

Anchorage Reentry Coalition – Incarceration & Reentry Data Sheet

INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES

By the beginning of 2017, estimates were that more than 6.6 million adults were being held in a prison or jail, or were under some other form of correctional supervision in the United States. This figure equates to roughly 1 in 38 adults being under some form of correctional supervision.¹ Pre-COVID estimates were that 2.3 million people were in confinement in the United States, spanning a vast and complex system of jails, prisons, detention facilities, juvenile facilities, Indian country prisons, military prisons, and psychiatric hospitals all operated by a mix of local, state, and federal jurisdictions and authorities.² No other comparable democratic nation in the world has incarceration rates near to that of the United States.^{3,4}

INCARCERATION AND RECIDIVISM IN ALASKA

The Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) currently operates 13 correctional facilities and is responsible for housing and supervising nearly the entire adult population of misdemeanants, felons, pretrial defendants, and supervision violators, and a small number of individuals convicted of federal crimes.^{5,7} Alaska is unique in that it is one of only six states with a unified, or integrated correctional system, in which the jail and prison system are operated by a single agency.⁶

Of the 13 DOC facilities located around Alaska, two are located within the boundaries of the Municipality of Anchorage (Anchorage Correctional Complex and Hiland Mountain Correctional Center) and six other institutions are situated within relative proximity to Anchorage and in the vicinities of Wasilla, Palmer, Seward, and Kenai.

At mid-year 2021, DOC reported holding in-custody or supervising a total of 9,216 individuals which equated to approximately 1.3% of the State's entire population. Among the adult population 18 years or older, an estimated 1 in 60 adults were actively in-custody or under DOC supervision at mid-year 2021.^{7,8} These proportions are increases from the previous year.

Among all those individuals in-custody or under DOC supervision at mid-year 2021, a total of 4,597 individuals were housed inside an in-state correctional facility, 16 were housed in an out-of-state correctional facility, 295 were housed at a community residential center, 195 individuals were in the community on electronic monitoring, and 4,113 individuals were on parole or probation. As of mid-year 2021, over half (2,373) of all individuals in Alaska correctional facilities were unsentenced.⁷

Among the incarcerated population, about 88% were identified as male and 12% as female. DOC reported this population to be comprised primarily of people identified as Alaskan Native (41%), Caucasian/White (40%), Black/African American (10%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (5%). Across all levels of supervision and custody, individuals between 18 and 49 years old accounted for 79% of the entire population.⁷

Total annual admissions into DOC facilities rose each consecutive year from CY16 to CY19, but declined in CY20. In CY21, there were 28,116 admissions which represented a small increase from the previous year. Similarly, the total number of people incarcerated at mid-year 2020 was down from mid-year 2019, but then trended upward again in CY21.⁷ In CY20 a total of 656 individuals were paroled, which continued a year-to-year decline in the annual number of individuals released on parole.¹⁴

DOC defines recidivism as a conviction and return to incarceration for any reason, for any person convicted of a felony within three years from their release. The latest recidivism rates reported for the FY18 cohort of released individuals indicates there was a slight increase in recidivism rates from the prior year, from 60.61% to 61.47%. Although small, recidivism rates are ticking back upward.⁷

INCARCERATION AND REENTRY IN ANCHORAGE

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The COVID-19 pandemic impacted incarceration and reentry in Alaska and in Anchorage. The emergence of the pandemic caused the disruption of judicial processes, it caused policies to be implemented that restricted access to correctional institutions by contractors, visitors, and non-institutional staff, and restricted movement and programming opportunities inside the facilities. From CY19 to CY20, the total number of releases from incarceration statewide dropped by nearly 30%. While the pandemic likely played a significant role in these decreases, a downward trend in month-to-month releases began in January, 2020 prior to the emergence of the pandemic.

According to DOC data, a total of 5,237 unique individuals were released from a DOC facility in CY21 that had been convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony, 45% (2,367) of whom were released to Anchorage.¹² This is despite the Municipality of Anchorage accounting for just under 40% of the State's entire population.¹³ A separate statistic reported by DOC, number of releases, reflects each instance there was a person released from custody to the community after serving a sentence. In CY21 there were a total of 5,586 releases from DOC custody, 46% of which were to Anchorage, 11% to Mat-Su, 9% to Fairbanks, 7% to Kenai, 3% each to Bethel and Juneau, and the remainder going to other communities across the state. The number of individuals and total releases to Anchorage in CY21 remained comparable to the prior year.¹²

Similar to system-wide DOC demographics, releases from custody to Anchorage during CY21 were predominately identified as Alaskan Native (36%), White (36%), or African American (12%). In terms of age, 77% of all releases to Anchorage were of individuals between 20-44 years old. Based on sex, male releases accounted for 78% of releases and 22% were female releases; almost half of all female releases statewide were to Anchorage in CY21.¹²

Based on classification, about 63% of DOC releases to Anchorage during CY21 reflected misdemeanor offenses and 36% reflected felony offenses. The majority of releases to Anchorage reflect non-violent offenses.¹² There were more than 2,119 people on probation/parole in Anchorage at mid-year 2021 which represents over half (51%) of all individuals on supervision in the state.⁷

In September, 2021 Alaska re-opened Palmer Correctional Center which served to expand the footprint and incarceration capacity in Alaska.⁷ Basic administrative data demonstrates that the use of incarceration in Alaska is not measurably decreasing, and that there continues to be an outsized proportion of Alaska's reentry population being released to Anchorage. People returning to the Anchorage community predominately identify as Alaskan Native, White, or African American; the vast majority are young adults to early middle-aged adults; most are males; and the vast majority of individuals were released after committing non-violent offenses. There is, however, also a large proportion of high-risk, high-need individuals releasing to Anchorage when compared to other Alaskan communities.

Year to year, basic demographic data continues to justify and validate the need for continued investments in a comprehensive range of resources and services for the relatively high number of formerly incarcerated individuals being released to the Anchorage community. Such reentry resources and services should be sensitive of the characteristics, strengths, needs and risk factors of this population that is integrating back into the Anchorage community.

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Note: The preceding analysis does not include criminally-involved youth, nor does it include data for individuals from Alaska that are in Federal custody or under Federal supervision.

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DATA SOURCES

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