

Oklahoma's Long Sentences Undermine Certainty, Cost Taxpayers Money, and Provide No Public Safety Return

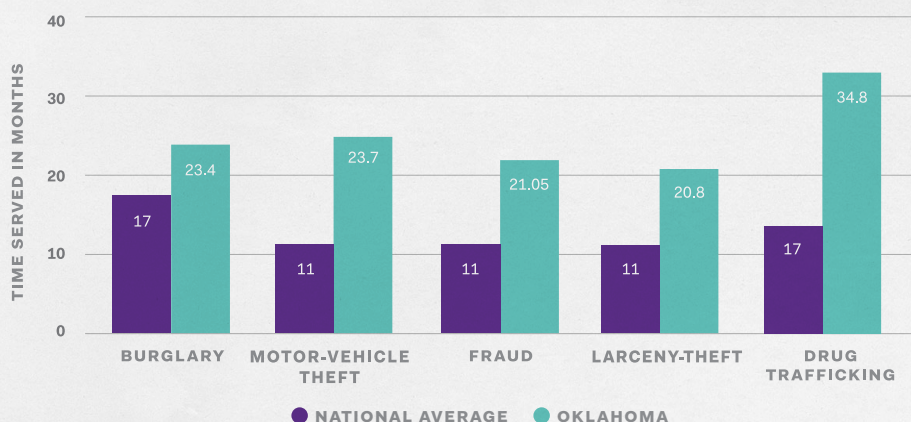
Despite years of progress, Oklahoma still has the fourth-highest imprisonment rate in the United States driven by the very long time people in Oklahoma spend in prison compared to those in other states. Research has long found that harsher sentences do nothing to deter future crime, and may in fact increase recidivism while wasting taxpayer dollars. Yet Oklahoma's criminal code continues to allow, and prosecutors and judges continue to embrace, extraordinarily punitive sentence terms that vary from county to county and DA district to DA district.

Oklahoma's prison sentences are much longer than other states.

People in Oklahoma spend nearly twice as long incarcerated for common property crimes like larceny and fraud, and more than twice as long for motor vehicle theft, than the typical state in the U.S. Oklahomans spend more than twice as long for drug sale or trafficking convictions—35 months in Oklahoma compared to an average of 17 months in other states. Moreover, for violent crimes carrying the longest sentences, Oklahomans spent 21% longer behind bars. Overall, the median time served for people released in Oklahoma's prisons in FY 2021 was a full year longer than the national average.

People in Oklahoma spend around 90% longer in prison for larceny, theft, and fraud, 105% longer for drug sale and trafficking, and 115% longer in prison for motor vehicle theft than in the average state.

Median time served in months for common property and drug crimes in Oklahoma vs. national average



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Corrections Reporting Program, 2018; Oklahoma Department of Corrections, FY 2021

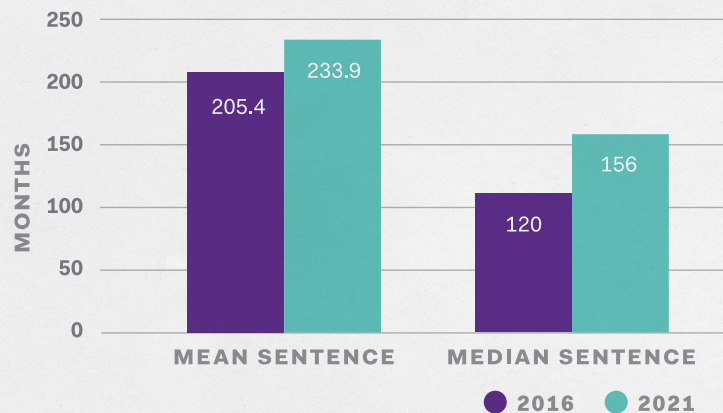
Sentences have grown significantly in the last 5 years.

Prison sentences in Oklahoma are extremely punitive, and they're getting longer by the day. In FY 2021, the average person in the state prison system had a 233.9-month (19.5 year) sentence, a 28-month increase from FY 2016.

As of July 2021, there were 8,027 people imprisoned on sentences of 20 years or more—higher than Oklahoma's entire prison population in 1984.

Prison sentences have grown significantly since FY 2016, with mean sentences increasing by 28 months to 19.5 years and median sentences increasing by 36 months to 13 years.

