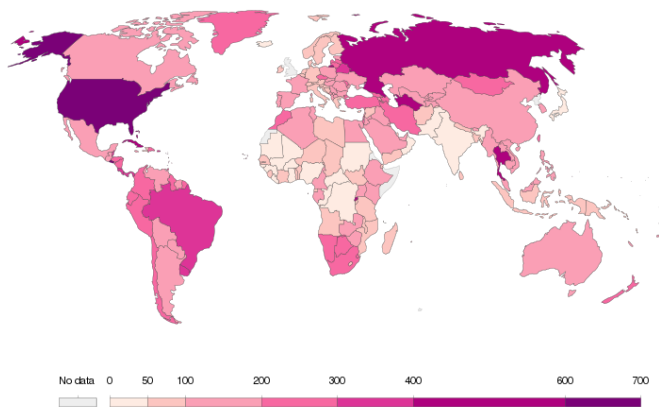


# What should Governments and Communities do about Mass Incarceration in the US?

Prison population rate: prisoners per 100,000  
Shown is data for 2018 or the latest available data before 2018.



Source: World Prison Brief (2018)

World map of prison population rates from World Prison Brief.

## Supporting Questions

1. What is the current mass incarceration situation in the U.S.?
2. What factors have contributed to U.S. mass incarceration?
3. What impact does mass incarceration have on our local, regional, and national communities?
4. How are some governments and communities responding to mass incarceration?

## High School - Democracy in Danger Series

### What should governments and communities do about Mass Incarceration in the US?

<b>C3 Standards</b>	D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens’ and institutions’ effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.
<b>Staging the Compelling Question</b>	Students will use a SIT protocol as they look at maps and infographics about global incarceration rates. Students will share their response to a small group.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
What is the current mass incarceration situation in the US?	What factors have contributed to mass incarceration in the US?	What impact does mass incarceration have on our local, regional, and national communities?	How have some governments and communities responded to mass incarceration?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Use source dependent questions to evaluate the United States’ mass incarceration situation”	Use source dependent questions to identify and explain some of the factors that have contributed to US mass incarceration.	Use source dependent questions to identify and explain some of the impacts that mass incarceration has on communities?	Use source dependent questions to learn how communities have responded to mass incarceration. Students will create a deliverable that answers the question:
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Source
Source A: <a href="#">World Mapper: Prisoners</a> (world mapper)  Source B: <a href="#">Mass Incarceration Statistics Excerpt</a>  Source C: <a href="#">Adult Incarceration Rates in the United States (wikipedia)</a>  Source D: <a href="#">World Incarceration Rates if States were countries</a>  Source E: <a href="#">State by State Data Portal</a>  Source F: <a href="#">What is Mass Incarceration Video</a> (Optional)	Source G <a href="#">Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 1</a>  Source H <a href="#">Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 2</a>  Source I <a href="#">Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 3</a>  Source J <a href="#">Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 4</a>  Source K <a href="#">Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 5</a>	Source N: <a href="#">Infographic: The Growth of Incarceration</a>  Source O: <a href="#">How mass incarceration affects communities</a> (CCAF)  Source P: <a href="#">Your Body Being Used: Where Prisoners Who Can't Vote Fill Voting Districts</a> (NPR)  Source Q: <a href="#">School to Prison Pipeline Persists</a> (ACLU)	Source R: <a href="#">What Communities Need Excerpt</a>  Source S - <a href="#">What Caused the Crime Decline?</a> (Brennan Center)  Source T: <a href="#">Community Organizations Role in Reducing Crime</a>  Source U: <a href="#">Focus on Places, Not People TED Talk</a>  Source V: <a href="#">3 Programs breaking down the School to Prison Pipeline</a>  Source W: <a href="#">How ‘the incarceration capital of America’ embraced criminal justice reform</a>

