

# **Presentation: A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey**

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# What is Prisoner Reentry?

More people are leaving prisons across the country to return to their families and communities than at any other time in our history. Nationally, over 600,000 individuals (or 1,700 a day) were released from state and federal prisons in 2000, a fourfold increase over the past two decades. From a number of perspectives, the issue of how people fare after they exit the prison gates has received renewed attention. Not only are more prisoners returning home than ever before, but they are also returning less prepared for life on the outside. Many will experience difficulty managing the most basic ingredients of successful reintegration—reconnecting with jobs, housing and their families, and accessing needed substance abuse and health care treatment. Most will be rearrested within three years, and many will be returned to prison for new crimes or parole violations. The cycle of incarceration and reentry into society carries the potential for profound adverse consequences for prisoners, their families and communities. But just as the potential costs are great, so too are the opportunities for interventions that could enhance the public safety, health and cohesion of the communities at the center of this cycle.

Former prisoners struggle with a host of issues that complicate the reintegration process. Compared to the general population, released inmates experience higher rates of substance abuse, mental illness, infectious disease, unemployment and homelessness. These challenges are often experienced in conjunction with one another. The difficulties faced in dual and triple diagnosis (for substance abuse, mental illness, and HIV infection, for example) are particularly acute, and the associated service needs are even more complex and challenging. To the extent that these issues present serious barriers to successful reentry for released prisoners, they also may present risks for the communities and families to which they return.

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## Prisoner Reentry Defined

Prisoner reentry is the process of leaving prison and returning to society. All prisoners experience reentry irrespective of their method of release or form of supervision. So both prisoners who are released on parole and those who are released to no supervision in the community experience reentry. If the reentry process is successful, there are benefits in terms of improved public safety and the long-term reintegration of the former prisoner. Public safety gains are typically measured in terms of reduced recidivism. Other reintegration outcomes would include increased participation in social institutions such as the labor force, families, communities, schools and religious organizations. Both financial and social benefits are associated with successful reentry.

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# Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey

## Presentation Summary:

- Until recently, the prison population has been growing
  - Inmates are mostly black (63%), serving time for violent offenses (45%) and serving an average term of 6 years
  - Increasing number of inmates are serving mandatory minimum terms
- Prison admissions are up, driven mostly by parole violators
- Prison releases are also up
- Releases to parole supervision have been fairly steady while releases without parole have been increasing
- Parole population has been fairly steady in the last 5 years
  - Parole population has increased 66 percent since 1977
  - Over half of parolees are successfully complete their parole term

## Questions for future research:

- How are prisoners prepared for reentry?
- How are families and communities prepared for the return of released prisoners?
- What is the profile of the release population?
  - Length of stay, participation in prison programs, needs and risks, etc.
- What are the outcomes for supervised versus unsupervised released prisoners? Does supervision make a difference in those outcomes?
- What is the parole revocation process? Who is succeeding on parole and who is not?

## PRISON POPULATION & INCARCERATION RATE HAS BEEN GROWING UNTIL RECENTLY

**Total prison population has grown nearly five fold between 1977-2001; has been in decline since 1999.**

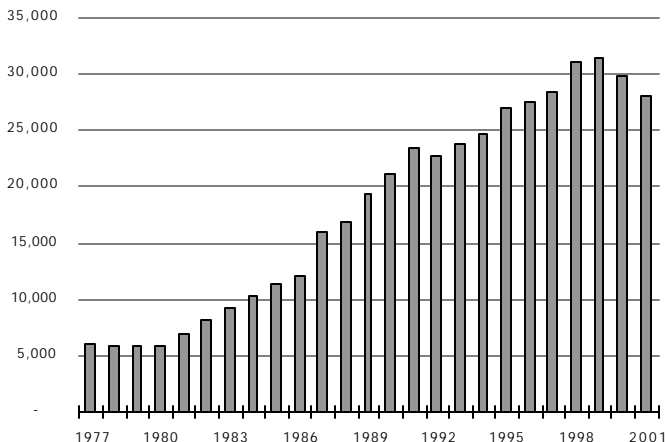
- As shown in Figure 1, the prison population experienced steady growth beginning in 1980 through the late 1990s.
- More recently, the prison population has been declining since 1999. The total population in 2001 was 28,142, down about 10 percent since the peak of 31,493 in 1999.
- Compared to other states across the country, New Jersey is in the top 10 states with the lowest prison growth since 1990.

