

# Private Prisons in the United States

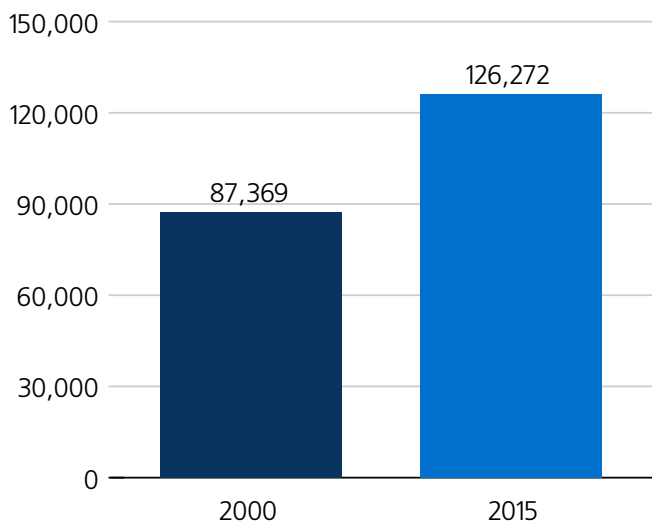
**Private prisons in the United States incarcerated 126,272 people in 2015, representing 8% of the total state and federal prison population. Since 2000, the number of people housed in private prisons has increased 45%.**

States show significant variation in their use of private correctional facilities. For example, New Mexico and Montana incarcerate over 40% of their prison populations in private facilities, while states such as Illinois and New York do not employ for-profit prisons. Data compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) show that in 2015, 28 states and the federal government incarcerated people in private facilities run by corporations including GEO Group, Core Civic (formerly Corrections Corporation of America), and Management and Training Corporation.

According to BJS data, 21 of the states with private prison contracts incarcerate more than 500 people in for-profit prisons. Texas, the first state to adopt private prisons in 1985, incarcerated the largest number of people under state jurisdiction, 14,293.

Since 2000, the number of people in private prisons has increased 45%, compared to an overall rise in the prison population of 10%. In five states, the private prison population has increased 100% or more during this

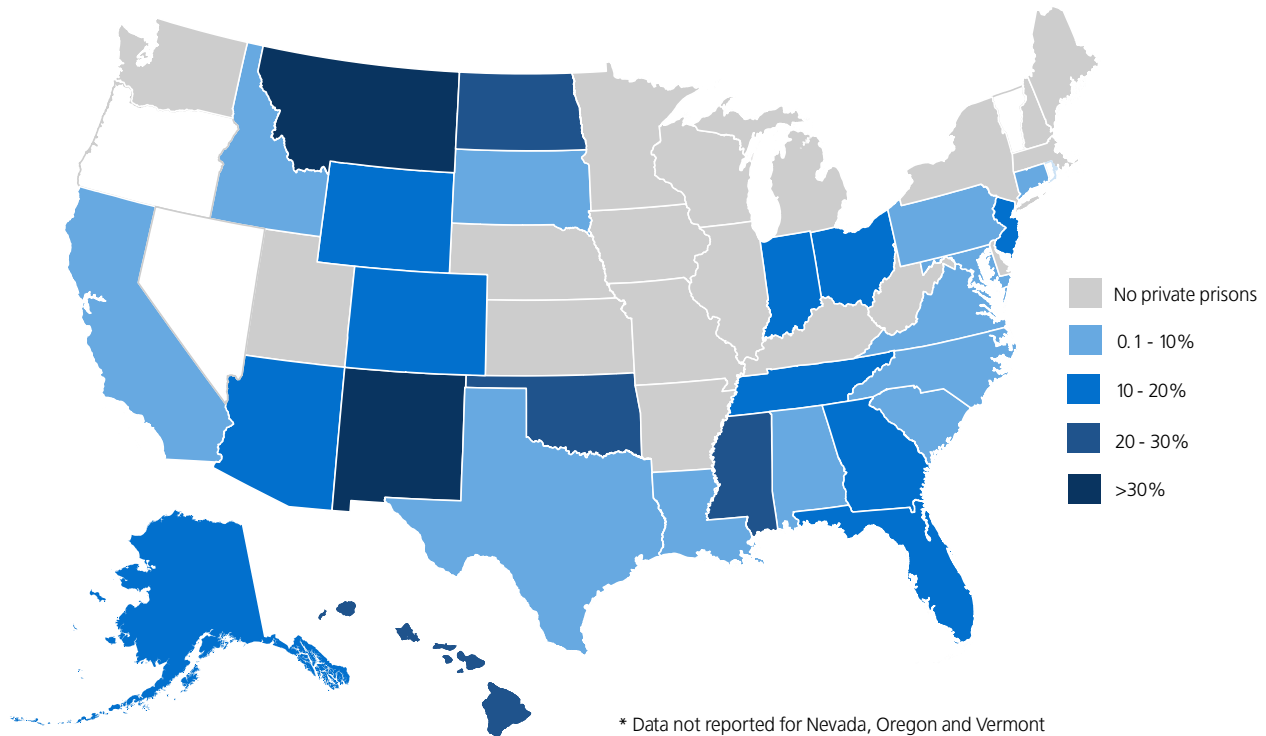
## Private prison population, 2000 and 2015



