

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH - 1983_____

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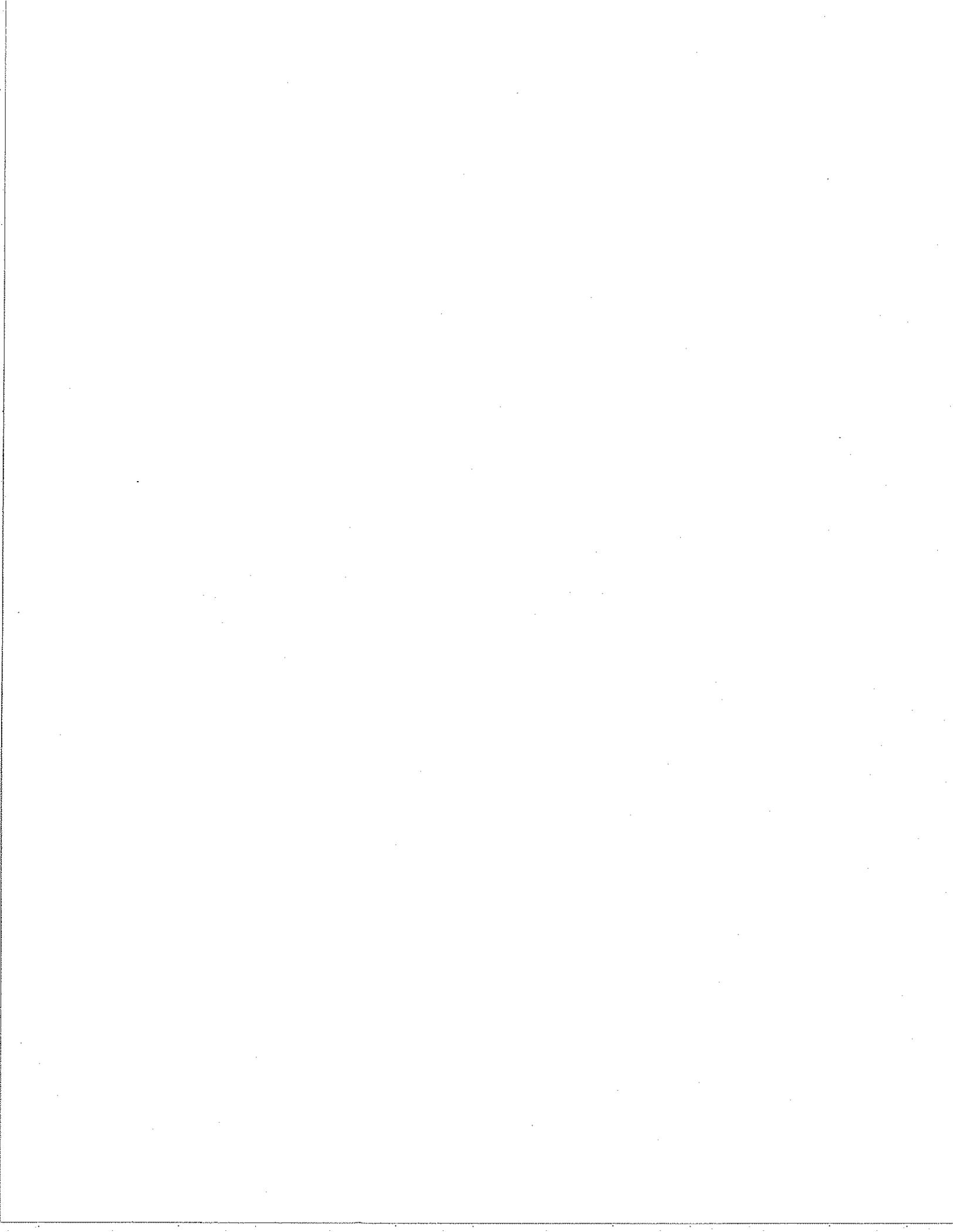


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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH - 1983

During 1983, the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) Research Unit conducted several research projects on various topics concerning the Department. This report presents a review of the papers that stemmed from these projects. Included in this report are abstracts which summarize specific findings of each of the individual studies cited.

