



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Executive Summary

April 1999, NCJ 171684

# Correctional Populations in the United States, 1996

An estimated 5.5 million adult residents of the United States were under some form of correctional supervision in 1996. Seven in every ten of these people were on probation or parole.

About 2.8% of all adult residents of the United States were under correctional supervision in 1996, up from 1.6% in 1985. About 9.0% of black adults, 2.0% of white adults, and 1.3% of adults of other races were under correctional supervision in 1996.

## Jails

On June 30, 1996, local jails held an estimated 510,400 adults, or about 1 in every 378 adult U.S. residents.

Men comprised 89% of adult jail inmates. White non-Hispanic inmates accounted for 42% of the total jail population; black non-Hispanics, 41%; and Hispanics, 16%.

The total number of adults in local jails increased by an estimated 11,100 during the year ending June 30, 1996, or 2.2%. Between 1986 and 1996 the adult jail population rose by 237,700, an average annual increase of 6.5%.

## Probation

Nearly 3.2 million adults were on probation on December 31, 1996. Probationers made up 57% of all adults under correctional supervision in 1996, down from 58% in 1995, and 65% in 1986.

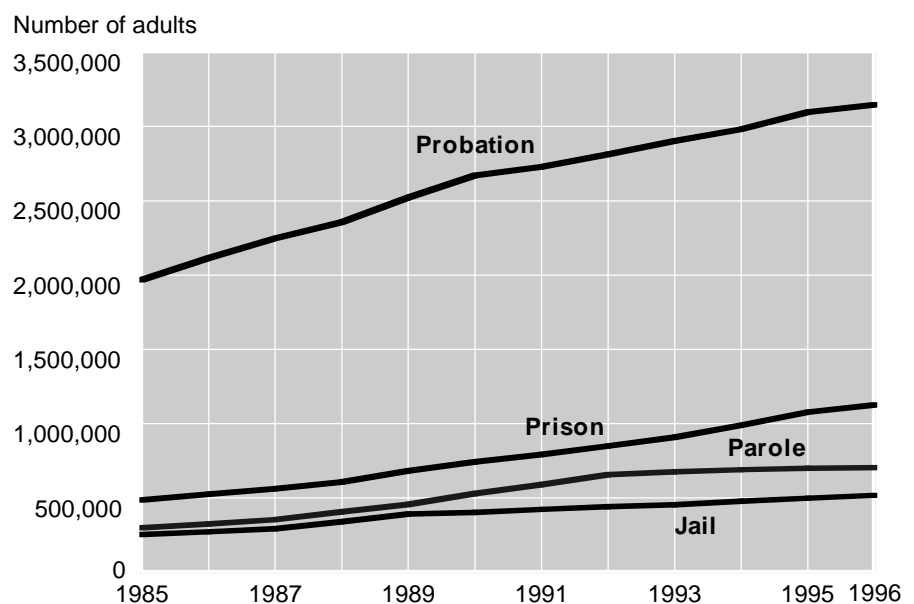
Twenty-one percent of the probationers were women, a larger proportion than for any other correctional population. About 66% were white and 32%, black. About 65% of all adults discharged from probation in 1996 had successfully completed their sentences.

Between yearend 1995 and 1996, the number of adults on probation increased by 83,834 (2.7%). From 1986 to 1996 the probation population grew by more than 1.1 million, an average of 4.2% annually.

## Prisons

An estimated 1.1 million men and women were in the custody of State and Federal prisons at yearend 1996. Approximately 94% were men. About 48% of the inmates

Adults on probation, in jail or prison, or on parole 1985-96



were white, 49% black, and 3% American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander.

The number of State and Federal inmates rose by 54,237 (5%) during 1996. This gain brought the total increase in prisoner population between 1986 and 1996 to 654,088, which translates to an average annual growth rate of 8.4%.

The number of sentenced prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction per 100,000 U.S. residents increased 45% from 292 in 1990 to 422 in 1996.

Between 1990 and 1996 the imprisonment rate of white inmates rose 39% from 139 to 193 per 100,000; the rate for blacks increased 38% from 1,067 to 1,571; and the rate for Hispanics grew 26% from 548 to 688.

