

Prison population is low but growing

No state has fewer residents incarcerated as a proportion of the total population than Vermont. Through unique approaches such as local Reparative Boards, the state has a history of reserving corrections facilities for the most serious offenders, with only 14% of those convicted incarcerated.³²

But Vermont's prison rate continues to rise, due in part to a higher volume of crime and tougher sentences.

the FACTS

- By 2011, the Vermont prison population is expected to increase 33%—the fifth highest rate of increase in the nation.³³
- Corrections experts refer to a higher volume of crime and a higher rate of convictions that receive jail time, including felonies, misdemeanors and motor vehicle offenses. Higher rates of pre-trial detention and returns also contribute to the significant increase in Vermont's prison population.
- The increase may also underscore a need for support systems designed to help high-risk populations avoid entering or returning to prison.³⁴ Potential strategies include aggressive high school dropout prevention, mandated juvenile drug treatment programs, and access to transitional housing.
- Vermont leads the nation in providing meaningful ways for offenders to restore themselves to their communities.³⁵ Vermont's community approach to crime places small-time offenders before local Reparative Boards, where they must listen to victim testimony, apologize, and agree to a monitored community service assignment. If they fail to honor the agreement, they are incarcerated.
- Transitional housing for ex-offenders is scarce, in some cases extending the time convicts spend in prison beyond the term sentenced.³⁶

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