



Bureau of Justice Statistics
Special Report

Prison Admissions and Releases, 1983

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Thirty States participated in the first annual National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) for 1983. These States reported data on 144,804 persons who entered prison and 135,179 persons who were released from prison. These prisoners represented more than three-fifths of the Nation's total State prison admissions and releases for 1983.

- More than 93% of those admitted or released were men. Male offenders were more likely than females to have violated parole, to have committed a violent crime, to have received a longer sentence, and to have served longer in prison.
- Approximately 54% of those admitted or released were whites and 45% were blacks. Blacks were more likely than whites to be admitted or released for a violent crime, especially robbery.
- Almost a fifth of those admitted to prison were parole violators.
- About half of those admitted to prison had been convicted of burglary (28%), robbery (14%), or larceny (11%).
- The median sentence for those admitted to prison in 1983 was 36 months; the median time served, including prior jail credits, for those released was 19 months.
- Whites and blacks admitted to prison in 1983 received the same average sentence lengths, once differences in their

The National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) began in 1983 as a joint effort of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and State correctional agencies. Through the NCRP participating States provide detailed information on each offender moving through their prison and parole systems.

The NCRP improves previous reporting programs by integrating the incarceration and parole phases of a sentence and by making available to the public data on hundreds of thousands of sentenced offenders through the Criminal Justice Archive at the University of Michigan.

This special report on those admitted to and released from State prisons in 1983 presents data derived from more than 325,000 individual records of offenders in 30 States. It covers such topics as the demographic characteristics

and conviction offenses of those entering and leaving prison, sentence lengths for those admitted to prison in States with determinate and indeterminate sentencing, and time served in jail and prison for various offenses. These data help us to understand differences among jurisdictions and the effects of varying sentencing and release policies.

Data for 1984, to be available in the fall of 1986, will cover 35 States with more than 400,000 offender records. As we look forward to the inclusion of all States in this national series, we at BJS gratefully acknowledge the essential contributions to this data collection effort of numerous professionals in State corrections and parole agencies.

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geographical and offense distributions were taken into account. Among those released in 1983, there was no consistent difference between blacks and whites in the amount of time served across 20 offense categories.

- About a third of the persons leaving prison in 1983 had previously served time in prison for a felony. On average those who had previously served time in prison received sentences about 12% longer and actually served about 11% longer in prison than those without a previous prison term.

- During the year, 578 persons with life sentences left prison in 21 reporting States. Nearly three-fourths of these prisoners were convicted of murder. The median time served on a life sentence by those released for the first time was 10 years and 9 months.

ADMISSIONS

Thirty States reported 144,804 persons entering their prisons in 1983. These States accounted for 63% of the Nation's total State prison admis-

averaged 5.6 months. It was longest for the crimes of assault (8.3 months), rape (7.9 months), other sexual assault (7.6 months), and murder (7.6 months). It was shortest for kidnaping (2.2 months) and arson (2.6 months). For all violent offenders released from prison, jail time averaged about 1 1/2 months longer than for those released for property offenses (5.6 months vs. 4.1 months). Jail time for drug offenders averaged 4.8 months.

State differences in time served

The 19-month median time served for inmates leaving prison in 1983 resulted from an array of different sentencing and correctional practices across the States. For this reason as well as limitations in the comparability of reported data (see notes to table 10), caution is recommended in comparing time served in different States. In some States, for example, relatively high proportions of exiting prisoners were violent offenders. It would be expected that this would have an effect on the overall time served in these States.

Wisconsin and Georgia furnish examples of how time served may be associated with a State's offense distribution. Wisconsin's 20-month median time served for all releases was longer than that for most States, and so was its proportion of violent offenders among released prisoners (44.7%, table 10). Georgia's relatively low median time served of 13 months was associated with a relatively low proportion of violent offenders (27.1%).

In five States the median time served for violent offenses exceeded the median of 30 months for all reporting States by at least 6 months. In 10 States the median for violent crimes was at least 6 months below the median for all reporting States. Only one State exceeded by 6 months or more the 15-month median for property crimes. In four States the medians for property offenders were at least 6 months shorter than the overall median.

