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# Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

# Prisoners in 1991

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ACQUISITIONS

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The number of prisoners under the jurisdiction of Federal or State correctional authorities at yearend 1991 reached a record high of 823,414. The States and the District of Columbia added 44,208 prisoners; the Federal system, 4,176. The increase for 1991 brings total growth in the prison population since 1980 to 493,593 — an increase of about 150% in the 11-year period (table 1).

The 1991 growth rate (6.2%) was less than the percentage increase recorded during 1990 (8.7%), and the number of new prisoners added during 1991 was 13,679 less than the number added during the preceding year (62,063). The 1991 increase

translates into a nationwide need for approximately 900 prison bedspaces per week, compared to the nearly 1,200 prison bedspaces per week needed in 1990.

Prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year (referred to as "sentenced prisoners") accounted for 96% of the total prison population at the end of 1991, growing by 6.8% during the year (table 2). The remaining prisoners had sentences of a year or less or were unsentenced (for example, those awaiting trial in States with combined prison-jail systems).

The number of sentenced Federal prisoners increased at a faster rate than sentenced prisoners in the States during 1991 (12.3% versus 6.4%). While the rate of increase in the number of sentenced prisoners for State systems was lower than in 1990 (6.4% and 8.7%), the rate of increase in the Federal system was higher (12.3% and 7.7%).

The number of Federal prisoners with no sentences or sentences of less than a year decreased by 2,058 during 1991 (from 16,622 to 14,564), while the number of sentenced prisoners increased by 6,234.

Prison populations in New Mexico, West Virginia, and Wyoming decreased during 1991. The decrease in these 3 States totaled only 187 inmates. The highest percentage increases during 1991 were reported for Rhode Island (15.9%), Washington (14.5%), New Hampshire (14.2%), and Arkansas (13.9%). Ten States reported total prisoner population increases of 10% or more since yearend 1990.

California's increase of about 4,500 prisoners during the year was the largest gain in the number of prisoners for any single jurisdiction; however, 1991 was the first year since 1977 when California's rate of increase fell below the national average.

Table 1. Change in the State and Federal prison populations, 1980-91

Year	Number of inmates	Annual percent change	Total percent change since 1980
1980	329,821		
1981	369,930	12.2%	12.2%
1982	413,806	11.9	25.5
1983	436,855	5.6	32.5
1984	462,002	5.8	40.1
1985	502,752	8.8	52.4
1986	545,378	8.5	65.4
1987	585,292	7.3	77.5
1988	631,990	8.0	91.6
1989	712,967	12.8	116.2
1990	775,030	8.7	135.0
1991	823,414	6.2	149.7

Note: All counts are for December 31 of each year and may reflect revisions of previously reported numbers.

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This Bulletin presents counts of the Nation's prisoners at the end of 1991. The 1991 increase of over 48,000 prisoners equals a demand for approximately 900 new prison beds per week nationwide. State prisons were estimated to be operating from 16% to 31% above their capacities at yearend.

The 1991 growth rate was the lowest annual percentage change since 1984. During 1991, 12 States and the Federal prison system experienced growth of 10% or more in the number of sentenced prisoners. By contrast, in 1989, a year of peak growth, 29 States and the Federal system experienced such an increase. The number of sentenced prisoners increased more in 1991 than in any year from 1985 to 1988 but less than in the record years of 1989 and 1990.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics expresses its appreciation to the departments of corrections in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Prison System, that make it possible for us to gather and report data on the Nation's prisoners.

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Director

**Table 2. Prisoners under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, by region and jurisdiction, yearend 1990 and 1991**

