

## Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

# Jail Inmates 1983

Inmates of local jails in 1983 had sociodemographic and criminal characteristics quite similar to those of jail inmates in 1978 despite an increase of more than two-fifths in the size of the jail population in the intervening 5 years. This information is derived from the 1983 Survey of Inmates of Local Jails, the third such survey ever to be conducted.<sup>1</sup>

In 1983 about 6 in 10 inmates were convicted and either awaiting sentence or serving time.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 7 in 10 of the sentenced jail inmates had received a sentence of less than 1 year. Nearly 4 in 10 inmates, both convicted and unconvicted, were in jail for property offenses, primarily burglary and larceny, and about 3 in 10 of all jail inmates were in for violent crimes, especially robbery and assault.

About two-thirds of the jail inmates in 1983 had previously served time in jail or prison. Another 15% had never been incarcerated but had served at least one sentence of probation.

At the time of arrest for their current offense, more than two-fifths of the jail inmates were in some criminal justice status, a majority of these on probation. More than three-fourths of the jail inmates who had been in a criminal justice status at arrest were returned to jail with new charges rather than for a technical violation of the terms of their release.

<sup>1</sup>Surveys of inmates of local jails were previously conducted in 1972 and 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Data from The 1983 Jail Census indicate that jails held nearly equal proportions of convicted and unconvicted jail inmates. The discrepancy in proportions of convicted and unconvicted jail inmates between the jail survey and jail census probably stems from methodological differences in data collection. As a complete enumeration, the census is not subject to sampling errors and data are collected from jail administrators. By contrast, the jail survey uses a random sample of inmates and thus, is subject to sampling error. In addition, survey data are obtained directly from inmates.

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With this bulletin the Bureau of Justice Statistics presents findings from the 1983 Survey of Inmates of Local Jails. This survey updates information obtained in two earlier jail inmate surveys. These surveys have provided criminal justice practitioners and the general public with a fuller understanding of the characteristics of the occupants of the Nation's local jails. The only national study of jail inmates of its kind, the Jail Inmates Survey provides a wealth of information on such topics as socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, current offense, criminal histories, drug and alcohol use, and jail activities.

During 1983 an estimated 8 million persons were admitted to local jails throughout the Nation. At the time the survey was conducted, the daily jail population was 223,552 inmates.

The Jail Inmate Survey was made possible through the cooperation of local jail officials across the country who provided access to inmates in their facilities. Their contribution to the successful completion of the survey is gratefully acknowledged.

Steven R. Schlesinger  
Director

At the time of the offense for which they were convicted, about a fourth of the convicted jail inmates had been under the influence of drugs and nearly half had been under the influence of alcohol.

The 1983 survey was based on personal interviews with a random sample of 5,785 inmates, 3,992 males and 1,793 females, drawn from a stratified random sample of 407 locally administered correctional institutions.<sup>3</sup> The sample was designed to be representative of the 223,552 persons housed in the Nation's 3,338 local jails and to provide a profile of their sociodemographic and criminal characteristics.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Because they were so few in number, females were sampled at a higher rate than males in order to produce estimates that were as reliable as those for males.

<sup>4</sup>For this survey, as in 1978, a local jail was defined as a facility that holds inmates usually for more than 48 hours and that is administered by local, city or county, officials. Specifically excluded from the count were temporary lock-ups that house persons for less than 48 hours, federally administered jails, State-administered jails, pri-

### LOCAL JAILS

Local jails serve a variety of purposes. They house persons awaiting arraignment and awaiting or standing trial as well as persons who have been convicted and are awaiting or serving a sentence, usually not exceeding 1 year. Among those awaiting trial, jails house persons for whom bail has not yet been set, persons who have been denied bail or other forms of pretrial release, and persons who have not been released on bail even though bail has been set.<sup>5</sup>

Jails also house probationers, parolees, and persons who had been released on bail but who have been taken into custody for violating the terms of their release and are awaiting further action.

vately operated facilities, and the combined jail-prison systems in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Vermont.

<sup>5</sup>Since the sample used in this survey is comprised solely of jail inmates, it is not possible to determine from these data the number of persons who received bail and remained out of jail prior to trial or conviction.

Jails may also hold persons awaiting transfer to another institution, such as prison escapees, offenders wanted in other jurisdictions, and sentenced offenders who will serve their terms in prison. In recent years prison crowding has caused some offenders sentenced to prison to serve their time in local jails. At midyear 1983, about 3% of the jail population in the country consisted of inmates held for other authorities or as a direct result of crowding in Federal or State prisons or other local jails.<sup>6</sup>

The length of stay in jail can vary widely. In some jurisdictions a convicted offender may serve several years in jail. On the other hand, a jail stay may be very brief if the prosecutor decides not to press charges or if bail or other pretrial release is quickly obtained.

