

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Massachusetts Department of Correction
Review of Current Research - 1985

292

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Massachusetts Department of Correction

Michael V. Fair
Commissioner

February 1986

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	<u>PAGE</u>
I. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
II. <u>EVALUATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES</u>	3
- A Description of Work Release Job Placements from Massachusetts State Correctional Facilities During 1982	4
- Operating Under the Influence: Programs and Treatment for Convicted Offenders	5
- The Effect of Community Reintegration on Rates of Recidivism: A Statistical Overview of Data for the Years 1971 through 1982	6
- Recidivism Trend Analysis	7
- The Higher Education Prison Program: The First Ten Years	8
- Commitments to Massachusetts County Facilities for Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol During 1984	9
III. <u>ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORTS</u>	10
- A Statistical Description of Residents of the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions on January 1, 1985	11
- Commitments to Massachusetts County Facilities During 1984	12
- Population Movements in the Massachusetts Department of Correction During 1984	13
- 1984 Court Commitments to the Massachusetts Department of Correction	14
- A Statistical Description of Releases from the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions During 1984	15
- 1984 Yearly Statistical Report of the Furlough Program	16

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I. INTRODUCTION

During 1985, the Research Unit of the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) conducted several special research projects and produced a number of statistical reports describing the DOC prison population. This report presents a review of the research that stemmed from these projects and from the annual updates. The abstracts summarize specific findings from each of the studies and statistical reports cited.

This report is divided into two sections reflecting the different areas of research conducted by the Research Unit during 1985. The first section includes abstracts of findings from special evaluative and descriptive projects completed in 1985. The second section covers a series of statistical descriptions of the state prison population.

Studies summarized in the first section analyze selected prison populations or DOC sponsored programs. The first paper in this section describes job placements made by Massachusetts state correctional facilities during the 1982 calendar year for offenders on work release. The second study surveys county and state programs -- proposed and operating in 1984 -- for offenders convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol (O.U.I.). The third report summarizes the findings of recidivism research conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction over a twelve year period, 1971-1982. The fourth study attempts to explain the recidivism trends detected in the previous analysis by examining inmate characteristics, trends in reintegration programming, and recidivism rates produced in an extended follow-up period. The fifth study examines the first 10 years of inmate participation in a college-accredited, higher educational program offered in Massachusetts state prisons since 1973. The final study in the first set of papers reports on the trends and 1984 profile of a special segment of county

commitments -- those offenders sentenced to a jail or house of correction for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol (O.U.I.).

The second set of papers consists of eight statistical reports which the Research Unit produces annually. The reports present updated information on the status and characteristics of the state and county prison populations. The first in the series of reports is a census of the prison population as of January 1, 1985. The next report presents information on 1984 commitments to county houses of correction. The three reports which follow the county commitment report document movement of the prison population during the calendar year of 1984. One report details admissions to and releases from state prisons, internal movements between institutions, and net population change at the end of the year; another reports on the number and characteristics of all court commitments to state correctional facilities in 1984; and a third describes the prison population released to the street during the same year. The last report in the series of statistical reports deals with the number and outcomes of furloughs (temporary releases) granted during 1984.

Information in each of the eight annual reports is institution-specific; that is, the data are reported by the institution where the population is resident, released from, or admitted to. Consequently, information on commitments, counts, and movements is available for the entire correctional system as well as individual institutions.

Copies of the full reports and studies may be obtained by writing to:

**Research Unit
Massachusetts Department of Correction
100 Cambridge Street, Room 2110
Boston, Massachusetts 02202**

II. EVALUATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES

A Description of Work Release Job Placements from Massachusetts State Correctional Facility During 1982

#277

January 1985

Dallas H. Miller

This research examines the characteristics of work release placements made by Massachusetts state correctional facilities during the calendar year of 1982. The job placements (the unit of analysis) are described in terms of the facility which placed the inmate at work in the community, the employer category of the placement, the job category of the placement, the number of hours worked per week, the hourly wage at job entry, the hourly wage at job termination, the total number of days from job entry to job termination, and an estimate of the total earnings for each job placement.