**Incarceration rate has increased four fold between 1980-2001 and declining since 1999.**

- Figure 2 shows that the incarceration rate (the rate of individuals sent to prison per 100,000 population) experienced dramatic growth in the decade between 1980 and 1990 increasing from 76 per 100,000 in 1980 to 301 per 100,000 in 1991.
- More recently, the incarceration rate continued to grow at a slower rate until reaching the 1999 peak of 384 incarcerated individuals per 100,000. Since 1999 the incarceration rate has been declining.
- The New Jersey incarceration rate was lower than national trends in the 1980s, caught up and exceeded the national incarceration rate in the early 1990s and has since fallen below the national rate. Figure 2 also shows that the New Jersey incarceration rate has been declining at a faster rate compared to the national average.

**Figure 1. New Jersey Prisoner Population, 1977-2001**

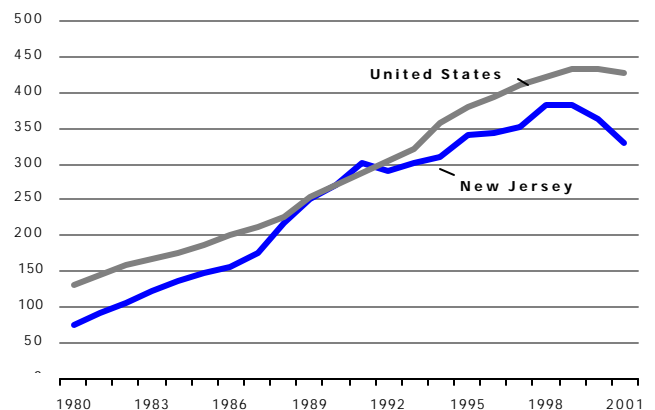
### Number of Prisoners



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

**Figure 2. Incarceration Rate for New Jersey and United States, 1980-2001**

### Incarceration Rate per 100,000 Population



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INMATES (2001)

### Race and Ethnicity

- The majority of New Jersey State prison inmates are Black (63 percent in 2001). There are nearly equal numbers of White (19%) and Hispanic (18%) prisoners.
- The two groups with the largest percentage growth between 1990-2001 are Hispanics (55 percent) and Asians (480 percent). The number of Asian inmates grew from 14 individuals in 1990 to 81 in 2001. The number of Black inmates has grown by 40 percent and White inmates by 30 percent between 1990 and 2001.
- According to 2000 Census data, the population of New Jersey is 66 percent White (not of Hispanic/Latino origin), 13 percent Black, 13 percent Hispanic and nearly 6 percent Asian.

