



Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

The Prevalence of Imprisonment

By Patrick A. Langan, Ph.D.
with the assistance of
Lawrence A. Greenfeld
BJS Statisticians

In the 1960s, while crime soared, prison populations declined. What followed in the 1970s was a marked shift in national opinion: increasingly, the public began to demand that the justice system get tougher with criminals.¹

The response of the justice system seemed immediate. From 1970 to 1979, the imprisonment rate surged a record 39%, the largest single decade increase since the 1920s, when the Federal government started keeping records on State and Federal prison populations. The 32% increase during the 1930s is the closest any other decade has come to this record.

Since the 1970s, imprisonment rates have continued to climb. With a 36% increase in just the first five years of the 1980s, and with further increases projected for the remainder of the decade, indications are that the imprisonment rate increase of the 1980s may turn out to be the biggest ever.

The significance of these statistics on the changing imprisonment rate is that they are a measure—perhaps the measure—by which the public gauges government response to crime. But these statistics do not speak for themselves. The changing imprisonment rate is actually a measure of the number of persons (usually per 100,000 population) in prison on a single day in one year relative to the number in prison on a single day in another year. The various implications of a change in these single-day counts are not obvious.

With this study, the Bureau of Justice Statistics introduces a new statistical indicator measuring the use of imprisonment as a sanction for crime. The prevalence of imprisonment indicator, along with the annual count of prison inmates, gives a comprehensive portrait of the American prison system in both static and dynamic terms. While the annual count of inmates reveals the number of prison inmates on 1 day, the prevalence indicator measures the cumulative effect on the Nation's population of admitting and releasing inmates from State prisons.

The findings of this study question some widely held beliefs about prisons, about deterrence (the inhibiting effect of the threat of imprisonment on the criminal activity of people), and about incapacitation (the effect that prisons have on reducing crime by preventing offenders from committing crimes in society). The fact that so few criminals go to prison relative to the large volume of serious crime convinces many that prisons cannot possibly have much of a deterrent or incapacitative effect on crime. Assessing the States' use of imprisonment in

This study translates imprisonment rates into more easily understood terms, better to convey the implica-

July 1985

dynamic terms, however, reveals that the proportion of the Nation's population affected by imprisonment is higher than might previously have been realized. Moreover, it suggests that the deterrent and incapacitative potential of prison may be larger than previously thought.

Estimates of the prevalence of incarceration are useful for a number of other reasons as well. Presenting incarceration rate data in this form facilitates comparison of the likelihood of imprisonment with other prevalence indicators of significant life events increasingly being used to convey important epidemiological information to the public. These data are valuable for planning purposes in anticipating future prison populations. The prevalence indicator is also useful for measuring recidivism, or the percentage released from prison who eventually return to serve another sentence. These detailed measures of lifetime recidivism establish a national benchmark (the first of its kind) against which future claims of superior correctional efficacy can be evaluated.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

tions of record prison population growth in the 1970s. The findings presented disclose that the proportion of the pop-

ulation punished by imprisonment (and, by implication, found guilty of serious crime) is much larger than many may realize and is also much larger than the single-day prison population counts indicate.

The study also shows that about half of all prison admissions do not return for subsequent reincarceration.

The study introduces a new statistical indicator measuring the pervasiveness of State imprisonment. The BJS indicator of prevalence of imprisonment measures both the percentage of the Nation's population confined in State prisons on any given day and the percentage that will ever have served a State prison sentence in their lifetime. This indicator is more readily understood than the conventional "rate per 100,000" used to measure imprisonment levels; it facilitates comparisons of the likelihood of imprisonment with other prevalence indicators of significant life events (such as the lifetime probability of being in a serious automobile accident or of contracting a particular disease).

The prevalence of imprisonment indicator has many other applications. It may be valuable for planning purposes if it is applied in local contexts to anticipate future needs for prison space. Researchers may use it in a variety of contexts to study public policy toward crime control. It can be used to measure prison recidivism, or the percentage of State prison inmates who return to prison to serve additional sentences. The establishment of such a national barometer (the first of its kind) of how successful the Nation's State prisons are in reducing crime may become a benchmark against which future claims of superior correctional efficacy can be evaluated.

Summary of findings

As used in this study, the term "prevalence" of State imprisonment initially refers to the probability of being in prison on any given day; and, later, to the probability in a person's lifetime of ever serving a prison sentence.² Recidivism refers to the chances in a person's lifetime of returning to prison after serving a prior prison sentence.

Between 62 and 71% of all first-time prison admissions do not return to prison a second time. Among second-time prison admissions, between 54 and 60% do not return for a third imprisonment; while 47 to 58% of third-time admissions do not serve a fourth prison sentence. As would be expected, the recidivism rate among inmates increases with the number of prison sentences served, since the more hardened, habitual offenders make up an increasing proportion of second, third and fourth-time prison admissions.

Differences in recidivism between the sexes and between the races are found to be much smaller than differences in prevalence. In other words, recidivism rates among male and female criminals show small differences, although males have a much higher probability than females of being in prison on any given day or of serving a prison sentence in their lifetime. Similarly, recidivism rates among black criminals and white criminals show little difference although blacks are more likely than whites either to be in prison on any given day or to serve a prison sentence in their lifetime.^{3,4}

During the period from 1978 to 1982 (the most recent period for which race-specific national data are available), the prevalence of imprisonment on any given day increased for all six of the segments that make up the Nation's population: white males, black males, other males, white females, black females, and other females. The largest increase occurred among white females; the smallest increase occurred among other females.

From 1973 to 1979 (the most recent period for which extensive national data are available), estimates of the lifetime prevalence of a first imprisonment increased for all four of the population segments for which data are available: white males, black males, white females, and black females. The largest increase occurred among black females; the smallest increase occurred among white females.

The probability of being in prison on any given day or of ever serving a prison sentence (aside from being convicted) varies more by sex than by race. Still, among males and females, blacks are found to have higher chances than whites of being in prison on any given day or of ever serving a prison sentence in their lifetime.⁵ This finding neither confirms nor rules out the possibility of racial discrimination by the justice system. Compelling evidence relevant to that issue comes not from studies comparing the racial composition of prison populations with the racial composition of the national population, but from studies comparing the racial composition of prison populations with that of all offenders engaged in serious, imprisonable crime.

The data

This report is one in a series using national data on crime to address issues of public and policy concern. The report presents results from a study based on surveys and censuses sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is a Federal government agency with major responsibility for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of statistical data on crime and justice. BJS

obtains its statistical data through periodic censuses and surveys. An annual census of inmates of State prisons provides counts of the number and demographic characteristics of persons in prison confinement. A survey of inmates of State prisons, conducted about every five years, provides more extensive information on confined persons.

BJS has sponsored two nationwide surveys of inmates of State prisons. The first was conducted in January 1974,⁶ the second in October 1979.⁷ Both involved face-to-face interviews with large, representative samples of inmates of State prisons.⁸ (See appendix tables A and B for details.)

