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# A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Illinois

Nancy G. La Vigne

Cynthia A. Mamalian

*with* Jeremy Travis and Christy Visher

*research for safer communities*



**URBAN INSTITUTE**  
Justice Policy Center

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Nancy G. La Vigne

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Designed by David Williams

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## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the many individuals and organizations who made valuable contributions to this report. The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), and specifically Steve Karr, provided the data that serve as the backbone of the analysis in this report. IDOC Director Donald Snyder; Tom Roth, Deputy Chief of the Administrative Services Division; and Nancy Miller, Chief of the Bureau of Operations, provided information on prison programming and the overall policy context of reentry in Illinois. Woody Carter and Wyla Diab of the Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC) provided demographic data on Chicago neighborhoods. Barbara Parthasarathy and Jason Sidorski of the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center prepared the maps included in this report. David Olson of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) and Loyola University provided guidance, information, and valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this report. Emmy Hong from the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University collected the data on Chicago-based services for returning prisoners. Nancy Morris from the University of Maryland at College Park assisted with data analysis. Vera Kachnowski and Terence Dunworth from the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center also provided feedback and guidance on earlier drafts of this report. The Urban Institute's David Williams designed the layout and formatted the text and graphics of this report. Finally, we thank our funders and program officers, who provided both the resources and guidance to make this report a reality: the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and ICJIA. Specifically, we would like to thank Julia Stasch of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and David Olson and Gerard Ramker of ICJIA.

## Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry

This *Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Illinois* is part of a larger Urban Institute initiative entitled *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*. The purpose of *Returning Home* is to develop a deeper understanding of the reentry experiences of returning prisoners, their families, and their communities. With support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA), the Urban Institute has launched *Returning Home* in Illinois as its first full study site. This research project involves interviews with prisoners before and after their release from prison; interviews with released prisoners' family members; focus groups with residents in communities to which many prisoners return; analysis of extant data on local indicators of community well-being; and interviews with community stakeholders. State laws and policies will also be reviewed to provide the overall political and policy context. The results of the Illinois study will be published in 2004 and will also be a part of a larger cross-state analysis based on *Returning Home* research conducted in Maryland, Ohio, and Texas.



# Executive Summary

This report describes the process of prisoner reentry by examining the policy context surrounding reentry in Illinois, the characteristics of Illinois' returning inmates, the geographic distribution of returning prisoners, and the social and economic climates of the communities that are home to the highest concentrations of returning prisoners. This report does not attempt to evaluate a specific reentry program or empirically assess Illinois' reentry policies and practices. Rather, the report consolidates existing data on incarceration and release trends and presents a new analysis of data on Illinois prisoners released in 2001. The data used for this report were derived from several sources—the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, and Census data compiled by the Metro Chicago Information Center. Highlights from the report are presented below.

**Historical Incarceration and Release Trends.** Illinois' incarceration and reentry trends mirror those observed at the national level. Between 1970 and 2001, the Illinois prison population increased more than 500 percent, from 7,326 to 44,348 people.<sup>1</sup> By the end of calendar year 2000, Illinois had the eighth highest prison population in the United States<sup>2</sup> and had an incarceration rate of 371 prisoners per 100,000 residents.<sup>3</sup> The increase in the Illinois prison population can be attributed to two main factors: increased admissions to prison and increased lengths of stay for incarcerated offenders. Increased admissions over the past two decades are the product of: (1) a dramatic increase in the number of drug law violators sentenced to prison; (2) a steady increase in the number of violent offenders sentenced to prison; and (3) a significant increase in parole revocations of released prisoners. Longer lengths of stay over the past two decades are driven by changes in sentencing policies, such as determinate sentencing and "truth in sentencing." Despite the long-term trend of increases in Illinois' prison population, in 2001 the population dropped marginally owing to increasing numbers of drug offenders and parole violators cycling through the prison system on relatively short sentences. Illinois' release patterns reflect these admissions and population trends (figure 1): In 2001, 30,068 men and women were released from Illinois prisons<sup>4</sup>—more than two and a half times the number released two decades ago (11,715 in 1983).<sup>5</sup>

**Preparation for Release.** The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) offers a range of facility-based programs and services in which prisoners may participate, including education, substance abuse treatment, employment readiness, and physical and mental health treatment. Since FY1991, IDOC has also required prisoners on post-release supervision to participate in a prerelease education, preparation, and planning program called PreStart. Community-based programming has also been enhanced in an

## Reentry Defined

For the purposes of this report, "reentry" is defined as the process of leaving the adult state prison system and returning to society. The concept of reentry is applicable to a variety of contexts in which individuals transition from incarceration to freedom, including release from jails, federal institutions, and juvenile facilities. We have limited our scope to those sentenced to serve time in state prison in order to focus on individuals who have been convicted of the most serious offenses, who have been removed from communities for longer periods of time, who would be eligible for state prison programming while incarcerated, and who are managed by state correctional and parole systems.

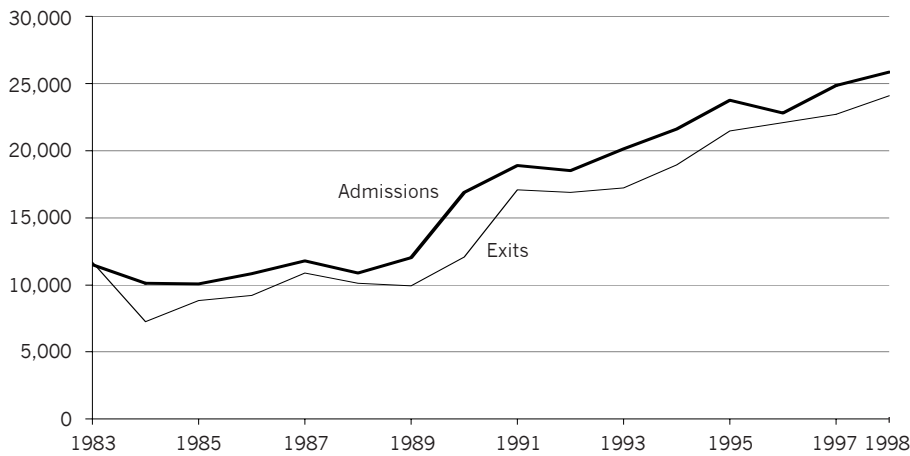
1 Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*. Springfield, IL, [www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/reports/statistical\\_presentations](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/reports/statistical_presentations). 2001 (Accessed February 8, 2003).

2 Beck, A., and P. Harrison (2001) *Prisoners in 2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

3 These population figures are based on custody counts, include inmates with a sentence of more than one year, include an undetermined number with a sentence of one year, and also include 822 inmates on electronic detention (Beck and Harrison (2001) *Prisoners in 2000*).

4 This statistic is based on released prisoners who had been sentenced to one year or more and does not include duplicate records of inmates who were released from IDOC more than once during the course of the calendar year.

5 Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.



**Figure 1. Adult exits from and admissions to Illinois prisons, FY1983 – FY1998**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.

effort to reduce the numbers of inmates returned to prison. Among these programs are Electronic Detention, Community Correctional Centers/Adult Transitional Centers, and Day Reporting Centers. These facility- and community-based programs, however, are serving only a very small percentage of Illinois' inmate and parolee populations.

**Profile of Prisoners Released in 2001.** The majority of released prisoners were male (90 percent) and black (67 percent). Most prisoners were relatively young at the time of their release, with 48 percent under the age of 31; the average age at release was 32. Over one-third had been serving time for drug offenses. The average length of time served was approximately one and one-third years, with over 60 percent of released inmates having served less than one year. More than half had been in an Illinois prison at least once before, and 27 percent had been admitted to prison based on technical violations of their parole.

**Life on the Outside: Parole Supervision.** Eighty-three percent of prisoners released during 2001 were released to supervision with the condition that they report to a parole officer. The number of people under supervision in Illinois has increased 60 percent from 18,882 in 1990 to 30,199 in 2000.<sup>6</sup> The ratio of supervised to unsupervised releasees has, however, remained relatively stable.

**Geographic Distribution of Released Prisoners.** The vast majority (97 percent) of Illinois prisoners released in 2001 returned to Illinois communities; of those, 51 percent returned to Chicago (15,488 released prisoners). Just 6 of Chicago's 77 communities—Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park—accounted for 34 percent of prisoners returning to Chicago in 2001. These neighborhoods tend to be more economically and socially disadvantaged than the average Chicago community.

<sup>6</sup> Hughes, T., D. Wilson, and A. Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

# Introduction

This report examines the prisoner reentry phenomenon in Illinois. Prisoner reentry—the process of leaving prison and returning to society—has become a pressing issue both in Illinois and nationwide, and with good reason. Rising incarceration rates over the past quarter-century have resulted in more and more inmates being released from prison each year. Nationwide, an estimated 630,000 inmates were released from state and federal prisons in 2001, a fourfold increase over the past two decades.<sup>7</sup> Thus, released prisoners, their families, and the communities to which they return must cope with the challenges of reentry on a much greater scale than ever before.

There are many challenges to prisoner reentry. More prisoners nationwide are returning home having spent longer terms behind bars,<sup>8</sup> exacerbating their already significant challenges of finding employment, obtaining housing,<sup>9</sup> and reconnecting with family. Prisoners today are typically less prepared for reintegration, less connected to community-based social structures, and more likely to have health or substance abuse problems than in the past.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these personal circumstances, limited availability of jobs, housing, and social services in a community can affect the returning prisoner's ability to reintegrate.<sup>11</sup> These challenges affect more than returning prisoners and their families; they can also have serious public safety implications for the communities to which prisoners return. Developing a thorough understanding of the characteristics of returning prisoners and the challenges they face is an important first step in shaping public policy toward improving the safety and welfare of all citizens.

Reentry concerns are most pressing in major metropolitan areas across the country, to which about two-thirds of the prisoners released in 1996 returned—up from 50 percent in 1984.<sup>12</sup> Within central cities, released prisoners may be more concentrated in a few neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup> High concentrations of returning prisoners can generate great costs to their communities, including potential increases in crime and public safety expenditures, greater public health risks, and high rates of unemployment and homelessness.

In many ways, the dimensions and challenges of prisoner reentry observed on the national level are mirrored in the state of Illinois. In 2001, 30,068 men and women were released from Illinois prisons<sup>14</sup>—more than two and a half times the number released two decades ago (11,715 in 1983).<sup>15</sup> Just over half of those prisoners (51 percent; 15,488) returned to one jurisdiction in the state, the city of Chicago. This group of returning prisoners was further concentrated in a small number of neighborhoods in Chicago. Just 6 of Chicago's 77 communities—Austin, Humboldt Park,

**7** Office of Justice Programs, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs (2002) "Attorney General Ashcroft Announces Nationwide Effort to Reintegrate Offenders Back into Communities" (Press Release, July 15, 2002). Available at <http://www.usnewswire.com/OJP/docs/OJPO2214.html> (Accessed October 2002).

**8** Lynch, J., and W. Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*. Crime Policy Report, vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.

**9** The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), for example, considers criminal history as part of its admission criteria and bans individuals convicted of drug-related or violent crimes from public housing for up to 3 years. However, CHA admission policies also allow for exceptions to this ban if the individual has successfully completed a rehabilitation program or the circumstances surrounding the offense no longer exist. Source: Chicago Housing Authority. Management Analysis and Planning Department. Inter-Office Memorandum, March 24, 2003.

**10** Austin, J. (2001) "Prisoner Reentry: Current Trends, Practices, and Issues." *Crime and Delinquency* 47 (3): 314–334; Hammett, T.M., C. Roberts, and S. Kennedy (2001) "Health-Related Issues in Prisoner Reentry." *Crime and Delinquency* 47 (3): 390–409; Lynch and Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*.

**11** For an in-depth discussion of prisoner reentry nationwide, see Travis, J., A. Solomon, and M. Waul (2001) *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

**12** Lynch and Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*.

**13** *Ibid.*

**14** This statistic is based on released prisoners who had been sentenced to one year or more, and does not include duplicate records of inmates who were released from IDOC more than once during the course of the calendar year.

**15** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park—accounted for 34 percent of prisoners returning to Chicago in 2001, or 4,398 released prisoners. These high-concentration communities in Chicago, which already face great social and economic disadvantages, may experience the impact of reentry to a magnified degree.

Government leaders, corrections officials, local organizations, and service providers are keenly aware of the reentry challenges in Illinois, and they have begun to use both research and programmatic knowledge to address them. In 2002, the Chicago Urban League released two research reports focused on ex-offender reentry: *Navigating Reentry: The Experiences and Perceptions of Ex-offenders Seeking Employment*<sup>16</sup> and *The Vicious Circle: Race, Prison, Jobs and Community in Chicago, Illinois and the Nation*.<sup>17</sup> Both reports provide useful information about prisoner reentry in Illinois and Chicago, specifically as it relates to identifying barriers to ex-offenders' social and economic advancement following release. Also in 2002, the Illinois Department of Corrections was awarded \$2,000,000 by the U.S. Department of Justice (Office of Justice Programs) as part of the federal government's Going Home initiative, which supports state-run reentry programs nationwide. This grant provides Illinois with the opportunity to continue and expand upon current reentry initiatives, specifically in the North Lawndale community of Chicago, which has one of the highest concentrations of ex-offenders in the state.<sup>18</sup> The Going Home program will provide services to juveniles and young adults who are at high risk of returning to prison. These services will include assessment; case management; cognitive restructuring; a voucher pool for treatment, transitional housing, employment training, and placement assistance; and specialized youth services.<sup>19</sup> The stated goal of the program, which is supported by local and state partners,<sup>20</sup> is to develop a system that successfully rehabilitates ex-offenders in the North Lawndale community and, ultimately, to apply that system across the entire state.<sup>21</sup>

Other organizations and agencies in Illinois have made reentry an important item on their agendas, including the Safer Foundation, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC), the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS),<sup>22</sup> Project JOBS,<sup>23</sup> and the Illinois Workforce Advantage Program.<sup>24</sup> For example, the Safer Foundation in Chicago, the largest community-based provider of employment services for ex-offenders in the United States, provides job placements and support services in order to help ex-offenders acquire and maintain employment and lead a crime-free life. The program includes the use of volunteers, a peer group instructional approach, work release center operations,

**16** Festen, M., and S. Fischer (January 2002) *Navigating Reentry: The Experiences and Perceptions of Ex-offenders Seeking Employment*. Chicago Urban League.

**17** Street, P. (2002) *The Vicious Circle: Race, Prison, Jobs, and Community in Chicago, Illinois and the Nation*. Chicago Urban League.

**18** Dighton, D. (Summer 2002) "The Challenge of Reentry: Keeping Ex-offenders Free." *The Compiler*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

**19** Ibid.

**20** Local partners are the Chicago Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, the Chicago Police Department, the Chicago Department of Human Services, North Lawndale Employment Network, Chicago Project for Violence Prevention, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities, Safer Foundation, North Lawndale Work Group on Balanced and Restorative Justice, and Chicago Public Schools. State partners are IDOC, State Board of Education, Office of the Governor, Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Workforce Investment Board, Department of Employment Security, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, and other faith- and community-based organizations.

**21** Dighton (2002) "The Challenge of Reentry: Keeping Ex-offenders Free."

**22** In addition to its Operation Overhaul campaign, CANS organizers are educating community residents on prisoner reentry issues and holding forums in communities where the ex-offender return rate is the highest. For more detailed information on CANS and its reentry activities, visit [www.chicagocans.org](http://www.chicagocans.org).

**23** Project JOBS is a broker of services (not a direct service provider) that builds partnerships with neighborhood organizations and helps to increase their capacity to serve neighborhood residents more effectively, promoting self-sufficiency among neighborhood residents by increasing levels of employment, reducing barriers to work and career mobility, and improving the quality of supportive services. In its 2000–2001 Annual Report, Project JOBS reports having developed a strategy to use \$5,000 of its \$50,000 in grant money to purchase bonds for program participants of member organizations who are either ex-offenders or have poor credit histories. It also reports having developed and introduced new program concepts to the organization's board and staff that include an ex-offender employment strategy. This four-phase employment strategy will include research of existing services/programs, focus groups with ex-offenders to hear their needs, a pilot program that

and focused fundraising techniques.<sup>25</sup> TASC, a nonprofit organization that specializes in social service technology and delivery, has also focused efforts on its over 4,000 adult clients who are reentering the community following incarceration. TASC helps clients gain access to substance abuse treatment, housing, and employment services, and has established a program entitled *Winners' Circles*, which are peer-led support groups for ex-offenders who are committed to remaining drug- and crime-free.<sup>26</sup>

These various efforts are positive steps toward improving reentry outcomes at the state level and in the city of Chicago, the most critical reentry location in the state. The premise of these programs is that a well-designed reentry system can enhance public safety, reduce returns to prison, control corrections expenditures, and help prisoners achieve successful long-term reintegration. In other words, these efforts could result in positive outcomes not only for individuals returning home, but for their families and communities as well.

This report is designed to contribute to the efforts currently underway in Illinois to enhance public safety and improve the prospects for successful prisoner reintegration in the state. It is important to note that this report does not attempt to evaluate a specific reentry program, nor does it empirically assess Illinois' reentry policies and practices. Rather, the process and characteristics of prisoner reentry in Illinois are described by answering several questions, which frame the organization of the report:

- **What is the policy context surrounding prisoner reentry in Illinois? How do state sentencing and post-release supervision practices affect the Illinois reentry picture?**
- **What are the characteristics of Illinois' returning inmates?**
- **How are Illinois prisoners prepared for reentry?**
- **What are the Illinois communities with the greatest concentrations of returning inmates? What are the economic and social climates of those communities?**

tests theories and identifies problems raised, and the full-scale implementation of a best practices approach to serving this population through the Project JOBS member organizations (Project JOBS (2001) *Project JOBS: Joint Opportunities Bring Success*. Annual Report January 2000–March 2001). Interviews with Project JOBS member organizations indicate that 21 percent of agencies consider ex-offender status a barrier to employment, and 40 percent of member agencies would like to see more employer outreach specific to the issues that their clients face, including ex-offenders (Liebrecht, M., and M. Hellwig (2001) *Employment Services Evaluation: Project JOBS*. Chicago, IL: Policy Research Action Group).

**24** The Illinois Workforce Advantage Program is one of the governor's initiatives targeting ex-offenders. It provides an infusion of state and local resources to improve the overall environment in distressed communities, which tend to be home for many ex-offenders (Dighton (2002) "The Challenge of Reentry: Keeping Ex-Offenders Free").

**25** For more detailed information about the Safer Foundation and its ex-offender programs, see National Institute of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, Office of Correctional Education (June 1998) *Chicago's Safer Foundation: A Road Back for Ex-Offenders*. NIJ Program Focus (NCJ 167575).

**26** For more detailed information about TASC and its ex-offender programs, see TASC Reports (Spring 2002) *Restoring Citizenship of Illinois Ex-Offenders*, or visit [www.illinoistasc.org](http://www.illinoistasc.org). See also Dighton (2002) "The Challenge of Reentry: Keeping Ex-Offenders Free."

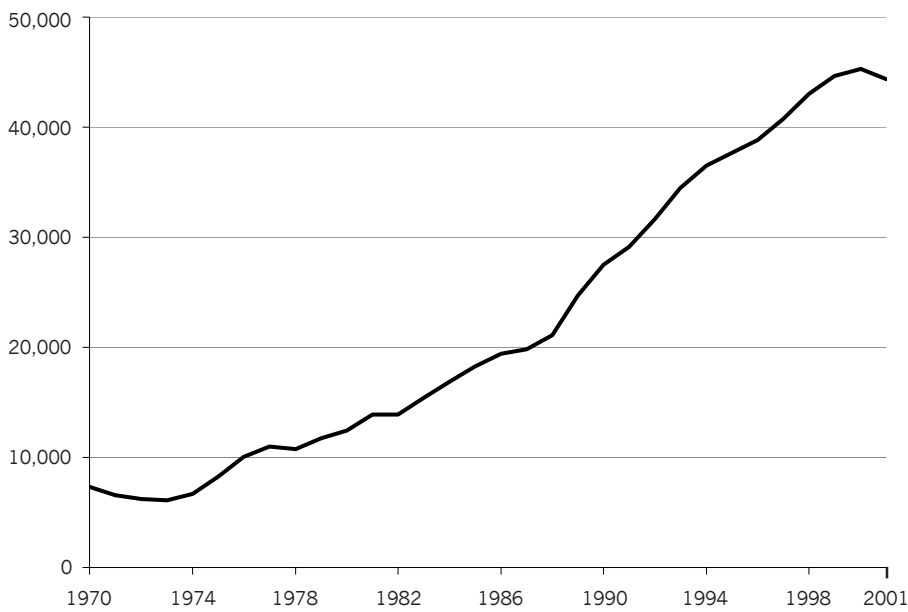
The report begins by describing the reentry process at the state level, including the policy context of changes in sentencing and incarceration statutes over time. Chapter 2 examines how prisoners in Illinois are released and describes current post-release supervision practices. Chapter 3 draws on IDOC data to describe the characteristics of inmates released from Illinois prisons in 2001. Chapter 4 describes the institutional- and community-based programming IDOC offers to help prepare inmates for successful reintegration. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of reentry in the city of Chicago, to which the largest number and percentage of Illinois releases return. Chapter 5 also describes and discusses the characteristics of Chicago neighborhoods and the unique challenges the city faces with regard to the reintegration of ex-prisoners, and includes a spatial analysis of neighborhood areas to which a large percentage of prisoners return. The report concludes with a chapter summarizing findings and next steps for future research. It is our hope that this report will provide a useful, factual foundation for individuals and organizations working to improve reentry outcomes for prisoners, their families and communities, and the general public in Illinois.

## About the Data

The data used for this report were derived from several sources. Longitudinal data describing the policy context of incarceration and reentry trends in Illinois were derived from a mix of federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and statistics compiled by various Illinois agencies, such as the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Agency (ICJIA). Community-level data used to develop the maps of reentry and related demographic and socioeconomic status data by Chicago neighborhood were derived from Census data compiled by the Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC). MCIC also provided the files that enabled us to aggregate and map data for the 77 Chicago community areas. The available data from each of these

sources spanned different time periods—some had data for only a few years, while others had data for two decades or longer. Rather than truncating longitudinal data so that graphs and statistics from all sources cover a common time span, we chose to include all years for which we were able to obtain data points. As a result, in some cases, readers will be unable to make year-to-year comparisons across graphs. Data on the population of inmates released from Illinois prisons in calendar year 2001 were obtained from IDOC and represent only those released inmates who received sentences of one year or more to ensure that these data represent individuals who were sentenced to serve time in the state prison system.

# What Is the Policy Context Surrounding Prisoner Reentry in Illinois?



**Figure 2. Illinois prison population, 1970–2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*. Springfield, IL.





To understand prisoner reentry in Illinois, it is first necessary to examine the state's recent trends in sentencing and corrections practices. This policy context helps frame the reentry issue and provides important background information for the discussion of the needs and challenges of returning inmates. This chapter provides an overview of Illinois' recent sentencing policies and incarceration trends and describes factors contributing to the growth in the state's released inmate population.

