



Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin

Prisoners in 1984

The total number of prisoners in State and Federal correctional facilities at yearend 1984 was 463,866. During the year 26,618 prisoners were added to the prison rolls. The States and the District of Columbia added 24,281 prisoners; the Federal system, 2,337. The increase for 1984 brings the total growth in the prison population since 1980 to more than 134,000 inmates—an increase of 40% in the 4-year period.

The 1984 growth rate (6.1%) was slightly greater than the 1983 rate (5.7%). Although the 1984 rate is roughly half of that for the record-high years of 1981 and 1982, it is nearly twice the average rate for the years 1978 through 1980. Furthermore, the 1984 increase in the number of inmates was almost three times larger than the average number added annually during 1978, 1979, and 1980 (table 1).

Overall, Federal institutions grew at a slightly faster rate in 1984 than State institutions. The percent increases were 7.3 and 6.0, respectively. The difference is explained, however, by the addition to Federal facilities of 1,066 prisoners with either no sentence or a sentence of less than 1 year. These additional prisoners (which include prisoners under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service) account for 46% of the total increase in the Federal prison rolls. The number of inmates sentenced to Federal prisons for more than a year grew by 4.8%; the comparable population in State prisons grew by 6.2% (table 2).

Federal and State prison populations have increased by the same proportion since 1980. Their relative rates of growth have fluctuated from year to year, but by yearend 1984 both State and Federal systems had grown by 40.6% (table 3).

This bulletin presents the yearend 1984 population count for our Nation's prisons. For the 10th consecutive year, yearend prisoner populations reached an all-time high, numbering more than 463,000. Since 1980 the prison population has jumped more than 40%. While jurisdictions have struggled to accommodate the increased populations through capacity expansion, adding an estimated 100,000 beds in the last 4 years, the number of prisoners has grown by more than 130,000 over the same period.

This report includes a new feature comparing the number of prison admissions since 1960 with the number of reported serious crimes. It shows that the number of prison admissions from courts for every 100 serious crimes reported to the police declined from 6.3 in 1960 to 2.3 in 1970.

The 1984 rate of increase in the Nation's prison population, although similar to the 1983 rate, reflected a different pattern of growth among the States. State-to-State variations were less pronounced. Twenty-seven States experienced a slowing of their growth; 11 of these States reduced their rates of growth by at least 5%. Two States (Tennessee and West Virginia) experienced actual decreases in their prison populations after increases in 1983. Florida, North Carolina and Vermont each reported an increase in the number of inmates after a decline (of more than 5%) in the previous year. Only one State (Alaska) grew by more than 20% in 1984; three had grown that fast in 1983. Two other States (New Hampshire and Oregon) grew by more than 15% compared to six in 1983.

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After remaining fairly stable in the 1970s, the ratio began to increase in 1981, reaching 4.0 in 1983. If the 1960 rate of prison admissions relative to crime had prevailed in 1983, the number of offenders sentenced to prison that year would have been about 100,000 more than the 173,000 who were actually admitted. On the other hand, if the 1980 rate had prevailed in 1983, about 60,000 fewer offenders would have gone to prison.

I would like to express my gratitude to the departments of corrections in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Prison System for their generous cooperation in compiling these data. This report marks the 58th year of the annual National Prisoner Statistics Program.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

Regional variations persist

Despite the decline in variation in the rates of growth among States in

Table 1. Change in the total prison population, 1977-84

Year	Number	Annual percent change
1977	300,024	—
1978	307,276	2.4
1979	314,457	2.3
1980	329,821	4.9
1981	369,950	12.2
1982	413,806	11.9
1983	437,248	5.7
1984	463,866	6.1

Note: National Prisoner Statistics reports since 1977 are based on the jurisdiction population.

1984, sharp regional differences persist in both the growth and the rate of incarceration. The 1984 growth rates of 9.1% in the Northeast and 9.4% in the West are still roughly twice the rates in the Midwest (4.8%) and in the

South (4.1%). The 4-year increases in total prison population were also much greater in the West and Northeast than in other regions. The prison population increased by 69.7% in the West and 54.0% in the Northeast, while the

Midwest and the South increased by 29.7% and 32.1%, respectively.

