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# Prisoners in 1996

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The total number of prisoners under the jurisdiction of Federal or State adult correctional authorities was 1,182,169 at yearend 1996. During the year the States and the District of Columbia added 50,582 prisoners, and the Federal prison system added 5,294 prisoners. Overall, the Nation's prison population grew by 5.0%, which was less than the average annual growth rate of 7.3% recorded since 1990. The 1996 increase was the equivalent of 1,075 more inmates per week.

At midyear 1996 (the latest available data), more than 1.6 million U.S. residents were incarcerated. State and Federal prisons housed about two-thirds of the incarcerated population (1,112,448). Jails, which are locally operated and typically hold persons awaiting trial and those with sentences of a year or less, held the other third (518,492).

Relative to the number of U.S. residents, the rate of incarceration in prisons at yearend 1996 totaled 427 sentenced inmates per 100,000 residents — up from 292 in 1990. On December 31, 1996, 1 in every 118 men and 1 in every 1,818 women were under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities.

## Highlights

Year	Number of inmates		Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 resident population		Population housed as a percent of highest capacity	
	Federal	State	Federal	State	Federal	State
1985	40,223	462,284	14	187	123%	105%
1990	65,526	708,393	20	272	151	115
1991	71,608	753,951	22	287	146	116
1992	80,259	802,241	26	305	137	118
1993	89,587	880,857	29	330	136	118
1994	95,034	959,668	30	356	125	117
1995	100,250	1,026,043	32	379	126	114
1996	105,544	1,076,625	33	394	125	116

- During 1996 the number of female prisoners rose by 9.1%, nearly double the increase of male prisoners (4.7%). At yearend 74,730 women were in State or Federal prison — 6.3% of inmates.
- On December 31, 1996, State prisons were operating at between 16% and 24% above capacity, while Federal prisons were operating at 25% over capacity.
- California (147,712), Texas (132,383), and the Federal system (105,544) together held 1 in every 3 prisoners in the Nation. Fifteen States, each holding fewer than 5,000 inmates, together held only 3% of the Nation's prisoners.
- The prison population of 12 States grew by at least 10% in 1996, led by North Dakota (18.8%) and New Mexico (15.8%). Vermont (down 12.0%), the District of Columbia (-4.3%), and Florida (-0.2%) recorded declines.
- Factors underlying the growth in the State prison population between 1985 and 1995 include —
  - a 12.3% average annual increase in the number of Hispanic inmates, higher than among blacks (9.4%) and whites (7.6%).
  - a 91% rise in the number of admissions from 1985 to 1990 and a 13% rise from 1990 to 1995.
  - a decline in annual release rates of prisoners from 37% in 1990 to 31% in 1995.
  - a sharp rise in violent offenders among white inmates (accounting for 42% of the 10-year increase in white prisoners) and in drug offenders among black inmates (42% of their increase).
  - an overall increase in the percentage held for drug offenses offset by declines in violent and property percentages.

**Table 1. Number of persons held in State or Federal prisons or in local jails, 1985, 1990-96**

Year	Total inmates in custody	Number of State and Federal prisoners on December 31		Inmates held in local jails on June 30	Incarceration rate <sup>b</sup>
		Jurisdiction <sup>a</sup>	Custody		
1985	744,208	502,507	487,593	256,615	313
1990	1,148,702	773,919	743,382	405,320	461
1991	1,219,014	825,559	792,535	426,479	483
1992	1,295,150	882,500	850,566	444,584	508
1993	970,444	970,444	909,381	459,804	531
1994	1,476,621	1,054,702	990,147	486,474	567
1995	1,585,589	1,126,293	1,078,545	507,044	601
1996					
June 30	1,630,940	1,164,356	1,112,448	518,492	615
December 31	--	1,182,169	--	--	--
Annual average increase,					
12/31/85 - 6/30/96	7.8%	8.3%	8.2%	6.9%	
12/31/90 - 6/30/96	6.6%	7.7%	7.6%	4.6%	

Note: Jail counts are for midyear (June 30). Counts for 1994-96 exclude persons who were supervised outside a jail facility. State and Federal prisoner counts for 1985 and 1990-95 are for December 31.

--Not available.

<sup>a</sup>Includes prisoners in custody, prisoners in local jails because of prison crowding, and prisoners supervised elsewhere, such as treatment centers.

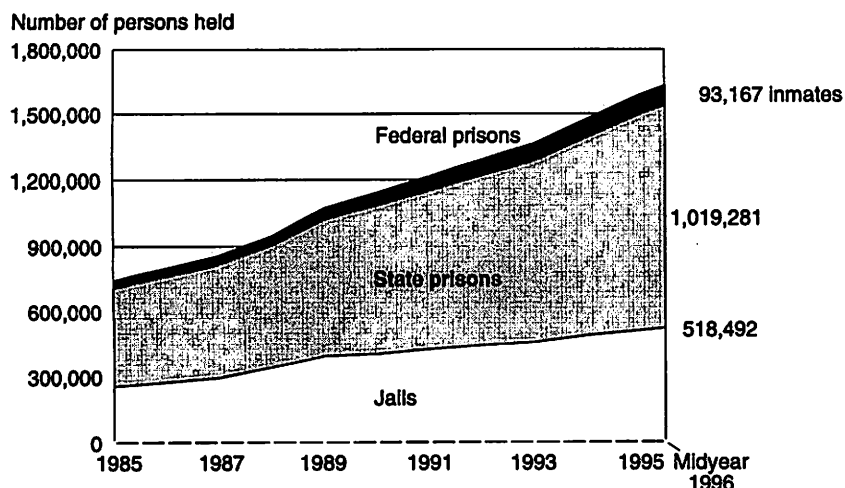
<sup>b</sup>Total of persons in custody of State, Federal, or local jurisdictions per 100,000 U.S. residents.

**The population of State and Federal prisons rose 5.0% during 1996**

The 1996 growth rate of 5.0% was smaller than the percentage increase recorded during 1995 (6.8%) and below the average annual growth rate since 1985 (8.1%) (table 2). In absolute numbers the total prison population increase of 55,876 prison inmates was the second lowest of the 1990's, after the 1991 increase of 51,640. In contrast, the prison population grew by 71,591 inmates during 1995.

Prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year ("sentenced prisoners") accounted for 96% of the total prison population at yearend, growing by 4.9% during 1996 (table 3). The remaining prisoners had sentences of a year or less or were currently unsentenced (that is, awaiting trial in States with combined prison-jail systems).

The sentenced State prison population experienced slower growth during the year than the Federal prison population (4.8% compared to 6.2%). The rate of growth for sentenced State prisoners was down from the 1995



- On average, the Nation's incarcerated population grew by 7.8% each year since 1985. During this period, the State and Federal prison population grew by 8.2% annually, while the local jail population increased by 6.9% each year.

- At yearend 1985, 1 in every 319 U.S. residents were incarcerated; by midyear 1996, that rate grew to 1 in every 163.

- Since 1990 correctional authorities have had to find beds for an additional 482,238 inmates, or about 1,700 new inmates each week.

- Since 1985 the Nation's prisons have added space for 428,240 inmates (highest capacity), and local jails have added space for 289,190. By 1996 State prisons were at 17% above their highest capacity, and jails at 8% below their rated capacity.

**Table 2. Changes in the State and Federal prison populations, 1985-96**

Year	Number of inmates	Annual increase	
		Number	Percent change
1985	502,507	40,505	8.8%
1986	544,972	42,465	8.5
1987	585,084	40,112	7.4
1988	627,600	42,516	7.3
1989	712,364	84,764	13.5
1990	773,919	61,555	8.6
1991	825,559	51,640	6.7
1992	882,500	56,941	6.9
1993*	970,444	64,992	7.4
1994	1,054,702	84,258	8.7
1995	1,126,293	71,591	6.8
1996	1,182,169	55,876	5.0
Average annual increase	1985-96	58,101	8.1%
	1990-96	63,836	7.3

Note: All counts are for December 31 of each year and may reflect revisions of previously reported numbers.

\*Includes the jurisdiction populations of Massachusetts and Texas for the first time. The final 1993 count (947,492), which excludes the noncustody population in Texas and Massachusetts, may be used for comparisons.

rate of 6.9% and also below the 7.2% average annual growth rate since 1990. In absolute numbers, sentenced State prisoners increased by 47,666 during 1996, compared to the 1995 increase of 64,442.

During 1996 the total prison population rose by at least 10% in 12 States. North Dakota experienced the largest increase (18.8%), followed by New Mexico (15.8%), Idaho (15.2%), Missouri (15.0%), and Wisconsin (14.8%). Two States and the District of Columbia experienced a decline in prison population. Vermont had the largest decline (down 12.0%), followed by the District of Columbia (-4.3%) and Florida (-0.2%).