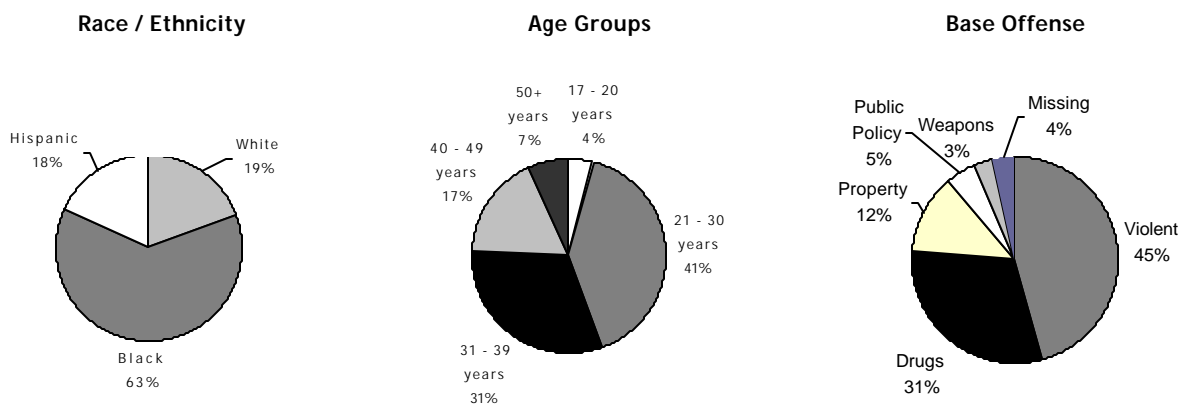
### Age Groups

- Nearly 45 percent of state prison inmates in 2001 were under age 30. The median age is 32.
- Older inmates experienced the largest percentage growth in total numbers between 1990-2001. The number of inmates over 50 years old more than doubled from 700 in 1990 to 1600 in 2001. Inmates in the 40-49 age category and 60+ category also nearly doubled in the last decade (from 2,061 in 1990 to 3,987 in 2001 among the 40-49 age group and from 184 to 358 among the 60+ age group). The other age groups have grown 25 to 30 percent.
- Inmates over 40 years old now comprise 25 percent of the total prison population, up from 17 percent in 1990.

### Base Offense Categories (see definitions in appendix)

- 45 percent of adult inmates in New Jersey State prisons are violent offenders; 31 percent are incarcerated for drug offenses.
- Between 1990-2001, the number of inmates incarcerated for public policy offenses tripled (from 344 to 1,061). Inmates incarcerated for weapons offenses doubled (from 311 to 691 in 2001).
- Inmates incarcerated for drug offenses have increased by 40 percent while inmates serving time for violent and property crimes have increased by just over 20 percent.

Figure 3. Inmate Race/Ethnicity, Age, and Offense Category, 2001



Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Report, 2001.

## SENTENCE LENGTH AND MANDATORY MINIMUM TERMS

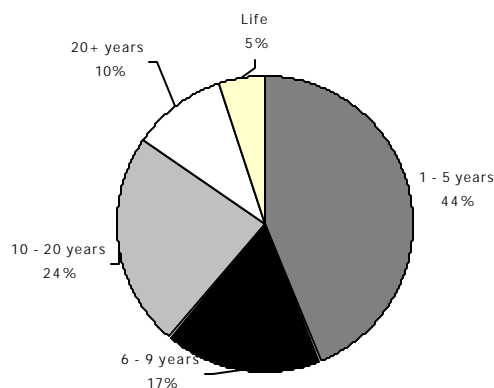
Nearly half of all inmates were sentenced to a term totaling less than five years.

- As shown in Figure 4, 44 percent of inmates were sentenced to term of 1 to 5 years.
- The median term for adult offenders is 6 years, down from 7 years in the early 1990s.

The number and share of prisoners subject to a mandatory minimum term has increased.

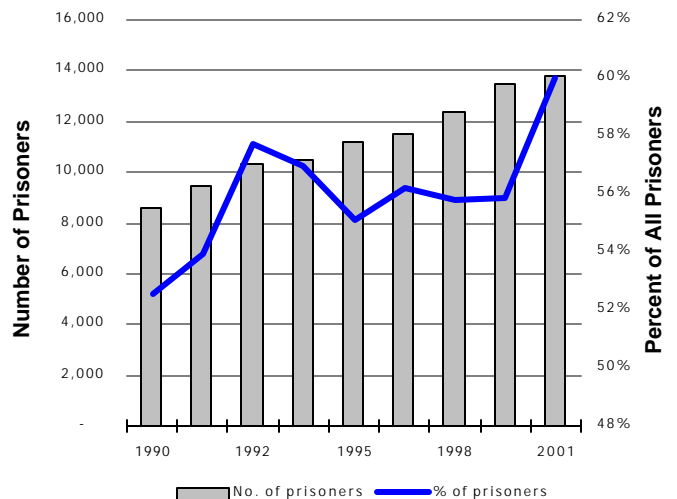
- Since 1979 New Jersey courts have had the option of imposing mandatory minimum sentences. This means that an offender must serve the entire minimum sentence before becoming eligible for parole. The term cannot be reduced through earned credits.
- As shown in Figure 5, the number and share of inmates subject to a mandatory minimum sentence has increased in the last decade. Between 1990-2001, the number of prisoners with a mandatory minimum term rose by 60 percent from 8,597 to 13,756. Prisoners with mandatory minimum sentences now account for 60 percent of all prisoners, up from 53 percent in 1990.
- In 2001, over half (62 percent) of the mandatory minimum sentences were 5 years or less. One-quarter of these sentences were over 10 years. The median mandatory minimum sentence is 3 years 6 months (2001).