In 1984 the South continued to record the highest per capita incarceration rates in the Nation. The

Table 2. Prisoners under the jurisdiction of State and Federal correctional authorities, by sex, region, division and State at yearend, 1983 and 1984

Regions, Divisions and States	Total			Sentenced to more than a year			Incarceration rate, 1984 ^b
	1984	1983 ^a	Percent change	1984	1983 ^a	Percent change	
United States, total	463,866	437,248	6.1%	445,381	419,731	6.1%	188
Federal	34,263	31,926	7.3	27,602	26,331	4.8	12
State	429,603	405,322	6.0	417,779	393,400	6.2	176
Male	443,013	418,104	6.0	425,986	402,120	5.9	369
Female	20,853	19,144	8.0	19,395	17,611	10.1	16
Northeast	70,537	64,671	9.1%	67,835	61,977	9.5%	136
New England							
Maine	1,025	1,082	-5.3	840	861	-2.4	72
New Hampshire	561	479	17.1	561	479	17.1	57
Vermont	515	497	3.6	392	378	3.7	74
Massachusetts	4,890	4,482	9.1	4,890	4,372	11.8	84
Rhode Island	1,220	1,157	5.4	888	878	1.1	92
Connecticut	5,718	5,474	4.5	3,748	3,577	4.8	119
Middle Atlantic							
New York	33,155	30,541	8.6	33,155	30,541	8.6	187
New Jersey	10,363	9,192	12.7	10,363	9,192	12.7	138
Pennsylvania	13,090	11,767	11.2	12,998	11,699	11.1	109
Midwest	85,859	81,917	4.8%	85,429	81,365	5.0%	144
East North Central							
Ohio	18,694	18,007	3.8	18,694	18,007	3.8	174
Indiana	9,328	9,296	0.3	9,063	8,973	1.0	165
Illinois	17,187	15,596	10.2	17,187	15,522	10.7	149
Michigan	14,604	14,382	1.5	14,604	14,382	1.5	161
Wisconsin	5,023	4,865	3.2	5,023	4,865	3.2	105
West North Central							
Minnesota	2,167	2,113	2.6	2,167	2,113	2.6	52
Iowa	2,836	2,814	0.8	2,836	2,814	0.8	97
Missouri	8,808	8,275	6.4	8,808	8,275	6.4	175
North Dakota	434	410	5.9	374	350	6.9	54
South Dakota	917	826	11.0	900	808	11.4	127
Nebraska	1,623	1,629	-0.4	1,535	1,551	-1.0	95
Kansas	4,238	3,705	14.4	4,238	3,705	14.4	173
South	193,286	185,677	4.1%	187,925	179,963	4.4%	231
South Atlantic							
Delaware	2,200	2,198	0.1	1,615	1,579	2.3	263
Maryland	13,124	12,617	4.0	12,442	11,979	3.9	285
District of Columbia	4,834	4,344	11.3	4,031	3,465	16.3	649
Virginia	10,667	10,093	5.7	10,493	9,855	6.5	185
West Virginia	1,599	1,624	-1.5	1,599	1,624	-1.5	82
North Carolina	16,371	15,395	6.3	15,219	14,257	6.7	246
South Carolina	10,035	9,576	4.8	9,434	9,076	3.9	284
Georgia	15,731	15,358	2.4	14,944	14,935	0.1	254
Florida	27,106	26,334	2.9	26,933	25,393	6.1	242
East South Central							
Kentucky	4,793	4,752	0.9	4,793	4,752	0.9	128
Tennessee	7,302	8,201	-11.0	7,302	8,201	-11.0	154
Alabama	10,482	9,856	6.4	10,246	9,641	6.3	256
Mississippi	6,115	5,586	9.5	5,974	5,481	9.0	229
West South Central							
Arkansas	4,454	4,244	4.9	4,427	4,226	4.8	188
Louisiana	13,919	12,812	8.6	13,919	12,812	8.6	310
Oklahoma	7,872	7,428	6.0	7,872	7,428	6.0	236
Texas	36,682	35,259	4.0	36,682	35,259	4.0	225
West	79,921	73,057	9.4%	76,590	70,095	9.3%	166
Mountain							
Montana	1,005	903	11.3	1,005	901	11.5	121
Idaho	1,282	1,192	7.6	1,282	1,192	7.6	127
Wyoming	740	721	2.6	740	721	2.6	143
Colorado	3,364	3,244	3.7	3,347	3,244	3.2	104
New Mexico	2,129	1,977	7.7	1,908	1,708	11.7	133
Arizona	7,845	7,251	8.2	7,638	7,115	7.4	247
Utah	1,419	1,274	11.4	1,407	1,261	11.6	84
Nevada	3,510	3,188	10.1	3,510	3,188	10.1	380
Pacific							
Washington	6,821	6,659	2.4	6,821	6,659	2.4	156
Oregon	4,563	3,941	15.8	4,563	3,941	15.8	170
California	43,314	39,373	10.0	41,780	38,025	9.9	162
Alaska	1,995	1,634	22.1	1,290	1,075	20.0	252
Hawaii	1,934	1,700	13.8	1,299	1,065	22.0	124

Note: Explanatory notes for each State are reported in the appendix.

^a Prisoner counts may differ from those

reported in previous publications and are subject to revision as updated figures become available.