## PRISON POPULATION ON THE RISE

The Illinois prison population has grown tremendously over the past three decades, reflecting the rise in prison populations nationwide.<sup>27</sup> Between 1970 and 2001, the Illinois prison population increased more than 500 percent, from 7,326 to 44,348 people (figure 2).<sup>28</sup> By the end of calendar year 2000, Illinois had the eighth highest prison population in the United States<sup>29</sup> and had an incarceration rate of 371 prisoners per 100,000 residents.<sup>30</sup> The female inmate population of IDOC has grown at more than twice the rate of the male population since 1992.<sup>31</sup> Over the past three decades, the female inmate population has increased by more than 1,700 percent. A significant portion of this growth occurred between 1990 and 1997, during which time the female population more than doubled.<sup>32</sup> The primary factor driving this recent growth has been the increase in admissions of females convicted of drug crimes, which nearly tripled over the past five years.<sup>33</sup>

To accommodate the growth in prison population, IDOC built nine new correctional facilities, adding 10,352 beds between 1990 and 2000, a 44.2 percent increase in total capacity. The Illinois prison system now consists of 48 public and private correctional facilities, including work camps, boot camps, and community correctional centers.<sup>34</sup> Of these 48 facilities, 36 are confinement facilities.<sup>35</sup> Nearly 90 percent of all inmates in adult institutions are double- or multi-celled.<sup>36</sup>

As the prison population has increased in Illinois, so has spending on corrections. Between fiscal years 1995 and 2003, total appropriations for IDOC increased 35 percent (as adjusted for inflation),<sup>37</sup> rising from \$755,369,300<sup>38</sup> to \$1.2 billion.<sup>39</sup>

## FACTORS INFLUENCING INCARCERATION TRENDS

The substantial increase in the Illinois prison population, which began in 1974, can be attributed to both increased admissions to prison and longer lengths of stay for incarcerated offenders. Increased admissions in

<sup>27</sup> Between 1925 and 1973, the per capita rate of imprisonment in the United States remained relatively constant, at about 110 per 100,000 residents. Since then, the rate of imprisonment has been steadily increasing each year. (Blumstein, A., and A. J. Beck (1999) *Population Growth in U.S. Prisons, 1980–1996*, in M. Tonry and J. Petersilia (eds.) *Prisons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press). By year-end 2001, the number of sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents was 470—over four times the rate of imprisonment that had been maintained during the early part of the 20th century (Harrison, P., and A. Beck (2002) *Prisoners in 2001*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice).

<sup>28</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*.

<sup>29</sup> Beck, Allen J., and Paige M. Harrison (2001) *Prisoners in 2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>30</sup> These population figures are based on custody counts, include inmates with a sentence of more than one year, include an undetermined number with a sentence of one year, and also include 822 inmates on electronic detention (Beck and Harrison (2001) *Prisoners in 2000*).

<sup>31</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*.

<sup>32</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1998) "Trends Among Female Offenders in Illinois," *The Compiler*, Chicago, IL.

<sup>33</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

<sup>34</sup> Illinois reports that only 36 of its inmates (0.1 percent) are held in other state or federal facilities (Beck and Harrison (2001) *Prisoners in 2000*).

<sup>35</sup> This excludes facilities for which 50 percent or more of inmates are permitted to leave unaccompanied and those for which the primary facility function was community corrections, work release, or prerelease (Beck and Harrison (2001) *Prisoners in 2000*). Inmates are assigned to maximum security prisons if they have a sentence of 20 or more years. Inmates with an 8- to 19-year sentence are eligible for assignment to medium security facilities, while inmates with a sentence of 7 years or less may be assigned to minimum security facilities. Inmates who do not abide by the rules at minimum or medium security prisons may be assigned to maximum security prisons regardless of the length of time to serve (State of Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) Frequently Asked Questions, [www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/faq/default.shtml#11](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/faq/default.shtml#11) (Accessed March 19, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

Illinois are the product of (1) greater numbers of drug law violators sentenced to prison (who tend to serve relatively short terms); (2) steady increases in admissions of violent offenders (who tend to serve longer terms, and therefore “build up” in IDOC facilities); and (3) dramatic increases in the number of parole revocations of released prisoners, who are returned to Illinois prisons. Increases in the average length of stay in Illinois, or the time actually spent in prison before release, are the product of changes in sentencing and correctional policies. Changes in sentencing policy, such as “truth-in-sentencing” reforms, require longer lengths of stay for certain crimes. Changes in the practice of awarding “good conduct credit,” or reductions in prison terms for program participation and good behavior, can also affect a prisoner’s average length of stay; however, this trend was not observed in Illinois (see sidebar Diminution Credits).

### Increased Admissions to Prison

Prison population growth is primarily a function of increased admissions to prison. Recent increases in Illinois prison admissions can be explained by: (1) increases in numbers of drug law violators; (2) increases in numbers of violent offenders; and (3) increases in parole violations and revocations.

**An Increase in Drug Law Violators.** After five years of marginal increases, total prison admissions in Illinois increased 138 percent between fiscal years 1988 and 1998, climbing from 10,864 to 25,839 new inmates (figure 3). This growth is attributed in part to the aggressive enforcement of drug laws and the sentencing of more drug offenders<sup>40</sup> to prison. The number of prison sentences for drug offenses increased by 400 percent between 1988 and 1999, at which time more than 14,300 drug offenders were sentenced to prison. In 1988, drug sentences made up less than 17 percent of all prison sentences to IDOC; by 1999, they accounted for 40 percent.<sup>41</sup> Beginning in 1988, there was also a dramatic increase in arrests for violations of Illinois’ Controlled Substances Act,<sup>42</sup> and a corresponding increase in the number of prison sentences. Between 1988 and 1989, the number of prison sentences for drug law violations increased 75 percent, and it jumped an additional 60 percent during the next year.<sup>43</sup> The IDOC drug offender population continued to increase between 1992 and 2000, nearly doubling in that decade (figure 4).<sup>44</sup> Today, drug offenders represent about one-quarter of Illinois’ prison population.<sup>45</sup> While drug offenders represent a high volume of those admitted to Illinois prisons (43 percent of admissions in 2001), they serve relatively short terms (an average of one year in 2001) and are released quickly. As a result, they account

<sup>37</sup> These calculations were based on the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, [www.bls.gov/cpi](http://www.bls.gov/cpi) (Accessed March 19, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*. Chicago, IL. \$755,369,300 is \$891,672,000 in 2002 dollars.

<sup>39</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (July 31, 2002) *Summary Statistics Sheet*.

<sup>40</sup> Drug offenders are individuals convicted of a drug offense. Four statutes address drug offenses: the Controlled Substances Act, the Cannabis Control Act, the Hypodermic Syringes and Needles Act, and the Drug Paraphernalia Control Act. Illinois’ Controlled Substances Act prohibits the possession, sale, delivery, and manufacture of substances such as cocaine, heroin, LSD, and other drugs except cannabis (marijuana). The Cannabis Control Act covers offenses involving cannabis and the punishments for the possession, sale, delivery or manufacture of the drug. The other two drug laws prohibit the illegal possession, sale, or delivery of instruments frequently used to facilitate the use of illegal drugs (Olson, D. (2000) “Prison Sentences for Drug Offenses,” Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, *Trends and Issues Update*. Volume 1, Number 10).

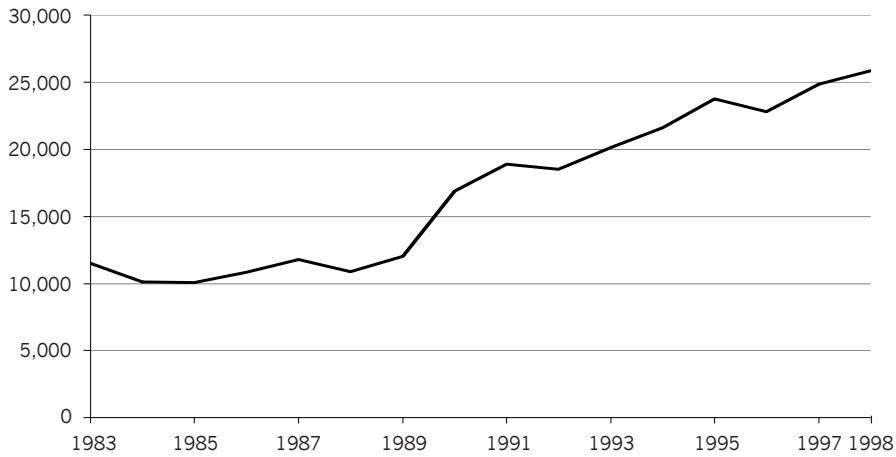
<sup>41</sup> Olson (2000) “Prison Sentences for Drug Offenses.”

<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that almost every violation of Illinois’ Controlled Substances Act is a felony, punishable by either a probation or prison sentence (Olson (2000) “Prison Sentences for Drug Offenses”).

<sup>43</sup> Olson (2000) “Prison Sentences For Drug Offenses.”

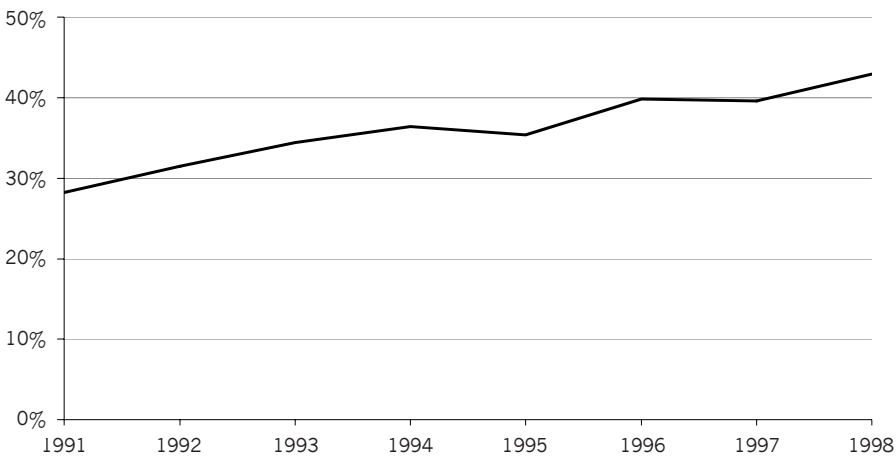
<sup>44</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*.

<sup>45</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*. Springfield, IL.



**Figure 3. Admissions to Illinois state prison, FY 1983 - FY 1998**

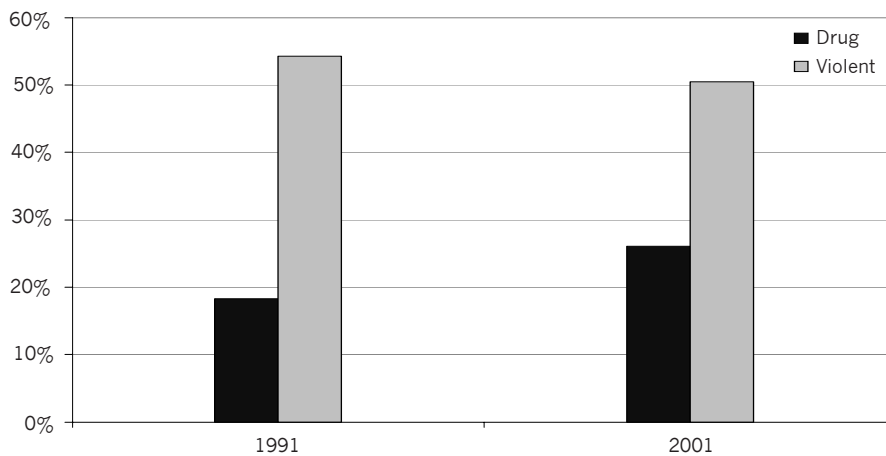
Sources: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL; Illinois Department of Corrections (1991) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1990–1992*. Springfield, IL; Illinois Department of Corrections (1989) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1988–1990*. Springfield, IL.



**Figure 4. Drug offenders as percentage of Illinois state prison admissions, 1991–1998**

Sources: Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*. Springfield, IL. and Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.

Note: This graph overlaps calendar year data from the *Statistical Presentation 2000* with fiscal year data from the *Human Services Plan*, so the trend line is an estimate for the years presented.



**Figure 5. Drug and violent offenders as percentage of total Illinois prison population, 1991 vs. 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*. Springfield, IL.

for only about one-quarter of the stock population. Officials from IDOC posit that the increasing share of drug and other short-term offenders admitted to prison in recent years may explain why, despite long-term trends of increases in prison population, the population declined marginally in 2001.<sup>46</sup>

**An Increase in Violent Offenders.** Since 1991, there has been a gradual rise in the number of violent offenders<sup>47</sup> sentenced to prison in Illinois, although this number decreased marginally in 2001. In 2001, violent offenders constituted 23.2 percent of all sentences imposed, 23.9 percent of all admissions, and 24.4 percent of all inmates leaving prison. Because their average sentence of 7.9 years is much higher than the overall average of 4.4 years, violent offenders are the most populous group (49.9 percent) in the prison system, and tend to build up or accumulate within the prison system over time.<sup>48</sup> While violent offenders continue to be the most populous inmate group, the percentage of the total prison population who are violent offenders has decreased. By contrast, the percentage of the total prison population who are drug offenders has increased (figure 5). Thus, the trends for violent offenders are quite different from those observed for drug offenders.

Increased admissions of inmates with a life or death sentence (i.e., inmates who will never be released), habitual child sex offenders and child sex offenders (i.e., inmates who as Class X offenders serve relatively lengthy sentences), and inmates sentenced under the state's indeterminate sentencing statute<sup>49</sup> have also contributed, albeit marginally, to Illinois' expanding inmate population (figure 6).<sup>50</sup>

**An Increase in Parole Violations and Revocations.** In addition to increases in offenders being sentenced to prison by the court for felony convictions,<sup>51</sup> an increase in parole violators being returned to prison has affected admission trends in Illinois (figure 7). When parolees commit new crimes (new crime violators) or violate the conditions of their release agreement (technical violators),<sup>52</sup> they are classified as parole violators and are subject to parole revocation. For a person whose parole is revoked, the Illinois Prisoner Review Board can exercise a number of dispositions, including return to prison (see sidebar The Illinois Prisoner Review Board).

The number of parolees returned to Illinois prisons increased by 32 percent from fiscal year 1991 to fiscal year 1998, at which time parole violators accounted for almost 25 percent of prison admissions. As shown in figure 8, beginning in the early 1990s, new crime violators as a percentage of total violator admissions decreased at the same time that technical violators as a percentage of total violator admissions were increasing. This

**46** In 2001, the Illinois prison population decreased by 933 inmates, a decline of 2.1 percent (Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*).

**47** Violent offenders are persons convicted of a violent crime. Generally, crimes against a person (battery, robbery, armed violence, weapons offenses, and offenses that imply a high risk of personal injury) and assaultive sex offenses (rape, criminal sexual assault or abuse) are classified as violent crimes (Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*).

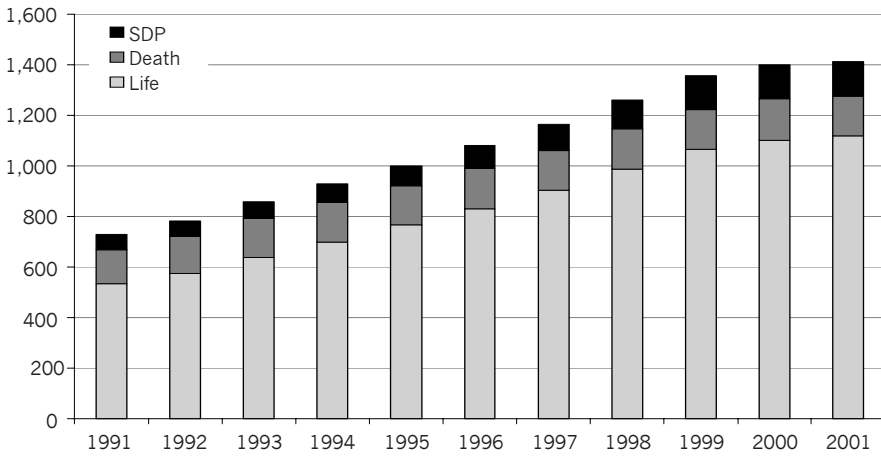
**48** Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*.

**49** Few inmates with an indeterminate sentence are released each year, and due to the seriousness of their crimes, most of the remaining indeterminate offenders will stay in prison for many years (Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*).

**50** Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*.

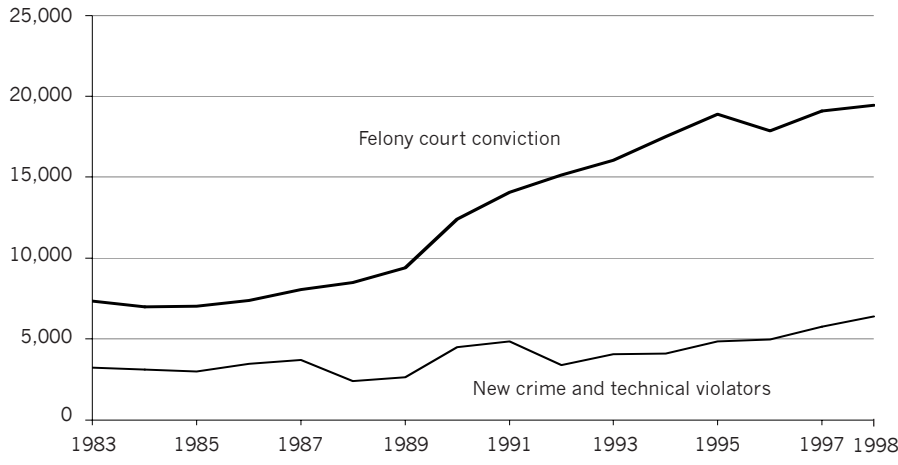
**51** New court commitments are persons entering prison directly from a sentence by a court and not from an unsuccessful period of community supervision (parole). (Ditton, P., and D. Wilson (January 1999) *Truth in Sentencing in State Prisons*. Special Report. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics).

**52** Examples of parole technical violations include being absent without leave from mandatory supervised release (failing to report to supervising officer, leaving jurisdiction without permission), possessing or testing positive for illegal drugs, having a misdemeanor conviction, or having a felony charge pending disposition at the time of re-admission (Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*).



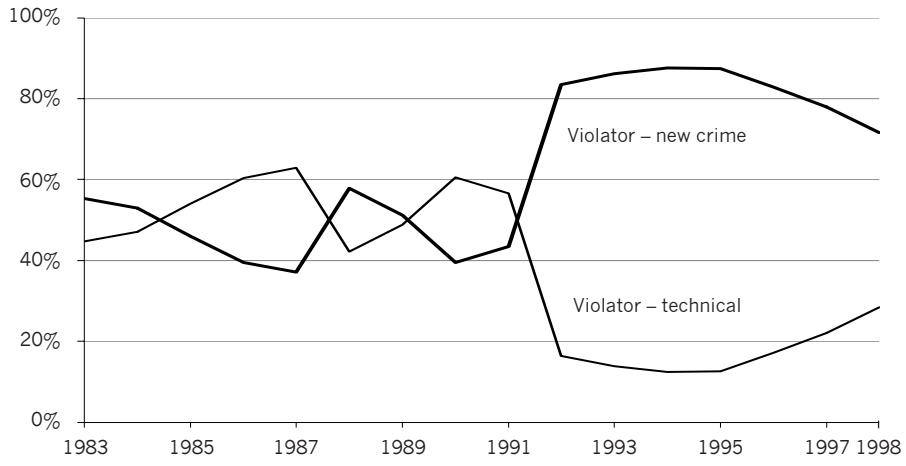
**Figure 6. Number of Illinois inmates with life, death, and sexually dangerous person sentences, 1991-2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Statistical Presentation 2001*. Springfield, IL.



**Figure 7. Illinois felony court convictions and parole violators admitted to prison, FY1983 - FY1998**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998-2000*. Springfield, IL.



**Figure 8. Illinois adult population violator (technical and new crime) admissions, as percentage of total violator admissions, FY1983 - FY1998**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998-2000*. Springfield, IL.

reversal in the share of technical versus new crime violator admissions may be the result of the implementation of the PreStart program in 1991. The PreStart program introduced a new parole philosophy that replaced the emphasis on surveillance with greater attention on providing services and assistance to released prisoners. The introduction of PreStart was also accompanied by a dramatic reduction in the number of parole officers.<sup>53</sup> After 1991, the majority of parolees returned to prison were returned for the commission of new crimes rather than for technical violations, which are parole officer-initiated. In fiscal year 1998, technical violations represented 7 percent of admissions in Illinois, while new crimes represented almost 18 percent.<sup>54</sup>

In 2000, however, IDOC instituted a statewide reorganization of the parole-monitoring system and a revitalized parole operation, including Operation Windy City in Chicago, both of which place a heavy emphasis on the surveillance functions of parole supervision.<sup>55</sup> As a result of this reorganization, more than 14,781 parolees were returned to prison in fiscal year 2001, an 81 percent increase from the 8,150 parolees returned in fiscal year 2000.<sup>56</sup> And, if Operation Windy City is any example, the ratio of technical to new crime violator admissions has reversed yet again: In the first four months that Operation Windy City was in operation, more than 340 parolees were returned to prison for technical violations, versus just 27 for new crime violations.<sup>57</sup>

## Increased Lengths of Stay

Prison population growth is also affected by increases in the average length of stay, or the actual time served in prison. The average length of stay can be increased four ways—by judges meting out longer sentences, by legislation requiring mandatory minimum prison sentences (e.g., Class X felonies and specific, non-probationable Class 1 felonies), by increases in the percentage of a sentence that is actually served in prison, or by decreases in the use of “diminution credits.”

**An Increase in Sentence Lengths Meted Out by the Court and Required by Legislation.** In Illinois, changes in sentencing policy have resulted in longer sentences for inmates. In response to concerns that indeterminate sentencing allowed for the possibility of sentencing bias,<sup>58</sup> the Illinois General Assembly passed legislation in 1978 that changed the state’s sentencing laws from indeterminate to determinate sentencing. Determinate sentences dictate specific time ranges for specific crimes within which judges can sentence an offender (e.g., Class 1 felony offenses can range from 4 to 15 years);<sup>59</sup> within this range, the judge specifies the sentence on the basis

<sup>53</sup> For more information on the PreStart program and its history, see the PreStart section in chapter 4.

<sup>54</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

<sup>55</sup> Operation Windy City is a joint effort of the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Chicago Police Department, and represents a deployment of a tactical force of 100 parole agents who ride along with police officers through targeted areas that gangs are known to frequent. As a result of 33 operations conducted since Operation Windy City began in July 2000, more than 1,500 face-to-face contacts with parolees have been conducted (Press Release: “Governor’s Parole Initiative Cracks Down on Crime” (November 7, 2001) Springfield, IL, [www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558). (Accessed March 20, 2003) and Press Release, “Governor Announces Gang Crime Action Plan Working” (September 19, 2000) Chicago, IL, [www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=363](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=363). (Accessed March 20, 2003)).

<sup>56</sup> Press Release: “Governor’s Parole Initiative Cracks Down on Crime” (November 7, 2001) Springfield, IL, [www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558).

<sup>57</sup> Press Release: “Governor’s Parole Initiative Cracks Down on Crime” (November 7, 2001) Springfield, IL, [www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558) and Press Release: “Governor Announces Gang Crime Action Plan Working” (September 19, 2000) Chicago, IL, [www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=363](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=363).

<sup>58</sup> Opponents of indeterminate sentencing suggested that dissimilar sentences were being handed down for similar offenses, a variance seen by many as being racially motivated. Critics of indeterminate sentencing also pointed to the possibility of bias not only in the courts but within the state’s Parole Board, which controlled an offender’s release once the minimum sentence was served. Proponents of determinate sentencing argued that it would greatly reduce sentencing and release bias (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*).

