

# EXTRACT



## 1 in 5 people incarcerated in the US are there for drug crimes

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(Photo credit: Alexander Aksakov/Getty Images)

### Drug prisoners account for more than 20 percent of people incarcerated in the U.S.

A new report from Prison Policy Initiative shows nearly 2.3 million people are behind bars in the United States today, reaffirming America still has the highest incarceration rate in the world.

Of the 2,298,300 people currently behind bars in the U.S., half a million are there for drug offenses.

That doesn't even include the 820,000 people on parole and 3.8 million people on probation in the U.S., many of whom are caught up in the legal system because of drug charges.

Drug arrests play a smaller role in state and local prison populations, but they are a "defining characteristic of the federal prison system," according to Prison Policy

Initiative's report.

Although the majority of people locked up in state prisons and local jails are not there for drug crimes, the report points out that state and local drug arrests lead to conditions that likely increase the rate of more serious convictions.

Drug arrests give residents of over-policed communities criminal records, which then reduce employment prospects and increase the likelihood of longer sentences for any future offenses.

The report concludes that ending the War on Drugs isn't going to end mass incarceration by itself, but drug policy reform can certainly play a role in significantly reducing incarceration rates.

## View gallery: 2016 U.S. drug prisoner statistics



Gallery source link: [Prison Policy Initiative](#)

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