There were 619 inmates who began a total of 837 different work release placements during 1982. By the end of the data collection (August to September 1983) most of the original job placements had ended; only 65 of the original placements continued with the occupants still employed. The mean hours worked per week was 38 hours; the mean entry hourly wage was \$4.47; the mean termination hourly wage was \$4.61; the mean time on the job was 95 days; and the estimated total earnings per inmate were \$2,415. The most common types of job termination were: still in work release at same institution but seeking new job; transferred to higher custody; transferred to another pre-release facility; and paroled with same job.

A comparison of work release job categories with statewide job categories revealed that work release placements tended to be more heavily concentrated in relatively low-skill job categories -- semi-skilled, unskilled, agriculture and service occupations. Of these, only service work was projected to be an employment area of high growth throughout the state.

**Operating Under the Influence:
Programs and Treatment for Convicted Offenders**

#278

February 1985

Kathleen Moore

Massachusetts passed legislation at the end of 1982 which increased the penalties for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol (OUI). The years that followed this legislation showed dramatic changes in the processing of drunk driving offenses and the composition of the county correctional population. This report examines the types of programs and treatment which were available and proposed in 1984 for dealing with offenders convicted of operating under the influence.

The information presented in this report was obtained in a series of semi-structured interviews with representatives from agencies providing programs and/or custody for the OUI population. While the report touches on the range of programs available for first and second offenders, it focuses primarily on how the county correctional system was handling this relatively new population (multiple OUI offenders).

Programs for first and second OUI offenders had been in place for several years and were being expanded to meet the new demand. However, the county correctional system offered only limited programming for the multiple OUI offender (three or more convictions). While several counties did report the availability of special alcohol treatment and counseling programs, the extent of most correctional programming was Alcoholics Anonymous. Program development in the county correctional system was constrained by the length of sentence commonly received by OUI offenders, lack of resources and overcrowding. County officials supported the development of state-run regional facilities for the custody and treatment of OUI offenders. They all stressed the importance of developing community re-entry treatment programs for the third-time offender.

**The Effect of Community Reintegration
On Rates of Recidivism: A Statistical
Overview of Data for the Years 1971
Through 1982**

#279

February 1985

Daniel P. LeClair

This study summarizes the findings of recidivism research conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction over a twelve year period (1971 through 1982). Annual monitoring of releases and returns since 1971 has led to the detection of a number of significant trends within the state correctional system. Dominant among these trends was the systematic decline in recidivism rates from 1971 to 1978. In 1971 the recidivism rate for prisoners released from state correctional facilities, prerelease centers and halfway houses was 25 percent; in 1973 the rate dropped to 19 percent; by 1977 it dropped to 15 percent. More recent data revealed a reversal of this trend between 1979 and 1980. Again, however, in 1981 and 1982 the data showed a modest drop in the recidivism rate.

The collective findings of the research provide evidence of a positive influence of community reintegrative, correctional programming on recidivism rates. Decreased recidivism has been associated with the home furlough program, prerelease programs, and graduated movement among institutions in descending level of security and size.

Recidivism Trend Analysis

#282

September 1985

Daniel P. LeClair

This report examines various explanations for the rise in recidivism in Massachusetts Correctional Institutions between 1979 and 1982 that followed an eight year decline in the rates. The investigation follows three lines of inquiry: (1) determining whether a higher risk population passed through correctional system or was released through parole during the period when recidivism trends first reversed; (2) determining whether the level and quality of community reintegration programming had changed and, hence, contributed to the rise in recidivism; and (3) examining the vagaries of the recidivism rate affected by the follow-up criterion used to measure recidivism.

A profile of inmate characteristics was found to be associated with higher recidivism rates, but the release population in the two comparison years (1978 and 1979) did not differ in terms of the differential recidivism risk characteristics. Moreover, the data clearly demonstrated that neither the quality nor the level of reintegration programming was associated with the rise in the recidivism rate. Finally, the data revealed that once the follow-up period was extended from one to two or more years, the previously documented rise in the recidivism rate between 1978 and 1979 no longer existed.

The conclusion drawn from these findings was that the rise in recidivism rates, first detected in 1979, may have been an artifact of a major system change in the Massachusetts criminal justice apparatus, specifically, court reform. A systematic process of reducing court case backlogs in the later years seems to have led to the increased probability that an individual would be adjudicated in a shorter period of time -- within a 12 month period -- without increasing the overall number of actual recidivists during a given time period.

