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U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics



Crime ^{and} Justice Facts, 1985

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U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics

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This document summarizes much of what BJS has found about crime and justice as of December 31, 1985. It is intended to bridge the information gap between the first and second editions of the Report to the Nation on Crime and Justice, a comprehensive statistical portrait of crime and justice in the U.S., first published in October 1983.

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The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of the Department of Justice.

Crime

The volume of crime

In 1984, the National Crime Survey reported more than 35 million victimizations:

	Number of victim- izations	Rate per 1,000 population
Personal crimes		
—of violence	5,954,000	31
Rape	180,000	1
Robbery	1,117,000	6
Assault	4,657,000	24
Aggravated	1,673,000	9
Simple	2,984,000	16
—of theft	13,789,000	72
		Rate per 1,000 households
Household crimes		
Burglary	5,643,000	64
Larceny	8,750,000	99
Motor vehicle theft	1,340,000	15

About 6 million persons—3.2% of all Americans—are victims of violent crime each year.

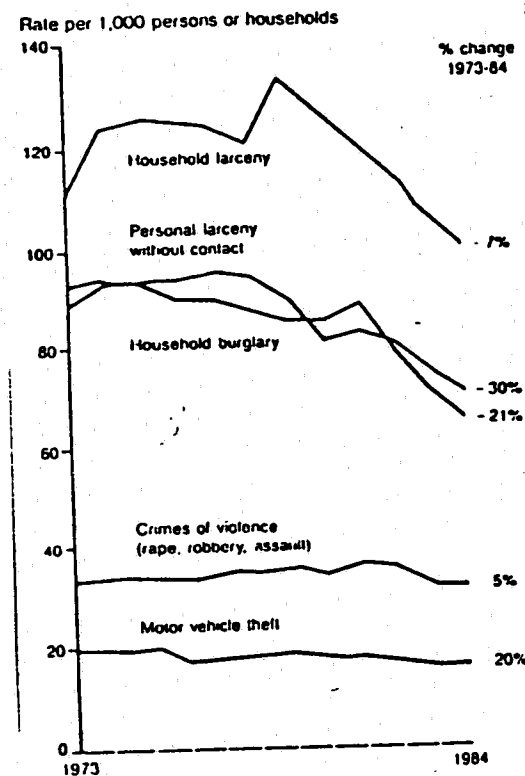
In 1984, 22.8 million households—26% of all households—were touched by crime.

Criminal victimization 1984
Households touched by crime 1984
The risk of violent crime

Crime trends

The 35.5 million criminal victimizations in 1984 was the lowest number recorded in the 12-year history of the National Crime Survey. This was about 14% below the 41.5 million victimizations recorded in the peak year of 1981.

Trends in victimization rates for selected crimes, 1973-84



Victimization rates for personal theft, household larceny, and burglary fell to 12 year lows in 1984: the rate for—

- crimes of personal theft was about 26% below its 1977 peak
- burglary was 31% below its peak in 1974
- household larceny was 26% below its peak in 1979.

Violent crime rates remained basically unchanged between 1983 and 1984, but they were 12% below their 1981 peak.

The 26% of households touched by crime in 1984 was down from 32% in 1975.

The recent decline in crime is attributed to several possible reasons:

- decreasing size of the teen and young adult population, the most crime-prone age group in society
- increasing severity of the criminal justice system that deters criminals
- record prison populations incapacitating larger numbers of career criminals than ever before
- growth in citizen prevention activities like Neighborhood Watch Programs.

Criminal victimization 1984 Households touched by crime 1984

Victims of crime

1983 Victimization rates
(per 1,000 persons or households)

	Personal crimes		Household crimes
	Violence	Theft	
Sex			
Male	40	83	
Female	23	72	
Age			
12-15	51	125	395
16-19	65	119	
20-24	60	119	256
25-34	42	88	
35-49	20	73	217
50-64	9	44	146
65 and over	6	23	95
Race			
White	30	77	183
Black	41	79	242
Other	24	51	187
Origin			
Hispanic	38	74	247
Non-Hispanic	31	77	187
Income			
Less than \$7,500	48	70	214
\$7,500-9,999	31	62	179
\$10,000-14,999	33	71	201
\$15,000-24,999	27	77	187
\$25,000-29,999	30	78	192
\$30,000-49,999	26	92	194
\$50,000 or more	23	105	189
Residence			
Central city 1,000,000 or more	43	92	245
500,000-999,999	48	90	223
250,000-499,999	48	105	258
50,000-249,999	39	85	261
Suburban	38	90	248
Rural	29	82	182
	22	58	148