**Figure 4. Inmates by Total Term at Admission, 2001**



Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Report, 2001.

**Figure 5. Number and Percent of Prisoners with a Mandatory Minimum Sentence, 1990-2001**



Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Reports, 1990-2001.

## PRISON ADMISSIONS

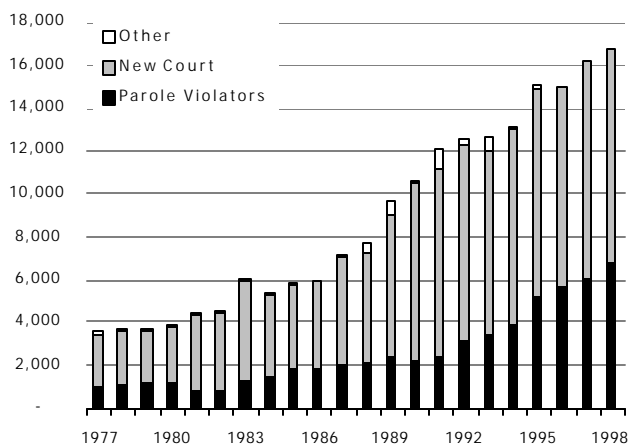
### Prison admissions have increased four fold since 1977.

- Admissions to New Jersey State prisons grew steadily through the late 1970s and early 1980s. (See Figure 6.) The most dramatic growth occurred in the 10 year period between 1988 and 1998 when prison admissions more than doubled. In 1998, there were nearly 17,000 admissions to New Jersey State prisons.
- New court commitments make up the majority of prison admissions.
- However, since the mid-1980s, the number of new admissions that are parole violators has been growing. In absolute numbers, parole violator admissions to prison grew nearly seven fold between 1977 and 1998. The most dramatic growth occurred in the 1990s when the number of parole violators tripled from 2,185 in 1990 to 6,822 in 1998.

### Parole violators make up a growing share of prison admissions.

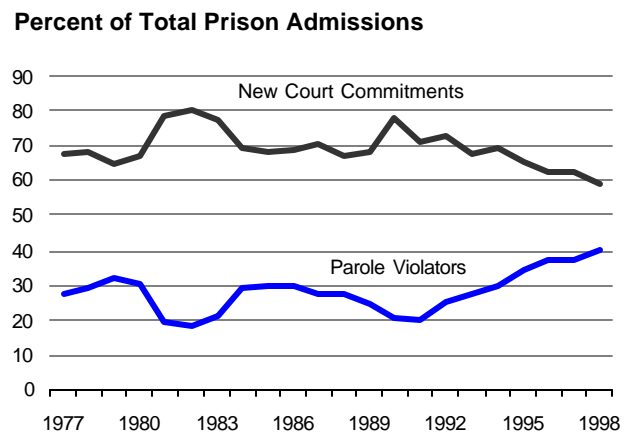
- Since about 1990, the share of admissions that are new court commitments has been declining and the share of admissions that are parole violators have been increasing. (See Figure 7.)
- The share of prison admissions that are parole violators doubled between 1990 and 1998 from 20 percent of all admissions to 40 percent.
- The share admissions that are new court commitments has declined by 25 percent between 1990 and 1998 from 78 percent of all admissions to 59 percent.

