



Reentry Trends in the United States

Inmates returning to the community after serving time in prison

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[Highlights](#)

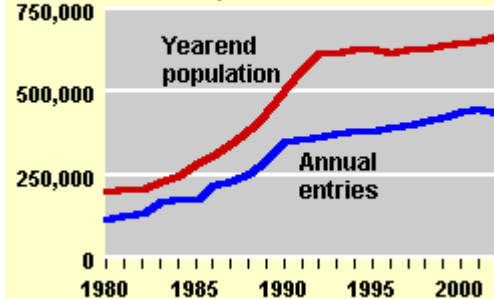
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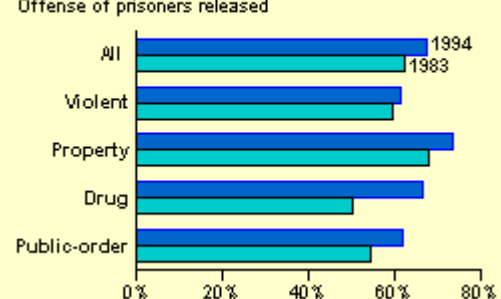
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Highlights <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/reentry/reentry.htm#highlights>

Annual State parole population and entries to State parole, 1980-2002



Percent of released prisoners rearrested within 3 years, by offense, 1983 and 1994



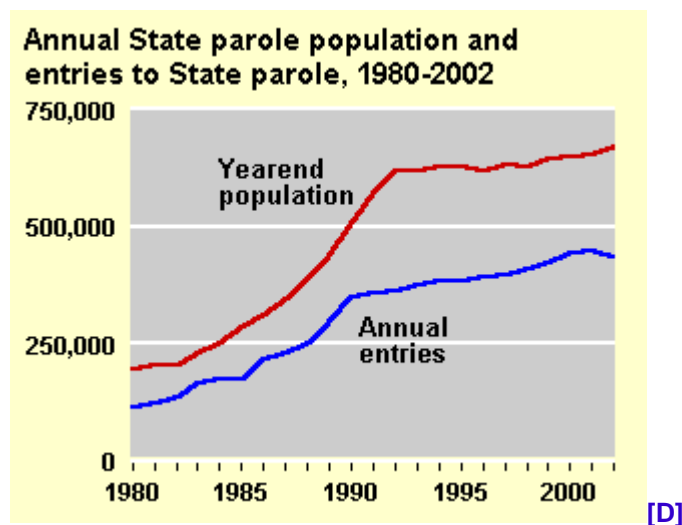
- At least 95% of all State prisoners will be released from prison at some point; nearly 80% will be released to parole supervision.
- At yearend 2002, 1,440,655 prisoners were under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities.
- In 2001, about 592,000 State prison inmates were released to the community after serving time in prison.
- Nearly 33% of State prison releases in 1999 were drug offenders, 25% were violent offenders and 31% were property offenders.
- 670,169 adults were under State parole supervision at yearend 2002.
- By the end of 2000, 16 States had abolished discretionary release from prison by a parole board for all offenders.
- Among State parole discharges in 2000, 41% successfully completed their term of supervision; relatively unchanged since 1990.

Growth in State prison and parole population

From 1990 to 2002, the State parole population grew at a slower rate than the State prison population

Since 1990, the State prison population nearly doubled, increasing from 708,393 in 1990 to 1,277,127 at yearend 2002. The rate of growth in the prison population slowed between 1999 and 2001, due in part to a rise in the number of releases from prison (592,000 in 2001). Relative to the prison population, the growth in the State parole population was much more modest, increasing from 502,134 in 1990 to 670,169 by 2002. However, the State parole and prison populations each grew 2.4% during 2002, the largest annual growth rate for each group since 1992 and 1999 respectively.

To view data, click on the chart.



- At least 95% of all State prisoners will be released from prison at some point; nearly 80% will be released to parole supervision.
- On average, from 1990 to 2001 the prison population increased 5.3% per year, while the State parole population rose 2.4% per year. However, since 1999 the rate of growth in State prisons has nearly stabilized.
- The low rate of growth in parole supervision relative to the growth in the prison population reflects changes in sentencing and parole release policies that have resulted in increasing lengths of stay in prison and declining prison release rates.
- 1,277,127 adults were under the jurisdiction of State correctional authorities at yearend 2002, up from 708,393 at yearend 1990.
- 670,169 adults were under State parole supervision at yearend 2002, up from 502,134 in 1990.

At least 95% of all State prisoners will be released from prison at some point; nearly 80% will be released to parole supervision

[Number of releases](#) | [Method of release](#) | [Releases by county of jurisdiction](#) | [Most serious offense and time served](#)

Number of releases

Despite a decline in prison release rates from 1990 to 2000, the number of prisoners released each year continued to grow.

In 2001, 592,000 offenders were released from State prison, a 46% increase over the 405,400 offenders that were released in 1990. In 2002, a projected 595,000 State inmates will be released to the community.

The release rate of State prisoners declined from 37% in 1990 to 31% in 1994. Since 1994, the rate of release has remained stable and was 33% in 2001.