During 1996, 48% of the increase in total prison population was accounted for by California (up 12,066), the Federal system (5,294), Texas (4,617), Missouri (2,869), and Pennsylvania (2,121). These five jurisdictions incarcerated over a third of the Nation's prison population.

### Rates of prison incarceration rise

On December 31, 1996, the number of sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents was 427. Of the 13 States with rates greater than that for the Nation, 9 were in the South, 3 in the West, and 1 in the Midwest. Four States — North Dakota (101), Minnesota (110), Maine (112), and Vermont (137) — had rates that were less than a third of the national rate. The District of Columbia, a wholly urban jurisdiction, held 1,609 prisoners per 100,000 residents at yearend 1996.

Since 1985 the number of sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents has risen from 200 to 427. During this period, prison incarceration rates rose most in the South (from 236 to 490) and West (from 176 to 386). The rate in the Midwest rose from 161 to 326, and the rate in the Northeast grew from 145 to 308. The number of sentenced Federal prisoners per 100,000 residents increased from 14 to 33.

**Table 3. Prisoners under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, by region and jurisdiction, yearend 1995 and 1996**

Region and jurisdiction	Total			Sentenced to more than 1 year			Incarceration rate, 1996 <sup>a</sup>
	Advance 1996	1995	Percent change, 1995-96	Advance 1996	1995	Percent change, 1995-96	
<b>U.S. total</b>	1,182,169	1,126,293	5.0%	1,138,187	1,085,369	4.9%	427
Federal	105,544	100,250	5.3%	88,815	83,663	6.2%	33
State	1,076,625	1,026,043	4.9	1,049,372	1,001,706	4.8	394
<b>Northeast</b>	166,476	162,050	2.7%	159,243	154,959	2.8%	308
Connecticut <sup>b</sup>	15,007	14,801	1.4	10,301	10,418	-1.1	314
Maine	1,476	1,396	5.7	1,401	1,326	5.7	112
Massachusetts <sup>c,d</sup>	11,790	11,687	.9	10,903	10,355	5.3	302
New Hampshire	2,071	2,014	2.8	2,071	2,014	2.8	177
New Jersey	27,490	27,066	1.6	27,490	27,066	1.6	343
New York	69,709	68,489	1.8	69,709	68,489	1.8	383
Pennsylvania	34,537	32,416	6.5	34,531	32,410	6.5	286
Rhode Island <sup>b</sup>	3,271	2,902	12.7	2,030	1,833	10.7	205
Vermont <sup>b,e</sup>	1,125	1,279	-12.0	807	1,048	-23.0	137
<b>Midwest</b>	204,509	193,220	5.8%	203,285	192,147	5.8%	326
Illinois <sup>f</sup>	38,852	37,658	3.2	38,852	37,658	3.2	327
Indiana	16,960	16,125	5.2	16,801	16,046	4.7	287
Iowa <sup>g</sup>	6,342	5,906	7.4	6,342	5,906	7.4	222
Kansas	7,756	7,054	10.0	7,756	7,054	10.0	301
Michigan <sup>g</sup>	42,349	41,112	3.0	42,349	41,112	3.0	440
Minnesota	5,158	4,846	6.4	5,158	4,846	6.4	110
Missouri	22,003	19,134	15.0	21,999	19,134	15.0	409
Nebraska	3,275	3,074	6.5	3,212	3,006	6.9	194
North Dakota	722	608	18.8	650	544	19.5	101
Ohio <sup>f</sup>	46,174	44,663	3.4	46,174	44,663	3.4	413
South Dakota	2,064	1,841	12.1	2,064	1,841	12.1	281
Wisconsin	12,854	11,199	14.8	11,928	10,337	15.4	230
<b>South</b>	469,744	454,182	3.4%	459,294	446,958	2.8%	490
Alabama	21,760	20,718	5.0	21,108	20,130	4.9	492
Arkansas	9,407	9,411	--	8,992	9,021	-3	357
Delaware <sup>b</sup>	5,110	4,802	6.4	3,119	2,980	4.7	428
District of Col. <sup>b</sup>	9,376	9,800	-4.3	8,659	9,042	-4.2	1,609
Florida <sup>g</sup>	63,763	63,879	-2	63,746	63,866	-2	439
Georgia <sup>g</sup>	35,139	34,266	2.5	34,328	34,168	.5	462
Kentucky	12,910	12,060	7.0	12,910	12,060	7.0	331
Louisiana	26,779	25,195	6.3	26,779	25,195	6.3	615
Maryland	22,050	21,453	2.8	20,980	20,450	2.6	412
Mississippi	14,292	12,684	12.7	13,576	12,251	10.8	498
North Carolina	30,701	29,253	4.9	27,945	27,914	.1	379
Oklahoma <sup>f</sup>	19,593	18,151	7.9	19,593	18,151	7.9	591
South Carolina	20,446	19,611	4.3	19,758	19,015	3.9	532
Tennessee <sup>f</sup>	15,626	15,206	2.8	15,626	15,206	2.8	292
Texas <sup>f</sup>	132,383	127,766	3.6	132,383	127,766	3.6	686
Virginia	27,655	27,415	.9	27,062	27,260	-7	404
West Virginia	2,754	2,512	9.6	2,730	2,483	9.9	150
<b>West</b>	235,896	216,591	8.9%	227,550	207,642	9.6%	386
Alaska <sup>b</sup>	3,706	3,522	5.2	2,311	2,042	13.2	379
Arizona <sup>g</sup>	22,573	21,341	5.8	21,603	20,291	6.5	481
California	147,712	135,646	8.9	144,386	131,745	9.6	451
Colorado <sup>f</sup>	12,438	11,063	12.4	12,438	11,063	12.4	322
Hawaii <sup>b,e</sup>	4,011	3,560	12.7	2,954	2,590	14.1	249
Idaho	3,834	3,328	15.2	3,834	3,328	15.2	319
Montana	2,073	1,999	3.7	2,073	1,999	3.7	235
Nevada <sup>f</sup>	8,215	7,713	6.5	8,215	7,713	6.5	502
New Mexico	4,724	4,078	15.8	4,506	3,925	14.8	261
Oregon	8,661	7,886	9.8	7,316	6,515	12.3	226
Utah	3,939	3,452	14.1	3,913	3,428	14.1	194
Washington	12,527	11,608	7.9	12,518	11,608	7.8	224
Wyoming	1,483	1,395	6.3	1,483	1,395	6.3	307

Note: The advance count of prisoners is conducted in January and may be revised. Prisoner counts for 1995 may differ from those reported in previous publications.

--Less than 0.05%.

<sup>a</sup>The number of prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year per 100,000 U.S. residents.

<sup>b</sup>Prisons and jails form one integrated system.

NPS data include jail and prison populations.

<sup>c</sup>Reference date is not December 31. See NPS

*jurisdiction notes.*

<sup>d</sup>Incarceration rate includes an estimated 7,500 inmates sentenced to more than 1 year, but held in county facilities.

<sup>e</sup>Population figures are based on custody counts.

<sup>f</sup>Data for inmates sentenced to more than a year may include some inmates sentenced to a year or less.

**Western States recorded the fastest growth in prison populations**

During 1996 the number of sentenced State and Federal prisoners grew by

an additional 1,016 inmates per week. The 1996 average weekly increase was 298 inmates fewer than the weekly increase in 1995 and 615 fewer than in 1994.

The Western States had the highest percentage increase in the number of sentenced prisoners, with a gain of 9.6% during 1996. The Midwest experienced a rise of 5.8% in the number of sentenced prisoners, while the South and the Northeast both recorded increases of 2.8%.