Violent crime victims are more likely to be—

- men than women (except for the crime of rape)
- younger people than the elderly
- blacks than whites or members of other racial groups
- Hispanics than non-Hispanics
- people with low incomes (less than \$7,500 per year) than people in other income groups.

Theft rates are highest for people with high incomes (\$50,000 or more per year).

Rural residents are less likely to be victims of crime than people living in cities or suburbs.

The lifetime chances of being murdered are much higher for blacks than for whites: black males have 1 chance in 21 to be murdered; white males have 1 chance in 131.

The risk of violent crime other than homicide is particularly high among males 16 to 24 years old and is about the same for whites and blacks in this age group: each year about 1 in 12 are victims of a violent crime.

Criminal victimization 1983 The risk of violent crime

The location of crime

The rates of victimization for crimes of violence and theft are—

- highest for residents of central cities
- lower for suburban residents
- much lower for residents of nonmetropolitan areas.

In crimes of violence, victimization rates are highest for residents of the two largest metropolitan areas. Residents of central cities with populations of 500,000 to 999,999 have the highest theft rates among city dwellers.

By far, the largest number of crimes occur in the general area where the victim lives.

Suburban dwellers are more likely to be victims of crime in the central city of their metropolitan area than are city dwellers to become victims in the suburban areas surrounding their cities.

Residents of central cities are less likely than suburban residents to be victimized in metropolitan areas other than their own.

Robbery and personal larceny with contact (purse snatching and pocket picking) are especially likely to occur in cities.

Males and females are equally likely to encounter a personal crime outside the area where they live.

For residents of rural and suburban areas, crimes of violence by strangers occurred more often away from the victim's home area than those committed by relatives, friends, or acquaintances.

Locating city, suburban, and rural crime

The economic cost of crime

Personal crimes of violence and theft and the household crimes of burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft cost their victims \$10.9 billion in 1981.

Nearly 75% of the cost, or \$8.1 billion, stemmed from household crime, burglary, household larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

Among the three violent crimes, the largest loss (\$421 million) was the result of robbery. However, the median loss of rape victims was slightly greater than that of robbery victims.

The median loss was \$80 for a violent crime victim and \$40 for a personal theft victim. Motor vehicle theft posted the highest median loss for all crimes, \$1,500.

Of all losses, most are from theft of property or cash (92%). Six percent result from property damage and 2% from medical expenses.

About 65% of the medical costs result from assault, the most common of the three violent crimes.

Thirty six percent of all losses (\$3.9 billion) were recovered or reimbursed during the 6 months following the offense.

Black victims of personal and household crimes experience greater median losses than white victims.

The economic cost of crime to victims

The relationship between victim and offender

Except for murder, most violent crimes are committed by strangers to their victims:

Relationship between victim and offender	Percent of violent crimes
Total	100%
Stranger	58
Aquaintance	33
Relative	7
Don't know relationship	2

In murders in which the relationship is known, about 24% of the victims are killed by strangers.

More than three-quarters of all robberies are committed by strangers, more than any other violent crime.

In incidents of family violence, about 88% are assaults, 10% are robberies, and 2% are rapes.

More than half of all violent crime committed by relatives involve spouses or ex-spouses. About three-quarters of the spousal attacks involve persons who were divorced or separated.

Men are three times more likely than women to be victimized by violent strangers. Women are three times more likely than men to be victimized by family members.

Strangers who rape or assault are more likely to be lone white males. But strangers who rob are more likely to be a pair or group of black males.

Strangers employ weapons in 4 of every 10 violent crimes they commit. About a third of familial assaults involve the use of a weapon or result in a serious injury.

A series of similar victimizations within the previous 6 months was reported by about a quarter of the persons violently victimized by a spouse or ex-spouse. Such victims are much more likely than other victims to experience a series of victimizations.

