



Public Welfare
Foundation

Mississippi by the Numbers:
A Comprehensive Analysis of
Criminal Justice Data

January 2026

Crime & Justice Institute

The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI), a division of Community Resources for Justice, bridges the gap between research and practice with data-driven solutions that drive bold, transformative improvements in adult and youth justice systems. With a reputation built over many decades for innovative thinking, a client-centered approach, and impartial analysis, CJI assists agency leaders and practitioners in developing and implementing effective policies that achieve better outcomes and build stronger, safer communities. CJI works with local, state, tribal, and national justice organizations to provide nonpartisan policy analysis, implementation consulting, capacity-building assistance, and research services to advance evidence-based practices and create systems-level change.

To learn more about CJI's work, please visit cjinstitute.org or [contact *cjiconnect@cjinstitute.org*](mailto:cjiconnect@cjinstitute.org).

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Mississippi by the Numbers: Executive Summary

In 2023, Mississippi had the highest incarceration rate in the nation with 652 per 100,000 people incarcerated. Mississippi has maintained this elevated, costly level of incarceration for years despite a decade of criminal justice reforms and a state crime rate below the national average. These conflicting trends raise questions about what is driving the state's adult justice system to incarcerate so many. Currently answers to these questions are hard to find, as Mississippi's publicly available data is fragmented, lacks uniformity, and is incomplete with gaps in sources and years. As a result, **there is no single resource where this information has been compiled, analyzed, and presented systematically that enables stakeholders and policy leaders to make informed decisions about their system.**

Public Welfare Foundation (PWF) commissioned the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI), a division of Community Resources for Justice, to conduct an analysis of available data and compile a report to provide a clearer, more connected view of the state's adult criminal justice system. However, the limitations inherent to Mississippi's data, or lack thereof, leave a number of questions unanswered and reinforce the need for investment in building the state's data capacity and infrastructure. Despite these constraints, CJI was able to identify several key findings about the state's criminal justice system to serve as a resource for data-driven decision-making. Notably, this report focuses only on the state's adult system and does not dive into youth justice data or practices that inherently contribute to the state's overall criminal justice landscape.

To conduct this assessment, CJI analyzed publicly available data from federal sources such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, state sources such as the Mississippi Department of Corrections, and nonprofits, such as the Public Safety Lab's Jail Data Initiative and FWD.us. This report reviews ten years of data and the lookback period is 2013-2023, when possible, due to time lags in data availability. To supplement the quantitative analysis and fill information gaps, CJI conducted qualitative interviews with stakeholders across the state, including judges, attorneys, law enforcement, corrections staff, directly-impacted individuals, and reform advocates, to gain a deeper understanding of the data findings and the context surrounding them.

From this analysis, CJI identified several key findings in Mississippi's criminal justice system, including:

- 1. Mississippi has the highest incarceration rate in the country, driven by nonviolent prisons admissions.**
- 2. People are staying longer in prison largely due to longer sentences and low parole grant rates.**
- 3. Racial disparities are rampant across the state's criminal justice system.**
- 4. Recidivism is increasing, driven primarily by growing admissions for parole violations.ⁱ**
- 5. Unmet mental health and substance use needs are contributing to unnecessary criminal justice system involvement.**
- 6. There is a lack of comprehensive data reporting and data quality is inconsistent.**

These findings highlight the need for state leaders to adopt evidence-based, data-driven strategies to effectively address the state's challenges.

ⁱ Defined as a 36-month return to prison by the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force

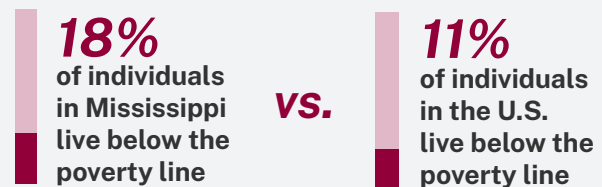
Socioeconomic Trends

Before diving into the specific criminal justice system data over the past decade, it is important to identify broader socioeconomic trends within the state to understand their potential impact on the adult criminal justice system. Since 2014, Mississippi has undergone a series of economic, social, and policy shifts that have reshaped the state's landscape. While there have been notable improvements in areas such as education, household income, and state budgeting, persistent challenges remain, including high poverty rates, poor healthcare outcomes, and increasing behavioral health needs. Recent developments, including increased investments in the criminal justice system and its infrastructure, highlight the complex and evolving landscape of Mississippi.

Mississippi has experienced a slight population shift over the past decade, with a 1% decline from approximately 2.99 million people in 2013, to 2.94 million in 2023.² With this decline came small shifts in demographics. The state saw incremental increases in the White and Asian populations, each up about a half percentage point; and greater increases in the Native American and Hispanic populations, up by about one percentage point each.³ While these populations increased, the Black population declined by about one percentage point.⁴ Mississippi also experienced a shift toward an older population with those aged 65 and older rising 3.6 percentage points and youth under 18 declining almost 2 percentage points from 2013.⁵ The population composition by sex remained largely the same during this period, with the 48.5% male and 51.5% female in 2023.⁶ The United States Census Bureau attributes this recent population decline to outmigration and experiencing more deaths than births.⁷

Notwithstanding the population getting smaller and older, Mississippi saw economic growth over the past decade, with improvements in household income and unemployment rates. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Mississippi's gross domestic product (GDP) increased 47%, from approximately \$103 billion in 2013 to \$151 billion in 2023, indicating steady economic growth.⁸ Looking at other economic indicators, the median household income rose 43% from \$37,963 to \$54,203, reflecting inflation-adjusted wage growth, and the unemployment rate dropped significantly from 9.8% in 2013 to 4.3% in 2023, highlighting improvements in the labor market.^{9,10} Sources indicate this growth stems largely from

manufacturing and real estate.¹¹ Despite these gains, Mississippi's economic trends are still lower than its neighboring states. It's GDP is the lowest per capita in the country, and the median household income is \$6,000 lower than the average of neighboring states.¹² Additionally, its unemployment rate is still the second highest in the region, and only 73% of those between ages 20 and 64 participate in the labor force, which is lower than the national average of 80%.^{13,14} Finally, the state's poverty rate, while improving, is still high. The percentage of people below poverty declined from 24% in 2013 to 18% in 2023, though it remains well above the national average of 11.1%.^{15,16}

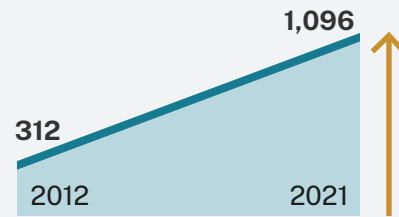


Mirroring the state's economic progress, Mississippi has made notable strides in education in recent years. According to the 2024 Kids Count Data Book by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the state improved its education ranking to 30th in the nation, marking its highest position ever.^{17,18,19} This progress is attributed to gains in early literacy and math proficiency, particularly among fourth-grade students.²⁰ However, despite these improvements, Mississippi still faces challenges in higher education attainment, ranking as the second least-higher educated state in the country in 2024.²¹

Despite the gains made in economic growth and education, Mississippi continues to confront significant challenges in its healthcare system.²² Currently, the state **ranks last in the country in overall health system performance.**²³ Particularly the state struggles in the areas of preventative care for children, premature deaths for treatable causes, and infant mortality.²⁴ Factors contributing to these issues include limited access to care and affordability, poor prevention and treatment, firearm deaths, obesity, and poor racial health equity.²⁵

The state's lack of access to care is significant given the increased prevalence in behavioral health needs over the past decade. Mississippi saw substance use disorders (SUD) increase by 110% over the last 10 years — from 8% in 2013 to 17% in 2022.^{26,27} This equates to almost one in five adult Mississippians having an SUD.²⁸ Further, data show, that as of 2022, 72% of those in need of substance use disorder treatment have not received it in the past year.²⁹ This lack of treatment is further evidenced by the increase in overdose deaths the state experienced. Between 2012 and 2021, **the number of overdose deaths reported in Mississippi more than tripled – from 312 to 1,096, an increase of 251%.** This accounts for increases across all types of drug related deaths, with the greatest number of deaths related to opioids (n=555).^{30,31} While the state is expected to receive \$370 million from the Opioid Settlement Plan, it has not yet determined how the funds will be distributed.³²

Since 2012, the number of overdose deaths reported in MS has more than tripled.



Similar to the growth in substance use disorders across the state, data show more Mississippians having a mental health need over the past decade. **The number of Mississippians with a mental illness grew 15% over the past decade.**^{33,34} The prevalence of mental health conditions in Mississippi is similar to the national average (22% and 23%, respectively), with 19% of Mississippi residents receiving mental health treatment in the last year compared to 22% nationally.^{35,36} Similar to those with a substance use disorder noted above, data shows individuals are not receiving the treatment they need. **In 2021, approximately 119,000 Mississippians went without mental health treatment that needed it.**³⁷ Interviews indicate that this lack of treatment is driven by high costs of healthcare and limited opportunities for treatment across the rural areas of the state. Fifty-four percent of Mississippi's population is considered rural, with **more than half of the state's doctors practicing in four urban areas.**³⁸

Amidst these shifts in the socioeconomic landscape and persistent challenges in healthcare access and education, Mississippi's state budget has grown overall, both in revenue and in appropriations. Between fiscal year (FY) 2020 and FY 2025, Mississippi's total state budget increased by approximately \$9.47 billion, rising from \$21.08 billion in FY 2020 to \$31.65 billion in FY 2025 — an increase of over 50%.^{39,40} This growth is largely driven by state funding, as the share of federal funding as a percentage of the total budget decreased slightly, from 44.5% in FY 2020 to 41.7% in FY 2025.^{41,42} The state's revenue,

1 in 5



Mississippians are struggling with an SUD — more than double the prevalence reported a decade ago

generated from a combination of taxes, fees, and business, grew from \$5.82 billion in 2020 to \$7.6 billion in 2025.⁴³ However, this revenue growth is expected to change over the next decade with the enactment of the “Build Up Mississippi Act” in 2025 that reduces income tax to 3% by 2030, with future reductions as low as .85% set to occur if certain fiscal benchmarks are met, and dropping sales tax to 5% from 7%.⁴⁴

This growth is mirrored in the state’s investment in its corrections system. From FY 2020 to FY 2025, the total budget for the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) increased by 35.63%, up \$120,562,688.^{45,46} The majority of this is driven by general fund appropriations, with increases of nearly \$7.5 million in community corrections, over \$2.5 million in reimbursements for housing individuals in local jails, and over \$33.5 million for medical services.⁴⁷

Looking more broadly at other areas within the criminal justice system, over the same time period, Mississippi’s investment in its courts grew as well. The Supreme Court budget, which includes the Office of Supreme Court Services,

Administrative Office of Courts, Court of Appeals, and trial judges, saw an increase of 22.2%, from \$83,571,065 to \$102,146,825.⁴⁸ This includes a budget increase of 23.8% for the state attorneys, from \$25,885,632 to \$32,041,563 and a 41% increase for public defenders, up from \$3,271,486 in FY 2020 to \$4,614,947 in FY 2025; of note, this budget is nearly seven times smaller than that of the state attorneys.⁴⁹ Lastly, Mississippi’s military, police, and veterans affairs budget grew 16%, from \$901,649,753 in FY 2020 to \$1,046,789,178 in FY 2025.⁵⁰

In sum, Mississippi has experienced a complex mix of progress and persistent challenges across various socioeconomic fronts. **The state has seen steady economic growth, improvements in household income, made gains in education outcomes, and reduced its unemployment rate. However, healthcare remains a critical issue,** with Mississippi ranking last nationally in overall health system performance and increasing rates of substance use disorders, mental illness, and overdose deaths over the past decade, with significant numbers not receiving treatment.