The most recent inmate censuses and the two inmate surveys form the basis for a study of the prevalence of State imprisonment. "Prevalence" refers to the proportion of the Nation's population in prison. The term can apply to the entire population of the United States, as in the question "what percentage of the total U.S. population is in prison on a single day?" or "what percentage of the total U.S. population will ever have been in prison in their lifetime?" It can also refer to population segments, as in the question "what percentage of the Nation's males are in prison on a single day?" or "what percentage of the Nation's males will ever have been in prison in their lifetime?"

The subject of this study is the prevalence of imprisonment among six population segments: white males, black males, males of all other races (hereafter referred to as "other" males, they are Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaskan Native), white females, black females, and females of all other races (hereafter referred to as "other" females). A longstanding tradition exists in criminological research for investigations into the demographic characteristics of apprehended offenders. The subject is relevant to key issues in criminology, including, for example, the causes and prevention of crime, the prediction of future criminality, the measurement of offender characteristics, and equality in justice administration.¹⁰

Interest in population segments also stems from two facts about prisons in the United States. First, inmate populations are almost exclusively male. For example, from 1978 to 1982, males were not quite 50% of the general population of the United States but were approximately 96% of State prison populations. (During this period they were also 90% of the persons arrested for FBI Uniform Crime Reports Index violent crime and from 78% to 79% of all those arrested for UCR index property crime.)¹¹ Second, prisons contain proportionately more blacks than the general population. From 1978 to 1982,

11% of the total adult population of the United States was black. Throughout this same period (the most recent period for which national data on the racial composition of State prison populations are available), 47% of prisoners confined in adult State prisons were black. However, during this period, blacks were also 44% to 47% of all the persons arrested for UCR index violent crime and 29% to 33% of all those arrested for UCR index property crime.

The report begins with the prevalence of State imprisonment in the United States on any given day in the years 1978 (the first year in which the annual prison census collected information on race) to 1982 (the most recent year for which race-specific national data are available).

What is the prevalence of adult State imprisonment on any given day?¹²

Total (table 1). Data indicate that, on any given day, prisoners in all the adult State prisons in the United States number about one-fifth of 1% of the Nation's total adult population (or about 1 in every 500 adults). During the period from 1978 to 1982, the prevalence of State imprisonment increased each year from a low of .175% in 1978 (or 1 in every 571 adults) to a high of .227% in 1982 (or 1 in every 441 adults).

Sex (table 1). On any given day males are about 26 times more likely to be in prison than females. From 1978 to 1981 the ratio fluctuated between 26 and 27 to 1. In 1982 the ratio dropped to 25 to 1, indicating a slight narrowing of the difference in the prevalence of imprisonment between males and females. The prevalence of imprisonment

of both males and females increased each year between 1978 and 1982. At yearend 1982, .455% of the Nation's adult males (or 1 in every 220) versus .018% of the Nation's adult females (or 1 in every 5,556) were in State prisons.

Sex and race (table 1). Differences in the prevalence of imprisonment between the sexes are larger than differences between the races, indicating, for example, that the probability of being in prison varies more by sex than by race. Throughout the period from 1978 to 1982, blacks, regardless of their sex, were typically about 8 times more likely to be in prison than either whites or others; but males, regardless of their race, were at least 17 times more likely to be in prison than females of the same race.

Of the six population segments, black males have the highest chances of being in prison on any given day. This conclusion is supported by data from the years 1978 to 1982. During this period black males were at least 8 times more likely to be in prison than white males or other males, 204 times more likely than black females, and 151 times more likely than other females. On a single day in 1982, the most recent year for which race-specific national data are available, 2.04% of the Nation's adult black males (or 1 in every 49) were in State prisons.

On any given day white females are the least likely of the six population segments to be in prison. This conclusion is supported by data from the period 1978 to 1982, throughout which white females had the lowest one-day prevalence rates. Their highest rate over this period occurred in 1982, when

1 in every 10,000 adult white females in the United States were in a State prison.

Of the three male population segments, other males are apparently least likely to be in prison.¹³ From 1978 to 1982 other males were consistently, though only slightly, less likely than white males to be in prison. On December 31, 1982, 1 in every 376 white males vs. 1 in every 437 other males were in State prison confinement.

Of the three female population segments, black females have the highest chances of being in prison on any given day in the United States. Throughout the period from 1978 to 1982, black females were at least 8 times more likely to be in prison than white females and at least 6 times more likely than other females.

From 1978 to 1982, the prevalence of imprisonment increased overall among each of the six population segments. The largest increase over the five-year span occurred among white females (a 43% increase); the smallest occurred among other females (a 9% increase).

Sex, race, and age (table 2). Data from the inmate surveys (the only available source of national data on the age composition of the prison population) indicate that the prevalence of imprisonment is highest among black males in their twenties. On a single day in 1974, an estimated 2.55% (or 1 in every 39) of all the black males aged 20 to 29 in the United States were in State prisons.¹⁴ On a single day in 1979 (the most recent year for which age-specific national data are available), a significantly higher (at the .05 level) percentage, or an estimated 3.03% (1 in every 33) of all the black males aged 20 to 29 in the United States, were in State prisons.¹⁵ The 1974 and 1979 estimates for black males are significantly higher (at the .05 level) than comparable age-specific estimates for white males, other males, white females, black females, or other females.

What is the lifetime prevalence of adult State imprisonment?¹⁶

Although only about one-fifth of 1% of the Nation's adult population is in State prison confinement on any given day, this seemingly small figure can be misleading. Imprisonment of even a small fraction of a population as large as that of the United States (roughly 175 million adults) translates to hundreds of thousands of persons in State prisons (429,603 as of December 31, 1984).¹⁷ Moreover, the small fraction in confinement on a single day masks the possibility that over some period longer than a day (say, a life-

Table 1. The prevalence of State imprisonment of adults in the United States on December 31, 1978 to 1982, total adult population, by sex, and by sex and race

Population segment	Percent of adult population 18 and over in State prisons on December 31,				
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Total*	.175%	.179%	.186%	.204%	.227%
Male*	.353	.359	.373	.411	.455
White	.204	.209	.218	.242	.266
Black	1.665	1.667	1.703	1.859	2.044
Other**	.292	.202	.189	.207	.229
Female*	.013	.014	.014	.016	.018
White	.007	.007	.007	.009	.010
Black	.062	.063	.062	.073	.082
Other**	.011	.011	.009	.011	.012

NOTE: Rounding obscures certain year-to-year increases in the prevalence of imprisonment. Also, some table percentages are very slightly inflated since they are based on a numerator (the number of inmates) that includes persons under age 18 and a denominator (the adult population) that only includes persons 18 and over. Inmate population data are from the annual publication *Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions on December 31, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, and 1982*, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington: USGPO, 1980, '81, '82, '83, and '84, respectively. U.S. population estimates

for the years 1978 to 1981 are from U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 917, Preliminary Estimates of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1970 to 1981*, USGPO, Washington, D.C., 1982; for the year 1982, from U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 929, Estimates of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1980 to 1982*, USGPO, Washington, 1983. *Includes inmates whose race is not known. **Includes Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaskan Native.

