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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Kenneth L. Hardy  
Director

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC  
CHARACTERISTICS OF RELEASEES  
FROM THE D.C. REFORMATORY  
FOR MEN: 1965

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ACQUISITION

by

Jeanne J. Wahl, B.A.  
Donald D. Stewart, Ph.D.  
and  
Stuart N. Adams, Ph.D.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

A study was made of the 568 inmates released from the D.C. Reformatory for Men in 1965 to define their characteristics and to explore procedures for evaluating their parole performance and for developing parole prediction methods. The present report outlines the findings on release characteristics. Later reports will deal with the parole performance of this group and with the prediction of parole success among releasees of this type.

Of the 568 releasees, 55 were released to detainers, records were incomplete on 18, and 15 died within the first year after release. The remaining 480 cases comprise the subjects of this report.

Of the 480 cases, 23 percent were released on parole, 47 percent on good-time, and 30 percent at expiration of sentence.

The typical releasee was a Negro in his early 30's, unmarried prior to incarceration, previously employed in semi-skilled or unskilled work in construction or service industries.

This releasee had an average IQ and about eight years of formal schooling. He had dropped out of school at about age 16.

He had been arrested at least once before age 19, and had had at least five arrests and three incarcerations before the instant offense. He had better than even chance of being either a user of narcotics or a heavy user of alcohol.

The releasee was somewhat more likely to have committed a crime against the person than a crime against property. He had been arrested alone in the commission of the current offense and had pleaded guilty. He had served almost four years for this last offense.

There were appreciable differences in characteristics of the three classes of releasees: 1) the parolee, 2) the good-time releasee, and 3) the expiration-of-term releasee. These differences are described in detail in the report.

Because of the extensive arrest and incarceration histories of the 568 inmates released from the Reformatory for Men in 1965, they represent a major investment by the District of Columbia in the form of costs of previous arrests, court appearances, periods of supervision

on probation and parole, and institutional stays. On the basis of procedures developed by the Research Division, Department of Corrections, it is estimated that the 568 inmates represent a criminal-justice careers cost, at the time of release in 1965, of approximately \$28,960,000. This is an average of about \$51,000 per releasee.

## SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RELEASEES FROM THE D. C. REFORMATORY FOR MEN\*

### Introduction

This study has three objectives. The first is to provide data which can serve as the basis for realistic planning of community services by both the Department of Corrections and other District agencies. The second is to lay the groundwork for the development of parole prediction tables when post-institutional histories of the releasees can be followed up. The third is to provide a baseline for continuing studies of institutional releasees, not only from the Reformatory for Men but also from other facilities of the Department of Corrections.

### The Setting of the Study

The Reformatory for Men is located on a 72-acre tract on the Federal reservation at Lorton, Virginia, 20 miles south of the city of Washington. A diversified program of treatment includes vocational, academic, and social education; psychological and casework counseling; a variety of work activities; and an extensive recreational program. Almost all inmates are assigned to work details

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\*This is a condensed version of a larger report, approximately 100 pages in length, which is presently available only as a typed manuscript, in semi-final draft.

and the majority take advantage of the available recreational activities. Smaller proportions are involved in educational or counseling services.

The majority of the Reformatory population are felons convicted of violations of the D.C. Code in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who have been sentenced under the provisions of the Indeterminate Sentence Act. The Act requires the imposition of mandatory minimum sentences, which ordinarily will not exceed one-third of the maximum sentence. Approximately 10 percent of the Reformatory population is composed of federal prisoners, that is, felons convicted of violations of the United States Code. Approximately five percent of the Reformatory population are misdemeanants. Ordinarily, the Department of Corrections assigns misdemeanants to the Workhouse, a minimum security facility, at Occoquan, Virginia. The misdemeanants in the Reformatory have been transferred because of unusual custody or disciplinary problems, or because of a pending detainer, in which case they must sign a waiver indicating a willingness to serve a part of the misdemeanor sentence before being transferred to the Reformatory.

Paroled inmates, those sentenced under both the D.C. Code and the U.S. Code, are released at the discre-

tion and under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia Board of Parole. A consideration in parole eligibility is the nature of the sentence being served. For example, indeterminately sentenced inmates are eligible for parole once they have served the minimum portion of their sentence. The only misdemeanants eligible for parole, however, are those sentenced to more than 180 days who have completed one-third of their sentences.