### CONVICTION STATUS

Jails routinely house both convicted and unconvicted persons. Convicted persons include those who have already completed the trial process, been found or pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentence, as well as those who have been sentenced. Unconvicted persons include those who have not yet been formally charged, those who are awaiting or standing trial, those whose charges have been dropped and are awaiting release, and those being held for other authorities.

In the 1983 Jail Inmate Survey, parolees and probationers returned to jail with new charges and awaiting trial were counted as unconvicted (of the new charges). Probationers and parolees returned to jail only on a technical violation of the terms of their release were considered convicted (of the of

<sup>6</sup>See *The 1983 Jail Census*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-95536, November 1984.

Detention status	1983		1978	
Total	100%		100%	
Convicted	59%	100%	58%	100%
Awaiting sentence		13		14
Sentenced		87		86
Unconvicted	40%	100%	42%	100%
Not yet arraigned		29		25
Awaiting trial or on trial		71		75
Conviction status not determined*	1%		—	
Number of jail inmates	223,552		158,394	

— Less than 0.5%  
\* Includes persons with no offenses.

Characteristic	1983			1978
	Convicted	Unconvicted	Total <sup>a</sup>	Total
Sex	100%	100%	100%	100%
Male	93	93	93	94
Female	7	7	7	6
Race	100%	100%	100%	100%
White	61	54	58	56
Black	36	44	39	41
Other	3	2	3	2
Ethnicity	100%	100%	100%	100%
Hispanic	14	15	14	10
Nonhispanic	86	85	86	90
Age at survey	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 18	1	2	1	3
18-24	39	42	40	46
25-34	39	38	39	32
35-44	13	11	12	11
45-75	8	7	7	8
Median age <sup>b</sup>	27 years	26 years	27 years	25 years
Marital status	100%	100%	100%	100%
Married	22	20	21	21
Widowed	1	1	1	2
Divorced	17	14	16	14
Separated	8	8	8	9
Never married	52	56	54	54
Education	100%	100%	100%	100%
Less than 12 years	59	60	59	61
12 or more years	41	40	41	39
Median education	11 years	11 years	11 years	10 years
Military service	100%	100%	100%	100%
Served	23	19	21	25
Never served	77	81	79	75
Number of jail inmates	132,620	88,120	223,552	158,394

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding.  
<sup>a</sup> Includes inmates with no offenses and inmates whose conviction status was not determined.  
<sup>b</sup> Medians are based on grouped data.

fense for which they had been placed on probation or parole; this offense was counted as their "current offense").

Nearly 6 in 10 jail inmates were convicted, 13% of whom were awaiting sentence (table 1). Seventy-one percent of the unconvicted inmates had been arraigned and were awaiting or standing trial.

This pattern of conviction status varied little in 5 years. However, unarraigned inmates were a slightly higher proportion of all unconvicted jail inmates in 1983 than in 1978.

### SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

#### Sex

The overwhelming majority of both convicted and unconvicted jail inmates in 1983 were male (table 2). Females constituted only 7% of each category.

#### Race

Blacks, who were 12% of the general U.S. population in 1983, were 39% of the jail inmate population. Whites accounted for 58% of the jail popula-

tion. Other races, primarily American Indian, accounted for the rest. A larger proportion of white than of black inmates were convicted (62% vs. 54%).<sup>7</sup>

The racial composition of local jail inmates in 1983 was essentially unchanged from 1978.

#### Ethnicity

Inmates of hispanic origin constituted 14% of the 1983 jail population compared to 10% in 1978.

#### Age

About two-fifths of the inmate population was between 18 and 24 years of age, about two-fifths between 25 and 34, and about one-fifth over 35. Only 1% of all jail inmates were under age 18. The median age of jail inmates in 1983 was 27 years.

Between 1978 and 1983, a slight decrease in the percent of inmates between 18 and 24 was paralleled by a comparable increase in the percent between 25 and 34 years of age.

<sup>7</sup>These figures, which do not appear in table 2, were derived by using race as the denominator rather than conviction status.

## Marital status

About 1 in 5 jail inmates was married. More than half had never been married and about 1 in 4 was divorced or separated.

## Education

Only 2 in 5 had completed 12 or more years of school. The median grade level was 11 years.

## Military service

One in five jail inmates had served in the military. This proportion was slightly higher for the convicted than for the unconvicted. In 1978, 1 in 4 jail inmates had seen military service.

