

Corrections: State of the Art

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An Overview of National Corrections Statistics

BY STEVEN D. DILLINGHAM, PH.D. AND LAWRENCE A. GREENFELD*

THE BUREAU of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the statistical arm of the United States Department of Justice. By U.S. Government standards, it is a small agency consisting of about 50 full-time employees, just over half of whom are professional statisticians. The Bureau was established by law in 1979 under the Justice System Improvement Act and has been reauthorized by the Congress twice since then—in 1984 under the Justice Assistance Act and in 1988 under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act. Annually, BJS receives a direct appropriation of about \$25 million. The BJS statutory mission is to:

- collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate statistics on crime, victims of crime, criminal offenders, and operations of justice systems agencies at all levels of government;
- provide financial and technical support to state criminal justice statistical and operating agencies; and
- analyze national information policy on such issues as the privacy, security, and confidentiality of criminal justice information and the interstate exchange of criminal records.

Each reauthorization included new and additional tasks assigned to BJS. Most important has been the evolving mandate to improve the quality of Federal and state criminal history records. BJS produces about 43 to 50 statistical publications per year covering a wide range of topics and issues. BJS, through its Justice Statistics Clearinghouse at the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, distributes more than three-quarters of a million copies annually of BJS reports and documents. In addition, through the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at the University of Michigan, BJS makes available a wide variety of machine-readable datasets covering most BJS statistical series. BJS also administers the National Drug Crime Data Center and Clearinghouse. On average, statistics on correctional populations, agencies, and facilities result in approximately 15 publications each year.

Historical Corrections Statistics

In 1850, the Federal Government, in cooperation with the states, as a part of the 7th Decennial Census of the Nation, initiated the first count of prisoners held in each of the 32 states and in the then-existing territories of Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, and Utah. The Census of 1850 described the characteristics of the prisoners confined in each jurisdiction with respect to race, age, sex, nativity, and place of birth. This report, from 140 years ago, also provided per capita imprisonment rates by race. In addition, the report from the census described the characteristics of persons held in local jails in seven states.

Between 1850 and 1870, U.S. marshals administered the census of prisoners as part of a special schedule of social statistics. The 1880 census targeted the enumeration of persons held by all jurisdictions in the Nation and yielded a series of incarceration rates for the states. In a special census of 1904, data on prisoners received from state courts were added to the growing list of descriptive information available for each state. The 1904 report broke down admissions by major and minor offense categories and included detail on sentences received by offense for each jurisdiction. In 1910, the introduction of the indeterminate sentence was noted in prisoner statistics—37 percent of state prisoners entering that year had received an indeterminate sentence. Every state in the Nation supplied statistical data in 1910 on offense distribution and sentence length; of the 136,472 adult and juvenile prisoners enumerated that year, sentence length data were missing for only 286 cases.

The 1923 Census of Prisoners revealed that 55 percent of those admitted to prisons that year had received an indeterminate sentence. The report observed that the increased use of the indeterminate sentence had led to wide ranges and disparities in sentencing. The 1923 report also described the prior confinement histories of the 147,000 new commitments during the year—nearly half of those admitted that year had previously been incarcerated. Detailed data tables in this report provided new information on time served by sex and by offense for each jurisdiction. A supplementary report to the 1923 census analyzed the relationship between the prisoner's residence and the place where the crime occurred,

*The authors are both with the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Dr. Dillingham is director of the Bureau, and Mr. Greenfeld is chief, Correctional Statistics Program.

time spent as a resident of the state and county, educational status, age, marital status, who the prisoner had been living with and the age the prisoner had left home, earnings, employment history, prior adult and juvenile criminal history, and even the prisoner's World War I service records. The prisoner data collection effort of 1923, a partnership between the states and the Federal Government, stands as a significant landmark in the history of correctional statistics.