Inmates may also be conditionally released prior to expiration of sentence by earning statutory good time -- the so-called "good-time release." Both the U.S. and the D.C. Codes provide for reduction of maximum sentences if the inmate maintains a satisfactory behavior record. Good-time releasees are supervised by the D.C. Board of Parole for the balance of their maximum sentence, except for the last 180 days. Federal prisoners are eligible for mandatory good time if the sentence being served is six months or more, while D.C. Code offenders are credited with good time for any sentence of one month or more. A further reduction in sentence may be achieved by earning industrial and/or meritorious good time.



### The Study Population

During 1965, the average daily population of the Reformatory was 1308. In the course of the year, 568 inmates were released from the Reformatory. Fifty-five of these were released to detainers, and 15 are known to have died within one year after release. Institutional records were not available for 18 cases. Since the primary purpose of the study was to develop a base for follow-up, the above cases were eliminated, leaving a new total of 480. Of the 480, there were 109, or 22.7 percent, who were released on parole, 227 or 47.3 percent who were released on good-time release, and 144, or 30.0 percent, who were released on the expiration of a sentence.

The data included in this report were obtained from the institutional folders maintained for each inmate.<sup>1</sup> Of the 480 releasees, there were 353, or 73.6 percent, who were released for the first time in 1965. The remaining 127, or 26.6 percent, had been released on this sentence one or more times on good-time release or parole. For the latter group, the 1965 release represented a second or subsequent release. Generally, however,

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that these records contain some unverified and inconsistent information which will be reflected as inaccuracies of reporting. Every attempt has been made to reduce the level of inaccuracy as much as possible.

the two groups - the first releasees and the re-releasees - were similar, except that the latter were appreciably older and had been confined for a significantly longer period.

#### Profiles of the Releasees

All Releasees - The 1965 releasee from the D.C. Men's Reformatory was usually a Negro, in his early thirties, who was unmarried. Prior to confinement, he had been employed as a semi-skilled or unskilled worker in the construction industry or some service facility. Although his employment record appeared to be relatively stable, his wages were low. The releasee had been arrested at least once before he was 19 years of age, and had not been arrested more than five times and confined more than three times before the instant offense. He had better than an even chance of being either a narcotic user or a heavy user of alcohol.

The releasee had an average I.Q., and he had had about eight years of formal education before he dropped out of school when 16 years of age. He was somewhat more apt to commit a crime against the person than a crime against property and had about one chance in ten of having been convicted of an offense involving narcotics.

He had been arrested alone in the commission of the instant offense and had pleaded guilty. He had served almost four years for this last offense.

During the period of confinement, he had been reported for minor disciplinary breaches. On occasion he had received formal counseling from a correctional officer and on less frequent occasion he had received formal counseling from a classification officer or social caseworker. He had one chance in ten of having undergone therapy at the Psychological Services Center. The releasee may have received some formal vocational training in the Reformatory, and, more likely, some academic or social training.

The Parolee - The parolee differed from the other releasees in being slightly older and slightly more apt to be married. The parolee was also somewhat more apt to have received an honorable discharge from the Armed Forces. The parolee had a substantially smaller number of prior arrests and commitments, considerably less chance of being a narcotic user but was somewhat more apt to be a heavy drinker. The parolee was markedly more assaultive with almost three chances in four of having been convicted of a crime against the person, but had a very small chance of having been involved in an

offense involving narcotics. The parolee had been confined for more than five years. While confined the parolee had a somewhat better disciplinary record and a markedly better record with reference to involvement in training programs.

The Good-Time Releasee - The good-time releasee was also slightly older than the average for the entire group of releasees. Apart from that he did not differ markedly from the profile figure for the entire group although he had been confined somewhat longer and had been involved in counseling services somewhat more often.

