



Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

Probation and Parole 1983

During 1983, the adult probation population rose by nearly 145,000 persons to 1,502,247—a 10.7% increase. During the same period, adult parole populations increased by more than 27,000 (12.1%) to 251,708 (table 1).¹ Since 1979, the probation population has increased by more than 38%, or about the same percentage increase as the prison population over the same period (39%). By contrast, the parole population has grown more slowly, increasing by 15% since 1979, because of both increased emphasis on the use of determinate and mandatory sentencing among the States as well as diminished reliance on discretionary parole board prison release decisions (table 2).

Only 8 of the 51 reporting jurisdictions² reported declines in their probation populations during 1983.³ Nearly two-thirds of the total decrease reported by these eight States occurred in Illinois (which may be a result of 1,864 cases closed as a result of a State-wide audit).

Forty-one States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal system reported increases in their probation populations ranging from a low of less than 1% in Vermont to a high of nearly 27% in the District of Columbia. Three other jurisdictions also reported annual growth rates in excess of 20%:

¹Probationers are defined as those offenders who have been placed under the supervision of a probation agency as a consequence of a court order. This definition excludes those persons placed on bench probation, court probation, summary probation or any other status which does not require supervision by a probation agency. Parolees are defined to be those offenders who have been conditionally released from prison to parole supervision (either by parole board decision or by mandatory release).

²Indiana did not provide data on probationers for 1983.

³These States were New Hampshire 34, Rhode Island 6, Illinois 3,037, South Dakota 470, South Carolina 413, Mississippi 11, Utah 570, and Alaska 25.

This is the third annual Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin presenting statistics on the Nation's probation and parole populations. Summary data were gathered on these populations for 1983 from the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal system.

Data on offender populations supervised in the community form an important complement to ongoing BJS programs to collect information on prison and jail populations.

September 1984

Together with offender-specific information on the composition of and sanctions imposed on correctional populations, such data permit greater understanding of the sanctioning process over time and across jurisdictions.

The generous cooperation of probation and parole agencies with these data collection programs is gratefully acknowledged.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

Connecticut, 23.3%; Texas, 22.6%; and Louisiana, 20.2% (table 3). The Federal probation population increased by 4.7% to 51,448.

The largest probation population at yearend 1983 was in Texas with a reported 217,350 offenders under supervision or about 14.5% of all the adult probationers in the nation. During 1983, Texas increased the size of its probation caseload by more than 40,000, accounting for more than a quarter of the total increase for the Nation. It is important to note that the large increase in the number of probationers in Texas occurred simultaneously with the first prison population reduction (-2.5%) for that State since 1974.⁴

Eight jurisdictions reported declines in the number of parolees at yearend 1983 compared to 1 year earlier (Federal—1,632, Maine—9, Connecticut—24, Illinois—310, Kansas—186,

West Virginia—11, North Carolina—1,836, Alabama—281). The Federal system and North Carolina accounted for 81% of the total decrease reported by these eight jurisdictions. In the case of North Carolina, prison population simultaneously declined that year by nearly 1,200 inmates (7.1%) suggesting fewer inmates available to be paroled. Prison population in North Carolina was lower at the end of 1983 (15,395) than it had been at yearend 1981 (15,791). In the Federal system, prison population growth (7.6%) during 1983 outpaced the growth in State inmate populations (5.8%). The reduction in the number of Federal parolees while the Federal prison population grew suggests that changes have occurred at the Federal level in inmate release policies or inmate composition that have resulted in longer stays in prison.⁵

⁴Texas prison population in 1982 was 36,149 compared to 35,259 at yearend 1983. This reduction of 2.5% occurred after annual increases in 1980 of 12.7%, 5.4% in 1981, and 14.8% in 1982. See *Prisoners in 1983*, BJS Bulletin, April 1984, NCJ-92949.

⁵The Federal prison system reported that 1983 increases in prison population resulted, in part, from a heightened Federal concentration on drug-related crimes, indicating that inmate composition may have been changing. In addition, in early 1983 the U.S. Parole Commission reported revisions to their release guidelines that were expected to increase the time served in prison by serious offenders. See *Prisoners in 1983*, BJS Bulletin, April 1984, NCJ-92949.

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