**Figure 6. Admissions to New Jersey State Prisons, 1977-1998**



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

**Figure 7. Percent of Total Prison Admissions by Type, 1977-1998**



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

## PRISON RELEASES

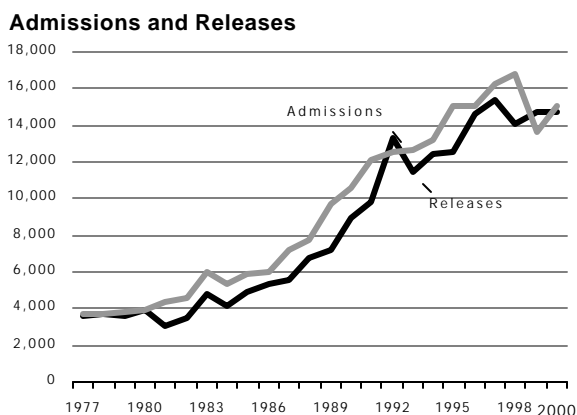
Releases from New Jersey State prisons have grown four fold between 1977-2001.

- As shown in Figure 8, releases from New Jersey State prisons have generally experienced steady growth starting in the early 1980s. (See the black line.)
- In 2000, there were 14,687 releases from New Jersey prisons.
- Also shown in Figure 8, admissions and releases have tracked one another closely. In 2000, admission and releases were very similar. There were 15,106 admissions and 14,687 releases.

Majority of prisoners are released to a period of parole supervision, although an increasing number are being released without parole supervision.

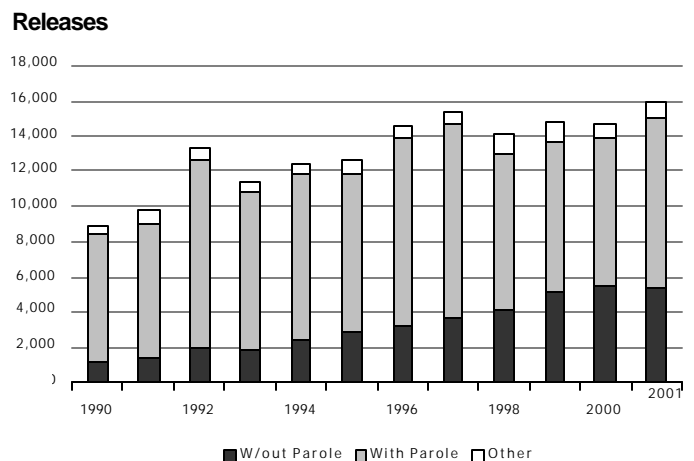
- There have been changes over the past decade in the number and share of prisoners released to parole supervision. The number of people released on parole supervision has declined by about one-third while the number of people released without parole supervision has increased four fold. (See Figure 9.)
- In 1990, 81 percent of releases were subject to a period of parole supervision; 13 percent were released without parole. As shown in Figure 10, in 2001 that had changed to 60 percent of releases were to parole supervision while 33 percent were not subject to a period of parole. (The remaining percent were released to a program other than parole.)

Figure 8. Admissions and Releases, New Jersey State Prisons, 1977-2000



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

Figure 9. Releases by Type, 1990-2001



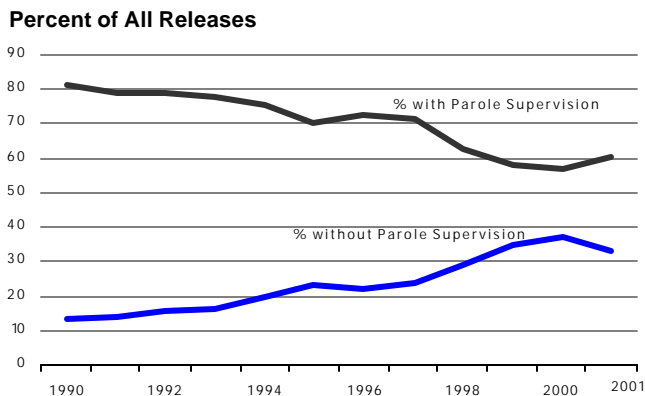
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

