

Executive Summary

The National Institute of Corrections defines older inmates as those with a chronological age of 50 years or older. This threshold is due primarily to health problems caused by extensive substance abuse histories, a lack of routine medical care and a lifetime of poor dietary habits. During the past twenty years, a fundamental national shift toward a more punitive response to crime has resulted in longer mandatory sentences and the curtailment of discretionary early release (parole). Combined with the aging of the overall U.S. population, the number of inmates age 50 and older has risen to unprecedented levels with no slowing in sight. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. population will continue to age at the current rate for the next ten years, then accelerate around 2010. The inmate population should mirror that trend.

Georgia, with a prison population in excess of 47,000 inmates has the sixth largest prison system in the nation. At the end of FY 2002 4,025 inmates, or nearly one in ten were 50 or older. It is estimated that the combined effects of Georgia's 1995 "two strikes" law and the 1998 "parole 90% policy" will result in an additional 1,500 inmates age 50 and older by 2004.

Though exact costs are difficult to determine, most estimates calculate the cost of housing an older inmate as three times that of a younger, healthier inmate. A recent study of Georgia's aging inmate population concluded that inmates age 50 and older are twenty (20) times more likely to be assigned to a medical bed than inmates under the age of fifty. In addition the study concluded that although inmates age 50 and older represented just over six percent of the overall population, they consumed over 12% of the inmate health care budget.

In 1979, inmates age 29 and younger accounted for 64% of the Georgia inmate population. By Fiscal Year 2002 that proportion had fallen to just 36%. The average age of the Georgia inmate has increased from 29 to 34.7 during the same period. In 1979 there were 570 inmates age 50 and older. As of June 2003 Georgia housed 4,416 older inmates. In FY 2002, 769 inmates age 50 and older were admitted to Georgia prisons, slightly down from the record 807 inmates FY 99. In just five years the average daily population of Georgia inmates age 50 and older is projected to exceed 6,200.

Nearly seven in ten older inmates are serving sentences for violent or sex crimes. Due to the seriousness of their offenses, nearly three-fourths of inmates age 50 and older are serving sentences of 10 years or longer, with an average sentence length of over 15 years. Almost a quarter (953) of the total population of older inmates are housed at Men's State Prison in Hardwick, Bostick State Prison, also in Hardwick, Augusta State Medical Prison and Wilcox State Prison.

Just 31% of older inmates have no physical limitations; 40% of all older inmates are classified as having major or very major physical defects. By comparison, 83% of inmates age 29 and younger have no physical limitations.

A review of the literature as well as a survey of other states' practices suggest that comprehensive correctional policies and procedures concerning the aging inmate population are in their infancy. As Georgia, and the rest of the states begin addressing the unique needs of older inmates, it is expected that comprehensive approaches will begin to emerge. Included in this report are summaries of the ten oldest inmates and ten longest serving inmates in the Georgia prison system.

GEORGIA'S AGING INMATE POPULATION

The purpose of this report is to examine historical trends in the age distribution of the Georgia inmate population and project future older inmate populations. Indicators suggest, and this report confirms, that the Georgia inmate population is growing older. For the purposes of this report, an "old/older" inmate is defined as being age 50 or greater. While there is no consensus as to a specific age at which an inmate can be considered old, there is general agreement in literature on the subject that an inmate with a chronological age of fifty presents a physical age of sixty. This is due to a variety of factors typically present in the inmate population, including extensive histories of substance abuse, a general lack of routine medical care, and a lifetime of poor dietary habits.

There are three variables that effect the age distribution of the inmate population: (1) the number of inmate admissions to prison, (2) the age of the inmates at admission, and (3) the amount of time the inmates remain incarcerated. In Georgia, as is the case in most other states, more inmates are coming into the prison system, they are older at admission, and they are staying longer. These factors have combined to increase the average age of the Georgia inmate from 28.7 years in 1979, to 34.7 years in 2002.

Convergence of Trends

Several trends have converged over the past two decades, which have contributed to the "graying" of the nation's inmate population. *The first trend influencing the aging of the inmate population occurred in the early 1980's with a fundamental national shift toward a more retributive and punitive response to crime.* This philosophy spawned a move toward abolishing discretionary early release, the implementation of mandatory minimum sentences for many different crimes and "three strikes and you are out" legislation. These policies resulted in sending more offenders to prison for longer periods of time.

Georgia responded to public outrage against violent crime by enacting SB 441 into law effective January 1, 1995. Better known as "two strikes and you are out," SB 441 requires that anyone convicted of any of seven serious violent felonies (also known as seven deadly sins) must serve a minimum of ten years in prison without parole. Any sentence handed down by the court beyond ten years is also "parole-proof." Anyone convicted of a second "deadly sin" receives a mandatory sentence of life without parole.

Although only in place since 1995, the effects of "two strikes" are already evident on the aging of the inmate population. Since its enactment through June 2002, there have been 5,837 offenders sentenced to a minimum sentence of ten years without parole. In FY 2002, those sentenced under this law received sentences ranging from an average of 14 years for armed robbery, to 19 years for kidnapping .

The second trend contributing to the aging of the inmate population is the trend toward a severe curtailment, if not outright abolition, of discretionary early release from prison. In Georgia, due primarily to the effects of mandatory sentencing, the potentially paroleable inmate population has fallen from approximately 96% of all inmates in 1996, to 87% of the inmates by FY 2002. This percentage will continue to fall in the near future as more inmates are added to the inmate population under mandatory minimum sentences. For instance, the first inmates sentenced to mandatory minimum sentences under SB441 began arriving in 1995, and will not be eligible for release from prison until 2005 at the earliest.

In addition, effective January 1, 1998, the Georgia Parole Board instituted a policy requiring all inmates convicted of twenty additional violent crimes not covered under the “two strikes” legislation to serve a minimum of 90% of their court imposed sentence. On average, those inmates who fall under the parole board’s 90% policy will serve 2.3 years longer in prison than inmates sentenced for the same crimes prior to the implementation of the “90%” policy.

While mandatory minimum sentencing and parole’s 90% policy are combining to increase the amount of time many Georgia inmates can expect to serve, in recent years the parole board has taken a more conservative approach in their overall release philosophy. In FY 1991 the parole board granted early release to 16,772 inmates while denying release to 2,397. In FY 2002 parole releases numbered 10,271.

A third trend influencing the aging of the inmate population is the massive increase in prison capacity over the past two decades. Georgia’s prison capacity grew from approximately 12,000 beds in 1980 to nearly 19,000 by 1990. Despite a 69% increase in prison capacity, the growth of the Georgia prison system during the 80’s paled in comparison with what was to follow. Between 1990 and 2002 Georgia increased its prison capacity by 150%, from 18,800 beds to over 47,000 beds, the largest increase in prison capacity in the history of the state.