The Higher Education Prison Program: The First Ten Years

#286

December 1985

Patricia L. Tobin

A state university in Massachusetts under contract to the Massachusetts Department of Correction has offered college credit courses through the Higher Education Prison Program (HEPP) to inmates in adult correctional facilities from 1973 to the present. This study assesses the first 10 years of the operation of the college-in-prison program and develops a profile of the offenders taking courses through HEPP.

Analysis of class rosters of HEPP courses offered between 1973 and 1982 produced three kinds of research products: (1) a trend analysis of enrollment; (2) patterns of program participation and performance; and (3) characteristics of the 676 program participants. Enrollment peaked in 1977 and declined steadily after that time. HEPP offered a broad-based curriculum consisting of 97 different courses during the first 10 years of the program. About 40 percent of the participants entered the program from one to three years prior to anticipated or actual release from prison. Another 20 percent entered the program when they had at least 10 or more years to serve (including life sentences) before they were parole eligible. The relatively large number of long-term participants was unexpected given that the original program targets were offenders nearing pre-release or parole status. HEPP participants could be distinguished from the average prison resident by age, educational background at incarceration, level of occupational skills, and veteran status.

The report concludes with a discussion of some of the trends and developments which occurred in the first 10 years of HEPP. Observations are made on the utility and limitations of this type of program assessment.

Commitments to
Massachusetts County Facilities
For Operating Under the Influence
of Alcohol During 1984

#287

December 1985

Dallas H. Miller

This study focuses on offenders committed to the county correctional system for Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol (OUI). In recent years OUI commitments have come to represent a growing segment of the county commitment population. This report explores the place of OUI commitments in overall county commitment trends and identifies distinguishing characteristics associated with OUI commitments in 1984.

The report is divided into two sections. The first section compares the trends in OUI commitments and other county commitments between 1976 to 1984. The second section compares the typical OUI offender committed in 1984 with the typical county commitment for all other offenses in 1984.

Between 1976 and 1984 both OUI and total county commitments rose unevenly. The percentage of total commitments which were OUI commitments increased from one percent in 1976 to 25 percent in 1983 and dropped to 21 percent in 1984. The OUI commitments were found to vary widely from county to county when the 1983 and 1984 figures were compared. In comparison with other 1984 county commitments, OUI commitments had shorter sentences, were more likely to serve a weekend sentence, were older and tended to have more education, and were more likely to be white and less likely to be single. The other factors upon which comparisons were made -- institution, sentencing court and sex -- showed little or no difference between OUI commitments and other county commitments.

III. ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORTS

A Statistical Description of Residents of the
Massachusetts Correctional Institutions
on January 1, 1985

#281

August 1985

Linda K. Holt

This report is a census of the population in state correctional facilities in the Department of Correction (DOC) on January 1, 1985. The report contains information on present offense, personal background, criminal history, and furlough participation of the residents. The statistics are presented in two sections: the first section describes the DOC population in facilities with no pre-release component and the second section describes the DOC population in facilities with a pre-release component.

There were 4,940 individuals incarcerated in the state correctional system on January 1, 1985. This represents a 10 percent increase over the population on January 1, 1984. Of these residents, 712 (14 percent) were in maximum security institutions, 2926 (59 percent) in medium security institutions, and 1302 (26 percent) in minimum security institutions or pre-release centers. The majority (69 percent) were serving Walpole (prison) sentences with a median minimum sentence of six years; 23 percent were serving Concord (reformatory) sentences with a median maximum sentence of 10 years; and six percent were sentenced to Framingham. More of the Framingham residents were serving time for county sentences (54 percent) than for prison sentences (27 percent). There were 665 (14 percent) lifers in the 1984 census.

Residents were most likely to be serving sentences for offenses against the person (61 percent) or property offenses (16 percent). The most frequently committed offense was armed robbery (22 percent).

The population was predominately male (94 percent), white (64 percent), and single (64 percent). The median age at incarceration was 25 years old and the median education level was eleventh grade. Twenty-four percent had a history of commitments to a juvenile authority and 57 percent had at least one prior incarceration as an adult.