In 1926, the annual collection of prisoner statistics was begun by the Bureau of the Census. The stated goal of the data collection effort was to "show the application of penal policies for various classes of offenders and in different parts of the country." That first report in 1926, the 65th anniversary of which BJS now celebrates, provided the basic structure which guides current statistical programs in corrections today. The delineation of common counting rules, definitions of reportable criminal justice statuses, uniform offense labels, and consensual schedules for reporting were all mapped out well before jurisdictions began participating in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Between 1926 and 1949, annual prisoner data were gathered and compiled by the Bureau of the Census. Between 1950 and 1971, responsibility for the program was shifted to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In 1971, the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, the precursor to BJS, assumed the overall responsibility for National Prisoner Statistics, or NPS as the series has come to be known. Over the 65 years of prisoner counts, several definitional changes were imposed with the goal of standardizing per capita rate calculations across jurisdiction. For example, in 1940, the counts of sentenced prisoners were limited to felons, a category of crime which varied from state to state in the duration of possible penalties, and in 1971 the term felon was discarded and "prisoners with sentences greater than 1 year" was used. In addition, reportable counts changed in 1977 to a jurisdiction-based definition in order to include state-sentenced prisoners backed-up in local jails due to prison crowding.¹

Current BJS Statistical Series in Corrections

Over the years, various statistical series have been added to expand the information available on prisoners and to obtain information on other segments of corrections. In 1930, annual data collection on executions was begun and in 1933 the first complete census of local jails was under-

taken. In 1965, annual parole data were first collected under the Uniform Parole Reporting Program, and in 1976 the first complete census of probation agencies was undertaken by the Federal Government. Counts of juvenile offenders in custody were initiated in 1971 as a biennial series entitled "Children in Custody."

Currently, BJS sponsors more than 20 separate statistical programs on correctional populations in the United States. Each program requires a different set of collection protocols, data processing specifications, and reporting schedules, plus separate listings of respondents and agencies. Together these series collect information from over 1,300 Federal and state correctional facilities, 3,300 local jails, 52 paroling authorities, and hundreds of probation agencies. The populations covered number about 4 million persons under the care, custody, or control of corrections agencies.

Probation

BJS collects annual counts and movements from all Federal, state, and local adult probation agencies in the United States. Descriptive information obtained includes race, sex, and ethnicity and the numbers on probation for felonies, misdemeanors, and driving while intoxicated. Data on the type of discharge are also obtained. Findings for 1989 reveal that:

- 2,520,479 adults were on probation nationwide on December 31, 1989;
- 1,567,156 adults entered probation supervision during the year and 1,433,104 were discharged from probation supervision during the year;
- 1,369 adults were on probation at yearend for every 100,000 adults in the resident population;
- 69% of the probation population were white, 30% were black, and 1% represented persons of other races;
- 82% of the probation population were males and 18 percent were females;
- 47% of the probation population had been convicted of a felony, 31% a misdemeanor, and 21% had been convicted of a driving while intoxicated offense;
- 39% of probationers had a sentence to confinement suspended, 12% were placed on probation in lieu of the imposition of a sentence, and 47% were sentenced directly to probation;
- among those discharged from probation, 68% exited by successful completion of their term, 4% were discharged as absconders, 5% were discharged to an outstanding detainer or warrant, 3% were incarcerated after conviction for a new offense, 11% were incarcerated on their current offense after violations of their conditional release, and 9% were discharged for other reasons such as death;
- 41% of probation agencies reported having specialized units providing intensive supervision services and 27% of probation agencies reported using electronic monitoring.

Over the decade of the 1980's, cumulative growth in the number under probation supervision was nearly 126 percent. During 1989, the

TABLE 1. CHANGES IN THE SIZE OF CORRECTION POPULATIONS, 1980-89

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total corrections population</u>	<u>Probation</u>	<u>Jail</u>	<u>Prison^b</u>	<u>Parole</u>
1980	1,842,121	1,118,097	183,988 ^a	319,598	220,438
1981	2,008,287	1,225,934	196,785 ^a	360,029	225,539
1982	2,194,364	1,357,264	209,582	402,914	224,604
1983	2,476,836	1,582,947	223,551	423,898	246,440
1984	2,690,704	1,740,948	234,500	448,264	266,992
1985	3,013,123	1,968,712	256,615	487,593	300,203
1986	3,241,960	2,114,821	274,444	526,436	326,259
1987	3,468,593	2,247,158	295,873	562,814	362,748
1988	3,746,671	2,387,740	343,569	607,766	407,596
1989	4,059,433	2,523,716	395,553	683,367	456,797
Total percent change					
1980-89	120.4%	125.7%	115.0%	113.8%	107.2%

Note: Counts for probation, prison, and parole population are for December 31 each year. Jail population counts are for June 30 each year.