The expansion of prison capacity has allowed for the implementation of mandatory sentencing and conservative parole policy, which in turn has allowed more inmates to serve longer sentences behind bars. More inmates, serving longer time, contribute to the aging of the overall population.

The fourth trend that impacts the aging of the inmate population is the overall aging of the United States population. In 1990 the median age was 32.8 in the U.S. and 31.4 in Georgia. By 2000 the median age in the U.S. increased to 35.9 and 34.5 in Georgia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this trend will continue through the first quarter of the century. The increase in the age of the overall population is expected to remain fairly constant through the first decade of the century, but beginning in 2010, with the first cohort of “baby boomers’ reaching retirement age, the aging trend is expected to increase rapidly. Unless there are significant changes in one or all of the previously

mentioned trends, the aging of the Georgia inmate population should continue to reflect this increase.

Perhaps the best indicator of the convergence of trends driving the aging of the inmate population is the *incarceration rate* (number of inmates per 100,000 in population). Between 1993 and 2002, Georgia's incarceration rate increased from 398 to 552, an increase of 39% in just ten years. Nationally, the incarceration rate has increased from 344 in 1993 to 474 in 2002, an increase of 38%. Georgia has the sixth highest incarceration rate among the fifty states.

Chart 1: Shifting Inmate Age Distribution

As shown in the graph below, there has been a significant shift in the age distribution of the Georgia inmate population over the past three decades. In 1979, the inmate population was heavily weighted toward the youthful inmate with inmates between the ages of 15 and 29 accounting for 64% of the standing inmate population. Approximately 31% of the population was between the ages of 30 and 49 and the remaining five-percent of the inmate population was age 50 or older.

Today's standing inmate population is considerably older with the inmate age group 30 to 49 now exceeding the 15 to 29 age group, and the 50 and older population now accounting for nearly 10% of the total population.

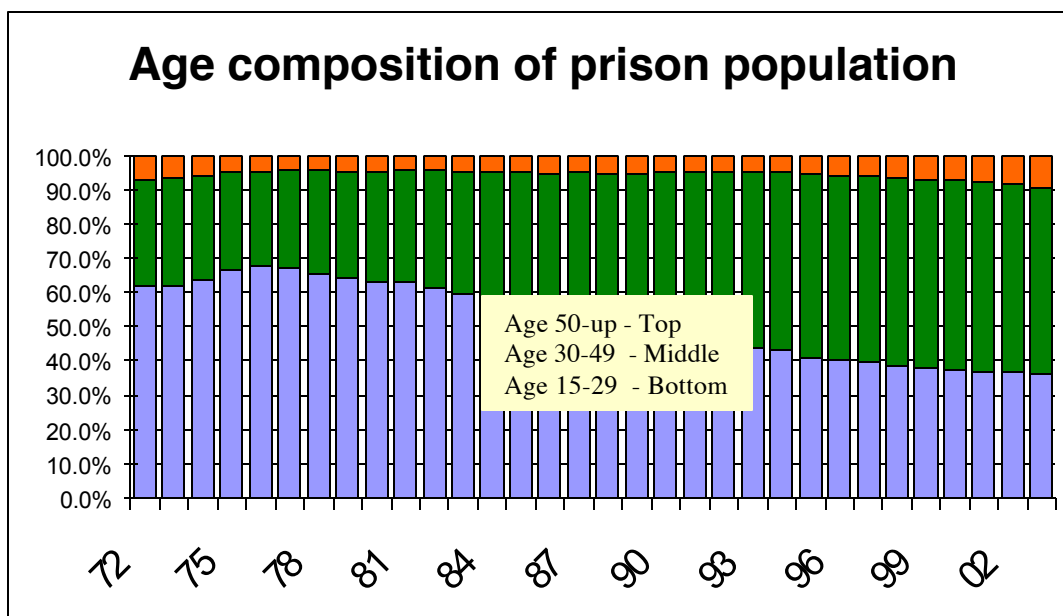


Chart 2: Average Inmate Age Increasing

The average (mean) age of the Georgia inmate has increased steadily during the past twenty years. As reflected below, the average inmate age has increased during the past twenty years by six years, from 28.7 to 34.7 years. The aging of the inmate population is reflective of the aging of the general U.S. population, as the “baby boom” generation grows older. The increase in aging is expected to maintain its current rate of growth, then accelerate around 2010 as the “baby boomers” reach retirement age.

Mean Inmate Age by Year

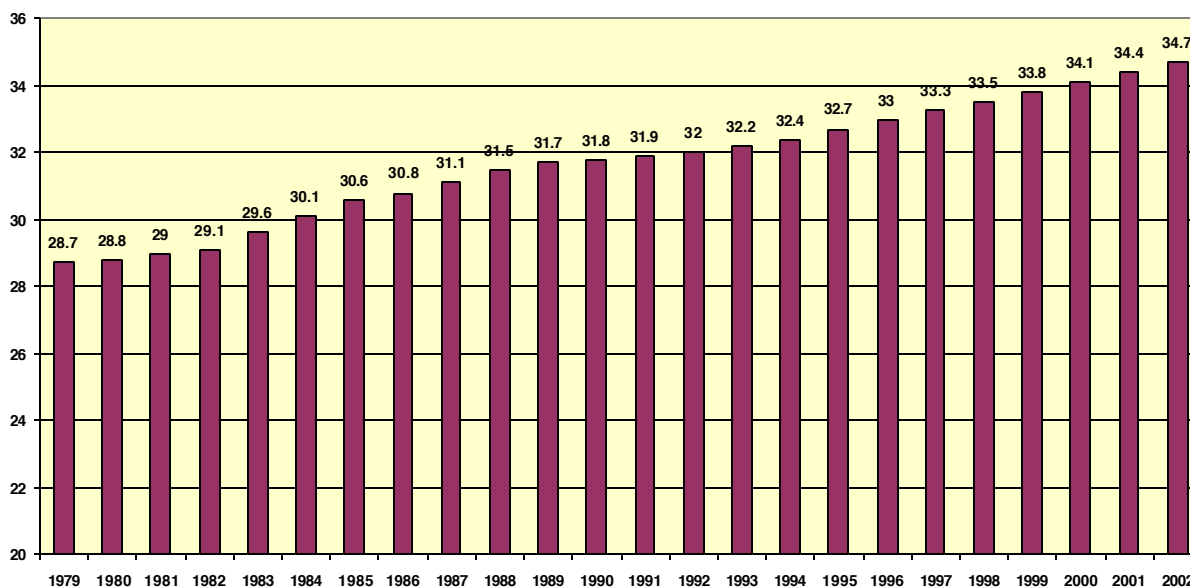


Chart 3: Admission Trends

There were 769 inmates age fifty and over (or 5% of all admissions that year) admitted to Georgia prisons in FY 2002. The record high was 807 admitted to Georgia prisons in FY 1999.