**Table 4. Changes in the number of sentenced prisoners under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, 1991-96 and 1986-96.**

Region and jurisdiction	Prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year			
	1991-96		1986-96	
	Population difference	Percent change	Population difference	Percent change
<b>U.S. total</b>	348,577	44.1%	616,103	118.0%
Federal	32,119	56.7%	52,284	143.1%
State	316,458	43.2	563,819	116.1
<b>Northeast</b>				
Connecticut	1,716	20.0%	5,975	138.1%
Maine	(157)	-10.1	159	12.8
Massachusetts	--	--	--	--
New Hampshire	538	35.1	1,289	164.8
New Jersey	4,007	17.1	--	--
New York	11,847	20.5	31,260	81.3
Pennsylvania	11,145	47.7	19,366	127.7
Rhode Island	281	16.1	1,023	101.6
Vermont	--	--	--	--
<b>Midwest</b>				
Illinois	9,737	33.4%	19,396	99.7%
Indiana	3,225	23.8	6,838	68.6
Iowa	2,197	53.0	3,565	128.4
Kansas	1,853	31.4	2,411	45.1
Michigan	5,926	16.3	21,607	104.2
Minnesota	1,686	48.6	2,696	109.5
Missouri	6,102	38.4	11,690	113.4
Nebraska	806	33.5	1,258	64.4
North Dakota	209	47.4	289	80.1
Ohio	10,430	29.2	23,711	105.6
South Dakota	690	50.2	1,014	96.6
Wisconsin	4,153	53.4	6,211	108.6
<b>South</b>				
Alabama	4,708	28.7%	9,604	83.5%
Arkansas	1,270	16.4	4,291	91.3
Delaware	646	26.1	1,163	59.5
District of Columbia	1,553	21.9	3,872	80.9
Florida	17,215	37.0	31,518	97.8
Georgia	11,319	49.2	18,478	116.6
Kentucky	3,111	31.7	7,622	144.1
Louisiana	6,776	33.9	12,479	87.3
Maryland	3,156	17.7	8,421	67.1
Mississippi	4,894	56.4	7,015	106.9
North Carolina	9,673	52.9	11,572	70.7
Oklahoma	6,253	46.9	9,885	101.8
South Carolina	2,550	14.8	8,736	79.3
Tennessee	4,152	36.2	8,035	105.8
Texas	80,706	156.2	93,849	243.5
Virginia	7,402	37.7	14,517	115.7
West Virginia	--	--	--	--
<b>West</b>				
Alaska	--	--	--	--
Arizona	6,760	45.5%	12,565	139.0%
California	--	--	--	--
Colorado	4,046	48.2	8,634	227.0
Hawaii	1,188	67.3	1,433	94.2
Idaho	--	--	--	--
Montana	595	40.3	962	86.6
Nevada	2,392	41.1	3,664	80.5
New Mexico	1,490	49.4	2,200	95.4
Oregon	1,741	31.2	2,546	53.4
Utah	1,308	50.2	2,168	124.2
Washington	3,362	36.7	5,915	89.6
Wyoming	384	34.9	622	72.2

Note: Totals include data for States otherwise excluded because of reporting changes. ( ) indicates a decline in the number of sentenced prisoners. --Not available because of reporting changes. See NPS jurisdiction notes.

Twenty States recorded higher growth rates of sentenced prisoners in 1996 than in 1995. Of these, 14 recorded growth rates over 10% in 1996, led by North Dakota (19.5%), Wisconsin (15.4%), and Idaho (15.2%).

New York, New Jersey, Georgia, and North Carolina reported increases of less than 2% in the number of sentenced prisoners during 1996. Among the six jurisdictions which reported declines, only Vermont (down 23.0%), the District of Columbia (-4.2%), and Connecticut (-1.1%) recorded a drop of greater than 1%.

Since 1991 the sentenced inmate population in State prisons has grown by 43.2% (table 4). During this period eight States reported increases of at least 50%, led by Texas (up 156.2%) and Hawaii (67.3%). Maine was the only State to report a decline (down 10.1%). During this time the Federal system reported an increase of 56.7% — 32,119 additional inmates with sentences of more than 1 year.

**Table 5. The prison situation on December 31, 1996**

Prison population	Number of prisoners	Incarceration rates, 12/31/96	Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 State residents*	Percent changes in the prison population			
				1-year growth, 1995-96	Percent change	5-year growth, 1991-96	Percent change
<b>10 highest:</b>							
California	147,712	Texas	686	North Dakota	18.8%	Texas	156.2%
Texas	132,383	Louisiana	615	New Mexico	15.8	Wisconsin	63.7
Federal	105,544	Oklahoma	591	Idaho	15.2	North Carolina	62.4
New York	69,709	South Carolina	532	Missouri	15.0	Mississippi	60.5
Florida	63,763	Nevada	502	Wisconsin	14.8	Iowa	53.0
Ohio	46,174	Mississippi	498	Utah	14.1	New Mexico	51.5
Michigan	42,349	Alabama	492	Rhode Island	12.7	South Dakota	50.2
Illinois	38,852	Arizona	481	Mississippi	12.7	Utah	50.1
Georgia	35,139	Georgia	462	Hawaii	12.7	Hawaii	48.6
Pennsylvania	34,537	California	451	Colorado	12.4	Minnesota	48.6
<b>10 lowest:</b>							
North Dakota	722	North Dakota	101	Vermont	-12.0%	District of Col.	-10.3%
Vermont	1,125	Minnesota	110	District of Col.	-4.3	Maine	-6.5
Maine	1,476	Maine	112	Florida	-2	South Carolina	11.9
Wyoming	1,483	Vermont	137	Arkansas	0	Maryland	14.3
South Dakota	2,064	West Virginia	150	Massachusetts	.9	Michigan	16.3
New Hampshire	2,071	New Hampshire	177	Virginia	.9	New Jersey	17.1
Montana	2,073	Nebraska	194	Connecticut	1.4	Rhode Island	18.0
West Virginia	2,754	Utah	194	New Jersey	1.6	New York	20.5
Rhode Island	3,271	Rhode Island	205	New York	1.8	Arkansas	21.1
Nebraska	3,275	Iowa	222	Georgia	2.5	Oregon	28.7

\*Prisoners with a sentence of more than a year. The Federal Bureau of Prisons and the District of Columbia are excluded.

In 1996 the 10 States with the largest prison populations held 61% of the Nation's total prison population, with California, Texas, and the Federal system accounting for 33% (table 5). Texas had the highest prison incarceration rate (686 sentenced inmates per 100,000 residents), followed by Louisiana (615), Oklahoma (591), and South Carolina (532). Eight States had prison incarceration rates below 200, led by North Dakota (101), Minnesota (110), and Maine (112).

The 15 States with the smallest prison populations each held less than 5,000 inmates. Collectively, these States held only 3.4% of the Nation's total prison population.

Over the last 5 years, 18 States had prison population increases of more than 40%, led by Texas (156.2%), Wisconsin (63.7%), North Carolina (62.4%), and Mississippi (60.5%). Among States with increased prison populations since 1991, only South Carolina (11.9%), Maryland (14.3%), Michigan (16.3%), New Jersey (17.1%), and Rhode Island (18.0%) had growth of less than 20%. Maine (down 6.5%) and the District of Columbia (-10.3%) experienced a decline in the number of inmates.

**Female prison population growth rate was nearly twice that of males**

During 1996 the number of women under the jurisdiction of State or Federal prison authorities increased from 68,494 to 74,730, an increase of 9.1% (table 6). The number of men grew from 1,057,799 to 1,107,439, an increase of 4.7%.

Since 1985 the annual rate of growth of female inmates has averaged 11.2%, higher than the 7.9% average increase in male inmates. By 1996 women accounted for 6.3% of all prisoners nationwide, up from 4.6% in 1985.

Relative to their number in the U.S. resident population, men were 16 times more likely than women to be incarcerated in a State or Federal prison. At yearend 1996 there were 51 sentenced female inmates per 100,000 women in the United States, compared to 819 sentenced male inmates per 100,000 men.

Oklahoma (with 115 sentenced female inmates per 100,000 female State residents) and Texas (with 102) had the highest female incarceration rates in 1996 (table 7). Maine (with 5

sentenced female prisoners per 100,000 female residents), Vermont (with 7), and Minnesota (with 10) had the lowest incarceration rates.

At yearend 1996, 21 States and the Federal system had more than 1,000 female inmates. In seven States the number of female inmates increased by at least 10% during the year. Texas led the Nation with a 25.2% increase (from 7,935 female inmates in 1995 to 9,933 in 1996).

**Table 6. Prisoners under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, by sex of inmate, yearend 1995 and 1996**

	Men	Women
<b>Total</b>		
Advance 1996	1,107,439	74,730
1995	1,057,799	68,494
Percent change, 1995-96	4.7%	9.1%
<b>Sentenced to more than 1 year</b>		
Advance 1996	1,068,573	69,614
1995	1,021,452	63,917
Percent change, 1995-96	4.6%	8.9%
Incarceration rate, 1996*	819	51

\*The number of prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year per 100,000 residents on December 31, 1996.

Three States held fewer than 100 female inmates at yearend 1996. Women were fewer than 3% of all prisoners in Maine and Vermont. Oklahoma had the highest percentage of female prisoners (9.9%), followed by Hawaii (9.6%) and New Mexico (8.0%).

Four States — California, Texas, New York, and Florida — and the Federal system held nearly half of the Nation's female prisoners. Nineteen States and the District of Columbia each had fewer than 500 female inmates in 1996, and together these 20 jurisdictions held only 6% of all female prisoners.