^b The number of prisoners sentenced to more than a year per 100,000 resident population on December 31, 1984.

number of sentenced prisoners was 231 per 100,000 residents in the South. This rate was almost 100 (per 100,000) greater than the incarceration rates in the Northeast (136) and in the Midwest (144). As a result of the large growth in the prison population however, the rates of incarceration in the West (though still lower than the historically

high rates in the South) are rapidly increasing. The incarceration rate in the West has increased from 105 to 166 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents in 4 years. Alaska, Arizona and Nevada with rates of 252, 247 and 380, respectively, are now among the ten States with the highest incarceration rates (table 4).

Five States increase by over 1,000 inmates

In five States the prison population increased by more than 1,000 inmates. California had the largest gain (3,941), followed by New York (2,614), Illinois (1,592), Texas (1,423) and Louisiana (1,107). Together these five States accounted for nearly 44% of the total increase in State prison populations. With the exception of Texas, each of these States also increased its proportion of the national prisoner population. California's increase in 1984 was 16.2% of the increase for all States, but California housed 9.7% of all State prisoners in 1983. Similarly, the increases in New York, Illinois and Louisiana were greater than their share of the Nation's prison population in 1983.

In general, States with large prison populations continued to grow at a faster rate than States with smaller prison populations. In the 16 largest states with over 10,000 prisoners, the prison populations grew by 6.4%, while in the remaining 34 States and the District of Columbia populations grew by 5.0%.

Female prisoner population grows at faster pace

The number of women in State and Federal correctional facilities increased by 8.9% during 1984, bringing the total number of female inmates to 20,853. As has been the case since 1981, the growth rate for female prisoners was greater than the rate for males. Despite their relatively high rates of growth in recent years, women still account for a small percentage of the prison population; less than 1 in 20 prisoners are female (table 5).

Among the 11 States with more than 500 women inmates in 1984, the highest rates of growth were recorded in New York (19.9%) and North Carolina (19.2%). Illinois and Texas followed with increases of 15.1% and 15.0%. Five States reported more than 1000 women in their prisons. These five (California, Florida, New York, Ohio, and Texas) together house nearly 40% of all female prisoners held in State institutions. Nevertheless, there is little State-to-State variation in the percentage of inmates who are women. In 41 States and the District of Columbia, the percent female is within 1% of the national average (4.5%).¹ Vermont has the lowest percent (2.3%); Oklahoma, the highest (6.0%).

¹ Because of the absence of any significant variation among jurisdictions, the percent of inmates who were female in each jurisdiction is not shown.

Table 3. Annual and total percent change since 1980 in the number of prisoners under State and Federal correctional authorities, by region, division, and State

Regions, Divisions and States	Annual percent change				Total percent change 1980-84
	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	
United States, total	12.2%	11.9%	5.7%	6.1%	40.6%
Federal	15.5	5.5	7.6	7.3	40.6
State	11.9	12.4	5.5	6.0	40.6
Northeast	17.7%	10.0%	9.0%	9.1%	54.0%
New England					
Maine	21.9	11.9	-2.5	-5.3	25.9
New Hampshire	22.1	11.8	7.6	17.1	72.1
Vermont	11.2	12.2	-17.0	3.6	7.3
Massachusetts	22.1	11.4	3.4	9.1	53.5
Rhode Island	18.3	7.0	11.6	5.4	50.1
Connecticut	22.2	-2.0	6.2	4.5	32.7
Middle Atlantic					
New York	16.9	9.6	9.3	8.6	52.0
New Jersey	19.2	16.8	12.2	12.7	76.1
Pennsylvania	14.6	12.2	12.0	11.2	60.2
Midwest	10.6%	7.0%	4.6%	4.8%	29.7%
East North Central					
Ohio	11.0	15.7	4.0	3.8	38.6
Indiana	20.0	9.6	5.8	0.3	39.6
Illinois	20.4	-0.2	9.1	10.2	44.4
Michigan	0.2	-1.6	-3.6	1.5	-3.4
Wisconsin	10.2	7.5	3.2	3.2	26.2
West North Central					
Minnesota	-1.7	5.8	1.5	2.6	8.3
Iowa	7.6	6.0	-0.5	0.8	14.3
Missouri	13.3	14.7	11.1	6.4	53.8
North Dakota	10.7	15.0	27.3	5.9	71.5
South Dakota	9.1	14.1	4.4	11.0	44.4
Nebraska	2.9	10.9	-6.3	-0.4	12.2
Kansas	11.1	11.1	20.4	14.4	69.9
South	9.0%	13.8%	2.3%	4.1%	32.1%
South Atlantic					
Delaware	16.1	20.8	6.3	0.1	49.3
Maryland	20.7	24.4	8.6	4.0	69.8
District of Columbia	10.6	17.3	6.4	11.3	53.7
Virginia	5.2	7.4	0.1	5.7	19.6
West Virginia	24.5	-1.2	5.0	-1.5	27.2
North Carolina	1.7	5.1	-7.1	6.3	5.5
South Carolina	8.6	7.0	4.8	4.8	27.6
Georgia	2.2	15.8	6.6	2.1	29.2
Florida	13.8	18.0	-5.4	2.9	30.7
East South Central					
Kentucky	11.3	1.0	17.9	0.9	33.6
Tennessee	12.5	-0.4	4.2	-11.0	4.0
Alabama	17.0	20.6	6.7	6.4	60.2
Mississippi	18.5	18.6	1.9	9.5	56.7
West South Central					
Arkansas	14.3	17.8	6.2	4.9	53.0
Louisiana	5.9	16.1	17.2	8.6	56.6
Oklahoma	10.1	23.1	14.3	6.0	64.1
Texas	5.4	14.8	-2.5	4.0	22.7
West	17.1%	17.9%	12.3%	9.4%	69.7%
Mountain					
Montana	12.4	10.0	-1.2	11.3	36.0
Idaho	17.1	9.1	14.2	7.6	56.9
Wyoming	4.1	26.3	2.7	2.6	38.6
Colorado	5.4	9.7	6.6	3.7	28.0
New Mexico	17.0	14.8	15.1	7.7	60.5
Arizona	19.5	16.2	19.5	8.2	79.4
Utah	22.3	6.7	4.8	11.4	52.3
Nevada	15.1	30.1	15.8	10.1	90.8
Pacific					
Washington	21.3	17.4	6.3	2.4	55.1
Oregon	3.7	18.4	1.1	15.8	43.6
California	18.9	18.6	13.7	10.0	76.3
Alaska	24.6	28.1	23.6	22.1	142.7
Hawaii	22.5	21.0	16.4	13.8	96.3

