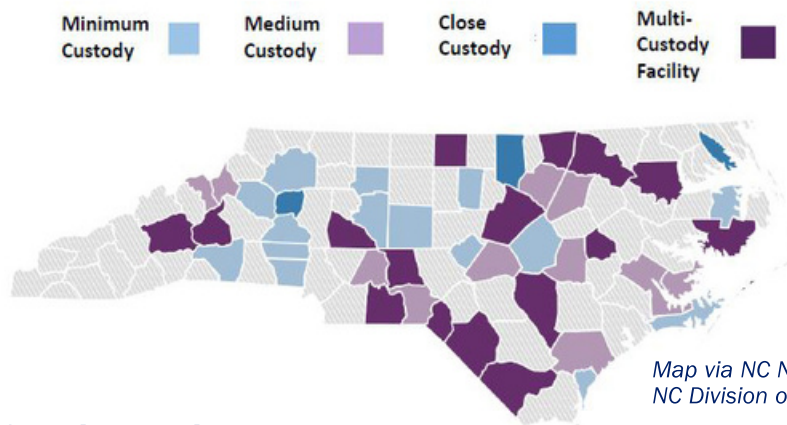


# North Carolina Prisons

About **31,000 people** are in the NC prison system.  
There are **54 state prison facilities**.



## The Reality of North Carolina's Prisons

- **Many behind bars for nonviolent crimes:** In FY 2024, North Carolina imposed 27,088 felony sentences, and 75% led to prison time. 70% of those active sentences were for nonviolent offenses.
- **Most will return home:** Nearly everyone in prison will reenter our communities. Only 1,725 people are serving life without parole.
- **Families left behind:** Around 20,000 North Carolina children have a parent who is incarcerated.
- **Understaffing:** High turnover has left prisons seriously understaffed — even some chaplain positions now depend on churches and community volunteers.
- **Aging behind bars:** Incarceration accelerates aging. Incarcerated people over the age of 20 are physiologically (meaning in terms of health and body function) approximately 10-15 years older than their biological age. Over 25% of those in prison are over 50.

### Daily Cost Per Person Comparison By Custody Level

Minimum Custody	Medium Custody	Close Custody	Daily Average
\$128.22	\$151.58	\$174.22	\$148.67



# Solitary Confinement

**Nearly one-quarter of the individuals in NC state prisons experience solitary confinement.**

## **The Human and Public Costs of Solitary Confinement in North Carolina**

- **Years in isolation:** Some people remain in solitary confinement for years—often in cells no larger than a parking space.
- **Used for punishment and control:** Solitary is imposed both as discipline for prison infractions and as a temporary holding cell before transfer—yet “temporary” can stretch weeks.
- **Lives lost:** Between 2021 and 2023, 14 people died while in solitary confinement.
- **Lasting harm:** People who spent time in solitary died at more than twice the rate of those who never experienced it.
- **Higher risk after release:** The odds of returning to prison were 40–70% higher for those who had been held in solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement doesn’t just isolate, it undermines public safety.



Source: Katherine LeMasters, Sara N. Levintow, Jennifer Lao, Erin McCauley, Craig Waleed, Zaire Cullins, M. Forrest Behne, Lauren Brinkley-Rubinstein, “The use of solitary confinement and in-custody mortality in North Carolina State Prisons,” 2021–2023, *Population Health*, Volume 32, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2025.101865>.

### **Common conditions of solitary confinement:**

No natural light

Meals are sent through a small slot in the door

Visitation is limited to attorney visits

Separated from staff and other people in prison for 22-24 hours per day

No access to the library or programming

Reduced access to medical treatment

1 hour per 5 days to recreate individually and/or shower