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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
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TOTAL U.S. CORRECTIONAL POPULATION DECLINED IN 2012 FOR FOURTH YEAR

WASHINGTON – The total U.S. correctional population (on probation, parole, in prison or jail) decreased for the fourth consecutive year during 2012 (down 51,000 offenders or 0.7 percent), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. This was the smallest decrease in the population since 2009.

Nearly the entire drop in the total correctional population during 2012 was due to a decline in the number of probationers (down 38,300) and prisoners held in the physical custody of state or federal prisons (down 21,100). The parole population (down 500) remained relatively stable during 2012 while the jail population (up 8,900) was the only correctional population to increase during the year, partially offsetting the overall decline in the U.S. correctional population.

At yearend 2012, about 6.94 million people were supervised by the U.S. adult correctional systems, which was the equivalent to about 1 in 35 U.S. adults (or 2.9 percent of the adult resident population), the lowest rate observed since 1997.

About 3.94 million offenders were supervised in the community on probation and 851,200 on parole. Around 1.35 million were incarcerated in state prisons, 217,800 in federal prisons and 744,500 in local jails.

During 2012, an estimated 4.1 million adults moved onto or off probation. Probation entries (2.05 million) declined for the fifth consecutive year, while probation exits (2.09 million) declined for the third consecutive year. The rate of incarceration among probationers at risk for violating their conditions of supervision in 2012 (5 percent) dropped below the rate observed in 2008 (6 percent).

Both parole entries (down 9 percent) and exits (down 7 percent) declined between 2011 and 2012. Among parolees at risk for violating their conditions of supervision, about 9 percent were reincarcerated during 2012, down from 12 percent during 2011.

A decrease in admissions to prison drove the decline in the U.S. prison population during 2012. A total of 609,800 offenders were admitted to state or federal prisons in 2012, the lowest number since 1999, while the number of offenders released from prison in 2012 (637,400) exceeded admissions for the fourth consecutive year. Releases from federal prison exceeded admissions for the first time since 1980.

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An estimated 1,511,500 prisoners were sentenced to more than one year under the jurisdiction of state or federal correctional authorities in 2012—a decrease of 27,400 inmates from yearend 2011. Prisoners under age 45 accounted for 80 percent of prison admissions, 77 percent of releases and 72 percent of the yearend prison population in 2012. The majority of state prisoners (53 percent) were serving time for violent offenses in 2011, the most recent year for which offense data are available.

Other findings include—

Probation

- Four states—Georgia, Michigan, New York and North Carolina—accounted for 51 percent of the total decrease in the probation population.
- Four states—Washington, Ohio, Tennessee and Idaho—reported the largest increases in probationers.
- Most characteristics of probationers have remained stable since 2000: In 2012, more than half (54 percent) were non-Hispanic white, about a third (30 percent) were non-Hispanic black and three-quarters (76 percent) were male offenders.

Parole

- California (down about 22,400) had the largest parole population decline during 2012, accounting for 72 percent of the decline among states reporting declines in their parole populations.
- During 2012, offenders entering parole through a discretionary release (41 percent) surpassed those entering through a mandatory release (35 percent).
- Fifty-eight percent of parolees completed their term of supervision or were discharged early in 2012, up from 52 percent in 2011.

Prisoners

- The federal prison system had the largest sentenced prison population (196,600 inmates) in 2012, followed by Texas (157,900), California (134,200), Florida (101,900) and New York (54,100).
- California (down 10 percent) had the largest prison population decrease in 2012, followed by Arkansas (down 9 percent), Wisconsin and Colorado (down 7 percent each).
- Overall, black males were 6 times and Hispanic males 2.5 times more likely to be imprisoned than white males in 2012.
- Black males ages 18 to 19 were almost 9.5 times more likely than white males of the same age group to be in prison. Among new court commitments to state prison, more than a third each of black and Hispanic offenders, and a quarter of white offenders were convicted of a violent offense.
- Between 1991 and 2011, the number of females admitted to state prison for newly committed violent offenses increased 83 percent.

Correctional Populations in the United States, 2012 (NCJ 243936) was written by Lauren E. Glaze and Erinn J. Herberman of BJS. *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2012* (NCJ 243826) was written by Laura M. Maruschak and Thomas P. Bonczar of BJS. *Prisoners in 2012: Trends in Admissions and Releases, 1991–2012* (NCJ 243930) was written by E. Ann Carson and Daniela Golinelli of BJS. In addition, the Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool - Prisoners was updated with 2012 data.

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The reports, data tool, related documents and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

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