



People's Bibliography on COVID-19 and Incarceration

This resource is designed to give readers an introductory education on the dangers of COVID-19 in prisons and immigration detention centers and the overall inhumanity of these facilities to better inform an abolitionist mindset. Below you will find brief overviews on relevant topics as well as additional reading materials for those who wish to learn more.

Prisons and immigration detention centers have always been detrimental to healthy human life. Now, COVID-19 is exacerbating the unsafe living conditions of these facilities and exposing them for what they are. There can be no reform for a system that is designed to violently harm the health and spirit of incarcerated individuals.

COVID-19 in prisons and detention centers

Incarceration facilities are some of the biggest COVID-19 hotspots based on their structural setup. Restrained movement, confined spaces, and limited medical care are making inmates incredibly vulnerable to the virus. Inmates are subjected to crowded living conditions—with two or more people sharing a small cell—which makes social distancing nearly impossible. Plus, 50% of inmates have pre-existing chronic disease and over 80,000 U.S. inmates are older than 60, making this population highly susceptible to the dangerous effects of COVID-19. Studies show that in these facilities, one infected person will spread the disease to 8.44 people on average. While some facilities are releasing inmates, these facilities are still operating at high-capacity and putting all of the inmates and staff at risk. Since August the state has released 18,000 inmates, but this is still far below the releasing rates necessary for keeping safe social distancing in incarceration facilities during the pandemic.

- New England Journal of Medicine: [Flattening to Curve for Incarcerated Populations—COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons](#)
- Stanford News: [Stanford Researchers Find COVID-19 Spreads Faster in American Jails Than on Cruise Ships](#)
- California Healthline: [California Prisons Are COVID Hotbeds Despite Billions Spent on Inmate Health](#)
- The Guardian: [‘Severe Inhumanity’: California Prisons Overwhelmed by Covid Outbreaks and Approaching Fires](#)
- Medium: [I’m Being Held at Border Detention Center. I’m Scared They’ll Let Us Die](#)
- The Appeal: [Coronavirus In Jails And Prisons](#)
- GT: [California’s Inmates Continued to Work During COVID-19 Spread](#)
- Reuters: [California to Release 8,000 Prisoners to Slow Pandemic](#)
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation: [Additional Actions to Reduce Population and Maximize Space](#)
- Los Angeles Times: [Tracking the Coronavirus in California State Prisons](#)
- The Mercury News: [Early Releases, Safety Measures Help Reduce COVID-19 Infections in California Prisons](#)



- **LA Times:**
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-20/adelanto-detainee-death>
- **LA times en español**
<https://www.latimes.com/espanol/california/articulo/2021-03-22/adelanto-detainee-death>
- **Agencia EFE**
<https://es-us.noticias.yahoo.com/mexicano-muere-72-horas-ser-203452536.html>
- **KTLA:**
<https://ktla.com/news/california/sick-detainee-released-by-ice-from-adelanto-immigration-facility-dies-3-days-later/>
- **Yahoo:**
<https://news.yahoo.com/ice-released-sick-detainee-adelanto-222759691.html>
- **Granthsla**
<https://us.granthshala.com/the-ice-launched-an-ailing-prisoner-from-the-adelanto-immigration-facility-he-died-three-days-later/>

COVID-19 spread in Adelanto

COVID-19 has raged through detention centers where packed spaces, problematic sanitary, and little access to masks makes it impossible for detained people to keep themselves safe. Adelanto Detention Center, a privately operated immigration detention center in San Bernardino County, has suffered a major COVID-19 outbreak in recent months, where 20% of detainees have tested positive. In an effort to control the spread, this detention center used a harmful chemical in its facility that is causing more harm than good. The chemical, an industrial disinfectant called HDQ Neutral, is causing additional poor health outcomes, such as respiratory irritation, asthma, and infertility. The situation in Adelanto Detention Center exemplifies the unsafe living conditions in immigration detention centers that have been exacerbated during this pandemic. As a result, a federal judge ordered that the detention center significantly reduce its population. Now, only 500 immigrants remain. This number is still too high given the inhospitable living conditions during the pandemic.