Inmates Age 50 and Older Admitted to Prison by Fiscal Year

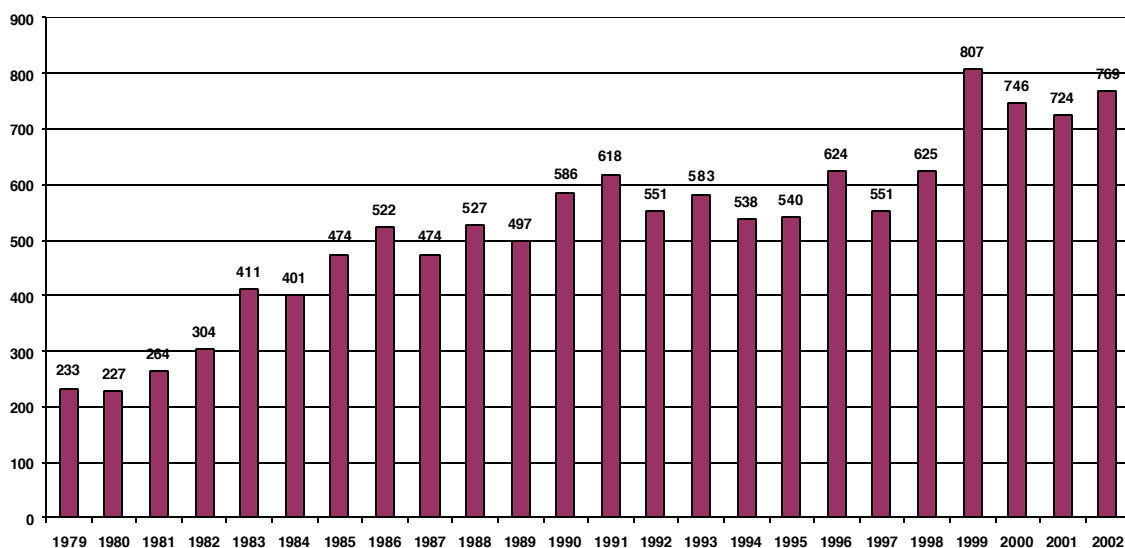


Chart 4: Projected Admissions

The average annual growth in admission to prison of those inmates 50 and older is slightly less than seven percent over the past twenty years. The past five years has seen a growth rate of nearly eight percent in admissions of this age cohort. If the current growth rate continues, in just three years the Department of Corrections will be admitting over 1,000 inmates per year age 50 and older.

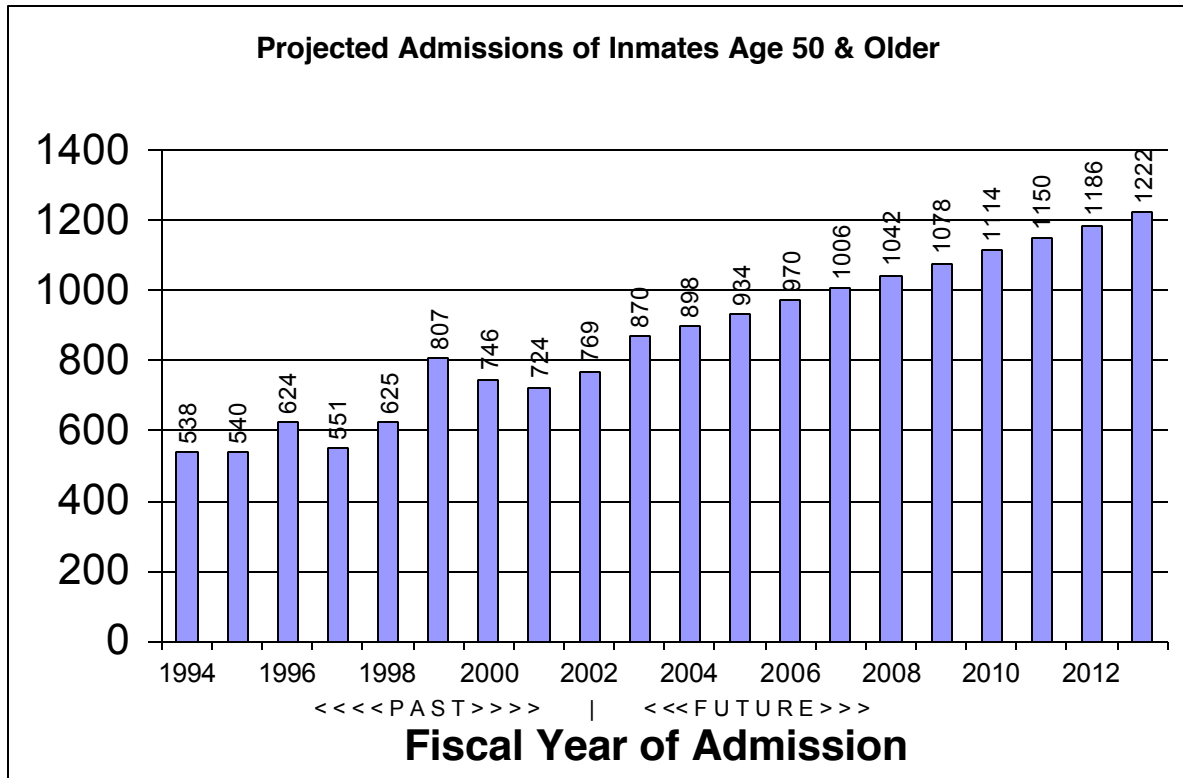


Chart 5: Admission Type

Nearly three-fourths of all inmates age 50 and older are admitted to prison through a direct court commitment. Seventeen percent are probation revocations and another 17% are parole revocations.

	Age 15-29	Age 30-49	Age 50+
Court Commitment	67%	60%	66%
Probation Revoked	20%	20%	17%
Parole Revoked	13%	19%	17%

Chart 6: Crime Type

The inmate cohort age 50 and above in the standing inmate population is more violent than both the 15-29 age group and the 30-49 age group. Seventy-one percent of inmates age 50 and older are serving sentences for violent and sex crimes. This compares to 30% for the middle-age cohort and 21% for the young cohort.