Justice Policy Efforts in the Past Decade

Similar to the value of examining Mississippi’s socioeconomic trends to understand their impact on the state’s criminal justice system, it is also essential to review recent policy changes. The following section provides a review of high-level state policy changes that occurred over the past decade to identify how they may influence the state’s criminal justice data trends.

In 2014, Mississippi enacted House Bill (HB) 585 in response to the state’s escalating prison population and associated costs.⁵¹ Governor Phil Bryant signed the legislation based on recommendations from the Corrections and Criminal Justice Task Force, which was supported by a Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) grant.⁵² The Task Force examined drivers of Mississippi’s prison population growth, up 17% over the prior decade, and found it was driven by a combination of factors including: (1) a reliance on incarceration for nonviolent offenses; (2) recidivism due to

community supervision violations; (3) increasing sentence lengths; and (4) inconsistent parole grant rates.⁵³ The Task Force issued 19 recommendations that were ultimately included in HB 585.⁵⁴ The policies included:

- Reducing sentence lengths for property offenses and creating tiered penalties based on value and repeat behavior,
- Creating a mechanism for judges to sentence below the mandatory minimum for drug offenses,
- Limiting periods of incarceration for technical violations and creating Technical Violation Centers,

- Establishing case plans based on risk and needs assessments and reentry planning prior to release,
- Creating parole eligibility for nonviolent offenses at 25% of the sentence served, and
- Creating geriatric parole.⁵⁵

In 2018, the Mississippi legislature built on these reforms with HB 387 which focused on prohibiting incarceration for nonpayment of fines and fees.⁵⁶ The enacted bill required a determination of willfulness for nonpayment of fines and fees before sanctioning for nonpayment.⁵⁷ The bill additionally expanded parole eligibility for individuals after serving 25% of their sentence except those convicted of committing a crime of violence, drug trafficking, or habitual offenses.⁵⁸ Lastly, the bill fine-tuned the response to technical violations in HB 585, noting the limitations on incarceration apply after a revocation instead of a violation.⁵⁹

The state revisited parole policy again in 2021 with Senate Bill (SB) 2795. This law broadened parole eligibility further, expanding who is eligible.⁶⁰ Under SB 2795, individuals with certain violent convictions such as armed robbery and carjacking became eligible after serving 60% of their sentence.⁶¹ Distinctly, SB 2795 applied parole eligibility changes retroactively to convictions from mid-1995, meaning thousands more individuals became eligible for parole regardless of their conviction date, something HB 585 and HB 387 did not do.⁶²

Since 2021, the state has targeted more front-end policies. In 2023, SB 2298 focused on the state’s bail practices, prohibiting courts from setting financial conditions of release solely for detention purposes, establishing a presumption that financial bail be both necessary and reasonable to assure safety and appearance, and prohibiting the detention of individuals charged with misdemeanors solely due to inability to pay.⁶³ The state also enacted HB 1222 in 2023 focusing on deflection practices. The enacted legislation required each municipal and county law enforcement agency to provide mental health first-aid training and to have at least one crisis intervention trained officer by a certain date.⁶⁴ **These reforms reflect public sentiment toward the state’s criminal justice system, with recent polling showing that 81% of bipartisan Mississippi voters support criminal justice reform and over two-thirds believe the system needs a “complete overhaul” or “major changes” as of late 2023.**⁶⁵

Lastly, in 2025, several state leaders sought to enact policies undoing prior reforms, specifically seeking to extend incarceration periods. In SB 2323, leaders sought to repeal parole eligibility entirely and reduce the number of credits individuals could earn to 85% of their sentence for nonviolent offenses.⁶⁶ However, this bill, and others similar in nature, did not advance out of their respective committees, illustrating limited support for these repeal efforts.



Mississippi's Adult Justice System

Building on the broader context of population, budget, and behavioral health trends, as well as policy reforms outlined in the previous sections, the remainder of the report explores trends in Mississippi's adult criminal justice system using a data-driven approach. By examining key indicators such as crime and incarceration rates, court processing, prison population, and probation and parole trends, this section presents the landscape of the Mississippi criminal justice system using publicly available data.

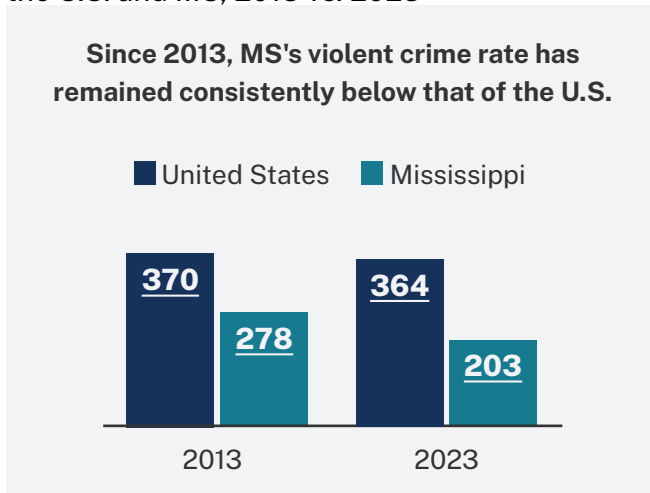
Crime Trends

Despite national trends, Mississippi's crime rates have continued to decline. Both violent and property crime rates have decreased over the last decade, falling more substantially than the national average.⁶⁷ This section examines violent and property crime rates in more depth.

Violent Crime Trends⁶⁸

To assess Mississippi's violent crime trends, CJI reviewed federal crime data. Compared to the national average, Mississippi has a lower violent crime rate. As of 2023, the most recent year Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) crime data were available, Mississippi's violent crime rate was 203 offenses per 100,000 people compared to a national rate of 364 per 100,000.⁶⁹ Moreover, Mississippi has experienced a more substantial decrease in violent crime rates than the national average since 2013; 27% versus 2%, respectively.⁷⁰ Mississippi's decrease was largely driven by a 74% decline in robbery since 2013.⁷¹

Figure 1: Violent Crime Rates Per 100,000 in the U.S. and MS, 2013 vs. 2023



While violent crime is decreasing, the state's homicide and murder rates are higher than the national average. Mississippi's murder rate at 6.9 per 100,000 is slightly higher than the national average of 5.7 per 100,000.⁷² Mississippi's homicide rate is significantly higher than the rest of the nation; 19.4 per 100,000 compared to an average of 7.5 per 100,000.⁷³

Defining Homicide vs. Murder

- ✓ **Homicide:**
inclusive of acts of killing without taking into consideration the specific circumstances nor intentions in the act. Therefore, homicide rates are more inclusive than murder rates.
- ✓ **Murder:**
refers to the intentional killing of another person with "malice aforethought," or malicious intent.

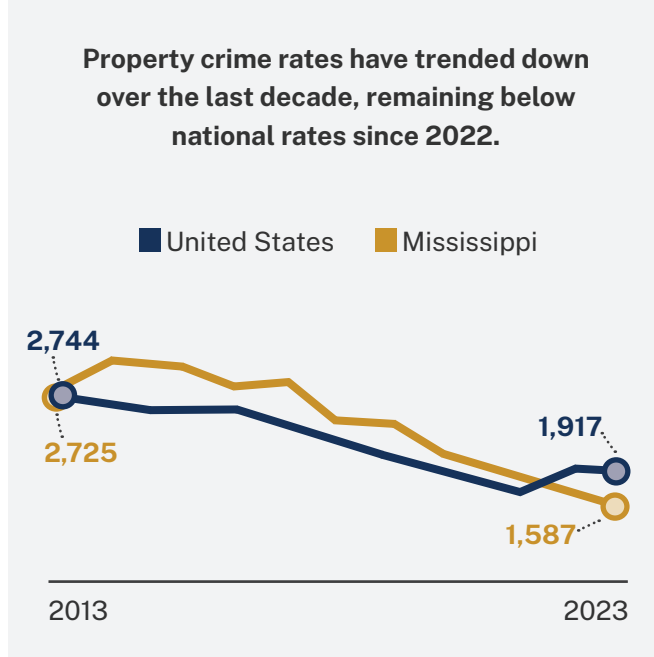
The state's high homicide rate is largely driven by homicides in the City of Jackson, Mississippi's largest city.⁷⁴ Jackson has one of the highest homicide rates in the country when comparing against cities with a population of at least 130,000 residents.⁷⁵ In 2024, the city recorded 111 homicides, with a per capita homicide rate of 77.24 per 100,000 people, which is significantly higher than the national average of 6.8 per 100,000.⁷⁶ This rate has been a concern for years, with the city experiencing a record-breaking 157 homicides in 2021, making it the highest per capita homicide rate in the nation at that time.⁷⁷ Experts cite the COVID-19 pandemic as well as an increase in gun

violence locally and nationally as the main drivers of this high homicide rate.⁷⁸ While still higher than the national average, this high rate has started to decline, dropping an estimated 6-7% between 2023 and 2024.⁷⁹

Property Crime Trends⁸⁰

Similarly, CJI examined federal data to understand state trends in property crime. While Mississippi has historically had higher property crime rates compared to the rest of the country, these rates have steadily declined and are now lower than the national average.⁸¹ As of 2023, the property crime rate in Mississippi was 1,587 offenses per 100,000 people, which is 19% lower than the national rate of 1,917 per 100,000.⁸² Property crime has decreased 42% over the last decade in Mississippi, compared to a 30% decrease nationally during the same period.⁸³ This continued decrease is noteworthy, given the recent spike in property crime rates across the country.