	<p>Source continued L  <a href="#">Militaryization of Police clip 6</a></p> <p>Source M  <a href="#">Why You Can't Blame Mass Incarceration on the War on Drugs</a> (Vox)</p>			
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<p><b>Summative Performance Task</b></p>	<p><b>ARGUMENT:</b> What should governments and communities do about mass incarceration in the United States? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that evaluates how we address this problem using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.</p>
	<p><b>EXTENSION.</b> Review the Sentencing Project's report, Decarceration Strategies: How 5 States Achieved Substantial Prison Population Reductions. Choose two</p>
<p><b>Taking Informed Action</b></p>	<p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> - Research the factors that influence mass incarceration in the US</p> <p><b>-ASSESS-</b> What impact does mass incarceration have on communities and how are communities and governments responding?</p> <p><b>ACT</b> - Rank and prioritize ways governments and communities can respond to the impact of mass incarceration on communities.</p>

## Overview

### Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of historical and contemporary social, political, and economic issues posed by mass incarceration. It is part of a series of lessons commissioned by the Democracy Project at the University of Virginia centered around the podcast *Democracy in Danger*. *Democracy in Danger* lessons share some basic characteristics. The compelling question will always start with the stem-- “What should we do about .. because that is [an essential question](#) we must ask of all of our citizens. In this case, the issue at hand is the impact of mass incarceration on United States communities. Additionally, *Democracy in Danger* lessons will lead students through a problem analysis characterized by the 4A approach (**asses** the problem, **analyze** the causes and effects of the problem, **address** potential solutions to the problem, **act** on a potential solution. We hope to make this type of problem analysis process a routine that young people can transfer to any new challenge that we face in our democracy and that it will pave the way for healthy deliberation with their fellow students, to collaboratively act together, and to forge healthy civic relationships that will strengthen our democracy.<sup>1</sup>

Note: This inquiry is expected to take three or four 50-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (e.g., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, featured sources, writing). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. This inquiry lends itself to differentiation and modeling of historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading the variety of sources.

### Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question, students will use dynamic maps, infographics, videos, and various articles to consider the social, economic, and political impact of mass incarceration on US communities. After that students will identify and discuss actions they believe governments and communities can take to address the impact of mass incarceration.

## Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, students will use the S.I.T strategy to consider surprising, interesting, troubling aspects about US mass incarceration while reading two different thematic maps - crime at the global and subnational levels.

Explain to students that during the next few days they will be learning about mass incarceration and it’s impact on the US communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Levine, P. (2016). The Question Each Citizen Must Ask. *Educational leadership*, 73(6), 30-34.

1. Ask students to refer to part 1 on their [Student Guide](#).
- 1- Spend 5-7 minutes reviewing [Source A](#) What information from this sources do you find Surprising, Interesting, and Troubling? What geographic patterns do you notice? What questions do these resources raise?
- 2- Once students complete the Part 1 lead a brief classroom discussion that allows students to share their thoughts and questions concerning mass incarceration based on their evaluation of source A.
- 4- Explain to the students that over the next few days they will be learning about mass incarceration in the United States and at the end, they will be tasked with answering the question, “What should governments and communities do about mass incarceration in the United States?”
- 5 Next, play [Source B](#) for the students introducing them to the Democracy in Danger podcast, Prison Pipeline, the podcast that inspired this inquiry activity. What is something you agree with in this podcast? What is something you may disagree with? Why?

## Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question asks students to address the question “What is the current mass incarceration situation in the US?” by answering a set of guided questions while watching a short video and interacting with a WebGIS map about state by state incarceration rates.

1. Introduce students to the compelling question, “What is the mass incarceration situation in the United States?” Explain that the answer to this question, as they noticed in part 1 varies based on geography and time period.
2. Direct students to part two of the student guide and explain they are to respond to the questions and prompts. If student access to technology is limited you can complete the activity together using one classroom computer and discuss the questions on the Student Guide.
3. Guide students to [Source C](#), [Source D](#), and [Source E](#). Model how the web map in Source K works.
4. At the conclusion of this activity, direct students to the [Student Guide](#) and have them construct a G.I.S.T that captures the current mass incarceration situation in the US based on their interactions with the Sources I, J, and K.
5. Have students share their G.I.S.T statements in small groups and have them identify one member of each group to share their G.I.S.T with the class.

This conversation will serve as a natural transition to supporting question #2, “What factors have contributed to mass incarceration in the United States?”.

### Featured Sources

- [Featured Source C](#) is a wikipedia map showing incarceration rates at the state level.
- [Featured Source D](#) is a bar graph comparing US state incarceration rates to worldwide national rates
- [Featured Source E](#) is the Sentencing Project’s resource, [State by State Portal](#).

## Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question asks students to address the question “What factors have contributed to mass incarceration in the US?”

Students will complete Part 3 of the [Student Guide](#) to identify and explain factors that have contributed to mass incarceration in the US.

### Procedure

1. Have students listen to sources B-F which are sound clips from the podcast, Prison Pipeline. Explain that these clips align with supporting questions 2 and 3. As you play these clips ask students to reflect and respond to the questions and prompts on the student guide.
2. Next, have students read Source M and compare the Vox article to Elizabeth Hinton’s claims in the Prison Pipeline podcast.
3. Once students complete Part 3 have them move onto the Part 4, and explore the question, “what impact does mass incarceration have on our local, state, and national communities?”
  - **Featured Sources G - L** - Excerpts from the Democracy in Danger episode, Prison Pipeline.
  - **Featured Source M** - [Why You Can’t Blame Mass Incarceration on the War on Drugs](#)

## Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question asks students to address the question ““What impact does mass incarceration have on our local, state, and national communities?””

The formative task is for students to work with sources N, O, P, and Q and respond to corresponding questions on the student guide.

### Procedure

1. Guide students to sources N, O, P, and Q.
2. Direct students to Part 4 of the [Student Guide](#) and have them read or view sources N, O, P, and Q.
3. Once students have completed Part 4, hold a classroom discussion on the question, “What impact does mass incarceration have on our local, state, and national communities?”
4. Next, transition students to Part 5 of the activity, and the next supporting question, “How have some governments and communities responded to mass incarceration?”

### Featured Sources

- Source N: [Infographic: The Growth of Incarceration](#)
- Source O: [How mass incarceration affects communities](#) (CCAF)
- Source P: [Your Body Being Used: Where Prisoners Who Can't Vote Fill Voting Districts](#) (NPR)
- Source Q: [School to Prison Pipeline Persists](#) (ACLU)

## Supporting Question 4

The fourth supporting question asks students to address the question “*How have some governments and communities responded to mass incarceration?*”

The formative task has students answer questions that correspond to sources R, T, U, V, and W.

1. Direct students to sources R, S, T, U, V, and W.
2. Students complete Part 5 of the [Student Guide](#).
3. Play for the students Source R from the Prison Pipeline podcast that shares a few possible solutions/responses to US mass incarceration.
4. Lead a class discussion on ways governments and communities have responded to US mass incarceration.
5. **Debrief**

To transition to the summative task lead a class discussion and/or a journal writing session. Prompts for journal writing include:

1. How might you respond to the prompt or essential question now?
2. What did you learn today? How does this information relate to the prompt or essential question?
3. What else do you want to know?

The following sources were selected to ...

- **Featured Source R:** [What Communities Need Excerpt](#)
- **Featured Source S -** [What Caused the Crime Decline?](#) (Brennan Center)
- **Featured Source T -** [Community Organizations Role in Reducing Crime](#)
- **Featured Source U -** [Focus on Places, Not People TED Talk](#)
- **Featured Source V -** [3 Programs breaking down the School to Prison Pipeline](#)
- **Featured Source W -** [How ‘the incarceration capital of America’ embraced criminal justice reform](#)

## Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have assessed the problem posed by hate groups, analyzed the causes and effects of their proliferation, and addressed some potential solutions to this danger to our democracy. To demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims, students will respond to the prompt “**What should governments and communities do about mass incarceration in the United States?**”

Student responses may extend their arguments by taking time to write legislative resolutions, Flipgrids, speeches as if they were delegates, or OpEds for an imaginary newspaper suggesting possible government or community solutions to issues raised by mass incarceration.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by raising awareness of this activity in their community.



## Appendix A: Sources

- Source A: [World Mapper: Prisoners](#) (world mapper)
- Source B: [Mass Incarceration Statistics Excerpt](#)
- Source C: [Adult Incarceration Rates in the United States](#) (wikipedia)
- Source D: [World Incarceration Rates if States were countries](#)
- Source E: [State by State Data Portal](#)
- Source F: [What is Mass Incarceration Video](#) (Optional)
- Source G: [Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 1](#)
- Source H: [Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 2](#)
- Source I: [Relationship between War on Poverty/War on Crime clip 3](#)
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