



Fewer People With HIV in U.S. Prisons

The number has declined for 23 consecutive years.

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At the end of 2021, fewer people in state and federal prisons were living with HIV than at the end of the previous year. The decline, of about 2%, represents the 23rd consecutive year that the number has decreased, according to a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the Department of Justice.

Titled “HIV in Prisons, 2021,” the report also includes data on HIV testing. Highlights from the report include:

- At year-end 2021, an estimated 11,810 persons with HIV were in the custody of state and federal correctional authorities, down from 12,060 in 2020.
- At year-end 2021, about 1.1% of persons—1.2% of males and 0.9% of females—in state and federal prison were living with HIV.
- In 2021, of the 50 jurisdictions reporting their HIV testing practices, 16 jurisdictions (which accounted for 40% of prison admissions) conducted mandatory HIV testing during intake.
- In 2021, a total of 18 jurisdictions offered HIV tests during routine medical exams of persons in custody, up from 11 in 2017.

A total of 1,032,130 people were in custody in state and federal correctional facilities in 2021, according to the report. Of those, 962,156 were male and 69,974 were female. The total number of people in custody declined each year since 2017, the earliest year included in the report, when the total number of people in custody was 1,279,259.

The 2021 decrease in prisoners living with HIV “followed the largest 1-year decline (down 15% between 2019 and 2020, largely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) since data collection began in 1991,” wrote the study authors. They added, “The population of state and federal prisoners living with HIV has fallen for 23 straight years from its peak of 25,980 in 1998, largely due to a roughly 4% average annual decrease in state prisoners with HIV.”