Table 4. The prison situation at yearend, 1984

10 States with largest prison population, 1984	Number	Increase, 1983-84	10 States with greatest percent change, 1983-84	Percent change	10 States with greatest percent change, 1980-84	Percent change	10 States with highest incarceration rates, 1984 ^a	Prisoners per 100,000 residents
California	43,314	3,941	Alaska	22.1%	Alaska	142.7%	Nevada	380
Texas	36,682	1,423	New Hampshire	17.1	Hawaii	95.3	Louisiana	310
New York	33,155	2,614	Oregon	15.8	Nevada	90.9	Maryland	285
Florida	27,106	772	Kansas	14.4	Arizona	79.4	South Carolina	284
Ohio	18,694	687	Hawaii	13.8	California	76.3	Delaware	263
Illinois	17,187	1,592	New Jersey	12.7	New Jersey	76.1	Alabama	256
North Carolina	16,371	976	Utah	11.4	New Hampshire	72.1	Georgia	254
Georgia	15,731	373	Montana	11.3	North Dakota	71.5	Alaska	252
Michigan	14,604	222	Pennsylvania	11.2	Kansas	69.9	Arizona	247
Louisiana	13,919	1,107	South Dakota	11.0	Maryland	69.8	North Carolina	246

^a The District of Columbia, as a wholly urban area, is excluded from the list of States.

Table 5. Women in State and Federal institutions at yearend, 1984

State	Number of women inmates	Percent of all inmates	Percent change in population, 1983-84
United States, total	20,853	4.5%	8.9%
Federal institutions	1,996	5.8	13.8
All State institutions	18,857	4.4	8.4
States with more than 500 women inmates			
California	2,310	5.3%	14.4%
Texas	1,691	4.6	15.0
Florida	1,179	4.3	-0.1 ^a
Ohio	1,021	5.5	4.5
New York	1,011	3.0	19.9
Georgia	763	4.8	1.7
North Carolina	702	4.3	19.2
Michigan	683	4.7	4.6
Illinois	641	3.7	15.1
Louisiana	608	4.4	14.1
Alabama	521	5.0	8.3

^a Florida reported 1,180 female inmates in 1983.

recently released from court supervision, the rate of growth in 1984 was 7.9%, as compared to the 6.3% increase among States with at least one institution under a court order or consent decree.

Expenditures by States exceed \$7 billion

The growth in the Nation's prison population has been accompanied by an equally dramatic growth in spending. Based on data reported in the Directory of the American Correctional Association, expenditures by State correctional authorities in fiscal year 1984 (including both direct and capital outlays) increased by nearly \$1.2 billion and reached an all-time high of nearly 7.2 billion dollars. Furthermore, as a result of a series of bond issues and other revenue-generating mechanisms, an additional \$1.2 billion was allocated for capital improvements in 1984 (table 7).