<sup>59</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

## The Illinois Prisoner Review Board

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board has revocation powers for all persons released on parole. For a person whose parole is revoked, the Illinois Prisoner Review Board exercises the following dispositions:

- return to prison
- reinstate parole at a comparable level of supervision
- reinstate parole with increased treatment/programming
- assign to halfway house

- assign to day reporting
- assign to intensive supervision
- assign to electronic monitoring

If parole is revoked, the time the parolee/inmate must remain incarcerated prior to any re-release is both mandatory and prescribed, based on the sentence length remaining. The agency has full discretion to revoke parole and order the parolee to serve the remainder of his or her sentence in prison.<sup>a</sup>

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a. National Institute of Corrections (1995) *Status Report on Parole, 1995: Results of an NIC Survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

## The Changing Role of Parole in Illinois

In 1978, Illinois' Parole Board was converted into the Prisoner Review Board, having some of the same members and functions as the Parole Board.<sup>a</sup> The Prisoner Review Board consists of 11 members and a chairperson, and is an independent quasi-judicial entity that makes decisions on a number of adult and juvenile prison inmate matters, including (1) reviewing good conduct credit awards and holding hearings to determine whether good conduct credits should be revoked or, upon IDOC's recommendation, whether lost good conduct credits should be restored; (2) determining the conditions inmates must follow after release from incarceration; and (3) determining whether those who violate conditions of release should be returned to IDOC. The Prisoner Review Board was

originally established to make parole release decisions about inmates under indeterminate sentencing, but has been responsible for the above prison inmate matters since 1978. (See sidebar Prisoner Review Board for additional information on the board's functions.)

While discretionary parole release was abolished in 1978, mandated terms of supervision, commonly called "parole supervision," for released offenders were not. The 1978 legislation mandated terms of supervision in the community of one to three years for released offenders, depending on initial conviction charges (called mandatory supervised release). Traditional parole structures remained for those incarcerated under indeterminate sentencing (i.e., before 1978).<sup>b</sup>

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a. In the mid- to late 1970s, legislators made changes to sentencing laws, responding to what they perceived as the public demand for tougher criminal laws that emphasized retribution over rehabilitation. With determinate sentencing, mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses, lengthening prison stays, and abolishing discretionary parole release, converting the Parole Board to the Prisoner Review Board and changing its functions fits with other philosophical and legislative changes that were taking place at

that time (Castellano, Thomas C. (July 1996) *The Implementation and Impact of Illinois' PreStart Program: A Final Report*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority; Ill. Stat. Rev. 1978, Chapt. 38, sec. 1003-3-1(a)(5)).

b. Castellano (July 1996) *The Implementation and Impact of Illinois' PreStart Program: A Final Report*.

of a number of factors, including the seriousness of the crime, prior convictions, and aggravating circumstances.<sup>60</sup> Inmates convicted of crimes committed in 1978 or later were given determinate sentences. With the enactment of determinate sentencing, sentence lengths increased and the prison population continued to expand, while the rate of prison releases slowed.<sup>61</sup> With the introduction of determinate sentencing also came the abolition of both the parole board<sup>62</sup> and discretionary parole release.<sup>63</sup>

Changes in sentencing policy have also resulted in longer sentences for certain classes of inmates. In 1978, Illinois lawmakers created a new class of felony offenses for the most violent crimes—Class X—and also created the death sentence and the natural life sentence.<sup>64</sup> Class X felonies (rape/aggravated criminal sexual assault; attempted murder; armed robbery; and drug sale/delivery offenses involving 15 grams or more of cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine) are non-probationable offenses that carry a minimum six-year prison sentence.<sup>65</sup> Some Class 1 felonies (including residential burglary and possession of 15 grams or more of cocaine or heroin) were also made non-probationable and require a minimum prison sentence of four years. The number and length of murder, Class X, and Class 1 sentences imposed since determinate sentencing began in 1978 have contributed to an increase in the inmate population. Since 1978, the average length of stay for an inmate convicted of murder has increased by 2.3 years. Class X inmates released during 2000 served nearly 11 months longer than inmates released in 1978 with a comparable indeterminate sentence.<sup>66</sup> Murder, Class X, and Class 1 offenders comprised less than 37 percent of the prison population in 1977; by the end of 2000, they represented 59 percent of all inmates.<sup>67</sup> The increase in admissions for these mostly violent offenders, whose longer sentences hold them in prison for extended periods, has resulted in a build up of inmates in the prison system.<sup>68</sup>

**An Increase in Percentage of Time Served.** In recent years, the average percentage of their sentences that prisoners actually serve has increased for certain groups of inmates. When Illinois enacted determinate sentencing in 1978, offenders were given prescribed sentence lengths. Through the use of diminution credits, however, IDOC and the Prisoner Review Board still had some control over the actual time inmates served. Thus, the amount of prison time offenders served was (and still is) often substantially shorter than the time they are sentenced to serve by the court. As a result of inmates receiving these credits, Illinois inmates released for the first time in 1990 served an average of 38 percent of their sentence.<sup>69</sup> To reduce discrepancies between the length of sentence imposed and actual time served in prison, Illinois adopted truth-in-sentencing (TIS) legis-

<sup>60</sup> Under indeterminate sentencing policy, inmates received a range of time and appeared before the Parole and Pardon Board, which determined suitability for release to parole.

<sup>61</sup> Growth also slowed in the early 1980s, when IDOC used a forced release policy. A significant rise began again once forced release ended in 1983. From 1988 to 1994, the prison population increased by 73.3 percent. However, since 1994, the prison population has grown modestly, at an annual rate of 3.6 percent. (Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) Frequently Asked Questions, [www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html); Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1999) "Significant Criminal Justice Legislation 1970–1999," *The Compiler*; Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*. Springfield, IL.)

<sup>62</sup> The Parole Board was converted into the Prisoner Review Board, keeping some of the same members and functions (Castellano (1996) *The Implementation and Impact of Illinois' PreStart Program: A Final Report*). See sidebar Prisoner Review Board for additional information on the board's functions.

<sup>63</sup> While discretionary parole release was abolished, mandated terms of supervision for released offenders were not. Legislation mandated terms of supervision in the community (called mandatory supervised release) for released offenders from one to three years, depending on initial conviction charges; traditional parole structures remained for those incarcerated under indeterminate sentencing (Castellano (July 1996) *The Implementation and Impact of Illinois' PreStart Program: A Final Report*).

<sup>64</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) Frequently Asked Questions, [www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html); Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1999) "Significant Criminal Justice Legislation 1970–1999."

<sup>65</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

<sup>66</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Hughes, T., D. Wilson, and A. Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.



## Diminution Credits

Most offenders sentenced to prison in Illinois receive credits toward their sentence for good behavior and participation in specific rehabilitation programs (e.g., education, drug treatment, Illinois Correctional Industries programs).<sup>a</sup> Inmates earn one-half day off their sentences (called “earned time”) for each day of participation in such programs if they successfully complete the programs. For example, an eligible inmate who completes a drug treatment program that is 30 days in duration may be awarded 15 days off her or his sentence.<sup>b</sup> These diminution credits decrease an offender’s length of stay in the prison system by moving up his or her maximum release date.

As a result of all available credits, the actual amount of time an offender serves in IDOC averages less than half the original sentence. Day-for-day good time credit<sup>c</sup> reduces the length of time served to almost half (49.5 percent) of the court-imposed sentence, while the combined effect of merito-

rious good time,<sup>d</sup> supplemental meritorious good time,<sup>e</sup> and earned time<sup>f</sup> reduces the average sentence length by an additional 9 percent. These credits result in the average inmate being incarcerated (in IDOC and jail) for approximately 41 percent of the original sentence.<sup>g</sup> From fiscal years 1991 to 1998, the net good time received by inmates has increased 43 percent, from 1,994,773 to 2,860,534 days.<sup>h</sup>

In the recent past, IDOC has increasingly used diminution credits to control crowding, as well as to encourage participation in programs that address the challenges prisoners may encounter upon their release from prison. Eligibility requirements<sup>i</sup> and, more recently, sentencing policies such as truth-in-sentencing, however, have minimized the use and therefore the overall effect of diminution credits on offenders’ sentence lengths in Illinois. Thus, the use of diminution credits in Illinois does not appear to have influenced increases in the prison population over time.

**a.** The rules and regulations also provide that the director of IDOC may award up to 180 days’ additional good conduct credit for meritorious service in specific instances as the director deems proper; certain exclusions apply, depending on the crime for which the prisoner is serving his or her sentence. The rules and regulations also provide that the good conduct credit accumulated and retained by any inmate during specific periods of time in which the inmate is engaged full time in substance abuse programs, correctional industry assignments, or educational programs provided by the Department, and satisfactorily completes the assigned program as determined by Department standards, shall be multiplied by a factor of 1.25 (for program participation before August 11, 1993) and 1.5 for program participation on or after that date. Inmates are not eligible for the additional good conduct credit while assigned to a boot camp, mental health unit, or electronic detention, or if serving a sentence for specific numerated crimes (Illinois Compiled Statutes, Corrections, Unified Code of Corrections, 730 ILCS 5/).

**b.** State of Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) Frequently Asked Questions, [www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html).

**c.** Each inmate receives one day of good conduct credit for each day in prison, which reduces the period of incarceration set by the court by half, except when a term of natural life or death has been imposed.

**d.** The director of IDOC may also award up to 90 days of good conduct credit for meritorious service.

**e.** This allows the director of IDOC to provide eligible inmates with an additional 90 days’ good time, essentially doubling the meritorious good conduct credit for eligible inmates.

**f.** Additional credit may be awarded to qualified inmates for participation in educational, vocational, substance abuse, or correctional industry programs provided by IDOC.

**g.** Illinois Truth-in-Sentencing Commission (1998) *Illinois Truth-in-Sentencing Commission Final Report*.

**h.** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.

**i.** Not all inmates are eligible; for example, inmates convicted of violent and Class X crimes are not eligible for earned good conduct credit. The Illinois Unified Code of Corrections (730 ILCS 5/) rules and regulations for early release provide that with respect to offenses committed on or after June 19, 1998, prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for first degree murder shall receive no good conduct credit and shall serve the entire sentence imposed by the court; the same holds true for prisoners serving terms of natural life imprisonment or prisoners who have been sentenced to death. Prisoners serving sentences for specific numerated crimes shall receive no more than 4.5 days of good conduct credit for each month of their sentence of imprisonment (Illinois Compiled Statutes, Corrections, Unified Code of Corrections, 730 ILCS 5/).

lation in 1995 (730 ILCS 5/3-6-3(a)(2) under Public Act 89-404), which requires certain offenders to serve a specified percentage of their sentence.<sup>70</sup> This statute requires that offenders serving a prison term for first degree murder must serve 100 percent of the sentence imposed by the court, and certain other serious violent offenders<sup>71</sup> must serve 85 percent of their sentences.<sup>72</sup> While determinate sentencing affected the sentence length meted out by the courts, truth-in-sentencing legislation affected how long offenders actually had to remain incarcerated. In Illinois, mean maximum sentence, mean time served, and percentage of sentence served for Part I violent offenders all increased between 1993 and 1999.<sup>73</sup> And the percentage of sentence served by all inmates<sup>74</sup> increased from 38 percent in 1990 to 49 percent in 1999.<sup>75</sup>

The Illinois Department of Corrections began admitting offenders sentenced under TIS legislation in 1998.<sup>76</sup> It is important to note, however, that the majority of inmates admitted to prison under TIS were admitted during 2000 and 2001. The year-end 2001 inmate population included 2,124 inmates sentenced under the truth-in-sentencing statute, representing a 31 percent increase in TIS inmates since 2000.<sup>77</sup> Given the recent implementation of TIS, the overall impact of this legislation on the prison population will not be experienced until TIS inmates serve more time than they otherwise would have served if the traditional determinate sentence had been imposed.<sup>78</sup>

## Summary

In summary, the state of Illinois has experienced significant growth in its prison population and corrections spending. The prison population increase can be attributed to changes in sentencing and arrest policies, and corresponding changes in types and lengths of sentences served by inmates. From a reentry perspective, we can expect to observe two different types of released inmates: (1) those serving longer sentences for serious and violent crimes because of both determinate sentencing and truth-in-sentencing statutes, and (2) those who are released having served short sentences for low-level crimes (notably drug crimes) and for parole revocations. The former group will likely have served long enough to have access to a variety of prison programming, including educational, vocational, employment, and substance abuse treatment programs. However, they will have been out of the workforce and disengaged from the community for a longer time, making the reentry adjustment a challenging one. Conversely, the latter group will have been released after serving very short sentences, making the disruption of incarceration less pronounced. However, as we

**70** Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*.

**71** Crimes for which offenders automatically must serve 85 percent of sentence are murder: intentional homicide of an unborn child; Class X: predatory criminal sexual assault, attempted murder, aggravated criminal sexual assault, aggravated battery with a firearm, aggravated battery of a child, aggravated kidnapping, criminal sexual assault, solicitation of murder for hire, solicitation of murder, heinous battery; Class 1: criminal sexual assault, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated battery of a child; Class 2: aggravated battery of a senior citizen. Crimes for which offenders must serve 85 percent of sentence due to great bodily harm to victim are Class X: home invasion, armed robbery, armed violence with a category 1 weapon, aggravated vehicular hijacking; Class 1: aggravated discharge of a firearm. Those for which the offender must serve 85 percent of sentence due to reckless homicide on alcohol or drugs are Class 2: reckless homicide on alcohol/drugs (Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*).

**72** By year-end 2000, 29 states and the District of Columbia had adopted federal truth-in-sentencing standards that require Part 1 violent offenders (murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) to serve at least 85 percent of their sentence before becoming eligible for release from prison (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice; Ditton and Wilson (1999) *Truth in Sentencing in State Prisons*).

**73** From 1993 to 1999, mean maximum sentence increased from 91 to 107 months; mean time served increased from 40 to 48 months; and, percentage of sentence served increased from 44 to 45 percent (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*).

**74** Excluding those released after serving time for a parole revocation.

**75** Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*.

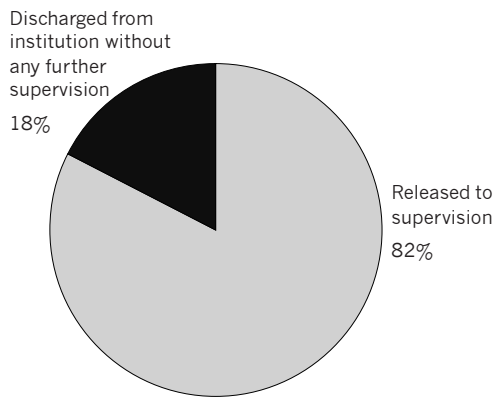
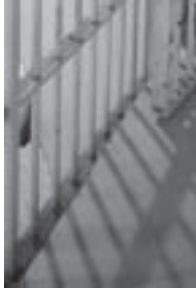
**76** For reasons unrelated to the substance of the truth-in-sentencing law, Public Act 89-404, which included this provision, was declared unconstitutional by the Appellate Court of Illinois, Second District, in March 1998. The Illinois Supreme Court affirmed this decision in 1999. In response to the court's decision, the Illinois General Assembly reenacted the truth-in-sentencing provisions in 1998, at which time IDOC began admitting offenders sentenced under the new legislation (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1999) *The Compiler*).

will observe in the following chapters, many of these inmates cycle in and out of prison on short sentences repeatedly, and therefore have little access to the programming and resources IDOC has to offer. These differences in reentry needs and challenges have implications for release policies and post-release supervision practices, the subject of the following chapter.

**77** Illinois Department of Corrections (2002)  
*Statistical Presentation 2001*.

**78** Ibid.

# How Are Prisoners Released in Illinois?



**Figure 9. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by type of release, 2001 (N = 29,167)**



**Figure 10. Supervised and unsupervised Illinois releasees, as percentage of total releasees, FY 1983 – FY 1998**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.



Prisoners in Illinois can be released through either a discretionary or nondiscretionary process. Under discretionary release, the prisoner's release from prison to supervision is decided by the Prisoner Review Board. With nondiscretionary or "mandatory" release, the prisoner's release is determined by statute, rather than by a panel or board.

In Illinois, prisoners who were sentenced prior to February 1, 1978, received indeterminate sentences, for which a judge set a minimum and maximum sentence length range. Inmates who received indeterminate sentences are called C-number inmates. Once C-number inmates have completed their minimum sentence, they periodically appear before members of the Prisoner Review Board to present their case for parole.<sup>79</sup> These inmates are eligible for *discretionary* release if their parole is approved by the Prisoner Review Board.<sup>80</sup>

Inmates sentenced under Illinois' determinate sentencing statute (i.e., after February 1, 1978) have predetermined release dates calculated based on the date of admission, sentence length, and anticipated accrual of good conduct credits. When an inmate is released through this *nondiscretionary* process, a predetermined period of supervision, called mandatory supervised release (MSR), follows. These released inmates are supervised by the Community Services Division of IDOC, described in the following section. Technically, the term "parole" applies to C-number inmates and the term "mandatory supervised release" applies to the period of post-release supervision provided to all other releasees; however, these terms are used interchangeably in this report.

The vast majority (94.3 percent) of prisoners released during 2001 were subject to nondiscretionary release, which includes those released to MSR, those discharged without any further supervision, and those who died in prison, whereas only 0.1 percent (just 31 inmates) were subject to discretionary release (i.e., parole is approved by the Prisoner Review Board). Overall, 83 percent of inmates were released with the condition that they report to a parole officer.<sup>81</sup> Prisoners who are released conditionally essentially serve the last portion of their sentences while back in the community. All other prisoners (18 percent) were discharged directly from the institution, meaning that they were not under the supervision of the Community Services Division after their release: These prisoners were released by court decision or because their sentences expired. Figure 9 presents the percentage of prisoners released by type of release condition.

The number of releasees under parole supervision in the community has increased significantly over time. Between 1990 and 2000, Illinois'

<sup>79</sup> State of Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) Frequently Asked Questions, [www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html).

<sup>80</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

<sup>81</sup> See sidebar Supervision Standards for Releasees for full description of parole supervision standards and conditions.

parole population increased 59.9 percent from 18,882 to 30,199.<sup>82</sup> The ratio of supervised to unsupervised releasees has, however, remained relatively stable (figure 10).

## PROMINENCE OF POST-RELEASE SUPERVISION

The first year after release is critical in determining whether an offender will reoffend or return to prison after having been released from custody, and it accounts for nearly two-thirds of all reoffending during the first three years out.<sup>83</sup> Post-release supervision serves two primary functions with regard to preventing such recidivism: (1) promoting the successful reintegration of inmates back into society and (2) monitoring released offenders for public safety purposes. The Community Services Division of IDOC uses community programs and services to promote successful reintegration into the community, and supervision functions to ensure that released inmates are maintaining drug- and crime-free lifestyles.

With regard to the supervision functions of the Community Services Division, each ex-prisoner who is subject to post-release supervision serves one to three years of mandatory supervised release (MSR). This is a period of parole that automatically follows a prison term for a felony and is administered by IDOC. Mandatory supervised release replaced traditional parole in Illinois with the enactment of determinate sentencing in 1978 and is intended to provide supervision and management of released offenders. Ex-offenders released on parole or MSR are supervised by parole staff until discharged. Supervision is graduated (three levels), commensurate with the releasee's offense, history, and adjustment within the community (see sidebar Supervision Standards for Releasees). During MSR, strict conditions of behavior are established, and failure to meet these conditions can result in a return to prison for the remainder of the original term.<sup>84</sup> With regard to service-related programs, the Community Services Division's goal is to provide inmates with the basic skills and information needed to access available community services once released;<sup>85</sup> these programs are described in chapter 4.

At the end of February 1999, 193 corrections parole agents were supervising over 30,800 parolees serving a period of mandatory supervised release—a ratio of 160 parolees per corrections parole agent.<sup>86</sup> IDOC was challenged with having to manage changes in supervision policies, coupled with continued growth in the number of releasees requiring monitoring

<sup>82</sup> Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*.

<sup>83</sup> Langan, P., and D. Levin (June 2002) *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice. Illinois reports that in 1990, 47 percent of its parole discharges successfully completed their terms of supervision, compared with 62.9 percent of its discharges in 1999. The state also reports that in 1990, 25.4 percent of its admissions to state prison were parole violators, compared with 27.3 percent in 1999 (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*).

<sup>84</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

<sup>85</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

and supervision, and increasing needs for specialized caseload services.<sup>87</sup> In its 1999 *Human Services Plan*, IDOC reported that it lacked the necessary number of correctional parole agents to monitor and supervise inmates being released into the community. A statewide reorganization of the parole monitoring system in July 2001, however, increased the number of corrections parole agents on the street by 350 percent.<sup>88</sup> Under the old parole monitoring system, fewer than 100 agents were out working in the community; under the new parole operation, all agents patrol the streets while monitoring their caseload each workday.<sup>89</sup> The number of corrections parole agents increased 101 percent over those employed in fiscal year 1998, reducing caseloads to 79 parolees per corrections parole agent in fiscal year 2001.<sup>90</sup>

Accompanying this new supervision philosophy was the development of the Automated Receiving and Classification (ARC) system. Developed in 2002 and linked to a statistical database, ARC was designed to hold agents and supervisors accountable for monitoring parolees according to established criteria, ensuring that department expectations are consistently met.<sup>91</sup> This computerized system, which is an improvement over the previous manual system, is designed to track each parolee's employment, gang involvement,<sup>92</sup> parole agent contacts, and program participation while on parole. ARC also collects extensive data at intake from those who violate parole and are returned to prison. For example, for the 2001–2002 year, parole violators surveyed using ARC reported that 66 percent were employed during parole, 57 percent had been employed at the time of their violation, 31 percent participated in programs while on MSR, 83 percent had been visited by a parole agent within the first 72 hours on parole, 52 percent had been seen by a parole agent within their last month on the street, and 2 percent were involved with a security threat group<sup>93</sup> while on parole.<sup>94</sup>

The above description of the processes by which inmates are released and supervised in Illinois has important implications for reentry. Just a fraction of a percent of all released inmates are released through a formal appearance before the Prisoner Review Board. The remainder undergo a “paper review” by the Board prior to release, and do not have the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the Board to discuss their home plans and conditions of supervision. While release plans may be developed on a less formal basis (i.e., through the PreStart program described in chapter 4), it is also possible that there is less scrutiny in reviewing home plans for those inmates not released through the formal, in-person Prisoner Review

**87** The problem originates with the fiscal year 1991 administrative decision to implement the PreStart program. The program's implementation coincided with a loss of 41 corrections parole agents, which reduced the focus on the surveillance and supervision functions of parole for most offenders while emphasizing referrals to social services. In addition, the court's 1988 decision to overturn truth-in-sentencing resulted in the immediate release of dozens of sex offenders and other violent criminals (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

**88** Press Release: “Governor's Parole Initiative Cracks Down on Crime” (November 7, 2001) Springfield, IL, [www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558).

**89** Ibid.

**90** Ibid.

**91** Ibid.

**92** This stems from the belief that gang members should be watched more closely on parole than non-gang members just because of their gang involvement. Olson and Dooley (2002) recently examined the role of gang membership in recidivism, or its correlation with other risk factors associated with rearrest, and found, in the bivariate analyses comparing recidivism among gang and non-gang members, that gang members were more likely to get rearrested following their release from prison. Gang members, however, were also different from non-gang members across a number of characteristics that more directly and independently explained these differing rates of rearrests. Specifically, gang members tended to be younger, African-American males with lower levels of educational achievement and more extensive criminal histories than their non-gang member counterparts released from prison. From the multivariate analyses, these factors—age, race, gender, education, and criminal histories—explained the higher rates of recidivism, not the inmates' gang affiliation in and of itself. It appears that the independent role of gang membership on recidivism is more complex, and relates to the age of the inmate in combination with their gang affiliation (Olson, D. and B. Dooley (November 2002) “Gang Membership and Inmate Recidivism: Does It Play a Role?” Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology 2002 Annual Conference, Chicago, IL).

**93** Security threat groups include gang members, terrorists, white supremacists, escape artists, etc.

**94** Illinois Department of Corrections, Automated Receiving and Classification System, Parole Violator Summary Information (8/1/2001–8/2/2002). Number of completed interviews was 9,106 (99.29 percent response rate).

