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U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

Jail Inmates 1984

At midyear 1984, local jails in the United States held an estimated 234,500 persons, 5% more than a year earlier. Overall jail occupancy was 90% of the rated capacity of the Nation's jails. The average daily jail population for the year ending June 30, 1984, was 230,641, up 1% from the preceding year. These findings are from the 1984 Annual Survey of Jails, which obtained data from 1,164 jails in 893 jurisdictions, a representative sample of the Nation's jails. Approximately 1 of every 3 jails across the country was surveyed.¹

Other survey findings:

- Males constituted 93% and females 7% of all jail inmates. Whites were 59%, blacks 40%, and other races 1%; Hispanics were 13%.
- An estimated 1,482 juveniles, about 1% of the total jail population, were being held in adult jails—down from 1,736 one year earlier.
- Unconvicted inmates (those on trial or awaiting arraignment or trial) were 51% of the adults in jail; convicted inmates (those awaiting or serving a sentence or returned to jail for violating probation or parole) were 49%.
- During the year ending June 30, 1984, there were 15.6 million jail admissions and releases.
- There were 363 jurisdictions with at least 100 jail inmates. Together, these jurisdictions had 621 jails, which held a total of 173,155 inmates, or about 74% of all jail inmates in the country. In these jurisdictions:
 - overall occupancy rate was 102% of rated capacity;
 - 24% of the jails held inmates due to crowding elsewhere;
 - 22% of the jails were under court

¹For a definition of local jails, see methodology, page 4.

In recent years few public policy issues have attracted as much attention at the State and local level as the resources devoted to jails, prisons, or other correctional programs. Accurate information on jail and prison populations is vital to policymakers and the general public in assessing the demands placed on correctional resources.

This Bureau of Justice Statistics bulletin presents findings from the June 30, 1984, Annual Survey of Jails. The survey was developed to provide estimates of the country's jail inmate population in the years between National Jail Censuses. This is the second survey in the series and the first to follow the 1983 National Jail Census.

order to reduce population, 13% to improve recreational facilities, and 11% to improve medical facilities or services;
—24% of the jails reported inmate deaths during the year. There were a total of 278 deaths, about the same number of deaths as in 1983; 136 were from natural causes, 126 were suicides, and 6 were homicides. Suicides were down slightly from 130 in 1983 and homicides were up 1.

One-day counts

On June 30, 1984, the estimated number of inmates held in local jails was 234,500, an increase of 5% over the number held on that date a year earlier (table 1). Between 1978 and 1983 the Nation's jail population had increased 41%, for an average annual rate of about 7%. One of every 744 adult residents of the United States was in jail on June 30, 1984.

May 1986

National estimates are provided for the number of jail inmates, their demographic characteristics and conviction or detention status, the total volume of annual jail admissions and releases, jail capacity, and the occupancy rate. Jails in 363 jurisdictions with large jail populations provided additional information on inmate deaths, jails under court order, and inmates held because of crowding elsewhere.

The Annual Survey of Jails was made possible through the cooperation of local jail administrators across the country whose facilities were selected to be included in the survey.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

Most juveniles in correctional custody (about 82,000 in 1983) are housed in juvenile facilities. Fewer than 1% of the inmates of the Nation's jails in 1984 were juveniles. An estimated 1,482 juveniles were housed in adult jails across the country on June 30, 1984, 15% fewer than a year earlier.²

Average daily population

The average daily population for the year ending on June 30, 1984, was 230,641—1% higher than the average daily population during the previous year.³ The average daily juvenile population for the year ending June 30, 1984, was 1,697—an estimated 4% below the average daily juvenile population for the previous year.

²For a definition of juveniles, see methodology, page 4.

³For a discussion of the differences between 1-day population counts and average daily population counts, see methodology, page 4.

Table 1. Jail population: One-day counts and average daily population by legal status and sex, 1978, 1983, and 1984

	Number of jail inmates				
	National jail census		Annual survey	Percent change from:	
	1978	1983	of jails 1984	1978-83	1983-84
One-day counts					
All inmates	158,394	223,551	234,500	41%	5%
Adults	156,783	221,815	233,018	41	5
Males	147,506	206,163	216,275	40	5
Females	9,277	15,652	16,743	69	7
Juveniles*	1,611	1,736	1,482	8	-15
Average daily population					
All inmates	157,930	227,541	230,641	44%	1%
Adults	156,190	225,781	228,944	45	1
Males	146,312	210,451	212,749	44	1
Females	9,878	15,330	16,195	55	6
Juveniles*	1,740	1,760	1,697	1	-4

Note: Data for 1-day counts are for February 15, 1978; June 30, 1983; and June 30, 1984.
*Juveniles are persons of an age specified by State statute (usually under 18) initially subject to juvenile court authority even if tried as adults in criminal court. Because fewer than 1% of the jail population were juveniles, caution must be used in interpreting any changes over time.