^aEstimated population counts.

^bPrisoner counts are for those in custody only.

probation population nationwide increased at the rate of about 2,615 additional new cases each week.

During the coming fiscal year, BJS will initiate a major new effort to gather more detailed information on the probation population in the United States. A complete census of all probation agencies will be conducted in order to gather agency-specific information on caseload size, presentence reporting, agency average daily investigation and supervision population size and composition, revocation procedures and frequency of revocation, programs and participation levels, residential services, drug testing, employees and types of occupational specialization, and agency budgets. Subsequent to conducting the census, a nationally representative sample of probationers will be selected for personal interviews regarding their criminal histories, drug and alcohol histories, various elements of their current offense (for example, a description of their relationship to their victim), and their use of weapons. Together the agency census and the survey of probationers should yield substantial additional information to supplement the annual population counts.

Jails and Locally Operated Correctional Facilities

BJS utilizes several different data collection programs to obtain both annual estimates of populations held in local confinement facilities and to provide detailed descriptions of the facilities and their populations. Annual population estimates are obtained from a national sample of jails. The

sample is designed to capture all large jails (jails with an average daily population of at least 100 inmates—such jails account for three-fourths of all jail inmates in the nation) and a stratified random sample of the remaining jails of smaller size. Information collected in the annual Jail Sample Survey includes population composition by age, sex, race, ethnicity, and conviction status; population movements; rated capacity and occupancy; the number of inmates held for other authorities; court orders; and deaths by cause of death. Data for 1989 reveal that:

- 395,553 persons were held in locally operated jails and correctional facilities on June 30, 1989;
- the jail population was 91% male, 51% white, 47% black, and 14% Hispanic;
- during the year preceding the survey, there were more than 19 million admission and release movements; and
- jails nationwide were operating at 108% of their rated capacities.

Data on jails and jail inmates are also obtained through periodic censuses of facilities and sample surveys of jail inmates. Censuses of local jails nationwide have been conducted in 1970, 1972, 1978, 1983, and 1988. The most recent census of the 3,316 local jails, conducted in 1988, revealed that:

- California (64,216 inmates), Texas (29,439 inmates), Florida (28,236 inmates), and New York (25,928 inmates) held the largest numbers of persons in local jails—Georgia and the District of Columbia had the largest number of persons held in jail per 100,000 residents;
- 12 percent of jails nationwide were under Federal or state court orders for specific conditions of confinement, and three-quarters of these were ordered to limit the size of the populations they housed;
- more than 99,000 persons were employed by local jails nationwide;
- two-thirds of all jails in the nation held an average daily population of fewer than 50 inmates—large jails, housing 1,000 or more inmates, accounted for 1.5% of all jails but 27% of all inmates;
- locally operated jails maintained nearly 17.4 million square feet of housing space or about 51 square feet of floor space per person—jails in New Jersey provided the least space per person, on average, while those in North Dakota provided the most;
- locally operated jails contained nearly 137,000 housing units (cells and dormitories) with an average of 2.5 persons per unit—45% of all inmates were held in housing units with at least 6 people in them.

Between 1978 and 1989, jail populations nationwide increased from 158,394 to 395,553, about a 150 percent increase. In 1978, jails were found to be operating at about 65 percent of their rated capacity. By 1989, jails were found to be occupied at 108 percent of their capacities.

In 1973, 1978, 1983, and 1989, BJS sponsored national sample surveys of the population in local jails. The surveys entailed face-to-face interviews

with large, nationally representative samples of persons, both convicted and unconvicted, held by local authorities. The instrument used in 1989 gathered information from nearly 6,000 persons held in 407 local jails on their criminal histories, prior use of drugs and alcohol, offenses and sentences, who their victims were, their participation in treatment programs, and numerous other demographic and family history characteristics. Each case had more than 900 individual items coded. Data for 1989 is scheduled for release in Spring 1991.