Board process. In addition, the percentage of prisoners being released to supervision in Illinois is higher than the nationwide average:<sup>95</sup> Most released prisoners in Illinois have both the benefits of parole agent assistance and the added risk of return to prison that accompanies parole agent surveillance. We now turn to a description of the characteristics of released inmates in Illinois and how these factors create reentry challenges upon their release.

**95** Approximately 83 percent of inmates in Illinois are released to supervision, versus 77 percent nationwide. Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) *Trends in State Parole, 1990–2000*.



## Supervision Standards For Releasees

All inmates<sup>a</sup> upon initial release to parole or mandatory supervised release (MSR)<sup>b</sup> are assigned to Level 1 supervision. There are a number of parolees<sup>c</sup> (e.g., sex offenders, class M and X offenders) who remain on Level 1 supervision unless granted an exception. After successful completion of an initial 90 days on Level 1, all other parolees are automatically reduced to Level 3 unless overridden by a parole supervisor. Supervision standards for Level 1 parolees include the following:<sup>d</sup>

- Having initial face-to-face contact with a parole agent
- Contacting agent or Department via telephone one time per month
- Having face-to-face contact with parole agent in the field one time per month
- Notifying agent of any residence or arrest problems
- Providing monthly documentation to agent indicating compliance with any Prisoner Review Board orders or conditions, such as evidence of sex offender registration or verification of participation in required treatment or programs
- Being subject to random drug testing

Level 2 supervision is reserved for ex-offenders who have been released from an Adult Transition Center after having successfully completed the program.<sup>e</sup> Supervision standards are the same as Level 1 supervision, except that the requirement for face-to-face contact with the corrections parole agent is reduced from monthly to every 90 days. After successful completion of an initial 90 days in Level 2, parolees are automatically reduced to Level 3 unless overridden by a parole supervisor. Level 3 supervision differs from Levels 1 and 2 in how often the parolee must have face-to-face contact with the corrections parole agent in the field. Face-to-face contact must

be made every 180 days. Parolees remain in Level 3 until discharge unless increased supervision is warranted.<sup>f</sup>

After the initial 90 days in Level 1 or 2, a parolee's level may be reduced at any time decreased supervision is warranted. Decreased supervision may be warranted, for example, when the releasee:

- Remains arrest-free
- Has had no documented substance abuse problems
- Complies with all Prisoner Review Board orders and conditions
- Demonstrates a stable lifestyle, including reuniting with family when appropriate
- Demonstrates no propensity toward violent or sexually aggressive behavior<sup>g</sup>

New legislation that became effective January 2002 provides for enhanced conditions of parole, requiring that each parolee:

- Permit an agent to visit him or her at home, employment, or elsewhere to the extent necessary for the agent to discharge his or her duties
- Consent to a search of his or her person, residence, or property under his or her control
- Submit to a urinalysis test as instructed by a corrections parole agent
- Not frequent places where controlled substances are illegally sold, used, distributed, or administered
- Not knowingly associate with other persons on parole without written permission of an agent and not associate with persons who are members of an organized gang.<sup>h</sup>

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a. Except for those released from a Transition Center Program.

b. Includes Impact Incarceration Program parolees and all resumed parole violators, and all inmates released to electronic detention.

c. Includes offenders on electronic monitoring, sex offenders, class M and X offenders, offenders with indeterminate sentences, offenders who have active Orders of Protection against them, validated Security Threat Group leaders, offenders adjudicated guilty but mentally ill, and juveniles.

d. Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Parole Agents Effective Supervision Manual*.

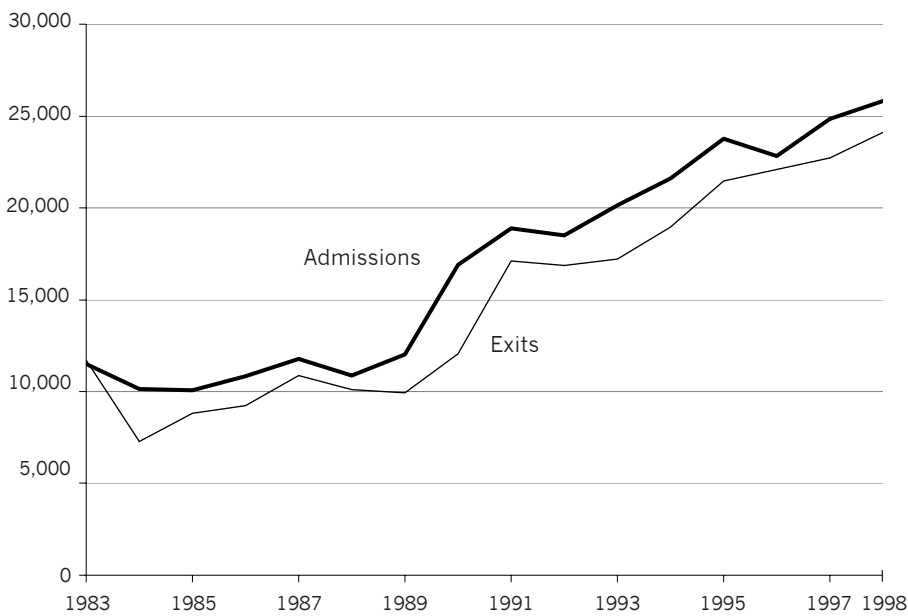
e. The same group of parolees that must remain on Level 1 supervision as listed in the previous footnote is also excluded from Level 2 supervision.

f. Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Parole Agents Effective Supervision Manual*.

g. Ibid.

h. Press Release: "Governor's Parole Initiative Cracks Down on Crime" (November 7, 2001) Springfield, IL. ([www.illinois.gov/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558](http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?CFID=2657277&CFTOKEN=51483459&RecNum=1558)).

# Who Is Returning Home?



**Figure 11. Adult exits from and admissions to Illinois prison, FY1983 – FY1998 (N = 29,167)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.



As admissions to the prison system have increased over time, so too has the number of inmates released from prison (figure 11). To understand the reentry picture in Illinois, it is important to examine the characteristics of the population being released from Illinois prisons each year. This chapter describes the 2001 release cohort, including basic demographics, reasons for incarceration, criminal histories, time served, and conditions of release.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

In the 2001 calendar year, IDOC released 30,068<sup>96</sup> men and women from prison who had been sentenced to a year or longer in an Illinois correctional facility. For the purposes of this discussion, descriptive statistics<sup>97</sup> were calculated for 29,167 prisoners,<sup>98</sup> which excludes those prisoners who did not return to the state of Illinois.<sup>99</sup> The demographic composition of this 2001 release cohort reflects the composition of the Illinois prison population:<sup>100</sup> The majority were male<sup>101</sup> (90 percent) and black<sup>102</sup> (68 percent) (figure 12). Most prisoners were relatively young at the time of their release, with 48 percent under the age of 31; the youngest prisoner released in 2001 was 17 years old, the oldest was 86 years old (figure 13).

At the time of their admission, almost three-quarters of all prisoners (73 percent) released during 2001 reported being single,<sup>103</sup> and 46.4 percent of those prisoners reported having one or more children. Of released inmates with children, the average number of children is 2.6, and the median is 2. That almost half of returning inmates left children behind while incarcerated highlights the importance and challenge of family reunification upon the inmate's release from prison.<sup>104</sup>

The education level of prisoners released in 2001 ranged from some grade school to graduation from college, with the majority of released prisoners having completed some high school education (figure 14).<sup>105</sup> Illinois educational prison programming, and its relevance to an inmate's successful reintegration, is discussed in more detail later in this report.

## WHY THEY WERE IN PRISON

Seventy-three percent of prisoners released during 2001 were admitted into the Illinois correctional system through new sentence admissions, which includes those admitted on new convictions and parole violators returned to prison for new crimes. Remaining admissions were for technical violations (27 percent) (figure 15). As described in chapter 2, an increase in drug offense convictions has contributed to rising incarceration rates in

**96** This number excludes 7 percent (2,278) of prisoners who were released from custody more than once during calendar year 2001. Typically, these prisoners were released in 2001, committed either a new sentence violation or a technical violation and were sent back to prison, and then were released again during the same year. For those prisoners who were released more than once, we report data collected prior to their first release date, and we exclude all subsequent release data.

**97** Data were provided by IDOC's Planning and Research Unit.

**98** In calculating specific descriptive statistics, different sample sizes have been noted with specific graphs. These differences in sample size are a function of missing data.

**99** This section reports data related to 29,167 prisoners released during 2001. IDOC officials collected information from prisoners at the beginning of their sentence and periodically updated it throughout their incarceration. One exception is information pertaining to marital status. Prisoners were asked their marital status once, when they first entered the correctional facility.

**100** Harrison and Beck (2002) *Prisoners in 2001*.

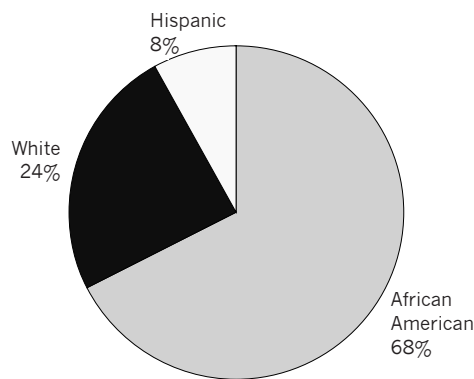
**101** For every female released in Illinois during 2001, nine males were released.

**102** The majority of both male (67 percent) and female (70 percent) prisoners released were black. The percentage of blacks released from incarceration during 2001 well exceeded the percentage of blacks residing in the state, indicating that blacks are disproportionately represented in the Illinois prison population. Whereas blacks represent only 15 percent of the general population in Illinois (all demographic data are taken from the 2000 U.S. Census), they represented two-thirds (67 percent) of prisoners released during 2001. The percentage of white prisoners released from IDOC is much lower than the percentage of white individuals in the Illinois population; whites represent 74 percent of the Illinois population and 26 percent of prisoners released during 2001.

**103** Note: Missing data for 30 percent of the total sample. Marital status of prisoners released: common law (2 percent), divorced (8 percent), married (14 percent), single (73 percent), widowed (1 percent), and separated (3 percent). For both females (80 percent) and males (83 percent), the majority of prisoners were not married. Only 14 percent of prisoners were married when they entered prison, and it is possible that some prisoners may have divorced while incarcerated. For example, several studies have noted the effects of incarceration on family stability and disruption (Smith, M., and T. Clear (1997) *Fathers in Prison: Interim Report*, draft report to the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation by the Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice, Newark, NJ; Hagan, J. (1996) "The Next Generation: Children of Prisoners," in Vera Institute, *The Unintended Consequences of Incarceration*. New York: Vera Institute of Justice; Lynch, J., and W. Sabol (1992) "Macro-social Changes and Their Implica-

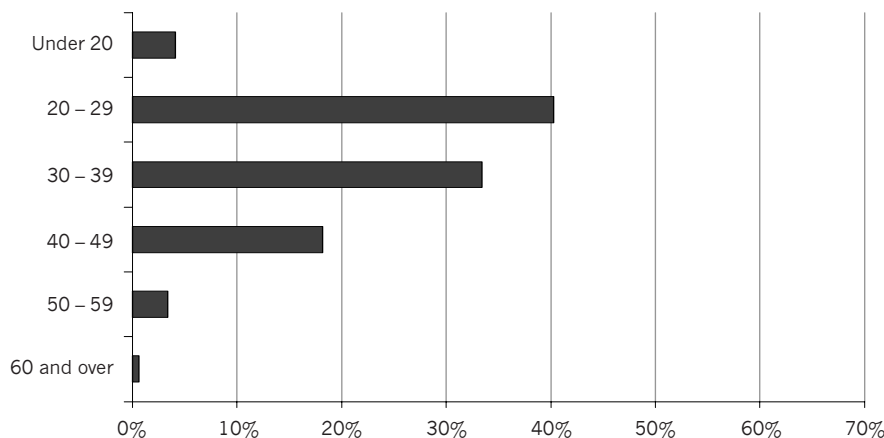
Illinois. This was clearly the case with Illinois prisoners who were released in 2001, over one-third (40 percent) of whom had been serving time for a drug offense (figure 16). A greater percentage of females than males (46.8 versus 40.5 percent) had been serving time for a drug offense. The 2001 group of releasees represented more court admissions (59 percent) than violator admissions (41 percent), which is in keeping with historical Illinois prison admission trends. While new crime violators have represented a greater percentage of violator admissions than technical violators over the past seven years, the 2001 release cohort reverses this trend. This is likely a manifestation of the new supervision policies instituted in June 2000, which reduced parole officer caseloads and placed a greater emphasis on the surveillance functions of supervision (see Prominence of Post-Release Supervision in chapter 2).

tions for Prison Reform: The Underclass and the Composition of Prison Populations." Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology, New Orleans, November 5; Rose, D., and T. Clear (1998) "Incarceration, Social Capital, and Crime: Implications for Social Disorganization Theory." *Criminology*, 36: 441-479.). Oftentimes the incarceration of a male partner leads to marital breakdown and negatively affects maternal parenting because the mother must now find secondary employment to provide necessary resources to the family (Rose and Clear, 1998). Even more disturbing is the finding that removal of a parent due to incarceration can produce negative psychological effects similar (in form, not severity) to removal of a parent due to divorce or death.



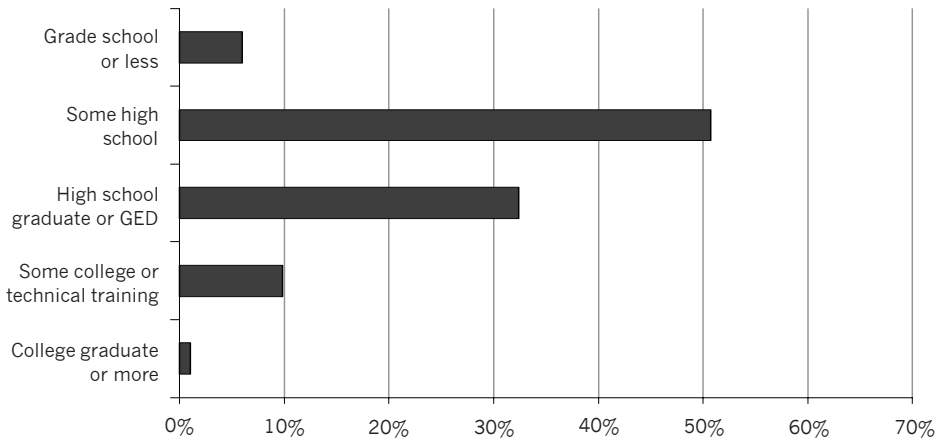
**Figure 12. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by race, 2001 (N = 29,167)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



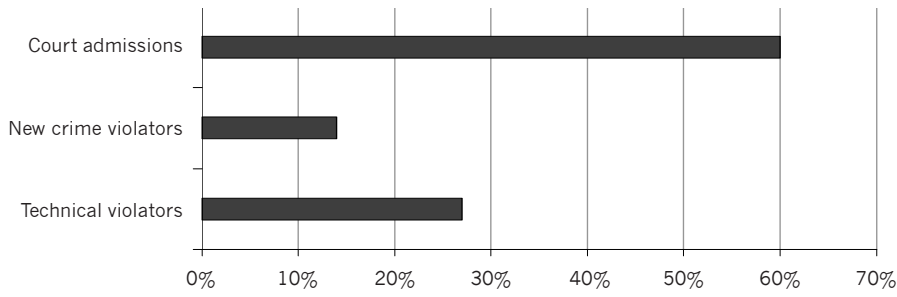
**Figure 13. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by age, 2001 (N = 29,165)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



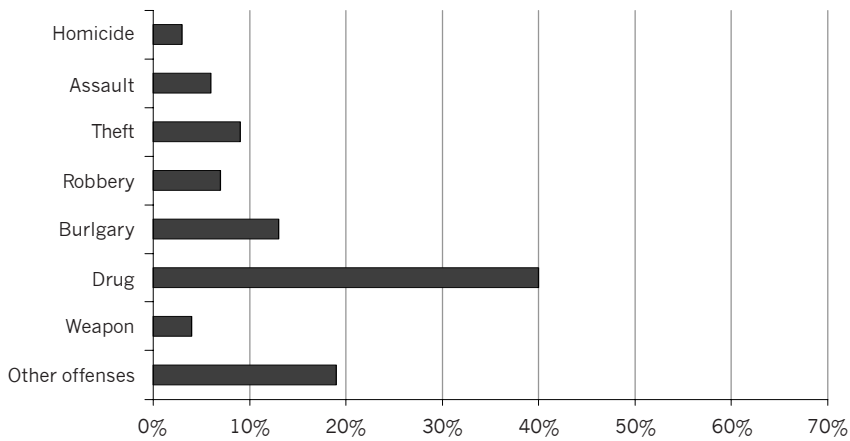
**Figure 14. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by education, 2001 (N = 18,974)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



**Figure 15. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by admission type, 2001 (N = 29,151)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



**Figure 16. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by conviction offense, 2001 (N = 29,167)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

## HOW LONG THEY WERE IN PRISON

Prisoners released in 2001 were sentenced to an average of just over four and a half years in the Illinois correctional system (figure 17).<sup>106</sup> The average length of total time served, however, was approximately one and one-third years, with over 60 percent of released inmates serving less than one year (figure 18).<sup>107</sup> Over 75 percent of all releasees served under 50 percent of their maximum sentence length in prison, and fewer than 5 percent of prisoners served between 80 and 100 percent of their maximum sentence in prison (figure 19).<sup>108</sup>

With respect to institutional security level, half (50 percent) of the 2001 releasee cohort were living in a minimum security level institutional setting prior to their release, and only 4 percent of prisoners released were living in a maximum security institutional setting prior to their release.<sup>109</sup> Figure 20 shows the percentage of released prisoners by their last recorded security level.

## CRIMINAL HISTORY AND THE REVOLVING DOOR

Released prisoners commonly return to prison, sometimes while still under parole supervision. A recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which tracked close to 300,000 prisoners released from prisons in 15 states in 1994, found that nearly 52 percent were back in prison for new sentences or technical violations of their release conditions within three years after release.<sup>110</sup> In Illinois, 44 percent of inmates released during FY 1997 returned to prison within three years, most after being sentenced for a new offense. For this same released inmate group, over 78 percent of the returns to prison occurred within two years after release.<sup>111</sup>

While almost half of the prisoners released during 2001 (48 percent) were serving time in an Illinois correctional facility for the first time, the other half had previously been incarcerated there. Of those prisoners who had been previously incarcerated in Illinois, 24 percent had been incarcerated once before and 14 percent had been incarcerated two times before the most recent incarceration. Thirteen percent of those prisoners released had been incarcerated three or more times (figure 21).<sup>112</sup> A 2001–2002 IDOC survey of parole violators supports these findings: On average, respondents reported having been on parole twice before, and 30 percent reported having violated their parole previously.<sup>113</sup> Because these data are based on returns to prison, however, they do not tell the entire story of a released prisoner's propensity to reoffend. Ongoing research by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, which is examining a cohort

**104** A number of organizations provide services to families of adult offenders. In Illinois, these organizations include the Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers; Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI); Family Connections of LSSI; Hospitality House, Inc.; Human Resources Development Institute, Inc.; and Urban Care Community Services, Inc. For contact and detailed program information, see Family and Corrections Network (November 2002) *Serving Families of Adult Offenders: A Directory of Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Corrections, U.S. Department of Justice, [www.nicic.org/pubs/2002/017081.pdf](http://www.nicic.org/pubs/2002/017081.pdf).

**105** Note: Missing data for 35 percent of the total sample. According to a 1995 IDOC inmate profile, 54 percent of female offenders have less than a high school education (McCanna, K., and S. Levy (1998) "Prison Programs Reflect the Needs of an Increasing Female Inmate Population. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority." *The Compiler*).

**106** The maximum sentence length given was 300 years.

**107** The 2001 Illinois data presented in this report represent men and women who had been sentenced to a year or longer in an Illinois correctional facility.

**108** Those prisoners who served more than 100 percent of their sentence were most likely serving time for consecutive sentences.

**109** Two percent of the sample (N = 591) did not have any of the three types of security level designation (minimum, medium, or maximum) at the time of release; rather, their level was "pending." Typically, this status is given to inmates who spend such a brief time incarcerated that their security level status is not determined by the time of their release.

**110** While prisoners discharged from Illinois state prisons were included in the analysis, this study combined data across the 15 study states, reporting results only in the aggregate (Langan and Levin (2002) *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*).

**111** Illinois Department of Corrections (2001) *Statistical Presentation 2000*.

**112** Totals in the text do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

**113** Illinois Department of Corrections, Automated Receiving and Classification System, Parole Violator Summary Information (8/1/2001–8/2/2002). Number of completed interviews was 9,106 (99.29 percent response rate).

of inmates released during 2000, found that the average number of *arrests* prior to their most recent prison sentence was nearly 12 per inmate, and those returning to Cook County/Chicago had an average of 14 prior arrests per inmate.<sup>114</sup> Roughly one-third of these prior arrests were for drug law violations.

## MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Compared with the general population, prisoners experience higher rates of mental illness. According to a 1997 national survey, 10 percent of state prisoners reported having a mental illness, compared with 2 percent in the general population.<sup>115</sup> At midyear 2000, an estimated 191,000 prisoners in state prisons (16.2 percent) self-reported some form of mental illness, one in every eight state prisoners was receiving some mental health therapy or counseling service, and almost 10 percent were receiving psychotropic medications (including antidepressants, stimulants, sedatives, tranquilizers, or other antipsychotic drugs).<sup>116</sup> In its 1999 *Human Services Plan*, IDOC estimated that 10 percent of its inmates had mental health needs or were developmentally disabled.<sup>117</sup> And in a 2001–2002 IDOC survey of parole violators, 29 percent reported having mental or physical health concerns.<sup>118</sup>

With regard to physical health needs, specific areas of heightened concern in prison populations are HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, hepatitis B and C, and tuberculosis. In 2000, 2.2 percent of state prisoners were HIV positive, and the overall rate of confirmed AIDS among the nation's prison population was four times the rate of the United States' general population.<sup>119</sup> In Illinois, between December 1991 and July 1996, the number of inmates with HIV/AIDS in IDOC adult institutions rose from 453 to 634, a 40 percent increase.<sup>120</sup> In 1997, between 465,000 and 595,000 cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia were estimated among *releasees* from correctional facilities (both prisons and jails) nationwide.<sup>121</sup>

Based on the national and state-level statistics described above, health problems are likely to pose a significant reentry challenge to Illinois' returning inmates—one that could seriously affect the ease of transition to life on the outside. Mental and physical health conditions of returning inmates also have important public health implications, specifically related to the spread of infectious disease to the general population and the added strain on the health care system.

**114** E-mail communication with David Olson, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, January 2003.

**115** An additional 14 percent of state prisoners reported having a learning or speech disability, 14 percent a hearing or vision problem, and 12 percent a physical condition. (Maruschak, L., and A. Beck (2001) *Medical Problems of Inmates, 1997*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice).