## Incarceration in private prisons

Jurisdiction	2000	2015	% private 2015	% change 2000-2015
Alabama	0	398	1.3	*
Alaska	1,383	593	11.1	-42.9
Arizona	1,430	6,471	15.1	352.5
Arkansas	1,540	0	0	-100
California	4,547	2,195	1.7	-48.3
Colorado	/	3,987	19.8	/
Connecticut	0	524	3.3	*
Delaware	0	0	0	
Florida	3,912	12,487	12.3	219.2
Georgia	3,746	7,953	15.2	112.3
Hawaii	1,187	1,340	22.8	12.9
Idaho	1,162	545	6.8	-46.9
Illinois	0	0	0	
Indiana	991	4,204	15.4	324.2
Iowa	0	0	0	
Kansas	0	0	0	
Kentucky	1,268	0	0	-100
Louisiana	3,068	3,152	8.7	2.7
Maine	11	0	0	-100
Maryland	127	30	0.1	-76.4
Massachusetts	0	0	0	
Michigan	449	0	0	-100
Minnesota	0	0	0	
Mississippi	3,230	3,946	20.9	22.2
Missouri	0	0	0	
Montana	986	1,490	40.4	51.1
Nebraska	0	0	0	
Nevada	508	/	/	/
New Hampshire	0	0	0	
New Jersey	2,498	2,863	14	14.6
New Mexico	2,155	3,026	42.2	40.4
New York	0	0	0	
North Carolina	330	29	0.1	-91.2
North Dakota	96	427	23.8	344.8
Ohio	1,918	6,050	11.6	12.7
Oklahoma	6,931	7,446	26.1	7.4
Oregon	0	/	/	/
Pennsylvania	0	605	1.2	*
Rhode Island	0	0	0	
South Carolina	0	14	0.1	*
South Dakota	45	22	0.6	-48.9
Tennessee	3,510	5,172	18.4	47.4
Texas	13,985	14,293	8.7	2.2
Utah	208	0	0	-100
Vermont	0	/	/	/
Virginia	1,571	1,568	4.1	-0.2
Washington	0	0	0	
West Virginia	0	0	0	
Wisconsin	4,337	0	0	-100
Wyoming	275	267	11	-3
Federal	15,524	34,934	17.8	125.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,369</b>	<b>126,272</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>44.5</b>

\* Use of private prisons implemented after 2000; / Data not reported

**Proportion of incarcerated population in private prisons, 2015**


period. The federal prison system experienced a 125% increase in use of private prisons since 2000 reaching 34,934 people in private facilities in 2015.

Despite the significant growth in private prisons since 2000, the number of people housed in these facilities has declined 8% since reaching a national peak population of 137,220 in 2012. Since 2000 six states — Arkansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Utah and Wisconsin — have eliminated their use of private prisons due to concerns about safety and cost-cutting. An additional six states saw reductions of 40% or more in the use of private prisons during this period.

At the federal level, a 2016 Obama Administration policy shift to reduce reliance and ultimately phase

out private prison contracts was reversed by Attorney General Jeff Sessions in February 2017. The reversal took place despite significant declines in the federal prison population and a scathing report by the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General that found federally contracted prisons had more safety and security incidents than public prisons. Currently, the federal Bureau of Prisons maintains the nation’s highest number of people managed under private prison custody. Changes in policy at the Department of Justice in 2017 that are likely to increase sentence length and expand prosecutions for drug and immigration offenses may contribute to the expansion of private facility contracting.

**Source:** *Prisoners Series* (2015, 2000), Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Private prisons are defined as “private facilities run by private prison corporations whose services and beds are contracted out by state governments or the Federal Bureau of Prisons.”