

DRUG WAR FACTS

Race, Prison and the Drug Laws

1. Of the 249,400 state prison inmates serving time for drug offenses at yearend 2004, 112,500 (45.1%) were black, 51,800 (20.8%) were Hispanic, and 65,900 (26.4%) were white.

Source: Sabol, William J., PhD, Couture, Heather, and Harrison, Paige M., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2006 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, December 2007), NCJ219416, p. 24, Appendix Table 9.

2. "The racially disproportionate nature of the war on drugs is not just devastating to black Americans. It contradicts faith in the principles of justice and equal protection of the laws that should be the bedrock of any constitutional democracy; it exposes and deepens the racial fault lines that continue to weaken the country and belies its promise as a land of equal opportunity; and it undermines faith among all races in the fairness and efficacy of the criminal justice system. Urgent action is needed, at both the state and federal level, to address this crisis for the American nation."

Source: Key Recommendations from Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs (Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, June 2000), from the web at <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/drugs/war/key-reco.htm>

3. "Our criminal laws, while facially neutral, are enforced in a manner that is massively and pervasively biased. The injustices of the criminal justice system threaten to render irrelevant fifty years of hard-fought civil rights progress."

Source: Welch, Ronald H. and Angulo, Carlos T., Justice On Trial: Racial Disparities in the American Criminal Justice System (Washington, DC: Leadership Conference on Civil Rights / Leadership Conference Education Fund, May 2000), p. v.

4. "When incarceration rates by State (excluding Federal inmates) are estimated separately by gender, race, and Hispanic origin, male rates are found to be 10 times higher than female rates; black rates 5-1/2 times higher than white rates; and Hispanic rates nearly 2 times higher than white rates (table 14)."

Source: Harrison, Paige M., & Beck, Allen J., PhD, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, May 2006) (NCJ213133), p. 10.

5. The incarceration rate in state or federal prison or jail for men was 1,384 per 100,000 residents, for women 134 per 100,000 residents. The rate for white men was 736 per 100,000, for black men 4,789 per 100,000, for Hispanic men 1,862 per 100,000. The rate for white women was 94 per 100,000, for black women 358 per 100,000, and for Hispanic women 152 per 100,000.

Source: Sabol, William J., PhD, Minton, Todd D., and Harrison, Paige M., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, June 2007), NCJ217675, p. 9, Table 14.

6. "At midyear 2006 more black men (836,800) were in custody in State or Federal prison or local jail than white men (718,100) or Hispanic men (426,900) (table 13). Black men comprised 41% of the more than 2 million men in custody, and black men age 20 to 29 comprised 15.5% of all men in custody on June 30, 2006.

"Relative to their numbers in the general population, about 4.8% of all black men were in custody at midyear 2006, compared to about 0.7% of white men and 1.9% of Hispanic men. Overall, black men

were incarcerated at 6.5 times the rate of white men. The incarceration rate for black men was highest among black men age 25 to 29. About 11.7% of black males in this age group were incarcerated on June 30, 2006. Across age groups black men were between 5.7 and 8.5 times more likely than white men to be incarcerated."

Source: Sabol, William J., PhD, Minton, Todd D., and Harrison, Paige M., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, June 2007), NCJ217675, p. 9.

7. "Among female offenders, more white women (95,300) than black women (68,800) or Hispanic women (32,400) were in custody. White women comprised 47% of the female population in custody at midyear 2006.

"In general females had a lower incarceration rate than males. White females had a lower incarceration rate (94 per 100,000 white women) than black females (358 per 100,000 black women) and Hispanic females (152 per 100,000 Hispanic women). The overall incarceration rate for black women was 3.8 times the rate for white women (table 14). Hispanic women were 1.6 times more likely than white women to be incarcerated. Across age groups black women were incarcerated between 2.8 and 4.3 times the rate of white women."

Source: Sabol, William J., PhD, Minton, Todd D., and Harrison, Paige M., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, June 2007), NCJ217675, p. 9.

8. According to the US Census Bureau, the US population in 2000 was 281,421,906. Of that, 194,552,774 (69.1%) were white; 33,947,837 (12.1%) were black; and 35,305,818 (12.5%) were of Hispanic origin. Additionally, 2,068,883 (0.7%) were Native American, and 10,123,169 (3.8%) were Asian.