Prisons

BJS data on prisons and prisoners, as with jails, relies upon a wide variety of collection programs to provide both annual counts and movements as well as to provide descriptions of the prison facilities nationwide and the populations they house. Prisoner counts are conducted three times per year: a June 30 count and an advanced and final yearend count. The mid-year count captures information on the sex of inmates held in state and Federal prisons and categorizes inmates into three groupings: those with sentences greater than 1 year, those with sentences of a year or less, and those who are unsentenced.² Prisoner data for June 30, 1990, revealed that:

- the Nation's state and Federal prison population reached a record 755,425 prisoners, an increase of 6% during the first half of the year and an annual increase of nearly 12%;
- growth during the first half of the year translated into a weekly demand for approximately 1,650 new bedspaces;
- half-yearly growth was most rapid in the Northeast (up 6.8%) and least rapid in the South (up 5.4%);
- the number of female prisoners increased by 71% during the first half of the year compared to growth of 5.9% in the number of male prisoners;
- per capita rates of imprisonment were 559 per 100,000 males and 31 per 100,000 females.

In addition to the count of state and Federal prisoners, the advance yearend counts provide detail on trends in prison populations, the extent of jail backups due to prison crowding, and the relationship between population and self-reported design, operational, and rated capacities. The advance yearend counts also provide crime-based incarceration rates in addition to population-based rates of incarceration. The advance yearend count for 1989 showed that:

- during the decade of the 1980's, prison populations in Western states rose by 203%, the Northeast by 155%, the Midwest by 111%, the South by 75%, and Federal prisoners by 129%;
- states with the largest growth during the decade were California (263%), New Hampshire (258%), New Jersey (249%), Alaska (234%), and Nevada (193%);
- at the end of 1989, about 3% of the state-sentenced

prison population was backed-up in local jails due to crowding in state institutions, and prisons nationwide were operating between 10% and 29% in excess of their capacities.³

The final yearend count provides additional detail on prisoner movements during the year; the race, sex, and ethnicity of prison populations; and the methods of entry and release. Historical counts of the custodial population are also provided in order to facilitate comparisons back to 1925.

Another BJS statistical series, the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP), collects individual-level data annually on prisoner movements: prison admissions, prison releases, parole admissions, and parole releases. These data permit analyses of issues of topical concern such as offense distributions and sentences received by those entering prisons, time served by offense for those discharged from prisons and the relationship to the sentence received, and duration of parole supervision and time to revocation. Data collected for 1986 revealed that:

- 34% of those committed from courts to state prisons had been convicted of violent offenses, 41% of property offenses, 16% of drug offenses, 8% of "public order" offenses (weapons, commercial vice, etc.), and 1% of other crimes;
- the average (mean) sentence for all court-committed admissions was 80 months—117 months for violent offenders, 64 months for property offenders, 59 months for drug offenders, and 50 months for public order offenders;
- 4.6% of all prison admissions had received sentences of at least 30 years (including life and death sentences), 9.1% had sentences of at least 20 years, and 14.5% had sentences of at least 15 years;
- among prisoners released from state prisons, the average (mean) time served was 24 months excluding jail credits—released violent offenders had served an average of 35 months, property offenders 19 months, and drug and public order offenders 17 months;
- released offenders had served an average of 35% of the maximum sentences they had received;
- among those discharged from parole supervision, 45% were by successful completion of term—the remainder were discharged as absconders, returned to prison, or had died;
- those discharged successfully from parole supervision had served an average of 20 months in prison and an average of 20 months under supervision with an average sentence of 72 months;
- by offense, the average sentence and time served in prison and on parole for those successfully discharged from parole was—

offense	sentence	prison time	parole time
violent	94 mos	29 mos	23 mos
property	60 mos	15 mos	18 mos
drugs	59 mos	15 mos	19 mos
public order	44 mos	13 mos	15 mos

- for those discharged from parole unsuccessfully by absconding or returning to prison as a result of a revocation, the average time under supervision was 17 months after having served an average of 23 months in prison, based upon an average sentence of 89 months.