Region and jurisdiction	Total			Sentenced to more than 1 year			Incarceration rate, 1991*
	Advance 1991	Final 1990	Percent change, 1990-91	Advance 1991	Final 1990	Percent change, 1990-91	
<b>U.S. total</b>	<b>823,414</b>	<b>775,030</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>789,609</b>	<b>739,549</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>Federal</b>	<b>71,608</b>	<b>67,432</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>57,044</b>	<b>50,810</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>751,806</b>	<b>707,598</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>732,565</b>	<b>688,739</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>131,813</b>	<b>123,392</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>127,934</b>	<b>119,063</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>248</b>
Connecticut	10,977	10,500	4.5	8,585	7,771	10.5	262
Maine	1,621	1,523	6.4	1,600	1,480	8.1	127
Massachusetts	9,058	8,273	9.5	8,998	7,899	13.9	150
New Hampshire	1,533	1,342	14.2	1,532	1,342	14.2	132
New Jersey	23,483	21,128	11.1	23,483	21,128	11.1	300
New York	57,862	54,895	5.4	57,862	54,895	5.4	319
Pennsylvania	23,388	22,290	4.9	23,386	22,281	5.0	192
Rhode Island	2,772	2,392	15.9	1,749	1,586	10.3	172
Vermont	1,119	1,049	6.7	738	691	8.4	125
<b>Midwest</b>	<b>155,469</b>	<b>145,793</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>155,140</b>	<b>145,480</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>254</b>
Illinois	29,115	27,516	5.8	29,115	27,516	5.8	246
Indiana	13,008	12,736	2.1	12,876	12,615	2.1	226
Iowa	4,145	3,967	4.5	4,145	3,967	4.5	144
Kansas	5,903	5,777	2.2	5,903	5,777	2.2	230
Michigan	36,423	34,267	6.3	36,423	34,267	6.3	387
Minnesota	3,472	3,176	9.3	3,472	3,176	9.3	78
Missouri	15,411	14,943	3.1	15,411	14,943	3.1	294
Nebraska	2,506	2,403	4.3	2,389	2,286	4.5	146
North Dakota	492	483	1.9	441	435	1.4	68
Ohio	35,750	31,822	12.3	35,750	31,822	12.3	323
South Dakota	1,374	1,341	2.5	1,374	1,341	2.5	190
Wisconsin	7,870	7,362	6.9	7,841	7,335	6.9	158
<b>South</b>	<b>301,265</b>	<b>284,029</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>291,807</b>	<b>275,217</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>332</b>
Alabama	16,760	15,665	7.0	16,400	15,365	6.7	392
Arkansas	7,709	6,766	13.9	7,667	6,718	14.1	314
Delaware	3,721	3,471	7.2	2,406	2,241	7.4	342
District of Col.	10,251	9,947	3.1	6,893	6,798	1.4	1,168
Florida	46,533	44,387	4.8	46,531	44,380	4.8	346
Georgia	23,644	22,345	5.8	22,859	21,605	5.8	342
Kentucky	9,799	9,023	8.6	9,799	9,023	8.6	261
Louisiana	20,464	18,599	10.0	20,307	18,599	9.2	466
Maryland	19,291	17,848	8.1	17,824	16,734	6.5	366
Mississippi	9,070	8,375	8.3	8,848	8,084	9.5	335
North Carolina	18,899	18,411	2.7	18,298	17,764	2.9	270
Oklahoma	13,376	12,285	8.9	13,376	12,285	8.9	414
South Carolina	18,312	17,319	5.7	17,173	16,208	6.0	473
Tennessee	11,502	10,388	10.7	11,502	10,388	10.7	227
Texas	51,677	50,042	3.3	51,677	50,042	3.3	297
Virginia	18,755	17,593	6.6	18,755	17,418	7.7	297
West Virginia	1,502	1,565	-4.0	1,502	1,565	-4.0	82
<b>West</b>	<b>163,259</b>	<b>154,384</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>157,684</b>	<b>148,979</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>290</b>
Alaska	2,720	2,622	3.7	1,841	1,851	-5	344
Arizona	15,415	14,261	8.1	14,843	13,781	7.7	398
California	101,808	97,309	4.6	98,515	94,122	4.7	320
Colorado	6,347	7,671	8.8	8,347	7,671	8.8	247
Hawaii	2,688	2,533	6.1	1,979	1,708	15.9	172
Idaho	2,211	1,961	12.7	2,211	1,961	12.7	212
Montana	1,478	1,425	3.7	1,478	1,425	3.7	182
Nevada	5,879	5,322	10.5	5,879	5,322	10.5	477
New Mexico	3,119	3,187	-2.1	3,016	3,067	-1.7	191
Oregon	6,760	6,492	4.1	6,760	6,492	4.1	229
Utah	2,624	2,496	5.1	2,605	2,474	5.3	149
Washington	9,156	7,995	14.5	9,156	7,995	14.5	183
Wyoming	1,054	1,110	-5.0	1,054	1,110	-5.0	225

Note: The advance count of prisoners is conducted immediately after the calendar year ends. Prisoner counts for 1990 may differ from those reported in previous publications. Counts for 1991 are subject to revision as updated figures become available. Explanatory notes for each jurisdiction are reported in the appendix.

\*The number of prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year per 100,000 resident population.

### Rates of Incarceration Increase

On December 31, 1991, the number of sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents was 310, also a new record. Eleven of the 18 jurisdictions with rates greater than the rate for the Nation were located in the South, 4 were in the West, 2 were in the Midwest, and 1 was in the Northeast.

Since 1980 the number of sentenced inmates per 100,000 residents has risen 123%, from 139 to 310. During this period, per capita incarceration rates have grown most rapidly in the Northeast, increasing by 185% (from 87 to 248), and the West, up by 176% (from 105 to 290). The per capita number of sentenced prisoners in the Midwest climbed 133% (from 109 to 254), and the rate rose 77% in the South (from 188 to 332). The number of sentenced Federal prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents has increased 144% (from 9 to 22) over the same period.

**Prison populations in Northeastern States grow the fastest**

Regionally, during 1991 the percentage increase in the number of sentenced prisoners was highest in the Northeastern States, with a gain of 7.5% (table 3). The number

of sentenced prisoners grew by 6.6% in the Midwest, 6.0% in the South and 5.8% in the West. The sentenced Federal prison population grew by 12.3%.

In 20 States the percentage change in the number of sentenced prisoners during 1991

was equal to or higher than that of 1990. Among these jurisdictions, nine had increases of at least 10%, led by Hawaii (15.9%), Arkansas (14.1%), and Massachusetts (13.9%).