## Prearrest employment

Slightly more than half of the jail inmates in 1983 had been employed at the time of arrest for the current incarceration (table 3). About three-fourths of those with jobs had been working full time. About 7 in 10 of those who did not have a job were looking for work at the time of their arrest. Of those who were not looking for work, men most frequently gave ill health as the reason. Women most frequently cited family responsibilities or the availability of child care.

The percentage of jail inmates who had been employed prior to arrest dropped by four points between 1978 and 1983. Among those without work, the percentage looking for jobs rose from 62% to 70%.

## Prearrest income

Approximately three-fourths of the jail inmates in 1983 had been out of jail or prison for at least 1 year prior to their arrest. Almost a third of them made less than \$3,000 during that year; somewhat more than a third earned between \$3,000 and \$9,999; and somewhat less than a third earned \$10,000 or more. The median income among the inmates who reported earnings for the year before their arrest was \$5,486. For those inmates who had been free for only part of the year before their current incarceration, the median monthly income was about \$462.

## PRETRIAL EXPERIENCE

### Bail

Prior to trial, persons may be released from jail in a number of ways: on their own recognizance with a promise that they will return for trial, to a

Table 3. Prearrest employment status and income of jail inmates, 1983

	1983						1978	
	Convicted		Unconvicted		Total*		Total	
<b>Prearrest employment</b>	100%		100%		100%		100%	
Employed	54%	100%	52%	100%	53%	100%	57%	100%
Full-time		79		73		77		79
Part-time		21		27		23		21
Not employed	46%	100%	48%	100%	47%	100%	43%	100%
Looking for work		67		75		70		62
Not looking		33		25		30		38
<b>Inmates reporting income</b>	100%		100%		100%			
Free at least 1 year	78%	100%	73%	100%	76%	100%		...
Less than \$3,000 per year		31		37		33		...
\$3,000-\$9,999		38		37		38		...
\$10,000 or more		31		26		29		...
Median annual income		\$5,733		\$4,974		\$5,486		...
Free less than 1 year	16%	100%	19%	100%	17%	100%		...
Less than \$500 per month		49%		57%		53%		...
\$500-\$999		30		26		28		...
\$1,000 or more		21		17		19		...
Median monthly income		\$505		\$425		\$462		...
Unavailable	6%		8%		7%			...
Number of jail inmates	132,620		88,120		223,552		158,394	
* Includes inmates whose conviction status was not determined.			... Data not available.					

third party who promises to ensure their appearance at trial, and on some form of bail.

Almost 9 in 10 of the unconvicted jail inmates in 1983 had had bail set for them (table 4). Those for whom bail had not been set were mainly probationers or parolees whose release had been revoked or persons charged with offenses for which bail may not be permitted in certain jurisdictions, such as first-degree murder.

Although bail had been set for most

Table 4. Pretrial experience of unconvicted jail inmates, 1978 and 1983

	1983		1978	
	<b>Bail status</b>	100%		100%
Not set		13		18
Set	87	100%	82	100%
Released and returned		6		8
Not released		94		92
<b>Legal representation</b>	100%		100%	
Without counsel		25		22
With counsel	75	100%	78	100%
Hired own		20		18
Court appointed		80		82
Number of unconvicted jail inmates	88,120		66,936	
Note: Persons remaining on bail or other forms of pretrial release during the period of the survey are beyond the scope of the study.				

unconvicted jail inmates, about 94% for whom bail was set said they had not been released on bail mainly because they could not afford to pay the amount required. About 6% had been released on bail but had been returned to jail prior to the survey, more than half with new charges.

## Legal representation

About three-fourths of the unconvicted jail inmates were represented by legal counsel at the time of the survey. (The other unconvicted jail inmates may have been in the process of obtaining counsel.) Among those who already had counsel, about four-fifths had court-appointed attorneys; the rest, private attorneys.

## Guilty pleas

About four-fifths of the convicted inmates had chosen to plead guilty rather than stand trial. This high proportion is consistent with the findings of other studies on the extent of guilty pleas.<sup>8</sup>

## CURRENT OFFENSE

About 3 in 10 jail inmates were there for violent offenses, 4 for property offenses, 2 for public-order offenses, and 1 for drug offenses (table

<sup>8</sup>See *The Prevalence of Guilty Pleas*, BJS Special Report, NCJ-96018, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 1984.

5). Among those in jail for property offenses, the chief offenses were burglary and larceny. Among violent offenders, robbery and assault were the principal offenses.

**Conviction status**

Inmates with violent offenses were the only ones more likely to be unconvicted than convicted; inmates with property, drug, or public-order offenses were more likely to be convicted than unconvicted (table 6).