Figure 2: Property Crime Rates in the U.S. and MS per 100,000, 2013-2023

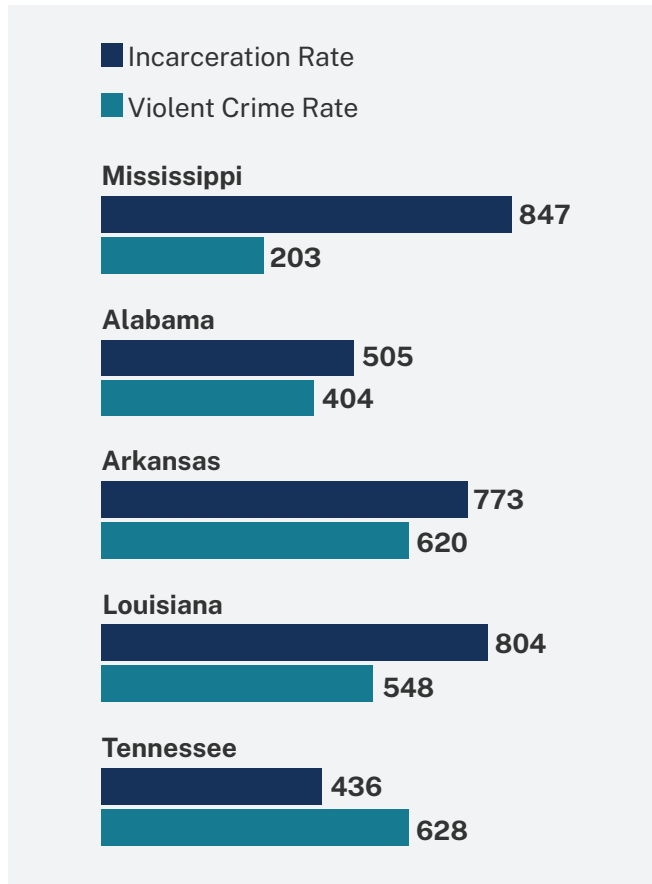


Looking at specific offenses, the decrease is driven by a decline in burglary and larceny theft, falling 63% and 38%, respectively, between 2013 and 2023.⁸⁴ While states across the country are struggling with increased incidents of retail theft, an analysis by Forbes found that Mississippi has 36% less retail theft than expected for its population size, ranking it third lowest nationally.⁸⁵ While these offenses are on the decline, motor vehicle theft has increased 29% in the state, which is in line with national trends, though still lower and with less growth than national averages.⁸⁶

Incarceration & Crime

While some seek to attribute Mississippi's low crime rate to its high incarceration rate, research suggests otherwise. Studies that have examined the relationship between incarceration and crime found that at best, a 10% increase in the incarceration rate results in only a 2-4% decrease in crime.⁸⁷ Instead, researchers found factors such as the decline of the crack cocaine market, technological advances, improvements in the economy, and changes in policing as more significant contributors to crime reduction.⁸⁸ Additional evidence supporting a limited relationship between incarceration and crime can be seen by comparing Mississippi's incarceration and crime rates to those of neighboring states. While Mississippi has a high incarceration rate and a lower-than-national-average violent crime rate, Louisiana had both one of the highest incarceration rates in the country in 2023, second only to Mississippi, and the fifth-highest violent crime rate in the country – 40% higher than the national average.⁸⁹ Conversely, Tennessee had the highest violent crime rate among the neighboring states, three times that of Mississippi in 2023, and yet the lowest incarceration rate.⁹⁰ These differences further illustrate the research findings that other factors are more consequential to crime than incarceration.

Figure 3: Neighboring State Incarceration Rate and Crime Rate Comparison per 100,000, 2023



for service involving individuals in a behavioral health crisis. In recent years, the state has expanded resources for law enforcement to use when interacting with an individual in a behavioral health crisis. This includes establishing Mobile Crisis Response Teams staffed with licensed therapists and peer support specialists to work with trained law enforcement to de-escalate individuals in crisis in the community; creating Crisis Stabilization Units operated by the state’s Department of Mental Health for short-term stabilization following an arrest and referrals for follow-up care; and enacting state statute to require law enforcement agencies to have officers certified in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and in Mental Health First Aid.⁹⁴⁻⁹⁷ As a result of this focus, Mississippi currently has 14 Crisis Stabilization Units, a Mobile Response Team in all of the state’s 82 counties, and 96% of law enforcement agencies that have at least one CIT trained officer.⁹⁸ In addition to these crisis response initiatives, two police departments, one in Ridgeland and one in Biloxi, established their own Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) programs that diverted people with SUDs from arrest altogether.⁹⁹ However, interviews noted that both programs were terminated when grant funding ran out.^{100,101}

Arrests & Law Enforcement

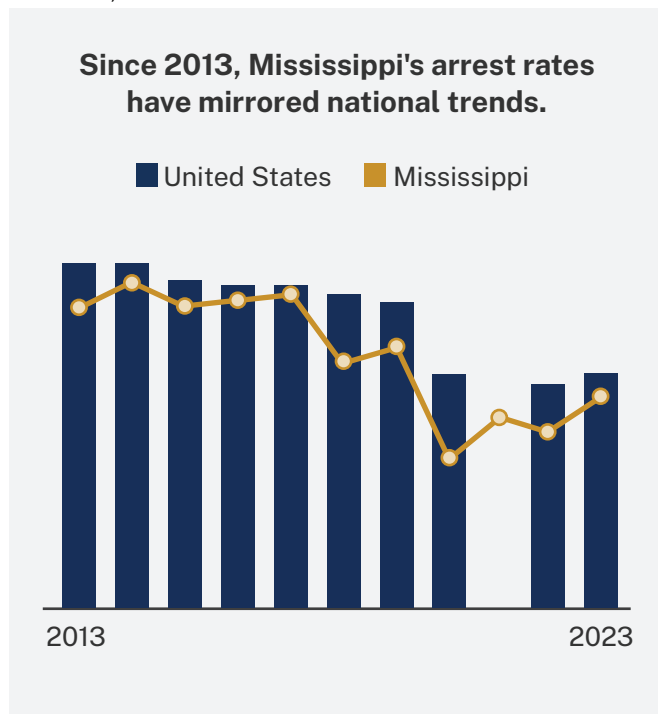
Looking at the first point of entry into the state’s criminal justice system, CJL analyzed arrest data using the FBI Crime in the United States reports. Arrests for property and violent crimes are both down in Mississippi, which parallels the drop in crime cited above.⁹¹ Notably arrests have declined more rapidly than the rate of crime, indicating fewer arrests are occurring compared to crimes committed. Violent crime decreased by 27% in Mississippi, yet arrests for violent crime have declined 36% since 2013.⁹² Similarly, property crime has decreased 42% but arrests for property crime have declined 54% since 2013.⁹³

Interviews have noted this gap between arrests and crime data may be driven by staffing challenges as well as high percentage of calls



While the number of total arrests has declined, the majority of arrests are still for nonviolent, low-level offenses. Data from 2014 to 2023 indicate that approximately two-thirds (68%) of arrests were for nonviolent, low-level offenses, including offenses such as vagrancy and loitering.¹⁰² In those ten years, the percentage of low-level offenses fluctuated with a high of 75% in 2021 and a low of 49% in 2022; however, 2022 stands out as an outlier, as all other years recorded were at least 68% or higher.¹⁰³ The most recent year available, 2023, reflects a return to these levels at 68.5%.¹⁰⁴ This places Mississippi in the top three states nationally for low-level arrest rates.¹⁰⁵ **This trend underscores an emphasis on low-level crime enforcement within the state’s criminal justice system.**

Figure 5: Comparison of Arrests in the U.S. and MS, 2013-2023ⁱⁱ



ⁱⁱ The FBI did not report 2021 national arrest rates due to a lack of reporting amidst the switch from the UCR system to NIBRS.

In addition to a focus on low-level criminal behavior, data show disproportionate enforcement against Black individuals compared to the general population. **In 2023, while 38% of Mississippi’s general population was Black, 56% of arrests were of Black individuals.**^{106,107} This overrepresentation is further exacerbated when specifically examining low-level offenses. In 2023, Black individuals were 2.2 times more likely to be arrested for low-level offenses than White individuals.¹⁰⁸

Black Mississippians make up 38% of the general population and 56% of arrests.

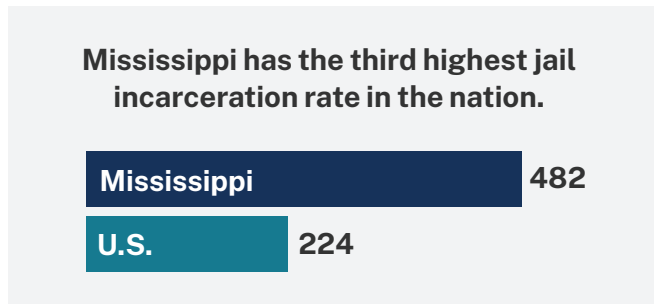
In 2023, Black individuals were 2.2 times more likely to be arrested for low-level offenses than their White counterparts.

Jails

Following arrest, individuals in Mississippi’s criminal justice system are typically booked into jail. **Data show that Mississippi has the third-highest jail incarceration rate in the nation at 482 per 100,000, which is more than double the national jail incarceration rate of 224 per 100,000, based on the most recent Census of Jails in 2019.**¹⁰⁹ Historically, Mississippi has had one of the highest jail incarceration rates in the country according to each year the Census of Jails was completed, ranking sixth in 2005, second in 2013, and third in 2019.¹¹⁰ This high incarceration rate may be due to Mississippi’s unique practice of housing individuals serving state sentences in local or regional jails. This practice is so pervasive that Mississippi ranked third highest in the nation, with 28% of state prisoners serving time in jail as opposed to prison in 2019.¹¹¹ This percentage continues to grow, with almost one in three individuals (30%) serving their time in local jails in 2023.¹¹² Local organizations report this practice

started as a way to decrease overcrowding in prisons, but has remained long after overcrowding had been addressed due to the economic reliance of leasing jail beds to state prisons.¹¹³

Figure 6: Comparison of Jail Incarceration Rates in the U.S. and MS per 100,000, 2019



1 in 3



state-sentenced individuals are serving their time in local jails rather than prisons

To understand these jail population trends, CJI utilized a variety of data sources. This included: (1) statewide data published by The MacArthur Foundation to provide snapshots from 2018 and 2023 of how long people are staying in jail; (2) snapshot data from The New York University (NYU) Public Safety Lab to illustrate demographics, bond amounts, charge data, and first appearance information from 14 counties, including two of the three most populous counties in the state, pulled on December 1, 2024; and (3) national comparison data compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics from 2023 and state data from 2019, the most recent year of state-collected data. However, these multiple sources highlight the fragmentation of jail data in the state, creating ongoing limitations of available variables, such as custody status, bond eligibility, and reason for incarceration (warrant or new charge).