Prison population snapshot by mean and median sentence in months, FY16 vs. FY21

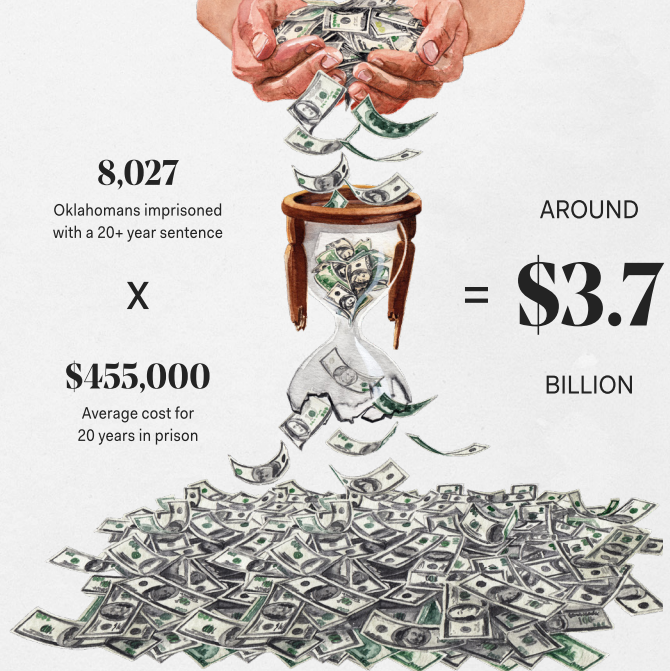


A startling 3,774 people in prison are facing the prospect of spending the rest of their days behind bars as they serve out life or virtual-life sentence terms. One in every 10 women and 1 in every 6 men in prison as of July 2021 have been sentenced to die in prison.

Oklahoma's reliance on lengthy sentences is costing the state millions while offering taxpayers no more safety in return.

Research shows that incarceration is among the least effective and most expensive approaches to crime prevention and yet still, annual general fund spending on corrections nearly quadrupled from FY 1990 to FY 2020, growing from \$155 million to more than half a billion dollars, \$552 million.

Oklahoma currently spends approximately \$455,000, or nearly half a million dollars, to hold a single person in prison for 20 years. As a result of Oklahoma's harsh sentencing practices, taxpayers will spend an estimated \$3.7 billion to hold the 8,027 people currently in prison with sentences of 20 or more years.



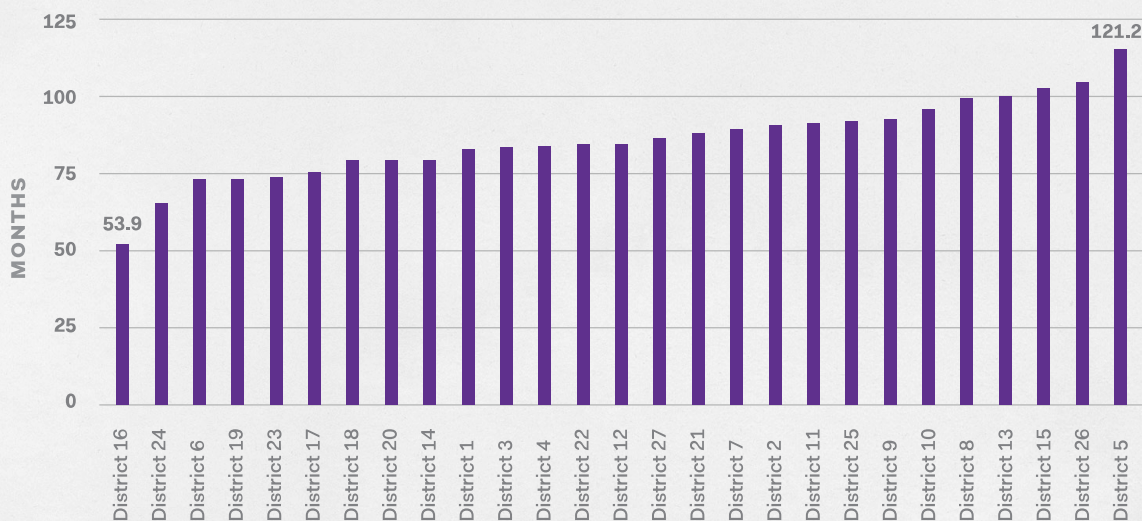
Oklahomans are not treated the same by the criminal justice system and some people are unfairly punished because of where they live.

Sentence terms for the same crime vary dramatically from one county to another and DA district to DA district, thus creating a system of injustice by jurisdiction. In District 16 (Latimer and LeFlore counties), the average sentence in FY 2021 was almost 54 months, or around 4.5 years. In District 5 (Comanche and Cotton counties), it was over 10 years.

As one currently incarcerated woman put it after meeting people in prison convicted of the same crime but with significantly shorter sentences, "It seems like some counties make their own laws."

Average prison sentences vary dramatically across DA Districts, with sentence terms for people convicted in District 5 more than twice as long as those issued in DA District 16.

Mean controlling sentence term in months for new court commitments by DA District, FY 2021



It is time for Oklahoma lawmakers to safely and smartly reduce sentence lengths in Oklahoma, helping to lower the prison population and make the criminal code more consistent across the state.