

A look inside Texas' prison system



Texas prisons: What to know

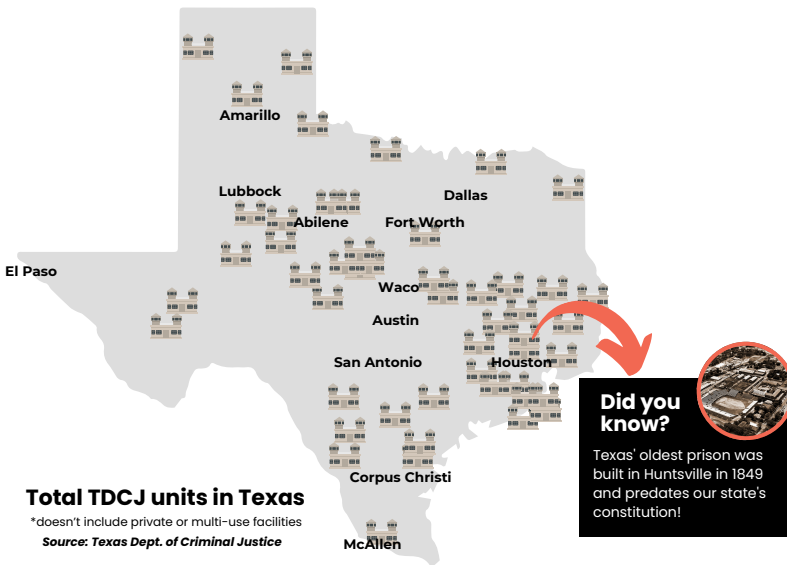


Photo source: Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice

Who make up TDCJ staff?

TDCJ employs over 33,000, **nearly two-thirds of whom are frontline workers** dealing with Texas inmates and parolees.

- 60% are correctional officers and about 5% are parole officers.
- **Turnover among staff occurred at a 25.9% rate** in the 2023 fiscal year.

While high, that represents a significant improvement over the 32.5% turnover rate from the prior year.

What is TDCJ's budget?

For the 2024-25 biennium, TDCJ has an \$8.5 billion budget, making it one of the largest state agencies in Texas. The per-inmate cost varies significantly by facility, but it averages to **\$77.49 per day per inmate**.



Photo source: Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice

There were **132,955 inmates** in Texas prison facilities in April 2024. Of the roughly 40,000 Texans released from state prisons every year, nearly half are rearrested within three years, and between 15-20% return to prison.

Who is in charge of the state's prisons?



The **Texas Department of Criminal Justice**, the state agency in charge of the prison system, oversees adult defendants who were sentenced in state court after conviction of a state crime.

TDCJ houses inmates in about 100 facilities, between prisons, private prisons, state jails and other kinds of facilities.

- The capacity of these facilities varies widely, from a few dozen to over 4,000 inmates per facility.

What TDCJ doesn't do:

- It does **NOT** oversee either juvenile defendants or those convicted of a federal crime.
- Also, it **does not oversee local jails** administered by sheriffs at the county level where defendants are mostly waiting for trial.

Texas inmates: A graying population, and mostly men



The average inmate in August 2023 was:

- **41 years old**, which reflects an aging population in TDCJ
- **over 90% are men** (119,448)
- **less than 10%** are women (10,205)

Most inmates are in prison because they committed a violent offense:

- **over 60%** (79,423) of inmates are being held on violent offenses
- **15%** (19,144) on drug-related offenses
- **9%** (11,214) on property offenses

While most of these inmates will reenter society at some point, the sad fact is that **many inmates will reoffend and, for some, that means a return to prison.**

Recidivism rates vary for prison and state jail inmates:

- **46.5%** of prison inmates will be rearrested within three years, with 14.7% reincarcerated.
- **60.1%** of state jail inmates will be rearrested within three years, with 20.5% reincarcerated.



Did you know?

Texas 2036 **supported the 2021 legislation** that requires state agencies to make more detailed information available to the public.

How do we prepare inmates to successfully reenter society? Education is key.



Photo source: Windham School District

Education is shown to reduce recidivism. TDCJ has programs at both the secondary education and higher education levels to equip inmates with the tools to succeed when they leave prison.

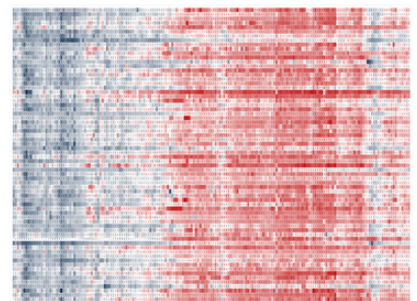
The goals of TDCJ's education programs are to:

- **improve** an inmate's odds of getting employment post-release,
- **reduce** their odds of reoffending, and
- **reduce** the taxpayer burden associated with confinement and incarceration.

Extreme heat in Texas prisons

In 2023, the average in-prison temperature exceeded 90 degrees on 69 days, **to the detriment of the safety of inmates and staff alike.**

In-Prison Temp. Range
56° 85° 106° **69 Days** Average in-prison temperature exceeded 90° in 2023



Harmful conditions - including excessive heat - negatively impact TDCJ staff retention and inmate health and wellness, which diminish the ability of inmates to take advantage of education and rehabilitation opportunities.

Periods of excessive heat contribute to significant increases in **inmate violence, inmate suicide incidents, and inmate deaths.**

Extreme heat also contributes to **increased prison staff turnover.** At a committee hearing in 2022, TDCJ's executive director testified that working in air conditioned spaces would improve staff recruitment and retention.

How is Texas 2036 taking action?

Texas 2036 has been working to **support lawmakers with the best available data and research to help improve prison conditions**, including a lack of air conditioning in many Texas prisons and increasing access to more educational options for Texas inmates.