Table 2. The prevalence of State imprisonment of adults in the United States on a single day in 1974 and 1979, by sex, race and age

Population segment	Percent of population in State prisons on a single day					
	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over
1974						
Male						
White	.057%	.304%	.208%	.106%	.045%	.014%
Black	.396	2.550	1.444	.753	.329	.091
Female						
White	*.001	.012	.010	.004	*.001	*.0001
Black	.012	.079	.040	*.008	*.004	*.001
1979						
Male						
White	.069	.410	.246	.128	.043	.011
Black	.442	3.027	2.003	.755	.390	.123
Female						
White	.003	.016	.010	.005	.002	*.0001
Black	.009	.124	.094	.035	.012	*.003

NOTE: Estimates applicable to all other races are not shown because of known inconsistencies between census and survey procedures for designating "other" race. Table percentages are computed from data contained in two sources: estimates of inmates of adult State prisons are from the 1974 and the 1979 nationwide surveys of inmates of State correctional institutions; U.S. population estimates are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 917, Preliminary Estimates of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1970 to 1981, USGPO, Washington, 1982, Table 1, pp. 11-12, 18-19. *Estimate is based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

time) the percentage of the population that will ever have been in prison may be substantial.

The lifetime prevalence of imprisonment in an adult State prison is estimated from information on persons entering adult State prisons in the United States in a single year. The number of persons entering at each age for the first time in their lives is critical for this purpose. The number of such first admissions at each age, as a fraction of the total U.S. population at that age, indicates the probability of a first imprisonment occurring at each age. If first-time imprisonment rates are stable over a long period of time, then the sum of the probabilities of first imprisonments at each age forms an estimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment in an adult State prison.¹⁸ Thus, for example, the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment for males (see appendix table C) is the probability of a male serving a first sentence at age 13 (the youngest age, recorded in an inmate survey, of a male entering an adult State prison to serve a first sentence),¹⁹ plus the probability of a male serving a first sentence at 14, plus the probability of a male serving a first sentence at 15, and so on through age 84 (an arbitrarily selected upper age limit). Though estimates of lifetime prevalence determined in this way are in one sense hypothetical, they will apply to real populations if the annual imprisonment rates from which they are computed remain stable into the future.²⁰

Lifetime prevalence estimates presented here are primarily based on the two inmate surveys carried out during the 1970's. The 1974 survey provides detailed information on a sample of

persons admitted to State prisons in the United States in 1973 (see appendix tables A and B) and, in conjunction with a 1973 census of the number of State prison admissions, is used to produce two estimates of the lifetime prevalence of State imprisonment in the United States: an inmate survey estimate and an admissions census estimate. The second survey, conducted in October 1979, provides details on a sample of persons admitted to State prisons in the United States in the year 1979 (see tables A and B in the appendix) and, in conjunction with a 1979 census of the number of State prison admissions, is also used to produce two estimates of the lifetime prevalence of State imprisonment in the United States: an inmate survey estimate and an admissions census estimate.

The reason for two estimates (an inmate survey estimate and an admissions census estimate) in each case (1973 and 1979) rather than a single estimate is that the number of first admissions to State prisons in a given year—which, to repeat, is critical for estimating the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment—is nowhere recorded explicitly. Available national data are capable only of establishing a range within which the actual number probably lies.

The 1974 and 1979 inmate surveys both provide an underestimate of the total number of sentenced adults admitted to State prisons in 1973 and 1979 because it is unlikely that all the sentenced adults admitted in 1973²¹ and 1979²² were in prison at the precise time the inmate surveys were conducted. (To illustrate, the 1979 inmate survey was conducted before the end of

1979 and therefore could not possibly have included every inmate admitted in 1979.) A 1973 census and a 1979 census of admissions of sentenced persons to adult State prisons both provide an overestimate of the total number of sentenced adults admitted to State prisons in 1973 and 1979 because it is likely that some of the inmates were counted more than once in the censuses when, for one reason or another, they were admitted to prison more than one time in 1973²³ or 1979.²⁴

The 1974 and 1979 inmate surveys both provide an estimate of the number of sentenced persons at each age who were admitted to State prisons for the first time in their lives in the years 1973 and 1979, respectively.^{25,26} (See appendix tables A and B for details.) These numbers are used to calculate inmate survey estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment. When multiplied by certain constants corresponding to the factor by which census counts exceed survey estimates,²⁷ these numbers are also used to calculate admissions census estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment. Admissions census estimates take into account the fact that more sentenced persons entered prisons in 1973 and 1979 for the first time in their lives than the 1974 and 1979 inmate surveys indicate; the constants give some indication of how many more.

To illustrate, the 1979 inmate survey estimates that 87,881 sentenced males entered State prisons in 1979. The 1979 admissions census records 141,477 admissions of sentenced males in 1979. Thus the census suggests about 1.6 times (1.6098702 to be precise) more male admissions than the survey. Multiplying the inmate survey estimate of the number of male first admissions at each age by the constant 1.6 (actually 1.6098702) produces the numbers that are used to calculate the 1979 admissions census estimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment of males.²⁸

In summary, data for each of two years (1973 and 1979) are used to calculate two estimates of the lifetime prevalence of adult State imprisonment (an inmate survey estimate and an admissions census estimate). Each estimate's size is determined by the number of persons estimated to have been admitted to prison for the first time in their lives in 1973 and 1979, which in turn is determined by imprisonment levels in 1973 and 1979, respectively. Because the inmate survey provides an underestimate and the admissions census an overestimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment, the true figure lies somewhere in between.

Total (table 3). At 1973 imprisonment levels, a person born in the United

States today is estimated to have between a 1.3% (or 1 in 77) and 2.1% (or 1 in 48) lifetime chance of serving a sentence in an adult State prison. These figures do not show that between 1.3% and 2.1% of all the elderly people in the Nation today have a prison record in their background. What they do show is that, if imprisonment rates continue long into the future at their 1973 levels, the day will eventually come when between 1.3% and 2.1% of the Nation's elderly will have served at least one prison sentence in their lifetime.

From 1973 to 1979, a significant (at the .05 level) increase in the prevalence of first admissions occurred.²⁹ Consequently, estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment based on these years increased significantly by about 30% from 1973 to 1979. At 1979 imprisonment levels, a person born in the United States today is estimated to have between a 1.7% (or 1 in 59) and 2.7% (or 1 in 37) lifetime chance of serving a sentence in an adult State prison.

Sex (table 3). At 1973 imprisonment levels, a male in the United States is almost 15 times more likely to serve a prison term in his lifetime than a female. A male has between a 2.5% (or 1

in 40) and 4% (or 1 in 25) chance in his lifetime of serving a State prison sentence, whereas a female has between a .17% (or 1 in 588) and .27% (or 1 in 370) lifetime chance.

At 1979 imprisonment levels, a male is about 14 times more likely to serve a State prison term in his lifetime than a female. Between 3.2% (or 1 in 31) and 5.1% (or 1 in 20) of the males born in the United States, versus between .25% (or 1 in 400) and .37% (or 1 in 270) of the females, would be expected to serve a State prison sentence in their lifetime if 1979 imprisonment levels continue into the future.

