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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH
1990

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I. INTRODUCTION

During 1990, the Research Division of the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) produced a number of reports describing the DOC inmate population. This report presents abstracts of these reports, and summarizes specific findings from each of the studies and statistical reports cited.

In addition to the reports summarized here, the Research Division also produces quarterly reports on the status of prison overcrowding and specialized research briefs on specific offender populations.

Copies of the full reports and studies may be obtained by writing or calling:

**Massachusetts Department of Correction
Research Division -22nd Floor
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02202
(617) 727-3312**

II. ABSTRACTS OF RESEARCH REPORTS

A STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF
RESIDENTS OF MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTIONS ON JANUARY 1, 1990

#353

September 1990

Linda K. Holt

This report presents a statistical description of 7,553 individuals in the custody of the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) on January 1, 1990. The report contains information on present offense and sentence, personal background characteristics, criminal history, and furlough program participation. The information is presented for the DOC population as a whole and for each facility separately. Changes in the population over the last five years are also given. Some of the highlights of the information presented in this report are:

- The 7,553 inmates in the DOC represent an increase of 12 percent over 1989 and an increase of 53 percent over 1985.
- Between 1985 and 1990, DOC population showed an increase in the proportion of Hispanic offenders, an increase in the proportion of offenders age 30 or over; an increase in the proportion of drug offenders; and a decrease in the proportion of furlough program participants.
- Nine percent were in maximum security facilities, 65 percent in medium security, 6 percent in minimum security, 14 percent in minimum/pre-release security, and 6 percent in pre-release security.
- Forty-seven percent of the population were incarcerated for an offense against the person, 15 percent for sex offenses, 14 percent for property offenses, 20 percent for drug offenses, and 4 percent for other offenses.
- There were 818 lifers in the DOC, including 353 first-degree lifers and 465 second-degree lifers.
- The median age of the population was 30 years.
- Fifty-two percent were serving their first adult incarceration and, 48 percent had a previous incarceration as an adult.

**1989 COURT COMMITMENTS TO THE
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION**

#356

November 1990

Lisa Lorant
Robert Tenaglia

This report is a statistical description of the 3,780 individuals committed by the courts to a term of incarceration in the Massachusetts Department of Correction during the year 1989. The tables in this report contain information on the nature of present offense, personal background characteristics and criminal history of these individuals. Some highlights of the statistics presented in this report are:

- There was a 27 percent increase in the number of commitments during the year, from 2,965 in 1988 to 3,780 in 1989. The 3,780 commitments in 1989 represent the highest level of commitments in DOC history.
- There were 1,888 commitments to Cedar Junction (38 percent higher than 1988), 1,142 commitments to Framingham (12 percent higher than 1988), and 750 commitments to Concord (30 percent higher than 1988).
- Males are committed to Cedar Junction or Concord while females are committed to Framingham. Overall, there was an increase of 36 percent in male commitments and an increase of 12 percent in female commitments from 1988 to 1989.
- The median minimum sentence for Cedar Junction commitments was five years; the median maximum sentence for Concord commitments was ten years; and the median maximum sentence for Framingham commitments was less than 1 year. Sentence lengths for new court commitments were similar in 1988 and 1989.
- Violent offenses (person and sex) accounted for 51 percent of all male commitments and 11 percent of all female commitments. Non-violent offenses (property, drug and "other") represented 89 percent of all female commitments and 49 percent of all male commitments. From 1988 to 1989 there were increases in all commitments, drug offenses (up 46 percent), sex offenses (up 40 percent), person offenses (up 27 percent), "other" offenses (up 14 percent), and property offenses (up 10 percent).
- The median age at commitment was 28 years.
- Fifty-three percent of the commitment population were white (including white Hispanics); 67 percent were single; 11 percent had been in the military; 38 percent came from the Boston SMSA; most had limited work experience concentrated in the areas of manual labor and services; the median educational level was twelfth grade; and, 32 percent had a self-reported history of drug use.
- Sixty-four percent of those committed were serving their first adult incarceration. The median age at first court appearance was nineteen.