More than 67,000 prison beds were added to State and Federal facilities through renovation and new construction between 1981 and 1983. As reported in the Corrections Yearbook (1984), by yearend 1983, the number of new beds under construction reached an all-time high of 58,299. Based upon the number of inmates added to prison rolls in 1984, however, over 500 beds per week were needed simply to maintain the level of accommodations existing at yearend 1983 (table 8).

Table 6. The impact of court intervention on the rate of growth, 1984

	Percent change in population, 1983-84
All States	6.0%
Nature of court intervention	
No intervention	9.2
Currently/recently challenged	7.9
At least one institution under court order or consent decree	6.3
Entire system under court order or consent decree	2.9

Court intervention reduces rate of growth

The dramatic increase since 1980 in the number of inmates in State prisons has generated enormous pressures on jurisdictions to provide sufficient housing, staff and programs to ensure the orderly operation of their facilities. Because of the persistent problems of overcrowding and inadequate facilities however, State and Federal courts have intervened with a series of court orders and consent decrees designed to relieve crowded conditions.

At yearend 1984 the prison systems of eight jurisdictions were operating under an existing court order or consent decree. These jurisdictions were the District of Columbia, Florida, Michigan (male prisons only), Mississippi, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Court supervision of the prison systems in three States (Alabama, Arkansas and Oklahoma) had been recently relinquished after correctional authorities had substantially complied with court requirements. In 25 other States at least 1 major institution was operating under a court order or consent decree concerning overcrowding

and other conditions.² As of December 31, 1984 legal challenges were pending in four additional States: Hawaii, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Challenges had been dismissed (or supervision had been relinquished) in Maine, Oregon and Wyoming. In only Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New York, New Jersey, North Dakota and Vermont have the courts not intervened because of problems with overcrowding or other conditions of confinement.

Court intervention has significantly reduced the rate of growth in the number of inmates in State facilities. States without court intervention (directly relating to crowding or the conditions of confinement) grew at a combined rate (9.2%) that was more than three times the rate for States whose entire systems were under court supervision (2.9%). In addition, among States currently facing lawsuits or

²In December 1984 the following States had at least one major institution under court order or consent decree: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Table 7. Expenditures by State correctional systems, 1971-84

Fiscal year	Expenditures in millions			Capital as percent of total
	Direct outlays	Capital outlays	Total	
1971	\$1,179.8	\$143.2	\$1,323.0	10.8
1972	1,270.2	107.5	1,377.7	7.8
1973	1,435.3	98.7	1,534.0	6.4
1974	1,688.1	124.5	1,812.6	6.9
1975	2,015.1	177.2	2,193.0	8.1
1976	2,276.3	190.5	2,474.8	8.0
1977	2,561.1	286.0	2,847.1	10.0
1978	2,855.3	321.6	3,176.9	10.1
1979	3,173.3	358.2	3,531.5	10.1
1980	3,863.1	638.0	4,501.1	14.2
1981	4,022.7	759.9	4,782.6	15.9
1982	4,989.5	555.9 ^a	5,545.4	10.0
1983	5,560.1	358.6 ^a	5,918.7	6.1
1984	6,411.6	780.9 ^a	7,192.5	10.9

Source: Data for 1971-79 are not strictly comparable to data for 1980-84. The data for 1971-79 were compiled from *Expenditure and Employment Data for the Criminal Justice System*, Bureau of Justice Statistics (published annually). The 1980-84 data are from the *Directory of the American Correctional Association (1981-85)*, College Park, Maryland. The 1980-84 data include 17

States in which only combined juvenile and adult expenditures were reported.

^a As a result of bond issues and other revenue-raising mechanisms, an additional \$952 million was allocated to capital improvements in FY82; an additional \$1.3 billion was allocated in FY83, and \$1.2 billion in FY84. These additional revenues represent future capital outlays for construction.

Table 8. Prison beds added, under construction and planned, 1981-83

Number of beds	1981	1982	1983
Added ^a	30,640	21,212	25,204
Under construction ^b	32,295	28,338	58,299
Planned ^c	60,409	73,673	53,321

Source: *Corrections Yearbook, 1982-84*.

^a Thirty-five jurisdictions reported beds added in 1981, 39 in 1982 and 33 in 1983.

^b Forty jurisdictions reported beds under construction in 1981, 51 in 1982 and 39 in 1983.

^c Thirty-eight jurisdictions reported beds in the planning stage in 1981; 49 jurisdictions reported beds planned in 1982 and 42 in 1983.

More than 11,500 in jails because of overcrowding

States have not kept pace with the escalating demand for additional prison space. In order to reduce their prison populations and to keep in line with existing court orders, many States have allowed offenders sentenced to State prisons to remain in local jails. In 1984 the number of prisoners held in local jails because of overcrowding in State facilities increased to more than 11,500. At yearend 2.8% of all prisoners under State jurisdiction (excluding prisoners in States with combined prison and jail systems) were housed in local jails as a result of prison overcrowding (table 9).³

States with more than 1,000 prisoners housed in local jails include California, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Tennessee. More than 10% of the inmates under State jurisdiction in Kentucky, New Jersey, and Tennessee were backed up in local jails.

