



The Epidemic of Incarceration in Arizona

With only 5% of the world's total population but 25% of the world's prison population, the United States has the highest rate of imprisonment in the world, a rate four times the world average. Arizona carries a disproportionate burden of this epidemic of imprisonment, from one of the fastest rates of prison population growth to one of the highest percentages of prisoners in the custody of the burgeoning private prison industry. Here's a quick look at the scale of the problem in Arizona:

- According to a September 2010 report to the Arizona legislature from Arizona's Office of the Auditor General, "Arizona's prison population has grown faster than most other states' since at least 2000. According to a 2010 federal Bureau of Justice Statistics report, Arizona ranked third nation-wide and...first among western states in its average annual prison population growth rate between 2000 and 2008."
- According to that same report, the Department of Corrections "expects the prison population to continue to increase, to 50,000 inmates by 2016" and plans "to add another 6,500 private prison beds at an estimated cost of about \$640.7 million through 2017."
- A February 2012 report on Arizona's private prisons by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) revealed that "Arizona has enthusiastically embraced prison privatization, with 13% of the state prison population housed in private facilities (the 11th highest percentage in the nation)."
- The same AFSC report revealed that the private prison industry in Arizona ignores recidivism rates and operates with "virtually no state oversight whatsoever."
- Also according to the AFSC report, one of the three private prison companies operating in Arizona, Corrections Corporation of America, spent \$17.6 million dollars between 2000 and 2010 lobbying Congress and the federal government and over \$11,000 in campaign contributions in recent Arizona elections.
- According to the Sentencing Project, Latino/a people are incarcerated at nearly twice the rate of whites in Arizona, and black people are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate.

Sources

Intro: McChesney, Robert W., *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (New York: New Press, 2000), xx; http://www.prisonstudies.org/info/worldbrief/wpb_stats.php?area=all&category=wb_poporate; and http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2006nov_factsheet_incarceration.pdf. **First and second items:** http://www.azauditor.gov/Reports/State_Agencies/Agencies/Corrections_Department_of/Performance/10-08/10-08.pdf. **Third, fourth, and fifth items:** http://afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/AFSC_Arizona_Prison_Report.pdf. **Sixth item:** http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_stateratesofincbyraceandethnicity.pdf.