These differences reflect the fact that convicted violent offenders, except perhaps those convicted of simple assault, are usually sentenced to prison and eventually transferred there. Most public-order offenses are misdemeanors, and persons convicted of these crimes can be expected to serve their terms in jail. Other crime types, such as property or drug offenses, vary in degree of seriousness, and conviction for these offenses can lead to either a jail or a prison term.

With respect to specific offenses, murder/attempted murder and robbery were more prevalent among unconvicted than among convicted jail inmates (table 5). About 10% of the unconvicted and 2% of the convicted jail inmates were confined for murder or attempted murder, and 14% of the unconvicted jail inmates, compared to 9% of the convicted, were incarcerated for robbery.

Among property offenses, burglary was a more common offense among the unconvicted than among the convicted (16% vs. 13%), and larceny was more common among convicted than among unconvicted inmates (14% vs. 9%).

The most common public-order offense was driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. An estimated 13,000

**Table 5. Current offense of jail inmates, 1978 and 1983**

Current offense	1983			1978
	Convicted	Unconvicted	Total <sup>a</sup>	Total
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Violent</b>	24%	40%	30%	30%
Murder/attempted murder	2	10	5	5
Manslaughter	1	—	1	1
Rape/sexual assault	3	4	3	3
Robbery	9	14	11	12
Assault	7	9	8	8
Other violent <sup>b</sup>	2	3	2	1
<b>Property</b>	39%	36%	38%	41%
Burglary	13	16	14	17
Auto theft	2	2	2	3
Fraud/forgery/embezzlement	4	6	5	6
Larceny	14	9	11	10
Stolen property	3	2	2	3
Other property <sup>c</sup>	3	3	3	2
<b>Drug</b>	10%	8%	10%	9%
Traffic	4	4	4	4
Possession/use	5	4	5	4
Other drug	—	—	1	1
<b>Public order</b>	26%	13%	20%	19%
Weapons	2	3	2	2
Obstructing justice	5	3	4	4
Traffic	3	1	2	7
Driving while intoxicated <sup>d</sup>	10	2	7	—
Drunkenness/morals offenses <sup>e</sup>	4	3	3	5
Other public order <sup>f</sup>	2	1	1	1
<b>Other<sup>g</sup></b>	1%	1%	1%	1%
Unavailable	—	—	1%	—
Number of jail inmates	132,620	88,120	223,552	158,394

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding.  
 — Less than 0.5%.  
<sup>a</sup> Includes jail inmates with unknown conviction status and a small number for whom it was not determined whether they had an offense.  
<sup>b</sup> Includes kidnaping, purse snatching, hit-and-run driving, and child abuse.  
<sup>c</sup> Includes arson, destruction of property, property damage from hit-and-run driving, and trespass.  
<sup>d</sup> Includes driving while intoxicated and driving under the influence of drugs, which were included under "traffic" in 1978.  
<sup>e</sup> Also includes vagrancy and commercialized vice.  
<sup>f</sup> Includes rioting, family related offenses such as nonsupport or abandonment, invasion of privacy, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and habitual offenders.  
<sup>g</sup> Includes juvenile offenses and unspecified offenses.

persons (10% of all convicted inmates) were serving time for this offense. About 2% of the unconvicted inmates had been charged with driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

**Sex**

Men and women in jail revealed

different offense patterns (table 7). Since men are the vast majority of jail inmates, their offenses shaped the overall pattern.

Women were less likely than men to be in jail for violent offenses in general and robbery in particular. Although the proportion of men and women in jail for property crimes in 1983 was roughly the same, women were less likely to be there for burglary, more likely to be there for larceny, and almost four times as likely to be there for fraud, forgery, or embezzlement. Women were also somewhat more likely than men to be in jail for drug offenses.

**Race**

Proportionately more blacks were in jail for violent offenses, especially robbery, than were whites or inmates of other races. Although the proportions of blacks and whites in jail for property crimes generally did not differ substantially, larceny was more prevalent among blacks than whites.

**Table 6. Detention status of jail inmates by offense type, 1983**

Detention status	All inmates	Current offense				
		Violent	Property	Drug	Public order	Other
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Convicted</b>	59%	47%	61%	64%	75%	57%
Awaiting sentence	8	9	8	7	6	43
Sentenced	51	38	53	57	70	15
<b>Unconvicted</b>	40%	53%	39%	36%	25%	43%
Not yet arraigned	11	13	11	8	12	4
Arraigned and awaiting or on trial	28	40	28	28	13	39
Conviction status not determined/no offense	1%	...	...	...	...	...
Number of jail inmates	223,552	67,439	84,730	20,478	45,254	2,839

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding. ... Not available.