CJI examined the age, race, gender, and offense charges of those in the snapshot jail population, which includes those serving time pretrial, short-term sentences, and long-term state sentences. Generally, the average Mississippian in jail is a 38-year-old Black male charged with a nonviolent offense.¹¹⁴ With respect to gender, about 85% of those in jail are men, which is consistent with national trends.^{115,116} Examining age, the population within Mississippi's jails are younger than national trends.^{117,118} Looking at race, the Mississippi jail population is 51% Black and 44% White.¹¹⁹ This mirrors overrepresentation trends in arrest data, with 51% of those in jail being Black compared to just 38% of the state population.^{120,121} This overrepresentation is also true when compared to national trends, with just 36% of individuals in jail being Black.¹²² However, the national average of Black people in America is only 12% compared to 38% in Mississippi. **When identifying the top charges of the jail population, 4 out of 5 people were there for a nonviolent offense.**¹²³ The top charges included property at 27%, drug offenses at 23%, violent offenses at 21%, public order offenses at 20%, and 7% other charges (largely criminal traffic offenses or driving under the influence).¹²⁴ This is a departure from national trends where the second most common offense type is violent offenses.¹²⁵

Another distinct feature of Mississippi's jail population was the length of time individuals are serving in jail. **The average number of days spent in jail in 2023 was 180 days, more than 5.5 times the national average of 32 days.**¹²⁶ This is slightly higher than the average days in Mississippi jails in 2018, which was 176 days.¹²⁷ This length of stay is likely influenced by the population that is serving a state sentence in Mississippi's jail population. As of 2023, Mississippi is among the top three states, after Louisiana and Kentucky, that house high numbers of individuals serving state sentences in their local jails.¹²⁸ As noted previously, in 2023, **about one in three state-sentenced individuals (30%) are serving their time in local jails.**¹²⁹ This may contribute to the relatively low percentage of unconvicted people confined in jail in Mississippi

(48%) compared to nationally (70%).¹³⁰ While there are two distinct populations housed in local jails, interviews suggest that programming offered across the state in these facilities is not tailored to meet the needs of both individuals serving long term sentences and those serving short term stays.¹³¹ Lastly, the data suggests the long length of stay may not be driven by high bail amounts, as the median bail across the state was \$400 lower than the inflation-adjusted national median of \$14,600, or by lengthy periods of time waiting for first appearance, as 90% of individuals detained in jails are seen in one day.¹³²⁻¹³⁵

Courts

Following arrest and booking, individuals in Mississippi who encounter the criminal justice system engage with the state's courts in a variety of different ways. Publicly available court data regarding criminal case processing in Mississippi courts are limited, but what was available was gleaned from annual reports published by the Mississippi Supreme Court. Data show the number of court dispositions has declined in the last decade by 24%, from 23,851 in 2013 to 17,555 in 2023; with over 129,000 cases pending.¹³⁶ While the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to this decline in dispositions, as low as 14,781 in 2021, this downward trend began prior to the pandemic.

Comparing how many cases are being opened versus closed, data similarly shows less cases being opened in the state, mirroring trends around fewer arrests. Historical trends for case filings are not available, but data show that the number of cases filed in 2024 is 7% lower than what it was in 2023, going from 19,064 cases filed to 17,704.¹³⁷ Further, there were more cases closed in 2024 than filed, which is an improvement upon the previous year, where cases filed outpaced the number of cases disposed of at 19,064 compared to 17,555. This difference of just over 1,500 more cases filed than were completed renders a resolve rateⁱⁱⁱ of 92%.¹³⁸ While this shows court processes are moving in the right direction, there are still over 129,000 cases pending as of 2024.¹³⁹

In 2023, Mississippi's court case resolve rate was 92%.



In addition to Mississippi's traditional court system, the state operates intervention courts which are designed to address underlying substance use and mental health disorders, with the opportunity to have the charges dismissed and avoid incarceration if an individual successfully completes the requirements.¹⁴⁰ As of 2024, Mississippi operated a total of 42 drug intervention courts and three pilot adult mental health courts, including 23 Adult Felony Drug Intervention Courts, 13 Juvenile Drug Intervention Courts, and six Family Drug Intervention Courts.¹⁴¹ Under Miss. Code § 9-23-15, individuals are eligible to participate in an intervention court based on the nature of their offense (it is not violent, not burglary, not DUI involving homicide, or drug trafficking) and their criminal history (not involving violent offenses).¹⁴² If someone meets all these requirements, their attorney can request a screening, but judges retain final discretion.¹⁴³

There is some data available on the utilization of these programs and their outcomes. In 2023, the drug court caseload was 2,988, a 12% increase from 2013.¹⁴⁴ For context, this represents about 16% of the total case filings in the year 2023. However, the drug court caseload has been steadily declining since 2020, when it reached its 10-year high of 3,432.¹⁴⁵ Mississippi's adult felony drug intervention courts have published a recidivism rate of 2.9% compared to the state average of 39%, and report \$1 billion in taxpayer savings since 2005 due to the comparative cost of maintaining an individual in a drug court program compared to incarceration (\$1,200 per year, compared to \$18,000).¹⁴⁶⁻¹⁵⁰ The report did not note completion rates associated with these outcomes.

ⁱⁱⁱ The resolve rate is the number of cases disposed of divided by the number of cases filed in a given year.

Similar to the intervention court programs, state law authorizes district attorney offices to establish pretrial intervention programs that also allow individuals to avoid incarceration and have cases be dismissed upon the successful completion of conditions.¹⁵¹ These programs are established by and overseen at the discretion of District Attorneys' offices across the state, with supervision supported by the Department of Corrections. According to MDOC data, these programs have grown since 2013, going from 69 cases per year to 146 cases per year in 2023.¹⁵² However, the caseload has fluctuated between 121 and 169 from 2014 to 2023, with an average of only 149 cases per year for the entire state of Mississippi.¹⁵³

A major challenge in Mississippi's court system noted in nearly every interview CJI conducted, is the absence of a cohesive, statewide public defender program. Unlike almost every other state in the country, Mississippi is one of five states that lacks state-supported public defense outside of capital and appeals cases.¹⁵⁴ The current Office of State Public Defender (OSPD) was established in 2011 to handle these capital and appeals cases and provide trainings to defense attorneys across the state. However, representation for indigent defendants is predominantly handled through locally funded attorneys.¹⁵⁵ Interviews noted this type of system has contributed to inconsistent representation and the state's high incarceration rate. Particularly referenced was the lack of a standard defense system across the state, which often results in attorneys not being appointed at initial bail hearings. Interviewees suggested the absence of attorneys at this critical point has contributed to more individuals being detained rather than released pending trial. Another challenge cited is the fee structure used by attorneys which can often incentivize quick resolutions to dispose of cases. Mississippi is one of few states that has not banned flat fee contracts for criminal defense.¹⁵⁶ Attempting to address these challenges, the Mississippi Supreme Court, in 2017, required all circuits to develop and submit public defense plans to ensure adequate

representation across the state. However, as of mid-2025, only five of 23 circuits have complied.¹⁵⁷ Another recent attempt to fill the representation gap in the state was the "Day One Regional Public Defender Pilot Program" in the 5th Circuit. The state approved funding for the Office of the State Public Defender to station attorneys, an investigator, and staff across seven rural counties to ensure early representation and continuous eligibility through to case disposition.¹⁵⁸ The goal of the pilot program is to demonstrate the positive impacts early representation can have on a jurisdiction.

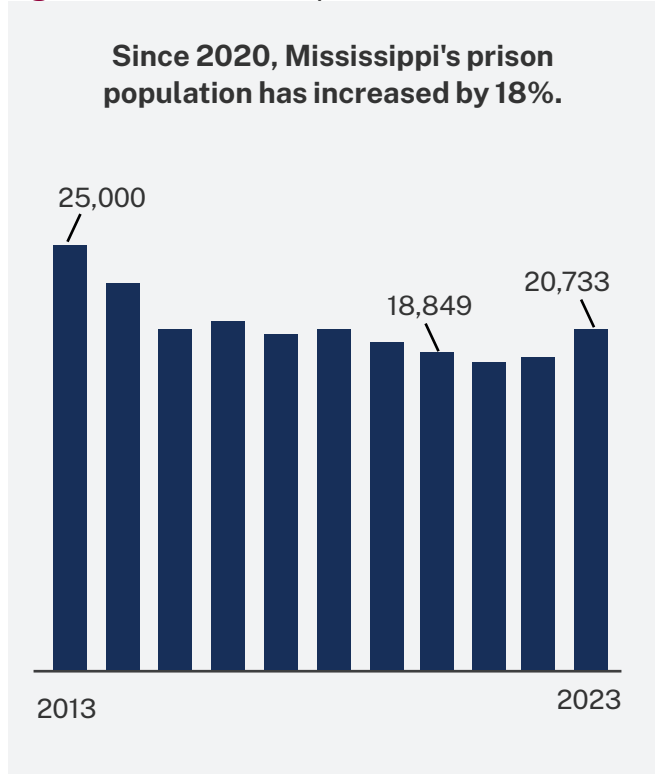
Prisons

Following a guilty disposition, if a carceral sentence is imposed, an individual will serve time in either a regional jail or state prison facility. To learn more about the state's prison population, CJI analyzed standing population, admission, and release data from the MDOC's annual reports. Select data points were also pulled from the Mississippi Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports. National comparisons were drawn from the Bureau of Justice Statistics Prisoner Series, and general population estimates are from the United States Census Bureau.

As noted earlier, **Mississippi has the highest imprisonment rate in the nation at 652 prisoners per 100,000 residents as of 2023.**¹⁵⁹ This figure is **more pronounced for the adult population, jumping to 847 per 100,000.**¹⁶⁰ The second highest adult imprisonment rate is 804 per 100,000 in neighboring Louisiana, which is also high compared to the rest of the country, where the average imprisonment rate for adults is 460 per 100,000.¹⁶¹ Between 2013 and 2023, the state's prison population dropped 20%. However, this overall decline is a bit more nuanced: following the reforms in 2014, the prison population fell, then rose again in 2016, before declining in 2019 and reaching its 10-year low in 2021. This decrease is likely driven by parole reforms enacted in 2018 as well as pauses to the criminal justice system caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most significantly, the population has

since rebounded by about 10%, driven by a growth in both admissions, up 18% since 2020, and the increased prevalence of longer sentences over 11 years.¹⁶²

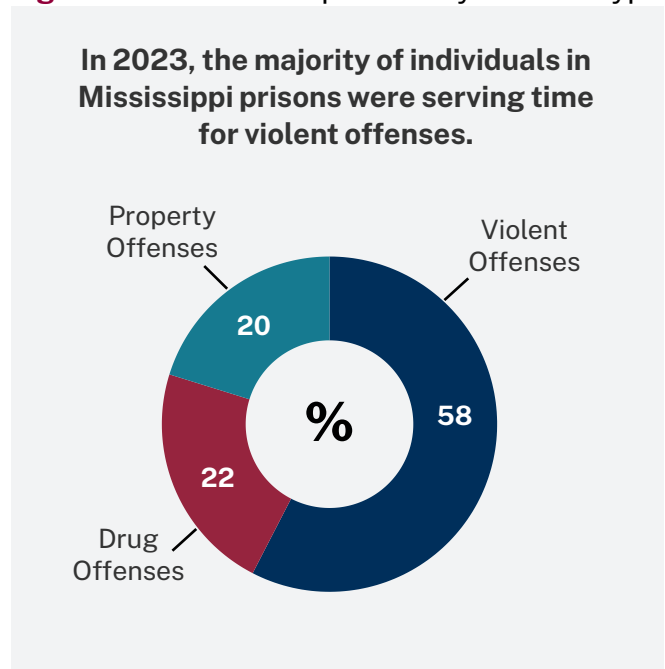
Figure 6: MS Prison Population, FY13-FY23