**116** Beck, A., and L. Maruschak (2001) *Mental Health Treatment in State Prisons, 2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

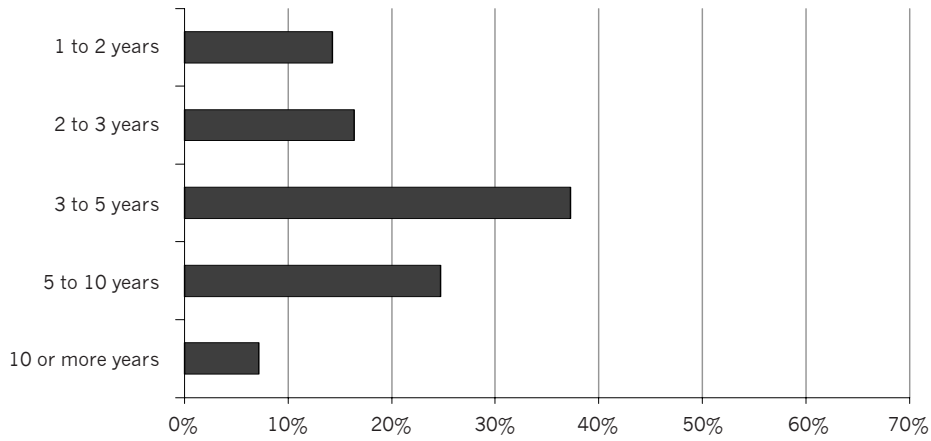
**117** This group is divided into three categories: severely mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, and mildly developmentally disabled.

**118** Illinois Department of Corrections, Automated Receiving and Classification System, Parole Violator Summary Information (8/1/2001–8/2/2002). Number of completed interviews was 9,106 (99.29 percent response rate).

**119** .52 percent versus .13 percent. (Maruschak, L. (2002) *HIV in Prisons 2000*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice).

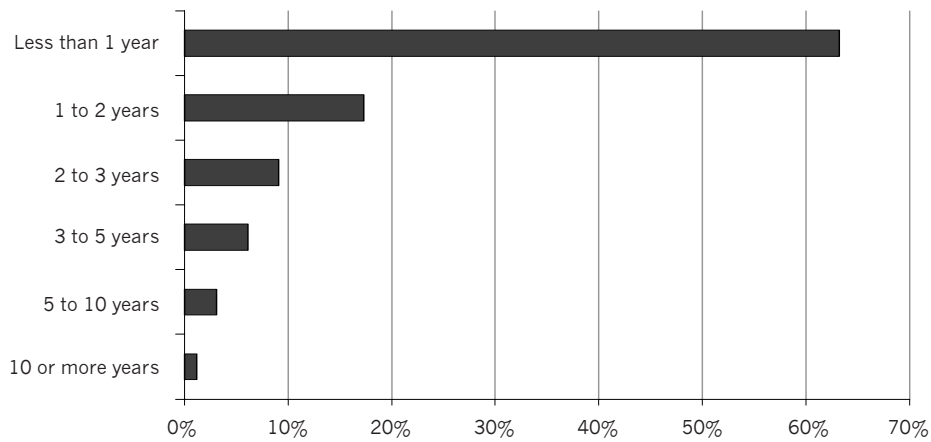
**120** Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

**121** National Commission on Correctional Health Care (March 2002) *The Health Status of Soon-to-Be Released Inmates: A Report to Congress*. ([http://www.ncchc.org/pubs/pubs\\_stbr.vol1.html](http://www.ncchc.org/pubs/pubs_stbr.vol1.html)). (Accessed March 19, 2003).



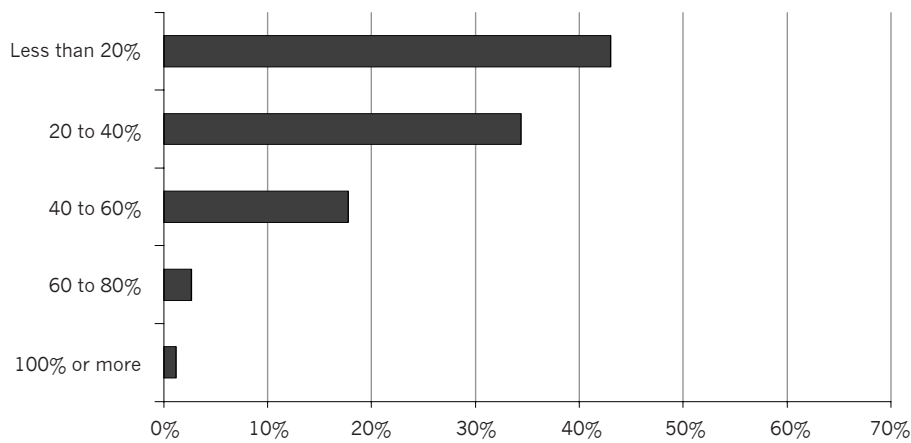
**Figure 17. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by sentence length, 2001 (N =29,167)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



**Figure 18. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by actual time served, 2001 (N = 29,008)**

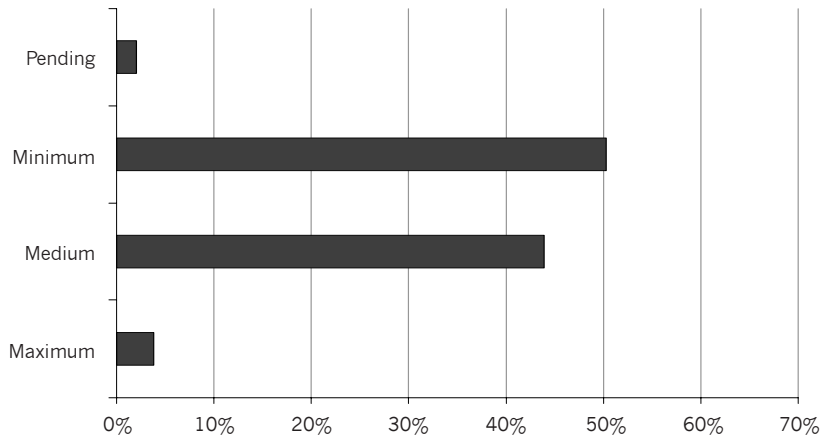
Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



**Figure 19. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by percentage of sentence served in prison, 2001 (N = 29,148)**

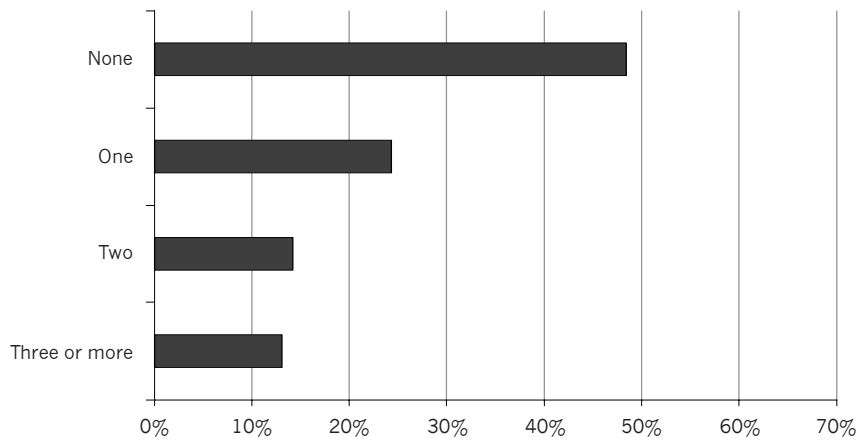
Source: Illinois Department of Corrections





**Figure 20. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by last recorded security level, 2001 (N = 29,167)**

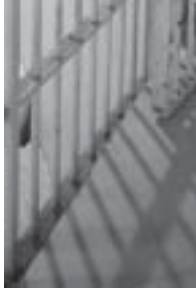
Source: Illinois Department of Corrections



**Figure 21. Percentage of prisoners released in Illinois, by number of prior incarcerations in Illinois, 2001 (N = 29,167)**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

# How Are Prisoners Prepared for Reentry?



Historically, prison programming has played an important role in American corrections. Prison administrators and others have long believed that providing educational and vocational programming to prisoners increases the likelihood of their successful return to the community. Community-based programming is expected to increase the likelihood of successful reintegration and decrease the recidivism rate of returning prisoners. Research has shown that a range of prison programming can contribute to positive post-release outcomes, including reduced recidivism.<sup>122</sup>

Despite the potential benefits of these programs, prisoners nationwide are less likely to have participated in prison programs than they were in the past: The number of soon-to-be-released prisoners who reported participating in vocational programs dropped from 31 percent in 1991 to 27 percent in 1997.<sup>123</sup> The number reporting participation in education programs dropped from 43 percent to 35 percent in that same period.<sup>124</sup> In addition, the number of state prisoners who reported receiving formal substance abuse treatment dropped from 25 percent in 1991 to 10 percent in 1997.<sup>125</sup> With regard to prerelease programming, in both 1991 and 1997, only about 13 percent of soon-to-be-released prisoners nationwide reported participating in such programs.<sup>126</sup>

**122** Lawrence, S., D. Mears, G. Dubin, and J. Travis (2002) *The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming. Research Report*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute; Gaes, G., T. Flanagan, L. Motiuk, and L. Stewart (1999) Adult Correctional Treatment. In M. Tonry, J. Petersilia (eds.) *Prisons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**123** Refers to inmates scheduled to be released in the next 12 months (Lynch and Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute).

**124** Lynch and Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*.

**125** Bureau of Justice Statistics (2000) *Correctional Populations in the United States, 1997*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

**126** Lynch and Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*.



## FACILITY-BASED PROGRAMMING

The Illinois Department of Corrections offers a range of programs and services in which prisoners may participate, including education, vocational training, counseling, mental and medical health care, leisure time activities, religious observances, library services, and various volunteer programs and services. Many of these programs are designed to be of educational, skill-building, or therapeutic value; their intent is to assist prisoners as they attempt to reintegrate into communities and families upon their release from prison.<sup>127</sup> With respect to providing a continuum of offender services, the governor's *Criminal Justice Plan for the State of Illinois* (2001) called for the state to close the gap between offender needs and available services and standardize the implementation of accurate and comprehensive assessment of offender risk, need, and responsiveness. Below, we provide a brief description of existing IDOC facility-based programs.

### Education Programs

Prior research findings suggest that the education level of prisoners is well below the average for the general population;<sup>128</sup> to target many prisoners' educational deficiencies and increase their likelihood of successful reentry, IDOC offers educational programming. All IDOC educational programs were established in 1972 by the Illinois General Assembly. They operate as part of Corrections School District 428, which has established primary, secondary, vocational adult, special, and advanced educational programs.<sup>129</sup> District 428 serves approximately 11,000 students in the various programs on a monthly basis. Students are placed<sup>130</sup> in an Adult Basic Education (ABE)<sup>131</sup> or General Education Development (GED) program,<sup>132</sup> the objectives of which are to provide students with the skills necessary to pass the test for a Graduate Equivalency Diploma certificate or to successfully continue academic or vocational pursuits, if desired.<sup>133</sup>

Within IDOC's Adult Education Division, contracts are developed with local community colleges to bring college credit-bearing programs into the institutions. Inmates have the opportunity to participate in a total of 50 different vocational programs, ranging from Business Information Systems to Emergency Medical Technology. Approximately 10,000 inmates participate annually in college vocational programs leading toward certificates and degrees. In fiscal year 1998, 2,221 inmates earned GED certificates, 354 earned School District Vocational Certificates, 1,314 successfully completed the College Vocational program, 242 earned associate degrees, and 14 earned bachelor's degrees.<sup>134</sup> In a 2001–2002 IDOC

**127** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**128** Andrews and Bonata, 1994; as cited in Lawrence, S., D. Mears, G. Dubin, and J. Travis (2002) *The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming. Research Report*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute; Gaes, G., T. Flanagan, L. Motiuk, and L. Stewart (1999) *Adult Correctional Treatment*. In M. Tonry and J. Petersilia (eds.) *Prisons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**129** Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

**130** Based on their Test of Adult Basic Education score.

**131** An ABE program teaches basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills that adults need to prepare for GED instruction. It also provides individualized instruction in these same areas as applied to practical daily living.

**132** A person who has not graduated from high school but who successfully passes the GED test earns a certificate from the Illinois State Board of Education that is equivalent to a high school diploma.

**133** Inmates committed to IDOC after January 1, 1987, whose achievement level falls below sixth grade in reading and math are required to attend a 90-day ABE instructional program (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

**134** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

survey of parole violators, 42 percent reported having participated in educational programs during incarceration.<sup>135</sup>

School District 428 also provides special education services for people with disabilities who are between 17 and 21 years of age.<sup>136</sup> These services include instruction that has been specifically developed to meet the unique needs of the disabled inmate. The majority of special education students are identified as having behavioral/emotional disorders or learning disabilities. Other classifications may include a visual or hearing impairment or a physical and/or health impairment.<sup>137</sup> District 428 also provides Chapter 1 services, which concentrate on basic reading and math skills, at seven correctional centers. Inmates who have not received a high school diploma or GED certificate and demonstrate educational needs are targeted for Chapter 1 participation.<sup>138</sup>

## Employment Readiness Programs

Most prisoners experience difficulties finding jobs after they are released from prison. They often enter prison with poor educational backgrounds and little work experience. During the time they spend in prison, they may lose work skills, forfeit the opportunity to gain work experience, and sever interpersonal connections that could provide information about jobs. After release, the stigma of their ex-prisoner status makes the job search even more difficult.<sup>139</sup> By law, they are specifically barred from a number of occupations.<sup>140</sup> A recent survey of 3,000 employers revealed that two-thirds would not knowingly hire an ex-prisoner.<sup>141</sup> These obstacles to finding legitimate employment add to the reintegration challenges returning prisoners face.

The Illinois Department of Corrections has several programs aimed at improving job skills and providing employment experience. Specifically, Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) operates in most adult institutions. The primary mission of ICI is to provide productive work-related endeavors as assignments for adult inmates. Annually, ICI inmate workers produce clothing, furniture, personal care items for sale to local and state government agencies, and \$28 million worth of food for use by IDOC. Seventy-nine percent of the products manufactured in ICI plants are used within IDOC. Despite the job preparedness that might accompany such prison employment, the percentage of inmates participating in correctional industries is quite low: From July 1, 1998, through February 1999, just 3 percent of the state's prison population were employed by ICI.<sup>142</sup>

**135** Illinois Department of Corrections, Automated Receiving and Classification System, Parole Violator Summary Information (8/1/2001–8/2/2002). Number of completed interviews was 9,106 (99.29 percent response rate).

**136** Students are interviewed and informally tested at each facility and reception center to identify those who may need special education services. Following a comprehensive case study evaluation, the need for special education and related services is determined at a multidisciplinary conference.

**137** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**138** Students are targeted for participation in the Chapter 1 program through a systematic needs assessment. Standardized testing identifies students who are below grade level and provides the basis for writing an individual plan for remedial instruction. The plan includes goals and objectives for each student, written performance terms, and an evaluation of student progress (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

**139** In a recent study by the Chicago Urban League, released ex-offenders reported that their lack of job skills and work experience prior to prison, along with gaps in employment history due to time out of the labor market while in prison and the stigma of a felony conviction, compounded their struggles to find employment (Festen and Fischer (2002) *Navigating Reentry: The Experiences and Perceptions of Ex-Offenders Seeking Employment*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Urban League).

**140** Council of Advisors to Reduce Recidivism Through Employment (C.A.R.R.E.) (2002) *Policy Paper 4: A Review of the State of Illinois Professional and Occupational Licensure Policies as Related to Employment for Ex-offenders*. Chicago, IL: The Safer Foundation.

**141** Holzer, H., S. Raphael, and M. Stoll (2001) *Will Employers Hire Ex-Offenders? Employer Checks, Background Checks, and Their Determinants*. Berkeley Program on Housing and Urban Policy. Working Papers: Working Paper W01-005. Available at [http://repositories.cdlib.org/iber/bphup/working\\_papers/W01-005](http://repositories.cdlib.org/iber/bphup/working_papers/W01-005) (Accessed July 2002).

**142** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

## Substance Abuse Treatment Programs

The link between substance abuse and criminal activity has been well documented. In a 1997 national survey, more than half of state prisoners reported that they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time they committed the offense that led to their imprisonment.<sup>143</sup> Substance abuse problems that are not treated both while the prisoner is incarcerated and after release can pose a severe impediment to successful reintegration. Not only do substance abuse problems increase the chance of reoffending, but they may also hinder the returning prisoner's ability to complete job requirements and reestablish relations with family. A recent study found that 74 percent of state prisoners nationwide who expect to be released within the next 12 months report a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse.<sup>144</sup>

Illinois statistics on substance abuse among inmates mirror national findings: Approximately 70 percent of all inmates admitted to Illinois prisons reported use of drugs or alcohol.<sup>145</sup> A 1994 needs assessment conducted by the Illinois Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA) and IDOC concluded that 57 percent of adult male inmates and 63 percent of adult female inmates were in need of substance abuse treatment at the time of initial classification.<sup>146</sup> A 1995 IDOC inmate profile provides the highest estimates of substance abuse, with 80 percent of female offenders reporting such a history.<sup>147</sup>

Some form of substance abuse programming is offered at each IDOC facility.<sup>148</sup> All institutions provide substance abuse education, and a number of institutions provide treatment in a Therapeutic Community setting.<sup>149</sup> As of April 1999, the largest Therapeutic Community treatment programs were offered at the following correctional centers: Southwestern with 670 treatment beds<sup>150</sup> (the entire facility), Dwight with 229 treatment beds (an all-female facility), Sheridan with 220 treatment beds,<sup>151</sup> Taylorville with 120 treatment beds, and Illinois River with 109 treatment beds.<sup>152</sup> According to IDOC, its current substance abuse treatment program does not provide a comprehensive continuum of care for offenders in need of treatment.<sup>153</sup> While the number of prisoners served by IDOC substance abuse treatment programs has steadily increased since 1990, slightly more than 3,100 treatment beds are currently available for the estimated 27,000 adult and juvenile offenders in need.<sup>154</sup>

**143** Mumola, C. (1999) *Substance Abuse and Treatment, State and Federal Prisoners, 1997*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice (NCJ 172871).

**144** Beck, A. (2000) "State and Federal Prisoners Returning to the Community: Findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics." Paper presented at the First Reentry Courts Initiative Cluster Meeting, Washington, D.C., April 13, 2000. Available at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/sfprc.pdf>.

**145** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**146** Ibid.

**147** McCanna, K., and S. Levy (1998) "Prison Programs that Reflect the Needs of an Increasing Female Inmate Population." Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. *The Compiler*.

**148** Funding for substance abuse treatment varies from institution to institution, and is provided in a large contractual line item within IDOC's annual budget. The costs for inmates to participate are calculated according to the DASA rate structure.

**149** "Therapeutic communities (TCs) are based on the primary tenet of social learning theory that people can learn new behaviors, attitudes, and feelings by observing other people and events followed by individual practice and feedback from others. TCs are designed and delivered in phases in parallel with offender change, and they incorporate the principles and practices of cognitive change. The overall goal for offenders is acquisition of pro-social values, conduct, emotion, and insight. Ideally, all unit staff are involved in the offender change process" (National Institute of Corrections, *Effective Interventions: Program Modalities*, <http://www.nicic.org/services/special/effective/programs-more.htm>) (Accessed March 19, 2003).

**150** Treatment beds indicate the number of inmates the treatment facility or program can accommodate.

**151** Results of a three-year outcome study conducted by Illinois State University on the Sheridan Correctional Center's therapeutic community treatment center suggested that as the length of treatment increased, treated inmates had lower rates of rearrest and recommitment to IDOC. Parolees who completed treatment and were released to the community were rearrested in a six-month period at a rate of 19.8 percent, compared with 34.7 percent for those not completing treatment (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

## Physical and Mental Health Treatment

**Physical and Mental Health.** Mental health care, including diagnosis and treatment of inmate mental health problems, is provided at every Illinois correctional institution. Services include psychological and psychiatric testing, examinations and diagnosis, individual and group counseling and therapy, and specialized treatment programs for individual offenders. Every institution has mental health professionals on staff or on contract to provide individual and group counseling/therapy. Male inmates with severe mental illnesses are transferred to Dixon Correctional Center, which has a specialized psychiatric unit, and are kept there until they are stabilized and can be returned to a regular institution. Mental health services for females are provided at Dwight Correctional Center.<sup>155</sup>

Medical care, including diagnosis and treatment, is also provided to inmates. Services include physical examinations, emergency medical treatment, and complete diagnosis and treatment of medical and dental problems. Additional medical services (e.g., gynecological) are provided to the female population.<sup>156</sup>

**Sex Offender Treatment.** In Illinois prisons, approximately 10 percent of the adult population are being held for a sex offense.<sup>157</sup> IDOC serves over 200 inmates in two in-house residential sex offender programs. Another 150 inmates participate in sex offender treatment groups at other facilities.<sup>158</sup>

**Physical/Sexual Abuse.** Female inmates often report a history of physical and/or sexual abuse. In a national survey, 57 percent of female prison inmates told interviewers they had been physically or sexually abused before their current sentence.<sup>159</sup> Survey data collected at Dixon Correctional Center in northern Illinois found that 70 percent of the 118 female inmates who completed the survey reported being victims of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and 86 percent of the women who reported being abused asked to see a mental health professional while in prison.<sup>160</sup> IDOC offers individual and group counseling sessions for inmates who have abuse histories or have particular issues to address, such as separation from a child or domestic abuse. In 1998, IDOC reported housing 1,908 female inmates who are single parents.<sup>161</sup> These women often leave behind children who must be cared for by relatives, friends, or social service agencies,<sup>162</sup> and the women must deal with the separation.

## Women and Children's Program<sup>163</sup>

Upon the birth of a child, incarcerated pregnant women lose custody of that child to family members or to social service agencies.<sup>164</sup> To address

**152** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**153** *Ibid.*

**154** *Ibid.*

**155** *Ibid.*

**156** *Ibid.*

**157** At the end of February 1999, IDOC housed nearly 43,300 offenders within its institutions. At this same time, IDOC reported that approximately 10 percent, or 4,340 inmates, of its adult institution population were being held for a sex offense.

**158** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**159** In this national survey, 19 percent of state prison inmates told interviewers they had been physically or sexually abused before their current sentence. When asked whether they were ever abused, 16.1 percent of men and 57.2 percent of women responded affirmatively. When asked whether they were abused before the age of 18, 14.4 percent of men and 36.7 percent of women responded affirmatively (Harlow, C. (1999) *Prior Abuse Reported by Inmates and Probationers, Selected Findings Report*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics).

**160** Fulla, S. (1998) "New Correctional Program Will Serve Female Inmates Who Are Victims of Abuse." Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. *The Compiler*.

**161** Based on a 1997 survey of inmates in state correctional facilities, a majority of state prisoners reported having a child under the age of 18. Among state prisoners, women (65 percent) were more likely than men (55 percent) to have minor children (Mumola, C. (2000) *Incarcerated Parents and Their Children, Special Report*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics). In Illinois, in FY 1990, just over 2,000 children had a mother go to prison, versus, 7,500 children in FY 2002. Five thousand of those children were from Cook County. Of the roughly 2,000 women admitted to state prison from Cook County in FY 2000, one in three had an average of five children, and 52 percent were sentenced to prison for a drug offense (George, S. (September 14, 2002) "The Chicago Project on Female Prisoners and Their Children." Comments presented to the Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference, Ex-Offender Policy Task Force, Congressman Danny K. Davis, Chair, Washington, D.C.).

**162** McCanna and Levy (1998) "Prison Programs Reflect the Needs of an Increasing Female Inmate Population."

this hardship for incarcerated mothers and their newborn children, beginning in fiscal year 1998, IDOC entered into agreements with the Women's Treatment Center in Chicago (five beds) and the Jane Adams Hull House in Aurora (ten beds) to house selected incarcerated women with their newborn children. The first woman and her baby were transferred in November 1997. Through the first part of fiscal year 1999, the average daily population in these facilities was 10 mothers.