A minority of the population (30 percent) participated in the furlough program during their current commitment. Of the furlough participants, only four percent (67 individuals) had furlough escapes during the current commitment.

1984 Court Commitments to the Massachusetts
Department of Correction

#285

October 1985

Linda K. Holt

This report is a statistical description of individuals committed by the courts to a term of incarcerations in the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) during 1984. The report includes all new court commitments as well as incarcerations which began as new sentences during the year (forthwith and from-and-after sentences). If an individual was committed to DOC more than once during 1984, each commitment was counted as a separate event and, hence, a separate case. The report presents information on present offense, personal characteristics, and criminal history of admissions from the courts.

The 2,202 commitments in 1984 represent an eight percent increase over the 2,035 commitments in 1983. The increase in commitments in 1984 is much greater than the two percent increase which occurred in 1983; in fact, the commitments in 1984 represents the highest level of court commitments in DOC history.

There were 827 commitments to Walpole, 643 commitments to Concord, and 732 commitments to Framingham. Overall there was a 10 percent increase in male commitments to Walpole, no change in commitments to Concord, and a 16 percent increase in female commitments to Framingham between 1983 and 1984.

The median minimum sentence for Walpole commitments was six years; the median maximum sentence for Concord commitments was ten years; and the median sentence for Framingham commitments was less than one year. Sentence lengths were similar to those in 1983. Offenses against the person and sex offenses accounted for 67 percent of all commitments to Walpole and Concord. Armed robbery was the single most common offense. The largest increases in commitments during the year were for drug offenses (112 more in 1984 than 1983) and sex offenses (66 more in 1984 than 1983).

The majority of commitments were white (64 percent); 66 percent were single; 47 percent came from the Boston SMSA; most had limited work experience concentrated in the areas of manual labor and services; and 22 percent had a self-reported history of drug use. The median education level was twelfth grade and median age at commitment was 26 years, slightly higher than prior years. Forty-eight percent were serving their first adult incarceration.

Commitments to Massachusetts County Facilities
During 1984

#283

October 1985

Dallas H. Miller

This report presents a description of the population committed to Massachusetts county facilities (jails and houses of correction) during 1984. The report includes information on operating expenditures and average yearly population of the county correctional systems as well as commitment figures, offense and sentence information, and personal characteristics of the commitments. With the exception of Deer Island and Charles Street Jail--the Suffolk County house of correction and jail, respectively--the statistics reported for a county combine the house of correction and jail figures. Due to the small number of offenders sentenced to jails, most of the county figures reflect house of correction commitments. All information in the paper is reported by the county facility receiving the commitments.

During 1984 9,397 individuals were committed to county facilities. This represents a two percent decrease from the number of commitments in 1983. Nearly half of the commitments (46 percent) were sentenced to three institutions - Billerica (19 percent), Worcester (16 percent), and Springfield (11 percent). Most of the commitments (93 percent) were sentenced from District Courts. The majority of individuals (86 percent) were committed for property and other non-person offenses. Commitments for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated decreased by 15 percent from 1983 to 1984. Sixty-one percent of those committed to county facilities were sentenced to serve three months or less, including commitments in lieu of fines.

The median age of those committed in 1984 was 25 years old, and the median grade completed in school was the eleventh grade. Almost all of the commitments were male, the majority were single (69 percent), and most were white (77 percent).

Population Movements in the Massachusetts
Department of Correction During 1984

#284

November 1985

Patricia Tobin

The annual movement report is a compilation of all admissions and releases into and out of Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) facilities during 1984. The report presents information on types of admissions and releases including: new court commitments, paroles, returns on parole violation, discharges, escapes, deaths, transfers to other correctional facilities both within the state and outside of the state, and trips to hospitals and courts. The statistics on various types of movement are summarized by specific institution or institutional group.

At the beginning of 1984 the population in custody of the Massachusetts Department of Correction was 4463; at the end of 1984 the population count had risen to 4867, an increase of 404 individuals or nine percent during the year. There was a total of 25,430 moves during 1984; admissions outnumbered releases that year. The median number of moves per inmate was two. As in past years, inter-institutional transfers comprised the majority of admissions and releases in 1984.