The report is divided into three sections which reflect the different areas of research conducted by the Research Unit during 1983. The first section describes two papers which deal with the topic of community reintegration. Since community reintegration has been a priority within the DOC itself, the Research Unit has closely monitored its effects on the state prison population. The first report analyzes recidivism rates for two years (1978 and 1979), and examines why the rate increased in 1979 for the first time in years. The second report is an overview of previous research on community reintegration, spanning a ten year period from 1971 to 1980. This paper looks at the persistence of various trends over the years, controlling for program selection factors and also examines the possibility of cross-over effects.

The second section in this report includes all those papers which evaluate or describe certain populations within the DOC. The first report in this section is a description of the Awaiting Trial Unit (ATU) at MCI-Framingham. This Unit houses women awaiting trial, those who in prior years would normally have been held in county houses of correction or jails. The second report is part of a series of reports which have focused on youthful offenders incarcerated in the state prison system. This specific one examines the recidivism rate for this population as well as the type of youthful offender who represents a high recidivist risk. The third report in this section presents a typology of older prisoners within Massachusetts State Correctional facilities from 1972 to 1982. The analysis proposes the use of a four-fold typology to aid in the understanding of inmates over age 60.

The final section of the report includes the eight statistical reports which the Research Unit produces annually. The first is a statistical description of Massachusetts correctional institutions on January 1, 1983. There are two commitment reports: one on those committed to the state prison system and another on those committed to county houses of correction. There are three other reports which deal with the movement of population in the DOC: one on furlough program

participants, a second on those released from the DOC during 1982 and a third on the various population movements in the DOC during that year. Finally, two statistical reports concerning recidivism rates for the 1981 releases are covered. The first examines this data for all 1981 releases and the second examines those 1981 releases from each specific pre-release facility.

Copies of the complete studies may be obtained by writing to:

Research Unit
Massachusetts Department of Correction
100 Cambridge Street, 21st Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02202

II. COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION REPORTS

An Analysis of Recidivism Rates Among Residents Released
From Massachusetts Correctional Institutions
During the Years 1978 and 1979

#252

March, 1983

Dr. Daniel P. LeClair

This study presents an analysis of recidivism rates for individuals released from Massachusetts correctional institutions in the years 1978 and 1979. The data show that a recent historical trend of an overall reduction in recidivism rates since the year 1971 continued to fall in the 1978 cohort but rose to a new high in the 1979 cohort. The 1979 data represent the first statistically significant increase in recidivism rates in the nine year period.

The report is divided into four sections, the first of which is an overview of the recidivism data for the 1978 and the 1979 releases. The second section explores the relationship between the 1978 - 1979 data and prior recidivism trends. Consistent with past studies, the 1978 - 1979 data show a positive relationship between furlough participation and lower rates of recidivism, and a positive relationship between pre-release participation and lower rates of recidivism. The data also show a similar association of lower recidivism rates for releases from lower security institutions and higher rates for releases from higher security institutions for both cohorts.

The third section of the report explores a variety of possible explanations for the significant increase in the recidivism rate for the 1979 releases. However, the data revealed that none of these explanations held and that further research is needed to explore this important policy question.

A final section of the study focuses on the identification of specific variables found to distinguish between individuals who recidivate and those who do not. The findings generally fit into prior studies which have isolated variables such as marital status, education, employment history, age, type of offense and criminal career pattern as the principle predictors of recidivism. Additionally, furlough participation and successful completion of pre-release placements were the strongest predictors of non-recidivism.

The Effect of Community Reintegration on Rates of Recidivism:
A Statistical Overview of Data for the Years
1971 Through 1980

#253

June, 1983

Dr. Daniel P. LeClair

This report draws together data generated from Massachusetts recidivism studies of the past ten years and presents a statistical overview of the results of that research. The first section of the report provides a general overview of the recidivism data for the ten year span. Included in the overview is a discussion of the trends that have emerged and remained consistent over the years. They are: 1) a systematic reduction in recidivism rates from 1971 to 1978, with an increase in 1979 and 1980, 2) lower recidivism associated with inmates who participated in the furlough program, 3) lower recidivism for pre-release participants and 4) lower recidivism associated with a graduated movement among institutions in descending level of security and size.

The second section presents data on these trends for which a control for program selection biases has been performed. That is, Base Expectancy tables have been utilized to construct expected rates of recidivism. Data for each of the trends are therefore analyzed in terms of expected vs. actual results and tests of significance are performed. The trends mentioned above all held true even with the control for program selection biases.