Analysis of Mississippi's prison population show that **racial disparities persist, with 60% of the prison population reported as Black compared to 38% of the general population.** The prison population is predominately male, with just 9% being female. The age of people incarcerated in Mississippi prisons has gotten older, with 1 in 5 people in prison in 2023 over the age of 50.¹⁶³ The percentage of the prison population that is 60 years or older has more than doubled in the last decade from 2.6% to 7%.¹⁶⁴ Increases in the aging population are significant due to this population's increased medical and physical needs. The percentage of the prison population that has a poor physical condition that limits their physical capacity (Medical Classification 4 and 5) is nearly 450 people, a 71% increase since 2013.¹⁶⁵

Moving from the characteristics of who is incarcerated to what they are incarcerated for, data show 57% are serving sentences for violent offenses (14% of which are sex offenses), 22% for drug offenses, and 20% for property offenses. This represents a slight shift over the past decade, with the population serving time for violent offenses (including sex offenses) increased from 43% in 2013 to 57% in 2023. While violent offenses comprise the majority, the proportion of individuals incarcerated for nonviolent offenses (43%) exceeds the national average of 37%.¹⁶⁶

Figure 7: MS Prison Population by Offense Type



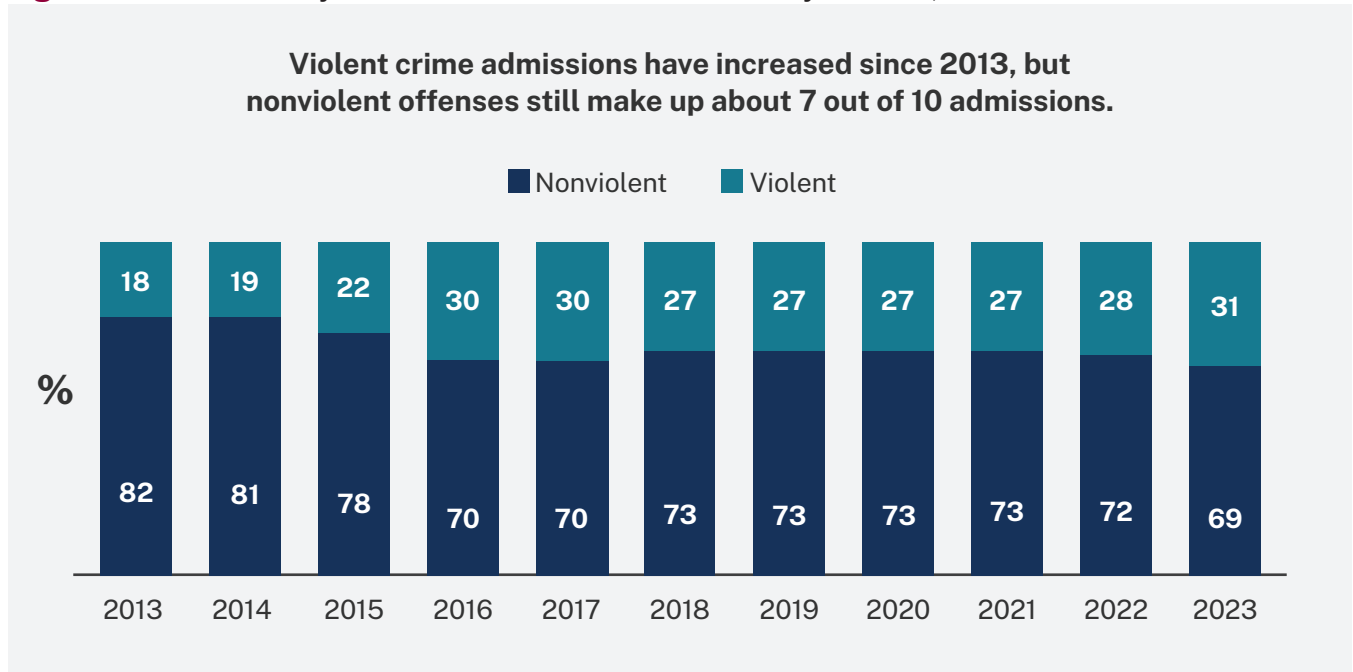
Admission Trends

Part of the state's recent prison population growth is due to an increase in admissions. Admissions have increased following a ten-year low in 2020, rising by 18%. This is largely due to increases in violent admissions. Although overall admissions have declined since 2013 for all crime types except violent crime (up 32%), there have been slight increases in admissions across each crime type in recent years. Since 2020, admissions for drug crimes have increased by 5%, property crimes by 19%, violent crimes by 31%, and sex crimes by 66%.¹⁶⁷ While violent crime admissions

have increased the most since 2013, property and drug admissions make up the highest proportion of people entering the prisons in 2023 at 35%

and 34%, respectively, a combined 69%.¹⁶⁸ Violent crime admissions make up 25% while sex crime admissions make up 6%.

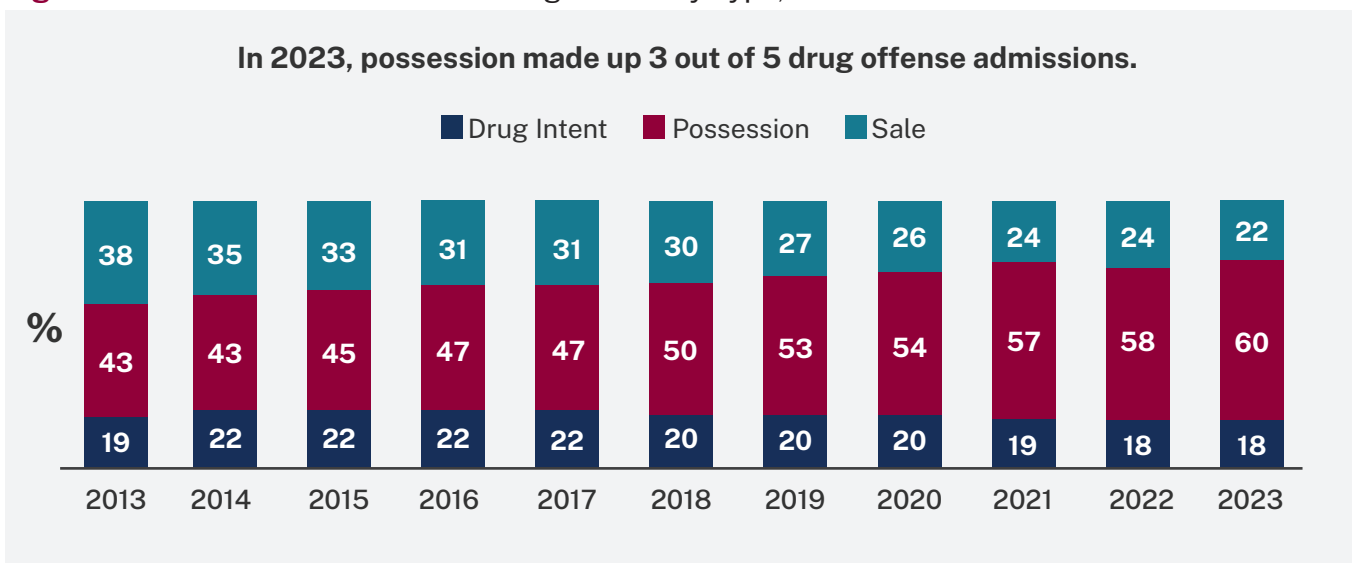
Figure 8: Admissions by Violent and Nonviolent Offenses by Percent, FY13-FY23



When examining drug offenses specifically, the proportion of admissions for drug possession has increased over the past decade. In contrast, admissions for drug sales and possession with intent to sell have declined by 42% and 3%, respectively, while admissions for drug possession have increased by 39%.¹⁶⁹ Mississippi classifies

drug possession offenses based on the type and amount of the controlled substance. Any Schedule I and II drugs weighing under 30 grams and any Schedule III, IV, and V drugs weighing under 500 grams are considered a possession offense. Higher weights elevate the conduct to an intent or sale offense.

Figure 9: Percent of Admissions for Drug Crimes by Type, FY13-FY23



Sentence Length & Length of Stay

Another explanation for the recent population growth is an increase in how long people are staying in prison. One way to examine this is by looking at an individual’s sentence length. Overall sentence lengths have increased over the last decade, most notably for sentences over 10 years. **Data show that sentences of 11 years or more have increased 43% (excluding death sentences), while sentences of 10 years or less have decreased 32%.**¹⁷⁰ There is also a gap in trends regarding sentence length by type of offense. While sentence lengths have increased for nonviolent offenses, up 36% since 2013, they have decreased for violent offenses, down 24%.¹⁷¹

Since 2013, the average sentence length for drug offenses increased 26% from six years to eight years. Sentences for all types of drug admissions have lengthened, as well.¹⁷² Sentences for intent and sale offenses increased 57% and 37%, respectively, to about 10.5 years on average. In addition, sentences for possession offenses increased 14% to about six years.¹⁷³ Sentence lengths also increased for nonviolent property offenses from 4.7 years in 2013 to five years in 2023, or an increase of 9%. Additionally, sex offense sentences increased 50%, from eight years in 2014 (2013 data was missing) to 12 years in 2023.

Data shows that sentences of 11 years or more have increased 43%, while sentences of 10 years or less have decreased 32%.

Since 2013, the average sentence lengths for drug offenses, property offenses, and sex offenses increased.

