



Time Served in State Prison, 2018

SUMMARY | NCJ 255662

MARCH 2021

Two-thirds of offenders released from state prison in 2018 served less than 2 years in prison before their initial release. While 1 in 23 violent offenders (4%) served 20 years or more before their initial release, over half of violent offenders (57%) were released in less than 3 years. About 1 in 5 state prisoners released in 2018 had served less than 6 months before their initial release.

Average and median years served

The average time served by state prisoners released in 2018, from their date of initial admission to their date of initial release, was 2.7 years. The median amount of time served (the middle value in the range of time served, with 50% of offenders serving more and 50% serving less) was 1.3 years. By offense type, the median time served was 17.5 years for murder, 7.2 years for rape, 17 months for drug trafficking, and 9 months for drug possession.

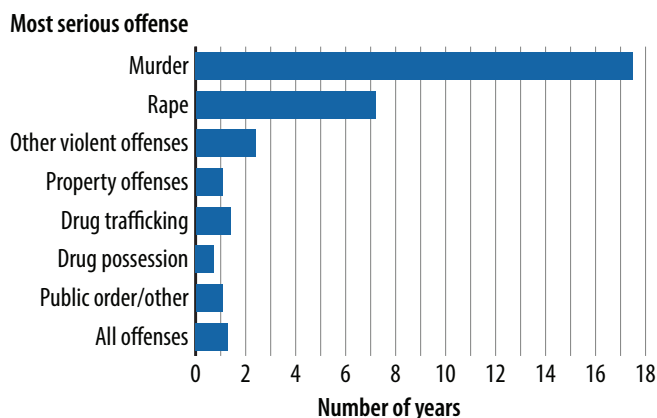
Percentage of sentence served

Persons released from state prison in 2018 served an average of 44% of their maximum sentence length before their initial release. State prisoners serving time for rape and initially released in 2018 served an average of 68% of their sentence, and those serving time for murder served an average of 58% of their sentence. Offenders released from state prison in 2018 after serving time for drug possession or drug trafficking had served less than 40% of their sentence, on average.

Offenders with differing sentences

Persons serving less than one year in state prison represented 42% of first releases in 2018. Among persons released from state prison in 2018 after serving 20 years or more, 70% had been imprisoned for murder or rape. Violent offenders released from state prison made up less than a third (30%) of all initial releases in 2018.

Median time served in state prison before initial release, by most serious offense, 2018



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Corrections Reporting Program, 2018.

Source of data

These findings are based on prisoner records from the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP), which collects records on prison admissions and releases. All statistics in this report are based on state prisoners' first release after serving time for a given offense. They exclude persons who were released after serving time for an offense, returned to prison for violating community supervision, and then were released again.

The report is based on NCRP data from 44 states. In 2018, these states were responsible for 97% of all persons released from state prisons nationwide. Annually administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the NCRP obtains individual-level records from state departments of corrections on prisoners entering and leaving prison custody or community supervision.

The full report (*Time Served in State Prison, 2018*, NCJ 255662), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at www.bjs.gov.