Expiration of Sentence Releasee - This releasee was much younger than the others and more apt to be single in the sense of never-married. He was somewhat less apt to be an unskilled worker and more apt to be a service worker. This releasee had a larger number of prior arrests and commitments and had more than one chance in three of being a narcotic user. This releasee was definitely a thief, that is, had much more chance of being confined for an offense against property than for an offense against the person. This releasee had served a sentence equal to only about one-third that of the entire group. While confined this type of releasee had a comparatively good disciplinary record but a markedly

inferior record with reference to participation in both counseling and training programs.

#### Summary

1) Almost 90 percent of the Reformatory releasee group were Negroes, reflecting the unique character of the District of Columbia population.

2) The releasee group, as compared with the Negro population of the District, had a higher proportion of single, separated, widowed and divorced persons.

3) Three generalizations may be made concerning the preconfinement employment records of the releasees: (a) most had been employed in low-status occupations which offer little security or prospect for advancement; (b) there was some job-turnover, but in the absence of a control from a similar population it would be difficult to categorize the turnover as "excessive"; (c) the median incomes from employment were substantially less than that of the non-white population of the District.

4) The median age at release was 33.8 years but the median age at first reported arrest was 18.7 years. During the interval between these two events, the median number of arrests was 5.7 and the median number of commitments was 3.4. The median period of confinement before the

release was 3.9 years. To summarize, most of the releasees had been arrested the first time as adults shortly after their 18th birthday, had been arrested five or more times later, had served three or more sentences later, and were released in this instance when almost 34 years of age after being confined for almost four years.

5) One-fourth of the releasees, had used narcotics but only about four percent had participated in the Narcotics Anonymous Program at the Reformatory.

6) Approximately one-third of the releasees had been heavy users of alcohol but less than ten percent had participated in the Alcoholics Anonymous Program at the Reformatory.

7) The intelligence of the releasees, as measured by standard intelligence tests, was an approximation of a normal distribution.

8) The level of academic achievement of the releasees, as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test, was slightly above the sixth grade.

9) Most had not completed the eighth grade, a level of scholastic achievement substantially lower than that of the general population of the District.

10) Most had dropped out of school as soon as legally permissible.

11) Approximately 40 percent of the releasees had been sentenced for such crimes against the person as homicide, aggravated assault and robbery; another 40 percent had been sentenced for such crimes against property as housebreaking, larceny, auto theft, forgery and fraud. Of the remaining 20 percent, half had been sentenced for a violation of the narcotics laws and the balance for a miscellany of offenses, some of which were misdemeanors. The Reformatory releasees in having a higher proportion of robbers and narcotic offenders and fewer housebreakers and white-collar criminals.

12) More than two-thirds of the releasees had been arrested alone without a co-defendant or associate.

13) More than half of the releasees had pleaded guilty to the offense for which they had been committed.

14) Almost two-thirds of the releasees had been referred for disciplinary action while confined.

15) Just over one-quarter of the releasees were reported to have received some formal counseling by correctional officers.

16) Only one percent of the releasees are reported to have received formal counseling from a classification officer or social caseworker.

17) Just under ten percent of the releasees had been involved in the psychotherapy program of the Reformatory's Psychological Services Center.

18) Sixteen percent of the releasees were reported to have received some formal vocational training in the Reformatory.

19) Approximately 37 percent of the releasees were reported to have received some academic and social training in the Reformatory.

20) Of the 480 releasees, 353, or 73.5 percent, were released for the first time in 1965 so far as the instant offense was concerned. The remainder of 127, or 26.5 percent of the total, had been released earlier, either on parole or good time release, and had been returned to the Reformatory, one or more times, either for a violation of the Board of Parole rules or for a new offense. These two groups - the first releasees and the re-releasees - were compared with reference to a number of characteristics and two of some significance were noted. The first releasee group was substantially



younger with a median age of 30.6 years as compared with 38.0 years for the re-releasees. Second, the median period of confinement for the first releasees was 3.3 years as compared with 6.3 years for the re-releasees.

21) The first release group of 353 was compared with the 68,188 reported first releasees from all American penal facilities in 1964. The D.C. releasees had a higher proportion of those convicted in the categories of robbery, auto theft, assault, and violation of the narcotic laws. The national group had a higher proportion of those convicted in the categories of burglary, forgery, fraud and embezzlement, and those classified as the "all other offenses" category.