Prisoners in determinate sentencing States represented 57% of all reported releases in 1983. Because only three determinate sentencing States—California, Colorado, and Illinois—reported jail time, it is not possible to make broad comparisons between time served in determinate and indeterminate jurisdictions. Compared to the median of 19 months for all released offenders in reporting States, time served was longer in California (22 months), the same in Colorado, and lower in Illinois (12 months). For violent offenders,

Table 11. First releases from State prisons, 1983: Total time served by offense and sex

| Most serious offense | Percent of first releases | Male | | Female | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| | | Time served in jail and prison | | Time served in jail and prison | | |
| | | Median | Mean | Median | Mean | |
| All offenses | 100.0% | 19 mos. | 26.6 mos. | 100.0% | 15 mos. | 19.2 mos. |
| Violent offenses | 34.8% | 30 | 38.7 | 25.5% | 24 | 29.5 |
| Murder | 2.3 | 80 | 91.5 | 2.3 | 58 | 63.9 |
| Manslaughter | 2.7 | 33 | 36.6 | 5.1 | 27 | 29.9 |
| Rape | 2.0 | 47 | 54.3 | ... | — | — |
| Other sexual assault | 2.6 | 29 | 34.5 | .5 | — | — |
| Robbery | 14.7 | 30 | 36.7 | 9.6 | 25 | 28.6 |
| Assault | 3.3 | 25 | 29.0 | 6.6 | 18 | 20.3 |
| Kidnaping | .8 | 33 | 41.4 | .5 | 26 | 40.9 |
| Other violent | 1.4 | 14 | 18.3 | 1.9 | 16 | 20.8 |
| Property offenses | 46.0% | 16 | 19.7 | 53.1% | 12 | 15.2 |
| Burglary | 25.4 | 17 | 21.1 | 7.1 | 15 | 17.3 |
| Arson | .7 | 21 | 24.9 | 1.2 | 19 | 23.1 |
| Auto theft | 2.0 | 15 | 17.4 | .8 | — | — |
| Forgery/fraud | 4.7 | 16 | 20.5 | 19.9 | 13 | 15.9 |
| Larceny | 11.0 | 12 | 16.5 | 21.5 | 11 | 13.7 |
| Stolen property | 1.6 | 13 | 18.3 | 1.3 | 7 | 10.5 |
| Other property | 1.5 | 12 | 15.1 | 1.3 | 11 | 12.6 |
| Drug offenses | 4.3% | 15 | 19.1 | 11.9% | 13 | 16.9 |
| Public-order offenses | 8.6% | 10 | 13.2 | 7.6% | 6 | 10.3 |
| Other offenses | 1.4% | 16 | 18.2 | 1.9% | 12 | 13.4 |
| Number of releases | 62,955 | 38,593 | | 4,834 | 2,872 | |

Note: Data on offense distributions are based on all first releases for which the most serious offense and time served in prison and/or jail were reported. Calculations of time served were restricted to first releases for which prison and prior jail time were reported.
 — Too few cases for calculation of median and mean time served.
 ... Less than .05%.

Table 12. First releases from State prisons, 1983: Total time served by offense and race