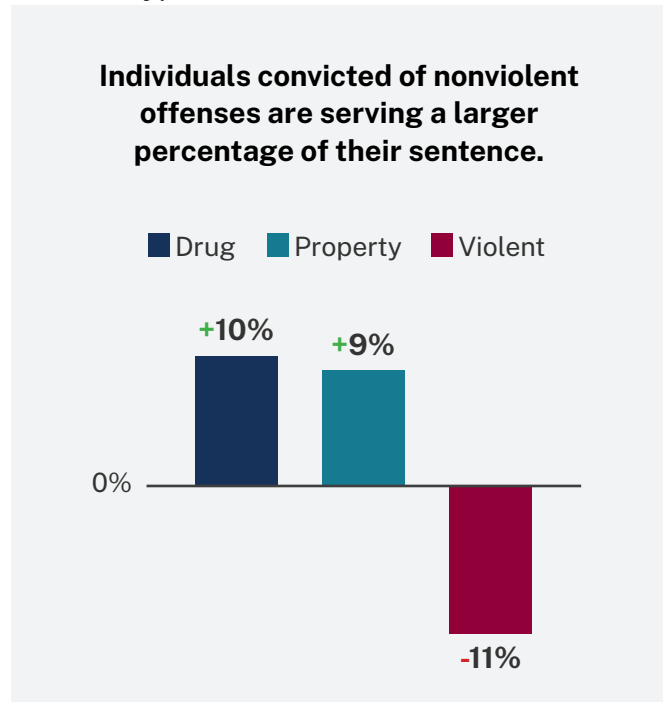
| | | |
|--|---|---|
| 26% increase for drug offenses | 9% increase for property offenses | 50% increase for sex offenses |
|--|---|---|

Table 1: State Comparison of Drug Possession Sentences for 5 Grams of Cocaine

| State | Sentence |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Louisiana | 1-5 Years ¹⁷⁴ |
| Arizona | 1.5-3 Years ¹⁷⁵ |
| Georgia | 1-3 Years ¹⁷⁶ |
| Alabama | 1-5 Years ¹⁷⁷ |
| Mississippi | Up to 8 Years¹⁷⁸ |

In addition, people incarcerated for drug and property offenses are now serving a larger percentage of their sentences than in the past. Between 2014 and 2023, the percentage of a sentence served in prison increased 10% for drug offenses, (from 41% to 45.5%) and 9% for nonviolent offenses, from (46% to 50%).¹⁷⁹ In contrast, for violent crimes, the percentage of time served decreased by 11%, from 68% to 61%.¹⁸⁰

Figure 10: Percent Change in Time Served by Offense Type, 2014-2023



Prison Releases

At the same time that people are staying longer in prison, fewer people are being released. Between 2013 and 2023, prison releases decreased 39%.¹⁸¹ This drop was true for all release types in the state including parole, probation following a split sentence, Earned Release Supervision under parole (ERS), and sentence expiration.¹⁸² With prison admissions growing and releases declining, admissions outpaced releases in 2023 by over 1,500 – the largest gap in the past decade, followed only by a discrepancy of 980 in 2016. This widening gap is an important indicator of the prison population growth.

Despite overall declines, the share of people being released through parole or probation nearly doubled over the decade.¹⁸³ Specifically, the percent of releases on parole increased from 21% in 2013 to 49% in 2023. Interviews suggest this increase is driven by an uptick in parole grant approvals in the wake of policy changes included under HB 585 and the shifts in Parole Board membership shortly after. While parole approvals initially rose following these reforms, they have since returned to pre-2014 levels, reportedly due to changes in board composition and increased violations among parolees.

Conversely, the percent of releases due to sentence expiration and individuals being released on ERS have declined. As more people are paroled, less are released at the end of their sentence with no supervision, down from 20% to 10%.¹⁸⁴ This drop also occurred for those leaving on ERS, declining even more from 26% to 8%.¹⁸⁵ Under ERS, incarcerated persons could be eligible for release to supervision after serving one-half of their sentence as determined by MDOC. In 2013, more than 1 in 4 releases were exiting on ERS and in 2023 less than 1 in 10.¹⁸⁶ Interviews suggest that this decline in ERS usage is due to the expansion of parole eligibility. Where someone could leave ERS after serving 50% of their sentence, following the reforms, the same person could leave on parole for a nonviolent offense after serving just 25% of their sentence.¹⁸⁷ This made ERS redundant.

While there have been recent bills to repeal and reduce ERS, they have ultimately been unsuccessful.



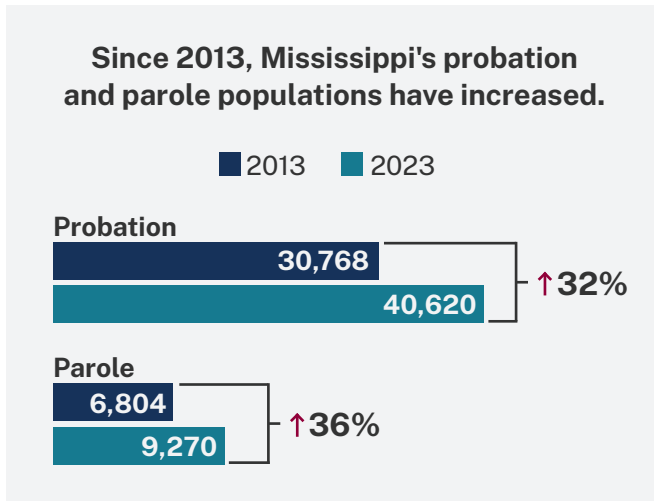
Prison releases have decreased
39% over the past decade.

Probation & Parole

Whether prior to incarceration or following release, individuals may serve time under community supervision through probation or parole, both administered by MDOC. People under probation have been court-ordered to serve their sentence in the community either with or without serving a period of incarceration first, while those on parole are completing the remainder of their prison sentence in the community under supervision with approval from the State Parole Board. When someone serves probation after spending time incarcerated it is referred to as post-release supervision and is considered a split-sentence. The length of the term is decided by the court.¹⁸⁸

CJI examined parole and probation data points from the MDOC annual reports, the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics Parole and Probation in the United States reports. In 2023, there were 49,900 individuals under some form of community supervision in the state, up from 37,600 in 2013, or a growth of 33%.¹⁸⁹ That is almost 1 in 50 people in the state being under some form of community supervision. Probation went from 30,768 in 2013 to 40,620 in 2023, **an increase of 32%**; and parole went from 6,804 in 2013 to 9,270 in 2023, **an increase of 36%**. While releases to parole have decreased, more individuals are on parole supervision, up 18% since 2013, likely due to earlier eligibility and longer parole terms.¹⁹⁰ Despite this growth, parole is currently at its lowest point since 2016.¹⁹¹ Interviewees note the changing composition of the Parole Board has contributed to shifting grant rates, ranging from 38% in 2022, 57% in 2023, and 49% in 2024.¹⁹²

These rates are approaching the low grant rates prior to 2014 (e.g., 30% in November 2011).¹⁹³ The recent low grant rates coupled with the increase in individuals serving long sentences and serving a longer percentage of that sentence is driving an increased length of stay in the state. This, combined with recent admission growth, will likely increase the prison population, absent a change in policies or practices.



Looking at the demographics of those on parole, data show, in 2023, 86% were male and 14% were female.¹⁹⁴ The majority were Black (55%), followed by 43% White, 1% Hispanic, and 1% of another race.¹⁹⁵ Of those on probation, 70% were male and 21% were female; while 42% were White, 47% were Black, and 1% were Hispanic.¹⁹⁶ **These demographics demonstrate an overrepresentation of Black individuals, a trend that is mirrored throughout Mississippi's criminal justice system.**

While there is little information available about individuals' community supervision outcomes, data do show more individuals on parole returning back to prison instead of successfully completing their parole terms in the community. As of 2023, individuals on parole returning to prison accounted for a higher percentage of prison admissions than a decade ago from about 1 in 10 in 2013 to about 1 in 4 in 2023.¹⁹⁷ Interviews noted that the make-up of the Parole Board may account for this increased

prevalence in returning to prison, as this decision rests on the authority of the Parole Board. Other factors interviewees cited included the changed policies from prior reform efforts that expanded parole eligibility, allowing more individuals to be on parole and thus numerically having more individuals who could be returned. According to the Corrections Oversight Task Force Annual Report, 80% of parole revocations during the first three quarters of 2023 were for violations other than a new felony conviction.¹⁹⁸ A 2020 report by CJI found that individuals on post-release supervision had the highest rates of unsuccessful completion, while those placed on non-adjudicated probation had the lowest.¹⁹⁹

Reentry & Recidivism

The final area of the system CJI explored was reentry into the community. Reentry data points are drawn from the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports, which provides information on recidivism, defining it as the 36-month return to prison rate. Data show that recidivism was higher in 2024 than in 2023, with 39% returned to prison for the overall 2021 cohort.²⁰⁰ This breaks down further to 42% recidivism for nonviolent releases and 33% for violent releases.²⁰¹ This is up from the 2020 cohort of releases which had a 36-month recidivism rate of 35% for overall releases and for nonviolent releases.²⁰² Violent releases held the same rate both years.²⁰³ Notably, this is lower than the United States on average, which has about half of those released from prison returning within three years.²⁰⁴ One reason Mississippi's recidivism rates may be lower comparatively is due to the state's reliance on long sentence lengths and historically low parole grant rates, meaning less individuals are released to the community with the opportunity to recidivate.

To supplement Task Force reports, CJI conducted qualitative interviews to identify barriers to successful reentry. The first challenge cited was that reentry is an extremely localized effort, driven largely by individuals in particular areas of the state and their specific areas of interest.

While Mississippi established a statewide Reentry Council through legislation in 2015, publicly available information about the council's initiatives is limited.²⁰⁵ Similarly, interviewees were unaware of specific efforts of the Council. Interviewees did note that individual reentry providers have sought to establish a coalition of providers across the state to address these issues more systemically, however these attempts have been unsuccessful to date.

In addition to the fragmented nature of reentry support in the state, interviewees also highlighted the **limited access to housing for individuals with criminal convictions as both a critical barrier to reentry and driver of recidivism**. Data from the 2025 Task Force Oversight report reiterates this, finding that 124 individuals were incarcerated at MDOC facilities despite being paroled because they do not have adequate housing for release.²⁰⁶ In response to this challenge, several community providers have focused on this area providing transitional housing, including New Way Mississippi Inc., the Mississippi Center for Reentry, and the Mississippi Offender Reentry Experience (M.O.R.E). MDOC has also taken steps to address this challenge by proposing a program called "Our House," specifically offering transitional housing to individuals with a behavioral health need with requirements for drug testing and treatment.²⁰⁷ "Our House" remains in the planning phase.

Lastly, related to the difficulty in accessing housing with a criminal conviction, interviewees also raised the state's expungement process as a challenge to securing housing and employment. The law requires individuals to petition the court for expungement, paying fines upward of \$200 dollars, and to give notice to the district attorney of the petition.²⁰⁸ For felony offenses, an individual must wait five years after the completion of their sentence and complete payment of all fines and fees associated with their case before applying.²⁰⁹ Interviewees explained that these steps often deter individuals from seeking expungement of offenses and result in their inability to obtain adequate housing or employment in the state.

Access to housing for formerly incarcerated individuals is limited.

Recent data show 124 individuals incarcerated in MDOC facilities despite being paroled due to a lack of adequate housing options.