**Table 7. Sociodemographic characteristics of jail inmates by offense, 1983.**

Current offense	Sex		Race			Age			
	Male	Female	White	Black	Other	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45 and over
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Violent</b>	31%	21%	27%	35%	25%	30%	31%	31%	27%
Murder/attempted murder	5	5	5	7	3	5	5	5	7
Manslaughter	1	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	—
Rape/sexual assault	4	—	4	3	2	3	3	6	6
Robbery	11	6	7	16	9	14	10	9	4
Assault	8	7	8	7	9	7	9	7	8
Other violent <sup>a</sup>	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
<b>Property</b>	38%	41%	37%	40%	35%	45%	35%	28%	28%
Burglary	15	5	14	14	11	21	11	6	4
Auto theft	2	—	2	2	3	3	2	—	2
Fraud/forgery/embezzlement	4	15	6	4	4	3	5	7	9
Larceny	11	18	9	15	14	13	11	11	7
Stolen property	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	1	2
Other property <sup>b</sup>	3	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	4
<b>Drugs</b>	9%	13%	9%	9%	13%	7%	12%	12%	5%
<b>Public order</b>	20%	21%	25%	13%	23%	15%	20%	27%	39%
Weapons	2	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	3
Obstructing justice	4	5	6	2	2	5	4	4	3
Traffic	2	1	3	1	4	2	3	2	1
Driving while intoxicated <sup>c</sup>	7	5	10	2	11	4	6	11	20
Drunkenness/morals offenses <sup>d</sup>	3	8	4	3	2	2	2	6	10
Other public order <sup>e</sup>	1	1	1	1	2	—	2	2	2
<b>Other<sup>f</sup></b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	—	0%
<b>Unavailable<sup>g</sup></b>	1%	3%	1%	2%	4%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Number of jail inmates	207,783	15,769	130,118	87,508	5,926	93,203	86,326	27,756	16,237

Note: Percentages may not add to total because of rounding.  
 — Less than 0.5%.  
<sup>a</sup> Includes kidnaping, purse snatching, hit-and-run driving, and child abuse.  
<sup>b</sup> Includes arson, destruction of property, property damage from hit-and-run driving, and trespass.  
<sup>c</sup> Includes driving while intoxicated and driving under the influence of drugs.  
<sup>d</sup> Includes vagrancy and commercialized vice.  
<sup>e</sup> Includes rioting, habitual offender, family related offenses such as nonsupport or abandonment, invasion of privacy, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.  
<sup>f</sup> Includes juvenile offenses and unspecified offenses.  
<sup>g</sup> Includes a small number for whom it was not determined whether they had an offense.

Whites were twice as likely as blacks to be incarcerated for public-order offenses, and both whites and inmates of other races were about five times more likely than blacks to be in jail for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

**Age**

Jail incarceration for public-order offenses increased with age. Only about 15% of the jail inmates under 25 were charged with public-order offenses, compared with 39% of those age 45 and older. This trend was particularly strong for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Among inmates 45 or over, 1 in 5 was in jail for this crime, compared to 4% for those under 25.

Persons between the ages of 25 and 44 were about twice as likely to be in jail for drug offenses as those under 25

or those 45 and older. Property offenses in general and burglary in particular were much more common among young jail inmates (those under 25) than among older ones. Violent offenses showed little variation among inmates of different ages.

**SENTENCES IMPOSED**

About half of all jail inmates were sentenced at the time of the 1983 survey. Larceny (14%), burglary (13%), and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol (11%) accounted for the largest proportions of sentenced jail inmates.

About 7 in 10 of the sentenced jail inmates had been convicted of offenses for which the median sentence was less

<sup>9</sup>The proportions of jail inmates sentenced for these offenses closely parallels the proportions convicted of these offenses that are in table 6.

**Table 8. Median sentence lengths for sentenced inmates by type of offense, 1983**

Current offense	Median sentence length imposed by court for jail inmates who will serve time in:	
	Jails	State or Federal prison
<b>Violent</b>	11.6 mos.	96.0 mos.
Murder/attempted murder	48.3	359.8
Manslaughter	12.3	—
Rape/sexual assault	9.5	120.1
Robbery	12.0	95.9
Assault	6.4	47.8
Other violent <sup>a</sup>	10.7	—
<b>Property</b>	6.5	35.8
Burglary	11.6	36.1
Auto theft	9.1	—
Fraud/forgery/embezzlement	9.9	36.2
Larceny	6.1	23.7
Stolen property	9.0	41.8
Other property <sup>b</sup>	3.4	—
<b>Drugs</b>	8.5	48.4
Drug traffic	9.5	60.1
Possession/use	7.7	48.3
Other drug	5.7	—
<b>Public order</b>	3.2	35.7
Weapons	6.9	36.3
Obstructing justice	3.1	—
Traffic	4.2	—
Driving while intoxicated <sup>c</sup>	1.9	—
Drunkenness/morals offenses <sup>d</sup>	...	...
Other public order <sup>e</sup>	2.3	—