³ The Federal Prison System does not house inmates in local jails in order to relieve overcrowding.

Louisiana and Mississippi had more than 20% of their prisoners in local jails.

Increased capacity reported

The extent of overcrowding in the Nation's prisons is difficult to determine, because of the absence of uniform standards for defining prison capacity. A wide variety of capacity measures are in use among the 52 jurisdictions. These measures include emergency capacity, staffed capacity, optimum management capacity, program capacity, functional capacity and maximum stress capacity.⁴ In order to

⁴ Survey of Prison Capacity conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency for the reference date December 31, 1982 (unpublished analysis).

Table 9. Number of prisoners held in local jails because of overcrowding, by State at yearend, 1983 and 1984

State	1983	1984
United States, total	8,078	11,555
Alabama	1,001	457
California	1,244	1,513
Colorado	211	159
Illinois	86	73
Kentucky	244	709
Louisiana	2,299	2,085
Maine	75	53
Maryland	82	72
Massachusetts	2	0
Mississippi	1,006	1,296
New Jersey	967	1,530
South Carolina	514	474
Tennessee ^a	8	1,495
Utah	55	32
Vermont	7	0
Virginia	246	663
Washington	28	61
Wisconsin	3	77

^a Tennessee's figures for 1983 and 1984 should not be compared. The 8 inmates in 1983 represent a portion of an unknown number of prisoners backed-up in local jails. Also, an unknown number of the 1,495 inmates in 1984 may be in jail for reasons other than prison overcrowding.

estimate capacity of the Nation's prisons and to assess the extent of overcrowding, States were asked to report three measures of capacity for yearend 1984—rated, operational and design. These measures were defined as follows:

- Rated capacity is the number of beds or inmates that a rating official believes can be safely accommodated within a facility.
- Operational capacity is the number of inmates that can be accommodated based on a facility's staff, existing programs and services.
- Design capacity is the number of inmates that planners or architects intended for the facility.

Twenty States were unable to report the rated capacity of their prison facilities; 8 States failed to report their operational capacity; and 17 States could not supply figures for design capacity (table 10). As a result, estimates of total capacity and measures of overcrowding can only be based on the highest or lowest capacity figures provided by the States.

Based on the highest capacity figures for 1983 and 1984, the capacity of State facilities increased by 12,314 inmates.⁵ The increase was 22,405 inmates, if the lowest capacity figures for both years are used. The Federal Prison System reported an increase in capacity of between 523 prisoners (based on lowest capacity) and 870 prisoners (based on highest capacity figures). At yearend 1984 the capacity of State and Federal prisons (using the best available data) was between 388,065 and 434,371 inmates.

State prisons 10% over capacity

State prisons are estimated to be operating at approximately 105% of their highest reported capacities and at 116% of their lowest capacities (table 11). Overall, as a percentage of the average of lowest and highest reported capacities, State institutions are operating at 10% over capacity. The Federal system is estimated to be operating between 10% and 37% over capacity (an average of 24% over capacity).

The severity of overcrowding, however, has changed little since 1978 (the earliest year for which comparable data are available). Although more than 150,000 prisoners have been added to State prison rolls since 1978, the

⁵ In 1983 the highest total capacity reported for State facilities was 390,896; for Federal facilities, 30,291. The lowest reported capacities were 340,738 for States and 24,399 for Federal prisons. For 1984 capacity figures, see Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. Reported Federal and State prison capacities at yearend, 1984

	Rated	Operational	Design
Federal institutions	24,922	31,161	24,922
State institutions:			
Alabama	9,166	9,166	9,166
Alaska	*	1,684	*
Arizona	*	6,491	*
Arkansas	*	4,398	*
California	28,483	40,724	28,483
Colorado	*	3,182	*
Connecticut	4,900	5,383	3,691
Delaware	*	2,041	*
District of Columbia ^a	*	*	3,503
Florida	29,452	28,827	29,999
Georgia	*	15,502	*
Hawaii	*	1,444	992
Idaho	*	1,175	971
Illinois	17,392	*	*
Indiana	6,258	6,259	*
Iowa	2,816	2,652	2,572
Kansas ^a	*	2,722	3,841
Kentucky	4,834	4,727	*
Louisiana	10,967	10,967	10,967
Maine	951	*	*
Maryland	9,421	13,160	*
Massachusetts	3,135	3,362	3,362
Michigan	*	12,930	*
Minnesota	2,410	2,410	2,500
Mississippi	4,868	*	*
Missouri	*	8,883	*
Montana	737	1,011	737
Nebraska	1,562	1,513	1,542
Nevada	*	*	2,952
New Hampshire ^a	505	540	501
New Jersey	8,424	9,934	*
New Mexico	*	2,390	2,390
New York	*	35,035	34,292
North Carolina	*	16,695	*
North Dakota	471	471	471
Ohio	*	*	11,680
Oklahoma	7,221	7,221	5,435
Oregon	2,333	3,510	2,690
Pennsylvania	*	*	10,025
Rhode Island	1,347	1,213	1,347
South Carolina	7,976	7,976	6,927
South Dakota	996	894	636
Tennessee	*	*	7,686
Texas	40,674	38,641	40,674
Utah	1,383	1,299	1,286
Vermont	529	529	489
Virginia	9,557	9,557	9,351
Washington	4,484	6,312	4,484
West Virginia	2,063	2,111	2,038
Wisconsin	4,078	4,078	*
Wyoming	*	682	606