The slight narrowing of the difference in the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment between males and females that occurred from 1973 to 1979 reflects the fact that female incarceration rates during this period increased faster than male rates. Nevertheless, for both males and females a significant (at the .05 level) increase occurred from 1973 to 1979 in the number of first admissions to prison. As a result, estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment based on data from these years also increased significantly for both males and females. Admission census estimates increased 30% for males and 34% for females.

Sex and race (table 3). Differences in the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment between the sexes are larger than differences between the races, indicating that the lifetime probability of imprisonment varies more by sex than by race. Based on both 1973 and 1979 prison data, blacks, regardless of their sex, are 6 to 7 times more likely than whites to serve a sentence in their lifetime; but males, regardless of their race, are more than 12 times more likely to serve a sentence in their lifetime than females of the same race.

It is estimated that a black male born in the United States today is 6 (at 1979 imprisonment levels) to 7 times (at 1973 levels) more likely to serve a State prison sentence in his lifetime than a white male. Between 10.2% (or 1 in 10) and 16.5% (or 1 in 6) of black males, versus between 1.5% (or 1 in 67) and 2.4% (or 1 in 42) of white males, would be expected to serve at least one State sentence in their lifetime if 1973 imprisonment rates continue into the future.³⁰ At 1979 rates, a black male born in the United States is estimated to have between an 11.6% (or about 1 in 9) and 18.7% (or 1 in 5) chance in his lifetime of serving a sentence in an adult State prison; a white male has between a 2.1% (or 1 in 48) and 3.3% (or 1 in 30) lifetime chance.

A black female is 6 (at 1973 imprisonment levels) to 8 (at 1979 levels) times more likely to serve a prison sentence in her lifetime than a white female. At 1973 imprisonment levels, a white female born in the United States today would have between a .11% (or 1 in 909) and .18% (or 1 in 556) chance in her lifetime of serving a sentence in an adult State prison; a black female, between a .6% (or 1 in 167) and 1% (or 1 in 100) lifetime chance. At 1979 imprisonment levels, a white female born in the United States today would have between a .14% (or 1 in 714) and .2% (or 1 in 500) chance in her lifetime of serving a sentence in an adult State prison; a black female would have between a 1% (or 1 in 100) and 1.5% (or 1 in 67) chance in her lifetime.

For all four population segments for which data are available—white males, black males, white females, and black females—a significant (at the .05 level) increase occurred from 1973 to 1979 in the estimated number of first admissions to adult State prisons. As a result, estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment based on data from these years also increased significantly. Admissions census estimates indicate that the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment increased 37% for white males, 13% for black males, 11% for

Table 3. Inmate Survey and Admissions Census estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment in adult State prisons in the United States, based on 1973 and 1979 prison data, total U.S. population, by sex, and by sex and race.

Population segment	Prevalence estimate: percent of population expected to serve a first sentence in lifetime, based on number and demographic characteristics of persons admitted to prison for the first time in their lives			
	in 1973		in 1979	
	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census
Total*	1.306%	2.107%	1.713%	2.742%
Male*	2.453	3.954	3.182	5.123
White	1.491	2.404	2.053	3.305
Black	10.226	16.488	11.590	18.658
Female*	.166	.273	.251	.367
White	.110	.181	.138	.201
Black	.610	1.004	1.030	1.509

NOTE: Estimates applicable to all other races are not shown separately because of known inconsistencies between census and survey procedures for designating "other" race. Demographic characteristics (including the ordinal number of sentence admitted for) and, in the case of inmate survey prevalence estimates, number of persons admitted to adult State prisons are from the 1974 (Survey of Inmates of State Correctional Facilities and Census of State Adult Correctional Facilities, 1974—ICPSR 7811, U.S. Dept. of Justice, BJS, Ann Arbor, MI: ICPSR, Fall 1983) and 1979 (Survey of Inmates of State Correctional Facilities, 1979—ICPSR 7856, U.S. Dept. of Justice, BJS, Ann Arbor, MI: ICPSR, Fall 1981) surveys of inmates of State prisons. In the case of admissions census prevalence estimates, number of persons admitted to adult State prisons based on the inmate surveys are pro-rated to admission counts published in Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions on December 31, 1971, 1972, and 1973 (National Prisoner Statistics Bulletin No. SD-NPS-PSF-1, U.S. Dept. of Justice, NCJSS, Washington: USGPO, May

1975), and Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions on December 31, 1979 (National Prisoner Statistics Bulletin No. NPS-PSF-7, NCJ-73719, U.S. Dept. of Justice, BJS, Washington: USGPO, February 1981). U.S. population estimates used to calculate prevalence estimates are from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 917, Preliminary Estimates of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1970 to 1981, Washington: USGPO, 1982, Table 1, pp. 11-12, 18-19. Also, inmate surveys provide underestimates and admissions censuses provide overestimates of the prevalence of imprisonment. In the case of inmate survey estimates for admission year 1979, correction for some of the underestimation can easily be made. Since the 1979 survey was conducted in October 1979, and therefore could not possibly have included all 1979 admissions, 1979 inmate survey prevalence estimates are based on data for 10 out of 12 months in 1979. To pro-rate 1979 inmate survey prevalence estimates to the full 12 months, they should be multiplied by 1.2. *Includes persons of all other races.

white females, and 50% for black females. The biggest increase was thus among black females; the smallest increase was among white females.

Estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment of males and females of all other races are not presented because of known discrepancies between inmate survey and admissions census procedures for classifying inmates of other races.³¹

What is the rate of recidivism among State prisoners?

The lifetime prevalence of a first prison sentence is calculated from information on first imprisonments (table 3). Similarly, the lifetime prevalence of a second sentence is calculated from information on second imprisonments (table 4); a third sentence, from information on third imprisonments (table 5); and, a fourth sentence, from information on fourth imprisonments (table 6). From these estimates of the prevalence of first as well as subsequent imprisonments, recidivism rates—or the rates at which State prisoners return to adult State prisons to serve additional sentences—can be calculated.

The ratio of the lifetime prevalence of a second sentence (table 4) to the lifetime prevalence of a first sentence (table 3) forms a recidivism rate: the percentage of first-timers (persons who serve a first sentence) who return to prison to serve a second sentence. The ratio of the lifetime prevalence of a third sentence (table 5) to the lifetime prevalence of a second (table 4) forms another recidivism rate: the percentage of second-timers (persons who serve a second sentence) who return to prison to serve a third sentence. Lastly, the ratio of the lifetime prevalence of a fourth sentence (table 6) to the lifetime prevalence of a third (table 5) forms another recidivism rate: the percentage of third-timers (persons who serve a third sentence) who return to prison to serve a fourth sentence. These recidivism rates are examined next.³²

Total (table 7). It is estimated that a first-timer (a person serving a first adult State prison sentence) has a 29% (at 1973 imprisonment levels) to 38% (at 1979 levels) lifetime chance of returning to prison to serve a second sentence. A second-timer (a person serving a second sentence) is estimated to have a 40% (at 1973 levels) to 46% (at 1979 levels) lifetime chance of returning to serve a third sentence. A third-timer (a person serving a third sentence) is estimated to have a 42% (at 1973 levels) to 53% (at 1979 levels) lifetime chance of returning to serve a fourth sentence.³³

Table 4. Inmate Survey and Admissions Census estimates of the lifetime prevalence of a second imprisonment in adult State prisons in the United States, based on 1973 and 1979 prison data, total U.S. population, by sex, and by sex and race.