## PAROLE POPULATION

### PAROLE POPULATION HAS INCREASED 66 PERCENT SINCE 1977.

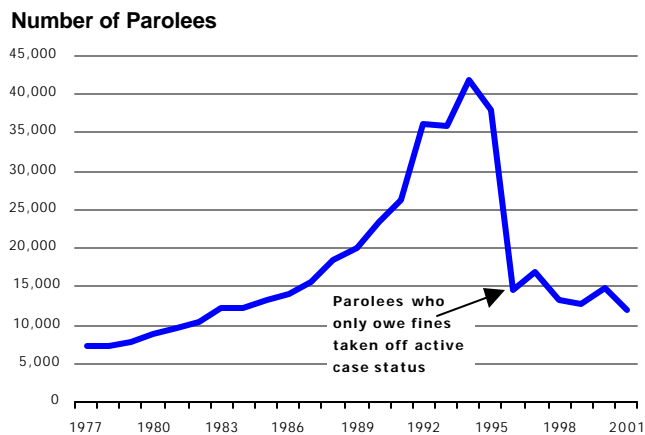
- As shown in Figure 11, the parole population has increased 66 percent from 7,000 in 1977 to nearly 12,000 in 2001.
- The substantial increase in the parolee population in late 1980s following by a dramatic decline represents a change in the way the Department of Corrections counts parolees. Starting around 1996, the Department moved parolees who only owed fines off the active caseload list. These were individuals who had completed their parole term but still owed fines.
- The average daily parole population in 2001 was 12,400. The State of New Jersey employs about 400 parole officers who have an average caseload of about 35 (including specialized caseloads). Excluding specialized caseloads brings the average caseload to 45.
- Over half (55 percent) of parolees were successfully discharged in 1999, compared to 42 percent nationally.

**Figure 10. Percent Released with and without Parole Supervision, 1990-2001**



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

**Figure 11. Parole Population in New Jersey, 1977-2001**



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

## Data Tables for Figures

Figures 1-2. Prisoners in New Jersey and Incarceration Rate per 100,000 Population (1977-2001), and U.S. Incarceration Rate (1980-2001)

	<b>New Jersey Prisoner Population</b>	<b>New Jersey Incarceration Rate</b>	<b>U.S. Incarceration Rate</b>
1977	6,017	78	-
1978	5,869	74	-
1979	5,852	76	-
1980	5,884	76	130
1981	7,011	92	144
1982	8,191	107	160
1983	9,192	123	167
1984	10,363	138	176
1985	11,335	149	187
1986	12,020	157	201
1987	15,969	177	211
1988	16,936	219	227
1989	19,439	251	253
1990	21,128	271	272
1991	23,483	301	287
1992	22,653	290	305
1993	23,831	301	322
1994	24,632	311	358
1995	27,066	340	379
1996	27,490	343	393
1997	28,361	351	410
1998	31,121	382	423
1999	31,493	384	434
2000	29,784	362	432
2001	28,142	331	426

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series: Prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction (corpop02.wk1) and Incarceration rates for prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction (corpop25.wk1).

**Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity of New Jersey State Prisoners, 1990-2001**

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>missing</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1990	3,406	10,281	2,648	14	9	4	16,362
1991	3,294	11,306	2,821	26	10	4	17,461
1992	3,282	11,531	3,005	32	15	3	17,868
1993	3,440	11,785	3,085	32	15	2	18,359
1995	3,707	13,040	3,460	52	30	1	20,290
1996	3,661	13,117	3,653	59	27	0	20,517
1998	4,015	14,209	3,859	63	22	0	22,168
1999	4,320	15,450	4,195	81	23	0	24,069
2001	4,389	14,329	4,114	81	5	12	22,930

Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Reports, 1990-2001.