**Table 3. Annual change in the number of sentenced prisoners under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, by region and jurisdiction, year end 1985 through 1991**

Region and jurisdiction	Annual change						Annual percent change					
	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	90-91	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
<b>U.S. total</b>	41,614	38,593	44,791	75,554	58,232	50,060	8.6%	7.4%	8.0%	12.5%	8.5%	6.8%
Federal	3,836	2,992	2,584	5,061	3,642	6,234	11.7	8.2	6.5	12.0	7.7	12.3
State	37,778	35,601	42,207	70,493	54,590	43,826	8.4	7.4	8.1	12.5	8.7	6.4
<b>Northeast</b>	6,346	8,441	7,243	14,884	9,664	8,871	8.8%	10.7%	8.3%	15.7%	8.8%	7.5%
Connecticut	283	311	86	1,586	1,462	814	7.0	7.2	1.9	33.6	23.2	10.5
Maine	15	(4)	(18)	212	48	120	1.2	-3	-1.5	17.4	3.4	8.1
Massachusetts	236	576	483	813	631	1,099	4.6	10.7	8.1	12.6	8.7	13.9
New Hampshire	99	85	152	147	176	191	14.5	10.9	17.5	14.4	15.1	14.2
New Jersey <sup>a</sup>	685	3,949	967	2,503	1,689	2,355	6.0	32.9	6.1	14.8	8.7	11.1
New York	3,942	2,393	3,700	6,685	3,663	2,967	11.4	6.2	9.1	15.0	7.1	5.4
Pennsylvania	1,046	1,081	1,637	2,575	1,823	1,105	7.4	7.1	10.1	14.4	8.9	5.0
Rhode Island	44	(16)	188	290	117	163	4.6	-1.6	19.0	24.6	8.0	10.3
Vermont	(4)	66	48	73	55	57	-9	15.0	9.5	13.2	8.6	8.4
<b>Midwest</b>	7,481	8,141	9,507	15,795	9,434	9,660	7.9%	7.9%	8.6%	13.1%	6.9%	6.6%
Illinois	822	394	1,231	3,631	2,804	1,599	4.4	2.0	6.2	17.2	11.3	5.8
Indiana	196	671	637	949	395	261	2.0	6.7	6.0	8.4	3.2	2.1
Iowa	90	74	183	550	383	178	3.3	2.7	6.4	18.1	10.7	4.5
Kansas	613	436	154	(319)	161	126	13.0	8.2	2.7	-5.4	2.9	2.2
Michigan	2,987	3,137	3,733	4,027	2,628	2,156	16.8	15.1	15.6	14.6	8.3	6.3
Minnesota	119	84	253	304	73	296	5.1	3.4	9.9	10.9	2.4	9.3
Missouri	513	1,048	819	1,745	1,022	468	5.2	10.2	7.2	14.3	7.3	3.1
Nebraska	221	9	145	170	8	103	12.8	.5	7.4	8.1	.4	4.5
North Dakota	(14)	19	34	(10)	31	6	-3.7	5.3	8.9	-2.4	7.7	1.4
Ohio	1,598	1,777	2,222	4,076	1,284	3,928	7.7	7.9	9.2	15.4	4.2	12.3
South Dakota	13	83	(117)	236	85	33	1.3	7.9	-10.3	23.2	6.8	2.5
Wisconsin	322	409	213	436	560	506	6.0	7.2	3.5	6.9	8.3	6.9
<b>South</b>	11,683	8,823	13,143	23,669	22,448	16,590	6.0%	4.3%	6.1%	10.3%	8.9%	6.0%
Alabama	755	1,098	(245)	1,218	1,790	1,035	7.0	9.5	-1.9	9.9	13.2	6.7
Arkansas	90	740	520	345	172	949	2.0	15.7	9.6	5.8	2.6	14.1
Delaware	197	203	42	83	(43)	165	11.2	10.4	1.9	3.8	-1.9	7.4
District of Columbia	183	827	700	421	148	95	4.0	17.3	12.5	6.7	2.2	1.4
Florida	3,746	132	2,321	5,285	4,414	2,151	13.2	.4	7.2	15.2	11.0	4.8
Georgia	487	1,874	294	1,601	1,986	1,254	3.2	11.8	1.7	8.9	10.1	5.8
Kentucky	307	1,149	717	1,135	734	776	6.2	21.7	11.1	15.9	8.9	8.6
Louisiana	410	1,075	867	1,015	1,342	1,708	3.0	7.5	5.6	6.2	7.8	9.2
Maryland	256	353	660	1,806	1,356	1,090	2.1	2.8	5.1	13.3	8.8	6.5
Mississippi	353	158	532	449	384	764	5.7	2.4	7.9	6.2	5.0	9.5
North Carolina	366	(255)	133	377	1,136	524	2.3	-1.6	.8	2.3	6.8	2.9
Oklahoma	1,378	(69)	809	1,160	677	1,091	16.5	-.7	8.4	11.1	5.8	8.9
South Carolina	1,114	840	1,040	1,906	1,400	965	11.2	7.6	8.8	14.8	9.5	6.0
Tennessee	464	48	2,136	855	(242)	1,114	6.5	.6	28.0	8.7	-2.3	10.7
Texas	1,002	287	1,616	3,585	6,020	1,635	2.7	.7	4.2	8.9	13.7	3.3
Virginia	828	386	997	2,345	1,145	1,337	7.1	3.1	7.7	16.8	7.0	7.7
West Virginia	(253)	(23)	4	83	29	(63)	-14.7	-1.6	.3	5.7	1.9	-4.0
<b>West</b>	12,268	10,196	12,314	16,145	13,044	8,705	14.4%	10.5%	11.5%	13.5%	9.6%	5.8%
Alaska	136	101	95	46	(57)	(10)	8.9	6.1	5.4	2.5	-3.0	-.5
Arizona	765	1,520	1,020	1,148	1,055	1,062	9.2	16.8	9.7	9.9	8.3	7.7
California	9,399	7,087	8,968	10,558	9,784	4,393	19.4	12.3	13.8	14.3	11.6	4.7
Colorado <sup>b</sup>	516	869	1,070	1,232	353	676	14.2	20.9	21.3	20.2	4.8	8.8
Hawaii	93	11	(22)	242	(49)	271	6.5	.7	-1.4	16.0	-2.8	15.9
Idaho	104	(13)	149	266	111	250	7.7	-.9	10.4	16.8	6.0	12.7
Montana	(18)	96	64	57	97	53	-1.6	8.6	5.3	4.5	7.3	3.7
Nevada	780	(117)	447	231	210	557	20.7	-2.6	10.1	4.7	4.1	10.5
New Mexico	194	280	137	36	(53)	(51)	9.2	12.1	5.3	1.3	-1.7	-1.7
Oregon	394	687	534	753	336	268	9.0	14.4	9.8	12.6	5.5	4.1
Utah	122	92	107	424	106	131	7.5	5.3	5.8	21.8	4.5	5.3
Washington	(316)	(472)	(315)	1,112	1,067	1,161	-4.6	-7.1	-5.1	19.1	15.4	14.5
Wyoming	99	55	60	40	84	(56)	13.0	6.4	6.6	4.1	8.2	-5.0