| Most serious offense | Percent of first releases | White | | Black | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| | | Time served in jail and prison | | Time served in jail and prison | | |
| | | Median | Mean | Median | Mean | |
| All offenses | 100.0% | 18 mos. | 24.6 mos. | 100.0% | 13 mos. | 27.9 mos. |
| Violent offenses | 30.7% | 29 | 36.0 | 37.8% | 31 | 40.9 |
| Murder | 2.0 | 71 | 81.5 | 2.6 | 88 | 97.7 |
| Manslaughter | 2.6 | 32 | 34.1 | 3.1 | 33 | 37.8 |
| Rape | 1.8 | 46 | 49.0 | 1.8 | 48 | 59.4 |
| Other sexual assault | 3.3 | 28 | 33.4 | 1.5 | 31 | 37.0 |
| Robbery | 11.1 | 30 | 34.8 | 19.2 | 30 | 37.8 |
| Assault | 7.6 | 24 | 28.2 | 8.6 | 24 | 28.9 |
| Kidnaping | .9 | 35 | 42.0 | .7 | 32 | 41.8 |
| Other violent | 1.4 | 15 | 18.2 | 1.3 | 14 | 19.0 |
| Property offenses | 43.5% | 16 | 19.6 | 46.3% | 15 | 19.1 |
| Burglary | 26.1 | 17 | 20.9 | 21.8 | 16 | 21.2 |
| Arson | .9 | 21 | 24.0 | .5 | 21 | 23.8 |
| Auto theft | 2.0 | 17 | 18.3 | 1.8 | 13 | 15.9 |
| Forgery/fraud | 6.3 | 15 | 19.2 | 5.1 | 15 | 19.5 |
| Larceny | 10.2 | 13 | 17.2 | 13.9 | 12 | 15.3 |
| Stolen property | 1.4 | 13 | 16.8 | 1.8 | 13 | 19.3 |
| Other property | 1.6 | 12 | 15.1 | 1.4 | 13 | 17.4 |
| Drug offenses | 9.9% | 16 | 18.3 | 7.0% | 14 | 19.0 |
| Public-order offenses | 9.1% | 9 | 12.6 | 7.8% | 10 | 13.5 |
| Other offenses | 1.8% | 16 | 17.9 | 1.1% | 16 | 17.6 |
| Number of releases | 35,754 | 22,190 | | 30,249 | 19,275 | |

Note: Data on offense distributions are based on all first releases for which the most serious offense and time served in prison and/or jail were reported. Calculations of time served were restricted to first releases for which prison and prior jail time were reported.

time served was the same as the overall figure in California and lower in Colorado and Illinois. For property offenses, inmates in Colorado and California served longer than all released prisoners in reporting States; those in Illinois served shorter.

Time served by sex and race

For every crime category examined with the exception of "other violent" offenses, men released from prison in 1983 served longer than women (table 11). This was true whether the com-

| | Number of re-releases | Percent of those released with a prior felony incarceration |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| All releases | 46,412 | 32.4% |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 42,975 | 33.5% |
| Female | 3,422 | 18.7 |
| Race | | |
| White | 27,501 | 31.7% |
| Black | 17,791 | 33.6 |
| Other | 609 | 42.4 |
| Selected offenses | | |
| Violent offenses | 16,794 | 29.8% |
| Murder | 1,063 | 26.5 |
| Robbery | 6,354 | 33.6 |
| Assault | 3,345 | 38.5 |
| Property offenses | 22,026 | 34.2 |
| Burglary | 12,039 | 35.2 |
| Larceny | 4,594 | 33.5 |
| Drug offenses | 4,031 | 30.0 |

Note: Data on the felony incarceration history of prisoners released in 1983 were reported for 99.5% of the 46,548 prisoners released by the following 13 States: Alabama, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

parison was made between median time served or mean time served. For violent offenses considered as a group, men served a median of 6 months longer than women; for property offenses the difference was 4 months. One of the largest differences was for the crime of murder: men served a median of 80 months, women 58 months.

For all reported releases, blacks as a group served somewhat longer than whites: a median of 1 month longer and a mean of 3.3 months longer (table 12). This is consistent with the higher proportion of blacks released for violent offenses (37.8%) compared to whites (30.7%). Robbery accounted for almost all of this difference in the percentage released for violent crimes: 18.2% of blacks compared to 11.1% of whites had been serving time for robbery as the most serious offense.

Among specific violent offenses blacks served longer median times in jail and prison for murder, manslaughter, rape, and "other sexual assault." Whites served longer for kidnaping and "other violent" offenses. There was no difference in median time served for robbery and assault.