Release rate: the number of releases per 100 sentenced prisoners at the beginning of each year, plus the number admitted during the year.

Five States (California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas) accounted for nearly half of all releases from State prison in 2001.

The number of State parole entries grew at an average annual rate of 1.9% from 1990 to 2002

- During 2002, there were 436,306 entries to State parole, a 25% increase over the number that entered parole in 1990. However, the number of entries in 2002 declined by nearly 10,000 from 2001.
- Among those entering parole, the percentage who had been re-released from State prison rose from 27% in 1990 to 45% in 1999.

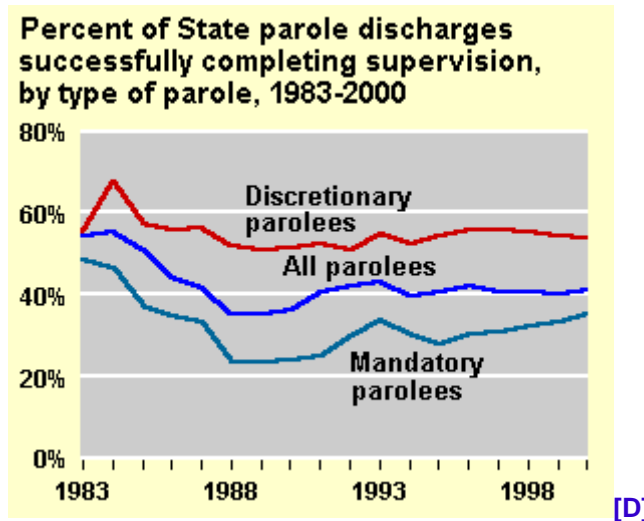
Re-releases are persons leaving prison after having served time either for a violation of parole or other conditional release or for a new offense committed while under parole supervision.

- Among parole entries in 1999, 35% had been convicted of a drug offense (up from 27% in 1990).
- The average age of parole entries increased from 31 years in 1990 to 34 years in 1999. In 1999, an estimated 109,300 State prisoners age 40 or older were paroled – 26% of all entries to parole. This was more than double the number that entered parole among that age group in 1990.

Success rates for State parolees

State parole success unchanged since 1990

To view data, click on the chart.



Among State parole discharges in 2000:

- 41% successfully completed their term of supervision (relatively unchanged since 1990)
- 42% were returned to prison or jail
- 9% absconded

Discharge refers to individuals exiting parole supervision.

Successful discharges include persons who have completed the term of conditional supervision.

Unsuccessful discharges include revocations of parole, returns to prison or jail, and absconders. Parolees who are transferred to other jurisdictions and those who die while under supervision are not included in the calculation of success/failure rates.

In every year during the 1990's, first releases were more likely to have been successful on parole than re-releases.

Re-releases are persons leaving prison after having served time either for a violation of parole or other conditional release or for a new offense committed while under parole supervision.

In every year between 1990 and 2000, State prisoners released by a parole board had higher success rates than those released through mandatory parole. Among parole discharges in 2000, 54% of discretionary parolees were successful compared to 35% of those who had received mandatory parole.

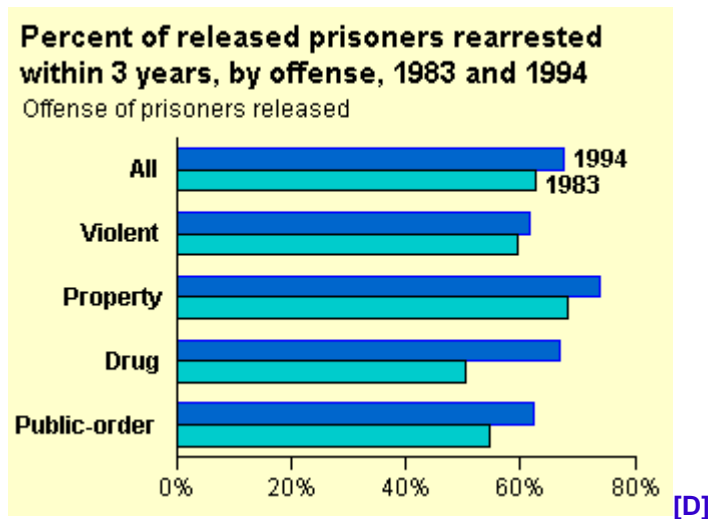
Discretionary parole exists when a parole board has authority to conditionally release prisoners based on a statutory or administrative determination of eligibility.

Mandatory parole generally occurs in jurisdictions using determinate sentencing statutes in which inmates are conditionally released from prison after serving a specified portion of their original sentence minus any good time earned.

In a 15 State study, over two-thirds of released prisoners were rearrested within three years

[Rearrest of releases](#) | [Reconviction](#) | [Returned to prison](#)

To view data, click on the chart.



Two studies come closest to providing "national" recidivism rates for the United States. One tracked 108,580 State prisoners released from prison in 11 States in 1983. The other tracked 272,111 prisoners released from prison in 15 States in 1994. The prisoners tracked in these studies represent two-thirds of all the prisoners released in the United States for that year.