Standing Population Inmates Age 50+ Crime Type

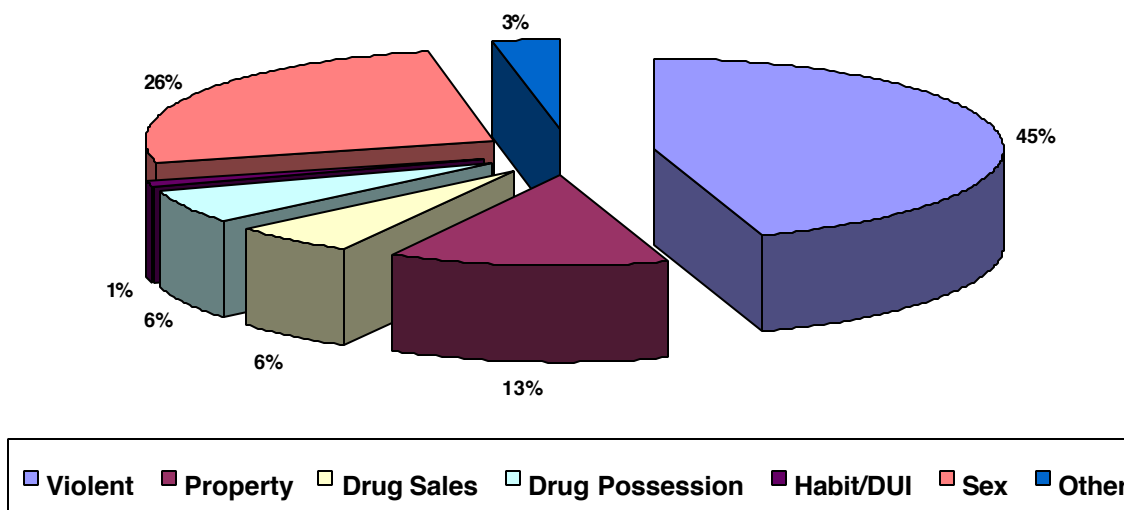


Chart 7: Conviction Offense

Of the 4,441 inmates age 50 and older in the standing inmate population as of June 1 2000, slightly under one half (2,180) were serving sentences for the offenses of Murder, Child Molestation, Aggravated Assault, Aggravated Child Molestation or Rape.

Standing Population Most Common Conviction Offense for Inmates 50+

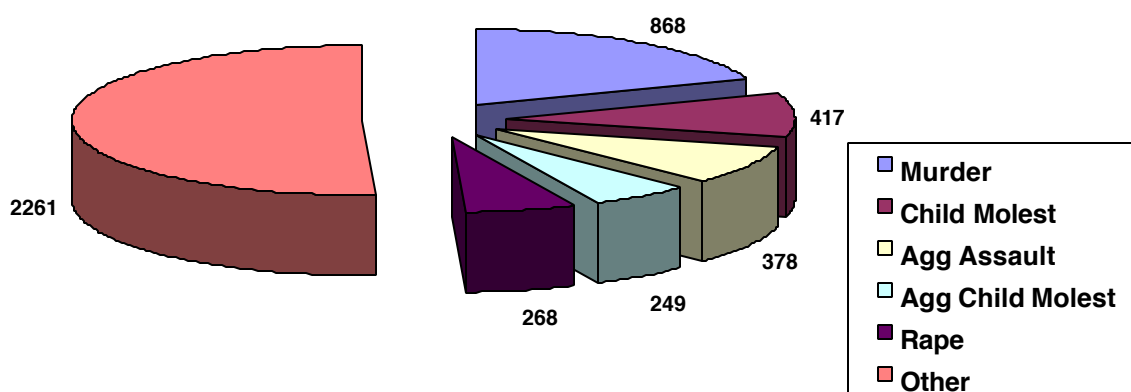
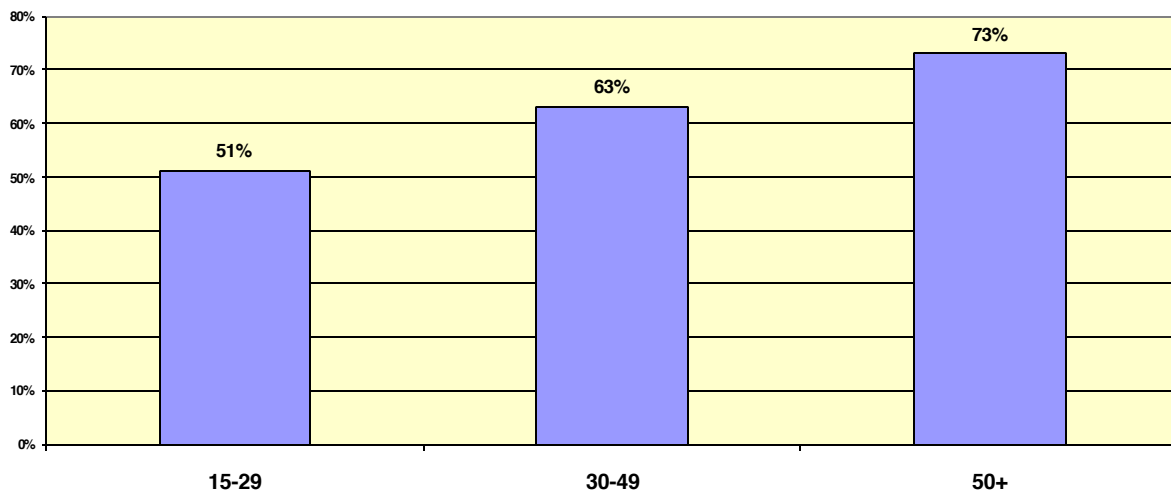


Chart 8a & 8b: Sentence Lengths

Given the severity of the offenses for which a majority of inmates age 50 and older are serving prison time, it follows that the age 50 and older cohort have longer sentence lengths as compared to other age groups. Seventy-three percent of the seniors are serving sentences of ten years or longer, while 63% of the age 30-49 cohort are serving ten year or longer sentences, and 51% of the young inmates are serving sentences of ten years or longer. The young inmates' average sentence length is 10.04 years, the middle-aged is 13.3 years and the seniors are serving average sentences of 15.6 years. These sentence lengths will push the ages of many of the 50 and older inmates into their 60's and 70's prior to their eventual release.