The data presented in the first two sections are based on a one year follow-up criterion. Because of the concern of possible cross-over effects, studies with longer follow-up periods have been conducted and their results are presented in section three. Analysis revealed that all trends previously identified remained unchanged upon extension to five years of follow-up, thus denying a significant role to cross-over effects in the Massachusetts research.

At the end of the report a bibliography is provided which contains a listing of all the published recidivism reports that this statistical overview summarizes.

III. EVALUATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES

Women in Jail: A Description of the Awaiting Trial
Unit at the Massachusetts Correctional
Institution at Framingham

#251

April, 1983

Lisa Lorant

The Awaiting Trial Unit (ATU) at MCI-Framingham is a facility that is used to house women from all parts of Massachusetts who are awaiting a court hearing, waiting to make bail or being held for some authority. Over the last two years there has been rapid growth of the Awaiting Trial Unit population at MCI-Framingham. The purpose of this report is to address the lack of research on the ATU population in general and to understand the reasons behind the large increase in population.

A description of the ATU is outlined in the first section of the report and includes: 1) the physical characteristics of the ATU, 2) the Administration/staff at the ATU, 3) the ATU admissions process and 4) the programming available to ATU residents.

The second section discusses the population levels at the ATU during the period 1975 - 1982. The report documents the rapid rise in total population leading to overcrowding at the ATU. In 1982 the average daily population at the ATU was 44 residents. With a rated capacity of 17, this meant that the facility was operating on average at 159% over capacity. This represents an 83% growth in population from 1981 when the average daily population was 24 residents.

An analysis of the admission and release patterns make up the third section of the report. The rise in total population was associated with a rise in admissions from various parts of the state as the county correctional system closed its pre-trial facilities for women and with an increase in the length of stay for women in the ATU. In 1982 there were 1,270 admissions to the ATU. This represents a 38% increase in admissions over 1981. Also the median length of stay in the ATU in 1982 was 5 days. This is an increase from 3 days in 1975. In 1982 most women released from the ATU were bailed (36%) or returned to court (46%). Only 13% of the admissions resulted in an individual being committed directly to MCI-Framingham.

Youthful Offenders Evaluation Volume III
Recidivism Analysis

#229

July, 1983

Lawrence T. Williams

This report is the third of a five volume series of studies on offenders seventeen years of age or younger committed to the DOC from 1968 to 1979. The focus on this volume is on a recidivism analysis of the sample.

The report begins by reviewing prior volumes of the youthful offender series, explaining the methodology and presenting an overview of prior Massachusetts DOC recidivism research. For this series of reports, a youthful offender is being defined as any offender who was seventeen years of age or younger when committed to the DOC from 1968 to 1979. This includes youth who were seventeen at the time of their commitment (legally adults in Massachusetts) as well as youth who were bound over from juvenile court jurisdiction and treated as adults in the adult criminal justice system.

In addition to analyzing the recidivism rate (30%) for the youthful offender sample after a one year follow-up period, the study identifies those factors that were associated with high recidivist risk youthful offenders. Recidivism rates and high risk indicators were also analyzed for various subsets of the youthful offender sample. One division breaks down the sample into bindover and non-bindover offenders. A further division breaks down each of these subsets into smaller groups depending on their penetration into the juvenile justice system.

All the separate analyses indicate that high recidivism risk youthful offenders had extensive criminal/delinquent records prior to this incarceration. Similarly, those with the least extensive criminal background had significantly lower recidivism rates than did the remainder of the sample. In fact, youthful offenders with no prior juvenile delinquent history who were not bindovers had a recidivism rate of 8% while those with an extensive juvenile delinquent history who were also bindovers had a recidivism rate of 37%.

A Typology of Older Prisoners in Massachusetts
State Correctional Facilities
1972 to 1982

#260

August, 1983

Patricia Tobin
Charles Metzler

This research develops a conceptual typology of older prisoners based upon the criminal history of inmates age 60 and over in the Massachusetts State Correctional System between 1972 and 1982. In previous studies of elderly offenders (Wiegand and Berger, 1979-80; Teller and Howell, 1981), two distinctive types were identified: 1) the first offender and 2) the chronic offender/recidivist. However, this bipolar typology does not capture all types of older offenders and instead clusters together certain types of offenders that have distinct backgrounds.