Violent crime by strangers Family violence

Crime profiles

Rape

Among rape and attempted rape victims—

- more than 70% are unmarried women
- 63% are under 25
- 53% are from low-income families
- 81% are white, but compared to their proportion in the general population black women are significantly more likely than white women to be victims.

Two-thirds of all rapes occur at night—the highest proportion between 6 p.m. and midnight.

In cases of rape or attempted rape—

- a woman is twice as likely to be attacked by a stranger as by someone she knows
- about 15% involve one victim and more than one offender
- about half are reported to the police.

The reasons most often given for not reporting a rape or attempted rape to the police or other authorities are that—

- the incident was too private or personal
- the victim felt nothing could be done.

The crime of rape

Household burglary

Burglars commit three-fifths of all rapes and robberies in the home and a third of all household assaults.

Someone is at home during 13% of all burglaries, and 30% of such incidents end in a violent crime.

Among all cases of burglary—

- a third are forcible entries in 22% of all burglaries, force is used unsuccessfully in an attempt to gain entry
- 43% are unlawful entries where the intruder has no legal right to be on the premises and no force is used to enter the premises.

Theft or attempted theft is involved in—

- 77% of all forcible entries
- 82% of unlawful entries where no force is used to gain entry.

Housing units most likely to be burglarized are rented rather than owned and are in multi-unit dwellings containing three to nine units.

Urban households are more likely than suburban or rural households to be victims of forcible entries. However, for unlawful entry where force is not used to gain entry, the rates in urban, suburban, and rural households are very similar.

Burglary occurs more often in warmer than in colder months.

When the time of entry is known, victims of burglary report that about half the incidents occurred during daytime and half occurred at night.

Household burglary

Bank robbery

Bank robberies—

- jumped from less than 500 per year prior to the 1960s to about 8,000 in 1980, increasing at a far faster rate than total robberies
- account for about 6% of all robberies of commercial establishments reported to Federal, State, and local authorities in 1982.

Of the bank robberies investigated by the FBI—

- slightly more than 6% involved violence
- injuries occurred in slightly more than 2%
- death occurred in less than half of 1%.

Most bank robbers appear to be unsophisticated, unprofessional criminals:

- 76% of them used no disguise despite the widespread use of surveillance equipment
- 86% never inspected the bank prior to the offense
- 95% had no long-range scheme to avoid capture and to spend the money without being noticed.

The average dollar loss from bank robberies was approximately \$3,300. During 1979, less than 20% of the amounts stolen were recovered.

Unlike other crimes, bank robbery is almost always detected and almost always reported. About two out of three bank robberies are cleared by arrest.

Of persons prosecuted for bank robbery, most had histories of prior arrest, convictions, and incarcerations. Forty-five percent had served at least one prior term in excess of 1 year.

Bank robbery: Federal offenses and offenders

Automated teller machine loss or theft

The Nation's banks lost an estimated \$70 million to \$100 million during 1983 from automated teller machine frauds.

Approximately \$262 billion were processed through 2.7 billion automatic teller machine transactions that year. Of a sample study of 2,700 transactions that resulted in an account-holder complaint, about 45% involved fraud.

Of the problem incidents studied, almost two-thirds involved withdrawals, almost a third of which involved unauthorized transactions with a stolen or lost card.

- To prevent unauthorized access, most automatic tellers require identification by a card and a personal identification number. According to the card holders, the personal identification number of the cards that were used in automated teller machine loss or theft was—
- recorded and kept near the card—typically in the purse or wallet—in 72% of the cases
 - written on the card in 6% of the incidents
 - written and kept separate from the card or purse in 7%
 - not written anywhere, in 15% of the incidents.

Electronic fund transfer fraud

The criminal justice response

Reporting crime

The criminal justice system deals directly with a very small amount of crime. Only about a third of all crimes are reported to the police.

The most serious crimes in terms of economic loss or injury are most likely to be reported. Nearly half of all violent crimes are reported, but only a fourth of personal crimes of theft and a third of household crimes are reported.

Excluding murder, the most frequently reported crimes are motor vehicle theft (69%) and aggravated assault (58%).