Note: Sentenced prisoners are those with sentences of more than 1 year.  
( ) Indicates a decline in the number of sentenced prisoners.

<sup>a</sup>In 1987 New Jersey began to include in its jurisdiction count the number of State-sentenced prisoners held in local jails because of prison crowding.

<sup>b</sup>Colorado revised its numbers from 1985 to 1990.

Since December 31, 1985, net gains in the number of sentenced prisoners have averaged about 1,000 prisoners per week — a gain of about 912 State prisoners and 78 Federal prisoners per week over the period. The largest net gains have occurred in the South (309 inmates per week) followed by the West (233), the Midwest (192), and the Northeast (178). During 1991 the average growth in the number of sentenced State and Federal prisoners was equal to a demand for 963 additional bed-spaces per

week, about 157 fewer than the average weekly growth in 1990 and nearly 500 per week less than in 1989.

The sentenced prisoner population increased in seven States by 90% or more since 1985: California (104%), Colorado (130%), Connecticut (112%), Kentucky (97%), Michigan (105%), New Hampshire (125%), and New Jersey (107%). California's increase of 50,189 sentenced prisoners since 1985 accounts for 69% of the increase for the West and 18% of the in-

crease among all States over the period. In 1985, 10.8% of the Nation's sentenced State prisoners were in California; in 1991, 13.5%. (For additional State comparisons, see table 4.)

#### Female prisoner population grows at a faster pace

The number of female inmates (47,691) increased at a faster rate during 1991 (7.8%) than the number of male inmates (6.1%) (table 5). The number of sentenced

**Table 4. The prison situation among the States, yearend 1991**

10 States with the largest 1991 prison populations	Number of inmates	10 States with the highest incarceration rates, 1991*	Prisoners per 100,000 residents	10 States with the largest percent increases in prison population			
				1990-91	Percent increase	1985-91*	Percent increase
California	101,808	Nevada	477	Rhode Island	15.9%	Colorado	129.9%
New York	57,862	South Carolina	473	Washington	14.5	New Hampshire	124.5
Texas	51,677	Louisiana	466	New Hampshire	14.2	Connecticut	112.3
Florida	46,533	Oklahoma	414	Arkansas	13.9	New Jersey	107.2
Michigan	36,423	Arizona	398	Idaho	12.7	Michigan	105.1
Ohio	35,750	Alabama	392	Ohio	12.3	California	104.0
Illinois	29,115	Michigan	387	New Jersey	11.1	Kentucky	96.7
Georgia	23,644	Maryland	366	Tennessee	10.7	Rhode Island	81.6
New Jersey	23,483	Florida	346	Nevada	10.5	Arizona	79.4
Pennsylvania	23,388	Alaska	344	Louisiana	10.0	Massachusetts	74.4

Note: The District of Columbia as a wholly urban jurisdiction is excluded.  
\*Prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year.

**Table 5. Prisoners under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, by sex of inmate, yearend 1990 and 1991**

	Men	Women
<b>Total</b>		
Advance 1991	775,723	47,691
Final 1990	730,795	44,235
Percent change, 1990-91	6.1%	7.8%
<b>Sentenced to more than 1 year</b>		
Advance 1991	745,510	44,099
Final 1990	699,064	40,485
Percent change, 1990-91	6.6%	8.9%
Incarceration rate, 1991*	599	34

\*The number of prisoners with sentences of more than 1 year: per 100,000 residents on December 31, 1991.

**Table 6. Women under the jurisdiction of State or Federal correctional authorities, yearend 1991**

Jurisdiction	Number of female inmates	Percent of all inmates	Percent change in female inmate population, 1990-91
U.S. total	47,691	5.8%	7.8%
Federal	5,654	7.9	7.6
State	42,037	5.6	7.8
<b>States with at least 500 female inmates:</b>			
California	6,302	6.2%	-3.1%
New York	3,368	5.8	25.2
Florida	2,639	5.7	-9
Texas	2,483	4.8	13.1
Ohio	2,293	6.4	17.8
Michigan	1,734	4.8	2.7
Georgia	1,391	5.9	14.0
Illinois	1,257	4.3	6.3
Oklahoma	1,236	9.2	15.4
New Jersey	1,107	4.7	6.3
Pennsylvania	1,088	4.7	8.2
South Carolina	1,064	5.8	1.0
Alabama	1,055	6.3	10.5
North Carolina	1,020	5.4	7.9
Louisiana	995	4.9	28.4
Virginia	947	5.0	2.2
Arizona	939	6.1	12.5
Maryland	931	4.8	6.2
Missouri	821	5.3	5.7
District of Columbia	753	7.3	24.3
Indiana	706	5.4	3.7
Connecticut	660	6.0	-3.4
Massachusetts	610	6.7	4.8
Washington	539	5.9	23.9
Mississippi	533	5.9	19.0
Tennessee	518	4.5	32.8
Kentucky	513	5.2	7.1

male prisoners per 100,000 men in the resident population (599 per 100,000) was about 18 times that of sentenced female prisoners per 100,000 women in the resident population (34 per 100,000). At the end of 1991, women accounted for 5.8% of prisoners nationwide (table 6).