BJS data on correctional facilities generally are gathered on 5-year cycles. Facility censuses have

been conducted in 1973, 1979, 1984, and 1990. These censuses obtain institutional and community-based, facility-level information on such items as: facility operators, provisions for physical security, inmate custody levels, primary functions, facility age, planned additions to capacity, rated capacity, court orders and consent decrees, inmate population composition, space, use and occupancy for each cell or housing unit, inmate programs and participation levels, staffing and staff composition, health facilities, institutional incidents, and drug testing policies and procedures for inmates and staff.

BJS also conducts sample surveys of the inmate population. Inmate surveys have been conducted in 1974, 1979, 1986, and a new survey will be carried out in June 1991. The surveys entail face-to-face interviews with large representative samples of the population in state prisons. The 1991 survey will be complemented by the addition of a companion survey of Federal prisoners. The surveys obtain a wide variety of demographic, criminal history, and drug and alcohol use information on prisoners. In addition, special supplements to the 1991 surveys will gather new information from inmates on their victims, the types of community supervision conditions most often violated, habits with respect to the possession and use of firearms, prior involvement in criminal gangs, and prior testing by criminal justice authorities for drug use and HIV. The most recent inmate survey, conducted in 1986 and based upon nearly 14,000 interviews, revealed that:

- over 80% of state prisoners have had prior sentences to prison, jails, probation, youth confinement facilities, or probation;
- two-thirds of state prisoners were serving a sentence for a violent crime or had a prior history of convictions for violent crimes;
- 95% of state prisoners were either recidivists or had current or prior convictions for violence;
- 35% of all prisoners were under the influence of a drug at the time of the offense for which they were serving time and 43% were daily users of drugs in the month preceding that offense;
- more than half of state prisoners reported they had been using drugs, alcohol, or both at the time of the offense for which they were serving time;
- among state prisoners who had used drugs, about half began their use by age 15;
- the greater an offender's use of major drugs (such as heroin, methadone, cocaine, LSD, or PCP) the more extensive the prior conviction history;
- about 30% of state prisoners reported prior participation in a drug treatment program—nearly half of these inmates had been in drug treatment more than once;
- among violent offenders in state prison, 59% reported not knowing their victim, 24% said they knew the victim very

well or as an acquaintance, 10% said the victim was a relative, and 7% indicated their victim had been an intimate;

- violent offenders with the most extensive criminal histories were the most likely to have victimized a stranger;
- over two-thirds of violent inmates reported that either they or their victims had been using drugs or alcohol at the time of the crime.

Parole

Apart from the individual-level data on parole admissions and releases discussed under the National Corrections Reporting Program, BJS data series on parole are similar to the data collected from probation agencies. BJS obtains annual aggregate movements and yearend counts by jurisdiction as well as descriptive information on race, sex, and ethnicity of parole populations. Data for 1989 reveal that:

- 456,797 adults were under the supervision of parole agencies nationwide on December 31, 1989;
- 305,596 adults entered parole supervision during the year, and 256,395 were discharged from parole supervision during the year;
- 248 adults were on parole at yearend for every 100,000 adults in the resident population;
- 53% of the parole population was white, 46% black, and 1% were of other races;
- 92% of the parole population was male and 8% was female;
- 7.5% of the parole population was considered to be on an inactive status with minimal supervision required, and just over 2% of the parole population was reported to be in a special intensive supervision status.

Over the past 13 years, the process by which offenders have been discharged from prison and placed on conditional supervision in the community has undergone radical change. In 1977, nearly 72 percent of the 115,000 persons discharged from state prisons nationwide were released as a result of parole board decisions. Less than 6 percent of the releases that year were by supervised mandatory release (sentence minus earned good-time credits), and 1 percent were the result of special release procedures such as emergency release due to crowding, supervised furloughs, or court-ordered release due to crowding. By contrast, among the more than 364,000 discharges from state prisons in 1989, 39 percent were by a discretionary parole board decision, 31 percent were by supervised mandatory release, and nearly 9 percent were due to special procedures mostly utilized to cope with prison crowding. In both 1977 and 1989 about 4 percent of all prison releases were to probation agencies (shock incarceration or shock probation terms), and the remainder, about 17 percent, were unconditional prison releases, primarily due to expiration of

term. BJS data on parole thus document the declining role of the parole board in the United States as the determinant of prison release.