**POPULATION MOVEMENTS IN THE
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION,
1989**

#352

August 1990

Linda K. Holt

This report summarizes the movement of offenders in the custody of the DOC during 1989. While the focus of the analysis is on calendar year 1989, trends in population movement over the period 1984 to 1989 are also discussed, particularly in relation to population growth during the period, including:

Some of the highlights of the information presented in this report include:

- There were 20,258 admissions and 19,437 releases of all types to DOC facilities during 1989.
- The continued pattern of admissions surpassing releases led to population growth in the agency.
- In 1989 admissions to the DOC included commitments/from and afters (N=3,858), parole/probation violators (N=1,185), and county transfers (N=458).
- In 1989 releases from the DOC included paroles to street (N=1,933), discharges to street (N=1,560), transfers to county facilities (N=892) and expirations of sentence to street (N=146).

**A STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF RELEASES FROM
MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS
DURING 1988**

#354

September 1990

Lisa Lorant
Robert Tenaglia

This report presents a statistical description of the 3,446 offenders released to the street from a Massachusetts correctional facility during 1988. This report also presents information on trends among releases over the last five years. Highlights from this report include the following:

- The 3,446 releases in 1988 represent an increase of 362 (12 percent) over 1987 releases and an increase of 1,321 (62 percent) over 1984 releases.
- The number of males released during 1988 increased by 6 percent from 1987, while the number of females released during 1988 increased by 20 percent.
- Fifty-four percent of all releases were by parole, 37 percent were by discharge and 9 percent were by expiration of sentence.
- Fifty-six percent were released from maximum or medium security facilities and 44 percent were released from lower security facilities. Many of those released from secure facilities were females serving county sentences or male parole violators.
- The average time served was 48.6 months for individuals serving Cedar Junction sentences, 19.1 months for individuals serving Concord sentences, and 6.0 months for individuals serving Framingham sentences.

**A STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF RELEASES FROM
MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS
DURING 1989**

#357

December 1990

**Lisa Lorant
Robert Tenaglia**

This report presents a statistical description of the 3,737 offenders released to the street from the Massachusetts Department of Correction during 1989. This report also presents information on trends among releases over the last five years. Highlights from this report include the following:

- The 3,737 releases in 1989 represent an increase of 291 (8 percent) over 1988 releases and an increase of 1,406 (60 percent) over 1985 releases.
- The number of males released during 1989 increased by 7 percent from 1988, while the number of females released during 1989 increased by 13 percent from 1988.
- Fifty-four percent of all releases were by parole, and 46 percent were by good conduct discharge or expiration of sentence.
- Fifty-six percent were released from maximum or medium security facilities and 44 percent were released from lower security facilities. Many of those released from secure facilities were females serving county sentences or male parole violators.
- The average time served was 54.0 months for individuals serving Cedar Junction sentences, 27.4 months for individuals serving Concord sentences, and 8.0 months for individuals serving Framingham sentences.

**STATISTICAL TABLES DESCRIBING THE BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND
RECIDIVISM RATES FOR RELEASES FROM MASSACHUSETTS
CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS
DURING 1987**

#348

August 1990

Lisa Lorant

and

**STATISTICAL TABLES DESCRIBING THE BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND
RECIDIVISM RATES FOR RELEASES FROM MASSACHUSETTS
PRE-RELEASE FACILITIES
DURING 1987**

#349

August 1990

Lisa Lorant

These two reports present information on recidivism rates of offenders released from Department of Correction facilities during 1987. In addition to providing recidivism rates, the tables in these two reports present statistical descriptions of the releasees. Some highlights from these two reports include the following:

- The recidivism rate in 1987 was 28%. This is slightly higher than the rate for 1986 (27%).
- The number of releases increased from 2,767 in 1986 to 2,859 in 1987, an increase of 3%.
- The recidivism rate varied by security level of the institution from which the offender was released: 50% for maximum, 35% for medium, 25% for minimum, 19% for minimum/pre-release, 21% for state pre-release and 22% for contract pre-release.
- From 1986 to 1987 the recidivism rate for releases from maximum or medium security institutions increased from 34% to 36%, and the recidivism rate for releases from lower security facilities stayed the same (20%).
- The recidivism rate for males was 29% an increase from the 1986 figure of 28%; and the rate for females was 23% an increase from last year's figure of 22%.
- Among males, the recidivism rate was 32% for those serving a Cedar Junction/State Prison sentence (compared to 30% for 1986), 34% for those serving a Concord/Reformatory sentence (compared to 33% for 1986), and 9% for those committed to other jurisdictions (e.g. county).
- Recidivists were returned for a variety of reasons: 22% for technical parole violations, 54% for a parole violation involving a new arrest, 24% for re-incarceration on a new offense, and less than one percent to await trial for a new offense.