Table 2. Detention status of adult jail inmates, 1978, 1983, and 1984

	Number of jail inmates		
	National jail census	Annual survey of jails	
	1978	1983	1984
Total adults with detention status	152,891	221,644	229,822
Convicted	75,438	107,660	113,491
Male	71,459	100,557	105,529
Female	3,979	7,103	7,962
Unconvicted	77,453	113,984	116,331
Male	72,394	105,459	107,901
Female	5,059	8,525	8,430

Note: Data are for February 15, 1978; June 30, 1983; and June 30, 1984.

Adult detention status

On June 30, 1984, convicted inmates made up 49% of the adults with a detention status, about the same percentage as in 1983 (table 2). Convicted inmates include those awaiting sentencing or serving a sentence and those returned to jail because they violated the conditions of their probation or parole. Unconvicted inmates—those on trial or awaiting arraignment or trial—accounted for 51% of the adults with a detention status.

Juvenile detention status

An estimated 30% of the juvenile jail inmates were being housed for juvenile authorities. These inmates included runaways and juveniles awaiting transfer to juvenile facilities. About 20% of jailed juveniles had been adjudicated or convicted; about 49% were awaiting adjudication or trial.

Demographic characteristics

Males accounted for 93% of the entire jail inmate population (table 3). The male inmate population grew 5%

during the year; the female population, 7%. From 1978 to 1983 the male inmate population had grown 40% and the female population, 65%. One of every 382 adult males and 1 of every 5,422 adult females residing in the United States were in a local jail on June 30, 1984.

White inmates made up 59% of the jail population; blacks, 40%; and other races (native Americans and Aleuts, Asians, and Pacific Islanders), 1%. Approximately 13% of jail inmates were of Hispanic origin. About 16% of the whites and 8% of the blacks were Hispanic. The female proportion of each racial and ethnic group of jail inmates was between 6% and 8%.

Population movement

During the year ending June 30, 1984, there were an estimated 15.6 million jail admissions and releases (table 4). About half of these were admissions. Admissions to local jails declined an estimated 3% between 1983 and 1984. Total admissions and releases were 32,100 for juvenile females, 157,181 for juvenile males, 1.5 million for adult

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of jail inmates, 1984

Percent of jail inmates	
Sex	
Male	93%
Female	7%
Race	
White	59%
Male	55
Female	4
Black	40%
Male	37
Female	3
Other*	1%
Male	1
Female	—
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	13%
Male	12
Female	1
Non-Hispanic	87%
Male	81
Female	6

Note: Data are for June 30, 1984. Sex was reported for all 234,500 inmates; race and ethnicity for 206,585. Percentages may not add to total because of rounding.
— Less than 0.5%.
*Native Americans, Aleuts, Asians, and Pacific Islanders

Table 4. Annual admissions and releases by legal status and sex, 1983 and 1984

	Number	
	National jail census	Annual survey of jails
	1983	1984
Total admissions	8,084,344	7,838,521
Adults	7,978,978	7,742,941
Males	7,270,663	7,007,292
Females	708,315	735,649
Juveniles*	105,366	95,580
Males	86,850	79,617
Females	18,516	15,963
Total releases	7,941,236	7,716,067
Adults	7,837,156	7,622,366
Males	7,145,818	6,904,343
Females	691,338	718,023
Juveniles*	104,080	93,701
Males	85,564	77,564
Females	18,516	16,137

Note: Data are for the year ending June 30.
*Juveniles are persons of an age specified by State statute (usually under 18) initially subject to juvenile court authority even if tried as adults in criminal court.

females and 13.9 million for adult males. The only group experiencing an increase in admissions and releases between 1983 and 1984 was adult females (up about 4%).

Occupancy

During the 5 years between the 1978 and 1983 jail censuses, the jail inmate

Table 5. Inmates, jail capacity and occupancy, 1978, 1983, and 1984

	National jail census		Annual survey of jails
	1978	1983	1984
Number of inmates	158,394	223,551	234,500
Rated capacity of jails	245,094	261,556	261,432
Percent of rated capacity occupied	65%	85%	90%

Note: Data are for February 15, 1978; June 30, 1983; and June 30, 1984.

population grew 41%, while the total rated capacity of the country's jails rose only 7%. During this period, the overall occupancy rate went from 65% to 85% (table 5). By mid-1984 the jail population had increased another 5%, but overall rated capacity had remained about the same. As a result, the rated capacity occupied increased another 5 percentage points, putting overall occupancy at 90% on June 30, 1984.