Note: Explanatory notes for each State are reported in the appendix.

^a Males only.
* Not reported.

overcrowding in the Nation's prisons. Half of the jurisdictions reported either back-ups in local jails or early releases to relieve overcrowding; nevertheless, with the exception of Minnesota, New Mexico and West Virginia, every jurisdiction reported a prison population at yearend in excess of 90% of available capacity (the standard suggested by the American Correctional Association).

A sharp rise in admissions relative to crime

The dramatic growth in State and Federal prison population during the last four years may reflect recent changes in criminal justice policies. The number of new admissions to prisons continues to exceed the number of prison releases, despite a significant decline since 1981 in the number of serious crimes. For 3 consecutive years since 1981, the ratio of prison admissions to the number of serious crimes has significantly increased.

The number of prison admissions from courts for every 100 serious crimes reported to police declined from 6.3 in 1960 to 2.3 in 1970. After remaining stable during the 1970s, the ratio rose from 2.6 new admissions per 100 serious crimes in 1980 to 4.0 admissions per 100 serious crimes in 1983 (the most recent year for which State-level data are available). By yearend 1983, the ratio reached its highest level since 1965 (table 12).

The numerator of the admissions-to-crime ratio is the annual number of new admissions from courts. In contrast to the yearend prisoner count in the conventional incarceration rate, prison admissions are more immediately affected by changes in crime, the number of arrests and sentencing practices.

The ratio of prison admissions to serious crimes reported to police also adjusts for the underlying level of crime. The denominator includes only those offenses for which a conviction frequently results in a prison sentence. These offenses (murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault and burglary) are estimated to account for 63% of all prison admissions.⁷ Estimates of the annual number of these serious crimes reported to police are based on the Uniform Crime Reports, published annually by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The same trend in the ratio of admissions to crime is observed when other data sources and definitions of

number of prisoners as a percentage of capacity has not increased. Previous reports have indicated that State institutions were operating at 11% over capacity in 1978.⁶

States have employed many methods to relieve overcrowding. Transfers to other State facilities, construction of temporary facilities, backups in local jails, double-bunking, use of confinement units designed for special purposes (such as segregation housing and medical care), intensive probation programs, early paroles and work release programs have all been used to make room for new prisoners.

Fourteen States reported the early release of 17,365 prisoners in 1984 due to overcrowded State facilities. Fifteen States had reported a total of 21,420 accelerated releases in 1983. Three States (Georgia, Michigan, and Tennessee) released almost 90% of all the 1984 early-release prisoners. Four States (Florida, Illinois, Indiana and Texas), that reported more than 13,000 early releases in 1983, reported none in 1984. Idaho, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Wyoming were added to the list of States relying on early release programs in 1984 (table 11).

No single indicator is sufficient to determine the exact magnitude of overcrowding in a particular State. Together these measures reveal serious

⁶See Prisoners in 1983, BJS Bulletin, April 1984, NCJ-92949.

⁷See Prison Admissions and Releases, 1981, BJS Bulletin, September 1984, NCJ-95043.

Table 11. Profile of prison crowding, 1984.