According to IDOC, the purpose of the program is to provide incarcerated women and their children the opportunity to break the cycle of crime, poverty, and poor parenting that often characterizes the lives of female offenders and subsequently affects the lives of their children. The program is designed for mothers and their children to live in an environment that (1) fosters personal responsibility, (2) builds parenting and decision-making skills that will facilitate the mothers' changing their criminal lifestyle, and (3) strengthens the mother/child bond. Program components include parenting, child care, nutrition, life skills, prevention of domestic violence, educational and vocational services, job readiness training, substance abuse treatment, individual and group counseling, and community resources awareness.

### **Impact Incarceration Program (Boot Camp)**

IDOC operates three adult boot camps and one juvenile camp. Lasting between 120 and 180 days, the Impact Incarceration Program (IIP) provides a structured environment in which to address problems that may contribute to an inmate's criminal activity. Focusing on offenders at risk of continued criminal activity because of substance abuse, poor social skills, and other related problems, the purpose of the program is to build character; promote maturity, responsibility, and a positive self-image; and motivate the offender to be a law-abiding citizen.<sup>165</sup>

Adult inmates must volunteer for this program at the time of sentencing. The placement recommendation by the sentencing judge is reviewed when the inmate is received at IDOC. IDOC retains the right to determine who goes to boot camp on the basis of eligibility requirements,<sup>166</sup> the nature of the crime, and whether the inmate is likely to successfully handle the physical and mental regimen.<sup>167</sup> Recidivism rates for inmates participating in IIP suggest that graduates return to prison less often for new crimes than similar inmates who did not participate in the program. An IDOC analysis indicated that of the first 1,388 program graduates, 25 percent were returned to prison within three years after their release for committing a new crime. Thirty-five percent of the comparison group of parolees who did not participate in the program returned to prison for a

**163** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**164** Any person having sole custody of a child at the time of commitment and any woman giving birth to a child after her commitment may arrange through the Department of Children and Family Services for suitable placement of the child outside of the Department of Corrections. The director of the Department of Corrections may determine that there are special reasons why the child should continue in the custody of the mother until the child is six years old (Illinois Compiled Statutes, Unified Code of Corrections, 730 ILCS 5/).

**165** Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

**166** Eligible adult inmates must not have been convicted of a serious crime or sentenced to corrections more than twice, must be between the ages of 18 and 35, and cannot have a sentence of more than eight years.

**167** State of Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Frequently Asked Questions*, [www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html).

new crime.<sup>168</sup> Despite these positive findings, the boot camp population decreased 33 percent from 2,332 participants in fiscal year 1999 to 1,557 participants in fiscal year 2001; the percentage of participants who have graduated (72 to 73 percent) has, however, stayed the same.<sup>169</sup>

## PreStart

Every prisoner who is released under parole and mandatory supervised release must participate in a program called PreStart. Introduced in fiscal year 1991, the PreStart program emphasizes prerelease education, preparation, and planning, coupled with post-release community-based services, tailoring the transition process for each releasee.<sup>170</sup> The PreStart approach was developed to prepare inmates for life after prison and to maximize the use of limited resources to meet the needs of releasees. At about the same time that IDOC inaugurated PreStart, the state was recovering from a fiscal crisis that had resulted in the loss of half of its existing parole staff.<sup>171</sup> Budgetary constraints, reduced staffing, and low staff morale had negative implications for smooth program implementation.<sup>172</sup>

PreStart, as it was originally designed, contained two distinct phases: prerelease education and post-release assistance. The mandatory prerelease education phase, which is still in effect, is a two-week, 30-hour specialized curriculum within the correctional facility. It is administered to inmates who are scheduled to be released in the next one to twelve months (depending on the institution) and provides them with skills, information, support, and assistance in accessing community resources. Inmates prepare Individual Development Plans (IDPs) with detailed personal goals and objectives and casework service needs. The post-release program was designed to lessen the focus on surveillance and supervision functions of parole for most offenders, and to emphasize referrals to social services that might help prevent releasees from reoffending.<sup>173</sup> The original post-release PreStart policy required all releasees<sup>174</sup> to report to their designated PreStart Community Service Centers<sup>175</sup> (now called Parole Offices) once a month for at least the first six months of the supervision term.<sup>176</sup> As originally conceived and implemented, these centers were established to help releasees achieve the personal goals and plans developed in their IDPs. The existing Parole Offices are now focused more on enforcement.

The average daily PreStart population in fiscal year 1998 was 30,550, its highest since the program's inception (figure 22).<sup>177</sup> This is a 105 percent increase since the program was implemented in fiscal year 1991. Two-thirds of PreStart participants were originally sentenced in Cook County (66 percent).<sup>178</sup>

**168** Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1997) *Trends and Issues 1997*.

**169** Illinois State Budget: Fiscal Year 2003.

**170** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**171** Significant layoffs occurred in 1983, after which time some parole agents were rehired. In 1987, another budget cut resulted in the laying off of half of the existing parole staff. Following this layoff, the average number of parole agents gradually increased through 1991, but not at a rate fast enough to bring average caseloads to levels found in the early 1980s. The average caseload per parole agent in 1991 was more than twice the caseload in 1982 and almost four times the recommended caseload of the American Correctional Association. Federal funding of PreStart, however, did allow for the rehiring of a number of corrections parole agents (Castellano (1996) *The Implementation and Impact of Illinois' PreStart Program: A Final Report*).

**172** Castellano (1996) *The Implementation and Impact of Illinois' PreStart Program: A Final Report*.

**173** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**174** With the exception of technical parole violators who are not included in these programs.

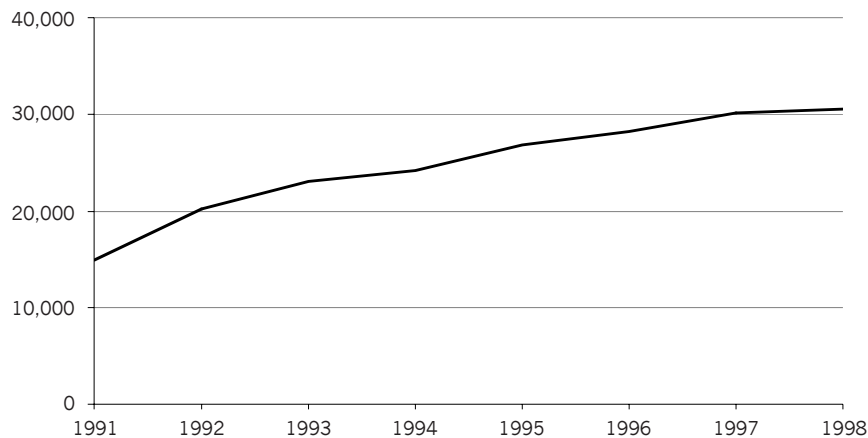
**175** Twenty-one PreStart Community Service Centers and three satellite facilities have been established to help releasees use the community-based services and programs. The Service Centers are administratively organized into four geographic regions, each including a Community Drug Intervention Program (CDIP) as part of its service component (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL).

**176** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**177** *Ibid.*

**178** *Ibid.*





**Figure 22. Average daily PreStart population, FY 1991 – FY 1998**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*. Springfield, IL.

Results of an 18-month process and impact evaluation of the PreStart program during its years of full operation indicated that PreStart releasees returned to prison at a rate of about 11.7 percent during the first year in the community, compared with 32.3 percent for inmates released in 1990, before PreStart began. Recidivism was as low as 5 percent among inmates who had been placed under special care or supervision after release from prison (e.g., electronic detention or intensive supervision as part of the community-based drug intervention program). Also, inmates who did not go through PreStart returned to prison more quickly than those who had gone through the program. Rearrest rates within one year of release were also lower for inmates released under the PreStart program (40 percent) than for inmates released prior to PreStart’s implementation (48 percent). High-rate offenders (those with five or more prior arrests) released under PreStart, however, had a higher rearrest rate after one year in the community than similar offenders released from prison before PreStart was implemented.

Overall, the state observed a dramatic decrease in prison admissions due to technical violations with the implementation of PreStart. And inmates generally reported positive feelings about PreStart’s prerelease program and indicated that they found the Community Service Centers to be helpful after their release. However, this evaluation was conducted when PreStart was in full implementation, including both in-prison and post-release components of the program; thus, it is difficult to assess the benefits of the program with regard to reduced recidivism today.

## COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING

Concerns about rising crime rates have led elected officials nationwide and in Illinois to advocate tough-on-crime strategies, including increased use of incarceration. States, however, are simultaneously faced with the fiscal and practical implications of rising incarceration rates and corrections expenditures. In light of these issues, over the past few years Illinois policymakers and corrections officials have expanded the use of alternatives to incarceration in an effort to alleviate and manage crowding in the Illinois prison system. In addition, community-based programming has been enhanced based on the belief that it is an effective means of easing the transition from prison to the community. Among these programs are electronic detention, Community Correctional Centers,<sup>179</sup> Adult Transitional Centers, and Day Reporting Centers.

### Electronic Detention

Since 1989, the Illinois Department of Corrections has used electronic detention (ED) as a prerelease reintegration technique. Inmates whom IDOC considers suitable for the program and who are statutorily eligible are allowed to spend the last several months of their sentence on ED rather than in an institution. Electronic detention allows screened inmates to live in the community at approved host sites while being electronically monitored.<sup>180</sup> The average time spent on ED is 6.2 months.<sup>181</sup> Residents participating in the ED program are expected to participate in programming activities such as work, education, and substance abuse treatment, and must submit to random urinalysis. Agents are required to conduct a minimum of two personal visits per month with each client. Electronic monitoring returns inmates to the community at a more gradual pace, provides significant public protection, and costs less than once-fourth of the operating costs for an inmate remaining in prison.<sup>182</sup> ED residents who violate the terms of the ED program are returned to prison to complete their sentences.

In fiscal year 2000, 678 inmates were serving their sentence in the ED program, a 131 percent increase since fiscal year 1991.<sup>183</sup> The number of inmates on electronic detention in fiscal year 2001 was 161, and the number of estimated inmates on electronic detention for fiscal year 2002 is zero. The number of parolees on electronic monitoring, however, has increased 123 percent from 770 in fiscal year 1999 to 1,718 in fiscal year 2001. The estimated number of parolees on electronic monitoring for fiscal year 2002 is 2,124, which would represent a 23 percent increase from the previous year.

**179** Two male, one female, and one coed Community Correctional Center (CCC) are located in Chicago. Kane County, Will County, and Winnebago County each contain one CCC. The remaining four CCCs are located in larger metropolitan communities in downstate Illinois. The mission of the Metro CCC has been changed to house Impact Incarceration Program (boot camp) inmates released into the community on electronic detention who have no host site to hook up the monitor. As of the end of February 1999, there were 68 inmates at Metro (Illinois Department of Correction (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

**180** ED provides continuous monitoring of a client through the use of a transmitter strapped to his or her ankle. The transmitter sends a continuous electronic signal to the field-monitoring device located in the host site. When the signal is being received, the vendor monitoring the offender can be assured that the person is within the allotted area of confinement. When the signal is interrupted, IDOC is notified of a potential violation. It is important to note that the signal being transmitted does not provide the location of the client. The primary purpose of the signal is to inform the monitoring agency and the ED agent that the client is outside the allotted area of movement (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

**181** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**182** *Ibid.*

**183** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*; and Illinois State Budget: Fiscal Year 2003.

## Community Correctional Centers/Adult Transition Centers

Community Correctional Centers (CCCs) and Adult Transition Centers (ATCs) provide selected inmates with structured supervision in a community setting for a more gradual transition to the community.<sup>184</sup> The Community Correctional Center program is designed to help inmates readjust to social and cultural mores, employment, and the daily demands of life on the outside. Adult Transition Centers are designed to house approximately 1,500 inmates, who must work or go to school and return to the ATC when not participating in an approved community activity. Both programs share the same purpose and function.

While residing at one of IDOC's 11 Community Correctional Centers, residents participate in readjustment programs and public service projects within their home community.<sup>185</sup> In fiscal year 1998, 1,393 inmates participated in the CCC program, a 57 percent increase since fiscal year 1991. (The rated capacity for fiscal year 1998 was 1,220.) All CCC residents are expected to participate for a minimum of 35 hours per week in constructive activity; this can be a combination of employment, vocational training, education, life skills, public service work, and daily in-house assignments. Alcohol and drug counseling, along with other medical and mental health services, are also available to residents. Community Correctional Center privileges and independent release time<sup>186</sup> are contingent upon the residents' strict compliance with the program's requirements. Residents who are unable or unwilling to conform to the program's expectations are returned to an adult institution to serve the remainder of their sentences.<sup>187</sup> In 2001, 3 percent of inmates released by IDOC were released from Community Correctional Centers.

IDOC also operates 12 work release centers, or Adult Transitional Centers.<sup>188</sup> Inmates who are within two years of release and classified as minimum security may apply for placement at an Adult Transitional Center. While IDOC is very selective about who is transferred to these centers,<sup>189</sup> the program has expanded in recent years: The Adult Transition Center population increased 22 percent from 1,360 in fiscal year 1999 to 1,658 in fiscal year 2001.<sup>190</sup> Despite this increase, however, only 3 percent of Illinois prisoners are transferred to Adult Transition Centers.<sup>191</sup> In a 2001–2002 IDOC survey of parole violators, 9 percent reported having participated in ATC programming, and of those who participated, 58 percent reported having successfully completed the program.<sup>192</sup>

**184** Beginning in 1988, new Community Correctional Centers were referred to as Adult Transition Centers.

**185** Residents are generally placed in or near their home community to allow for an easier and more timely readjustment (Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*).

**186** Responsibilities are gradually reestablished through counseling, visitation, extended leaves, and compliance with Center rules. Residents are allowed to visit friends and relatives in their homes for short periods; these visits can be extended as residents approach their release date.

**187** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**188** Two of the centers house female inmates.

**189** State of Illinois Department of Corrections (2002) *Frequently Asked Questions*, [www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html](http://www.idoc.state.il.us/faq/default.html).

**190** Illinois State Budget: Fiscal Year 2003.

**191** Williams, B. (February 6, 2003) "Safer Foundation: Community Reentry of Formerly Incarcerated Persons—Policy Recommendations."

**192** Illinois Department of Corrections, Automated Receiving and Classification System, Parole Violator Summary Information (8/1/2001–8/2/2002). Number of completed interviews was 9,106 (99.29 percent response rate).

## Day Reporting Centers

On April 1, 1998, the Community Services Division opened its first seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year Day Reporting Center, located on the south side of Chicago, in an effort to address the high failure rates of inmates released to this area. A Day Reporting Center is a nonresidential program where releasees participate in educational, employment, treatment, and life skills programming.<sup>193</sup>

Participation is mandatory for releasees who agree to treatment, are released to this area of Chicago, and fall into at least one of three distinct groups: (1) ex-offenders with two or more prior incarcerations, (2) ex-offenders with a sentence of 10 years or more, and (3) ex-offenders who are 25 years old or younger and serving time for crimes against another person. Prior to release from prison, all inmates assigned to the Day Reporting Center must participate in an orientation program, which occurs immediately following the completion of the in-prison PreStart component.<sup>194</sup> The level of supervision of releasees assigned to the Day Reporting Center is dependent upon their progress.<sup>195</sup>

The purpose of the program<sup>196</sup> is to enhance coping skills, provide model behaviors to replace crime-related behaviors, decrease substance abuse and prevent sex offender relapse, improve the releasee's ability to obtain employment, and provide structured activity for releasees within a community setting.<sup>197</sup> Unless there is a previously approved absence, participants are required to report to their Day Reporting Center Monday through Friday from 8:45 a.m. to 8 p.m. Approved absences are granted for a variety of reasons, including court appearances, job interviews, and medical appointments. Daily programming includes lectures, support groups, counseling, and time spent in the computer lab. Contracted services include drug testing, treatment and recovery, basic life skills, violence prevention, literacy, job skills training, GED preparation, and job placement.

## The Going Home Initiative

In July 2002, Illinois Governor Ryan announced that IDOC had received a \$2 million U.S. Department of Justice grant to support the Illinois Going Home prisoner reentry program in the North Lawndale community of Chicago.<sup>198</sup> North Lawndale has more than 2,700 parolees between the ages of 17 and 35 currently living in the community, making it home to one of the highest concentrations of parolees in the state. The Going Home program will provide services to all prisoners returning to North Lawndale, including assessment, case management, cognitive restructuring, drug treatment, transitional housing, and employment train-

**193** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Years 1998–2000*.

**194** The orientation program for the Day Reporting Center includes a review of reporting instructions, the MSR agreement, directions to the Center, and guidelines for how to successfully complete the program.

**195** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Year 1998–2000*.

**196** Program components include adult basic education/literacy, anger management, obtaining services from community agencies, cognitive restructuring, domestic violence programming, mental health therapy, job search skills, employment readiness, life skills, parenting, substance abuse/sex offender programming, and victim empathy.

**197** Illinois Department of Corrections (1999) *Human Services Plan—Fiscal Year 1998–2000*.

**198** Dighton (2002) "The Challenge of Reentry: Keeping Ex-offenders Free."

ing and placement assistance. The program will also provide specialized youth services to an additional 200 juveniles and young adults with a propensity for violence or at high risk of returning to prison.<sup>199</sup> Contact with the inmates selected for the program will begin before they are released, and the program will employ newly formed transition teams composed of IDOC parole officers, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC) case managers, and North Lawndale Employment Network staff.<sup>200</sup> A program evaluation that tracks the recidivism rates of the participants will be conducted.

In summary, research suggests that the vast majority of inmates have significant educational, vocational, and employment deficits.<sup>201</sup> Illinois provides a wide array of facility- and community-based programs designed to increase the likelihood that inmates returning to their communities will reintegrate successfully and not reoffend, and some have been shown to be effective in this regard. However, these programs are serving a very small percentage of Illinois' inmate and parolee populations. National data indicate that approximately 35 percent of inmates receive educational programming.<sup>202</sup> Based on the survey of parole violators described above, 42 percent participated in educational programming, a rate comparable with the national participation rates. (Unfortunately, data comparing Illinois to nationwide participation rates on employment and vocational programming are not available). Despite the fact that Illinois is on par with other states with regard to some programmatic efforts, the state stands to benefit from increasing the availability of programs and services found to be effective in preparing inmates for reentry. Our discussion now turns to where released prisoners are going in the state of Illinois.

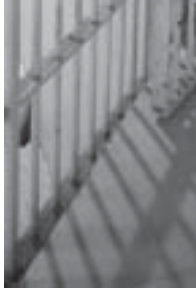
**199** Ibid.

**200** Ibid.

**201** Gaes et al., 1999; Cullen and Gendreau, 2000; as cited in Lawrence, S., D. Mears, G. Dubin, and J. Travis (2002) *Research Report: The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming*.

**202** Travis et al., 2000; as cited in Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, and Travis (2002) *Research Report: The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming*.

# Where Are Released Prisoners Going?

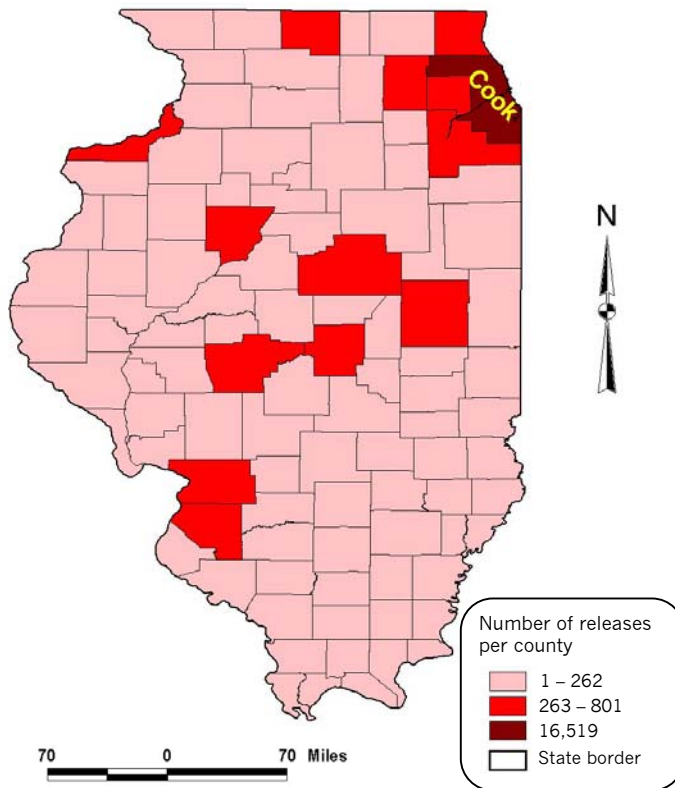


The community context of prisoner reentry can have an important influence on post-release success or failure. It stands to reason that ex-prisoners returning to communities with high unemployment rates, limited affordable housing options, and few services are more likely to relapse and recidivate. In order to understand the community context of reentry in Illinois, it is first necessary to examine the geographic distribution of released inmates. This chapter presents findings from a geographic analysis of returning inmates and examines this reentry distribution in relation to the socioeconomic characteristics of the areas with the highest percentage of released prisoners in 2001, as well as the characteristics of the prisoners who returned to these areas.

During 2001, 97 percent of all men and women released from Illinois prisons returned to communities in Illinois.<sup>203</sup> Six counties (Cook, Winnebago, Lake, St. Clair, Peoria, and Will) accounted for 75 percent of inmates returning (figures 23 and 24). Sixty-two percent of released prisoners returned to Cook County; no other county is home to more than 3 percent of releasees. More than half (53 percent) of released prisoners returned to the city of Chicago in Cook County (figure 25), by far the largest municipality in Illinois,<sup>204</sup> with a rate of return of 534 per 100,000 individuals. Compared to the second two largest cities, Rockford and Aurora, Chicago receives a roughly equal rate of return to Rockford (507 returns per 100,000 individuals) relative to population size, and a higher rate than Aurora (234 returns per 100,000).

**203** *2000 Census Population Compared to 1990: Illinois Municipalities, 2000 Census Re-districting Data Summary File, PL 94-171.*

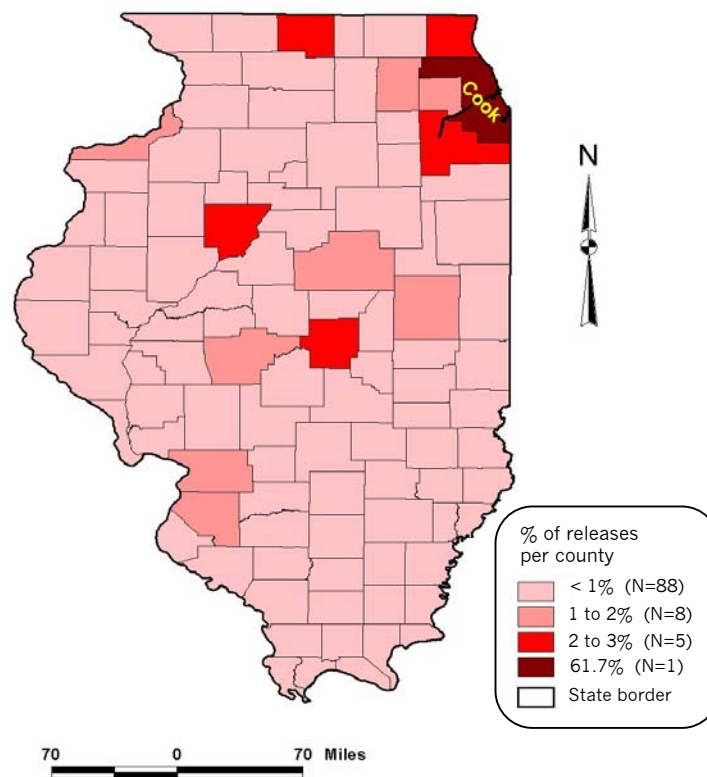
**204** Although residents of Chicago represent only 23 percent of the state's total population (*2000 Census Population Compared to 1990: Illinois Municipalities, 2000 Census Re-districting Data Summary File, PL 94-171*), during 2000 Chicago accounted for 40 percent of crimes reported in the state crime index offense total (*Crime in Illinois, Illinois Uniform Crime Reports, 2001*).