During the coming fiscal year, as it has done in the probation area, BJS will undertake a major new initiative to obtain greater detail on the parole population and the agencies which administer parole supervision in the community. A census of all parole agencies will be conducted to gather agency-specific data on caseload size, pre-release planning, revocation procedures and frequency of revocation, programs and participation levels, residential services, drug testing, employees and types of occupational specialization, and agency budgets. After completion of the agency census, a nationally representative sample of parolees will be selected for personal interviews covering their criminal histories, drug and alcohol histories, various elements of their current offense, their victims, and their use of weapons. Together, the agency census and the survey of parolees should significantly supplement existing knowledge relating to parole populations and parole activities.

Special Series

Capital Punishment

BJS also collects annual data on populations under sentence of death. Individual-level data on persons received under sentence of death, persons executed, and persons whose death sentence is removed are obtained from state correctional agencies each year. In addition, each State Attorney General's office is surveyed to obtain information on legislative changes or developments in case law which affect the imposition of the death penalty in that state. Data for 1989 reveal that:

- eight states carried out 16 executions during 1989 bringing the total to 120 executions between January 1, 1977, and December 31, 1989;
- those executed in 1989 had spent an average of 7 years and 11 months awaiting execution—the average time spent by the total 120 persons executed was 6 years and 7 months;
- during 1989, 250 persons were sentenced to death by courts, 96 had their death sentences vacated or commuted, and 6 died by other than execution;
- on December 31, 1989, there were 2,250 persons held under a sentence of death in 34 states;
- about 7 out 10 prisoners under sentence of death had a prior felony conviction history, about 1 in 11 had a prior conviction for homicide, and 2 in 5 condemned prisoners had a criminal justice status (such as being on probation, parole, a prison escapee, or having had charges filed against them) at the time of the capital offense;
- among those under sentence of death—58% were white, 40% black, and 2% of other races—99% were male—the median age was 34;

- at the end of 1989, 20 states authorized execution by lethal injection, 14 authorized electrocution, 6 states authorized lethal gas, 3 states authorized hanging, and 2 states authorized a firing squad—9 states authorized multiple methods;

- the 120 persons executed between 1977 and 1989 represent 3.2% of the 3,746 persons who were under a death sentence over the period.

Recidivism

In 1987 BJS initiated efforts to create a National Recidivism Reporting System (NRRS) designed to link criminal history information from the FBI and participating states in order to build data bases on selected groups of offenders. The pilot test for NRRS was a 6-year followup of a representative sample of almost 4,000 persons (representing 11,347 prison releases), aged 17 to 22 years old at the time of their release, who were discharged from prisons in 22 states in 1978.⁴ The following year, BJS designed and built a second NRRS data base containing more than 300,000 criminal history records on a representative sample of 16,355 persons (representing about 109,000 prison releases) discharged from prisons in 11 states in 1983 and followed for 3 years after release.⁵ This latter study revealed that:

- within 3 years of their release, 63% of the prison releases had been rearrested for new felony or serious misdemeanor charges, 47 percent had been reconvicted, and 41 percent had been returned to prison or jail;
- the estimated 68,000 prison releasees from the 11 states who were rearrested within 3 years accumulated 326,000 new arrest charges (an average of 4.8 charges per arrestee), including almost 50,000 arrests for violent crimes—2,300 arrests for homicides, 17,000 robbery arrests, 23,000 arrests for assault, and nearly 4,000 arrests for rape and sexual assault;
- the 109,000 prisoners were estimated to have acquired 1.7 million arrest charges over their criminal careers;
- about 1 in 8 rearrests occurred in states other than the state in which the prisoners had been imprisoned at the time of their release in 1983;
- recidivism rates were inversely related to age at release and directly related to the number of prior arrests—for example, an estimated 94% of prisoners aged 18 to 24 years old with 11 or more prior arrests were subsequently rearrested after their release in 1983;
- nearly 1 in 3 released violent offenders and 1 in 5 released property offenders were rearrested within 3 years for a violent crime.