For property offenses blacks generally served less time than whites. Blacks served a median of 1 month less than whites for burglary and larceny and 4 months less for auto theft. There

| Selected offense | Mean sentence length ^a | | Mean total time served | | Mean percent of sentence served ^b | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|--|-----|
| | Prior incarceration: Yes | No | Prior incarceration: Yes | No | Prior incarceration: Yes | No |
| All offenses | 64 mos. | 57 mos. | 31 mos. | 28 mos. | 74% | 62% |
| Violent offenses | 96 | 79 | 41 | 38 | 71 | 65 |
| Robbery | 101 | 77 | 40 | 36 | 68 | 65 |
| Assault | 67 | 52 | 33 | 30 | 79 | 71 |
| Property offenses | 48 | 42 | 25 | 21 | 74 | 59 |
| Burglary | 50 | 46 | 26 | 22 | 76 | 58 |
| Larceny | 40 | 35 | 23 | 19 | 72 | 60 |
| Drug offenses | 61 | 50 | 27 | 22 | 70 | 56 |

Note: Of the 46,412 releases with information on felony incarceration history, 87% had data on sentence length, 78% on time served and 77% on time served as a percent of the maximum sentence.
^aSentence length refers to the maximum sentence of the most serious offense. Mean sentence length excludes those with sentences of life and death.
^bSentence length refers to the total maximum sentence imposed that an offender must serve for all offenses.

was no difference between the races for arson, forgery/fraud, and stolen property. "Other property" was the only property offense for which blacks served longer than whites.

Whites served a median of 2 months longer than blacks for drug offenses and 1 month less for public-order offenses.

Prior felony incarceration

About a third (32.4%) of the prisoners released in 1983 had previously been incarcerated for a felony (table 13). Males were more likely than females to have a prior incarceration history for a felony (33.5% vs. 18.7%). There was little difference between whites and blacks.

The more serious offenses tended to have smaller percentages of prisoners with prior records, although the variation was not great: 29.8% of those released for violent offenses vs. 34.2% of those released for property offenses had previously been incarcerated for a felony.

Prisoners released in 1983 who had served time for a past felony had received sentences on average 7 months longer (or 12% more) than those with no prison history (table 14). Those with a prior imprisonment had sentences averaging 17 months longer for violent offenses, 6 months longer for property offenses, and 11 months longer for drug offenses. The difference was especially large for those convicted of robbery: those with a prior felony incarceration received an average sentence of 101 months, compared to 77 months for those with no such history.

Time served in prison and jail was

also longer for those with a prior felony incarceration (31 months vs. 28 months).⁴ A prior felony incarceration had a greater impact on the time served by drug and property offenders than on time served by violent offenders. In addition, prisoners with a prior felony incarceration served a greater proportion of their sentence before release (74%) than other released prisoners (62%).

Life sentences

During 1983, 780 persons with life sentences left correctional custody in 21 reporting States. Three-fourths of these prisoners (578) were released to the community. The rest were transferred to mental or medical facilities or to Federal prisons or prisons in other States, were released on appeal, or died.

Nearly all of the 578 offenders with life sentences (97.7%) had committed violent offenses (table 15). Murderers were 73.3% of those released from a life sentence; rapists and robbers were an additional 19.8%. Nearly 25% of those released with life sentences had previously served time in prison for a felony conviction.

The median time served on life sentences by those released from prison for the first time was 10 years and 9 months.

⁴Prisoners in the 13 States that provided data on prior prison experience served longer than prisoners in other States; as a result, the mean of 28 months served by prisoners without a prior prison record was longer than the mean of 26 months served by prisoners in all of the reporting States.

METHODOLOGY

Reporting criteria

The National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) collected data on all prison admissions and releases for calendar year 1983. NCRP data covered prisoners admitted to or released from custody, regardless of the jurisdiction where the prisoner was sentenced. Starting in 1983, all sentenced inmates, including those with sentences of a year or less, were counted. Persons who were sentenced to a State prison but were admitted to or released from the custody of a local jail were included in the NCRP. Multiple admissions or releases per person during the year were recorded as separate events.

Offenses

Each State's offenses were recoded to a common set of offense codes. In this report, attempts and conspiracies were included with completed offenses. Attempted murders and conspiracies to commit murder, however, were classified as assaults.

Offense types appearing in this report included the following offenses:

Murder—homicide, vehicular homicide, and felony murder.

Manslaughter—manslaughter, vehicular manslaughter, and negligent homicide.

Rape—forcible rape, aggravated rape, and sexual intercourse without consent.

Other sexual assault—statutory rape, carnal abuse, gross sexual imposition by force, sodomy, fondling, child molestation, and lewd acts with children.

Robbery—unarmed robbery, armed robbery, aggravated robbery, and purse snatching.

