In 1971 President Richard Nixon declared a “War On Drugs”.


1984: Sentencing Reform Act (SRA)
America's Racial Demographic

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
DP-1: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Other
Racial Demographic: America's Prison Population 2008

- Black: 38%
- White: 34%
- Hispanic: 20%
- Other: 8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bulletin NCJ 228417 - Prisoners in 2008
Federal Prisoners, by Offense - 2010

Source: US Bureau of Prisons Data, Feb 2010

- Drugs
  - Property
  - Other

- Immigration
- Violent
Federal Prison Population: 1984 - 2010

Note: Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) passed 1984

Sources: US Bureau of Prisons, US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Federal Prisoner Population 1914 - 2010

Sources: US Bureau of Prisons, US Bureau of Justice Statistics, Cato Institute's History of Prohibition

1920 - 1933: Alcohol Prohibition
1971: President Nixon declares "War On Drugs"
1984: Sentencing Reform Act (SRA)
Incarcerated Americans: 1984-2008

Note: Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) passed 1984

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics
United States is the World's Leading Jailer

Prisoners per 100,000 Population - 2008

The World's Leading Jailers

Prisoners of the World - 2008

Federal Drug Control Budget (in billions)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice

Note: As of 2004, ONDCP has changed its budgetary reporting practices, and no longer includes costs of enforcement and incarceration as part of its 'Federal Drug Control Budget'.
Prisoners per 100,000 Population in America: 1984 - 2008

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics

Note: Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) passed 1984
America's Prisoners per 100,000 Population, by Race - 2008

% of Illicit Drug Users in America

% of Drug War Prisoners in America

*Source: SAMHSA 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse

**Source: The Sentencing Project

Women are the single fastest growing demographic in U.S. prisons

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics
Drug Sellers By Race
(Percent, based on survey response)

Source: 2004 National Survey on Drug Use & Health, U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
U. S. Correctional Population

Source: Probation and Parole in the United States, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Total US Correctional Population, Year-End 2008: 7,523,365, or 1 in every 31 American adults
Changes in State Spending 1985 – 2004

Source: The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America’s Prison Expansion from The Urban Institute, 2004
In addition to the prisons represented here, the United States has more than 3,000 jails holding people awaiting trial or serving short sentences. Overall, the United States incarcerated over 2 million people (one in every 143 U.S. residents) in prisons and jails at year-end 2000.

People in state and federal prisons: 1,312,354. Rate per 100,000 U.S. residents: 478

Year Prison Opened:  
- 1778 - 1900  
- 1901 - 1940  
- 1941 - 1980  
- 1981 - 2000

Designed by Rose Heyer for PrisonersoftheCensus.org