Characteristics of jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations

Nearly three-fourths of the Nation's jail population in 1984 were housed in the jails of 363 jurisdictions, each with an average daily population of at least 100 inmates. Together they accounted for 621 jails, 3 more than in 1983. They held 173,155 inmates on June 30, 1984, slightly more than the 168,250 inmates held a year earlier.

Inmates held because of overcrowding elsewhere

Approximately 24% of the jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations held inmates because of crowding elsewhere in 1984, compared to 21% in 1983 (table 6). About 75% of these jails that were holding inmates because of crowding elsewhere were holding them for State authorities. About a third more jails held inmates for State authorities because of crowding in 1984 than in 1983. The proportion holding inmates for other local authorities or Federal authorities because of crowding did not increase during the year.

The number of inmates held because

of crowding elsewhere increased 41% during the year, but still represented only 4% of all inmates in jurisdictions with large jail populations. Most of the increase was in the number of inmates held for State authorities, which rose by 31%.

Jails under court order

Although an estimated 90% of the rated capacity of the Nation's jails was occupied on June 30, 1984, occupancy exceeded rated capacity by about 2% among jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations (table 7). Nearly 22% (134) of the jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations were under court order to reduce the number of inmates they housed. The combined court-ordered capacity for these jails under court order was 49,572. The total rated capacity of these jails was about 99% of the total court-ordered capacity, and they were occupied at 98% of court-ordered capacity.

In jurisdictions with large jail populations, 24% of the jails reported that they were under court order to improve one or more conditions of confinement (table 8). Among these jails 47% were cited for deficient medical facilities and services, 54% for inadequate recreational facilities, and 81% for crowded living units.

Inmate deaths

Approximately 24% of the jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations reported inmate deaths during the year ending June 30, 1984, down from 27% a year earlier (table 9). These jails

Table 7. Rated capacity and percent of capacity occupied for jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations, June 30, 1984

Jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations	Number of jails	Rated capacity	Number of jail inmates	Percent of capacity occupied
Total	621	169,967	173,155	102%
Jails under court order to reduce population*	134	48,869	48,588	99%
Jails not under court order	487	121,098	124,567	103%

Note: Data are for June 30, 1984, and cover all jails in jurisdictions with an average daily inmate population of 100 or more in the 1983 jail census.

*The court-ordered capacity for these jails was 49,572—703 inmates higher than the rated capacity.

Table 6. Jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations: Impact of crowding elsewhere, 1983 and 1984

	Number	
	1983	1984
All jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations	618	621
Jails holding inmates for other authorities*:		
Federal	130	150
State	31	35
Local	84	112
Local	44	52
All inmates in jurisdictions with large jail populations	168,250	173,155
Inmates being held for other authorities:		
Federal	4,400	6,199
State	306	460
State	3,606	4,733
Local	488	1,006

Note: Data are for June 30, 1983, and June 30, 1984, and cover all jails in jurisdictions with an average daily inmate population of 100 or more in the 1983 jail census.

*Detail adds to more than total because some jails hold inmates for more than one authority.

averaged nearly two inmate deaths per facility. About half the inmate deaths were from natural causes, 45% were suicides, 2% resulted from injuries caused by another person, and 4% were from other causes.

Table 8. Jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations: Number under court order and subject of court order, 1984

	Number of jails
Jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations	621
Jails under court order:	
To reduce population	134
For conditions of confinement	150
Subject of court order:	
Crowded living units	122
Recreational facilities	81
Medical facilities/services	70
Visitation practices/policies	55
Disciplinary procedures/policies	54
Food service (quantity/quality)	51
Administrative segregation procedures/policies	50
Staffing patterns	48
Grievance procedures/policies	46
Education/training programs	43
Fire hazards	41
Counseling programs	36
Other	35

Note: Data are for June 30, 1984, and cover all jails in jurisdictions with an average daily inmate population of 100 or more in the 1983 jail census. Some jails were under court order for more than one reason.

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Bulletin

Methodology

The 1984 Annual Survey of Jails was the second such survey conducted for the Bureau of Justice Statistics by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The first was conducted in 1982. On February 15, 1978, and June 30, 1983, complete enumerations of the Nation's jails were conducted. These full censuses are conducted every 5 years. A sample of jails is surveyed in each of the 4 years between full jail censuses to provide annual estimates of the jail inmate population.

A local jail is a facility that holds inmates beyond arraignment, usually for more than 48 hours, and is administered by local officials. Specifically excluded from the count were temporary lockups that house persons for less than 48 hours, Federal- or State-administered facilities, privately operated facilities, and the combined jail-prison systems of Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The 1984 survey included 1,164 jails in 893 jurisdictions. A jurisdiction is a county, municipality, or township that administers one or more local jails. The jails in 363 jurisdictions were automatically included in the survey because the average daily inmate population in these jurisdictions was 100 or more in the 1983 jail census. The jurisdictions with large jail populations accounted for 621 jails and 173,155 inmates, or 74% of the estimated inmate population on June 30, 1984. The other jurisdictions surveyed constituted a stratified random sample of those jurisdictions whose average daily inmate population was less than 100 in the 1983 jail census.