Percent of Inmates, by Age Group, with Sentence Length of Ten Years or More



Average Sentence Length (In Years) by Age Group

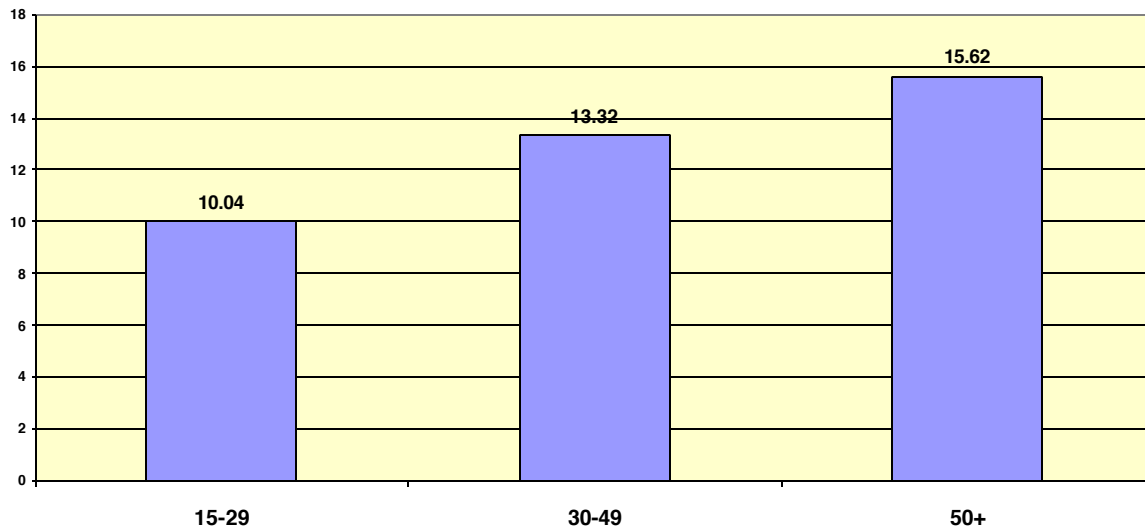


Chart 9: Inmates Serving Life and Life Without Parole

As of May 2003 there were 1,220 inmates age 50 and older serving sentences of life or life without parole. Inmates aged 30-49 serving these sentences have a greater potential future effect on the aging of the inmate population due to their sheer number - *as of May 2003 there were 3,862 inmates in this age group serving Life or LWOP sentences*. There are an additional 1,381 inmates age 15-29 serving these sentences.

	Life Sentence	Life Without Parole
Age 15-29	1,303	78
Age 30-49	3,666	196
Age 50+	1,168	52
Total	6,137	326

Chart 10: The Effects of Seven Deadly Sins on the Aging Inmate Population

Anyone convicted for the first time of committing any of seven serious violent felonies (seven deadly sins) must be sentenced to a minimum of ten years in prison and then must serve the entire court – ordered sentence. Anyone convicted of a second of these felonies must serve the remainder of their life in prison without parole. On average, 54 inmates age 50 and older are admitted annually with a sentence of *at least* ten years to serve. Given an average annual admission of 54 inmates age 50 and older, by the time the first cohort of inmates are released in 2005, the projected average daily population will be 430 inmates serving a minimum ten years.

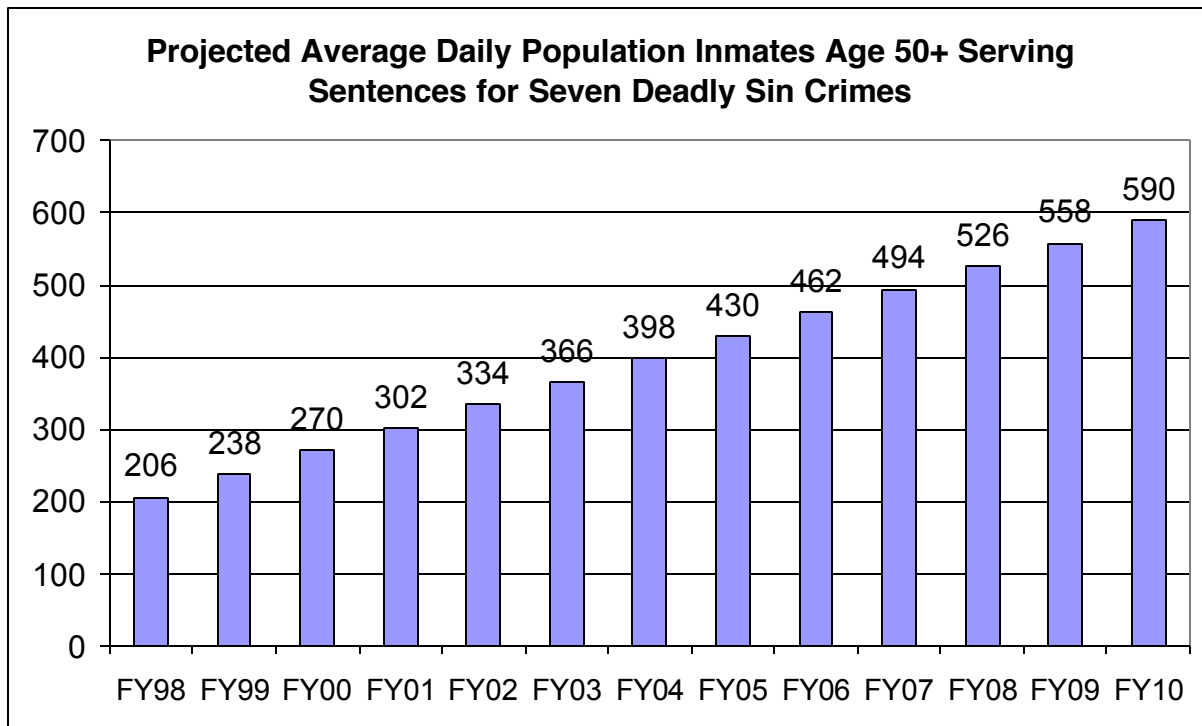


Chart 11: The Effects of Parole's 90% Policy on the Aging Inmate Population

Effective January 1, 1998 anyone convicted of any of 20 designated violent offenses must, by parole board policy, serve a minimum of 90% of their court-imposed sentence. There were 170 inmates age 50 and older fitting this profile admitted in FY1998, and 335 admitted in FY1999. The average sentence length of these inmates is 66 months. Under parole policy, then those inmates will serve a minimum of 60 months before they are eligible for parole consideration. With an average sentence length of over five years, the majority of the first cohort sentenced in 1998 will not become parole-eligible until 2003.