Overall, the 1991 growth rate in the number of female inmates (7.8%) was less than that for 1990 (8.9%). The rate of growth of female inmates declined in the West, from 7.9% in 1990 to .4% in 1991. This lower growth rate offset the higher growth rates in 1991 in the Northeast, Midwest, and South.

	Percent increase in female inmate population	
	1990-91	1989-90
U.S. total	7.8%	8.9%
Federal	7.6	18.5
State	7.8	7.7
Northeast	14.6	9.2
Midwest	7.6	6.3
South	10.0	7.8
West	.4	7.9

In 1991, 26 States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal system had more than 500 female inmates. Among these jurisdictions, 12 had increases of at least 10%, led by Tennessee's increase of 32.8% (from 390 in 1990 to 518 in 1991). New York's increase during 1991, 677 inmates, accounted for 19.6% of the nationwide increase of 3,456.

#### Local jails held more than 12,000 because of State prison crowding

At the end of 1991, 19 jurisdictions reported a total of 12,225 State prisoners held in local jails or other facilities because of crowding in State facilities (table 7).<sup>1</sup> Three States — Alabama, New Jersey, and Tennessee — accounted for more than half of the prisoners sentenced to prison but incarcerated locally. Three States — New Jersey, Tennessee, and West Virginia — held more than 10% of their State-sentenced prisoners in local jails because of State facility crowding. Overall, 1.5% of the State prison population was confined in local jails on December 31, 1991, because of prison crowding.

<sup>1</sup> State prisons include the District of Columbia.

#### Prison capacity estimates are difficult to compare

The extent of crowding in the Nation's prisons is difficult to determine precisely because of the absence of uniform measures for defining capacity. A wide variety of capacity measures is in use among the 52 reporting jurisdictions because capacity may reflect both available space to house inmates and the ability to staff and operate an institution. To estimate the capacity of the Nation's prisons, jurisdictions were asked to supply up to three measures for yearend 1991 — rated, operational, and

design capacities. These measures were defined as follows:

- Rated capacity is the number of beds or inmates assigned by a rating official to institutions within the jurisdiction.
- Operational capacity is the number of inmates that can be accommodated based on a facility's staff, existing programs, and services.
- Design capacity is the number of inmates that planners or architects intended for the facility.

**Table 7. State prisoners held in local jails because of prison crowding, by State, yearend 1990 and 1991**

States housing prisoners in local jails	Prisoners held in local jails			
	Number		As a percent of all prisoners	
	1990	1991	1990	1991
U.S. total	17,574	12,225	2.3%	1.5%
Alabama	858	1,245	5.5	7.4
Arizona <sup>a</sup>	52	49	.4	.3
Arkansas	777	97	11.5	1.1
Colorado <sup>a</sup>	653	81	8.5	1.0
District of Columbia	826	477	8.3	4.7
Idaho	123	103	6.3	4.7
Indiana <sup>a</sup>	757	773	5.9	5.9
Kentucky	693	866	7.7	8.8
Louisiana	4,493	...	24.2	...
Maine	10	2	.7	.1
Massachusetts <sup>a</sup>	430	785	5.2	8.7
Mississippi	775	847	9.3	9.3
New Jersey	2,741	3,523	13.0	15.0
Oklahoma	210	434	1.7	3.2
Oregon	61	0	.9	0
South Carolina	443	418	2.6	2.3
Tennessee	1,869	2,046	18.0	17.8
Utah	0	84	0	3.6
Vermont <sup>b</sup>	34	20	3.2	1.8
Virginia	1,569	0	8.9	0
West Virginia <sup>a</sup>	102	287	6.5	19.1
Wisconsin	98	88	1.3	1.1

... No data available.

<sup>a</sup>For States not including jail backups in their jurisdiction counts, the percentage of jurisdiction population was calculated using the total number of State inmates in jail and prison.

<sup>b</sup>Includes inmates housed in other States as a result of prison crowding.

Of the 52 reporting jurisdictions, 36 supplied rated capacities, 44 provided operational capacities, and 37 submitted design capacities (table 8). As a result, estimates of total capacity and measures of the relationship

to population are based on the highest and lowest capacity figures provided. (Twenty-two jurisdictions reported 1 capacity measure or gave the same figure for each capacity measure they reported.)

### Most jurisdictions are operating above capacity

Prisons generally require reserve capacity to operate efficiently. Prison dormitories and cells need to be maintained and repaired periodically, special housing is needed for protective custody and disciplinary cases, and space may be needed to cope with emergencies. At the end of 1991, seven States reported they were operating below 95% of their highest capacity. Forty-five jurisdictions and the Federal prison system reported operating at 100% or more of their lowest capacity; 38 of these held populations that met or exceeded their highest reported capacities.