- Offenders released by parole had a higher recidivism rate (36%) than those who were discharged (15%).
- Offenders who previously had been paroled and parole violated on their present sentence had higher rates of recidivism than those who were first releases (51% vs. 19%).
- For males, those committed for property offenses had the highest recidivism rate (44%); for females, those committed for drug offenses had the highest recidivism rate (26%).
- The recidivism rate for those released with no prior adult incarcerations was lower (20%) than for those released with a history of one (32%) or more than one (37%) prior adult incarcerations.
- The recidivism rate was higher for offenders with no furloughs prior to release (31%) than the recidivism rate for individuals with one or more furloughs prior to release (16%).

THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION ON RATES
OF RECIDIVISM: A STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF
DATA FOR THE YEARS 1971 THROUGH 1987

#350

July 1990

Daniel P. LeClair, Ph.D.

The Research Division of the Massachusetts Department of Correction routinely collects and publishes data on rates of recidivism. From these studies data are currently available for the releasee cohorts for the years 1971 through 1987. This report attempts to draw together data generated from the recidivism studies of the past 17 years and to present a summary statistical overview of the findings.

The annual statistical monitoring of recidivism data since the year 1971 has led to the detection of a number of significant trends occurring within the Massachusetts correctional system. Dominant among these trends was the occurrence of a systematic reduction in the recidivism rates from 1971 through to 1978. For example, in the year 1971 the recidivism rate for the combined population of state prison releases was 25%; in 1973 it had dropped to 19%; and in 1976 it had dropped to 16%. By 1977, the recidivism rate was 15%. Later data, however, revealed that a reversal had occurred in this historical trend. The 1979 and 1980 releasee populations represented the first statistically significant increase in recidivism rates in a nine year period. From 1980 to 1983 recidivism rates dropped from 26% to 21%, followed by an increase in recidivism rates for the last 4 years of the period, 1984 to 1987.

A second major trend concerned the home furlough program in the Massachusetts correctional system, a program begun in 1972. The data revealed that those individuals who had experienced a furlough prior to release from prison had significantly lower rates of recidivism than did individuals who had not experienced a furlough prior to release. When selection factors were controlled, the relationship remained positive. This trend continued in a consistent pattern for the fifteen successive years for which data were available.

Recidivism studies have also revealed that participation in prerelease programs prior to community release leads to reduced rates of recidivism. Again, when selection factors were controlled the relationship remained constant.

A final documented trend that has emerged from the recidivism studies focused on the process of graduated movement among institutions in descending level of security and size. Analyses revealed that individuals released from prison directly from medium or minimum security institutions (including prerelease centers and halfway houses) had significantly lower rates of recidivism than did individuals released directly from a maximum security institution. Again, this relationship held even when selection factors were controlled.

When follow-up periods were extended from one to two and then to five years, the above findings with respect to furloughs, prerelease centers, and security level of releasing institution remained constant.

The major findings of the research were collectively interpreted as tentative evidence of a positive effect of the reintegrative community based correctional programming. The above conclusions hold through the documented trend of increased recidivism and the more recent drop in the rates. Despite the fluctuations in overall recidivism, participation in reintegration programs remains associated with lower rates of recidivism.

COURT COMMITMENTS TO
MASSACHUSETTS COUNTY FACILITIES
DURING 1988

#347

May 1990

Linda K. Holt

This report provides a statistical description of the 11,753 offenders committed by the courts to Massachusetts county facilities (jail or house of correction) during 1988. The report presents information on institution committed to, court committed from, month of commitments, offense, sentence length, sentence type, age, sex, race, marital status, education, place of birth and residence.