Analysis is therefore used in this study to test an alternative system of classifying older inmates into four categories. They are: 1) "first offenders" who are admitted to prison for the first time at older ages and have no previous convictions; 2) "chronic offenders" with a history of incarcerations in a house of correction or multiple criminal charges who are first imprisoned in a state prison late in life; 3) "prison recidivists" who are older inmates who have a record of multiple state and federal incarcerations beginning at a young age; and 4) "young offenders grown old" who are imprisoned when young who received long sentences and grew old in prison.

The four types of older inmates appear quite dissimilar in terms of offense patterns, criminal history and types of movement within the prison system. The fourfold typology suggests that the presence of older people in prison is not simply a bimodal pattern of youthful offenders continuing criminal careers and senior citizens being incarcerated for the first time. In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that the fourfold typology would be more useful and would yield richer data than the bipolar typology.

IV. ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORTS

A Statistical Description of Residents of the Massachusetts
Correctional Institutions
On January 1, 1983

#254

June, 1983

Linda K. Holt

This report is a statistical description of characteristics of the residents in each correctional facility on January 1, 1983. This description includes information on present offense, personal background, criminal history and furlough participation. The report is divided into two sections: the first gives the description of residents at all non-pre-release institutions and combines pre-release facilities together and the second gives the description of residents at each pre-release facility and combines the non-pre-release institutions together.

On January 1, 1983 there were 4,334 individuals incarcerated in the state correctional system. This represents an 18% increase from the population on January 1, 1981.

Of the 4,334 DOC residents there were 724 (17%) in maximum security institutions, 2421 (56%) in medium security institutions and 1189 (27%) in minimum security institutions or pre-release centers. The majority of the residents were originally committed to Walpole (66%). While the majority of sentences were spread over a range from one year to over twenty, 13% were lifers and 32% had indeterminate sentences. The majority of residents are serving sentences for crimes against the person (63%) or sex offenses (13%). The most frequently committed offense is armed robbery (26%).

The population is 95% male. In terms of race, there were 66% whites and 34% blacks. Seven percent of the population were Hispanic. The median age of the population on January 1, 1983 was 28 years old and the population is predominantly single (63%). The median education level is tenth grade; 32% have completed the high school level.

Twenty-six percent have a history of commitments to a juvenile authority. Overall, 56% had at least one prior incarceration as an adult, including 45% with incarcerations at the county level and 27% with state or federal incarcerations.

Twenty-nine percent of the population participated in the furlough program during their current commitment. Only 4% have had one or more escape furlough outcomes.

Commitments to Massachusetts County
Facilities During 1982

#255

July, 1983

Lawrence T. Williams

This report is a description of court commitments to the Massachusetts County facilities (houses of correction) during 1982. Included in this report is information concerning operating expenditures and average populations as well as statistics on present offense and personal background variables.

The total operating expenses for the year ending June 30, 1982 were just under 34 million dollars. During 1982 there were 8,500 individuals committed to county facilities. This represents an increase of 36% over the number of commitments during 1981.

The majority of individuals (86%) were committed for non-person offenses. Burglary was the offense for which individuals were most frequently sentenced (18%). Commitments for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol increased from 295 during 1981 to 1305 during 1982, an increase of 342%. The majority of sentences were under a year, with 60% of the individuals being committed to sentences of three months or less.

The median age for commitments to houses of correction during 1982 was 24 years old. The majority of the population were male (99%). Most offenders were single (70%) at the time of their commitment to the county facility. The median last grade completed was the eleventh grade. More than one third of the commitments (41%) had graduated from high school, while only 135 offenders (2%) had graduated from college.

Most of the commitments (92%) were sentenced by District Courts. Nearly half (44%) of the commitments were sentenced to three institutions - Billerica, Worcester and Springfield.

1982 Court Commitments to the Massachusetts
Department of Correction

#256

June, 1983

Linda K. Holt

This report is a statistical description of the 2,003 individuals committed by the courts to a term of incarceration in the Massachusetts Department of Correction. The tables in this report contain information on the nature of present offense, personal background characteristics and criminal history of these individuals. The 2,003 commitments during 1982 represent an 18% increase from the previous year and the highest number of commitments over a ten year period.