**Figure 3. Age Groups of New Jersey State Prisoners, 1990-2001**

	<b>17 - 20</b>	<b>21 - 24</b>	<b>25 - 30</b>	<b>31 - 39</b>	<b>40 - 49</b>	<b>50 - 59</b>	<b>60+</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1990	766	3,061	4,112	5,658	2,061	518	184	16,360*
1991	816	3,404	4,420	5,925	2,156	553	187	17,461
1992	953	3,715	5,025	5,068	2,319	590	198	17,868
1993	935	3,561	5,185	5,374	2,469	640	195	18,359
1995	1,034	3,414	5,853	6,166	2,770	787	263	20,287*
1996	1,025	3,320	5,731	6,403	2,942	829	267	20,517
1998	1,234	3,529	5,986	6,936	3,256	941	286	22,168
1999	1,181	3,841	6,317	7,657	3,726	1,044	303	24,069
2001	985	3,796	5,352	7,201	3,987	1,251	358	22,930

\* For 1990, missing data on two individuals and missing data on three individuals in 1995.

Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Reports, 1990-2001.

Figure 3. New Jersey State Prisoners by Base Offense, 1990-2001

	<b>Violent</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Public Policy</b>	<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Drugs</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1990	8,526	2,325	344	-	5,012	155	16,362
1991	8,991	2,295	341	-	5,699	135	17,461
1992	8,999	2,245	351	311	5,780	182	17,868
1993	9,309	2,433	445	329	5,686	157	18,359
1995	10,092	2,757	706	484	6,107	144	20,290
1996	10,213	2,789	854	496	6,004	161	20,517
1998	10,303	2,994	935	584	6,549	803	22,168
1999	10,913	3,255	1,054	677	7,416	754	24,069
2001	10,513	2,847	1,061	691	7,025	793	22,930

Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Reports, 1990-2001.

**Definitions:**

- **Base Offense** is the most serious offense the inmate at the time of admission.
- **Violent Crimes** include homicide, sexual assault, aggravated/simple assault, robbery, kidnapping, other sex offenses and other crimes against persons (i.e., threats, coercion, larceny from a person, death by auto and negligent manslaughter).
- **Property Offenses** include burglary, arson, theft, forgery, embezzlement, and receiving/possessing stolen property.
- **Public Policy Offenses** include racketeering, gambling, violation of probation, corruption, perjury, escape, bail jumping, juvenile or family related offenses and conspiracy. Violation of probation makes up the vast majority of these offenses.
- **Weapons Offenses** include weapons possession/operation.
- **Drug Offenses** include distribution, manufacture and possession/use of drugs.

Figure 4. Inmates by Total Term at Admission, 1990-2001

	<b>1 - 5 Years</b>	<b>6 – 9 Years</b>	<b>10 – 20 Years</b>	<b>20+ Years</b>	<b>Life</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1991	7,352	2,243	6,868		846	13	139	17,461
1992	7,536	2,404	5,089	1,817	836	4	182	17,868
1993	7,697	2,552	5,227	1,873	849	5	156	18,359
1995	8,657	2,915	5,575	2,082	910	7	144	20,290
1996	8,691	3,005	5,541	2,160	948	11	161	20,517
1998	9,807	3,140	5,565	2,247	1,019	14	376	22,168
1999	11,252	3,483	5,761	2,309	1,062	14	188	24,069
2001	9,899	3,881	5,351	2,320	1,097	15	367	22,930

Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Reports, 1991-2001.

Figure 5. Number and Share of Inmates With a Mandatory Minimum Term

	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of all Prisoners</b>
1990	8,597	53%
1991	9,420	54%
1992	10,319	58%
1993	10,456	57%
1995	11,184	55%
1996	11,536	56%
1998	12,366	56%
1999	13,453	56%
2001	13,756	60%

Source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Offender Characteristics Reports, 1990-2001.