Some highlights of the statistics presented in this report are:

- In 1988 there were 11,753 commitments to county facilities. This represents an increase of 9 percent over the 10,818 commitments in 1987.
- In terms of general categories of offenses, 12 percent were committed for offenses against the person, 2 percent for sex offenses, 26 percent for property offenses, 13 percent for drug offenses, 21 percent for Operating Under the Influence (O.U.I.), and 27 percent for all other offenses.
- Specifically, the most common types of offenses for which offenders were committed were O.U.I. (21 percent), motor vehicle violations (14 percent), and burglary (8 percent).
- The median sentence length was three months. Thirteen percent were committed in lieu of payment of a fine. One percent were serving weekend sentences.
- The median age of offenders committed to county facilities was 27 years.
- Seventy-three percent of the offenders were white, 16 percent were black, 10 percent were Hispanic, and less than one percent were other races.
- The median educational level was 12th grade.
- Sixty-nine percent of the offenders were single, 16 percent were married and 14 percent were separated, divorced or widowed.
- Sixty-nine percent were born in Massachusetts, 18 percent were born in other states, 9 percent were born in U.S. territories and 4 percent were foreign-born.

**COURT COMMITMENTS TO
MASSACHUSETTS COUNTY FACILITIES
DURING 1989**

#355

October 1990

Linda K. Holt
Sara Twyman

This report provides a statistical description of the 13,117 offenders committed by the courts to Massachusetts county facilities (jails or houses of correction) during 1989. The report presents information on institution committed to, court committed from, month of commitment, offense, sentence length, sentence type, age, sex, race, marital status, education, place of birth and residence.

Some highlights of the statistics presented in this report are:

- In 1989 there were 13,117 commitments to county facilities. This represents an increase of 12 percent over the 11,753 commitments in 1988.
- In terms of general categories of offenses, 11 percent were committed for offenses against the person, 2 percent for sex offenses, 26 percent for property offenses, 14 percent for drug offenses, 19 percent for Operating Under the Influence (O.U.I.), and 28 percent for all other offenses.
- Specifically, the most common types of offenses for which offenders were committed were O.U.I. (19 percent), motor vehicle violations (14 percent), and burglary (9 percent).
- The median sentence length was three months. Fifteen percent were committed in lieu of payment of a fine. One percent were serving weekend sentences.
- The median age of offenders committed to county facilities was 27 years.
- Seventy-two percent of the offenders were white, 18 percent were black, 10 percent were Hispanic, and one percent were other races.
- The median educational level was 12th grade.
- Seventy-one percent of the offenders were single, 15 percent were married and 13 percent were separated, divorced or widowed.
- Sixty-eight percent were born in Massachusetts, 19 percent were born in other states, 9 percent were born in U.S. territories and 4 percent were foreign-born.

A DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF CORI PETITIONERS OF DOC INMATES

#351

June 1990

Michael White

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 258B, Section 3 provides that crime victims, family members of homicide victims, and witnesses may request to be notified when the offender receives a temporary, provisional or final release from custody, or when an offender escapes from custody. Passage of this provision from the Victim Bill of Rights of 1984 led to a dramatic increase in the number of petitions for Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) filed with the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB). While the Department of Correction (DOC) had a CORI Notification program in place prior to 1984, the rapid growth in the number of CORI petitions on DOC inmates demonstrates the need for the Department to take a closer look at the CORI Notification program. This study presents a statistical profile of a sample of CORI petitioners of DOC inmates and of the offenders who are the subjects of these CORI petitions.

Findings from this study include:

- The number of new CORI petitions increased from 78 in 1984 to 1,190 in 1988.
- Seventy percent of the CORI petitioners are female, 25% are male, and 5% are households.
- Thirty-four percent of all CORI petitioners are crime victims. The second most frequently occurring category of petitioner is family member of homicide victim, which accounts for 24% of the petitioners.
- Seventy-one percent of the CORI petitioners were referred to the CORI program by District Attorneys' Offices and 29% by other agencies.
- Of the offenders who were subjects of CORI petitions, 96% were male and 4% were female.
- At the time of petition, 80 percent of the CORI subjects were in secure facilities.
- Eighty-eight percent of the CORI subjects were convicted of violent offenses including person offenses (55%) and sex offenses (33%).
- Twenty-seven percent of the CORI subjects are serving life sentences.