PRISON POLICIES FACT SHEET

The prison population has increased from 300,000 people in the early 1970s to 2.3 million people today. There are nearly six million people on probation or on parole. One in every fifteen people born in the United States in 2001 is expected to go to jail or prison; one in every three black male babies born in this century is expected to be incarcerated.

- Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy, p. 15

25%
The percentage of the world’s prisoners incarcerated in America. The U.S. has 5% of the total world population.

Source: NAACP, Criminal Justice Fact Sheet

10x
Five times as many white people use drugs as black people, yet black people are sent to prison for drug offenses at 10 times the rate of white people.

Source: NAACP, Criminal Justice Fact Sheet

There are more than a half-million people in state or federal prisons for drug offenses today, up from just 41,000 in 1980.

- Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy, p. 15

40%
When age, education, school enrollment, region of residence and urban residence are statistically accounted for, past incarceration reduced subsequent wages by 11%, cut annual employment by nine weeks and reduced yearly earnings by 40%.

Source: Pew Charitable Trust, Collateral Costs, 2010

32%
Number of inmates given a mandatory minimum sentence who had little or no previous criminal record.

Source: Congressional Testimony and Reports, Chapter 7, Statistical Overview of Mandatory Minimum Penalties, 2011

Spending on jails and prisons by state and federal governments has risen from $6.9 billion in 1980 to nearly $80 billion today.

- Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy, p. 16

$50 billion
Amount taxpayers spend annually on state prisons.

Source: Families Against Mandatory Minimums, 2011

Between 1990 and 2005, a new prison opened in the United States every ten days.

- Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy, p. 260

$25 million
Amount the two largest private prison companies—GEO and Corrections Corporation of America—have spent on lobbying efforts. Combined, they make $3.3 billion in annual revenue.

Source: The Washington Post, “How For-Profit Prisons have become the Biggest Lobby No One Talks About,” 2015

For the first time in close to forty years, the country’s prison population did not increase in 2011. In 2012, the United States saw the first decline in its prison population in decades.

- Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy, p. 298