State	Population as a percent of highest capacity ^a	Population as a percent of lowest capacity ^a	Percent of population in local jails due to overcrowding	Number of early releases due to overcrowding
Federal institutions	110	137	*	0
State institutions	105	116	2.8% ^b	17,365
Alabama	109	109	4.4	0
Alaska	118	118	*	14
Arizona	121	121	0	172
Arkansas	101	101	*	0
California	106	152	3.4	0
Colorado	106	106	4.5	0
Connecticut	106	155	*	0
Delaware	108	108	*	*
District of Columbia	132	132	*	*
Florida	92	129	0	0
Georgia	101	101	*	7,425
Hawaii	134	195	*	*
Idaho	109	132	*	57
Illinois	98	98	0.4	0
Indiana	149	149	*	*
Iowa	101	110	*	0
Kansas	104	147	*	0
Kentucky	99	101	12.9	*
Louisiana	101	101	20.7	0
Maine	102	102	5.2	*
Maryland	99	130	0.5	*
Massachusetts	145	156	0	0
Michigan	113	113	0	4,149
Minnesota	87	90	*	0
Mississippi	99	99	21.2	79
Missouri	99	99	*	0
Montana	99	136	0	1
Nebraska	104	107	0	0
Nevada	119	119	0	*
New Hampshire	97	109	0	0
New Jersey	104	123	12.9	213
New Mexico	89	89	0	0
New York	95	97	*	0
North Carolina	98	98	0	0
North Dakota	92	92	*	0
Ohio	161	161	*	0
Oklahoma	109	145	0	487
Oregon	130	196	0	0
Pennsylvania	131	131	0	*
Rhode Island	91	101	*	0
South Carolina	120	138	4.7	459
South Dakota	92	144	*	0
Tennessee	95	95	17.0	3,742
Texas	90	95	0	0
Utah	100	108	2.3	0
Vermont	97	105	*	*
Virginia	105	107	6.2	0
Washington	108	152	0.9	318
West Virginia	76	78	*	*
Wisconsin	121	121	1.5	21.9
Wyoming	109	122	0	30

Note: Explanatory notes for each State are reported in the appendix.
^a Some States prohibit jail backups and early releases or have combined jails and prisons.
^b These percentages are derived from Tables 2 and 10. The highest total capacity

reported for States was 403,210 and for the Federal prisons 31,161. The lowest total capacity reported for States was 363,143 and for the Federal prisons 24,922.
^b Seven jurisdictions with combined jail and prison systems are not included.

insight into differences among jurisdictions in their response to crime and provides another measure of the relative size of State prison systems. Based on the number of serious crimes reported to police, Southern States continue to exhibit the "toughest" response to crime with an overall ratio of 5.5 prison admissions per 100 serious crimes. Georgia's ratio of 8.6, North Carolina's ratio of 7.9, and Alabama's 7.5 are among the highest observed in 1983. In contrast to the high incarceration rates, and in spite of the dramatic expansion of the prison systems in recent years, Western States are found to have a relatively low number of prison admissions per every 100 serious crimes committed annually. Overall, the ratio among States in the West is 3.0, which is only slightly greater than the ratio of 2.7 in the Northeast. Alaska, Wyoming and Idaho with ratios of 7.3, 6.8 and 5.7, respectively, are exceptions to the generally low number of prison admissions in the West (table 14).

Nevada's ratio of 5.0 admissions per 100 serious crimes is especially noteworthy, since it contrasts sharply with its relatively high incarceration rate (380 prisoners per 100,000 residents). Nevada's rate is only one prisoner admission (per 100 serious crimes) above the national rate. Nineteen States had higher admissions-to-crime ratios.

The ratio of admissions to crime also clarifies the high rate of incarceration reported for the District of Columbia. Although the number of prisoners (per 100,000 residents) in the District of Columbia is 649 (over three times the national rate and over twice the rate in contiguous States), the prison population is not disproportionate to the number of serious crimes. The 5.2 new prison admissions per 100 crimes committed in the District of Columbia, though above the national average, was below the ratio in 15 States in 1983. Even though the District is a wholly urban area, its admissions-to-crime ratio is similar to the ratio in adjacent States; the ratios in Maryland and Virginia are 4.6 and 6.6, respectively.

Since 1980, States showing the greatest gains in prison admissions relative to crime were Alaska, Georgia, North Dakota, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wyoming. Each of these States had a 3-year increase of 3 or more prisoners (per 100 crimes), which is more than double the increase for the Nation as a whole. Of these, Alaska and North Dakota were among the ten States with the greatest percentage increases in the prison population since 1980. Despite growth of more than

crime are utilized. Data from the National Crime Survey (on the annual number of completed rapes, aggravated assaults, robberies, and burglaries) provide an identical result: a 53.8% increase in the admissions-to-crime ratio since 1980. Similarly, prison admissions have increased relative to the number of cleared crimes and the number of arrests.⁸ During the same

period, the ratio of admissions to cleared crimes increased by 40.5%, and the ratio of admissions to arrests increased by 33.1%. The admissions-to-crime ratio, for all measures of crime, has risen substantially since 1980 (table 13).

An inspection of the admissions-to-crime ratio by State provides additional

⁸ A crime is cleared when a suspect is arrested and charged or when the identity and location of a suspect is known, but the police are prevented from taking action by circumstances outside of their

control (for example, the suspect has died, the suspect was already in custody for another offense, or the victim refused to cooperate with the prosecution).

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