Table 1

Social and Demographic Characteristics  
480 Releasees, D. C. Reformatory for Men, by Type of Release, 1966

Characteristics	All Releasees N-480	Released On Parole N-109	Released On Good Time Release N-227	Released On Exp. Of Sent. N-144
<u>Race</u>	89.2% Negro	89.0% Negro	90.7% Negro	86.8% Negro
<u>Median Age, in Years</u>	33.8	34.2	34.6	32.4
<u>Marital Status</u>				
Single	35.2%	35.7%	32.1%	39.5%
Separated, Widowed and Divorced	26.0%	22.9%	30.8%	20.9%
<u>Occupational Skill</u>				
Skilled and Semi-skilled	25.6%	23.8%	27.3%	24.3%
Unskilled	37.7%	38.5%	41.4%	31.3%
All Service Occupations	14.7%	15.5%	13.2%	16.8%
<u>Place of Last Employment</u>				
Mfg., Construction, & Transportation	29.9%	34.8%	30.9%	26.9%
Wholesale & Retail Trade & Service	41.4%	35.7%	39.6%	43.7%

1 If any quantitative distribution is arranged in order from the smallest to the largest item, the middle item is the median.

Characteristics	All Releasees N-480	Released On Parole N-109	Released On Good Time Re. N-227	Released On Exp. of Sentence N-144
<u>Place of Longest Employment</u>				
Mfg., Construction & Transportation	30.8%	37.5%	32.6%	23.0%
Wholesale & Retail Trade & Service	40.1%	38.6%	40.0%	40.8%
<u>Last Employment &amp; Longest Employment Same</u>	52.7%	49.5%	52.0%	55.3%
<u>Honorable Discharge from Armed Forces</u>	22.5%	33.0%	18.5%	20.8%
<u>Median Weekly Income, in Dollars, Longest Employment</u>	\$63.40	\$63.50	\$62.50	\$66.70
<u>Median Age at First Arrest, in Years</u>	18.7	18.6	18.8	18.2
<u>Median Number of Prior Arrests</u>	5.7	3.8	5.7	7.4
<u>Median Number of Prior Commitments</u>	3.4	1.9	3.5	4.5
<u>Certified Narcotic Addicts &amp; Other Users</u>	24.6%	10.1%	23.3%	37.5%
<u>Reported Heavy Use of Alcohol</u>	33.5%	38.5%	34.8%	28.4%

Characteristics	All Releasees N-480	Released On Parole N-109	Released On Good Time Release N-227	Released On Exp. of Sent. N-144
<u>Median IQ Score</u>	96.2	96.2	96.1	96.3
<u>Median SAT Score</u>	6.4 grade	6.9 grade	6.2 grade	6.6 grade
<u>Median Highest School Grade Completed</u>	7.9	9.1	7.6	8.2
<u>Median Age Left School, in years</u>	16.4	16.3	16.3	16.5
<u>Offense</u>				
Crimes Against Person	43.6%	70.6%	46.1%	18.8%
Crimes Against Property	39.9%	20.2%	36.7%	60.4%
Narcotic Offenses	10.4%	6.4%	12.8%	9.7%
<u>No Co-Defendants or Associates</u>	68.5%	60.5%	67.4%	76.3%
<u>Pleaded Guilty</u>	51.5%	46.8%	50.7%	56.2%
<u>Median Length or Total Period of Confinement</u>	3.9 years	5.3 years	4.7 years	1.3 years
<u>Disciplinary Actions Reported</u>				
No Disciplinary Action	38.5%	49.5%	26.0%	50.0%
Three or More Control Cell Actions	13.5%	9.2%	17.6%	10.4%

Characteristics	All Releasees N-480	Released On Parole N-109	Released On Good Time Release N-227	Released On Exp. Of Sentence N-144
<u>Classification Committee Prognosis</u>				
Good	18.7%	22.0%	21.1%	12.5%
Very Poor	3.5%	1.8%	2.6%	6.3%
<u>Counseling</u>				
Correctional Officer	25.8%	26.6%	27.3%	22.9%
Classification Officer or Social Case-worker	1.0%	.9%	1.8%	----
<u>Training</u>				
Vocational	16.0%	30.3%	17.6%	2.8%
Academic or Social	36.6%	59.6%	37.5%	18.1%