Generally, demographic characteristics of the victims (sex, age, race) make less difference to the reporting rates than does the type of crime.

Most crimes are reported by the victim or a member of the victimized household:

- Of reported personal crimes, 60% are reported by the victim, 13% by another household member, 22% by someone else, and 3% are discovered by the police.
- Of reported household crimes, 88% are reported by a household member, 10% by someone else, and 2% are discovered by the police.

The most frequently cited reason for reporting a violent crime to the police was to keep the crime from happening again. For both personal theft and household crimes, the most frequently cited reason for reporting was the desire to recover property.

The most frequently cited reason for not reporting was that the crime was not important enough to be reported to the police. For violent crimes the reason most often given was that it was a private or personal matter.

Reporting crimes to the police

Criminal justice processing

Most crime is a State and local problem. About 98% of all civil and criminal court cases are filed in State and local courts.

Serious crime is only a small part of the criminal justice system workload. In State courts, criminal cases represent less than 13% of the case filings, and felony filings account for only a small fraction of the criminal filings.

Differences in local laws, agencies, resources, standards, and procedures result in varying responses to crime. For example, a study of four States found that prosecutors in one State file on 30% of the arrests brought to them by the police, but prosecutors in another State file on 97% of the arrests.

Most felony arrests do not result in a trial. From a third to more than half of all arrests are rejected at screening or dismissed, and most of the rest result in a guilty plea.

Evidence-related deficiencies and witness problems account for more than half the rejections at screening. In most jurisdictions, evidence and witness problems are also the most common reasons for dismissals.

Guilty pleas rather than trials account for the vast majority of felony convictions, approximately, 45 of every 100 arrests.

The use of guilty pleas in felony cases varies greatly among jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have policies which result in high rate of guilty pleas; others go to trial more frequently.

Most guilty pleas are to the most serious charge filed by the prosecutor. In 12 of 16 jurisdictions studied, close to 60% or more of the guilty pleas were to the top charge.

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Few cases are disposed of at a trial. An average of 4 of every 100 arrests go to trial. Of cases bound over to felony court, only 8% result in a trial.

Defendants charged with serious crimes are more likely to demand a trial than those with less serious charges.

Most cases that go to trial by jury result in conviction. Of 24 jurisdictions studied, an average of 69% of the cases that went to trial resulted in conviction; the individual jurisdiction rates ranged from 51% to 85%.

State court caseload statistics, 1977-81
Case filings in State courts, 1983
The prosecution of felony arrests, 1980
Prevalence of guilty pleas

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Indigent defense

According to the Constitution, all those accused of crimes punishable by incarceration have a right to an attorney. The courts have ruled that the defense of accused persons must be provided regardless of the defendant's ability to pay for such counsel. Therefore, the costs of indigent defense services are borne by the public.

The Nation spent almost \$625 million during 1982 for indigent criminal defense services in about 3.2 million State and local court cases.

The 1982 expenditure for indigent defense was 44% more than the estimated \$435 million cost during 1980 and 213% more than the estimated \$200 million spent in 1976.

The average cost of an indigent defense case nationwide was \$196, ranging from \$567 in Hawaii to \$85 in Oklahoma.

Assigned counsel systems that require the appointment of private attorneys dominate service delivery patterns. They are used in 60% of all counties; 34% of the counties use public defender systems, and 6% use contract systems.

Public defender systems are the dominant system in 43 of the 50 largest counties in the United States and serve 68% of the Nation's population.

A growing number of cases are no longer being handled by public defenders, primarily because of the increasingly strict definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest and limits on the number of cases the public defender is able to handle.

Of all counties studied, 75% have some form of recoupment requiring defendants to repay a portion of their defense costs; but 25% of the counties that have recoupment reported that no payments were received in 1982.

Criminal defense systems: a national survey

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Pretrial release

About 85% of defendants at Federal, State and local levels are released before their trials.

Of all Federal defendants released during 1979—

- about 50% were on unsecured bond
- 23% were on personal recognizance
- 14% were on deposit bond
- 9% were on surety bond
- less than 2% were on collateral bond.

In the Federal courts, the highest amounts of bail tend to be imposed on persons accused of the most serious crimes and who have extensive criminal records and weak social and economic ties.