Source: US Census Bureau, Department of Commerce, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File for states, Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin for the United States: 2000 (PHC-T-a) Table 1, from the web at <http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-t1/tab01.txt>, last accessed September 8, 2001.

9. "Offense distributions differed between sentenced male and female State prisoners. More than half of males (53%) were sentenced for violent offenses, compared to 34% of females. Among State prisoners, sentenced females were more likely than sentenced males to be sentenced for property (31% vs. 20%) and drug offenses (29% vs. 19%).

"There were also differences in offense distributions at yearend 2004 by race and Hispanic origin. A majority of black (53%) and Hispanic (54%) prisoners were sentenced for violent offenses, compared to about half (50%) of white prisoners. Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to be sentenced for drug offenses (23% of blacks, 21% of Hispanics, and 15% of whites). Whites were more likely (26%) than blacks (18%) or Hispanics (18%) to be sentenced for property offenses."

Source: Sabol, William J., PhD, Couture, Heather, and Harrison, Paige M., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2006 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, December 2007), NCJ219416, p. 8.

10. Regarding State prison population growth from 1990 through 2000, the US Dept. of Justice reports, "Overall, the increasing number of drug offenses accounted for 27% of the total growth among black inmates, 7% of the total growth among Hispanic inmates, and 15% of the growth among white inmates (table 19)."

Source: Harrison, Paige M. & Allen J. Beck, PhD, US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2001 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, July 2002), p. 13.

11. According to the federal Household Survey, "most current illicit drug users are white. There were an estimated 9.9 million whites (72 percent of all users), 2.0 million blacks (15 percent), and 1.4 million Hispanics (10 percent) who were current illicit drug users in 1998." And yet, blacks constitute 36.8% of those arrested for drug violations, over 42% of those in federal prisons for drug violations. African-Americans comprise almost 58% of those in state prisons for drug felonies; Hispanics account for 20.7%.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse: Summary Report 1998 (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999), p. 13; Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1998 (Washington DC: US Department of Justice, August 1999), p. 343, Table 4.10, p. 435, Table 5.48, and p. 505, Table 6.52; Beck, Allen J., Ph.D. and Mumola, Christopher J., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 1998 (Washington DC: US Department of Justice, August 1999), p. 10, Table 16; Beck, Allen J., PhD, and Paige M. Harrison, US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, August 2001), p. 11, Table 16.

12. Among persons convicted of drug felonies in state courts, whites were less likely than African-Americans to be sent to prison. Thirty-three percent (33%) of convicted white defendants received a prison sentence, while 51% of African-American defendants received prison sentences. It should also be noted that Hispanic felons are included in both demographic groups rather than being tracked separately so no separate statistic is available.

Source: Durose, Matthew R., and Langan, Patrick A., Bureau of Justice Statistics, State Court Sentencing of Convicted Felons, 1998 Statistical Tables (Washington DC: US Department of Justice, December 2001), Table 25, available on the web at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/scsc98st.htm>, last accessed December 21, 2001.

13. At the start of the 1990s, the U.S. had more Black men (between the ages of 20 and 29) under the control of the nation's criminal justice system than the total number in college. This and other factors have led some scholars to conclude that, "crime control policies are a major contributor to the disruption of the family, the prevalence of single parent families, and children raised without a father in the ghetto, and the inability of people to get the jobs still available."

Source: Craig Haney, Ph.D., and Philip Zimbardo, Ph.D., "The Past and Future of U.S. Prison Policy: Twenty-five Years After the Stanford Prison Experiment," American Psychologist, Vol. 53, No. 7 (July 1998), p. 716.

14. "Since 1997, 16 states have implemented reforms to their felony disenfranchisement policies
 "These reforms have resulted in the restoration of voting rights to an estimated 621,400 persons
 "By 2004, the total number of people disenfranchised due to a felony conviction had risen to 5.3 million
 "Among those disenfranchised, 74% are currently living in the community
 "In 2004, 1 in 12 African Americans was disenfranchised because of a felony conviction, a rate nearly five times that of non-African Americans
 "Voting is linked with reduced recidivism; one study shows that 27 percent of non-voters were rearrested, compared with 12 percent of voters"

Source: King, Ryan S., "A Decade of Reform: Felony Disenfranchisement Policy in the United States" (Washington, DC: Sentencing Project, 2006), p. 2.