— Too few cases to reliably estimate sentence lengths.  
 ... Not available.  
<sup>a</sup> Includes kidnaping, purse snatching, hit-and-run driving and child abuse.  
<sup>b</sup> Includes arson, destruction of property, property damage from hit-and-run driving, and trespass.  
<sup>c</sup> Includes driving while intoxicated and driving under the influence of drugs.  
<sup>d</sup> Includes vagrancy and commercialized vice.  
<sup>e</sup> Includes rioting, habitual offender, family-related offenses such as nonsupport or abandonment, invasion of privacy, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

than 1 year. Whatever the offense, however, offenders who expected to serve their time in prison had considerably longer median sentences than those who expected to serve their time in jail (table 8). Violent offenders sentenced to prison had median sentences more than eight times longer than sentences imposed for inmates who would serve their time in jail. Among property and drug offenders, median sentences for those going to prison were about 6 times longer, and for public-order offenders, about 11 times longer than sentences imposed on those remaining in jail.

Among inmates who would serve their time in jail, offenses with the longest median sentences included murder/attempted murder (about 4 years), and manslaughter, robbery, and bur-

**Table 9. Prior criminal record of jail inmates, 1983**

	Percent of all inmates
Previously sentenced to probation and/or incarceration	80%
Only probation	15
Incarceration	66
Only for minor crimes*	9
For any other crime	57
1 prior incarceration	25
2-3	20
4 or more	12
Number of jail inmates	223,552

Note: Subtotals may not add to totals because of rounding.  
\*Minor crimes include drunkenness, vagrancy, loitering, disorderly conduct, trespassing, or traffic offenses other than driving while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol.

glary (about 1 year each). The shortest median sentences for those who would serve their time in jail were for those convicted of public-order crimes, particularly driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol (about 2 months).

**PRIOR CRIMINAL RECORD**

About 80% of the jail inmates in 1983 reported at least one prior conviction (table 9). About 66% had served time in the past for one or more offenses. Most of these had served time for offenses more serious than drunkenness, minor traffic offenses, trespassing, loitering, or disorderly conduct. A third of all jail inmates had served time for more serious offenses at least twice in the past; and 12% had previously served four or more jail or prison terms.

Some 15% of all jail inmates in 1983 had prior records limited to probation, but about three-fifths of all jail inmates had been on probation at least once, either as an adult or as a juvenile. About one-half of all inmates who had ever been on probation were first placed on probation before they reached age 18, and another one-third between the ages of 18 and 24.

**STATUS AT ARREST**

At the time of arrest, 44% of the jail inmates were already in some criminal justice status (table 10). Among these inmates, more than half had been on probation, about one-fourth on parole, 13% on bail, and 3% each were either on some other type of pretrial release or were escapees. However, the type of criminal justice status at

arrest differed between the convicted and the unconvicted. Convicted jail inmates were more likely than unconvicted jail inmates to have been on probation at arrest for the current offense, whereas unconvicted inmates were more likely to have been on parole.

More than three-fourths of the jail inmates with criminal justice status at the time of their arrest were returned to jail with new charges (table 11). An estimated 79% of those jail inmates who had been on probation, 86% of those who had been on parole, 58% of those who had been on bail, 53% of those who had been on other pretrial release, and 59% of those who had escaped were charged with one or more new offenses when they were returned to jail.

**DRUG USE**

Three-fourths of all jail inmates reported using illegal drugs at some time in their lives: 72% reported using marijuana; 38% used cocaine; 32% amphetamines; and 27% barbiturates (table 12). Methaqualone, LSD, and heroin had each been used by more than one-fifth of the inmates.

Drug use among jail inmates was more pervasive in 1983 than in 1978. While three-fourths of the jail inmates in 1983 had a history of drug use, in 1978 two-thirds of the jail inmates had ever used drugs. In addition, the pattern of drug use changed somewhat during the 5-year period. The proportion of jail inmates ever using heroin dropped, but the proportion ever using cocaine rose, as did the proportion ever using marijuana.

Many jail inmates said that at some time in their lives they had used drugs on a weekly basis: about one-fifth had used cocaine; about one-fifth, amphetamines; about one-sixth, heroin; and about one-seventh, barbiturates. More than half had used marijuana on a weekly basis.