Among whites, prisoners age 30-34 had the highest incarceration rate in 1996: 469 per 100,000 white residents. Among blacks, prisoners age 25-29 had the highest rate: 4,131 per 100,000. Among Hispanics, prisoners age 20-24 had the highest rate: 1,514.

Approximately 64% of sentenced prisoners entering prison in 1996 were new court commitments, and a third were parole or other conditional release violators.

Among State prisoners entering prison for the first time for a given offense, the proportion who were black declined from 51% in 1990 to 47% in 1996, and the proportion white increased from 49% to 52%. The opposite was true among Federal new court commitments: Whites decreased from 66% in 1990 to 62% in 1996, while blacks increased from 32% to 34%.

In 1996, for the third consecutive year, the number of persons admitted to State prisons for drug offenses (98,700) exceeded the number entering for violent (96,300), property (94,800), or public-order crimes (34,600). However, 1996 was the first year that violent admissions exceeded property admissions.

### **Parole and post-release supervision**

An estimated 704,700 adults were on parole at yearend 1996, an increase of 0.6% from 1995.

Among persons released from prison in 1996, 73% were placed on probation, parole, or some other type of conditional release.

The number of persons leaving State prisons based on parole board decisions declined from 37% in 1990 to 30% in 1996. During the same period, the number departing as mandatory releases grew from 29% to 38%, and as expiration of sentence, from 13% to 17%.

Slightly fewer than 9 in every 10 parolees were men. An estimated 54% of persons on parole were white; 44%, black; and 2% of other races.

Nearly half of all exits from parole were categorized as successful completions. The majority of the remainder were returned to incarceration, but only about 1 in every 8 parolees were returned to incarceration with a new sentence.

Although the parole population increased by less than 1% during 1996, the average annual rate of increase from 1986 to 1996 was 8.0%. The number of adults on parole rose 116% during the 10-year period.

The proportion of adults being actively supervised (79%) and those being supervised out-of-State (4%) declined slightly between 1986 and 1996, whereas the relative number under inactive supervision (10%) increased slightly, and persons classified as absconders remained about the same (7%).

### **Capital punishment**

During 1996, 299 inmates were received under sentence of death by State and Federal prisons, and 99 had their death sentences removed by means other than execution.

As of December 31, 1996, the Nation's prisons held a total of 3,219 inmates under sentence of death. An estimated 57% were white and 42% were black. Half had been under sentence of death for at least 6 years and 3 months.

Nineteen States executed 45 male prisoners during 1996, including 31 whites and 14 blacks. Between 1977 and 1996 a total of 358 prisoners were executed under civil authority in the United States.

### **Military confinement**

On December 31, 1996, the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy held a total of 2,747 prisoners in 28 facilities. The Coast Guard operated no confinement facilities. Data for Air Force facilities were not reported.

Approximately 99% of the prisoners held by the Army, 82% of those held by the Navy, and 70% of those held by the Marine Corps at yearend 1996 were convicted inmates; the remainder were unconvicted persons whose cases had not yet been tried.

About a third of convicted military prisoners were confined for rape (16%) or sexual assault (15%). Slightly less than a fifth were serving sentences for drugs. Twelve percent were sentenced for larceny/theft, and 11% for murder. Approximately 9% were confined for military infractions, such as AWOL, insubordination, or failure to obey a lawful order.

Ninety-eight percent of all prisoners held in military confinement facilities in 1996 were men, and 2% were women. About 52% were non-Hispanic whites; 36%, non-Hispanic blacks; 8%, Hispanics; and 4% other races. Slightly more than 98% were enlisted personnel, and slightly less than 2% were officers.

## 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails

The 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails (SILJ) conducted face-to-face interviews with jail inmates from October 1995 through March 1996.

The Survey obtained detailed information about jail inmates' current offenses and sentences, their criminal histories, personal and family characteristics, drug alcohol use and treatment, and health care and jail condition issues. Jail inmate surveys were also conducted in 1972, 1978, 1983, and 1989.