**Table 7. Women under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, yearend 1996**

Region and jurisdiction	Number of female inmates	Percent of all inmates	Percent change in female inmate population, 1995-96	Incarceration rate, 1996*
<b>U.S. total</b>	<b>74,730</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>51</b>
Federal	7,700	7.3%	4.1%	4
State	67,030	6.2	9.7	47
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>8,771</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>29</b>
Connecticut	1,133	7.5	16.2	36
Maine	39	2.6	8.3	5
Massachusetts	747	6.3	13.9	15
New Hampshire	106	5.1	-9	18
New Jersey	1,281	4.7	-2.0	31
New York	3,728	5.3	3.1	40
Pennsylvania	1,476	4.3	-1.7	24
Rhode Island	229	7.0	45.9	14
Vermont	32	2.8	-27.3	7
<b>Midwest</b>	<b>11,704</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>37</b>
Illinois	2,249	5.8	2.4	37
Indiana	1,008	5.9	13.0	33
Iowa	470	7.4	10.6	32
Kansas	476	6.1	6.0	36
Michigan	1,920	4.5	4.2	39
Minnesota	234	4.5	7.8	10
Missouri	1,464	6.7	24.7	53
Nebraska	228	7.0	8.1	26
North Dakota	45	6.2	55.2	12
Ohio	2,805	6.1	.4	49
South Dakota	142	6.9	7.6	38
Wisconsin	663	5.2	32.1	24
<b>South</b>	<b>30,103</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>60</b>
Alabama	1,357	6.2	4.8	58
Arkansas	548	5.8	-1.1	41
Delaware	379	7.4	6.2	44
District of Col.	432	4.6	-12.6	119
Florida	3,302	5.2	-9.8	44
Georgia	2,239	6.4	10.0	56
Kentucky	820	6.4	11.7	41
Louisiana	1,562	5.8	9.7	69
Maryland	1,055	4.8	-2.2	37
Mississippi	941	6.6	19.0	60
North Carolina	1,870	6.1	6.7	39
Oklahoma	1,940	9.9	6.9	115
South Carolina	1,202	5.9	15.0	57
Tennessee	688	4.4	5.2	25
Texas	9,933	7.5	25.2	102
Virginia	1,687	6.1	1.7	47
West Virginia	148	5.4	14.7	15
<b>West</b>	<b>16,452</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>13.9%</b>	<b>51</b>
Alaska	269	7.3	10.7	46
Arizona	1,519	6.7	6.1	63
California	10,248	6.9	12.8	60
Colorado	845	6.8	18.5	43
Hawaii	385	9.6	23.4	52
Idaho	273	7.1	28.8	46
Montana	117	5.6	4.5	26
Nevada	607	7.4	14.5	76
New Mexico	378	8.0	36.0	39
Oregon	571	6.6	22.8	22
Utah	210	5.3	30.4	21
Washington	920	7.3	16.0	33
Wyoming	110	7.4	3.8	46

\*The number of female prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year per 100,000 female residents on December 31, 1996.

**Local jails held over 31,000 prisoners because of State prison crowding**

At the end of 1996, 27 States reported a total of 31,508 State prisoners held in local jails or other facilities because of crowding in State facilities (table 8). Louisiana accounted for 29% of all prisoners sentenced to prison but housed locally. Seven States — Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Arkansas, North Dakota, Tennessee, and West Virginia — held more than 10% of their prison population in local jails. Overall, 2.9% of all State prisoners were confined in local jails due to State prison crowding, up slightly from 2.7% in 1995.

**Table 8. State prisoners held in local jails because of prison crowding, by State, yearend 1995 and 1996**

States housing prisoners in local jails	State prisoners held in local jails			
	Number		As a percent of State inmates	
	1996	1995	1996	1995
U.S. total	31,508	27,858	2.9%	2.7%
Louisiana	9,148	8,671	34.2%	34.4%
New Jersey	4,367	4,258	15.9	15.7
Mississippi	3,242	2,357	22.7	18.6
Virginia	2,506	2,979	9.1	10.9
Tennessee	1,958	2,057	12.5	13.5
Alabama	1,529	800	7.0	3.9
Arkansas	1,201	675	12.8	7.2
Indiana	1,194	1,139	7.0	7.1
Colorado	1,163	549	9.4	5.0
Kentucky	778	559	6.0%	4.6%
Massachusetts <sup>ab</sup>	617	662	5.0	5.4
North Carolina	500	396	1.6	1.4
South Carolina	413	399	2.0	2.0
Wisconsin	341	354	2.7	3.2
Michigan <sup>b</sup>	330	393	.8	.9
New Mexico	309	369	6.5	9.0
Utah	307	279	7.8	8.1
Idaho	301	0	7.9	--
West Virginia	286	134	10.4%	5.3%
Oklahoma <sup>b</sup>	285	291	1.4	1.6
Minnesota	208	63	4.0	1.3
Montana	138	133	6.7	6.7
Arizona <sup>b</sup>	124	322	.5	1.5
Oregon	91	19	1.1	.2
North Dakota	91	0	12.6	--
New Hampshire	65	0	3.1	--
Wyoming	16	0	1.1	--

--Not calculated.

<sup>a</sup>The reference date is not December 31. See *NPS jurisdiction notes*.

<sup>b</sup>For States not including jail backups in their yearend counts, the percent of the jurisdiction population was calculated based on the total number of State inmates in jail and prison.

In addition to housing inmates in local jails, 14 States and the District of Columbia eased prison crowding by placing inmates in other States or in Federal facilities. On December 31, 1996, 7,101 prisoners nationwide were held under such arrangements — representing less than 1% of all State prisoners. North Carolina placed the most inmates in Federal and out-of-State facilities (1,381), followed by Oregon (1,026) and Colorado (973). At yearend 1996 Oregon (11.8%) and Montana (11.6%) had more than 10% of their total prison population in other State or Federal facilities.

States housing prisoners in other States or Federal facilities	Prisoners held in other States or Federal facilities	
	Number	As a percent of all State prisoners
U.S. total	7,101	.7%
North Carolina	1,381	4.5%
Oregon	1,026	11.8
Colorado	973	7.8
Missouri	901	4.1
Virginia	596	2.2
District of Col.	557	5.9
Hawaii	297	7.4
Massachusetts	269	2.3
Montana	241	11.6
Alaska	202	5.5
Idaho	198	5.2
New Mexico	162	3.4
Wisconsin	126	1.0
Alabama	97	.4
New Hampshire	75	3.6

### Prison capacity measures vary

The extent of prison crowding is difficult to determine because of the absence of uniform measures for defining capacity. The 52 reporting jurisdictions apply a wide variety of capacity measures to reflect both the available space to house inmates and the ability to staff and operate an institution. To estimate the capacity of their prisons, jurisdictions were asked to supply three measures for yearend 1996: rated, operational, and design capacities. These measures were defined as follows:

*Rated capacity* is the number of beds or inmates assigned by a rating official to institutions within the jurisdiction.

*Operational capacity* is the number of inmates that can be accommodated based on a facility's staff, existing programs, and services.

*Design capacity* is the number of inmates that planners or architects intended for the facility.

Of the 52 reporting jurisdictions, 33 supplied a rated capacity, 43 provided an operational capacity, and 37 submitted a design capacity (table 9).

Twenty-six jurisdictions provided only one measure or the same figure for each measure they reported. As a result, estimates of total capacity and measures of the relationship to population are based on the highest and lowest capacity figures provided.

