

MASS INCARCERATION IN MARYLAND



TIMELINE OF MASS INCARCERATION

1968: The Omnibus Crime Control & Safe Streets Act allocated \$400 million to law enforcement, largely in response to civil rights movements. Marked the beginning of the War on Crime. Introduced policies that disproportionately affected Black communities, contributing to over-policing & increased incarceration.

1986: The Anti-Drug Abuse Act created significant sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine offenses. Funneled Black individuals into the criminal legal system, expanding racial inequalities and mass incarceration.

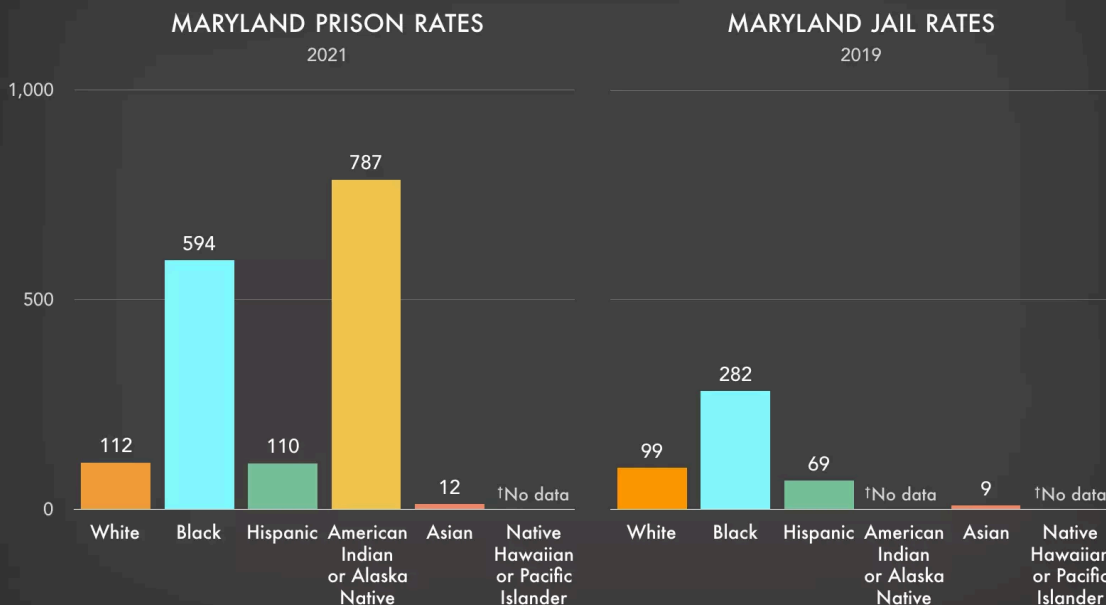
1994: The Violent Crime Control & Law Enforcement Act (1994 Crime Bill) Introduced "tough-on-crime" measures that allocated funding to policing and building prisons, and encouraged states to adopt harsher sentencing practices, resulting in a surge of long prison sentences.

2001-Present: The legacy of these policies continues to impact Maryland's prison system. The aging prison population is disproportionately Black and brown. We need for reform, particularly in decarceration efforts, to heal the long-term harms of mass incarceration.

IMPACT OF MASS INCARCERATION

Racial disparities in Maryland prison and jail incarceration rates

People in state prisons and local jails, per 100,000 state residents in each race or ethnicity category



† Suppressed: Estimate is either not calculable based on published data or is based on fewer than 25 people. Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau data. For sourcing details and dataset, including race definitions and categories not displayed above, see: www.prisonpolicy.org/data/race_bystate_2021.xlsx.

PRISON
POLICY INITIATIVE

Racial Disparities in Maryland's Prisons: 72% of incarcerated Marylanders are Black, despite Black individuals making up only 31% of Maryland's population, making Maryland the national leader in racial disparities among incarcerated individuals.

Aging Prison Population: As of July 2022, 7.4% of Maryland's prison population was over 60 years of age. Older incarcerated individuals often develop health problems that prisons are ill-equipped to treat and are a great cost to the state.

Scan for More Resources



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INITIATIVES TO COMBAT MASS INCARCERATION

SECOND LOOK LAWS:

Call for Reform:

Multiple national organizations, including the American Law Institute and the American Bar Association, are calling for the introduction of "second look" laws. These laws allow incarcerated individuals to have their sentences reviewed after 15 to 20 years of incarceration.

Maryland's Role:

OPD supports the Second Look Act as a critical step toward reducing excessively long sentences and ensuring that individuals who have served significant time can be reintegrated into society. A second look provides an opportunity to balance public safety with fairness in sentencing.

MEDICAL AND GERIATRIC PAROLE:

Current Crisis: Maryland's prison population is aging and suffering from medical ailments, without real access medical or geriatric parole. The Maryland parole board releases 66% fewer people and holds 27% fewer hearings since the pandemic started.¹

Reform: OPD supports more efficient and inclusive medical and geriatric parole processes. Current eligibility criteria are too narrow and the system is plagued by delays. Expanding access to parole for elderly and medically vulnerable individuals is essential to ensuring justice and reducing overcrowding in prisons.

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