Rearrest within 3 years

- 67.5% of prisoners released in 1994 were rearrested within 3 years, an increase over the 62.5% found for those released in 1983
- The rearrest rate for property offenders, drug offenders, and public-order offenders increased significantly from 1983 to 1994. During that time, the rearrest rate increased:
 - from 68.1% to 73.8% for property offenders
 - from 50.4% to 66.7% for drug offenders
 - from 54.6% to 62.2% for public-order offenders
- The rearrest rate for violent offenders remained relatively stable (59.6% in 1983 compared to 61.7% in 1994).

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Reconviction within 3 years

- Overall, reconviction rates did not change significantly from 1983 to 1994. Among, prisoners released in 1983, 46.8% were reconvicted within 3 years compared to 46.9% among those released in 1994. From 1983 to 1994, reconviction rates remained stable for released:
 - violent offenders (41.9% and 39.9%, respectively)

- property offenders (53.0% and 53.4%)
- public-order offenders (41.5% and 42.0%)
- Among drug offenders, the rate of reconviction increased significantly, going from 35.3% in 1983 to 47.0% in 1994.

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Returned to prison within 3 years

- The 1994 recidivism study estimated that within 3 years, 51.8% of prisoners released during the year were back in prison either because of a new crime for which they received another prison sentence, or because of a technical violation of their parole. This rate was not calculated in the 1983 study.

BJJ Sources:

[Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983](#), April, 1989

[Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994](#), June, 2002.

Persons entering State parole in 1999 were older than those who entered parole in 1990 (31 to 34 years) while the racial and ethnic composition of entries was unchanged

- [Demographic characteristics of State parole entries](#)
- [Background characteristics of prisoners](#)
- [Demographic characteristics of successful State parolees](#)

Demographic characteristics of State parole entries

- The racial and ethnic distributions of persons entering parole remained nearly stable from 1990 to 1999. In 1999, 35% of parole entries were white, 47% were black, and 16% were Hispanic.
- In 1999, 10% of entries to State parole were female, up from 8% in 1990.
- The average age of prisoners released to parole increased from 31 years in 1990 to 34 years in 1999. In 1999, an estimated 109,300 State prisoners age 40 or older were paroled – 26% of all entries to parole.

**Demographic characteristics of State parole entries, 1990
and 1999**

Percent of entries

Characteristics	1990	1999
Gender		
Male	92.1 %	90.1 %
Female	7.9	9.9
Race/Hispanic origin		
White non-Hispanic	34.2 %	35.4 %
Black non-Hispanic	48.8	47.3
Hispanic	16.3	16.1
Other	0.7	1.2
Age at prison release		
17 or younger	0.2 %	0.1 %
18-24	23.4	16.3
25-29	26.6	19.0
30-34	22.2	19.7
35-39	13.9	19.2
40-44	7.3	13.5
45-54	4.9	10.2
55 or older	1.5	2.1
Mean age	31 yrs	34 yrs

Note: Based on prisoners with a sentence or more than 1 year who were released from State prison. Data are from the National Corrections Reporting Program.

- Among discretionary and mandatory parole releases from State prison in 1999, black non-Hispanic offenders served longer in prison than white non-Hispanics or Hispanics. Overall, black non-Hispanic offenders released by discretionary parole in 1999 served 37 months in prison; white non-Hispanics served 34 months; and Hispanics 33 months. Black offenders released by mandatory parole served 7 months longer than whites (38 months compared to 31 months). Hispanics served 30 months.

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Background characteristics of prisoners expected to be released

Among State prisoners expected to be released to the community by yearend 1999:

- 56% had one or more prior incarcerations and 25% had 3 or more prior incarcerations.
- 84% reported being involved in drugs or alcohol at the time of the offense which led to their incarceration.
- Nearly 25% were determined to be alcohol dependent.
- 21% had committed the offense to obtain money for drugs.

- 14% were determined to be mentally ill.
- 12% reported being homeless at the time of the arrest.

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Demographic characteristics of successful State parolees

- Between 1990 and 1999, the success rates among State parole discharges increased from 33% to 39% among blacks and increased from 31% to 51% among Hispanics, but dropped from 44% to 41% among whites.
- Among discharges from State parole in 1999, 39% of males successfully completed parole supervision compared to 48% of females.
- Success rates were higher among discharges that were age 55 or older (54%) than among those who were under age 25 (36%).
- Accounting for 2.1% of discharges in 1999, parolees age 55 or older had the highest rate of successful completion (55%).

Discharge refers to individuals exiting parole supervision.

Successful discharges include persons who have completed the term of conditional supervision.

Unsuccessful discharges include revocations of parole, returns to prison or jail, and absconders. Parolees who are transferred to other jurisdictions and those who die while under supervision are not included in the calculation of success/failure rates.

BJIS Sources:

[Trends in State Parole, 1990-2000](#), October, 2001.

["State and Federal prisoners returning to the community: Findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics"](#) (PDF file, 30K), by Allen J. Beck, presented at the First Reentry Courts Initiative Cluster Meeting, Washington, D.C., April 13, 2000.