Table 8. Reported Federal and State prison capacities, yearend 1991

Region and jurisdiction	Rated capacity	Operational capacity	Design capacity	Population <sup>a</sup> as a percent of	
				Highest capacity	Lowest capacity
<b>Federal<sup>b</sup></b>	43,753	...	...	146	146
<b>Northeast</b>					
Connecticut	9,935	10,928	...	100	110
Maine	1,193	1,193	1,193	136	136
Massachusetts	...	...	5,650	160	160
New Hampshire	1,318	1,542	1,162	99	132
New Jersey	...	...	14,898	155	155
New York	58,687	55,699	48,363	99	120
Pennsylvania	...	...	15,915	147	147
Rhode Island	3,042	3,042	2,789	91	99
Vermont	647	862	647	130	173
<b>Midwest</b>					
Illinois	23,961	23,961	20,217	122	144
Indiana	11,934	14,211	...	92	109
Iowa	3,003	3,003	3,003	138	138
Kansas	...	6,622	...	89	89
Michigan	26,209	...	...	139	139
Minnesota	3,414	3,414	3,414	102	102
Missouri	15,056	15,411	...	100	102
Nebraska	...	...	1,706	147	147
North Dakota	...	576	576	85	85
Ohio	...	...	20,783	172	172
South Dakota	1,189	1,130	1,189	116	122
Wisconsin	6,497	6,497	6,497	121	121
<b>South</b>					
Alabama	14,604	14,604	14,604	115	115
Arkansas	...	7,335	...	105	105
Delaware	2,915	3,138	2,015	119	185
District of Columbia	9,788	9,508	8,101	105	127
Florida	53,652	47,572	36,470	87	128
Georgia	...	22,895	...	103	103
Kentucky	8,455	8,270	...	116	119
Louisiana	15,493	15,493	15,493	132	132
Maryland	...	18,880	13,984	102	138
Mississippi	8,524	8,098	8,524	106	112
North Carolina	16,126	19,646	...	96	117
Oklahoma	8,964	11,243	...	119	149
South Carolina	16,138	16,138	12,335	114	149
Tennessee	9,409	9,349	9,642	98	100
Texas	47,770	50,698	62,212	83	108
Virginia	13,970	13,970	13,970	134	134
West Virginia	1,585	1,644	1,736	87	95
<b>West</b>					
Alaska	2,523	2,602	...	105	108
Arizona	...	14,994	...	103	103
California	...	...	55,692	183	183
Colorado	...	7,416	6,239	112	133
Hawaii	...	2,569	1,658	105	162
Idaho	...	2,086	1,831	106	121
Montana	1,117	1,441	1,117	103	132
Nevada	6,166	6,166	5,014	95	117
New Mexico	3,236	3,236	3,236	96	96
Oregon	...	6,690	...	101	101
Utah	3,131	2,890	...	84	91
Washington	5,452	6,710	6,710	137	168
Wyoming	88	777	619	136	198

... Data not available.

<sup>a</sup>Excludes inmates who had been sentenced to State prison but were held in local jails because of crowding and who were included in the total prisoner count.

<sup>b</sup>Excludes prisoners housed in contract or other non-Federal facilities.

Overall, at the end of 1991 State prisons were estimated to be operating at 116% of their highest capacities and 131% of their lowest capacities (table 9). Prisons in Southern States were found to be operating closest to their reported capacity on each measure. The Federal system was estimated to be operating at 46% over capacity.

**An increasing percentage of prisoners admitted for drug offenses**

Underlying the 116% growth in the State prison population during the 1980's was a change in the offense distribution: In 1989 an estimated 29.5% of persons admitted to State prison were drug offenders, up from

7.7% in 1981 (table 11). The number of prison commitments for drug offenses grew six-fold, from 11,487 in 1981 to 87,859 in 1989, while the total number of commitments doubled, from 149,186 to 297,827. The increase in prisoners admitted for drug offenses accounted for more than half of the growth in the total admissions to State prisons.

Growth in the number of persons arrested for drug law violations and an increase in the rate of incarceration for drug offenses account for the change in the prison offense distribution. Between 1981 and 1989, the estimated number of adult arrests for drug law violations increased by 166.6%, from 468,056 to 1,247,763 (table 12).

The impact of this increase in arrests was compounded by a rise in the rate of incarceration. In 1981 there were 24 drug offenders admitted to State prison for every 1,000 adult arrests for drug violations (table 13). By 1989 the rate increased to 70 admissions per 1,000 adult arrests.<sup>2</sup>

**Newly available data permit estimates of the probability of incarceration**

Previous BJS Bulletins have reported the ratio of prison commitments to adult arrests for selected serious crimes. This ratio was designed as an alternative to population-based measures. While population-based incarceration rates take into account the number of sentenced prisoners and the size of the resident population in a jurisdiction, the prison admission-to-arrest ratios show the use of prison relative to those arrests that account for a substantial proportion of prison admissions.

In the numerator of this ratio was the total number of court commitments for all offenses; in the denominator was the

<sup>2</sup>The 1990 rate could not be calculated. Although the number of adult arrests for drug law violations in 1990 was 1,008,332, data on the number of drug offenders admitted to State prisons were not available.

**Table 9. State prison population and capacity, by region, 1991**

Region	Prison population	Highest capacity	Lowest capacity	Population as a percent of	
				Highest capacity	Lowest capacity
U.S. total	749,318	647,160	572,487	116%	131%
Northeast	131,452	112,717	100,552	116	131
Midwest	155,469	123,582	117,147	126	133
South	299,219	297,351	247,364	101	121
West	163,178	113,510	107,424	144	152

Note: Population counts exclude prisoners sentenced to State prison but held in local jails.