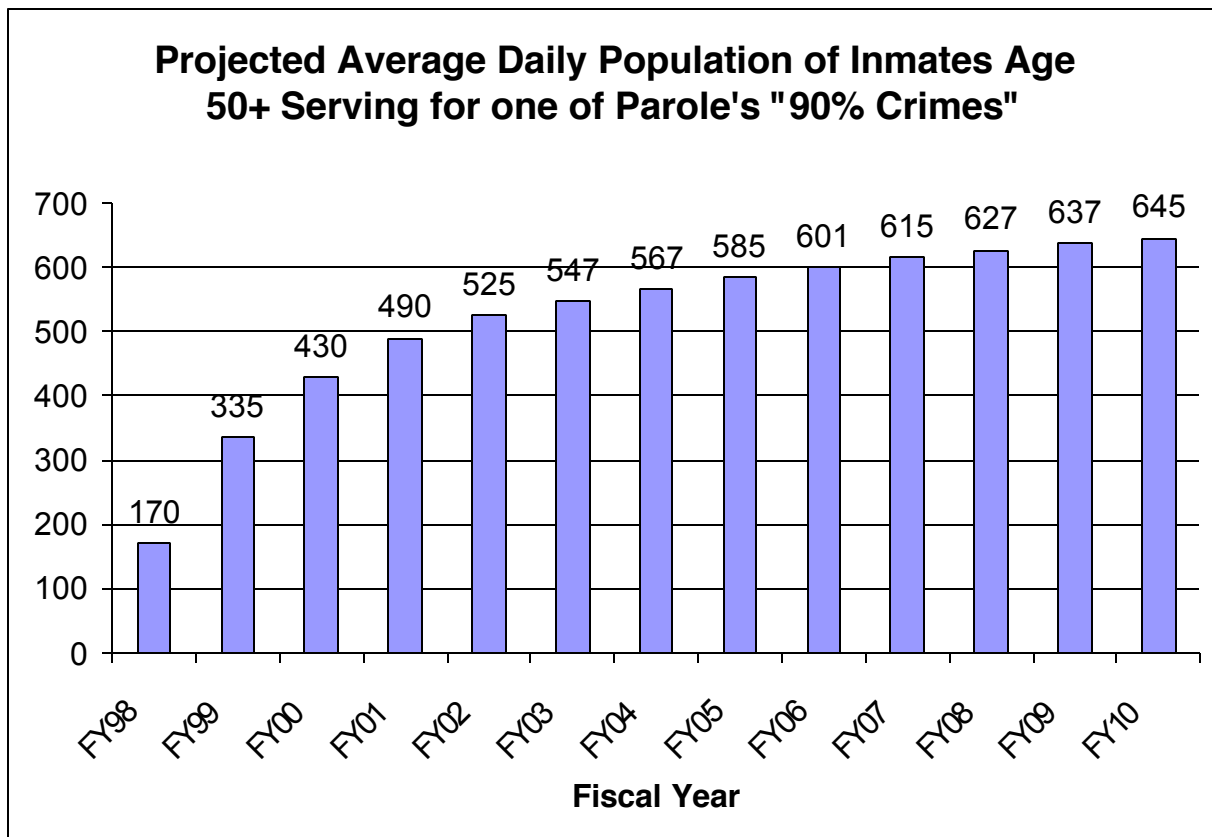


Chart 12: Combined Effects of Seven Deadly Sins and Parole 90% on the Average Daily Population of Inmates Age 50 +

The buildup of inmates age 50 and above serving sentences under the parole 90% policy built steadily through the end of 2002. Under the seven deadly sins law, the first inmates will not be eligible for release until they have served at least 10 years, so a leveling of the average daily population of inmates age 50 and older will begin to occur around 2005. The combined effect of the policy and the law will result in an average daily population of a little over 1,200 inmates age 50 and older by 2010.

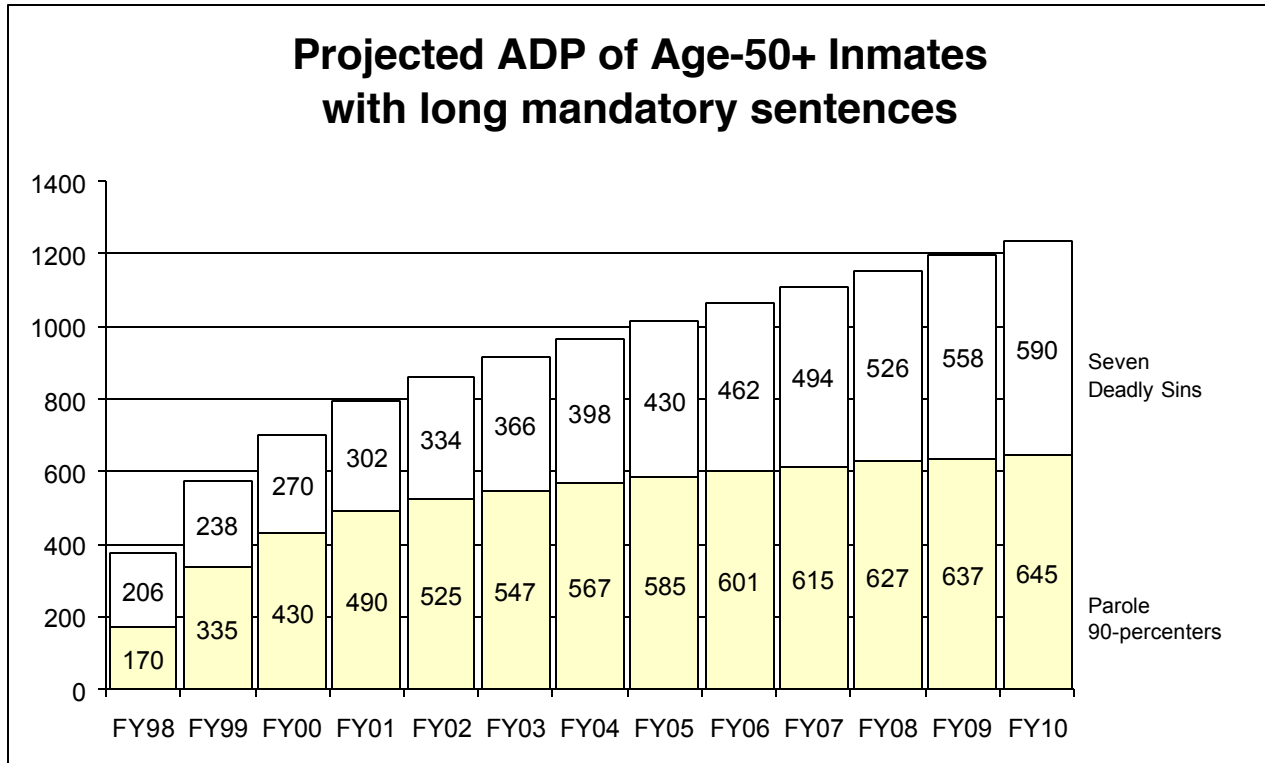


Chart 13: Older Inmates in the Standing Population

Without exception, each succeeding year in the past ten years has shown an increase in the number of inmates age 50 and older in the standing population. Inmates age 50 and older numbered 1,013 in 1989 and by 2002, this number had more than tripled to 4,025. In the past five years alone the number has nearly doubled. In 1989, inmates age 50 and older represented 5% of the inmate population of approximately 20,000. By 2002 that percentage had increased to 8.9% of a prison population that numbered in excess of 46,000.