Seventy-five percent of the commitments to the DOC were from Superior Courts, mostly from Suffolk Superior, Middlesex Superior and Worcester Superior. However, only 17% of the commitments to Framingham were from Superior Courts; most commitments to Framingham were from municipal or district courts. While the commitments to Walpole and Concord increased slightly (8% and 11% respectively), the commitments to Framingham increased substantially (49%). This increase in females accounts for 59% of the total increase in commitments. The type of offense varied by committing institution. Sixty-nine percent of the commitments to Walpole and 62% to Concord were for person or sex offenses while 38% of the commitments to Framingham were for property offenses and 38% were for offenses in the "other" category.

The median age at incarceration was 25 years, with ages ranging from 16 years to 68 years old. All Walpole and Concord commitments (73%) are male; all Framingham commitments (27%) are female. Seventy percent of the new inmates were white and 29% black; of the whole sample 9% were Hispanic. The median educational level for this population was the 11th grade; 42% were high school graduates, and 10% had some college education.

In terms of their criminal history, the median age at the time of first court appearance was 17 years of age. The median number of prior court appearances was ten. While 52% were serving their first adult incarceration, 37% had a history of incarcerations in a county facility and 21% had been incarcerated at a state or federal facility.

1982 Yearly Statistical Report
of the Furlough Program

#257

July, 1983

Patricia Tobin

The furlough program has been in operation by the Massachusetts Department of Correction since November 6, 1972. A total of 81,822 furloughs have been granted between the inception of the program and December 31, 1982. This report is divided into two sections. The first section gives an overview of pertinent furlough statistics for 1982. The second section presents an overview of the Massachusetts furlough program and provides comparisons over the past ten years.

During the 1982 calendar year, 6,307 furloughs were granted. The number of individuals furloughed was 1,198. Of the total number granted, twelve (0.2%) resulted in official escapes, three of which returned voluntarily within twenty-four hours. The majority of furloughs (66%) were granted from pre-release centers, with 30% being granted from minimum and only 4% being granted from medium and maximum security combined.

During 1982 the DOC released 1,440 residents to the community. Of that total, 30% (438) had received one or more furloughs before release.

Since 41% of the inmates released in 1981 had been furloughed, this represents a 4% decrease in furlough participation of the released population from 1981 to 1982. Finally, while the furlough rate fluctuated month by month, an average of 8.8% of the population was furloughed per month.

In spanning the past ten years, it is evident that the number of individuals furloughed per year has decreased. From 1973 to 1982, the number of individuals furloughed decreased from 1,868 to 1,198 (a decline of 36%) with a slight increase occurring between 1980 and 1981. The escape rate by individual furloughed followed a similar declining pattern over the ten years from a high of 7.6% to a low of 1.0%. While these trends were occurring, the percentages of individuals being released who had not participated in the furlough program prior to their release was increasing. Even though the number of releases over this time span increased by 49%, the percentage of individuals released who had participated in the furlough program decreased from 69% to 30%.

A Statistical Description of Releases
From the Massachusetts Correctional
Institutions During 1982

#259

August, 1983

Linda K. Holt

This report presents a statistical description of the characteristics of individuals released to the street from the Massachusetts Department of Correction during 1982. The tables contain information on the releases themselves as well as information on the releasees, including their present offense, personal background characteristics, criminal history and furlough participation. The report is divided into two sets of tables - those that represent each non-pre-release facility, with the pre-release centers put in one category and then those that represent each pre-release center separately but put all other facilities into a non-pre-release category.

During 1982 there were 1,440 individuals released to the street from facilities in the Massachusetts Department of Correction. This represents an increase of 29% from 1981.

The data reveal that males and females differ on most release characteristics. These differences may largely be attributed to the type of sentence served. While almost all (98%) male releases were serving state sentences, only 13% of the women releases were serving state sentences.

For male releasees, 60% were released from lower security institutions (minimum security and pre-release centers) and 40% were released from secure institutions (maximum or medium security). For females, only 10% were released from lower security and 90% being released from secure institutions.

Individuals could be released by the authority of the Parole Board, by expiration of sentence or by a good conduct discharge. Eighty percent of the men released were paroled and 20% were released by expiration of sentence or good conduct discharge. Again we find a difference by sex with only 39% of female releasees being paroled.

For those cases where time served could readily be calculated, 72% served two years or less before release. In breaking this down by committing institution, there was a difference in time served for Walpole (4.6 years), Concord (1.4 years) and Framingham (4 months) sentences.