Figures 6-7. Admissions to New Jersey Prisons by Type, 1977-1998

	<i>Parole Violators</i>		<i>New Court Commitments</i>		<i>Other</i>		<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
1977	1,001	27.3%	2,485	67.7%	187	5.1%	3,673
1978	1,083	29.2%	2,538	68.5%	86	2.3%	3,707
1979	1,210	32.1%	2,435	64.6%	123	3.3%	3,768
1980	1,192	30.3%	2,635	67.0%	108	2.7%	3,935
1981	847	19.3%	3,467	78.8%	85	1.9%	4,399
1982	833	18.2%	3,667	80.0%	86	1.9%	4,586
1983	1,286	21.3%	4,695	77.8%	53	0.9%	6,034
1984	1,567	29.2%	3,738	69.8%	54	1.0%	5,359
1985	1,773	30.1%	4,038	68.5%	82	1.4%	5,893
1986	1,785	29.8%	4,140	69.1%	64	1.1%	5,989
1987	1,985	27.6%	5,102	71.0%	100	1.4%	7,187
1988	2,081	27.0%	5,151	66.8%	475	6.2%	7,707
1989	2,386	24.6%	6,644	68.5%	666	6.9%	9,696
1990	2,185	20.5%	8,338	78.4%	111	1.0%	10,634
1991	2,410	19.9%	8,665	71.4%	1,059	8.7%	12,134
1992	3,142	25.1%	9,056	72.5%	297	2.4%	12,495
1993	3,478	27.4%	8,563	67.5%	638	5.0%	12,679
1994	3,922	29.7%	9,154	69.4%	112	0.8%	13,188
1995	5,157	34.3%	9,747	64.9%	116	0.8%	15,020
1996	5,617	37.4%	9,382	62.5%	2	0.0%	15,001
1997	6,064	37.4%	10,147	62.6%	1	0.0%	16,212
1998	6,822	40.6%	9,938	59.2%	41	0.2%	16,801

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series: Sentenced prisoners admitted to State or Federal jurisdiction (corp13.wk1), Conditional release violators returned to State or Federal jurisdiction (corp15.wk1), and New court commitments admitted to State or Federal jurisdiction (corp14.wk1).

**Figure 8. Releases from New Jersey State Prisons, 1977-2001**

<b>Total Releases</b>	
1977	3,563
1978	3,671
1979	3,651
1980	3,910
1981	3,102
1982	3,457
1983	4,832
1984	4,188
1985	4,921
1986	5,304
1987	5,545
1988	6,740
1989	7,193
1990	8,945
1991	9,779
1992	13,325
1993	11,501
1994	12,387
1995	12,586
1996	14,577
1997	15,341
1998	14,041
1999	14,734
2000	14,687
2001	16,032

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics,  
National Prisoner Statistics Data Series:  
Total Sentenced Prisoners Released From  
State or Federal Jurisdiction (corpop22.wk1).

**Figure 9-10. Releases from New Jersey State Prisons  
By Type, 1990-2001**

	<b>Total Releases</b>	<b>With Parole</b>	<b>W/out Parole</b>
1990	8,945	7,284	1,173
1991	9,779	7,716	1,376
1992	13,325	10,540	2,078
1993	11,501	8,947	1,885
1994	12,387	9,326	2,441
1995	12,586	8,832	2,912
1996	14,577	10,621	3,242
1997	15,341	10,982	3,645
1998	14,041	8,821	4,116
1999	14,734	8,518	5,147
2000	14,687	8,348	5,449
2001	16,032	9,715	5,340

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.

**Figure 11. Parole Population in New Jersey, 1977-2001**

1977	7,173	1989	20,062
1978	7,386	1990	23,298
1979	7,817	1991	26,282
1980	8,911	1992	36,120
1981	9,706	1993	35,775
1982	10,514	1994	41,802
1983	12,287	1995	37,867
1984	12,206	1996	14,545
1985	13,385	1997	16,903
1986	14,064	1998	13,218
1987	15,709	1999	12,698
1988	18,463	2000	14,899
		2001	11,931

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Data Series.