About 10% of the Federal defendants who are released, are rearrested for new crimes, violate the conditions of their release, or fail to appear for trial. In State and local courts, pretrial misconduct occurs three times as often. This may be attributed to the large number of white-collar offenders prosecuted in the Federal courts.

During the same bail time period, Federal defendants with serious criminal records are more likely to be rearrested or fail to appear for trial (35%) than those with less serious records (20%) or those with no records (8%).

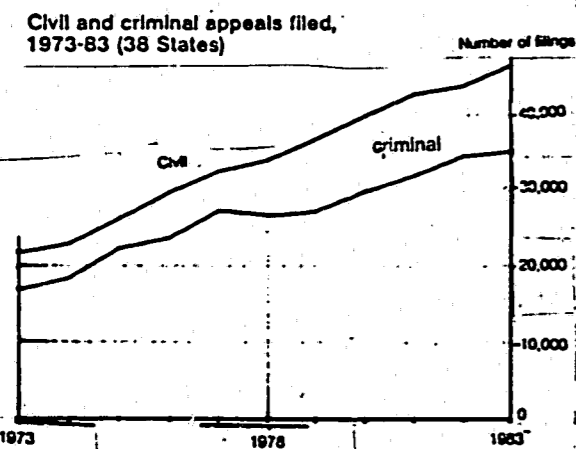
The longer a defendant waits for a trial, the greater is the probability of misconduct; the likelihood was 10% for Federal defendants on bail for 90 days, 14% for those on bail for 180 days, and 17% for those on bail for 270 days.

Pretrial misconduct: Federal offenses and offenders

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Appeals

State appeals court cases more than doubled during the decade between 1973 and 1983.



The increase—114% for civil cases and 107% for criminal cases—was even greater than the 90% increase in Federal appeals filed in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Both civil and criminal caseloads increased by about 4% during each year since 1978, not nearly as fast as appellate filings.

Criminal appeals had comprised only 10% to 15% of the total appeals until the 1960s, when a rapid increase occurred. In the past decade criminal appeals comprised between 43% and 46% of all appeals.

The number of Federal habeas corpus petitions (where prisoners challenge the validity of their State convictions after they have exhausted all other appeals) rose nearly 700% from 1961 through 1982.

Only 1.8% of the inmates who filed habeas corpus petitions succeeded in gaining any type of release.

Many of the same prisoners filed successive habeas corpus petitions for State and Federal court review of their conviction and/or detention.

Case filings in State courts, 1983
The growth of appeals: 1973-83 trends
Habeas corpus-Federal review of State prisoner petitions

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The cost of criminal justice

Federal, State, and local spending for all civil and criminal justice activities during fiscal 1982 was \$34.7 billion, less than 3% of all government spending in this country:

Percent of government spending by activity

Social insurance payments	21.7%
National defense and international relations	16.6
Education	13.4
Housing and the environment	7.0
Public welfare	6.4
Hospitals and health	4.3
Transportation	3.6
Justice	2.8
Space research and technology	0.5

Local governments spent \$21 billion, State governments \$11.6 billion, and the Federal Government \$3.3 billion, including both direct and intergovernmental expenditures in 1982.

Of every justice dollar, 54¢ were spent on police protection, 21¢ on the courts and other legal activities, and 26¢ on prisons and other correctional costs.

Less than one penny of every dollar spent by the Federal, State, and local governments went into the operation of the Nation's correctional system, including jails, prisons, probation and parole.

Total government spending on civil and criminal justice was \$150 per person in 1982.

State and local per capita spending varies greatly by State; West Virginia and Arkansas spend the least (less than \$70 per person); most is spent by New York (\$200), Nevada (\$254), the District of Columbia (\$312), and Alaska (\$546).

Justice expenditure and employment, 1982

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Sentencing and corrections

Sentencing practices

States vary in the degree of judicial and parole board discretion in sentencing and release decisions provided by law. Currently, State sentencing systems involve:

Indeterminate sentencing—The judge has primary control over the type of sentence given such as prison, probation or fine, and the upper and lower bounds of the length of prison sentences within statutory limits, but the actual time served is determined by the parole board.