Despite these gaps, interviewees noted that MDOC has made recent efforts to support reentry as part of their pre-release services.²¹⁰ Including support for obtaining state-issued identification and provisional driver's licenses, enrolling in Medicaid and other benefits, accessing Social Security support, resolving child support issues, and locating housing and clothing.²¹¹ These services are broadly available to individuals under MDOC supervision or those preparing for release.²¹² Additionally, MDOC facilities provide reentry focus programming, however, interviews note that access to these programs vary based on what facility an individual is housed in. Based on monthly reports, there is an average of about 1,600 enrollment spots in these programs per institution, ranging from 642 spots to 2,090; however, data show that on average the programs are only at 70% capacity MDOC provides programming supporting reentry, however, interviews note that access to these programs vary based on what facility an individual is incarcerated in. Based on monthly reports across the seven state institutions listed, there is an average of about 1,600 enrollment spots in these programs per institution, ranging from 642 spots to 2,090; however, they are only at 70% capacity on average.²¹³

A Closer Look at Mississippi's Justice Data

Data Challenges

Access to reliable and comprehensive data is essential for evaluating and improving the criminal justice system. This report draws on the best available information from state agencies, publicly released reports, and, underlying datasets where possible. However, significant data limitations remain, affecting both long-term trends analysis, and detailed examination of specific metrics. While completing the data landscape for the Mississippi adult criminal justice system, a number of limitations emerged. Of primary concern are: (1) the analytical constraints posed by data reported in the aggregate as opposed to individual level datasets, (2) data reported inconsistently over time, and (3) data not being collected and/or reported.

Aggregate vs. Individual-Level Data

Publicly available data in Mississippi are most commonly reported in the aggregate through annual reports published by each related agency or through assigned task force reports. For example, prison data is reported in aggregate form through the Department of Corrections Annual Report and court data is reported through Supreme Court Annual Reports. Supplemental data, specific to state-interests, are often reported in task force reports, such as the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports. While these numbers are helpful in showcasing general trends, **they do not provide in-depth analysis on specific points of interest**, such as exploring interactions between multiple variables and equity-related questions. This limits the ability of practitioners, legislators, and researchers to ask specific questions or conduct deeper issue-focused analysis.

In contrast, individual-level data expands the precision of analyses, allowing researchers to delve deeper into interesting patterns and trends. This creates opportunities to finetune current practices and procedures and enhance efficiency and equity. For example, in the above data landscape, prison data was reported in the aggregate to show that sentence lengths have increased across all offenses, except for violent offenses. If raw data were available, it could potentially be determined why that is. For example, are more people being sentenced for

less serious violent crimes? Or perhaps specific nonviolent offenses are being given a lengthier sentence than in the past? Speculation provides a number of possibilities, but without individual-level prison and court data, this remains unclear and hinders evidence-based solutions.

Inconsistent Reporting

Data reported by criminal justice system actors and agencies are often done inconsistently. This was true both within agencies and across agencies. Within agencies, this can make it challenging to piece together long-term trends, understand how practices impact outcomes, or uncover challenges with implementing equitable change. For example, in regard to reported parole data, the parole grant rates in Mississippi were available for certain years, but not others, leaving unanswered questions when trying to understand this long-term trend.

These challenges—and emerging ones—are intensified when working across multiple agencies, whether among entities within the same system touchpoint, such as different jails, or across distinct sectors, such as linking court and jail data. These challenges include inconsistent definitions, varying collection practices, and unclear reporting standards. For example, data were reported differently for many of the jails in the state, limiting the ability to analyze multiple counties together.

Uncollected/Unreported Data

Many aspects of the criminal justice system are not systematically captured or made publicly accessible. Certain data of interest for this report were either not collected and/or reported, such as the number of officers per agency trained in crisis intervention (CIT) or case processing times for criminal court cases. While it is not always clear whether data is collected but kept only internally or if certain metrics are truly not tracked, difficulties arise when trying to foster transparency between the criminal justice system, policymakers, advocates, and researchers. This can be especially true when new practices are implemented, such as with the crisis intervention training, or when data tracking can become complex, such as tracking reentry data. Whatever the reason, the lack of data related to areas of interest limits comprehensive understanding around how people move through the criminal justice system and the effectiveness of specific practices and policies.

For example, based on public data, Mississippi has a high percentage of individuals serving state sentences in jails, but due to the severely limited data available on the jail population, as well as the predisposed aggregated data on the prisons, it is impossible to further understand why this is and if there are any patterns related to who is serving time in jail versus prison. Creating and tracking a variable that indicates whether someone in jail is there serving time on a state sentence would help policymakers, criminal justice system practitioners, and advocates understand this phenomenon and how to manage it better.

Tracking specific variables can help policymakers, justice system practitioners, and advocates gain a better understanding of certain trends and how to manage them.

Enhancing Mississippi's Data Infrastructure

In Mississippi, publicly available data remains fragmented across systems, inconsistent over time, and often limited in scope. At each touchpoint in the system, there are varying degrees of data availability.

More data infrastructure should be considered to address current limitations, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Lack of police diversion data
- ✓ No comprehensive statewide jail data
- ✓ Limited court processing data
- ✓ Aggregate prison data necessitating predisposed analysis
- ✓ Inconsistently reported parole data
- ✓ Lack of reentry data

Part of the issue is a lack of uniform guidance on what metrics to track and who is responsible for collecting, storing, and analyzing it. Without standardized measures reported consistently across jurisdictions, it becomes exceedingly difficult to monitor long-term trends or evaluate system performance effectively.

Ideal Data to be Collected by Mississippi Agencies

This section covers an extensive list of variables and data that should be collected and made available to those working in the criminal justice system, policy makers, advocates, researchers, and the public. These data should be sent and stored in a singular database to create accessibility across different agencies and jurisdictions while still honoring confidentiality.

Key Data Variables for All Agencies & Jurisdictions

Unique Identifiers
(for linking cases across agencies)

Demographic Information
(birthdate, sex, race, ethnicity)

Socioeconomic Information
(education, income, housing status)

Behavioral Health Indicators
(SUDs, mental health conditions)

Physical Health Indicators
(chronic illness, care needs)

| LAW ENFORCEMENT | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|--|
| Per Arrest | Arrest Date & Time | Arrest Charge Description |
| | Citation Number | Arrest Charge Statute |
| | Reason for Arrest | Offense Classification |
| | Arrest Charge | Most Serious Charge Indicator |
| | Arresting Officer | Arresting Agency |
| General Arrest Info. | Number of Arrests | Number of Diversions |
| | Number of CIT Officers | - Crisis Intervention Team - Diversion Programs |

| COURTS | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|---|
| Per Case | Case Number | Type of Counsel |
| | Charge(s) Statute | Date Case Opened |
| | Charge(s) Description | Date of Disposition |
| | Pretrial Release Mechanism | Date of Sentencing |
| | Bond Eligibility | Sentence Type & Length |
| | Bond Status | Enhancements |
| | Court Dates & Type of Hearing | Current/Past Failure to Appear/Pay Warrants |
| | Judge Assigned | Diversion Status |

COURTS (CONTINUED)

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| General Court Info. | Criminal Court: | |
| | - Number of cases filed | - Bond grant rate |
| | - Number of cases pending | - Failure to appear warrants |
| | - Number of cases disposed of | - Failure to pay warrants |
| | Specialty Court & Diversion Data: | |
| | - Number of courts & programs | - Capacity |
| | - Enrollment | - Graduate rate |

JAILS

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Per Booking | Booking Date & Time | Pretrial Status |
| | Booking Number | Bond Eligibility |
| | Arresting Agency | Bond Amount (Posted Date) |
| | Reason for Booking | Security Classification |
| | Charge Statute | Programming Attendance |
| | Charge Description | Medical/MH/SUD Indicators |
| | Offense Category | Medical/MH/SUD Appointments |
| | Offense Classification | Release Date & Time |
| | Court Case Number | Release Mechanism (ROR, Bond, etc.) |
| | Charge Status | MH Involuntary Commitment Indicator |
| General Jail Info. | Number of Admissions | Number of Programs & Treatments: - Enrollment - Capacity - Graduation (if applicable) |
| | Number of Involuntary Commitments | |
| | Number of Releases | |
| | State Prisoners in Local Jurisdiction | Ratio of Staff to Incarcerated Individuals (including staff openings) |

PRISONS

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Per Admission | Admission Date & Time | Programming Information: - Eligibility - Enrollment - Completion Parole Hearing Date Release Date & Time Release Mechanism MH Involuntary Commitment Indicator |
| | Offense Statute | |
| | Offense Description | |
| | Offense Classification | |
| | Offense Category | |
| | Reason for Admission | |
| | Sentence Length | |
| | Parole Eligibility | |
| General Prison Info. | Number of Admissions | Number of Programs & Treatments: - Enrollment - Capacity - Graduation (if applicable) |
| | Number of Releases | |
| | State Prisoners in Local Jurisdiction | |
| | Ratio of Staff to Incarcerated Individuals (including staff openings) | |

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Per Person Paroled | Date Paroled | Length of Parole |
| | Number of Hearings Prior to Parole | Discharge Date |
| | Parole Officer Assigned | Discharge Type |
| | Offense Statute | Revocation Status |
| | Offense Description | Number of Technical Violations |
| | Offense Classification | Rearrest(s) |
| | Offense Category | Reconviction(s) |
| | Number of Conditions Imposed | Reincarceration(s) |
| General Parole Info. | Grant Rate | Average Caseloads |
| | Number of People on Parole | Staff Openings |

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION (CONTINUED)

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Per Person on Probation | Date Probation Began | Incarceration Required |
| | Probation Officer Assigned | Discharge Date |
| | Offense Statute | Discharge Type |
| | Offense Description | Revocation Status |
| | Offense Classification | Number of Technical Violations |
| | Offense Category | Rearrest(s) |
| | Number of Conditions Imposed | Reconviction(s) |
| | Sentence Length | Reincarceration(s) |
| General Probation Info. | Number of People on Probation | Staff Openings |
| | Average Caseloads | Probation Following Incarceration |

REENTRY

- How many programs are available?
- What types of services are offered?
- How many individuals are receiving services?
- How many clients are reincarcerated?
- Where is the reentry program located?

RECIDIVISM

- How many people are rearrested after release from jail, prison, parole, or probation?
- How many people are reconvicted after release from jail, prison, parole, or probation?
- How many people are reincarcerated after release from jail, prison, parole, or probation?
- How many people are reincarcerated for a technical violation of community supervision?

Key Findings & Looking Forward

While Mississippi has made meaningful progress over the past decade by enacting policy reforms to reduce its population of incarcerated people, data shows that significant challenges remain. These ongoing issues contribute to the state's position as the nation's highest incarcerator. The key findings from this landscape analysis are outlined below.

1

Mississippi has the highest incarceration rate in the country, driven by nonviolent prison admissions.

2

People are staying longer in prison, largely due to increased sentence lengths and low parole grant rates.

3

Racial disparities are rampant across Mississippi's criminal justice system.

4

Recidivism is increasing, driven primarily by growing admissions for parole violations.

5

Unmet treatment needs may contribute to unnecessary justice system involvement.

6

There is a lack of comprehensive data reporting and data quality is inconsistent.

Finding 1: Mississippi has the highest incarceration rate in the country, driven by admissions for nonviolent offenses.