**Table 9. Reported Federal and State prison capacities, yearend 1996**

Region and jurisdiction	Rated capacity	Operational capacity	Design capacity	Population housed as a percent of capacity	
				Highest capacity	Lowest capacity
Federal	76,897	...	...	125%	125%
<b>Northeast</b>					
Connecticut <sup>a</sup>	...	...	...	...	...
Maine	1,490	1,490	1,490	99%	99%
Massachusetts	...	...	7,838	150	150
New Hampshire <sup>b</sup>	1,886	1,786	1,716	102	113
New Jersey <sup>b</sup>	...	...	13,869	167	167
New York	68,996	65,700	53,366	101	131
Pennsylvania	...	21,740	22,170	156	159
Rhode Island	3,441	3,441	3,441	95	95
Vermont	1,160	1,160	1,023	97	110
<b>Midwest</b>					
Illinois	28,200	28,200	24,538	138%	158%
Indiana <sup>b</sup>	13,611	15,730	...	100	116
Iowa	4,201	4,201	4,201	151	151
Kansas	7,883	...	...	98	98
Michigan	...	42,959	...	99	99
Minnesota <sup>b</sup>	5,014	5,014	5,014	99	99
Missouri	...	20,611	...	102	102
Nebraska	...	2,517	2,013	130	163
North Dakota <sup>b</sup>	623	623	623	101	101
Ohio	34,337	...	...	134	134
South Dakota	...	1,832	...	113	113
Wisconsin <sup>b</sup>	9,538	9,538	9,538	130	130
<b>South</b>					
Alabama <sup>b</sup>	19,927	19,927	19,927	99%	99%
Arkansas <sup>b</sup>	8,160	8,160	8,160	101	101
Delaware	...	4,206	3,192	121	160
District of Columbia	7,251	9,866	9,419	89	122
Florida	71,449	68,582	62,065	89	103
Georgia	...	32,889	...	107	107
Kentucky <sup>b</sup>	9,232	9,003	7,104	131	171
Louisiana <sup>b</sup>	17,631	17,664	...	100	100
Maryland	...	22,885	...	96	96
Mississippi <sup>b</sup>	12,440	12,440	12,440	89	89
North Carolina <sup>b</sup>	24,175	...	24,175	119	119
Okahoma	11,369	14,388	...	136	172
South Carolina <sup>b</sup>	18,614	18,614	15,189	108	132
Tennessee <sup>b</sup>	...	13,811	14,095	97	99
Texas	136,195	136,195	138,849	95	97
Virginia <sup>b</sup>	16,166	16,166	16,166	152	152
West Virginia <sup>b</sup>	2,640	2,730	2,580	90	96
<b>West</b>					
Alaska	2,603	...	...	135%	135%
Arizona	...	20,270	...	111	111
California	...	...	72,621	203	203
Colorado <sup>b</sup>	...	8,605	7,104	118	143
Hawaii	...	2,650	1,754	151	229
Idaho <sup>b</sup>	2,447	3,301	2,447	101	136
Montana <sup>b</sup>	...	1,417	896	120	189
Nevada	7,667	7,326	5,842	107	141
New Mexico <sup>b</sup>	4,515	4,515	4,515	94	94
Oregon <sup>b</sup>	...	7,202	...	105	105
Utah <sup>b</sup>	...	4,048	4,230	86	90
Washington	7,371	10,057	10,057	125	170
Wyoming <sup>b</sup>	981	1,244	1,035	118	150

...Data not available.

<sup>a</sup>Connecticut no longer reports capacity due to a law passed in 1995. See *NPS jurisdiction notes*.

<sup>b</sup>Population housed as a percent of capacity was calculated excluding jail backlogs from yearend counts.

## Most jurisdictions were operating above capacity

Prisons generally require reserve capacity to operate efficiently. Dormitories and cells need to be maintained and repaired periodically, special housing is needed for protective custody and disciplinary cases, and space may be needed to cope with emergencies.

At yearend 1996, 15 States and the District of Columbia reported that they were operating at or below 99% of their highest capacity (table 9). Thirty-six States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal prison system reported operating at 100% or more of their lowest capacity. Mississippi, which was operating at 89% of its lowest capacity, had the least crowded prison system. California, operating at over twice its highest reported capacity, had the most crowded prison system.

**Table 10. Population as a percent of reported capacity for State prisons, 1996**

	State prisons <sup>a</sup>
Highest capacity	893,752
Lowest capacity	836,272
<b>Net change in capacity, 1995-96</b>	
Highest	24,081
Lowest	42,028
<b>Population as a percent of capacity<sup>b</sup></b>	
<b>Highest</b>	
1991	116%
1992	118
1993	118
1994	117
1995	114
1996	116
<b>Lowest</b>	
1991	131%
1992	131
1993	129
1994	129
1995	125
1996	124

Note: States were asked to report their rated, operational, and design capacities. Tabulations reflect the highest and lowest of the three capacities for 1991 to 1996.

<sup>a</sup>Data include estimated capacity figures for Connecticut at yearend 1995 and 1996.

<sup>b</sup>Excludes inmates sentenced to State prison but held in local jails because of crowding.

By yearend 1996 the Federal prison system was estimated to be operating at 25% over capacity, relatively unchanged since 1995. Overall, State prisons were estimated to be operating at 16% above their highest ca-

capacity, up slightly from the 14% for last year (table 10). Based on the lowest capacity figures, State prisons were operating at 24% over capacity at yearend 1996, continuing the steady decline from 31% in 1991.

## Prisoners in custody of correctional authorities in the U.S. territories, yearend 1995 and 1996

Territory/ commonwealth	Total			Sentenced to more than 1 year			
	Advance 1996	Final 1995	Percent change, 1995-96	Advance 1996	Final 1995	Percent change, 1995-96	Incar- ceration rate, 1996 <sup>a</sup>
Total	13,116	12,891	1.7%	9,576	9,371	2.2%	231
American Samoa	90	79	13.9	70	43	62.8	118
Guam	416	379	9.8	323	286	12.9	206
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	59	70	-15.7	50	65	-23.1	96
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico <sup>b</sup>	11,993	11,810	1.5	8,776	8,660	1.3	232
U.S. Virgin Islands	558	553	.9	357	317	12.6	368

<sup>a</sup>The number of prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year per 100,000 persons in the resident population. Midyear population estimates were provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Data Base.

<sup>b</sup>The number of prisoners sentenced to more than 1 year were estimated using prisoner counts from 1994 and 1995.

## U.S. territories held over 13,000 inmates in 1996

The U.S. territories and commonwealths — American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands — reported 13,116 inmates in custody of their prison systems at yearend 1996 — an increase of 1.7% since 1995. Prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year totaled 9,576 (or nearly three-quarters of the total territorial prison population).

Relative to the resident populations in the territories, the rate of incarceration was 231 prisoners per 100,000 residents — about half the combined

rate of the 50 States and the District of Columbia. Of the 5 territories, the Northern Mariana Islands had the lowest prison incarceration rate — 96 inmates per 100,000 residents, followed by American Samoa with 118. The U.S. Virgin Islands (with 368 prisoners per 100,000 residents) and Puerto Rico (with 232) had the highest incarceration rates.

Puerto Rico, the largest of the territories, had the most sentenced prisoners (8,776 at yearend 1996), up from 8,660 in 1995. In 1996, 21 States and the District of Columbia had fewer sentenced inmates than Puerto Rico; 13 States had lower incarceration rates.



**An increasing percentage of the Nation's prisoners are black or Hispanic**

Between 1985 and 1995 the number of prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year rose by over 600,000. The number of white males increased

by 103%, the number of black males by 143%, the number of white females by 194%, and the number of black females by 204% (table 11). At yearend 1995 (the latest available data), there were more black males in State or Federal prisons (510,900) than white males (493,700).

On December 31, 1995, an estimated 3.2% of all black males were in prison, compared with less than half of 1% of all white males. While the incarceration rates of both white and black males have risen since 1985, the rate for black males has grown more rapidly. In 1985 black males were about 6.3 times more likely than white males to be in prison; by 1995 they were 7.0 times more likely than white males to be in prison.

**Table 11. Number of sentenced prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction, by sex and race, 1985-95**

Year	Number of sentenced prisoners						
	Total	Male			Female		
		All <sup>a</sup>	White <sup>b</sup>	Black <sup>b</sup>	All <sup>a</sup>	White <sup>b</sup>	Black <sup>b</sup>
1985	480,568	459,223	242,700	210,500	21,345	10,800	10,200
1986	522,084	497,540	258,900	232,000	24,544	12,400	11,800
1987	560,812	533,990	277,200	249,700	26,822	13,700	12,600
1988	603,732	573,587	292,200	274,300	30,145	15,500	14,200
1989	680,907	643,643	322,100	313,700	37,264	18,400	18,300
1990	739,980	699,416	346,700	344,300	40,564	20,000	20,100
1991	789,610	745,808	363,600	372,200	43,802	20,900	22,200
1992	846,277	799,776	388,000	401,700	46,501	22,100	23,800
1993	932,074	878,037	418,900	445,400	54,037	25,200	27,900
1994 <sup>c</sup>	1,016,691	956,566	452,700	489,200	60,125	28,300	30,700
1995	1,085,363	1,021,463	493,700	510,900	63,900	31,700	31,000

Note: Sentenced prisoners are those with a sentence of more than 1 year.  
<sup>a</sup>Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other racial groups.  
<sup>b</sup>The numbers for sex and race were estimated and rounded to the nearest 100. For men and women, the total number of sentenced prisoners was multiplied by the proportion of black or white of the total population in each group. The reported racial distribution was used to estimate unreported data. For 1995, Hispanics were identified among unknown sentenced prisoners; then, race was estimated for those Hispanics based on the Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities. Finally, estimation of sex and race was done, following the procedure used for previous years.  
<sup>c</sup>The numbers of sentenced prisoners on December 31, 1994, have been updated and will differ from numbers reported in prior years.

Hispanics, who may be of any race, represent the fastest growing minority group being imprisoned, increasing from 10.9% of all State and Federal inmates in 1985 to 15.5% in 1995 (table 12). During this period the number of Hispanics in prison rose by 219%, with an average 12.3% increase each year.

Estimated number of sentenced male prisoners per 100,000 male residents

Year	White	Black
1985	246	1,559
1990	339	2,376
1995	461	3,250

Based on the U.S. resident male population on July 1 of each year.

