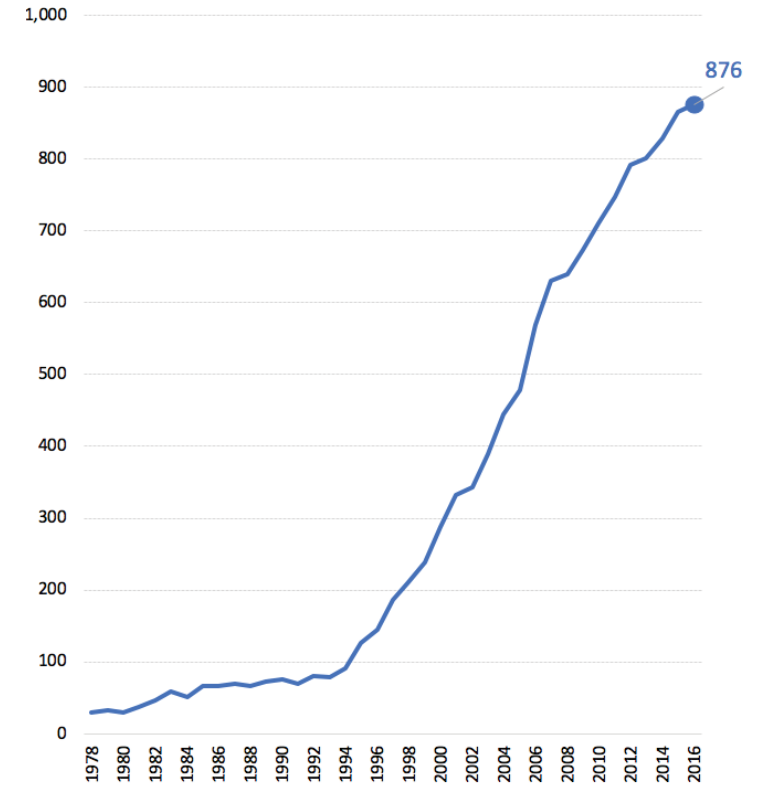


Source: The Sentencing Project, The Color of Justice, 2016

African Americans are incarcerated in West Virginia prisons at a rate that is 3.5 times the imprisonment of whites. One out of 36 black males in West Virginia is in prison. While blacks make up 3.5% of West Virginia's population, they make up 11.7 percent of the state's prison population. These racial disparities are driven by policies and practices, the role of implicit bias and stereotypes, and structural disadvantages in communities of color.

## Women Prison Incarceration Growth in West Virginia

Sentenced female prisoners under the jurisdiction of state or federal correctional authorities



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prison Statistics Program, 1978-2016

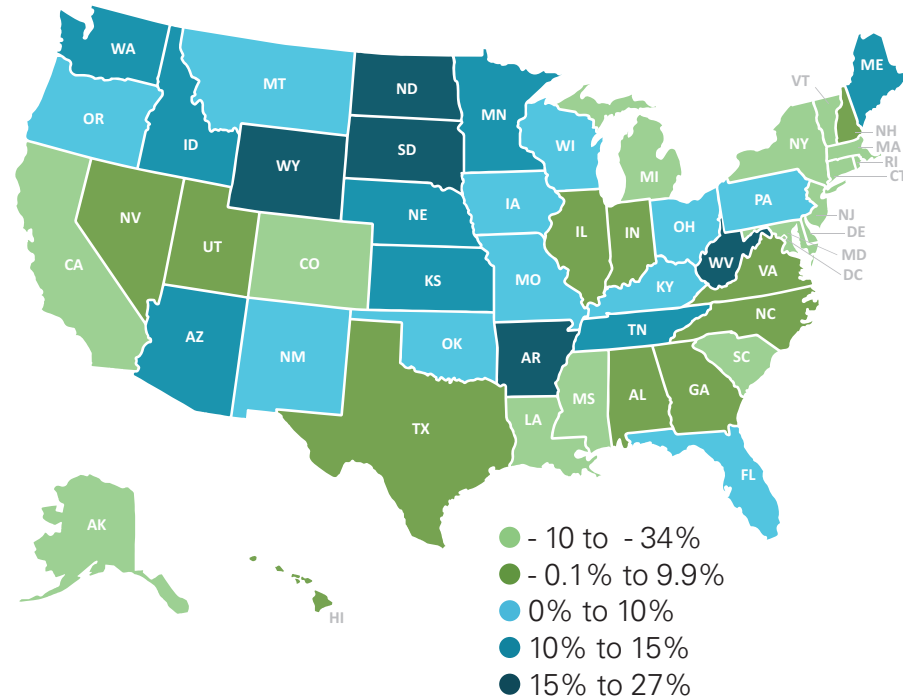
The number of women in prison in West Virginia has grown thirteen-fold over the last four decades. In 2016, the female imprisonment rate in West Virginia was 95 per 100,000 females while the national average was 64 per 100,000 females. From 1990 to 2016, West Virginia experienced the largest growth in female imprisonment in the nation.