There was a total of 12,917 admissions of all types into institutions during 1984. This represented an eight percent increase over such movements in 1983. The breakdown by specific type of move indicates that little increase occurred among institutional transfers (three percent), but large increases occurred between 1983 and 1984 in the number of returns on parole violations (39 percent), new court commitments (10 percent), and admissions of county inmates to DOC which rose from 15 admissions in 1983 to 307 in 1984.

There were 12,513 releases from DOC institutions during 1984, a six percent increase over the previous year. Much of the increase in releases can be attributed to more transfers to houses of correction which increased by 250 percent in one year from 84 transfers in 1983 to 294 in 1984. The number of escapes decreased from 257 escapes in 1983 to 236 in 1984, a decrease of eight percent. Other types of releases which increased between 1983 and 1984 were discharges (by 8 percent) and sentence expirations (by 23 percent).

A Statistical Description of Releases from
the Massachusetts Correction Institutions During 1984

#288

December 1985

Ann Marie Rocheleau

This report presents a statistical description of the characteristics of individuals released to the street from facilities of the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) during 1984. The tables contain information on the nature of the commitment offense, personal background characteristics, criminal history, furlough program participation, and release characteristics for all individuals released to the street from Massachusetts correctional facilities. Only those individuals who were released to the street by authority of the Parole Board, by expiration of sentence or by discharge are included in the report. Individuals who were released more than once during 1984 are treated as multiple cases.

During 1984 there were 2,125 releases to the street from DOC facilities. This represents an increase of eight percent over the number released in 1983. Walpole commitments represented 28 percent of all releases; Concord commitments represented 39 percent of all releases; and Framingham commitments represented 31 percent of all releases. Over two-thirds of the releases were male and almost one-third were female. Thirty-two percent of the releases were black and 66 percent were white. Overall, 52 percent of the releases had prior incarcerations in a state or county institution as an adult.

The report presents many of the statistics by the sex of the released offenders because males and females were found to differ on most release characteristics. These differences can be largely attributed to the type of sentences served. Eighty-seven percent of the females released were serving county sentences, and 13 percent were serving state sentences. Almost all of the males released were serving state sentences. Among males, 54 percent were released from minimum security and pre-release centers, and 46 percent were released from higher security institutions. Among females, 12 percent were released from lower security, and 88 percent were released from a secure institution. The majority of men were released by parole (82 percent), while slightly more than half of the women were released by expiration of sentence or good conduct discharge (55 percent). A greater proportion of men (21 percent) than women (four percent) were released following a return on a parole violation.

1984 Yearly Statistical Report of
the Furlough Program

#289

December 1985

Patricia Tobin

The furlough program has been in operation in the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) since November 6, 1972. This report presents a statistical description of the number, distribution, and outcomes of the furloughs granted in 1984, and a trend analysis of participation in the furlough program since its inception. The analysis is divided into two sections. The first section contains relevant furlough statistics for 1984. The second section presents a brief overview of the furlough program and provides comparisons of furlough characteristics over a 10 to 12 year period.

From January 1, 1984 to December 31, 1984 a total of 8,354 furloughs were granted. The actual number of individuals furloughed was 1,546. For every 1,000 furloughs granted, one ended in escape (a resident failing to return to a correctional facility within two hours of the appointed time of return). Ten individuals--less than two percent of the population furloughed -- were declared on furlough escape in 1984.

A total of 96,886 furloughs have been granted between the inception of the program and the end of 1984. During that period 616 of those furloughs resulted in escapes, yielding an overall furlough escape rate of 0.6 percent or six escapes per 1,000 furloughs. Since the inception of the furlough program a gradual decline has occurred in the actual number of furloughs granted, the number of individuals furloughed, and the percentage of the released population participating in the furlough program prior to release. In addition, the escape rate showed a parallel decline during the same period. However, starting in 1983 and extending into 1984 the number of furloughs granted and the number of individuals furloughed increased while the trends in the percentage of released population furloughed and the escape rate continued to decline. The decline in furloughs and escape rates suggests that greater selectivity may have been exercised in the granting of furloughs thereby reducing the likelihood of escape.

END