**Table 12. Number of Hispanic prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction, by sex, 1985 and 1990-95**

Year	Hispanic prisoners		Sentenced Hispanic prisoners per 100,000 residents of Hispanic origin <sup>a</sup>		
	Number	Percent	Total <sup>b</sup>	Male	Female
1985	54,672	10.9%	285	542	22
1990	103,065	13.3	437	817	43
1991	112,520	13.7	461	863	44
1992	125,018	14.1	493	928	45
1993	138,699	14.6	529	994	50
1994	156,908	14.9	580	1,092	53
1995	174,292	15.5	622	1,174	57

Note: Data are based on incomplete counts. Each year, some States were unable to report data on Hispanic origin, others reported estimates only, and others reported incomplete counts.  
<sup>a</sup>Rates are based on estimates of the U.S. resident Hispanic population on July 1 of each year.  
<sup>b</sup>Sentenced prisoners are those with a sentence of more than 1 year. The number of Hispanics with a sentence of more than a year was estimated by multiplying the total number of sentenced prisoners by the proportion of Hispanics among all prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction. Estimates were rounded to the nearest 100.

At yearend 1995 at least 174,000 Hispanics were under the jurisdiction of State or Federal prison authorities. Because some States are only able to report partial counts, the total number of Hispanic inmates may be somewhat larger. (Based on inmate self-identification obtained in the 1991 surveys of State and Federal inmates and projected to 1995, the Hispanic population may be as large as 200,000.)

**Growth linked to increasing number of inmates in prison for violent and drug offenses**

The distribution of the four major offense categories — violent, property, drug, and public-order offenses — changed dramatically in the Nation's

prison population between 1985 and 1995 (table 13). As a percentage of all State prisoners, violent offenders fell from 54% in 1985 to 46% in 1995, property offenders fell from 31% to 24%, drug offenders rose from 9% to 23%, and public-order offenders rose from 5% to 7%.

The number of drug offenders in State prisons rose sharply during this 10-year period. By 1995 nearly 6 times as many inmates were serving time in State prisons for drug offenses (224,900) as in 1985 (38,900).

In absolute numbers, however, the largest growth in State inmates was among violent offenders. Between 1985 and 1995 the number of violent offenders grew by 211,400, while the number of drug offenders grew by 186,000. As a percentage of the total growth in sentenced State inmates during the period, violent offenders accounted for 39% of the total growth, drug offenders 35%, property offenders 18%, and public-order offenders 8%.

Since 1990 the patterns of growth in the four major offense categories have shifted among State inmates. Between 1990 and 1995 the annual increase in drug offenders averaged 8.6%, down from 30.7% recorded in the previous 5 years. The average annual increase in public-order offenders also declined — from 14.6% per year to 7.8%. Offsetting this slower increase of drug and public-order offenders, there has been a rise in the growth rates for violent offenders (from 5.0% per year to 7.9%) and property offenders (from 4.4% per year to 6.4%).

	Average annual percent increase in State prisoners*	
	1985-90	1990-95
Total	8.7%	7.6%
Violent	5.0	7.9
Property	4.4	6.4
Drug	30.7	8.6
Public-order	14.6	7.8

\*Based on the estimated number of State inmates with sentences of more than 1 year in custody at yearend.

### Sources of growth differ for white and black State inmates

Detailed estimates of the offense distributions of State inmates at yearend 1985, 1990, and 1995 reveal differences in the sources of growth among white and black inmates. During the 10-year period, the number of black inmates serving time for drug offenses rose by an estimated 117,400, while the number of white inmates in for drug offenses rose by 64,900. Overall, the increasing number of drug offenders accounted for 42% of the total growth among black inmates and 26% of the growth among white inmates.

In contrast, violent offenders accounted for the largest source of growth among white inmates — up 102,900 in 10 years — totaling 42% of the overall increase among white inmates. The number of black inmates serving time for violent offenses rose by about the same amount (103,800) but accounted for 37% of the total increase in black inmates.

**Table 13. Estimated number of sentenced State prisoners, by the most serious offense, 1985, 1990, and 1995**

Most serious offense	Total			Percent change, 1985-95	White			Percent change, 1985-95	Black			Percent change, 1985-95
	1985	1990	1995		1985	1990	1995		1985	1990	1995	
<b>Total</b>	451,812	684,544	989,007	119%	224,900	338,600	471,100	109%	211,100	321,700	490,100	132%
<b>Violent offenses</b>	246,200	313,600	457,600	86%	111,900	151,200	214,800	92%	124,800	150,800	228,600	83%
Murder <sup>a</sup>	50,600	72,000	103,200	104	24,100	36,300	48,400	101	24,600	33,100	51,600	110
Manslaughter	14,500	13,200	16,100	11	6,500	6,900	7,900	22	7,400	5,900	7,800	5
Rape	19,400	24,500	36,200	87	8,400	13,300	21,300	154	10,100	10,200	13,700	36
Other sexual assault	20,300	39,100	59,000	191	14,600	28,900	44,200	203	4,700	9,000	13,200	181
Robbery	94,000	99,200	134,800	43	35,100	34,800	43,400	24	55,900	61,600	87,900	57
Assault	36,100	53,300	88,400	145	17,000	24,100	38,500	126	17,700	26,200	46,200	161
Other violent <sup>b</sup>	11,300	12,400	19,800	75	6,200	7,000	11,100	79	4,400	4,900	8,000	82
<b>Property offenses</b>	140,100	173,700	237,400	69%	75,100	95,200	130,700	74%	60,600	72,400	100,200	65%
Burglary	74,500	87,200	111,700	50	40,700	49,800	62,300	53	31,200	34,600	46,400	49
Larceny	27,100	34,800	50,300	86	11,800	17,300	25,600	117	14,200	16,700	23,800	68
Motor vehicle theft	6,300	14,400	22,400	256	3,800	7,900	12,700	234	2,400	5,900	8,900	271
Fraud	17,200	20,200	27,000	57	10,300	10,900	14,700	43	6,700	8,400	11,400	70
Other property <sup>c</sup>	14,900	17,100	26,000	74	8,500	9,300	15,300	80	6,000	6,900	9,700	62
<b>Drug offenses</b>	38,900	148,600	224,900	478%	21,200	61,000	86,100	306%	16,600	83,400	134,000	707%
<b>Public-order offenses<sup>d</sup></b>	23,000	45,500	66,100	187%	14,900	29,800	39,000	162%	7,600	13,700	25,000	229%
<b>Other/unspecified<sup>e</sup></b>	3,200	3,100	3,000	-6%	1,800	1,600	500	-72%	1,400	1,500	2,300	64%

Note: Offense distributions for yearend 1985 and 1990 are based on data from the Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities, conducted in March 1986 and August 1991. The offense distributions for yearend 1995 were estimated using *stock-flow method* procedures that combine the estimates for yearend 1990 by offense and race with estimates of admissions and releases obtained in the National Corrections Reporting Program, 1991-95. See *Methodology* for further details on these procedures.

<sup>a</sup>Includes nonnegligent manslaughter.

<sup>b</sup>Includes extortion, intimidation, criminal endangerment, and other violent

offenses.

<sup>c</sup>Includes possession and selling of stolen property, destruction of property, trespassing, vandalism, criminal tampering, and other property offenses.

<sup>d</sup>Includes weapons, drunk driving, escape, court offenses, obstruction, commercialized vice, morals and decency charges, liquor law violations, and other public-order offenses.

<sup>e</sup>Includes juvenile offenses and unspecified felonies.

## Changing Federal prison population related to drug and weapons violations

Prisoners sentenced for drug offenses constituted the single largest group of Federal inmates (60%) in 1995, up from 34% in 1985 (table 14). The increase of more than 42,000 drug offenders accounted for more than 80% of the total growth in Federal inmates.

Between 1985 and 1995 the percentage of violent Federal inmates declined sharply, from 28% to 13%. As a percentage of all Federal inmates, robbers showed the largest decline, from 19.6% in 1985 to 7.3% in 1995.

Since 1985 the number of Federal inmates serving time for weapons offenses has soared, from 926 inmates

in 1985 to 7,519 in 1995. By yearend 1995 weapons offenders constituted the second largest group of Federal inmates.

## Recent rise in State prison populations may be the result of increasing time served

Data on prison admissions and releases collected annually in the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) reveal that growth in the State prison population has not been the result of longer sentences imposed. Between 1985 and 1995 the average (mean) maximum sentence of prisoners declined from 78 months to 66 months (table 15). The median length of imposed sentences (the 50th percentile) for prisoners admitted from court remained constant at 48 months.

Moreover, despite the increasing use of mandatory minimums and sentencing enhancements during the period, the percentage of inmates who received a maximum sentence of 10 years or longer also declined (from 19.7% in 1985 to 17.1% in 1995).