Number of Inmates 50 and Older in Standing Population by Fiscal Year

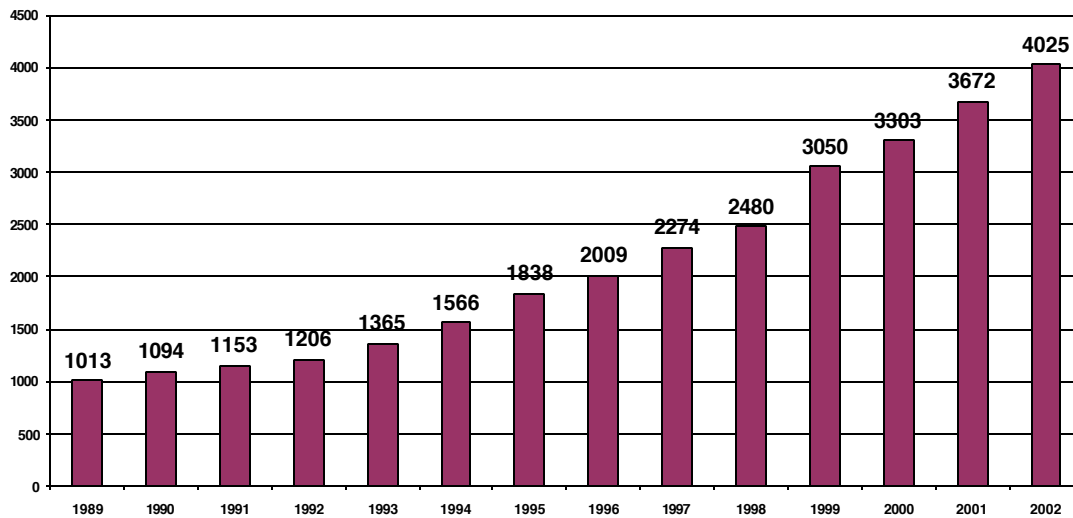


Chart 14: Projected Inmate Population Age 50 and Older

The average annual growth of the cohort of inmates age 50 and older has been 12.5% over the past decade. Using 12.5% growth in a projection may be conservative due to a number of factors. First, the number of admissions to prison of this cohort continues to increase. Second, the older cohort serves longer sentences than other cohorts. Finally, there are over 6,000 inmates of all ages currently serving sentences of life or life without parole. By 2010 it is projected that the standing population of inmates age 50 and older will exceed 6,900.

Past and projected July 1st populations of inmates age 50 and older

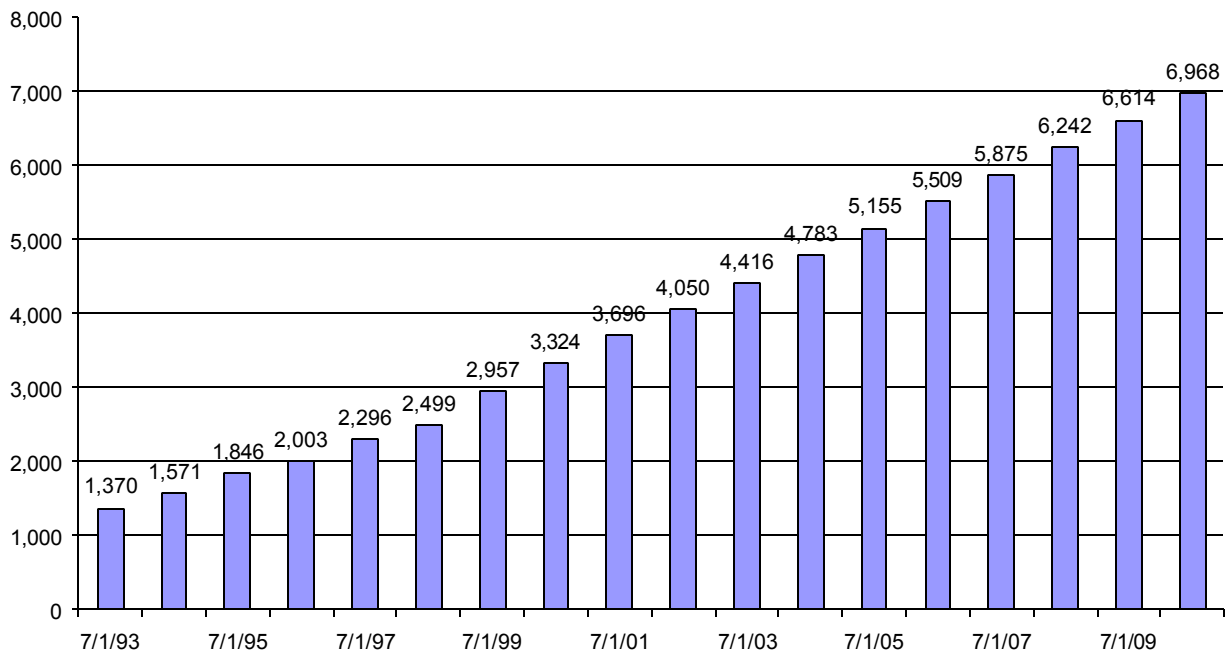


Chart 15: Inmate Institutional Assignments

Georgia houses prison inmates in primarily three types of facilities: state prisons, private prisons, and county work camps. The older inmate population in Georgia tends to have greater physical and mental health needs than the remainder of the population. They also tend to have been convicted of more serious offenses and received longer sentences. Given these factors, the age 50+ inmate cohorts are more likely to be assigned to state prisons rather than private or county facilities. Nine out of ten inmates age 50 and older are housed in state prisons as compared to eight in ten of the remainder of the inmate population.

Though spread throughout all prisons in Georgia, Men's State Prison in Milledgeville houses the highest concentration of inmates age 50 and above. Approximately 382 inmates of the average daily population at Men's State Prison are 50 or older. The following chart provides a summary of inmates age 50 and older by institutional assignment.