**Figure 23. Number of prisoner releases, by Illinois county, 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.

Note: Total releases in Illinois = 29,167; 2,374 (or 8.1%) are not shown in map because of incomplete addresses.



**Figure 24. Percentage of prisoner releases, by Illinois county, 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.

Note: Total releases in Illinois = 29,167; 2,374 (or 8.1%) are not shown in map because of incomplete addresses.

## PRISONER REENTRY IN COOK COUNTY

With over 5,376,741 residents and covering an area of 945 square miles, Cook County is the sixth largest county in Illinois geographically, but the largest in terms of population. Forty-three percent of Illinois' population resides in Cook County,<sup>205</sup> which has the highest population density per square mile in the state.<sup>206</sup> Almost one-half (48 percent) of the county residents are white, over one-quarter (26 percent) are African American, and one out of every five county residents are Hispanic (of any race).<sup>207</sup> Just over half (52 percent) of county residents are female, and median age in 2000 was 33.6 years, with persons under the age of 20 accounting for nearly 30 percent of the total county population.<sup>208</sup> Female-headed households with children under the age of 18 account for 26 percent of the county households, and the county is characterized by 42 percent renter-occupied housing and 6 percent vacant housing.<sup>209</sup> Between fiscal years 1994 and 2001, the number of adult admissions to IDOC from Cook County decreased 3 percent, from 13,637 to 13,269. In 2001, drug offenders accounted for the majority (51 percent) of all admissions from Cook County, compared with 20 percent for violent offenders and 24 percent for property offenders.<sup>210</sup>

### Overview of Released Prisoners Who Returned to Cook County

In 2001, 18,377 released inmates returned to Cook County—3.4 per 1,000 residents. This group represents 62 percent of Illinois inmates released that year (figure 24). The majority of inmates released to Cook County were male (90 percent) and black (80 percent).<sup>211</sup> Forty-nine percent had been serving time for drug-related crimes, 25 percent for property crimes, 21 percent for crimes against a person, and 5 percent for sex-related crimes. Released inmates ranged in age from 17 to 80 years, with an average (mean) age of 32 years. Just over half of these released inmates had completed some high school (54 percent), with only 23 percent being high school graduates. Over three-quarters reported being single at the time of entry to prison (77 percent), while only 13 percent reported being married. Approximately 40 percent of released prisoners returning to Cook County had been incarcerated in Illinois at least once before. The majority of released inmates to Cook County were released to a period of supervision (84 percent); the remaining 16 percent were discharged from the institution (i.e., were under no post-release supervision). Of those inmates released to supervision, 73 percent were released to mandatory supervised release (MSR) or parole, and an additional 10 percent were technical parole violators who were re-released to MSR or parole. Figure 26 shows the distribution of released prisoners across Cook County, with the highest concentrations located in the city of Chicago.

<sup>205</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

<sup>206</sup> Bauer, R., D. Olson, and G. Ramker (2002) *A Profile of the Cook County Criminal and Juvenile Justice System*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

<sup>207</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

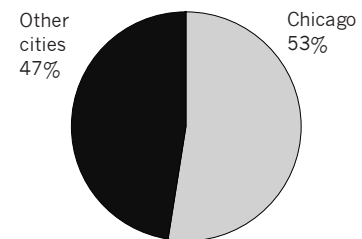
<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

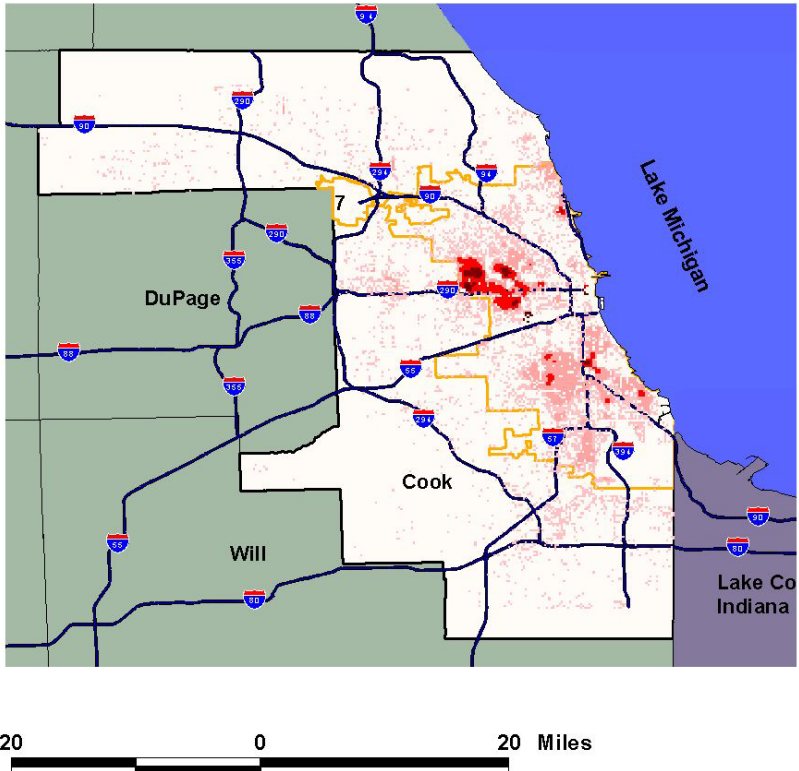
<sup>210</sup> Bauer, Olson, and Ramker (2002) *A Profile of the Cook County Criminal and Juvenile Justice System*.

<sup>211</sup> Racial distribution for releasees to Cook County: black (80.4 percent), white (9 percent), Hispanic (10.2 percent), Asian (0.2 percent), and American Indian (0.1 percent).

**Figure 25. Percentage of prisoner releases by Illinois city of return, 2001 (N = 30,068)**

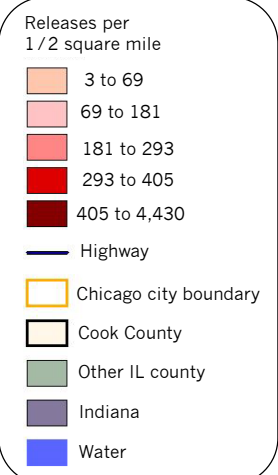




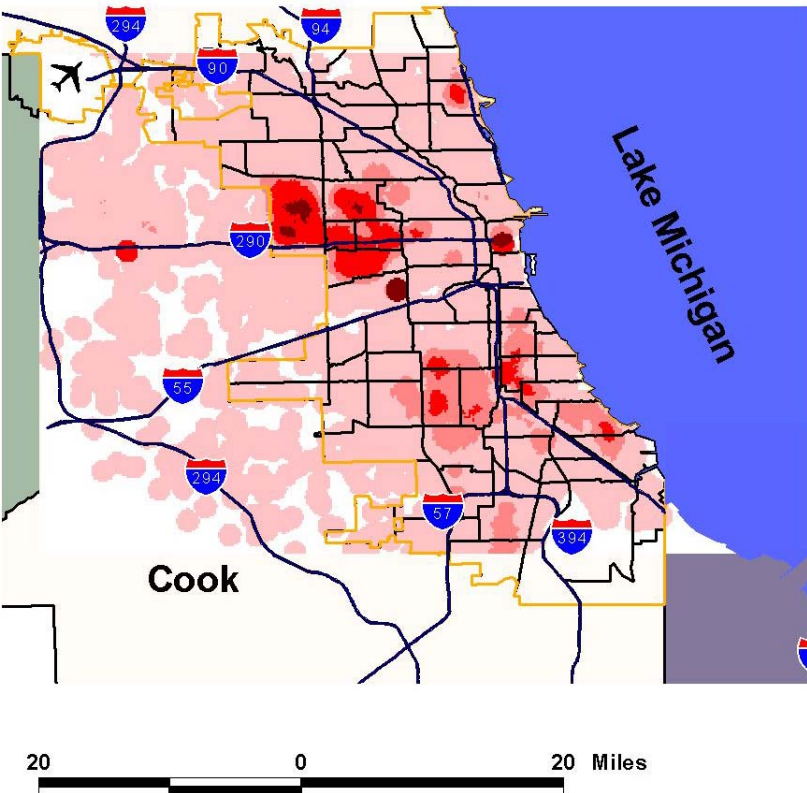


**Figure 26. Prisoner release density in Cook County, Illinois, 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.



Note: Total releases to Cook County = 18,377; 2,400 (or 13%) are not shown in map because of incomplete addresses.



**Figure 27. Prisoner release density in Chicago, Illinois, 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.



Note: Total releases to Chicago = 15,488; 2,354 (or 15%) are not shown in map because of incomplete addresses.

## PRISONER REENTRY IN CHICAGO

The city of Chicago encompasses 227 square miles and is home to 2,949,913 residents. Of the city's almost 3 million residents, 4.9 percent (143,393) are unemployed, 3.6 percent (105,517) of the city's families live below the poverty level, and 35 percent (105,705) of households are female-headed and include children under the age of 18.<sup>212</sup>

### Overview of Released Prisoners Who Returned to Chicago

In 2001, of the 18,377 inmates released to Cook County, 15,488 (84.3 percent) were released to the city of Chicago—5.3 per 1,000 residents. Within the Chicago city boundary, released inmates are highly concentrated within certain areas (figure 27); these concentrations will be explored in greater detail in the next section of this report. The majority of the prisoners who returned to Chicago in 2001 were male (90 percent), and the average (mean) age was 33 years. About 85 percent of returning prisoners to Chicago were black, while only 6 percent were white. This reflects a different racial distribution than that of Chicago residents overall (42 percent white, 37 percent black).

With regard to criminal histories, about 26 percent of released prisoners returning to Chicago in 2001 had been in prison at least once before, which is slightly higher than the 24 percent of released inmates across the state. Twenty percent had most recently been convicted of a person-based crime, while 51 percent had been convicted of a drug-related crime, which is higher than the 40 percent of all inmates released in 2001 who had been convicted of a drug-related crime. Of those prisoners released, 66 percent had served less than one year in jail or prison, and 15 percent had served one to two years. The majority of inmates were released to a period of supervision (83 percent), with the remaining 17 percent being discharged from the institution (i.e., with no post-release supervision requirements). Of those released to supervision, 72 percent were released to MSR or parole, and an additional 11 percent were technical parole violators who were re-released to MSR or parole.

## PRISONER REENTRY IN CHICAGO COMMUNITIES

Prisoner reentry affects not only inmates who are returning home, but also the community to which they are returning.<sup>213</sup> Conversely, the characteristics of the community to which released prisoners return may affect their reentry success. For instance, both the availability and cost of housing and the availability and proximity of jobs in a community may influence post-release outcomes for returning prisoners. In addition, availability and accessibility, or lack thereof, of social services, such as health

<sup>212</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

<sup>213</sup> Released prisoners are returning to the same communities from which they came prior to incarceration. The city's top 15 ZIP codes for prison releases are very nearly (and in nearly the same order) identical to the top 15 ZIP codes for prison population (Street, P. (2002) *The Vicious Circle: Race, Prison, Jobs, and Community in Chicago, Illinois and the Nation*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Urban League).

care and substance abuse treatment, is likely to affect reentry transition and subsequent recidivism.<sup>214</sup>

In Illinois, releasees are not only most highly concentrated in Chicago, the largest metropolitan area within the state, but they are even more concentrated within a few communities in the Chicago area. Just 6 of 77 Chicago communities—Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park—account for 34 percent of prisoners returning to Chicago (figures 28 through 30).<sup>215</sup> The South Lawndale community also received a heavy concentration of returning prisoners, with 1,254 releasees representing 10 percent of all returns to the city. However, the vast majority (92 percent) of these released prisoners went to a single address within the community—the Cook County Courthouse. According to IDOC sources, it is likely that many of those with the Courthouse as their release address were “released” to the jail there to await trial on new charges.<sup>216</sup> Given this anomaly in the data, South Lawndale will not be included in the discussion of reentry in Chicago communities that follows in this section.

The return of released prisoners to these high-concentration communities is only half the story. The other half is the high rate of people being sent or returned to prison who come from these communities: Such high concentrations of residents cycling in and out of prison may destabilize social networks and social relationships within neighborhoods. Some researchers suggest that communities with weakened social networks have less success promoting informal social control among residents, which may result in increased neighborhood crime, though little is known about this phenomenon.<sup>217</sup>

What we do know is that, in addition to being home to large numbers of returning prisoners, these high-concentration areas are among the Chicago communities that are the most socially and economically disadvantaged. These communities are characterized by families living below the poverty level; moderate to high levels of renter-occupied housing, unemployment, and female-headed households; and above average Part I crime rates (figures 31 through 39).

Community Area	Number of Returning Prisoners	Rate per 1,000 Residents
Austin	1,681	14.3
Humboldt Park	699	10.6
North Lawndale	656	15.7
West Englewood	521	11.5
Englewood	429	10.7
East Garfield Park	412	19.7

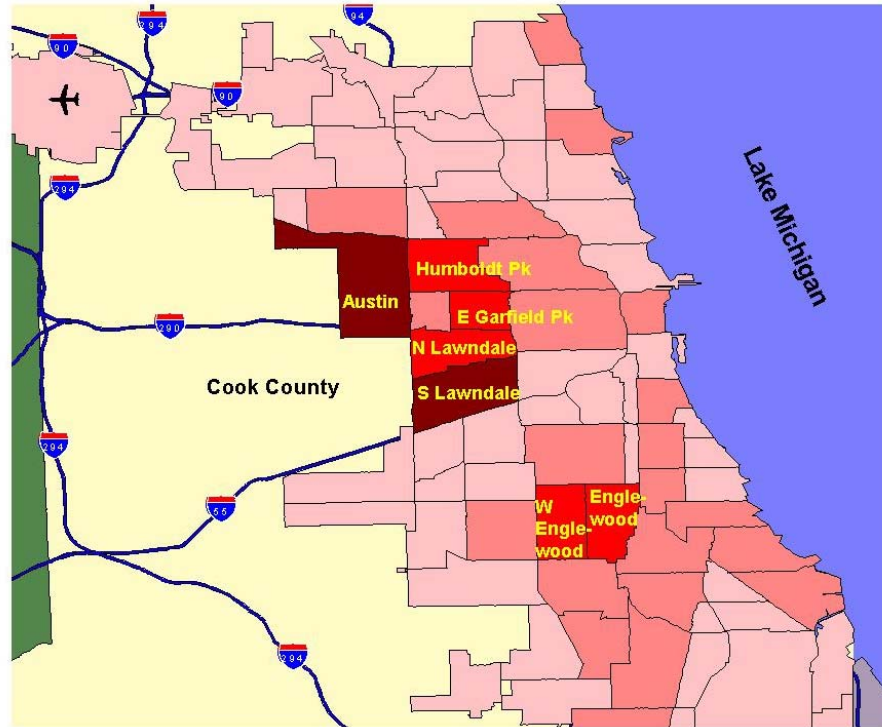
**214** See, for instance, Vigilante, K., M. Flynn, P. Affleck, et al. (1999) “Reduction in Recidivism of Incarcerated Women Through Primary Care, Peer Counseling, and Discharge Planning.” *Journal of Women’s Health*, 8 (3): 409–415; Kim, J., J. Rich, S. Zierler, et al. (1997) “Successful Community Follow-up and Reduced Recidivism in HIV Positive Women Prisoners.” *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 4 (1): 5–17; Haines, K. (1990) *After-care Services for Released Prisoners: A Review of the Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

**215** Numbers and percentages of releasees by community: Austin (1,681; 12.8 percent), Humboldt Park (699; 5.32 percent), North Lawndale (656; 4.99 percent), Englewood (429; 3.27 percent), West Englewood (521; 3.97 percent), and East Garfield Park (412; 3.14 percent).

**216** Email communication with Steve Karr, Illinois Department of Corrections, November 22, 2002.

**217** Lynch and Sabol (2001) *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*; Rose, D., and T. Clear (1998) “Incarceration, Social Capital, and Crime: Implications for Social Disorganization Theory.” *Criminology* (36): 441–79; Rose, D., and T. Clear (2003) *Incarceration, Reentry, and Social Capital: Social Networks in the Balance*. In J. Travis, M. Waul (eds.) *Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

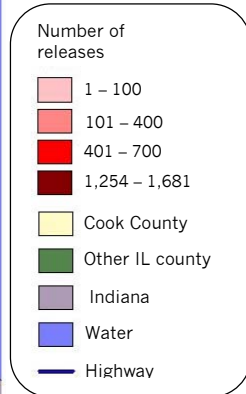
**Figure 28. Numbers and rates of released prisoners to Chicago communities, 2001**



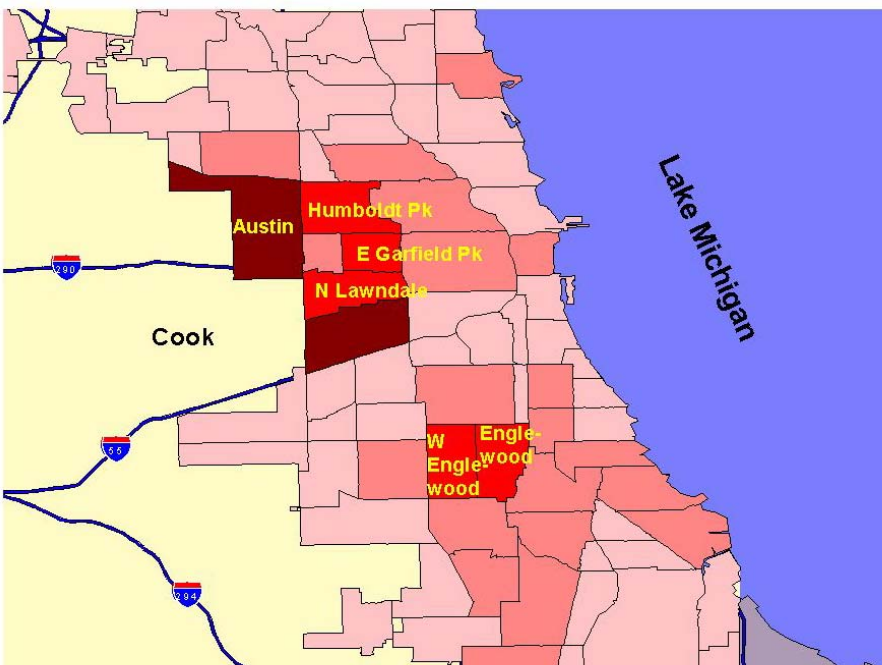
10 0 10 Miles

**Figure 29. Number of prisoner releases by Chicago communities, 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.



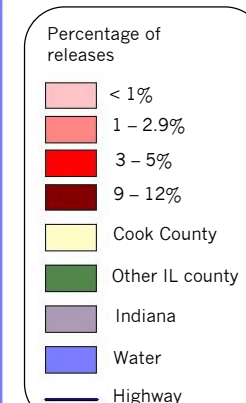
Note: Total releases to Chicago = 15,488; 2,354 (or 15%) are not shown in map because of incomplete addresses.



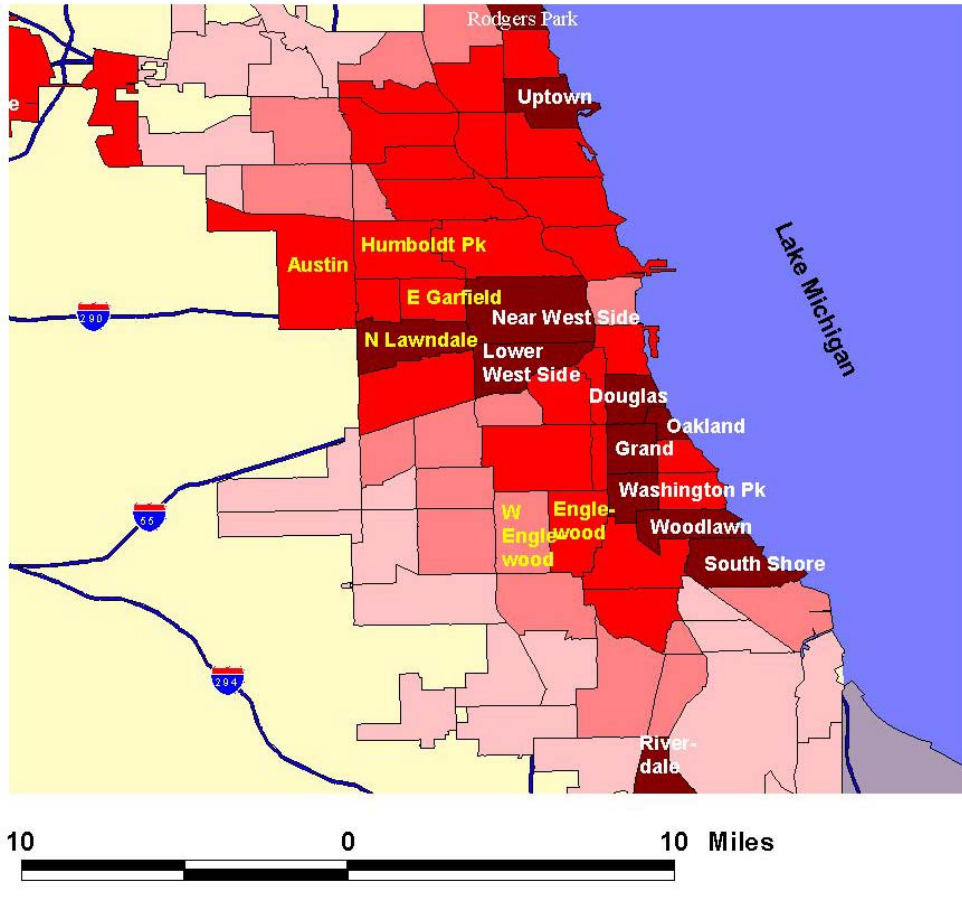
10 0 10 Miles

**Figure 30. Percentage distribution of prisoners released to Chicago communities, 2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.

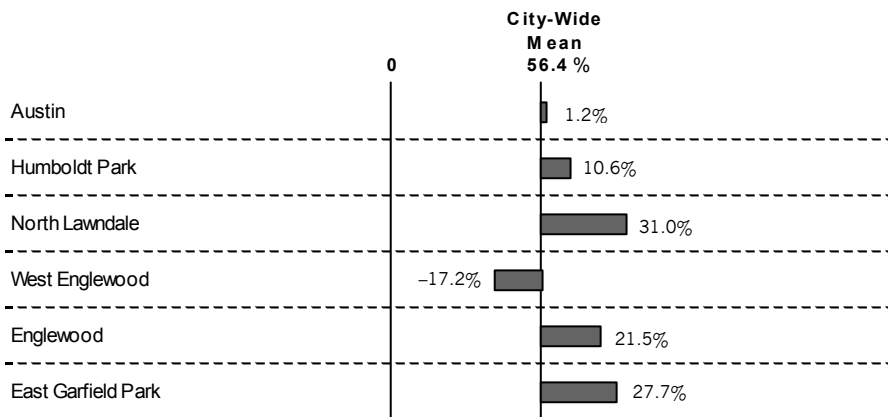
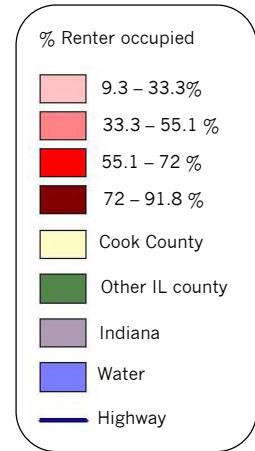


Note: Total releases to Chicago = 15,488; 2,354 (or 15%) are not shown in map because of incomplete addresses.