Population segment	Prevalence estimate: percent of population expected to serve a second sentence in lifetime, based on number and demographic characteristics of persons admitted to prison for the second time in their lives			
	in 1973		in 1979	
	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census
Total*	.502%	.810%	.506%	.800%
Male*	.987	1.591	.963	1.551
White	.607	.978	.581	.935
Black	4.234	6.830	4.006	6.449
Female*	.026	.042	.044	.064
White	**	**	.025	.037
Black	**	**	.183	.271

NOTE: (see note at table 3) **Estimate not shown because it is based on 10 or fewer sample cases.
*Includes persons of all other races.

Table 5. Inmate Survey and Admissions Census estimates of the lifetime prevalence of a third imprisonment in adult State prisons in the United States, based on 1973 and 1979 prison data, total U.S. population, by sex, and by sex and race.

Population segment	Prevalence estimate: percent of population expected to serve a third sentence in lifetime, based on number and demographic characteristics of persons admitted to prison for the third time in their lives			
	in 1973		in 1979	
	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census
Total*	.203%	.327%	.230%	.368%
Male*	.403	.650	.450	.724
White	.233	.376	.275	.443
Black	1.856	2.993	1.870	3.010
Female*	**	**	.016	.023
White	**	**	.009	.013
Black	**	**	.067	.100

NOTE: (see note at table 3) **Estimate not shown because it is based on 10 or fewer sample cases.
*Includes persons of all other races.

Table 6. Inmate Survey and Admissions Census estimates of the lifetime prevalence of a fourth imprisonment in adult State prisons in the United States, based on 1973 and 1979 prison data, total U.S. population, by sex, and by sex and race.

Population segment	Prevalence estimate: percent of population expected to serve a fourth sentence in lifetime, based on number and demographic characteristics of persons admitted to prison for the fourth time in their lives			
	in 1973		in 1979	
	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census	Inmate Survey	Admissions Census
Total*	.108%	.174%	.096%	.153%
Male*	.221	.355	.192	.309
White	.124	.199	.136	.219
Black	1.041	1.679	.676	1.088
Female*	**	**	**	**

NOTE: (see note at table 3) **Estimate not shown because it is based on 10 or fewer sample cases.
*Includes persons of all other races.

Sex (table 7). Even though males are 26 times more likely than females to be in prison on any given day and 14 times more likely ever to serve a sentence in their lifetime, differences in recidivism rates between male and female prisoners are not as great as these differences; and, in one case, the difference is not statistically significant (at the .05 level). Based on

both 1973 and 1979 prison data, male first-timers are more likely (significant at the .05 level) to return to prison than female first-timers (40% of males versus 15% of females, based on 1973 data; 30% of males versus 17% of females, based on 1979 data). Male second-timers return to prison to serve a third sentence at the rate of 41% (at 1973 levels) to 47% (at 1979 levels), the

Table 7. Estimated rates of recidivism from adult State prisons in the United States, based on 1973 and 1979 prison data, total State prisoners, by sex, and by sex and race.

Prisoners	Percent of		
	1st-timers	2nd-timers	3rd-timers
	expected to return to prison to serve a		
	2nd sentence	3rd sentence	4th sentence
1973			
Total*	38%	40%	53%
Male*	40	41	55
White	41	38	53
Black	41	44	56
Female*	15	**	**
White	**	**	**
Black	**	**	**
1979			
Total*	29	46	42
Male*	30	47	43
White	28	47	49
Black	35	47	36
Female*	17	36	**
White	18	35	**
Black	18	37	**

NOTE: Estimates applicable to all other races are not shown separately because of known inconsistencies between census and survey procedures for designating the other races. Also, admissions census estimates (from tables 3 through 6) were used to calculate table percentages. (Except for rounding error, inmate survey estimates produce the same results.)
*Includes prisoners of all other races.
**Estimate not shown because it is based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

latter of which is not significantly higher than the only available rate for female second-timers, the 36% rate based on 1979 imprisonment data. Male third-timers return to prison to serve a fourth sentence at the rate of 43% to 55% (at 1979 and 1973 levels, respectively). Because few females ever serve a third sentence, reliable data on the percentage who return to serve a fourth sentence are not available.

Sex and race (table 7). Although black males are more likely than white males to be in prison on any given day and are also more likely than white males ever to serve a prison sentence in their lifetime, differences in recidivism rates between black male prisoners and white male prisoners are small and, in most cases, not statistically significant. Similarly, black females are more likely than white females either to be in prison on any given day or to serve a sentence in their lifetime, but differences in recidivism rates between black females and white females are also small and, in every case, not statistically significant.

Based on 1973 imprisonment data, white male first-timers (41%) and black male first-timers (41%) do not return to prison at significantly different rates. Based on 1979 data, black male first-

timers return to prison to serve a second sentence at a higher rate (35%) than white male first-timers (28%), but the difference, though statistically significant (.05 level), is very small compared to the sevenfold difference in imprisonment prevalence rates between black males and white males. The only available comparable data on recidivism among female first-timers are from the year 1979. Estimates from that year show no significant difference between the rates at which white females (18%) and black females (18%) return to prison to serve a second sentence.

Based on both 1973 and 1979 imprisonment data, the rates at which white male second-timers (38% to 47%, respectively) and black male second-timers (44% to 47%, respectively) return to prison to serve a third sentence are not significantly different. The only comparable data available on recidivism among female second-timers are from the year 1979. Estimates from that year show no statistically significant difference between the rates at which white female second-timers (35%) and black female second-timers (37%) return to prison to serve a third sentence.

Based on 1973 imprisonment data, the rates at which white male third-timers (53%) and black male third-timers (56%) return to prison to serve a fourth sentence are not significantly different. Based on 1979 imprisonment data, the recidivism rate for white male third-timers (49%) is higher (significant at .05 level) than the rate for black male third-timers (36%). The difference, however, is again small and, moreover, in the opposite direction as compared to differences in imprisonment prevalence between the races.