The NCRP data suggest that the actual time served by State prisoners may be increasing. Preliminary data for 1995 show that State prisoners released for the first time on their current offense (that is, first releases) served on average 24 months in prison and 5 months in jail. The amount of time served in prison was 4 months shorter in 1985 (20 months) and 2 months shorter in 1990 (22 months).

**Table 14. Number and percent of sentenced inmates in Federal prisons, by offense, 1985 and 1995**

Most serious offense	Number of inmates <sup>a</sup>		Percent of inmates	
	1985	1995	1985	1995
<b>Total</b>	31,364	88,101	100%	100%
<b>Violent offenses</b>	7,768	11,321	28.1%	13.1%
Homicide	993	966	3.6	1.1
Assault	546	2,633	2.0	3.0
Robbery	5,417	6,341	19.6	7.3
Other violent	812	1,381	2.9	1.6
<b>Property offenses</b>	5,289	7,524	19.2%	8.7%
Burglary	292	164	1.1	0.5
Fraud	2,805	5,629	10.2	6.5
Other property	2,192	1,731	7.9	2.0
<b>Drug offenses</b>	9,482	51,737	34.3%	59.9%
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	2,514	15,762	9.1%	18.3%
Immigration	865	3,612	3.1	4.2
Weapons	926	7,519	3.4	8.7
Escape/court	215	367	.8	.4
Other public-order	508	4,264	1.8	4.9
<b>Other<sup>b</sup></b>	2,554	0	9.3%	0
<b>Unknown</b>	3,757	1,757		

Note: Data for September 30, 1985, are from table A-9 of *Statistical Report*, Federal Bureau of Prisons. Data for December 31, 1995, are from the Federal justice database.

<sup>a</sup>Includes prisoners of any sentence length.

<sup>b</sup>Includes offenses not classifiable or not a violation of the United States Code.

**Table 15. State prison admissions and releases: Trends in sentencing and time served, 1985, 1990, and 1995**

	1985	1990	Preliminary 1995 <sup>a</sup>
<b>New court commitments<sup>b</sup></b>			
Most serious offense (percent)			
Violent	35.1%	27.2%	29.5%
Drug	13.2	32.0	30.9
Maximum sentence <sup>c</sup>			
Mean	78 mo	70 mo	66 mo
Median	48	48	48
10 years or more (percent)	19.7%	17.9%	17.1%
Minimum time to be served <sup>d</sup>			
Mean	31 mo	38 mo	43 mo
Median	18	24	24
<b>First releases<sup>e</sup></b>			
Most serious offense (percent)			
Violent	31.9%	25.3%	26.6%
Drug	12.4	27.5	32.1
Maximum sentence			
Mean	65 mo	65 mo	58 mo
Median	36	48	37
Time served in prison <sup>f</sup>			
Mean	20 mo	22 mo	24 mo
Median	14	13	15
10 years or more (percent)	.6%	1.4%	1.4%

Note: Data were obtained from the National Corrections Reporting Program, 1985, 1990, and 1995.

<sup>a</sup>Preliminary data based on 30 States with admissions records and 29 States and the District of Columbia with release records.

<sup>b</sup>Persons entering prison directly from a sentence by a court.

<sup>c</sup>The maximum sentence length for the most serious offense.

<sup>d</sup>The estimated shortest time that each admitted prisoner is expected to serve before becoming eligible for first release.

<sup>e</sup>Excludes persons who had previously been conditionally released from prison and then were returned to prison for the same offense.

<sup>f</sup>Excludes time spent in jail and credited to the current sentence.

These data reflect the time served by prisoners actually released. Some prisoners will never be released but will die in prison, and some with very long sentences will not show up among released prisoners for many years. As a result, these measures of time served tend to understate the actual time served by persons entering prison.

Data on the projected average minimum time to be served by persons entering prison also suggest that time served may be increasing. In 1995, taking into account parole eligibility requirements, good-time credits, and other early-release allowances, persons entering State prison were expected to serve an average of 43 months in prison, up from 38 months in 1990 and 31 months in 1985.

#### State prison admission and release rates have dropped

Underlying the steady growth in the State prison population since 1990 has been a drop in the rates of prison admission and release. Between 1985 and 1990 admissions to State prison rose sharply — at an average rate of nearly 14% per year. Since 1990, however, these increases have slowed considerably, averaging only 2.5% per year. Relative to the number of inmates in prison, the number of admissions dropped from 76 per 100 State prisoners in 1989 to 56 per 100 in 1995 (table 16).

The rate of release from State prisons rose steadily from 1985 to 1990 and then declined. The number of persons released each year relative to the number of persons in prison during the year (that is, the number of inmates at the beginning of the year plus those admitted during the year) was highest in 1990 (37 per 100) and lowest in 1994 and 1995 (31 per 100).

The rates of release have dropped for all types of offenders. In general, for major offense categories, the percentage discharged of all persons in prison during the year declined between 1991 and 1995 (table 17). Release rates for violent offenders dropped from 23% to 20%; for prop-

erty offenders from 47% to 38%; for drug offenders from 42% to 38%; and for public-order offenders from 44% to 39%. These rates are further evidence that time served in prison may be increasing for all types of offenders in State prison.

**Table 16. Trends in State prison admissions and releases, 1985-95**

Year	Admissions to State prison			Releases from State prison			
	Number	Admission rate <sup>a</sup>	Percent of new court commitments	Number	Release rate <sup>b</sup>	Percent of all releases	
						Parole board	Mandatory release
1985	240,598	57.9%	76.1%	206,988	31.5%	42.5%	30.4%
1986	273,402	61.0	74.4	233,706	32.4	42.6	30.7
1987	307,519	61.4	73.4	274,178	34.6	40.1	30.8
1988	347,028	66.6	70.7	305,031	35.1	39.8	30.3
1989	423,897	75.6	70.3	350,804	35.6	38.4	30.3
1990	460,739	72.7%	70.1%	405,374	37.0%	39.4%	28.8%
1991	466,285	67.6	68.0	421,687	36.5	39.7	29.9
1992	480,676	65.6	69.5	430,198	35.5	39.5	29.5
1993	475,100	60.9	66.9	417,838	33.3	38.8	31.6
1994 <sup>c</sup>	498,919	58.0	64.5	418,372	30.8	35.0	35.6
1995	521,970	55.7%	64.7%	455,139	31.2%	32.3%	39.0%

Note: Releases exclude escapees, AWOL's, and transfers. All data are limited to prisoners with a sentence of more than 1 year.  
<sup>a</sup>The number of admissions per 100 State prisoners at the beginning of each year.  
<sup>b</sup>The number of releases per 100 State prisoners at the beginning of each year plus the number admitted during the year.  
<sup>c</sup>Releases in Alaska, by type, were estimated for 1994.

**Table 17. Estimated rate of release from State prison, by the most serious offense, 1991-95**

Most serious offense	Percent of prisoners released				Preliminary 1995
	1991	1992	1993	1994	
<b>Total</b>	36.5%	35.5%	33.3%	30.8%	31.2%
<b>Violent offenses</b>	23.0%	22.3%	20.9%	19.1%	20.0%
Murder*	8.8	7.4	6.6	5.7	5.8
Manslaughter	21.4	24.4	21.2	20.0	19.1
Rape	20.7	20.3	18.0	16.5	16.6
Other sexual assault	19.1	18.7	18.0	16.6	18.1
Robbery	29.6	28.2	26.6	24.3	25.8
Assault	29.4	29.1	27.7	25.4	26.2
Other violent	21.8	22.7	21.7	21.2	23.6
<b>Property offenses</b>	46.6%	45.3%	41.6%	39.1%	37.7%
Burglary	44.7	42.3	39.8	37.1	36.1
Larceny	54.7	54.7	48.1	45.0	43.4
Motor vehicle theft	41.0	37.4	37.5	37.1	39.5
Fraud	46.6	46.4	41.0	39.2	34.1
Other property	41.5	43.3	40.0	36.6	33.8
<b>Drug offenses</b>	42.4%	41.3%	40.8%	36.9%	38.5%
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	43.8%	43.1%	40.1%	39.6%	38.8%

Note: All data are estimated based on prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year under State jurisdiction. For each offense and year, the percent released is the number of inmates released during the year divided by the number at beginning of the year plus the number admitted during the year. All offense distributions were estimated using stock-flow methods that combine data from NPS and NCRP. See *Methodology* for a description of these methods.  
 \*Includes nonnegligent manslaughter.