**Table 10. Population as a percent of reported capacity for State prisons, 1985-91**

	State prisons
Highest capacity 1991	647,160
Lowest capacity 1991	572,487
<b>Net change in capacity, 1990-91</b>	
Highest	48,665
Lowest	29,297
<b>Population as a percent of capacity*</b>	
Highest	
1985	105%
1990	115
1991	116
Lowest	
1985	119%
1990	127
1991	131

Note: States were asked to report their rated, operational, and design capacities. Tabulations reflect the highest and lowest of the 3 capacities reported for 1985, 1990, and 1991. The Federal system did not report comparable capacity figures for 1991.

\*Excludes inmates who had been sentenced to State prison but were held in local jails because of crowding and who were included in the total prisoner count.

**Table 11. Court commitments to State prisons, by type of offense, 1960-89**

Year	Number of court commitments			Percent admitted for	
	All offenses	Selected serious offenses	Drug offenses	Selected serious offense	Drug offenses
1960	74,952	40,924	3,148	54.6%	4.2%
1964	75,096	43,330	3,079	57.7	4.1
1970	67,304	39,777	6,596	59.1	9.8
1974	89,243	58,900	10,709	66.0	12.0
1978	112,874	72,578	9,481	64.3	8.4
1981	149,186	93,838	11,487	62.9%	7.7%
1982	164,648	105,539	13,336	64.1	8.1
1983	173,289	106,746	14,210	61.6	8.2
1984	166,927	87,971	18,529	52.7	11.1
1985	183,131	100,539	24,173	54.9	13.2
1986	203,315	106,740	33,140	52.5%	16.3%
1987	225,627	110,332	46,028	48.9	20.4
1988	245,310	112,843	61,573	46.0	25.1
1989	297,827	117,344	87,859	39.4	29.5

Note: Offenses include murder, manslaughter, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and burglary. Data for new court commitments for 1960-82 are from unpublished National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) reports on admissions and releases. Data for 1983-89 are from the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP).

estimated number of adult arrests for murder/nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and burglary.

$$\text{Previously reported ratio} = \frac{\text{All new court commitments for 5 serious offenses}}{\text{Number of arrests for 5 serious offenses}}$$

Between 1960 and 1974 the prison admission-to-arrest ratio declined from 299 commitments per 1,000 adult arrests for the selected serious offenses to 155. In the late 1970's the ratio began to increase. By 1990, the ratio had more than doubled — to 367 court commitments per 1,000 adult arrests.

The previously reported ratio, however, should not be used as a measure of the probability of incarceration or as an

indicator of the certainty of punishment. Data recently available from the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) demonstrate that the changing offense distribution heavily influenced changes in this ratio. Admissions for drug offenses accounted for more than half (51.6%) of the total increase in the number of admissions (148,641) between 1981 and 1989; admissions for the selected serious offenses accounted for 15.8% of the increase.

A more refined ratio that includes the same types of offenses in the numerator and denominator shows that the probability of incarceration for persons arrested for serious offenses has not increased steadily over time. The ratio of prison admissions for murder, manslaughter, sexual assault,

robbery, aggravated assault, and burglary to adult arrests for the same offenses increased from 100 commitments per 1,000 adult arrests in 1970 to 150 in 1983. The ratio fluctuated between 1984 and 1987 and then declined to 131 commitments per 1,000 adult arrests in 1989, which was below the level observed in 1981.

The data suggest that growth in the prison population before 1984 may have been linked to an increase in the probability of incarceration for serious offenses. Much of the growth since 1984, however, resulted from the doubling of the number of adult arrests for drug law violations and the tripling of the probability of incarceration for those arrestees.

**Table 12. Estimated number of court commitments and adult arrests for selected serious offenses and drug offenses, 1960-90**

Year	Estimated number of adult arrests		
	Selected serious offenses	All drug offenses	Drug trafficking
1960	250,465	--	--
1964	291,146	--	--
1970	395,679	322,314	--
1974	574,730	474,897	--
1978	616,656	479,950	86,391
1981	697,847	468,056	93,143
1982	754,742	584,850	119,309
1983	709,525	583,474	128,948
1984	679,032	623,719	137,218
1985	688,795	718,597	170,307
1986	757,587	742,687	186,414
1987	749,651	849,521	219,176
1988	840,633	1,050,576	287,858
1989	897,252	1,247,763	404,275
1990	881,466	1,008,332	318,633

Note: The number of adult arrests was derived from annual publications from the FBI on the number of murders/nonnegligent manslaughters, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, and drug law violations reported to the public. The estimated number of adult arrests for these crimes was derived by multiplying the estimated total number of arrests by the percentage of known arrests of persons age 18 or older, as reported annually by the FBI. For 1960 and 1964, estimates of adult arrests were based on FBI data for total known arrests for those years and were weighted for reporting coverage. (See *Crime in the U.S., 1970*, tables 24 and 25.) The estimated number of adult arrests for drug trafficking was derived by multiplying the total number adult arrests for drug law violations by the percentage of arrests for sale or manufacture.  
--Not available

**Table 13. Court commitments to State prisons, relative to adult arrests for selected offenses, 1960-90**

Year	Number of court commitments		
	For all offenses per 1,000 arrests for serious offenses	For selected serious offenses per 1,000 arrests for same offenses	For drug offenses per 1,000 arrests for all drug offenses
1960	299	163	--
1964	258	149	--
1970	170	100	20
1974	155	102	22
1978	183	118	20
1981	214	134	24
1982	218	140	23
1983	244	150	24
1984	246	130	30
1985	266	146	34
1986	268	141	45
1987	301	147	54
1988	292	134	59
1989	332	131	70
1990*	367	--	--

Note: Selected serious offenses include murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and burglary.  
--Not available.  
\*Data on the number of court commitments by type of offense were not available for 1990.