### Criminal justice characteristics of persons held in local jails, 1989 and 1996

Characteristic	Percent of jail inmates	
	1996	1989
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Offense</b>		
Violent	26.3%	22.5%
Property	26.9	30.0
Drug	22.0	23.0
Public-order	24.3	22.8
<b>Criminal justice status at arrest</b>		
None	46.4%	53.5%
Status <sup>a</sup>	53.6	46.5
On probation	31.7	--
On parole	13.1	--
On bail/bond	12.7	--
On other pretrial release	4.4	--
<b>Criminal history</b>		
None	27.3%	23.5%
Priors <sup>a</sup>	72.7	76.5
Probation	63.0	62.9
Jail/prison	58.4	56.6
<b>Prior drug use</b>		
Never	17.6%	22.3%
Ever <sup>a</sup>	82.4	77.7
Regularly	64.2	58.0
In month before offense <sup>b</sup>	55.0	43.8
At time of offense	35.6	27.0
<b>Under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offense<sup>b</sup></b>	40.6%	41.3%
<b>Substance abuse treatment</b>		
Never	57.7%	67.6%
Ever <sup>a</sup>	42.3	32.4
Since admission	10.3	--
Number of inmates	507,026	395,554

--Not available.

<sup>a</sup>Detail may add to more than total; inmates may fit more than one category.

<sup>b</sup>Based on convicted jail inmates only.

During the period that interviews were conducted for the SILJ, approximately 3,328 local jails held an estimated 507,026 inmates. Between the fall of 1989, when the previous survey was conducted, and 1996 the jail population grew 28%.

Although jail inmates were predominantly male, women accounted for an increasing percentage of the total.

The percentage of black and Hispanic jail inmates in 1996 had not changed substantially from 1989 after increasing between 1983 and 1989.

The rapid increase in the percentage of jail inmates held for a drug offense during the 1980's abated in the 1990's. The percentage charged with a drug offense rose from 9% in 1983 to 23% in 1989 but remained at 22% in 1996.

The percentage of inmates in jail for a violent offense rose slightly, from 23% in 1989 to 26% in 1996. In both years just under a 25% of the inmates were charged with a public-order offense, 7% to 9% were being held for driving while intoxicated (DWI), and 2% for a weapons violation.

The most common offense among white jail inmates was driving while intoxicated (DWI) or driving under the influence (DUI). An estimated 13% of white inmates, 7% of Hispanics, and 2% of blacks were in jail for DWI/DUI.

Violent offenses were most frequent among younger inmates. Almost a third of those 24 or younger, but a fourth of those 25 or older, were in jail for a violent offense.

Almost 1 in every 3 jail inmates were on probation at the time of their most recent arrest; 1 in 8 were on parole; and 1 in 8 were on bail or prerelease bond.

The percentage of recidivists — those with a prior sentence to probation or incarceration as an adult or juvenile — declined from 77% in 1989 to 73% in 1996.

The criminal records of jail inmates in 1996 were longer than those of inmates in 1989. About 32% of all inmates in 1996, compared to 23% in 1989, said they had served three or more terms in jail, prison, or other correctional facility.

Reported drug use by jail inmates rose sharply between 1989 and 1996. The percentage of inmates who said they had ever used marijuana rose from 71% to 78%; stimulants from 22% to 34%; hallucinogens from 24% to 32%; depressants without a doctor's prescription, from 21% to 30%; and heroin or other opiates from 19% to 24%. Before their most recent admission to jail, 37% of female inmates, compared to 11% of males, said they had been physically abused. Thirty-seven percent of the women, compared to 6% of men, reported they had been sexually abused. About 27% of women and 3% of men had ever been raped.

Put  
first-  
class  
stamp  
here

**Bureau of Justice Statistics Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 179, Dept. BJS  
Annapolis Junction MD 20701-0179**

-----  
FOLD ALONG THIS LINE

**Yes! Send me 1 copy of *Correctional Populations in the United States, 1996* (192 pages), NCJ-170013.**

**FAX to 410-792-4358**, or fold, tape, and mail this page to the address above, with first-class stamp.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone number: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
FOLD ALONG THIS LINE

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Office of Justice Programs  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

*Washington, DC 20531*

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
DOJ/BJS  
Permit No. G-91

**Correctional Populations  
in the United States, 1996:  
Executive Summary**