Data were obtained by mail questionnaires: a long form for jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations and a short form for those in the sample group. Second and third mailings and follow-up phone calls were used to encourage reporting. The response rate for the survey was 99.6% of all jurisdictions sampled.

National estimates for the inmate population on June 30, 1984, were produced by sex, race, legal status, and conviction status; for the average daily population during the year ending June 30, 1984, by sex and legal status; and for admissions and releases during the year ending June 30, 1984, by sex and legal status. National estimates were also produced for jail design capacity and rated capacity. Administrators of jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations, who completed the longer questionnaire, provided counts of inmates held due to crowding elsewhere, inmate deaths, and jails under court order.

Except for racial characteristics, data from the 1983 census of jails were used to

Table 9. Jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations: Inmate deaths during 1983 and 1984

	Jails reporting deaths ^a		Inmate deaths	
	1983	1984	1983	1984
Total	169	150	276	278
Cause of death:				
Natural causes	87	83	129	136
Suicide	99	96	130	126
Injury by another person	5	5	5	6
Other ^b	11	10	12	10

Note: Data are for the year ending June 30 and cover all jails in jurisdictions with an average daily inmate population of 100 or more in the 1983 jail census.
^aDetail adds to more than total because some jails reported more than one type of death.
^bAccidents and cases where the cause of death had not been determined.

estimate individual items of data not available from some respondents in 1984.

Because jails with average daily populations of less than 100 were included in the survey on a sample basis, national estimates have an associated sampling error (standard error). In general, if the difference between two numbers is more than twice the standard error for that difference, the odds are 95 out of 100 that the two numbers are, in fact, different. In other words, there is a 95% certainty that the difference is real and not the result of surveying a sample rather than the entire population. Differences mentioned in the text meet or exceed this 95% confidence level.

The results of comparisons among jails in jurisdictions with large jail populations are not subject to sampling error because all such jurisdictions were surveyed.

In both the 1983 National Jail Census and the 1984 Annual Survey of Jails two measures of inmate population were used: the average daily population for the year ending June 30 and the inmate count on June 30 of each year. The average daily inmate population balances out any extraordinary events that may render the 1-day count atypical. The 1-day count is useful because some characteristics of the inmate population, such as race, ethnicity, and detention status, can be obtained for a specific date from jails that may not record them on a daily basis.

State statutes and judicial practices allow juveniles to be incarcerated in adult jails and prisons under a variety of circumstances. Juveniles are persons of an age (usually under 18) specified by statute in each State, initially subject to juvenile court authority, even if tried as adults in criminal court. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 recommends that those juveniles held in adult jails who were not tried as adults in criminal court be separated from the adult inmate population by both sight and sound. The proportion of the juveniles in adult jails who were housed in accordance with these guidelines is not available.

All calculations in this report involving general population figures used Bureau of the Census estimates of the population for July 1, 1984, reported in "Estimates of the population of the United States, by age, sex and race: 1980 to 1984," Series P-25, No. 965, March 1985.

Further reading

Census of Jails, 1978: Data for Individual Jails, Vols. I-IV, NCJ-72279-72282, December 1981.

BJS Bulletins:

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Jail Inmates 1982, NCJ-87161, February 1983.

The 1983 Jail Census, NCJ-95536, November 1984.

Jail Inmates 1983, NCJ-99175, November 1985.

Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletins are prepared principally by BJS staff. This bulletin was written by Phyllis Jo Baunach and Melissa Sickmund of BJS and Betty Ford of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Carol B. Kalish, chief of data analysis, edits the bulletins. Marianne W. Zawitz assisted in the editing. Marilyn Marbrook, publications unit chief, administered production, assisted by Betty Sherman, Millie Baldea, and Joyce Stanford. Statistical assistance was provided by Thomas Hester, Christopher A. Innes, and Sophie Bowen. The sample design and data collection were carried out by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for BJS.

May 1986, NCJ-101094

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National Crime Survey

Criminal victimization in the U.S.:

- 1984 (final report), NCJ-100435, 5/86
- 1983 (final report), NCJ-96459, 10/85
- 1982 (final report), NCJ-92820, 11/84
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- Reporting crimes to the police, NCJ-99432, 12/85
- Locating city, suburban, and rural crime, NCJ-99535, 12/85
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- Family violence, NCJ-93449, 4/84

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- The crime of rape, NCJ-96777, 3/85
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- 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

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The Hispanic victim, NCJ-69261, 11/81

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

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