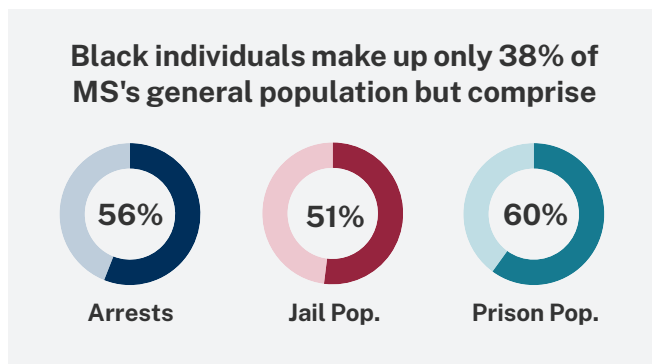
Mississippi has historically had some of the highest rates of incarceration in the country, surpassing all other states in 2023, the most recent year of state-specific data.²¹⁴ Its reliance on incarceration is driven largely by nonviolent offenses. Data show that more than two-thirds of arrests in the state are for low-level offenses, four out of five individuals in jail are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses, and more than two-thirds of prison admissions are for nonviolent offenses. Interviewees indicated that this is driven by a cultural reliance on incarceration and a lack of community based alternatives. They referenced the fact that there are only 23 adult treatment courts for 82 counties, and in 2023 only 146 cases participated in pre-trial diversion.²¹⁵

Finding 2: People are staying longer in prison, largely due to increased sentence lengths and low parole grant rates.

Sentence lengths have increased in Mississippi over the past ten years, particularly for individuals serving time for nonviolent offenses. Data show that sentence lengths of 11 years or more has increased 43% over the past decade. Additionally, people incarcerated for drug and property offenses are serving larger percentages of their sentences, up 10% and 9% respectively.²¹⁶ This is coupled with less individuals being released, declining 39% since 2013 and parole grant rates at their lowest level since 2014.

Finding 3: Racial disparities are rampant across Mississippi’s justice system.

Black individuals are significantly overrepresented in every stage of Mississippi’s criminal justice system. Black individuals represent just 38% of the state’s general population but comprise 56% of arrests, 51% jail populations, and 60% of the prison population. Black Mississippians are also 2.2 times more likely than White Mississippians to be arrested for low-level offenses. Addressing this severe disparity is necessary to protect the community at large, as mass incarceration has been shown to disproportionately affect Black communities by negatively impacting education, employment, and family connections, all of which have been shown to prevent future criminal involvement.^{217,218}




Finding 4: Recidivism is increasing, driven primarily by growing admissions for parole violations.

Data show that recidivism is increasing in the state, up four percentage points since 2023.²¹⁹ This is coupled with parole violations comprising a larger portion of admissions over the last 10 years, going from 10% of admissions in 2013 to 25% in 2023. Interviewees noted challenges to successful reentry including a fragmented and localized reentry network, extreme barriers to housing, and an onerous expungement process. Additionally, interviews indicated that while jail and prison facilities have reentry programming available, the availability is dictated by where individuals are housed and data shows the programs are not being utilized fully, with a capacity of about 70% on average.

Finding 5: Unmet treatment needs may contribute to unnecessary criminal justice system involvement.

While Mississippi has a lower-than-average prevalence of substance use and mental health conditions, data show a significant population of individuals with these diagnoses that are not receiving treatment. Specifically, in 2022, 72% of those with substance use disorders were not receiving treatment. Further, over the past decade, mental illness, as well as substance use disorders and fatal drug overdoses, have significantly increased in Mississippi. Interviews indicated that treatment, similar to reentry resources, is inconsistent across the state without systematic support. Additionally, interviewees note a cultural stigma associated with seeking behavioral health treatment as a barrier to change. While steps have been taken to link individuals in the community to treatment, such as the establishment of mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization units, room exists to better support this vulnerable population.



Over the past decade, mental illness, substance use disorders, and fatal drug overdoses, have significantly increased in Mississippi.

Finding 6: A lack of comprehensive data reporting exists and data quality is inconsistent.

While publicly available data reports exist for various agencies, such as courts and prisons, and data dashboards offer some insight into crime and arrest statistics, there remains a significant gap in access to uniform, analyzable data needed to track meaningful trends across Mississippi’s criminal justice system. At the crux of informed decision-making is the ability to analyze data.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, Mississippi has undertaken a series of criminal justice reforms that have produced varied outcomes. In some areas, there are measurable improvements and in others the data show positive outcomes that have since subsided. Most importantly, however, the very trends that prompted Mississippi to reevaluate its criminal justice system in the first place — namely a growing prison population at increasing costs to taxpayers — are back on the table. Since 2020, the state's prison population has grown 10%, driven by a growth in both admissions, up 18% since 2020, and individuals spending longer in prison for nonviolent offenses, up 43%. The goal of this report is to bring awareness to recent criminal justice data trends and give the public and policy makers the resources to make informed decisions about state's path forward.

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Appendix A: Data Manual

All data included in the report are available publicly. This appendix gives more depth on data sourced for this report.

Crime Data – Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Crime in the US Reports

Crime data were pulled from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Crime in the US reports which have data reported from law enforcement agencies through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program (through 2021) and National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), post 2021. Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crime includes burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Arson is not typically included in offense estimates because reporting is too varied across agencies when it comes to this type of offense.

Arrest Data – Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Crime in the US Reports

Arrest data were taken from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Crime in the United States reports. Data are submitted to the FBI through the UCR program (through 2021) and through the NIBRS program (post 2021). Arrests represent the number of arrests that occurred in a year, not the number of individuals arrested in a given year. In other words, the data can include the same person more than once if that person was arrested on more than one occasion. Each data point represents an instance of someone being arrested, cited, or summoned for an offense. Traffic citations are not included. Arrest data also do not include juveniles, which is considered to be anyone under the age of 18, regardless of the state’s definition of juveniles. General population estimates are from the United States Census Bureau.

Jail Data – New York University Public Safety Lab Jail Data Initiative

The New York University (NYU) Public Safety Lab stores and reports jail data from different states across the country. The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) was able to request access to the Mississippi county jail rosters the Public Safety Lab uses to populate their public dashboard. Mississippi had 21 rosters available which CJI downloaded on May 21, 2025. CJI was able to include 14 based on common variables and available information. The data included represent the standing population on December 1, 2024. This date was chosen because it included the most recent full year and had most counties available. Counties that were excluded included those with no booking data, no charge information, and/or no bond information. One county that had all bond totals equal to \$0 was still included because it had all other information and was a small county jail. Median bond information was calculated for only those with a bond greater than \$0. When national comparisons are drawn, data are pulled in the aggregate from the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ Census of Jails report. General population estimates are from the United States Census Bureau.

Court Data – Mississippi Supreme Court Annual Reports

Court data were gleaned from annual reports published by the Mississippi Supreme Court. There was limited relevant information in these reports for criminal case processing. Cases disposed of per year were the only viable data points available for the lookback period. However, filed, disposed, and pending cases were available for 2023 which allowed CJI to calculate a case resolve percentage for criminal cases.

Prison Data – Mississippi Department of Corrections Annual Reports

Standing population, admission, and release data were pulled from the Mississippi Department of Corrections annual reports. Numbers were transposed from the report into a spreadsheet to create visual components, percentages, and calculate percent differences. Select data points were taken from the Mississippi Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports. National comparisons, when drawn, were from the Bureau of Justice Statistics Prisoner Series. General population estimates are from the US Census Bureau.

Probation and Parole Data – Mississippi Department of Corrections Reports and Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force Reports

Parole and probation data points are drawn from both the Mississippi Department of Corrections annual reports, as well as the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports. These data were reported in the aggregate and are reflected as such in the current report.

Reentry Data – Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force Reports

Reentry data points are drawn from the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force reports. These data were reported in the aggregate and are reflected as such in the current report.

Appendix B: State Examples

Looking to other states, an integral step towards quality data is legislation that provides clear guidance on what data should be collected and how this data can be made available to those working in the system, as well as the public.

Florida: Requiring Comprehensive Statewide Justice System Data Collection

Florida created legislation in 2018 that mandated data collection and reporting at the county level in all 67 counties in the state on more than 50 specific metrics to ensure comprehensive and uniform justice system tracking. To ensure consistency across various jurisdictions, state statute outlined each specific metric with definitions and who should be spearheading this effort in each agency. This effort included a substantial investment in the development of a database, financial incentives to counties, consistent standards in what was being reported, and definitions of terms to ensure comparability across counties. Further, for agencies who did not comply with these data collection requirements, they were deemed ineligible for certain funding for multiple years after noncompliance. Statute also outlined that these data should be accessible to the public through a readily accessible web-based interface, such as a dashboard, to promote transparency.²¹⁴

Illinois: Mandating Data Collection Around Specific Interests

Illinois passed The Illinois Criminal Diversion Racial Impact Data Collection Act of 2017 that mandated tracking how many people were diverted through law enforcement and prosecutors by outlining specific procedures and definitions. The underlying goal was to identify whether or not diversion opportunities were equitably available for people across racial and ethnic lines, which is relevant to Mississippi as not only is there a focus on low-level enforcement, but that Black individuals are over 2x more likely to be arrested for low-level offenses than their White counterparts. Mississippi does not capture diversion statistics at the point of arrest, resulting in significant gaps of understanding about alternatives to incarceration and broader system involvement.²¹⁵

While passing legislation that mandates data collection and reporting is a critical first step toward data

accessibility, the effectiveness of such laws depends heavily on their implementation. Without dedicated resources, standardized definitions, and interagency coordination, these mandates can fall short in practice. Successful data infrastructure requires long term effort, technical capacity, and collaboration to ensure that data can be effectively linked across jurisdictions.

New Mexico: Implementation Around Comprehensive Data Collection

In 2019, New Mexico enacted House Bill 267, designed to improve data collection and coordination across the state's criminal justice system. The legislation assigned the New Mexico Sentencing Commission (NMSC) responsibility for implementing a statewide data-sharing network to collect, store, and analyze information across law enforcement, courts, corrections, and behavioral health agencies. Implementation has been a central focus of this initiative. The NMSC has worked to standardize data definitions, develop secure data-sharing infrastructure, and guide local Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils (CJCCs) in integrating their data systems. Although the system is still evolving, New Mexico's experience underscores that successful reform requires not only legislative authorization but sustained implementation leadership, including governance structures, interagency collaboration, and ongoing technical capacity-building – to translate policy mandates into meaningful, actionable data systems. Along with proper guidance, incentives, and financial support, a key piece to building data infrastructure is having specialized data staff who can lead the way in building sustainable collection and reporting practices. Quality data requires dedicated time and effort, whether that is reworking someone's current role within an agency to protect time for data work or opening up a new role. This may look like hiring someone on a contract to set up sustainable practices and then training someone in the agency to maintain it, or hiring someone full-time. Sustainability is key in maintaining long-lasting data compliance.