## Methodological note

This Bulletin is based upon an advance count of prisoners conducted for the National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) program immediately after the end of each calendar year. A detailed, final count containing any revisions will be published at a later date.

## Explanatory notes

**Alabama.** Capacity in community programs is not included in the reported capacity figures.

**Alaska.** Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include, therefore, both jail and prison populations.

**Arizona.** Population counts are based on custody data. Population counts exclude 46 male and 3 female inmates housed in local jails due to overcrowding. Other expedited releases consist of inmates released by Early Parole Review (A.R.S. 31-233J).

**California.** Population counts are based on custody data.

**Colorado.** Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less." Colorado revised the jurisdiction counts for 1985-90 to include inmates held in local jails due to overcrowding.

**Connecticut.** Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include, therefore, both jail and prison populations.

**Delaware.** Population counts are based on custody data. Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include, therefore, both jail and prison populations.

**District of Columbia.** In the District of Columbia, prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include, therefore, both jail and prison populations. Female releases are included in the counts for male releases. Female capacities are included in the male capacities reported.

**Federal.** Population counts for "Unsentenced inmates" include those who come under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Female capacities are included in the male capacities reported.

**Florida.** Population counts are based on custody data.

**Georgia.** Population counts are based on custody data. Population counts exclude an undetermined number of inmates housed in local jails solely to ease overcrowding, awaiting pick-up.

**Hawaii.** Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include, therefore, both jail and prison populations.

**Illinois.** Population counts are based on custody data. Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of inmates with sentence of 1 year or less."

**Indiana.** Population counts are based on custody data and exclude 773 inmates housed in local jails because of crowding.

**Iowa.** Population counts are based on custody data.

**Kansas.** Female capacities are included in the male capacities reported.

**Maine.** Female capacities are included in the male capacities reported.

**Maryland.** While population totals are actual manual counts, breakdowns for sentence length are estimates based on the actual sentence length breakdowns of Maryland's automated data system.

**Massachusetts.** Population counts are based on custody data. Population counts exclude 774 male and 11 female inmates housed in local jails because of crowding. Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less." Population totals are actual counts; however, the totals by sex are estimates believed to be within 0.1% of the actual counts.

**Michigan.** Population counts are based on custody data. Capacity figures exclude the capacities of the Community Residential Program.

**Mississippi.** Female capacities are included in the male capacities reported.

**Nevada.** Other expedited releases consist of inmates released through mandatory parole.

**New Jersey.** Other expedited releases consist of inmates released under the provisions of the Intensive Supervision Program. This program was designed in response to prison overcrowding and is an intermediate form of punishment between incarceration and probation. Each of the male capacity figures include 595 bedspaces in county facilities.

**North Carolina.** While population totals are actual counts, the breakdowns for sentence length are estimates believed to be accurate to within 1% of the actual counts. Population counts exclude inmates housed in county jails for which the state government had parole authority. These inmates are not under the jurisdiction of the North Carolina Division of Prisons. North Carolina had an undetermined number of releases due to overcrowding.

**Ohio.** Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less."

**Oklahoma.** Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" may include a small undetermined number of inmates with a sentence of 1 year.

**Rhode Island.** Prisons and jails form one integrated system. All NPS data include, therefore, both jail and prison populations.

**Tennessee.** Population counts are as of December 20, 1991. Population counts for "Inmates with over 1 year maximum sentence" include an undetermined number of "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less." Population counts include 1,744 males and 102 females housed in local jails because of crowding in State prison facilities and exclude 2,736 felons sentenced to serve time in local jails.

**Texas.** Population counts are based on custody data. The courts have ordered that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Institutional Division (TDCJ-ID) cannot house more inmates than 95% of capacity. Approximately 2,928 beds are exempt from this rule, and the inmates in these beds do not count toward the calculation of 95% capacity. The population counts include all inmates within TDCJ-ID; however, the capacity figures exclude the 2,928 exempt beds.

**Vermont.** Population counts are as of December 5, 1991. Prisons and jails form an almost completely integrated system. However, some county and municipal authorities do operate local lockups. NPS data include both jail and prison populations. The capacity figures exclude the 34 male inmates housed in local lockups.

**Virginia.** Starting December 31, 1991, Virginia no longer reports "Inmates with a sentence of 1 year or less."

**Washington.** Capacity figures exclude state work release facilities which housed 862 inmates on December 31, 1991. None of the work release capacity of 884 is specifically reserved for state inmates; capacity for inmates, parolees, probationers, and offenders serving partial confinement sentences is indistinguishable.

**West Virginia.** Population counts exclude 263 male and 24 female inmates housed in local jails because of crowding.

**Wyoming.** Population counts are based on custody data. Wyoming revised the June 30, 1991, female population counts. The male operational capacity figure is the absolute total bedspace available to Wyoming's Department of Corrections, and it includes 150 bedspaces in community centers not exclusively designated as male or female.

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The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, is responsible for matters of administration and management with respect to the OJP agencies: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Victims of Crime, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The Assistant Attorney General establishes policies and priorities consistent with the statutory purposes of the OJP agencies and the priorities of the Department of Justice.