Finally, brief mention is made of the only consistent temporal trend evident in the limited recidivism data available from the years 1973 and 1979.³⁴ From 1973 to 1979 the recidivism rates of both white male and black male first-timers declined (significant at the .05 level). Some idea of why the consistent decline occurred in the recidivism rates of male first-timers can be derived by looking at tables 3 through 6. For example, table 3 shows an increase in first imprisonments between 1973 and 1979, while table 4 shows little change in second imprisonments. Inevitably, therefore, the probability of a second imprisonment following a first decreases from 1973 to 1979. These figures suggest that the main reason for the increase in overall prison population between 1973 and 1979 was the increase in first imprisonments. An increase in first imprisonments might be expected to be followed by an increase in second

imprisonments, but this cannot be confirmed until the planned inmate survey is conducted in late 1985.³⁵

Research procedures

This study uses research procedures³⁶ that have long been known to criminologists (e.g., Ball, Ross, and Simpson, 1964; Belkin, Blumstein, and Glass, 1973; Gordon, 1973; Gordon and Gleser, 1974; Gordon, 1976; and Farrington, 1981) but have only recently been applied for the first time to the subject of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment (Greenfeld, 1981).³⁷ These procedures rest on many assumptions (e.g., assumptions about the accuracy of inmates' accounts of their incarceration histories,³⁸ about the stability of age-specific imprisonment rates, and about the representativeness of inmate survey samples) that have not yet been thoroughly investigated. However, the major findings of this study are robust. Moreover, the prevalence estimates presented in this study understate the level of imprisonment because the study did not include juvenile incarcerations, local jail commitments, and Federal and military sentences in its definition of imprisonment and because 1979 data was the most current available. Since 1979, incarceration rates have increased.

Conclusion

In criminal justice practice, crimes are not neatly divided into those that are imprisonable and those that are nonimprisonable. Whether a crime is imprisonable (meaning the offender stands a high chance of going to prison if apprehended and convicted) usually depends largely on some combination of how serious it is and who commits it. That is, the most serious crimes are imprisonable regardless of who commits them; crimes that are not among the most serious are imprisonable if they are committed by someone with a long or grievous prior record.

It is not possible to specify very precisely what the volume of imprisonable crime is. The most complete source of crime data, the National Crime Survey sponsored by BJS, obtains information from representative samples of the Nation's crime victims. Crime victims can provide many facts about the seriousness of the crimes committed against them but usually cannot be expected to know anything about the criminal backgrounds of the perpetrators. Nevertheless, crime victims' accounts provide a measure, albeit imprecise, of the volume of imprisonable crime.

In 1979, to pick one year, more than

1973 and 1979 imprisonment rates continued long into the future. A desirable feature of this method is its contemporaneity, a feature which cannot be approached by the longitudinal method, especially when the period at risk is a long one, as in the case of adult imprisonment.

21 One reason the 1974 survey is said to underestimate the number of sentenced persons admitted in 1973 is the large discrepancy between the survey estimate (68,482) and the 1973 admissions census count (110,516). Another reason is explained as follows with an example. The 1974 inmate survey was conducted in late January 1974. Based on the survey, an estimated 284,313 males were in adult State prisons at that time, of whom a survey estimated 40,344 were sentenced males admitted to prison for the first time in their lives in the year 1973. These 40,344 males are therefore all the sentenced males who were admitted to prison for the first time in their lives in 1973 and who were still in prison at the time of the 1974 survey. They are a subset of all the sentenced males admitted for the first time in their lives in 1973, because some unknown number of such males had probably been released from prison before the time of the 1974 survey. This assumption must be reconciled with the fact that almost all the males admitted to prison in 1973 were serving sentences exceeding one year. Since the period from the time of the earliest 1973 admission (January 1973) to the time of the 1974 survey (January 1974) was no longer than a year, it might be thought that almost all the males admitted in 1973 would still have been in prison at the time of the survey. Perhaps they were. One reason for thinking they were not is that, because of widely existing statutory provisions relating to prison release (provisions concerning parole eligibility, good-time credit, mandatory minimum sentences, and early release due to prison overcrowding), many prisoners receiving adult State prison sentences exceeding one year actually serve less than one year before being released. In recognition of the survey's potential for underestimating 1973 admissions, the survey is said to provide an underestimate of the number of males admitted to prison for the first time in their lives in 1973. The 1974 survey estimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment among males is based on the survey estimate of the number of males admitted for the first time in their lives in 1973. Consequently, the 1974 inmate survey is also said to provide an underestimate of lifetime prevalence.

22 One reason the 1979 survey is said to underestimate the number of 1979 admissions is the large discrepancy between the survey estimate (93,517) and the 1979 admissions census count (149,741). Another reason is that the survey was conducted before the year was ended, in October 1979, and therefore could not possibly have included all the inmates admitted in 1979. A third reason is that some of the inmates admitted in 1979 were probably already released by the time of the survey. In recognition of the survey's potential for underestimating 1979 admissions, the 1979 survey is said to provide an underestimate of the number of males admitted to prison for the first time in their lives in 1979, and consequently (as explained in the preceding footnote) an underestimate of lifetime prevalence.

23 The reason the 1973 prison admissions census is said to provide an overestimate of the number of sentenced persons admitted to adult State prisons in 1973 is further explained here. Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions on December 31, 1971, 1972, and 1973 (NPS Bulletin No. SD-NPS-PSE-1, U.S. Dept. of Justice, National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, Washington: USGPO, May 1975) reports, for 1973, 105,349 (Table 6, p. 21) admissions of sentenced males to State prisons in the U.S. and 5,167 (Table 7, p. 23) admissions of sentenced females. The publication defines admissions as: commitments from court, parole or conditional release violators returned to prison, or escapees returned under an old sentence. Furthermore, the definition restricts admissions to persons sentenced as adults or youthful offenders whose maximum sentence length exceeds one year. However, in both tables cited, a footnote indicates that three States probably departed from the prescribed

definition by submitting admission counts which included some persons with a maximum sentence length of less than a year and a day. Moreover, in both tables cited, a footnote reports that some inmates were involved in more than one prisoner movement, and that the published number of admissions is therefore larger than the actual number of different persons admitted. The publication gives no indication of the extent of such double-counting of people. In view of the census' potential for counting people more than once, the 1973 admissions census is said to provide an overestimate of the number of different persons admitted to prison in 1973. The 1973 admissions census estimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment is based, in part, on the 1973 admissions census count. Consequently, the 1973 admissions census is also said to provide an overestimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment.

24 The reason the 1979 prison admissions census is said to provide an overestimate of the number of sentenced persons admitted to adult State prisons in 1979 is the same as the reason the 1973 prison admissions census is said to overestimate the number of persons admitted in 1973 (see preceding footnote). Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions on December 31, 1979 (NPS Bulletin No. NPS-PSE-7, NCJ-73719, U.S. Dept. of Justice, BJS, Washington: USGPO, February 1981) reports, for 1979, 41,477 (Table 11, p. 22) admissions of sentenced males and 8,264 (Table 12, p. 24) admissions of sentenced females to adult State prisons in the U.S. Some unknown number of persons admitted were counted more than once. In recognition of the admissions census' potential for double-counting people, the 1979 admission census is said to provide an overestimate of the number of different persons admitted in 1979 and consequently (as explained previously) an overestimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment.

25 The 1974 survey estimates that 62.7% of all 1973 admissions, 61.7% of all 1973 male admissions, and 82.2% of all 1973 female admissions were lifetime first sentences to adult State prisons. The 1979 survey estimates 68.3% of all 1979 admissions, 67.5% of all 1979 male admissions, and 80.4% of all 1979 female admissions were lifetime first sentences to adult State prisons.

26 The inmate surveys actually provide various estimates that are used to calculate the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment: estimates of the total number of sentenced persons admitted to prisons for the first time in their lives, by age, race, and sex; the second time in their lives, by age, race, and sex; the third time in their lives, by age, race, and sex; and the fourth time in their lives, by age, race, and sex.