Institution	# of Inmates 50 & Older	Institution	# of Inmates 50 & Older
Men's SP 1	382	Walker SP	54
Bostic SP	226	Lee SP	66
ASMP 2	189	Rogers SP	35
Calhoun SP	108	Arrendale SP	47
GDCP 3	121	Baldwin SP	62
Central SP	129	Burrus CTC 6	32
Autry SP	134	GDCP (perm) 7	22
Scott SP	126	Lowndes SP	6
Hancock SP	131	Wayne SP	17
Wilcox SP	156	Autry (pre-tran)	14
Rivers SP	111	Montgomery SP	23
Macon SP	144	Milan SP	9
Rutledge SP	92	<u>Putnam SP</u>	3
Dooly SP	129		
Hays SP	96		
Georgia SP	114		
Phillips SP	109		
Coffee (PP) 4	112		
Wheeler (PP) 4	134		
Coastal SP	94		
Dodge SP	137		
Valdosta SP	89		
Smith SP	85		
Ware SP	90		
Pulaski SP 5	72		
James (PP) 4	126		
Telfair SP	84		
Washington SP 5	78		
Metro SP 5	73		

1. Provides housing for medically infirm, non-ambulatory and geriatric inmates.
2. Provides centralized acute and specialized medical services and Level IV MH services for males and females.
3. Inmates currently being classified.
4. Private Prison
5. Female Prison
6. Supports Georgia Public Safety Center
7. GDCP permanently assigned inmates

Chart 16: Physical Health

It is difficult to calculate an exact cost differential for incarceration based on age. The available literature estimates that for medical costs alone, older inmates will require expenditures two to three times that of younger, healthier inmates. Though no direct costs are attached, a rough estimate of the ratio of health care expenditures can be derived from the physical profiles of the younger and older age cohorts in the Georgia inmate population.

Just 31% of the older inmate cohort are classified as having no physical limitations as compared to 83% of the age 15-29 cohort. *Forty percent of the older inmate population is classified as having major or very-major physical defects.* A significant portion of the GDC's \$120 annual health care budget is directed toward the older, sicker inmates.

In 1998 the Department of Corrections commissioned an independent examination of special needs populations within the prisons; included in this study was the aging inmate population. The study by Barrell and Associates concluded that inmates aged 50 and older were twenty (20) times more likely to be assigned to a special medical bed than inmates younger than age 50. In addition, the study concluded that although inmates age 50 and older only comprised approximately 6% of the overall inmate population, they consumed over 12% of the total inmate medical expenditures.

Physical Profile Inmates 50 and Older

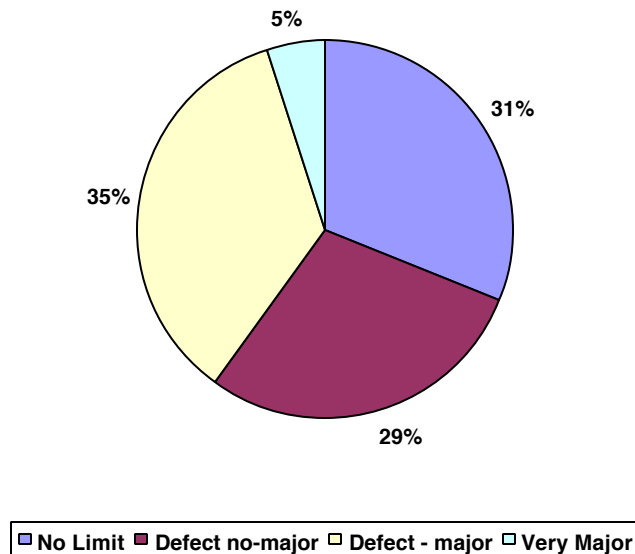
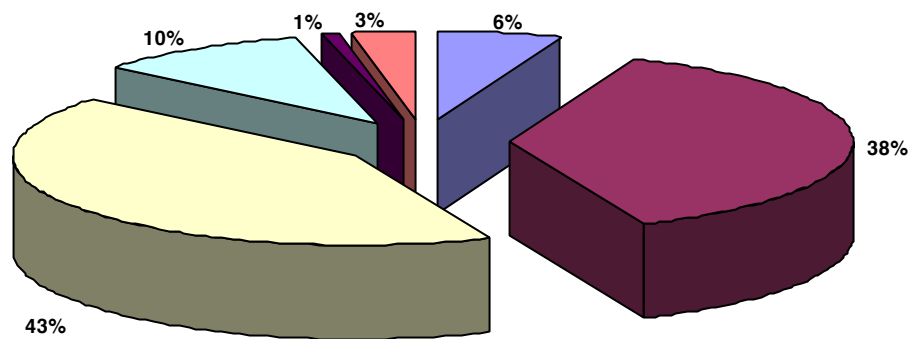


Chart 17: Security Classification

The older inmate cohort is less likely than the other two cohorts to be classified as close or maximum security. Eleven percent of the older inmate cohort is classified as close or maximum security compared to 22% of the youthful cohort and 16% of the middle-age cohort. Thirty-eight percent of all older inmates are classified as medium. Although age usually reduces escape, assault and other security risks, the violent criminal background of the age 50 and older inmate is a detriment to reduction to the less-expensive minimum and trusty security levels.

Inmates Age 50+ by Security Classification



Trusty
 Minimum
 Medium
 Close
 Maximum
 Diagnostic

The Aging Inmate Population in Selected Other States

(Inmate statistics as reported in July 2003 telephone survey)

Texas reported **15,019** inmates, or **10.1%** of the **148,701**-inmate population is 50 or older.

Tennessee reported **1,915** inmates, or **10%** of the **19,159**-inmate population is 50 or older.

Florida reports **7,679** inmates, or **9.9%** of the **77,285**-inmate population, is age 50 or older.

Arkansas reported **1,288** inmates, or **9.6%** of the **13,418**-inmate population is 50 or older.

Missouri reported **2,739** inmates, or **9%** of the **30,338**-inmate population is age 50 or older.

North Carolina reported **2,841** inmates, or **8.4%** of the **33,887**-inmate population is age 50 or older.

Kentucky reported **1,299** inmates, or **8.2%** of the **15,934**-inmate population, is age 50 or older.

South Carolina reported **1,839** inmates, or **7.7%** of the **23,966**-inmate population is age 50 or older

Virginia reported **2,299** inmates, or **7.4%** of the **31,243**-inmate population is 50 or older.

Alabama reported **2,011** inmates, or **7.1%** of the **28,440**-inmate population is 50 or older.

Mississippi reported **1,415** inmates, or **6.9%** of the **20,453**-inmate population is 50 or older.

Maryland reported **1,585** inmates, or **6.6%** of the **23,855**-inmate population is age 50 or older.