People with mental illness deserve help, not handcuffs. Yet people with mental illness are overrepresented in our nation’s jails and prisons. We need to reduce criminal justice system involvement and increase investments in mental health care.

About 2 in 5 people who are incarcerated have a history of mental illness (37% in state and federal prisons and 44% held in local jails).

An estimated with serious mental illness are held in solitary confinement inside U.S. prisons.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for people held in local jails.

Nearly 1 in 4 people shot and killed by police officers between 2015–2020 had a mental health condition.

66% of women in prison reported having a history of mental illness, almost twice the percentage of men in prison.

4,000 people with serious mental illness are held in solitary confinement inside U.S. prisons.

3 in 5 people (63%) with a history of mental illness do not receive mental health treatment while incarcerated in state and federal prisons.

Less than half of people with a history of mental illness receive mental health treatment while held in local jails.

Among incarcerated people with a mental health condition, non-white individuals are more likely to be held in solitary confinement, be injured and stay longer in jail.

People who have health care coverage upon release from incarceration are more likely to engage in services that reduce recidivism.

About 3 in 5 people (37%) with a history of mental illness do not receive mental health treatment while incarcerated in state and federal prisons.

Data from the U.S. Department of Justice and other select sources. Find citations for this resource at nami.org/mhstats