27 The size of the constant is a function of how much larger the admissions census count is than the inmate estimate. The 1973 census count of 110,516 total admissions in 1973 is 1.6137963 times larger than the 1974 inmate survey estimate of 68,482 total admissions in 1973; the census count of 105,349 male admissions, 1.6122215 times larger than the survey estimate's 65,344 male admissions; and the census count of 5,167 female admissions, 1.6465902 times larger than the survey estimate's 3,138 female admissions. Consequently, 1973 admissions census estimate of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment are higher than inmate survey estimates by corresponding factors. Similarly, the 1979 census count of 149,741 total admissions is 1.6012169 times larger than the survey estimate's 93,517; of 141,477 male admissions, 1.6099702 times the survey estimate's 87,881; and, of 8,264 female admissions, 1.4598128 times larger than the survey estimate's 5,661. Consequently, 1979 admissions census estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment are higher than 1979 inmate survey estimates by corresponding factors.

28 Multiplying survey estimates by such constants is justified if it can be assumed that the sentenced inmates who were admitted in 1973 and 1979 and who were present at the time of the 1974 and 1979 inmate surveys are representative of all the sentenced inmates admitted to State prisons in 1973 and 1979, respectively. This assumption has not been investigated.

29 The 1974 survey questionnaire was changed slightly for the 1979 survey. It is therefore possible that some portion of the increase from 1973 to 1979 in the estimated number of first admissions may have been due to minor changes in the survey questionnaire.

30 The possibility was explored that perhaps some substantial number of the persons admitted to prison for the first time in 1973 and designated "black" were not native-born. That possibility is of concern because including such persons with native-born blacks would artificially inflate the prevalence rate applicable to native-born blacks. To check this possibility, data from the 1974 survey on the birthplaces of inmates admitted in 1973 were examined. Only 3.9% reported a birthplace outside the United States. (Comparable data from the 1979 survey are not available.)

31 More specifically, the annual census of prison inmates, which is based on prison records, distinguishes "race not known" from all other races in the census questionnaire. However, a substantial minority of States are known to deviate from these census definitions, either by submitting estimates (as opposed to census counts) of the racial composition of their prison populations, or by classifying as "race not known" those inmates who are Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaskan Native. The 1974 inmate survey, which was based on interviewer observation or prison records (about 12% of the 1974 survey sample), contained few cases of inmates whose race was not known (less than 1%); the 1979 inmate survey, which was based on prisoner self-reports only, contained none. Perhaps as a result of the censuses' potential for undercounting the other races, the annual censuses, in fact, indicate that the prevalence of imprisonment of other males is slightly lower than that of white males whereas the inmate surveys, in fact, indicate that other males have significantly higher one-day prevalence rates than white males.

32 It is logically possible for recidivism rates computed in this way to exceed 100% as a result of either sampling error or changes in imprisonment rates over time. A longitudinal study of inmates released from prison could not have this defect. Also, inmate survey estimates are said to underestimate prevalence, partly for the reason that some of the inmates admitted in a survey year would already have been released by the time of the survey. The degree of such underestimation may be related to the ordinal sentence number. To illustrate, relatively many first-timers but very few fourth-timers admitted in 1973 would already have been released from prison as a result of early release laws. Recidivism rates computed here do not take this possible relationship into account.

33 Among first-, second-, and third-timers, first-timers tend to have the lowest rates. D. Glaser (The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967: 27) also reported that first-timers have lower recidivism rates than second-timers or subsequent "losers." The finding of lower recidivism rates among first-timers might be expected. Since the probability of recidivism is known to increase with the length of the prior record, first-timers should have lower recidivism rates than second-timers or subsequent losers. However, differences between the recidivism rates of first-timers and subsequent losers would not be expected to increase forever because of the counter effects of aging. That is, the probability of recidivism is known to decrease with age. Since it takes time to become, say, a second-timer or a third-timer, third-timers tend to be older than second-timers who, in turn, tend to be older than first-timers. Consequently, differences between the recidivism rates of first-timers and subsequent losers would grow, but only up to a point, the point at which the effects of aging become pronounced.

34 That is, comparable data for the period 1973 to 1979 are not available on the female population segments; the recidivism rate of white male second-timers increased significantly (at the .05 level) from 1973 to 1979, but the comparable rate for black male second-timers did not; and, the recidivism rate

of black male third-timers declined significantly (at the .05 level) from 1973 to 1979, but the comparable rate for white males did not.

35 This brief discussion draws attention to the difficulties arising from the assumption of steady state conditions.

36 The procedure is a straightforward application of a statistical model known to demographers as a life table. For an excellent discussion of the model, see Chapter 15 of H.S. Shryock, J.S. Siegel, and Associates, The Methods and Materials of Demography, Volume 2, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington: USGPO, 1971.

37 J. Ball, A. Ross, and A. Simpson, "Incidence and Estimated Prevalence of Recorded Delinquency in a Metropolitan Area," American Sociological Review, 29 (1), Feb. 1964; J. Belkin, A. Blumstein, and W. Glass, "Recidivism as a Feedback Process," J. of

Criminal Justice, 1, 1973; R. Gordon, "An Explicit Estimation of the Prevalence of Commitment to a Training School, to Age 18, by Race and by Sex," J. of American Statistical Association, 68 (343), Sep. 1973; R. Gordon and L. Gleser, "The Estimation of the Prevalence of Delinquency," J. of Mathematical Sociology, 3, 1974; R. Gordon, "Prevalence," in Klein ed., The Juvenile Justice System, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976; D. Farrington, "The Prevalence of Convictions," British J. of Criminology, 21 (2), 1981; L. Greenfeld, "Measuring the Application and Use of Punishment," a paper presented at the American Society of Criminology meeting, Nov. 12, 1981.

38 In the most comprehensive report to date on the accuracy of inmates' self-reports (K. Marquis, Quality of Prisoner Self-Reports, Santa Monica: Rand Corp., 1981), self-reports of arrests and convictions over a maximum two-year period prior to

imprisonment were investigated by comparing them to official records. It was found that prison inmates do not deny facts about their criminal histories: their accounts included more arrests than, and as many convictions as, their official records. It was also found that the self-reports were equally "accurate" for white and nonwhite inmates.

39 BJS Criminal Victimization in the United States, 79. A National Crime Survey Report, NCJ-76710, NCS-N-19, Washington: USGPO, September 1981.

40 BJS Prisoners in 1984, Bulletin NCJ-97118, April 1985, table II.

41 Estimates of the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment in this report did not take mortality into account. However, adjustment for mortality would not have substantially affected either the size of the estimates or conclusions regarding differences between population segments compared.

