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PRISONERS AGE 55 OR OLDER MADE UP 10 PERCENT OF THE STATE PRISON POPULATION IN 2013, UP FROM 3 PERCENT IN 1993

WASHINGTON – Prisoners age 55 or older sentenced to more than one year in state prison increased from 26,300 in 1993 to 131,500 in 2013, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. This represented a growth from 3 percent to 10 percent of the total state prison population during this period. From 1993 to 2013, the median age of state prisoners increased from 30 to 36 years.

Two main factors contributed to the aging of state prisoners between 1993 and 2013: a greater proportion of older prisoners were serving longer sentences, predominantly for violent offenses, and the number of admissions of older persons increased. Both the admission rate and yearend imprisonment rate for state prisoners age 55 or older increased from 1993 to 2013, which indicates that the aging U.S. resident population was not solely responsible for the growth in older offenders in prison.

The imprisonment rate for prisoners age 55 or older sentenced to more than one year in state prison increased from 49 per 100,000 U.S. residents of the same age in 1993 to 154 per 100,000 in 2013. Forty percent of state prisoners who were age 55 or older on December 31, 2013, had been admitted to prison when they were at least age 55, and 60 percent turned age 55 while serving time in prison. Additionally, 40 percent of state prisoners age 55 or older on December 31, 2013, had been imprisoned for at least 10 years, compared to 9 percent in 1993.

Admission to prison of people age 55 or older increased 82 percent between 2003 and 2013. People age 55 or older accounted for 1 percent of state prison admissions in 1993, 2 percent in 2003 and 4 percent in 2013.

In 2013, two-thirds (66 percent) of state prisoners age 55 or older were serving time for a violent offense, compared to a maximum of 58 percent of other age groups. In 2013, nearly half (48 percent) of state prisoners age 55 or older were serving sentences for murder or nonnegligent manslaughter or sexual assault, compared to nearly a third (31 percent) of prisoners ages 45 to 54 and more than a

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quarter (27 percent) of those ages 35 to 44. In 2013, 30 percent of state prisoners age 55 or older were imprisoned for sexual assault, which was more than double the percentage of prisoners age 44 or younger.

The mean sentence length for prisoners age 55 or older admitted on new court commitments was consistently higher than other age groups. Their mean sentence length was 82 months in 2013. In comparison, prisoners ages 18 to 39 had a mean sentence length of 69 months, and the mean sentence length for new inmates ages 40 to 54 was 71 months.

Prisoners age 55 or older convicted of new violent crimes received longer sentences and were expected to serve a higher proportion of their sentences than younger offenders. Prisoners admitted in 2013 when they were age 55 or older could expect to serve an average of 182 months (15 years) for new violent offenses, compared to 116 months (10 years) for those admitted at ages 40 to 54 and 55 months (almost 5 years) for those ages 18 to 39.

The report, *Aging of the State Prison Population, 1993–2013* (NCJ 248766), was written by BJS statistician E. Ann Carson and former BJS Director William J. Sabol. The report, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

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