- EarthJustice: [Immigrants in Detention Facilities At Risk of Toxic Chemical Exposure, According to Newly Compiled Research](#)
- Desert Sun: [Nearly 20% of Detainees at Adelanto ICE Facility Have COVID-19](#)
- Los Angeles Times: [COVID-19 Cases Leap in Outbreak at ICE Detention Center](#)



- Law 360: [9th Cir. Says ICE Failed To Protect Detainees From COVID-19](#)
- Desert Sun: [Judge Orders ICE to Reduce Population at Adelanto Detention Center Aimed COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

Prison industrial complex

The U.S. has 25% of the world's prisons despite having only 5% of the global population. Currently, over 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the U.S. The trend towards mass incarceration began in the 1970s during Nixon's "war on crime," which criminalized petty drug crimes and increased policing in Black and brown neighborhoods. Although crime was typically very low before this era, the increase in policing and criminalization led to more arrests, and more people filling jails. Over the past 30 years, the prison system has become an industry. Many prisons are privatized, and corporations can purchase prison labor at a very low cost, ultimately driving profitability. This demand of labor then incentivises over-policing and locking up more folks to fuel the industry.

- Netflix: [13th](#)
- All Rise Magazine: [How Mass Incarceration Happened: A Brief History](#)
- Reformed: A Criminal Justice Podcast: [Crime Pays? The Prison Industrial Complex](#)
- The New Press: [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#)
- Prison Policy Initiative: [Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020](#)

Healthcare in detention centers

Prisons and immigration detention centers have always been detrimental to healthy human life. COVID-19 has only exacerbated the unsafe living conditions of these facilities and has exposed them for what they are. More than half the states hire for-profit private companies to provide medical services to inmates. Because these companies are contracted at a flat rate, providing health services minimizes their profits. Therefore, there is an incentive for these companies to provide fewer services in order to cut costs. Many inmates' requests for medical attention are ignored, and in some cases they are punished for making too many requests. This treatment is abhorrent under any circumstances, but especially given that incarcerated individuals have higher rates of disease than the general population and tend to suffer from infectious disease, mental health problems and substance use and addiction. These issues are only exacerbated in poor carceral living conditions.

- The New Yorker: [The Jail-Healthcare Crisis](#)
- American Academy of Family Physicians: [Incarceration and Health: A Family Medicine Perspective](#)
- The Washington Post: [Immigrant Detainees Get Poor Medical Care. Face Retaliation for Speaking Out, According to Democrat-led Report](#)

Gendered violence in detention centers

Incarcerated women are 30 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than free women. Even though women only make up 10% of the prison population, they account for 75% of reported assaults. In addition to the constant threat of sexual violence, incarcerated women also name dirty living environments, disease, and poor medical care as primary threats to their safety. Many of these women end up in prisons or in immigration detention centers because of



interpersonal violence in their homes and communities, which is then continued by institutional and structural violence. Activism movements focused on abolishing the carceral state must also address the domestic violence that often leads to more gendered violence in prisons at the hands of the state.

- Ms. Magazine: [Sexual Violence in Women's Prisons Reaches "Constitutional Proportions." Will Lawmakers Step In?](#)
- University of California Press: [In Search of Safety: Confronting Inequality in Women's Imprisonment](#)
 - A scholarly review of this book can be found [here](#).
- Critical Resistance: [Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex](#)
- Feminist Formations: [Ending our Expertise: Feminists, Scholarship, and Prison Abolition](#)

ICE hysterectomies

In September, nurse Dawn Wooten filed a whistleblower complaint against the Irwin County Detention Center after multiple women complained of forced hysterectomies by Dr. Amin. In many instances there was not a translator present, so these women were uninformed and unable to provide consent for the procedure. The motives are particularly concerning because independent doctors that serve ICE detainees are paid for the procedures they perform, and hysterectomies can be billed for thousands of dollars per procedure. This is yet another development in the United States' long, troubling history of forced sterilization of minority women.

- The New York Times: [Immigrants Say They Were Forced Into Unneeded Surgeries](#)
- NPR: [Whistleblower Alleges 'Medical Neglect,' Questionable Hysterectomies Of ICE Detainees](#)
- CNN: [In a Horrifying History of Forced Sterilizations, Some Fear the U.S. Is Beginning a New Chapter](#)