To be added to any BJS mailing list, copy or cut out this page, fill it in and mail it to:
National Criminal Justice Reference Service
User Services Dept. 2
Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20850

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Street or box:

City, State, Zip:

Telephone: ()

Interest in criminal justice:

Please add me to the following list(s):

- Justice expenditure and employment reports—annual spending and staffing by Federal, State, and local governments and by function (police, courts, etc.)
- Computer crime reports—electronic fund transfer system crimes
- Privacy and security of criminal history information and information policy—new legislation; maintaining and releasing intelligence and investigative records
- BJS Bulletins and Special Reports—timely reports of the most current justice data
- Courts reports—State court caseload surveys, model annual State reports, State court organization surveys
- Corrections reports—results of sample surveys and censuses of jails, prisons, parole, probation, and other corrections data
- National Crime Survey reports—the only regular national survey of crime victims
- Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (annual)—broad-based data from 153 sources in an easy-to-use, comprehensive format (433 tables, 103 figures, index)

Bureau of Justice Statistics reports

(revised July 1985)

Call toll-free 800-732-3277 (local 251-5500) to order BJS reports, to be added to one of the BJS mailing lists, or to speak to a reference specialist in statistics at the Justice Statistics Clearinghouse, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850. Single copies of reports are free; use NCJ number to order. Postage and handling are charged for bulk orders of single reports. For single copies of multiple titles, up to 10 titles are free; 11-40 titles \$10; more than 40, \$20; libraries call for special rates.

Public-use tapes of BJS data sets and other criminal justice data are available from the Criminal Justice Archive and Information Network, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 (313-764-5199).

National Crime Survey

Criminal victimization in the U.S.:
1982 (final report), NCJ-92820, 11/84
1973-82 trends, NCJ-90541, 9/83

BJS special reports:

The risk of violent crime, NCJ-97119, 5/85
The economic cost of crime to victims, NCJ-93450, 4/84
Family violence, NCJ-93449, 4/84

BJS bulletins:

Households touched by crime, 1984, NCJ-97689, 6/85
The crime of rape, NCJ-96777, 3/85
Household burglary, NCJ-96021, 1/85
Criminal victimization 1983, NCJ-93869, 6/84
Violent crime by strangers, NCJ-80829, 4/82
Crime and the elderly, NCJ-79614, 1/82
Measuring crime, NCJ-75710, 2/81

Response to screening questions in the National Crime Survey (BJS technical report), NCJ-97624, 7/85

Victimization and fear of crime: World perspectives, NCJ-93872, 1/85

Expenditure and employment

Justice expenditure and employment extracts: 1990 and 1991, NCJ-96007, 6/85
Justice expenditure and employment in the U.S., 1971-79, NCJ-92596, 11/84
Justice expenditure and employment in the U.S., 1979 (final report), NCJ-87242, 12/83

Corrections

BJS bulletins and special reports:

Prison admissions and releases, 1982, NCJ-97995, 7/85
Prisoners in 1984, NCJ-97118, 4/85
Examining recidivism, NCJ-96501, 2/85
Returning to prison, NCJ-95700, 11/84
Capital punishment 1983, NCJ-93925, 7/84
Time served in prison, NCJ-93924, 6/84

U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Prisoners in State and Federal institutions on Dec. 31, 1982 (final), NCJ-93311, 12/84
Capital punishment 1982 (final), NCJ-91533, 11/84

1979 survey of inmates of State correctional facilities and 1979 census of State correctional facilities:

BJS special reports:

Career patterns in crime, NCJ-88672, 6/83

BJS bulletins:

Prisoners and drugs, NCJ-87575, 3/83
Prisoners and alcohol, NCJ-86223, 1/83
Prisons and prisoners, NCJ-80697, 2/82
Veterans in prison, NCJ-79232, 11/81

Census of jails and survey of jail inmates:

The 1983 jail census (BJS bulletin, NCJ-95536, 11/84)

Jail inmates 1982 (BJS bulletin), NCJ-87161, 2/83

Census of jails, 1978: Data for individual jails, vols. I-IV, Northeast, North Central, South, West, NCJ-72279-72282, 12/81

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

Parole and probation

BJS bulletins:

Probation and parole 1983, NCJ-94776, 9/84

Setting prison terms, NCJ-76218, 8/83

Characteristics of persons entering parole during 1978 and 1979, NCJ-87243, 5/83

Characteristics of the parole population, 1978, NCJ-66479, 4/81

Parole in the U.S., 1979, NCJ-69562, 3/81

Courts

BJS bulletin:

The growth of appeals: 1973-83 trends, NCJ-96381, 2/85

Case filings in State courts 1983, NCJ-95111, 10/84

BJS special reports:

Felony sentencing in 18 local jurisdictions, NCJ-97681, 6/85

The prevalence of guilty pleas, NCJ-96018, 12/84

Sentencing practices in 13 States, NCJ-95399, 10/84

Criminal defense systems: A national survey, NCJ-94630, 8/84

Habeas corpus, NCJ-92948, 3/84

Case filings in State courts 1983, NCJ-95111, 10/84

State court caseload statistics, 1977 and 1981, NCJ-87587, 2/83

The prosecution of felony arrests, 1979, NCJ-86482, 5/84

Privacy and security

Computer crime:

BJS special reports:

Electronic fund transfer fraud, NCJ-96666, 3/85

Electronic fund transfer and crime, NCJ-92650, 2/84

Computer security techniques,

NCJ-84049, 9/82

Electronic fund transfer systems and crime, NCJ-83736, 9/82

Legislative resource manual, NCJ-78890, 9/81

Expert witness manual, NCJ-77927, 9/81

Criminal justice resource manual, NCJ-61550, 12/79

Privacy and security of criminal history information:

A guide to research and statistical use, NCJ-69790, 5/81

A guide to dissemination, NCJ-40000, 1/79

Compendium of State legislation: NCJ-48981, 7/78

1981 supplement, NCJ-79652, 3/82

Criminal justice information policy: Intelligence and investigative records, NCJ-95787, 4/85

Victim/witness legislation: An overview, NCJ-94365, 12/84

Information policy and crime control strategies (SEARCH/BJS conference), NCJ-93926, 10/84

Research access to criminal justice data, NCJ-84154, 2/83

Privacy and juvenile justice records, NCJ-84152, 1/83

Federal offenses and offenders

BJS special reports:

Pretrial release and misconduct, NCJ-96132, 1/85

BJS bulletins:

Bank robbery, NCJ-94463, 8/84

Federal drug law violators, NCJ-92692, 2/84

Federal justice statistics, NCJ-80814, 3/82

General

BJS bulletins:

Tracking offenders: The child victim, NCJ-95785, 12/84

The severity of crime, NCJ-92326, 1/84

The American response to crime: An overview of criminal justice systems, NCJ-91936, 12/83

Tracking offenders, NCJ-91572, 11/83

Victim and witness assistance: New State laws and the system's response, NCJ-87934, 5/83

BJS telephone contacts, NCJ-95505, 10/84

How to gain access to BJS data (brochure), BC-000022, 9/84

Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1983, NCJ-91534, 10/84

Information policy and crime control strategies, NCJ-93926, 10/84

Proceedings of the 2nd workshop on law and justice statistics, 1984, NCJ-93310, 8/84

Report to the nation on crime and justice: The data, NCJ-87068, 10/83

* U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1985 461-537/20001

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

Washington, D.C. 20531

Special Report

END