## Methodology

### *National Prisoner Statistics (NPS)*

The Bureau of Justice Statistics, with the U.S. Bureau of the Census as its collection agent, obtains yearend and midyear counts of prisoners from departments of correction in each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In an effort to collect comparable data from all jurisdictions, NPS distinguishes prisoners in *custody* from those under *jurisdiction*. To have custody of a prisoner, a State must hold that person in one of its facilities. To have jurisdiction means that a State has legal authority over the prisoner. Prisoners under a State's jurisdiction may be in the custody of a local jail, another State's prison, or other correctional facility. Some States are unable to provide both custody and jurisdiction counts. (See *NPS jurisdiction notes*.)

Excluded from NPS counts are persons confined in locally administered confinement facilities who are under the jurisdiction of local authorities. NPS counts include all inmates in State-operated facilities in Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont, which have combined jail-prison systems.

### *Estimating offense distributions*

The offense distributions of State prisoners at yearend are estimated for 1985, 1990, and 1995. Inmate surveys, conducted in March 1986 and August 1991, provide estimates for the custody populations at yearend 1985 and 1991. When combined with counts by offense of annual admissions and releases, these surveys provide the basis for estimating the offense distributions of the other years.

The offense distributions were estimated using the following forward and backward stock-flow procedures:

1. To obtain a base population for each survey year, survey estimates were applied to counts of the total

sentenced jurisdictional populations for the survey year. The 1986 survey provided estimates for yearend 1985, and the 1991 survey for yearend 1991.

2. To obtain flow populations for each year, the offense distributions of admissions and releases (in percentages) were drawn from annual reports of the National Corrections Reporting Program (1985-95). These percents were then multiplied by the total number of admissions and releases of sentenced prisoners to obtain an estimate of the number of admissions and releases by type of offense for each year.

3. Forward estimates of the number of inmates at yearend in nonsurvey years were estimated iteratively by adding admissions and subtracting releases from the base population. The estimated end-of-year distribution was then used as the base population for the next year. The process was then repeated until the subsequent survey year was reached. Data from the 1986 survey were used for forward estimates for 1986-90, and data from the 1991 survey, for 1992-95.

4. Backward estimates were obtained iteratively by adding releases and subtracting admissions from the yearend base population. The estimated distribution was then used as the base population for the preceding year. This process was repeated until the previous survey year was reached. Data from the 1991 survey were used to estimate data for 1990 back to 1986.

5. Final estimates were obtained by calculating a weighted sum of the forward and backward estimates. The forward and backward estimates were weighted inversely to the elapsed number of years from the base population and then summed. Forward weights were reduced by one-sixth for each year after the base survey year, and backward weights were reduced by one-sixth for each year preceding the base survey year. The final estimates were then converted to proportions.

6. Because the 1986 and 1991 survey estimates were based on custody counts, the final estimates (which were based on the sentenced jurisdictional counts) were then converted to custody counts. To estimate the number of inmates by offense, the total number of inmates in physical custody was multiplied by the proportion of inmates in each offense category.

These procedures were extended to provide detailed estimates for white and black inmates. Estimates by race from the 1986 and 1991 surveys were applied to yearend totals for 1985, 1990, and 1991. Flow populations by race for each year from 1992 through 1995 were drawn from the NCRP. In each year the percents by race were multiplied by the offense distributions of all admissions and releases to obtain estimates of the total flows by race. Estimates of the number of inmates by race at yearend 1992 were then calculated by adding admissions and subtracting releases from the base population. The estimated end-of-year distribution was then used as the base for the next year. The process was repeated for each year through 1995.

### *Estimating release rates by offense*

The estimated offense distributions of all sentenced inmates for admissions and releases were also used to calculate annual release rates for 1991 through 1995. For each offense and year, the percentage released was calculated by dividing the number of inmates released during the year by the number in prison at the beginning of the year plus the number admitted during the year. The rate of release represents the percentage released of all persons in prison at some time during the year.

## **NPS jurisdiction notes**

**Alabama** — Population counts also include 444 inmates in community programs, but the capacity of these community programs is excluded from the capacity figures.

**Alaska** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

**Arizona** — Population counts are based on custody data.

**Arkansas** — Population counts for "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" include 335 male inmates incarcerated in the county jail awaiting transfer to the Department of Correction for whom sentence length is unknown.

**California** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include felons who are temporarily absent, such as in court, jail, or hospital. These inmates were not included in counts for December 31, 1995.

Population counts for "Unsentenced inmates" include civil addicts who are temporarily absent. These inmates were not included in counts for December 31, 1995.

**Colorado** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less."

**Connecticut** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

Legislation in July 1995 abolished the capacity law so that prisons no longer have a rated or operational capacity. Design capacity is recorded separately in each facility.

**Delaware** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

Capacity counts include Department of Correction halfway houses.

**District of Columbia** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

**Federal** — The rated capacity of Federal facilities excludes contract bedspaces.

**Florida** — Population counts are based on custody data.

Population counts for "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" include persons with a sentence of 365 days.

**Georgia** — Population counts are based on custody data.

Population counts exclude an undetermined number of inmates housed in local jails awaiting transfer to prison.

**Hawaii** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

**Illinois** — Population counts are based on custody data.

Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of inmates with a sentence of 1 year.

Population counts and capacity figures include 651 male inmates and 122 female inmates on electronic detention.

**Iowa** — Population counts are based on custody data.

Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" and "Unsentenced inmates."

**Kansas** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include a small undetermined number of inmates with incarceration sentences of less than 1 year as a result of sentencing under the Kansas Sentencing Guidelines Act of 1993.

**Kentucky** — Capacity decreased in 1996 because private contract prisons were excluded.

**Louisiana** — Operational capacity is no longer defined as court-ordered capacity; instead, it is based on day-to-day operation. Rated and operational capacities include contractual work-release facilities.

**Maryland** — While population totals are actual counts, the breakdowns by sentence length are estimates based on actual sentence length breakdowns extracted from the automated data system and then applied to the manual data.

**Massachusetts** — Population counts are as of January 5, 1997, and crowding counts are as of January 6, 1997. Population counts include 596 male inmates and 21 female inmates housed in local jails and 269 male inmates housed out of State as of January 6, 1997, because of crowding in State prison facilities.

Population totals are actual counts; however, when sex or sentencing information is missing, the counts are estimated.

**Michigan** — Population counts are based on custody data and include adult prisoners housed in Michigan's institutions, camps, and community correctional centers and on electronic monitoring.

**Nevada** — Under a new law, an inmate serves an indeterminate sentence containing a minimum sentence to be served before parole eligibility. The shortest minimum sentence is 1 year, but that only advances an inmate to parole eligibility. Therefore, because an inmate cannot discharge his or her sentence in 1 year or less, "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" is now reported as "Not applicable." Nevada reports its emergency capacity as rated capacity. Capacity levels increase in size from design to operational and finally to emergency capacity.

**New Hampshire** — The rated capacity is 1,886, but because of a legislative cap, 125 beds are unusable, which makes the actual capacity 1,761.

**New Jersey** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include inmates with sentences of 1 year.

**North Carolina** — While population totals are actual counts, the breakdowns by sentence length are estimates believed to be accurate within 1% of the actual counts.

Rated and design capacities changed during 1996 because several small prisons built in the 1930's were closed.

**Ohio** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less.

**Oklahoma** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" may include a small undetermined number of inmates with a sentence of 1 year.

Population counts exclude 227 male inmates and 58 female inmates housed in local jails as of December 31, 1996, because of crowding in State prison facilities; these inmates had not been received by the Department of Correction.

**Oregon** — Population counts for "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" include an undetermined number of inmates for whom sentence length is unknown because complete sentencing orders may not have arrived for some recently admitted inmates.

**Pennsylvania** — Reported capacities are single-cell capacities.

**Rhode Island** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include inmates with partially suspended sentences only if the prison portion of the sentence exceeds 1 year. As a result, the "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" population is understated, and the "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" population is overstated.

**South Carolina** — Population counts for "Unsentenced inmates" include inmates on Youthful Offender Act observation status.

**Tennessee** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of inmates with a sentence of 1 year.

Population counts exclude an undetermined number of felons sentenced to serve their time in local jails. The State pays to house these felons, but the local court maintains jurisdiction.

**Texas** — Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less."

**Vermont** — Prisons and jails form one integrated system. NPS data include both jail and prison populations.

Population counts are based on custody data. Population counts and capacity measures exclude 660 inmates on furlough or intermediate sanctions.

**Virginia** — Population counts for "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less" increased because of a new law that went into effect on January 1, 1995, that made the State responsible for felons with a sentence of 6 months or more.

Virginia uses a base capacity method to determine the rated, operational, and design capacity figures. Under this method of determining capacity, only the bunks that touch the floor are counted; top bunks are not counted.

**Washington** — Reported capacities exclude State work-release and pre-release facilities, which housed 765 male inmates and 269 female inmates on December 31, 1996.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D., is director.

BJS Bulletins present the first release of findings from permanent data collection programs such as the National Prisoner Statistics program. State and Federal corrections officials have cooperated in reporting the data presented.

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