15. "Thirteen percent of all adult black men -- 1.4 million -- are disenfranchised, representing one-third of the total disenfranchised population and reflecting a rate of disenfranchisement that is seven times the national average. Election voting statistics offer an approximation of the political importance of black disenfranchisement: 1.4 million black men are disenfranchised compared to 4.6 million black men who voted in 1996."

Source: Fellner, Jamie and Mauer, Marc, "Losing the Vote: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement Laws in the United States" (Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch & The Sentencing Project, 1998), p. 8. Election statistics cited are from the US Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1996" (p20-504), July 1998.

16. One in three black men between the ages of 20 and 29 years old is under correctional supervision or control.

Source: Mauer, M. & Huling, T., Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later (Washington DC: The Sentencing Project, 1995).

17. "In 2001, the chances of going to prison were highest among black males (32.2%) and Hispanic males

(17.2%) and lowest among white males (5.9%). The lifetime chances of going to prison among black females (5.6%) were nearly as high as for white males. Hispanic females (2.2%) and white females (0.9%) had much lower chances of going to prison."

Source: Bonczar, Thomas P., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prevalence of Imprisonment in the US Population, 1974-2001," NCJ197976 (Washington DC: US Department of Justice, August 2003), p. 8.

18. In 1986, before mandatory minimums for crack offenses became effective, the average federal drug offense sentence for blacks was 11% higher than for whites. Four years later following the implementation of harsher drug sentencing laws, the average federal drug offense sentence was 49% higher for blacks.

Source: Meierhoefer, B. S., The General Effect of Mandatory Minimum Prison Terms: A Longitudinal Study of Federal Sentences Imposed (Washington DC: Federal Judicial Center, 1992), p. 20.

19. Regardless of similar or equal levels of illicit drug use during pregnancy, black women are 10 times more likely than white women to be reported to child welfare agencies for prenatal drug use.

Source: Neuspiel, D.R., "Racism and Perinatal Addiction," Ethnicity and Disease, 6: 47-55 (1996); Chasnoff, I.J., Landress, H.J., & Barrett, M.E., "The Prevalence of Illicit-Drug or Alcohol Use during Pregnancy and Discrepancies in Mandatory Reporting in Pinellas County, Florida," New England Journal of Medicine, 322: 1202-1206 (1990).

20. Due to harsh new sentencing guidelines, such as 'three-strikes, you're out,' "a disproportionate number of young Black and Hispanic men are likely to be imprisoned for life under scenarios in which they are guilty of little more than a history of untreated addiction and several prior drug-related offenses... States will absorb the staggering cost of not only constructing additional prisons to accommodate increasing numbers of prisoners who will never be released but also warehousing them into old age."

Source: Craig Haney, Ph.D., and Philip Zimbardo, Ph.D., "The Past and Future of U.S. Prison Policy: Twenty-five Years After the Stanford Prison Experiment," American Psychologist, Vol. 53, No. 7 (July 1998), p. 718.

For a more complete perspective, read Drug War Facts sections on [Alcohol](#), [Civil and Human Rights](#), [Drug Use Estimates](#), [Economics](#), [Prisons, Jails & Probation - Overview](#), [Prisons & Drug Offenders](#), [Race & HIV/AIDS](#), and [Women](#).

Home	Common Sense for Drug Policy	Research Links and Materials for Journalists and Policy Makers	Media Awareness Project News Archive	Public Education and Advertising Campaign
Drug War Distortions	Effective National Drug Control Strategy	Put a Drug War Facts banner on YOUR site	Links to Drug and Criminal Policy Organizations	Real-Time Drug War Clock

Copyright © 2000-2005, [Common Sense for Drug Policy](#)

Updated: Wednesday, 02-Jan-2008 10:33:00 PST ~ Accessed: 216189 times