Assault—attempted murder, simple assault, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, vehicular assault, and criminal injury to persons.

Kidnaping—abduction, kidnaping and felonious restraint.

Other violent—extortion, intimidation, hit-and-run driving, child abuse, and criminal endangerment against a person.

Burglary—breaking and entering, burglary, and safecracking.

Arson—arson and burning a thing of value.

Auto theft—auto theft, conversion of an automobile, receiving and transferring a stolen vehicle, unauthorized use of a vehicle, and unauthorized entry of a vehicle.

Forgery/fraud—worthless checks, uttering, obtaining money by false pretenses, counterfeiting, and embezzlement.

Larceny—theft, petty larceny, grand larceny.

Stolen property—possession, transportation, receiving or selling of stolen property.

Other property—destruction of property, vandalism, criminal tampering, trespassing, entering without breaking, and possession of burglary tools.

Drug offenses—possession or use of controlled substances, importation, manufacture, sale, or delivery of controlled substances, possession with intent to sell, and forging or uttering a false prescription for a controlled substance.

Public order—escape from custody, weapons offenses, court offenses, obstruction, driving while intoxicated, other traffic offenses, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, morals and decency, and commercialized vice.

Other offenses—juvenile offenses and unspecified felonies.

Sentences

Unless otherwise indicated, data on sentence length refer to the offense with the longest sentence. Whenever a sentence had both a minimum and a maximum term, the maximum was used to define the sentence length. Total maximum sentence refers to the total of all consecutive sentences to be served. A life sentence was defined as

any prison sentence with a fixed or maximum term of life in prison, regardless of the possibility of parole.

Time served

Time served refers to the amount of time spent in prison between the date of admission and the date of release. Where indicated, jail credit and prior prison time served on the current offense were added to time served to obtain the total time served.

Median and mean

The medians in this report were calculated from ungrouped data. Sentencing data do not conform to the standard assumptions permitting calculations from grouped data. Because nearly all sentences are multiples of 12-month units, the assumption of an even distribution of values within groups is not met. Medians from grouped data may also vary from year to year as a result of changes in the interval specifications.

Median sentence lengths are less stable than means. A median represents the value of the case at the 50th percentile. Therefore, when the median encompasses nearly an entire multiple of 12 months, a shift of only a few cases may increase or decrease the median by 12 months.

In contrast to the calculation of medians, mean sentence lengths excluded prisoners with sentences of life in prison or death. Medians are

Table 15. State prisoners released with a life sentence, 1983: Offense distribution, felony incarceration history, and time served

| Conviction offense | Prisoners released with a life sentence |
|---|---|
| Number | 578 |
| Offense total | 100.0% |
| Violent offenses | 97.7% |
| Murder | 73.3 |
| Manslaughter | .4 |
| Rape | 11.3 |
| Other sexual assault | .8 |
| Robbery | 8.5 |
| Kidnaping | 3.4 |
| Other violent | 0 |
| Other offenses | 2.4% |
| Felony incarceration history total | 100.0% |
| Yes | 24.5 |
| No | 75.5 |
| Total time served, first releases | |
| Median | 129 mos. |
| Mean | 141 mos. |

Note: Data on offense were reported for 505 unconditional and conditional releases; data on felony incarceration for 196 releases. Time served was reported for 412 first releases who were paroled, pardoned or had their sentences commuted.

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sensitive to the uneven distribution of cases; means are strongly influenced by extreme values. Because of the limitations of each measure, both means and medians were reported for sentence length.

Time-served data do not group at 12-months intervals. Both medians and means have been reported in most tables to provide a more accurate summary of the data.

Year-to-year comparisons

Care should be exercised when comparing 1983 data on sentence lengths and time served to those published for previous years. Not only did the group of reporting States differ from previous years, but the NCRP introduced new reporting criteria and different computational procedures.

Reporting criteria in 11 States

were, however, sufficiently similar in 1982 and 1983 to permit a limited comparison of time served between these years. In the aggregate there was no difference in time served in prison by first releases in these States in 1982 and 1983: the mean time served in prison, excluding prior jail time, was 22.2 months in both years.

Bureau of Justice Statistics reports

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