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Bureau of Justice Statistics

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WASHINGTON The number of adults under correctional supervision in the United States declined by less than one percent during 2009, dropping to 7,225,800 (or 48,800 fewer offenders than at yearend 2008), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. This was the first measured decline in the total number of adults under correctional supervision since BJS began reporting these populations in 1980.

One in 32 adults, or about 3.1 percent of U.S. adult residents, was under correctional supervision at yearend 2009, down slightly from the rate of supervision in 2008.

Although comparatively small, decreases in the probation population (down by 40,079 offenders) and the parole population (down by 5,526 offenders) were the first observed decreases since BJS began annual data collections on these populations in 1980. At yearend 2009, 4,203,967 adults were on probation, and 819,308 were under parole or other post-custody supervision.

During 2009, entries to probation declined by 2.4 percent, and entries to parole declined by 1.2 percent. At the same time, the number leaving probation increased by 0.3 percent and leaving parole supervision increased by 0.9 percent. The increased number of offenders leaving probation and parole was associated with increases in the rate of offenders completing their terms of supervision. During 2009, 65 percent of probationers completed their terms, either by serving their full-term sentence or by early discharge, up from 58 percent in 2006. Among parolees, 51 percent completed their terms of supervision during 2009, up from 45 percent in 2006.

The failure rate of offenders under community supervision defined as the incarceration of offenders at any time during the year remained relatively stable or declined during 2009. For probationers, the percent incarcerated at some time during the year remained relatively stable from 2006 (6.1 percent) through 2009 (5.8 percent). Among parolees, the failure rate declined slightly from 15.4 percent in 2006 to 14.0 percent in 2009.

At yearend 2009, 51 percent of probationers were felons, up slightly from 49 percent in 2008. This reversed a declining trend in the percent of probationers who were felons, which had decreased from 52 percent in 2000. Among all offenders on probation, 19 percent were violent offenders (unchanged from 2008), and 26 percent were drug offenders (down from 29 percent in 2008).

Among parolees, violent offenders accounted for 27 percent of the population at yearend 2009, up slightly from 26 percent in 2008. Drug offenders represented a slightly smaller share of the parole population at yearend 2009 (36 percent) compared to 2008 (37 percent).

Among incarcerated offenders, the number of jail inmates totaled 760,400 at midyear 2009 (down 2.2 percent from 2008). The number of prisoners under the jurisdiction of state and federal correctional authorities increased by 0.2 percent (3,981 prisoners) during 2009 to reach 1,613,740 at yearend.

The growth in the prison population during 2009 was the slowest annual increase in the current decade and marked the third consecutive year of a declining rate of growth in the prison population. While the federal prison population increased by 3.4 percent (up 6,838 prisoners), the state prison population had the first measured decline (down 0.2 percent or 2,857 prisoners) since 1977.

Twenty-four states reported declines in the prison population, with the largest declines in absolute number of prisoners in Michigan (down 3,260) and California (down 2,395). Twenty-six states reported increases in their populations; Pennsylvania (up 2,214) and Florida (up 1,527) had the largest increases.

At yearend 2009, the imprisonment rate the number of sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents declined for the second straight year, falling to 502 per 100,000 from a peak of 506 per 100,000 in 2007.

The decline in the number of state prisoners occurred as the number admitted into state prisons decreased. During 2009, state prison admissions decreased by 2.4 percent (totaling 674,707). New court commitments (down 1.3 percent) declined for the third straight year during 2009, and parole violators (down 4.5 percent) decreased for the first time since 2003.

While more than half of states reported decreases in admissions to prison, California reported the largest decline (11,122 fewer admissions), which was about four times the decline reported in any other state. The decrease in admissions in California was led by a drop in the number of parole violators returned to prison (down 9,668).

The reports were written by BJS statisticians (except as noted), and can be found at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov>: *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2009* (NCJ 231681), by Lauren E. Glaze; *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2009* (NCJ 231674), by Lauren E. Glaze, Thomas P. Bonczar, and Fan Zhang (BJS Intern); and *Prisoners in 2009* (NCJ 231675), by Heather C. West (now with the U.S. Census Bureau), William J. Sabol, and Sarah J. Greenman (BJS Program Assistant). For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical reports and programs, please visit the BJS website at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/>.

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