Determinate sentencing—The judge sets the type of sentence and the length of prison sentences within statutory limits, but the parole board may not release prisoners before their sentences (minus good time) have expired.

Mandatory prison terms—Legislation requires the imposition of a prison sentence, often of specified length, for certain crimes and/or certain categories of offenders.

Presumptive sentencing—The judge is required to impose a sentence whose length is set by law for each offense or class of offense. When there are mitigating or aggravating circumstances, however, the judge is allowed to shorten or lengthen the sentence within specified boundaries.

Some States employ other practices that affect sentencing and the actual time served:

Sentencing guidelines—The courts set sentences by using procedures designed to structure sentencing decisions usually based on offense severity and criminal history.

Parole guidelines—Parole boards use procedures designed to structure release decisions based on measurable offender criteria.

Good-time policies—In nearly all of the States, legislation allows for reduction of a prison term based on the offender's behavior in prison.

Emergency crowding provisions—Some States have statutes or policies that relieve prison crowding by systematically making certain inmates eligible for early release.

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In recent years in many States there has been a movement away from sentencing systems that give judges and parole boards great discretion in sentences and time served to more certain and fixed punishments for crimes through mandatory sentences, sentences of fixed length (determinant). Beginning with Maine in 1976, nine States had abolished parole as of 1983. In the 5 years from 1977 to 1982, the proportion of those released from State prisons by parole boards dropped from 72% to 52%.

By yearend 1982, most of the States had also enacted mandatory sentences for certain types of offenses or offenders.

Prison sentence lengths vary among jurisdictions, but they are consistently related to the seriousness of the crime within jurisdictions.

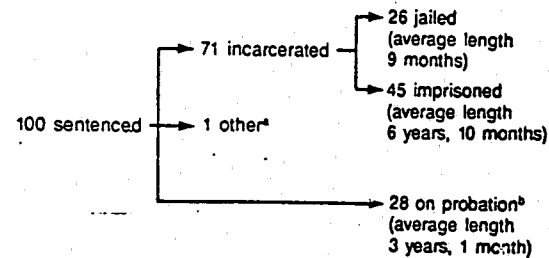
Setting prison terms
Sentencing practices in 13 States
Felony sentencing in 18 local jurisdictions
Prison admissions and releases, 1982

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Sentencing outcomes

Most convicted felons are sentenced to incarceration.

A typical 100 sentences in felony court



*Other includes such sentences as restitution to the victim or a fine.
*Probation refers to probation only and does not include sentences to a split term of incarceration and probation.

Felons convicted of more serious offenses are more likely to go to State prison:

	Percent of convicted felons sent to prison
Homicide	85%
Rape	69
Robbery	65
Burglary	46
Aggravated assault	39
Larceny	29
Drug trafficking	23

The risk of imprisonment for serious crime has increased in recent years, but it has not yet reached the levels of 20 to 25 years ago.

	Prison admissions per 100 of the most serious crimes
1960	6.3
1965	4.5
1970	2.3
1975	2.6
1980	2.6
1981	2.9
1982	3.5
1983	4.0

Some jurisdictions use jail instead of prison more often as the sanction against convicted felons. For example, in Baltimore City, Maryland, only 1% of convicted felons are sentenced to jail; but in Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Minnesota, about half the convicted felons receive some sort of jail term.

Straight probation constitutes more than a fourth of felony sentences. Almost another fifth of felony sentences are to a term in jail followed by probation, a sentence referred to as a split sentence.

The average sentences are longest for prison and shortest for probation.

Felons with multiple conviction charges receive longer sentences. Of those convicted on a single charge, 40% received prison sentences, averaging more than 5 years; in contrast 69% of those convicted on four or more charges received prison terms averaging almost 14 years.

About 1 in 9 of those convicted of multiple charges and sentenced to prison receive consecutive sentences, requiring that sentences be served in sequence. The rest receive concurrent sentences that allow the offender to serve several sentences at the same time.

The prison sentence imposed is longer for those receiving consecutive sentences (an average of almost 19 years) than concurrent sentences (an average of almost 9 years).

