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Prisoners in 2015

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Print release | Full reports: Correctional Populations | Prisoners | Jails	

U.S. CORRECTIONAL POPULATION AT LOWEST LEVEL SINCE 2002

WASHINGTON – An estimated 6,741,400 persons were supervised by adult correctional systems in the United States at yearend 2015, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. The population decreased 1.7 percent during 2015, dropping below 6.8 million for the first time since 2002. At yearend 2015, about 1 in 37 adults (or 2.7 percent of all adults) in the United States was under some form of correctional supervision, the lowest rate since 1994.

Offenders supervised in the community on either probation (3,789,800) or parole (870,500) continued to account for most of the U.S. correctional population in 2015. From 2014 to 2015,

the community supervision population decreased 1.3 percent, which was due to a drop in the probation population (down 2.0 percent). The parole population increased by 1.5 percent during the year.

Probation is a court-ordered period of correctional supervision in the community, generally as an alternative to incarceration. Parole is a period of conditional supervised release in the community following a prison term.

At yearend 2015, an estimated 2,173,800 persons were either under the jurisdiction of state or federal prisons or in the custody of local jails in the United States, down about 51,300 persons from yearend 2014. This was the largest decline in the incarcerated population since it first decreased in 2009.

From 2014 to 2015, 40 percent of the decline in the U.S. prison population (down 35,500) was due to a decrease in the number of federal prisoners. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) population decreased by 7 percent (down 14,100 inmates) during the period.

The state prison population decreased by almost 2 percent (21,400 inmates) from 2014 to 2015. Twenty-nine states recorded a decrease in the total number of prisoners under their jurisdiction. Also, fewer admissions and more releases from state and federal prisons contributed to the overall decrease in the prison population. State and federal prisons admitted 608,300 persons in 2015, which was 17,800 fewer than in 2014. They released 641,000 persons in 2015, which was 4,700 more than in 2014.

An estimated 721,300 inmates were confined in county and city jails on an average day in 2015, down from a peak of 776,600 inmates on an average day in 2008. In 2015, there were 10.9 million admissions to jails. From 2008 to 2015, the volume of admissions to jails steadily declined. The number of admissions to jails in 2015 was nearly 15 times the size of the average daily population in 2015.

BJS also updated its dynamic online Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool with 2015 data on prisoners. The data tool allows the media, stakeholders and other BJS website users to analyze prisoner data by yearend populations, admissions, releases and many other prisoner characteristics.

Correctional Populations in the United States, 2015 (*NCJ 250374*) was written by BJS statisticians Danielle Kaeble and Lauren Glaze. *Jail Inmates in 2015* (*NCJ 250394*) was written by BJS statisticians Todd D. Minton and Zhen Zeng. *Prisoners in 2015* (*NCJ 250229*) was

written by BJS statistician E. Ann Carson and BJS intern Elizabeth Anderson. The online data tool, *Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool - Prisoners*, was created by E. Ann Carson of BJS.

The reports, data tool, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at https://www.bjs.gov/.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at http://www.ojp.gov.

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