BJS efforts to measure recidivism have continued with the development of a new data base on a representative sample of 35,000 persons arrested for the first time in 1978 and 1984 in eight states and tracked by their criminal history records through 1991. These data will provide estimates of the incidence, prevalence, and seriousness of offending for two points in time and will permit the analysis of trends in recidivism, criminal career patterns, and the effects of alternative

criminal justice sanctions.

Conclusion

A central mission of the corrections statistical series in BJS is to provide description of those populations under sanction, both incarcerated and non-incarcerated. Through these series a national portrait emerges against which individual jurisdictions may compare themselves. It also provides policy-makers, officials, and the public the opportunity to examine whether corrections is moving in the desired direction. For example, though there is much debate about who belongs in prison, BJS data reveal that about 95 percent of those confined in state prisons are either recidivists or violent offenders. This suggests the importance of both the gravity of the current offense and the extensiveness of the criminal history as factors in the decision to incarcerate. Similarly, BJS data reveal that about 3 out of 4 persons under correctional sanction are being supervised in the community and are not incarcerated in a local jail or a state or Federal prison, a ratio that has remained stable during the 1980's, the period of the largest prison population growth ever recorded. BJS data also indicate that:

- in general, time served in prison has not gotten longer;
- available evidence does not indicate that

prison makes people worse or exacerbates their crime-committing propensities;

- there is some evidence, however, that given arrest or conviction, the probability of a sentence to confinement has increased; and, most importantly,
- there is increased evidence that the criminal justice policies of the 1980's are reducing crime and enhancing public safety.

During the 1980's while the per capita number of sentenced prisoners under the jurisdiction of state and Federal correctional authorities increased nearly 100 percent, the per capita rate of crime against persons, as measured by annual surveys of the general population, dropped 16 percent, and the number of crimes per household declined 25 percent. Had the rates of criminal victimization in 1989 been the same as in 1980, an estimated 3.7 million more personal crimes and an estimated 5.5 million additional household crimes would have occurred. In 1980, an estimated 30 percent of all households in the nation had at least one member who had been victimized by crime during the year; in 1989, an estimated 24.9 percent of all households were affected by crime. While such numbers are still far too large and crime remains a national priority, significant reductions in crime rates have in fact occurred during the period of prison population growth.

TABLE 2. RATES OF VICTIMIZATION AND INCARCERATION, 1980-89

Year	Rates of victimization ^a		Percent of households affected by crime ^b	Incarceration rate ^c
	Personal crimes	Household crimes		
1980	116	227	30%	139
1981	121	226	30	153
1982	117	208	29	170
1983	108	190	27	179
1984	103	179	26	187
1985	99	174	25	200
1986	96	170	25	216
1987	98	174	25	228
1988	100	170	25	244
1989	98	170	25	274
Percent change 1980 to 1989	-15.5%	-25.1%	-16.7%	+97.1%

^aNumber of victimizations per 1,000 persons aged 12 or older or per 1,000 households.

^bThe percentage of U.S. households with at least one family member who reported having been a crime victim.

^cThe number of state and Federal prisoners with sentences greater than 1 year per 100,000 resident population.

NOTES

¹See *State and Federal Prisoners, 1925-85*, BJS Bulletin, NCJ-102494, October 1986, and *Historical Statistics on Prisoners in state and Federal Institutions, Yearend 1925-86*, BJS, NCJ-111098, May 1988, for further discussion of historical prisoner statistics in the United States.

²The distinction by sentence length is intended to distinguish those seven jurisdictions which combine jails and prisons under state administrative authority. The seven jurisdictions in which the state is responsible for the operations of jails are: Alaska, Hawaii, Rhode Island, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, and Vermont. In this way, similar

populations within each jurisdiction are available for comparative analysis.

Reporting jurisdictions vary in their methods for determining the capacity of their prisons. Self-reported capacities are obtained from state and Federal correctional agencies for up to three different measures of capacity: rated capacity, design capacity, or operational capacity. Estimates of the relationship of population to capacity are based upon the highest and lowest of the three capacity measures obtained.

³See *Recidivism of Young Parolees*, BJS Special Report, NCJ-104916, May 1987.

⁴See *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983*, BJS Special Report, NCJ-116261, April 1989.