**Felony sentencing in 18 local jurisdictions
Prisoners in 1984
Prison admissions and releases, 1982**

Time served in prison

Actual time served in prison is generally much less than the maximum sentence length:

	1982 admissions		1982 releases	
	Percent of all prisoners	Median sentence length (months)	percent of all prisoners	Median time served (months)
All offenses	100%	51	100%	16
Murder	5	Life	3	69
Manslaughter	3	105	4	28
Rape	3	120	17	25
Robbery	18	78	17	25
Assault	7	48	8	15
Burglary	28	42	28	14
Larceny	10	32	10	10
Auto theft	2	36	1	13
Forgery/fraud				
embezzlement	6	33	6	11
Drugs	8	43	8	11
Other	13		13	

The median time served in 1982 (16 months) was the lowest recorded since 1926 when data collection began.

- Except in the years during World War II, median time served for all first releases has been in the range of 17 to 21 months.
- In 1979 and 1980 it was 19 months and then declined to 17 months in 1981 and 16 months in 1982.

A life sentence rarely means that an offender will spend the rest of his/her life in prison.

- The median time served for a life sentence in 1982 was 5 years and 9 months.
- Nearly a quarter of those released in 1982 on a life sentence served 3 years or less and nearly three-fifths served 7 years or less.

Prison admissions and releases, 1982

Correctional populations

More than 1% of the U.S. population is under some form of correctional supervision:

Persons under correctional supervision		
	Number	Percent
Probation	1,502,000	65%
Parole	252,000	11
Prison	454,000	19
Jail (sentenced only)	107,600	5
Total	2,325,600	100

The number of persons under each type of correctional supervision is at an all time high.

- The Nation's adult probation population grew by 10.7% (nearly 145,000 persons) in 1983.
- During 1983, the parole population grew by 12.1% (more than 27,000 persons).
- The prison population grew by more than 6% during 1984, adding 26,618 more prisoners.
- Local jail populations including convicted and unconvicted inmates grew by more than 40% between 1978 and 1983, rising from 76 to 98 jail inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents.

Three-quarters of the persons under correctional supervision are in the community (on probation or parole); one-quarter are incarcerated (in prison or jail).

Based on current incarceration rates, an estimated 3% to 5% of the males born in the United States today are likely to serve a sentence in an adult State prison during some time in their lives.

In 1979, 95% of prison inmates were convicted violent offenders or had been previously convicted of a crime.

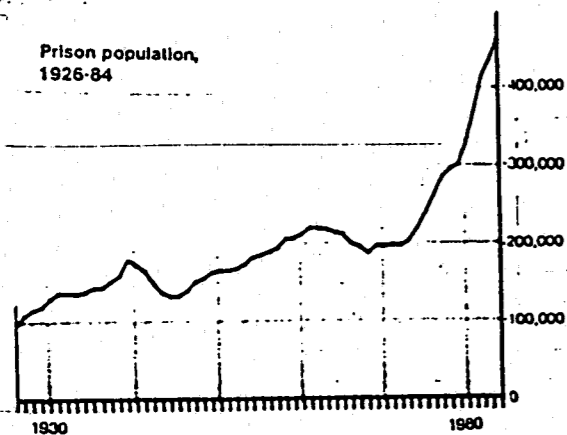
Of the 223,551 local jail inmates in 1983, about half were unconvicted persons awaiting or on trial. The other half were convicted offenders who will either serve their sentence in jail (usually for less than 1 year) or will be transferred to a State prison.

Because of their dual functions of detention and confinement, jails have a higher volume of admissions and releases than other correctional facilities. In 1983, jails admitted more than 8 million persons and released slightly less than 8 million.

**Prisoners in 1984
Probation and parole 1983
The 1983 jail census
The prevalence of imprisonment**

Prison crowding

1984 was the tenth consecutive year which set a new prison population record (463,866 prisoners).



In the 4 years since 1980, the prison population has grown by more than 40%.

The States added an estimated 100,000 new prison beds during the past 4 years, but serious crowding persists:

- At yearend 1984 the States said they were operating at about 110% of their prison capacity.
- More than 11,000 prisoners were backed up in local jails.
- 14 States reported that they had given early release to a combined total of more than 17,000 inmates in 1984 because of crowding.

