



Close to One Million People in Prisons and Jails -- Nearly Half of Total Population -- Have a Current Chronic Health Condition

We know from public health experts that people with chronic health conditions are especially at-risk to COVID-19. Studies of the health of people in prison and jail show that, **upwards of 40 percent have “current chronic illness:”** medical conditions that can include cancer, high blood pressure/hypertension, stroke-related problems, diabetes/high blood sugar, kidney-related problems, arthritis and rheumatism (whose treatments include drugs to suppress your immunity), asthma, and cirrhosis of the liver.¹ This research also shows that 50 percent of people incarcerated ever had a chronic illness, and the survey does not account for certain infectious diseases, like AIDS/HIV and Hepatitis-C. Other studies show that, among older people sentenced to prison for crimes, upwards of 70 percent have a current chronic illness.²

If the proportions studied by the U.S. Justice Department and other research entities hold true for the current population of individuals in prisons and jails, this means, nearly one million people (985,121) have a current chronic health condition among the adults in jails and state and federal prisons. That is approaching half of the total population incarcerated in the United States.

Table: Prison³ & Jail Populations by Age with Total Estimated Current Prison and Jail Population with a Chronic Illness.

	Prison Population Over Age 50	Prison Population Under Age 50	Jail Population for the 50 states (Sentenced, and Pretrial)	Total Estimated Current Prison and Jail Population with a Current Chronic Illness
<i>National</i>	288,800	1,169,700	736,800	985,121
<i>California</i>	30,363	97,346	82,440	95,053
<i>Florida</i>	23,338	72,813	54,002	68,491
<i>Illinois</i>	7,643	41,229	22,536	31,498
<i>Michigan</i>	9,153	29,608	16,990	25,617
<i>Ohio</i>	9,479	39,509	19,000	30,718
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	9,313	36,562	37,764	17,893
<i>Texas</i>	30,830	114,189	66,434	95,897

¹ Laura M. Maruschak and Marcus Berzofsky, Medical Problems of State and Federal Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011–12 (2016). Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Justice Department.

² Prison Health Care Costs and Quality: How and why states strive for high-performing system. (2017) Pew Charitable Trusts.

³ Prison population are from, "Sentenced Prisoners Under State and Federal Jurisdiction by Sex, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age, December 31, 2016," and jail populations from, "BJS Annual Survey of Jails 2016. (2018). Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.