Population Movements in The Massachusetts Department
of Correction During 1982

#261

December, 1983

Patricia Tobin

This movement report is a compilation of all admissions and releases during 1982. It presents information by type of admission and release including: new court commitments, paroles, returns on parole violations, discharges, escapes, deaths, transfers to other correctional facilities both within the state and outside of the state, and trips to hospitals and courts.

At the beginning of 1982 the population of all Massachusetts Department of Correction facilities was 3777; at the end of 1982 the population was 4431. This represents an increase of 654 individuals or 17% during a single year and is an increase of 37% over the population at the beginning of 1981. The population change was due primarily to the disproportionate increase in admissions over releases.

There was a total of 11,356 admission movements of all types into institutions during 1982. This represents a 22% increase over the number of such movements in 1981. When broken down by specific type of admission, we see that the increase was across the board and included increases in returns on parole violations (20%), transfers within the DOC (24%), new court commitments (17%) and returns from escapes (18%).

There were 10,702 movements out of institutions during 1982, a 23% increase from the previous year. Much of the increase in releases can be attributed to inter-institutional transfers, which increased 23% in one year. Paroles to the street increased by 16% and escapes by 15%. The number of transfers to houses of correction remained stable (79 in 1982). There were 9 deaths in DOC facilities: two deaths by homicide, two by suicide and five by natural causes.

Statistical Tables Describing the Background Characteristics
and Recidivism Rates for Releases From Massachusetts
Correctional Institutions During 1981

#262

December, 1983

Lawrence T. Williams

This report is a statistical description of characteristics of offenders released to the streets from Massachusetts correctional institutions during 1981 with corresponding recidivism rates. A recidivist is defined as any offender who returns to a state or federal correctional institution, or to a house of correction or jail for 30 days or more. The follow-up period is one year from the date of the offender's release to the community. In this report, all drug programs and pre-release facilities are collapsed into the category "pre-release"*. Similarly, the category "minimum security" includes releases from NCC (Northeastern Correctional Center), Bay State Correctional Center, Plymouth and Warwick. Statistics are available for men released from these two categories as well as from MCI's Walpole, Concord, Framingham, Gardner, Norfolk and SECC (Southeastern Correctional Center). Statistics are also available for women released from MCI-Framingham, and three pre-release centers housing women (Charlotte House, Brooke House and Lancaster).

A total of 1,032 offenders (837 males and 195 females) were released from Massachusetts correctional facilities during 1981. Seventy-nine percent of those released were paroled with the remainder being discharged. During 1981, 9% were released from maximum security, 41% from medium security, 10% from minimum and 41% from pre-release centers.

The overall recidivism rate for the 1981 releases was 24%. The rate varied by the institution released from and ranged from 36% from a maximum security facility, 28% from medium security to 18% from the pre-release facilities.

* A companion study providing the same information for offenders released from pre-release facilities follows.

Statistical Tables Describing the Background Characteristics
and Recidivism Rates for Releases From Massachusetts
Pre-Release Facilities During 1981

#263

December, 1983

Lawrence T. Williams

This report is a statistical description of characteristics of offenders released to the streets from Massachusetts pre-release facilities during 1981 with corresponding recidivism rates. A recidivist is defined as any offender who returns to a state or federal correctional institution, or to a house of correction or jail for 30 days or more. The follow-up period is one year from the date of the offender's release to the community. In this report, statistics are presented for releases from each of the pre-release facilities (577 House, Coolidge II, Temporary Housing Program, Shirley, Boston State, Coolidge, Brooke, South Middlesex Pre-Release, Park Drive, Lancaster, Charlotte House, Hillside and Norfolk Pre-Release). Additionally, information is presented for releases in two other categories. The first category, "Drug Rehab" includes those released from four drug programs (Spectrum House, Meridian, Boston VA Hospital, and Third Nail). The second category, "non-pre-release", includes maximum, medium and minimum security releases.

A total of 1,032 offenders were released from DOC facilities during 1981. Of those, 420 (41%) were released from pre-release centers including state pre-release and contract pre-release facilities.

While the overall recidivism rate for the 1981 releases was 24%, it was 18% for the pre-release facilities. This was 3 percentage points higher than the rate of 15% for the 1980 releases from these facilities. Additionally the rate was lower for state-run pre-release centers (14%) than for those that are contracted (21%).