At yearend 1984, six States and the District of Columbia were operating their entire prison systems under a court order or consent decree concerning overcrowding and other conditions, as was Michigan's system for male offenders. In 25 other States at least one major prison was under a court order or a consent decree.

During 1984, the prison population in States entirely under court order increased only 2.9%, compared to an increase of 9.2% in States without court intervention.

Prisoners in 1984

Capital punishment

At yearend 1984, 1,405 persons were under a sentence of death in State prisons. All had been convicted of murder, 99% were males, 57% were white, and the median age was 31.

Among the inmates under sentence of death—

- two-thirds of had prior felony convictions and 1 in 10 had a prior homicide conviction
- a fifth were on parole at the time of their capital offense
- nearly another fifth had pending charges, were on probation, or were prison inmates or escapees when they committed their capital offense.

Excluding those with pending charges, almost a third of the inmates awaiting execution were under sentence for another crime when the capital offense was committed.

At yearend 1984, 37 States, covering 78% of the U.S. population, had laws authorizing the death penalty, but only 32 States held prisoners under sentence of death and 6 States had conducted executions during that year.

The most common methods of execution permitted by State law were electrocution (16 States) and lethal injection (15 States). Lethal gas was permitted in 8 States, hanging in 4 States, and a firing squad in 3 States.

The 21 persons executed in 1984 brought the total to 32 persons executed since 1976 when the Supreme Court affirmed the death penalty.

Between 1980 and 1984, 16 whites were admitted to death row for every 1,000 arrested for murder or nonnegligent manslaughter; 12 blacks were admitted to death row for every 1,000 arrested for these crimes.

During the decade 1975-84—

- 32 persons were executed
- 2,384 persons were sentenced to death
- 198,000 persons were arrested for murder and nonnegligent manslaughter
- 204,000 persons were victims of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter

Capital punishment 1984

Recidivism

Of persons entering a State prison in 1979:

- Almost 84% had a record of prior convictions, including 61% who had been previously incarcerated as an adult, a juvenile, or both.
- About 28% had five or more prior convictions for criminal offenses.
- At the time of their admission, 40% were on parole or probation for prior offenses.
- About 28% would still have been incarcerated for earlier crimes if they had served the maximum term of their prior sentences to confinement.

About half of the inmates released from State prisons will return within 20 years, and 60% of these repeaters will be back by the end of the third year. Most recidivists return to prison within 2 years.

Recidivists entering prison for robbery, burglary, or auto theft return to prison more quickly than those who entered for other crimes.

With some exceptions, the highest risk of returning to prison occurs during the second half of the first release year.

The longer a former prisoner remains in the community without reincarceration beyond the first year, the less is the likelihood that he or she will return to prison.

Examining recidivism Returning to prison Career patterns in crime

Prisoners, drugs, and alcohol

Before committing the crime for which they were imprisoned—

- Almost a third of State prisoners and a quarter of convicted jail inmates reported that they had drunk very heavily.
- Almost a third of State prisoners and a quarter of convicted jail inmates said they had been under the influence of an illegal drug.
- Three-fifths of the State prisoners who were under the influence of drugs had also been drinking.

A quarter of the interviewed prison inmates said that they had drunk very heavily almost every day for the entire year before they were incarcerated.

More than half the State prisoners said they had taken illegal drugs during the month before committing the crime.

Compared to 40% of the general U.S. population, 78% of State prisoners and 75% of all jail inmates reported having used drugs at some time in their lives. Marijuana is the drug most commonly used by State prisoners and jail inmates.

Habitual offenders and persons convicted of assault, burglary, and rape were more likely than other State prisoners to be very heavy drinkers. Alcohol use was most likely among jail inmates convicted of public order offenses and violent offenses, particularly manslaughter and assault.

Those offenders most likely to have been under the influence of drugs at the time of their offense were—

- drug offenders and burglars among State prisoners
- drug offenders and property offenders among jail inmates

Of prison inmates—

- Whites, males, and persons between 18 and 25 years old are especially likely to be very heavy drinkers
- Men are somewhat more likely than women to use drugs. A somewhat greater proportion of women than of men use heroin.

Prisoners and alcohol Prisoners and drugs Jail inmates 1983

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