# The High Cost of Mass Incarceration in West Virginia

## West Virginia's Prison Population Has Grown Faster Than Most States

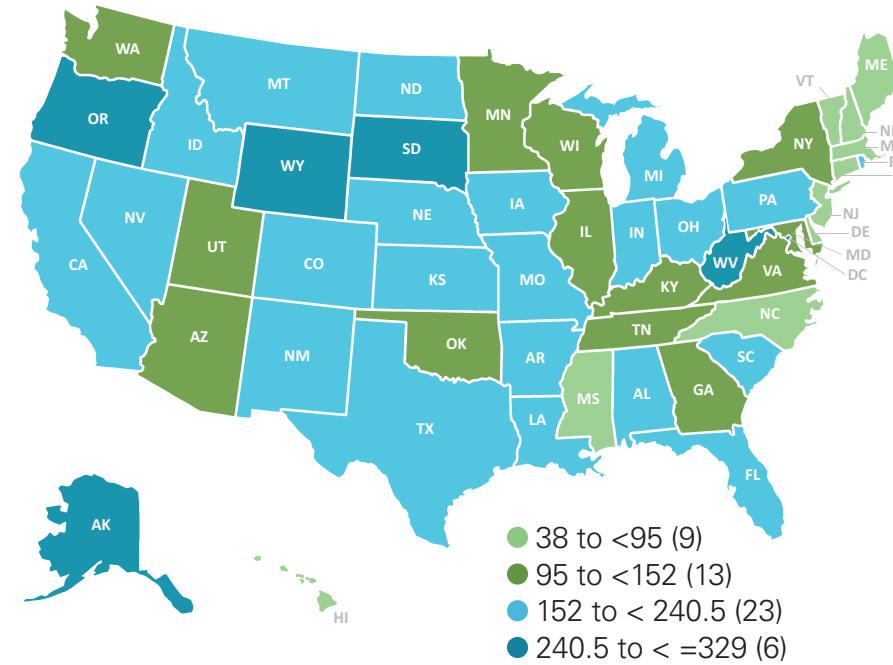
Percent change in people in prison by state, 2007 to 2017



Source: Vera Institute of Justice, *People in Prison, 2017* (May 2018)

While most states are experiencing a decline incarceration, West Virginia is not. From 2007 to 2017, West Virginia's prison population grew by 17.1 percent, the 5th-highest growth rate in the nation.

## West Virginia Has the Highest Rate of Juvenile Offenders in Custody in the Nation at 329 Per 100,000 Juveniles.



Source: OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book. Online. Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/corrections/qa08601.asp?qaDate=2015>. Released on June 01, 2017.

## Some Strategies to Reduce Incarceration in West Virginia

- Eliminating mandatory minimums and cutting back on long prison sentences and making bail policies more fair and less costly.
- Shifting resources to community-based prevention and treatment for substance abuse and mental health.
- Investing in interventions that promote youth development and promoting age-appropriate and evidence-based responses to delinquency.
- Examining and addressing policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequity at every stage of the justice system.
- Removing barriers that make it harder for individuals previously involved in the justice system to turn their lives around, such as state identification cards, eligibility for SNAP, professional licenses, and expungements.

Source: National Research Council. 2014. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/18613>.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



8 Capitol Street, Fourth Floor • Charleston, WV 25301  
304.720.8682 | [Info@wvpolicy.org](mailto:Info@wvpolicy.org)

[@WVCBP](https://twitter.com/WVCBP) • [www.wvpolicy.org](http://www.wvpolicy.org)