**Table 11. Percent of inmates with a criminal justice status at arrest who were returned to jail with new charges**

	Percent with new charges		
	Total*	Convicted	Unconvicted
Inmates with criminal justice status at arrest	78%	68%	93%
On probation	79	70	98
On parole	86	73	99
On bail	58	56	70
On pretrial release	53	41	71
Escapee	59	50	80
Number of inmates	223,552	132,620	88,120

\* Total includes inmates whose conviction status was not determined.

**Table 12. Percent of jail inmates who had ever used drugs, 1978 and 1983**

Type of drug	Percent of inmates ever using drugs <sup>a</sup>	
	1983	1978
Any drug	75%	68%
Marijuana	72	66
Cocaine	38	29
Amphetamines	32	31
Barbiturates	27	30
Methaqualone	23	...
LSD	22	21
Heroin	22	26
PCP	15	16
T's and blues <sup>b</sup>	11	...
Methadone <sup>c</sup>	7	7
Number of jail inmates	223,552	158,394

... Not available.  
<sup>a</sup> Inmates may have used more than one drug.  
<sup>b</sup> Amphetamines and barbiturates taken in combination.  
<sup>c</sup> Does not include methadone used in a drug treatment program.

Only convicted offenders were asked if they had used drugs or alcohol just prior to their current offense. At the time of the offense, about 1 in 4 convicted jail inmates in 1983 had been under the influence of one or more drugs (table 13). Half of these offenders were using marijuana; one-sixth were using heroin; another sixth, co-

**Table 10. Criminal justice status of jail inmates at arrest, 1983**

	Total*	Convicted	Unconvicted
Total inmates at arrest with:	100%	100%	100%
No criminal justice status	56	55	58
Criminal justice status	44	45	42
On probation	56	62	48
On parole	25	20	32
On bail	13	12	15
Pretrial release	3	3	3
Escapee	3	3	2
Number of inmates	223,552	132,620	88,120

\* Total includes inmates whose conviction status was not determined.

**Table 13. Drug use among convicted offenders just before current offense, by crime type, 1983.**

Current offense	Number convicted	Percent of convicted who used drugs
Total	132,620	26%
Violent	32,112	25
Murder/attempted murder	3,345	30
Manslaughter	1,188	19
Rape/sexual assault	4,017	19
Robbery	11,945	31
Assault	9,609	22
Other violent <sup>a</sup>	2,008	18
Property	51,660	31
Burglary	17,335	39
Auto theft	2,960	33
Fraud/forgery/embezzlement	5,976	20
Larceny	18,001	30
Stolen property	3,676	27
Other property <sup>b</sup>	3,712	23
Drugs	13,181	45
Traffic	5,469	42
Possession	6,830	46
Other drugs	882	48
Public order	34,036	11
Weapons	2,769	21
Obstructing justice	6,856	12
Traffic	3,734	9
Driving while intoxicated <sup>c</sup>	13,406	7
Drunkenness/morals offenses <sup>d</sup>	4,894	13
Other public order <sup>e</sup>	2,377	6
Other <sup>f</sup>	1,008	25
Unavailable	623	—

<sup>a</sup> Includes kidnaping, purse snatching, hit-and-run driving, and child abuse.

<sup>b</sup> Includes arson, destruction of property, property damage from hit-and-run driving, and trespass.

<sup>c</sup> Includes driving while intoxicated and driving under the influence of drugs.

<sup>d</sup> Also includes vagrancy and commercialized vice.

<sup>e</sup> Includes rioting, habitual offender, family related offenses such as nonsupport or abandonment, invasion of privacy, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

<sup>f</sup> Includes juvenile offenses and unspecified offenses.

**Table 14. Alcohol use among convicted jail inmates just before current offense, 1978 and 1983**

	1983	1978
Percent of convicted inmates who had been drinking just before crime	48%	46%
Of those who had been drinking, percent who were:		
Very drunk	28%	31%
Pretty drunk	26	23
Feeling good	34	28
Sober	12	18
Drinking 5 hours or more	54%	44%
Number of convicted inmates	132,620	91,411

burglary (39%), auto theft (33%) or larceny (30%)—than other offenders had used drugs just before the crime. About 1 in 4 inmates convicted of violent offenses, especially robbery (31%) and murder/attempted murder (30%), and roughly 1 in 10 convicted of public-order offenses, mainly weapons offenses (21%), had used drugs just prior to the offenses for which they were currently incarcerated.

#### ALCOHOL USE

Nearly half of the convicted jail offenders had been drinking just before the current offense (table 14). Of those inmates who had been drinking, more than half admitted that they had been drinking enough to feel "pretty drunk" or "very drunk" just prior to committing the current offense.

