

Race and Incarceration in the US

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INCARCERATION RATES

AMONG FOUNDING NATO COUNTRIES



Incarceration rates per 100,000 population

Source: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2018.html>

The ten countries with the highest incarceration rates are:

1. United States (737)
2. Russia (615)
3. Ukraine (350)
4. South Africa (334)
5. Poland (235)
6. Mexico (196)
7. Brazil (193)
8. Spain (144)
9. Kenya (130)
10. Netherlands (128)

STATE POLICY DRIVES MASS INCARCERATION

(Number of people incarcerated by federal, state or local governments, 1925 – 2015)

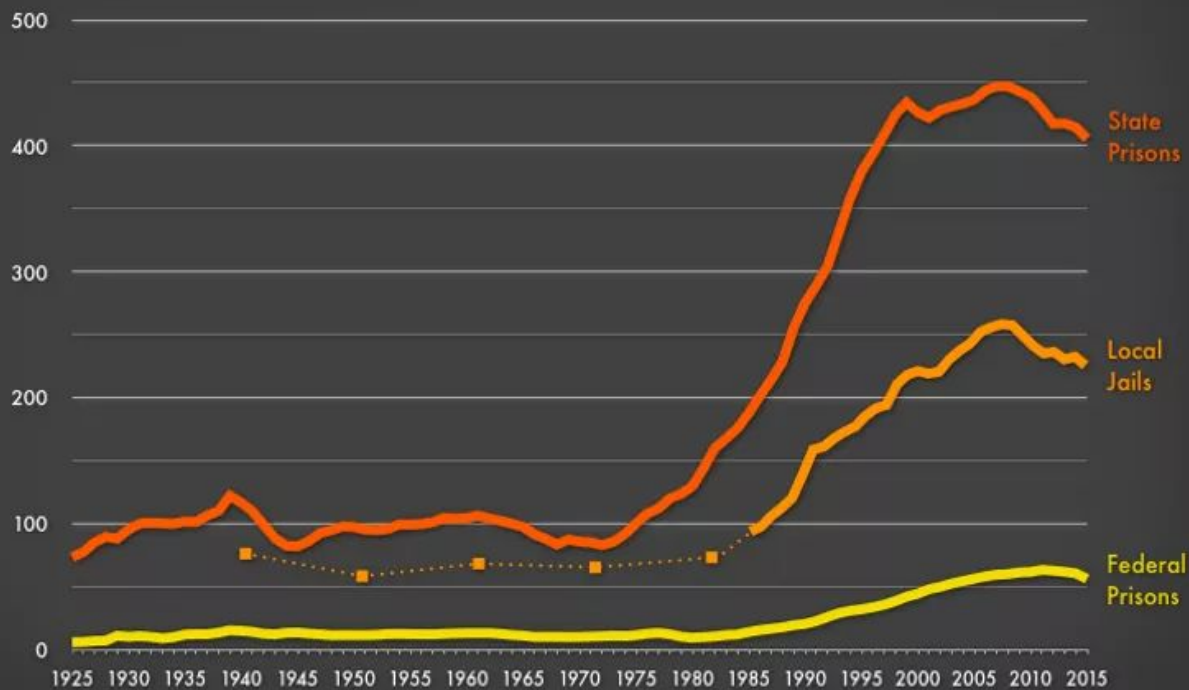
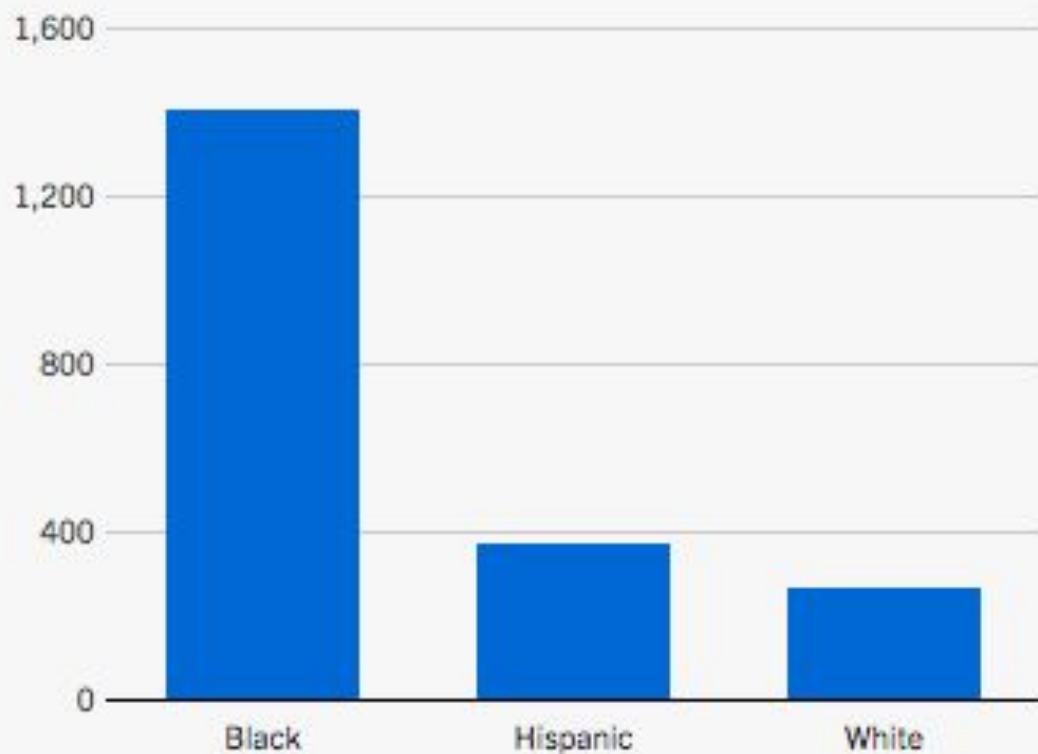


Figure 1. Average rate of incarceration by race and ethnicity, per 100,000 population



We Should Be Careful About “Mathematizing” Race

- Statistics about concepts like race can be misleading and can be used to mask racism.
- Greater ‘objectivity’ in numerical measures often just masks bias, and makes it more destructive

The Use of Algorithms in the Carceral System

- The carceral system uses predictive algorithms in several ways: (1) determining sentencing, (2) determining who is granted parole, and (3) a replacement for cash bail (in some states).
- Historically, these algorithms have taken into account age, race, criminal history, employment, school grades, and neighborhood.
- COMPAS (in use today) relies on criminal record, age, gender, and answers to dozens of questions about marital and family relationships, living situation, school and work performance, substance abuse, and more.

Breakout Discussion

1. What are some ways to identify when statistics are being used in misleading or racist ways?
2. Do we have the right to use aggregate data for making predictions about individuals? Are we wasting valuable information if we don't?
3. Are there better alternatives to the use of predictive algorithms in the carceral system?
4. How can we (as mathematicians and scientists) encourage better practices with statistics and algorithms?

Final Thoughts