Alcohol use just before the crime was basically unchanged from 1978. However, more inmates drank for a longer period of time before the crime in 1983 than in 1978. Fifty-four percent of the inmates drinking just before the crime in 1983 had been drinking for 5 or more hours; the comparable figure for 1978 was 44%.

Inmates convicted of public-order offenses used alcohol more than any other group (table 15). However, public-order offenses include driving while intoxicated. If this offense is excluded from the public-order category, 45% of the public-order offenders had used alcohol just prior to the crime.

About 54% of the violent offenders had used alcohol before their crime. Alcohol use was particularly pervasive among those convicted of manslaughter (68%) and assault (62%).

Among property offenders 40% had used alcohol just prior to the current offense, and among drug offenders, 29%.

**Table 15. Alcohol use among convicted offenders just before current offense, by crime type, 1983**

Current offense	Number convicted	Percent of convicted who used alcohol
Total	132,620	48%
Violent	32,112	54
Murder/attempted murder	3,345	49
Manslaughter	1,188	68
Rape/sexual assault	4,017	52
Robbery	11,945	48
Assault	9,609	62
Other violent <sup>a</sup>	2,008	49
Property	51,660	40
Burglary	17,335	44
Auto theft	2,960	51
Fraud/forgery/embezzlement	5,976	22
Larceny	18,001	37
Stolen property	3,676	45
Other property <sup>b</sup>	3,712	51
Drugs	13,181	29
Traffic	5,469	26
Possession	6,830	30
Other drugs	882	44
Public order	34,036	64
Weapons	2,769	32
Obstructing justice	6,856	43
Traffic	3,734	36
Driving while intoxicated <sup>c</sup>	13,406	93
Drunkenness/morals offenses <sup>d</sup>	4,894	70
Other public order <sup>e</sup>	2,377	28
Other <sup>f</sup>	1,008	40
Unavailable	623	—

<sup>a</sup> Includes kidnaping, purse snatching, hit-and-run driving, and child abuse.

<sup>b</sup> Includes arson, destruction of property, property damage from hit-and-run driving, and trespass.

<sup>c</sup> Includes driving while intoxicated and driving under the influence of drugs.

<sup>d</sup> Also includes vagrancy and commercialized vice.

<sup>e</sup> Includes rioting, habitual offender, family related offenses such as nonsupport or abandonment, invasion of privacy, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

<sup>f</sup> Includes juvenile offenses and unspecified offenses.

caine; one-eighth, amphetamines; and one-twelfth, barbiturates.

This pattern of drug use also differed somewhat from that reported in 1978. In 1978, fewer convicted jail inmates, about 1 in 5, reported having used drugs just prior to the current offense. Among these offenders, marijuana was used by about half (as in 1983), but the proportions using heroin and barbiturates were about twice as high in 1978 as in 1983, and the proportion using cocaine was about half.

As might be expected, a larger proportion of drug offenders (45%) than other types of offenders had used drugs just prior to the current crime. Aside from these drug offenders, a larger proportion of convicted property offenders—mainly those convicted of

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November 1985, NCJ-99175

## METHODOLOGY

The 1983 Survey of Inmates of Local Jails was conducted for the Bureau of Justice Statistics by the U.S. Bureau of the Census through personal interviews during July and August 1983. A nationally selected random sample of 5,785 inmates, 3,992 males and 1,793 females, was drawn from a stratified random sample of 407 jails. Female offenders were oversampled to obtain a large enough sample to make reliable statements about this group and comparisons with males. The response rate for this survey was 92%.

The sample of inmates was selected from a universe of 3,338 institutions containing 207,783 males and 15,769 females. A complete directory of local jails is maintained for the Bureau of Justice Statistics by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

A weighting procedure was used to make estimates of responses for the entire jail inmate population. Because the survey is based on a sample rather than upon a complete enumeration, a sampling error (standard error) is associated with each estimate in this report, including the measures of difference and of change. In general, if the difference between two numbers is greater than twice the standard error for that difference, we can say that we are 95% confident that the two num-

bers are in fact different—that is, the apparent difference is not simply the result of surveying a sample rather than the entire population. All comparisons made in the text are at the 95% confidence level.

More information on sampling procedures and standard-error tables is available in the report, **Sample Design, Estimation Procedures and Reliability of the Estimates for the 1983 Jail Inmate Survey**, NCJ-99416, available as follows:

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Census of jails and survey of jail inmates reports:

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**The 1983 jail census**, NCJ-95536, 11/84

**Jail inmates 1982**, NCJ-87161, 2/83

**Census of jails, 1978: Data for individual jails**, vols. I-IV; Northeast, North Central, South, West, NCJ-72279-72282, respectively

**Profile of jail inmates, 1978**, NCJ-65412, 2/81

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