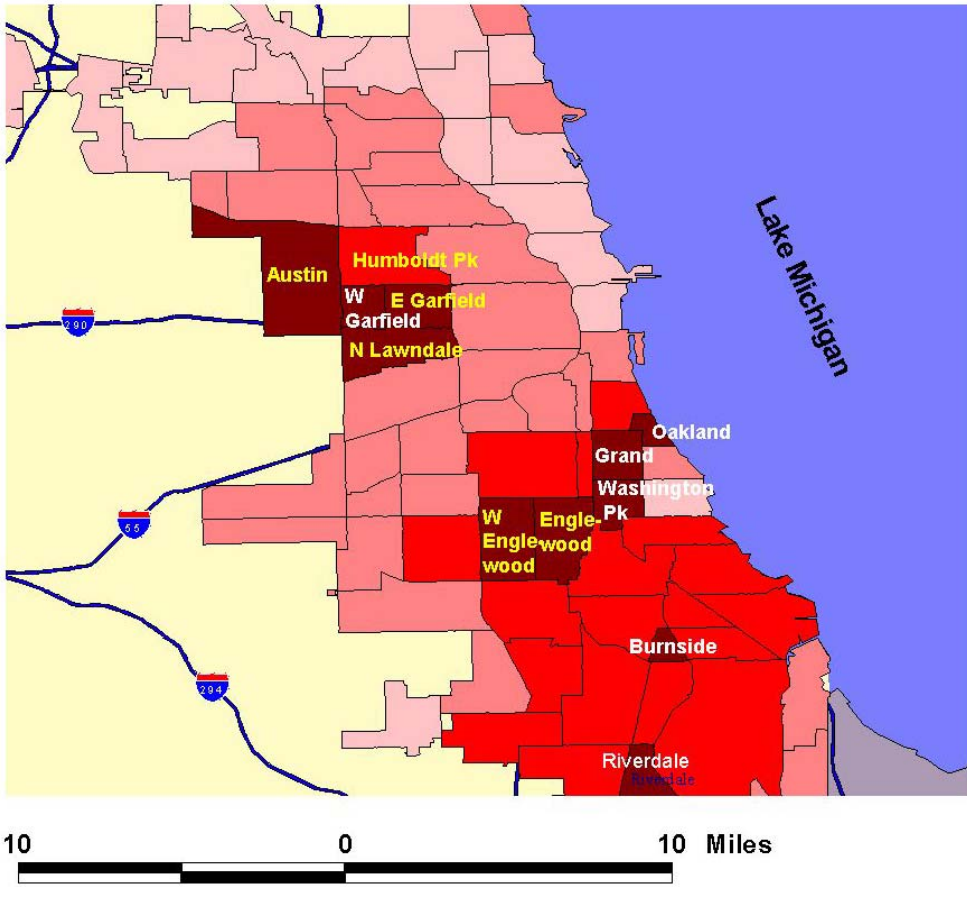
**Figure 31. Percentage of renter-occupied housing by Chicago communities**

Sources: Metro Chicago Information Center; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.



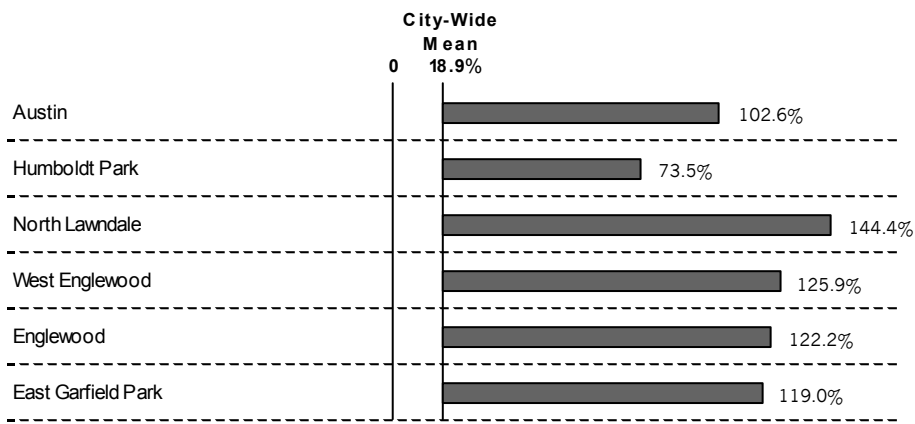
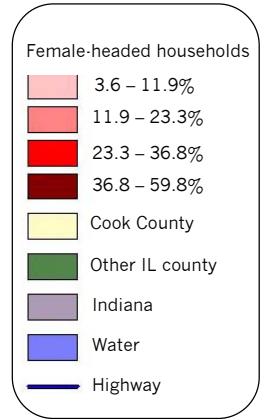
**Figure 32. Chicago communities compared to city-wide mean: Renter-occupied housing**

Source: Metro Chicago Information Center.



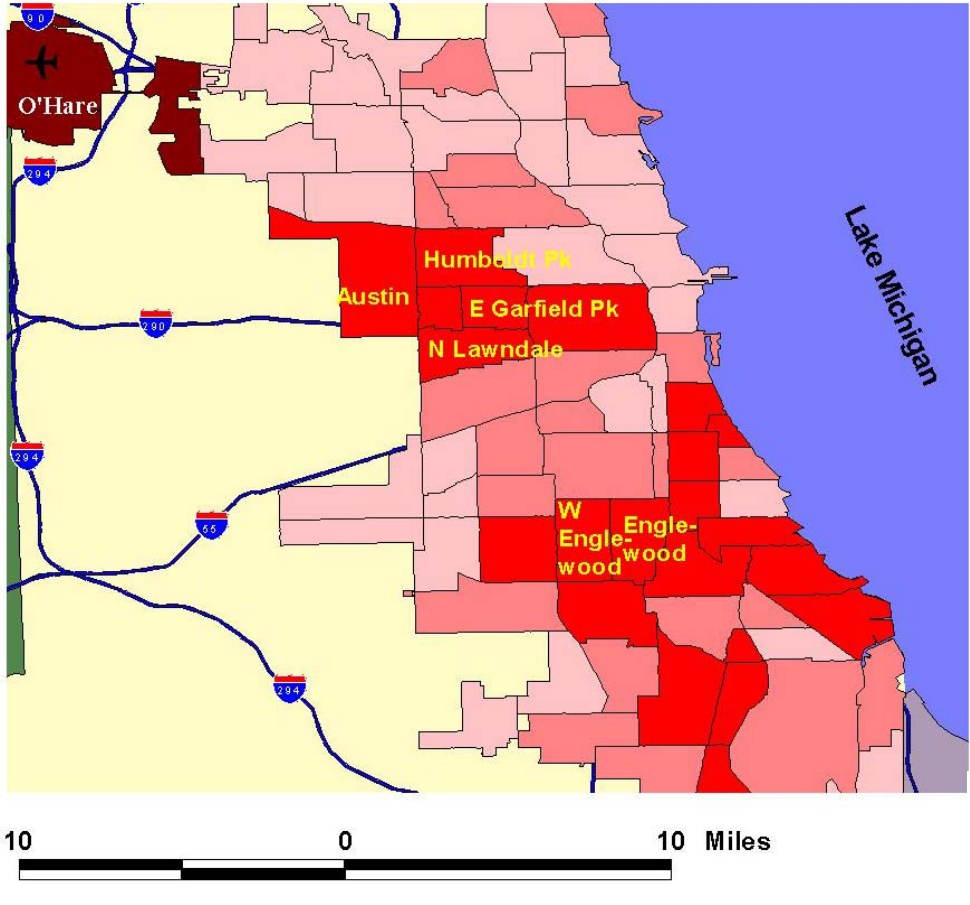
**Figure 33. Percentage of female-headed households by Chicago communities**

Sources: Metro Chicago Information Center; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.



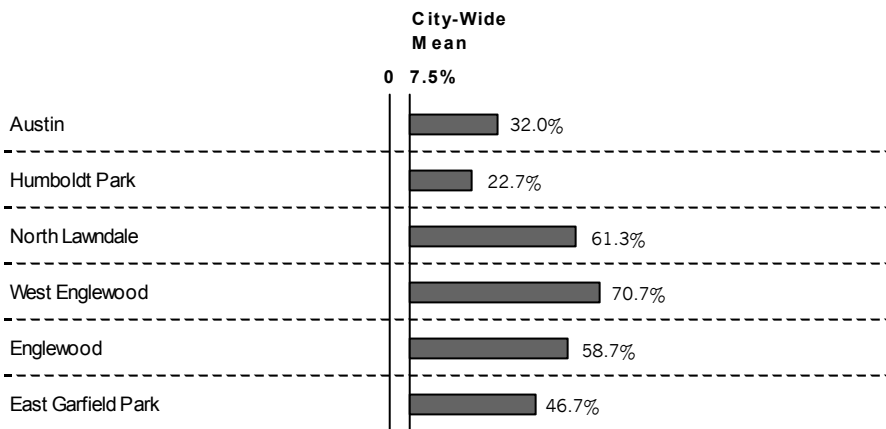
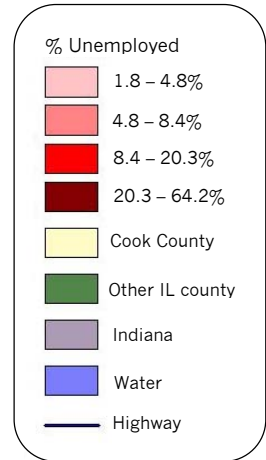
**Figure 34. Chicago communities compared to city-wide mean: Female-headed households**

Source: Metro Chicago Information Center.



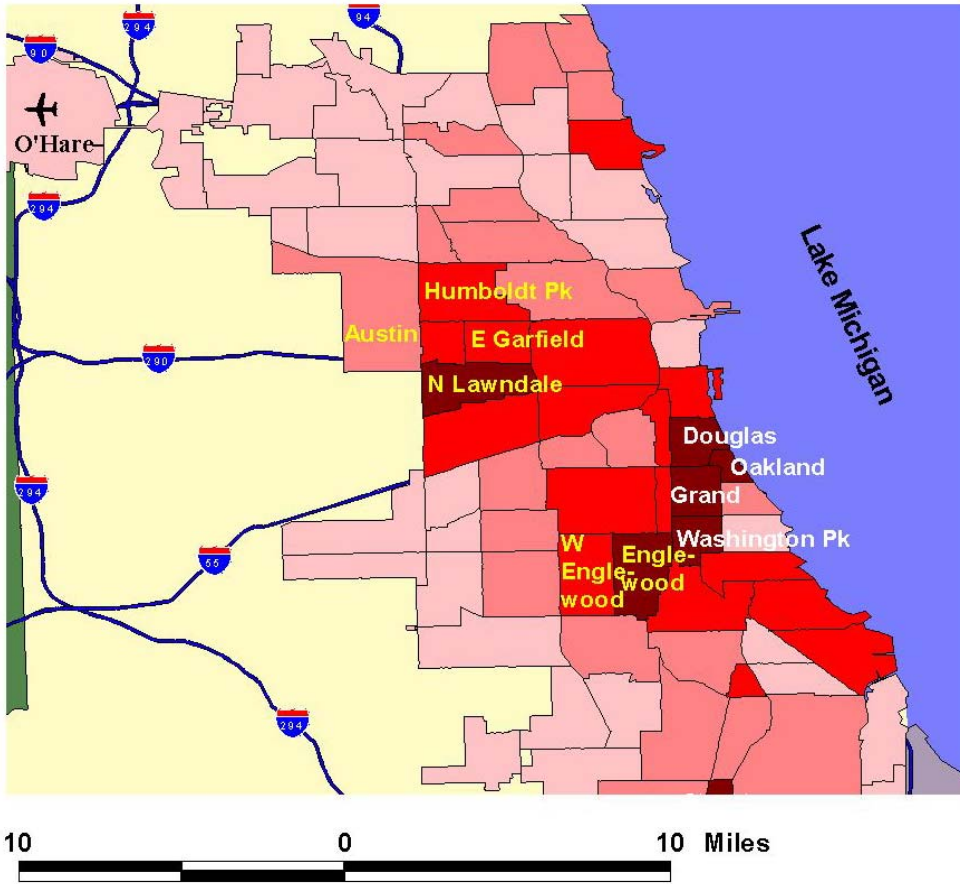
**Figure 35. Percentage of unemployed persons by Chicago communities**

Sources: Metro Chicago Information Center; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.



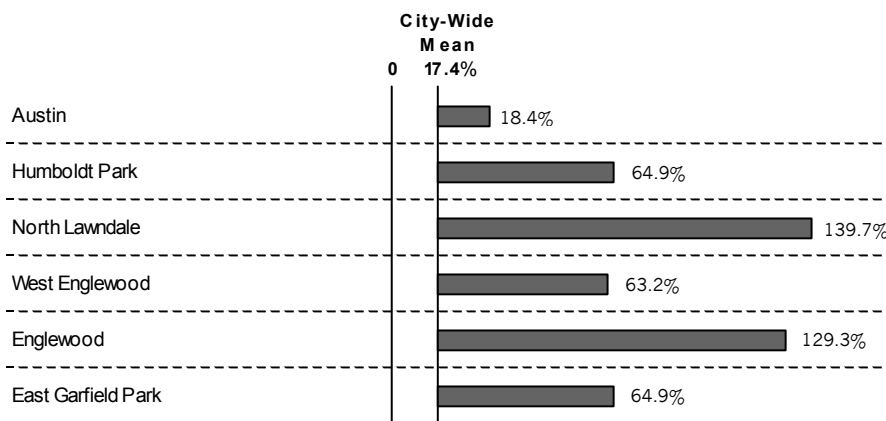
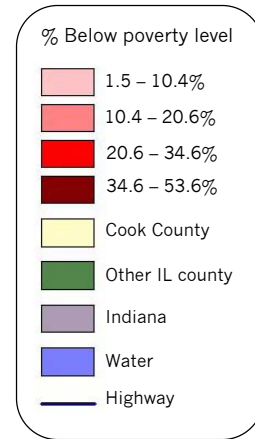
**Figure 36. Chicago communities compared to city-wide mean: Unemployed persons**

Source: Metro Chicago Information Center.



**Figure 37. Percentage of families below the poverty level by Chicago communities**

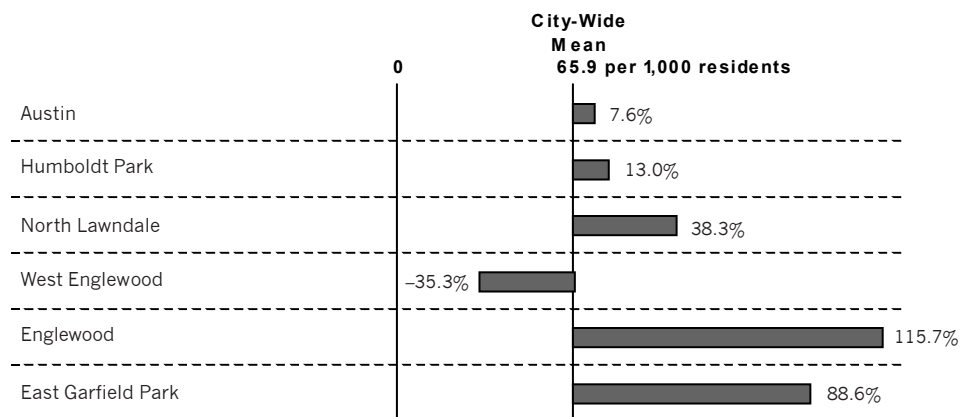
Sources: Metro Chicago Information Center; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.



**Figure 38. Chicago communities compared to city-wide mean: Families below the poverty level**

Source: Metro Chicago Information Center.





**Figure 39. Chicago communities compared to city-wide mean: Part I crimes per 1,000 residents**

Source: Chicago Police Department, *Annual Report 2001*.

We describe below the six communities that received the highest numbers of returning prisoners in 2001. Figure 40 summarizes the key demographic data<sup>218</sup> for those six communities, showing (1) percentage of vacant housing; (2) percentage of renter-occupied housing; (3) percentage of high school graduates; (4) percentage of unemployment; (5) percentage of population that is nonwhite; (6) percentage of female-headed households; (7) percentage of families below the poverty level; and (8) Part I crime rates per 1,000 residents.<sup>219</sup> As figure 40 shows, all of these neighborhoods are higher (or lower in the case of high school graduates) than the city-wide average for these demographics, with the following exceptions: The percentage of vacant housing in Austin is slightly lower than the city average, the percentage of renter-occupied housing in West Englewood is 17 percent lower than the city average, and the Part I crime rate in West Englewood is 35 percent below the city average.

**218** These demographic data represent Census data aggregated by Chicago neighborhood, as provided by the Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC).

**219** Part I crimes include murder, aggravated assault, rape, robbery, larceny, burglary, and arson.

**Austin.** In 2001, 1,681 prisoners returned to the Austin community, which has a total population of 117,527 (14.3 per 1,000 residents). Twenty-one percent of the families in Austin live below the poverty level; the community has a 10 percent unemployment rate, which is 32 percent higher than the city average; and female-headed households account for 38 percent of the households in this area, which is 103 percent higher than the city average. The community is characterized by 8 percent vacant housing and 57 percent renter-occupied housing. Sixty-six percent of its residents are high school graduates, and the population in this area is 95 percent nonwhite (predominantly black, at 89.7 percent), which is 39 percent higher than the city average. Austin's Part I crime rate is close to the city average, at 70.9 crimes per 1,000 residents.

**Humboldt Park.** In 2001, 699 released prisoners returned to the Humboldt Park community, which has a total population of 65,836 (10.6 per 1,000 residents). Twenty-nine percent of the families in Humboldt Park live below the poverty level, which is 65 percent higher than the city average; the community has a 9 percent unemployment rate; and female-headed households account for 33 percent of the households in this area. The community is characterized by 10 percent vacant housing and 62 percent renter-occupied housing. Fifty percent of its residents are high school graduates, which is 30 percent lower than the city average, and the population in this area is 97 percent nonwhite (47 percent black and 48 percent Hispanic), which is 41 percent higher than the city average. With regard to crime, Humboldt Park experienced serious crime at a rate 13 percent higher than the city average.

**North Lawndale.** In 2001, 656 released prisoners returned to the North Lawndale community, which has a total population of 41,768 (15.7 per 1,000 residents). It is by far the most impoverished of the six communities described here; 42 percent of the families in North Lawndale live below the poverty level, which is 140 percent higher than the city average; the com-

**Figure 40. Rank of six high-concentration areas among 77 Chicago community areas, by demographic**

Community Area	Vacant Housing	Renter-Occupied Housing	High School Graduates	Unemployment	Non-White	Female-Headed Households	Families Below Poverty Level	Part I crime rate (per 1,000 residents)
<b>Austin</b>	7.8%	57.1%	66.2%	9.9%	95.2%	38.3%	20.6%	70.9
% Different from city mean	-2.5	1.2	-7.8	32.0	38.6	102.6	18.4	7.6%
<b>Humboldt Park</b>	10.1	62.4	50.3	9.2	96.7	32.8	28.7	74.5
% Different from city mean	26.3	10.6	-29.9	22.7	40.8	73.5	64.9	13.0%
<b>North Lawndale</b>	15.2	73.9	60.5	12.1	99.1	46.2	41.7	91.1
% Different from city mean	90.0	31.0	-15.7	61.3	44.3	144.4	139.7	38.3%
<b>West Englewood</b>	12.0	46.7	62.8	12.8	99.6	42.7	28.4	42.6
% Different from city mean	50.0	-17.2	-12.5	70.7	45.0	125.9	63.2	-35.3%
<b>Englewood</b>	17.0	68.5	59.3	11.9	99.6	42.0	39.9	142.1
% Different from city mean	112.5	21.5	-17.4	58.7	45.0	122.2	129.3	115.7%
<b>East Garfield Park</b>	14.6	72.0	60.6	11.0	98.9	41.4	28.7	124.3
% Different from city mean	82.5	27.7	-15.6	46.7	44.0	119.0	64.9	88.6%
<b>City average</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>56.4%</b>	<b>71.8%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>65.9</b>

munity has a 12 percent unemployment rate, which is 61 percent higher than the city average; and female-headed households account for 46 percent of the households in this area, which is 144 percent higher than the city average. The community is characterized by 15 percent vacant housing, which is 90 percent higher than the city average, and by 74 percent renter-occupied housing. Sixty-one percent of its residents are high school graduates, and the population in this area is 99 percent nonwhite (predominantly black, at 94 percent), which is 44 percent higher than the city average. North Lawndale's Part I crime rate exceeds the city average by 38 percent.

**West Englewood.** In 2001, 521 released prisoners returned to the West Englewood community, which has a total population of 45,282 (11.5 per 1,000 residents). Twenty-eight percent of the families in West Englewood live below the poverty level, which is 63 percent higher than the city average; the community has a 13 percent unemployment rate, which is 71 percent higher than the city average; and female-headed households account for 43 percent of the households in this area, which is 126 percent higher than the city average. The community is characterized by 12 percent vacant housing and 47 percent renter-occupied housing. Sixty-three percent of its residents are high school graduates, and the population in this area is almost entirely nonwhite (predominantly black, at 97.8 percent), which is 45 percent higher than the city average. Of the six communities described here, West Englewood is the only community with a Part I crime rate significantly below the city average, with 42.6 crimes per 1,000 residents.

**Englewood.** In 2001, 429 released prisoners returned to the Englewood community, which has a total population of 40,222 (10.7 per 1,000 residents). Forty percent of the families in Englewood live below the poverty level, which is 129 percent higher than the city average; the community has a 12 percent unemployment rate, which is 59 percent higher than the city average; and female-headed households account for 42 percent of the households in this area, which is 122 percent higher than the city average. The community is characterized by 17 percent vacant housing, which is 113 percent higher than the city average, and by 69 percent renter-occupied housing. Fifty-nine percent of its residents are high school graduates, and the population in this area is almost entirely nonwhite (predominantly black, at 97.8 percent), which is 45 percent higher than the city average. Englewood's Part I crime rate, at 142.1 per 1,000 residents, is the highest of these six communities, exceeding the city average by 115.7 percent.

**East Garfield Park.** In 2001, 412 released prisoners returned to the East Garfield Park community, which has a total population of 20,881 (19.7 per 1,000 residents). Twenty-nine percent of the families in East Garfield Park live below the poverty level, which is 65 percent higher than the city

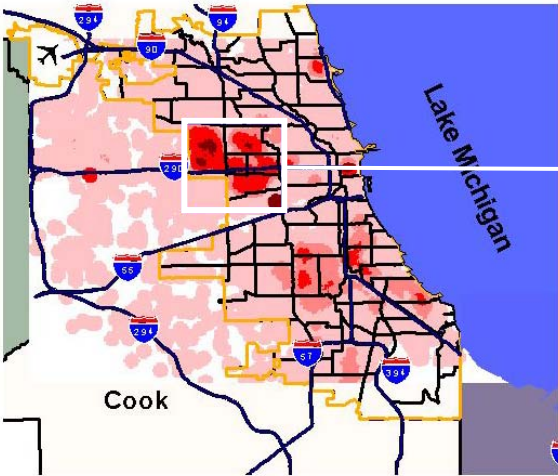
average; the community has an 11 percent unemployment rate; and female-headed households account for 41 percent of the households in this area, which is 119 percent higher than the city average. The community is characterized by 15 percent vacant housing, which is 83 percent higher than the city average, and by 72 percent renter-occupied housing. Sixty-one percent of its residents are high school graduates, and the population in this area is 99 percent non-white (predominantly black, at 97.2 percent), which is 44 percent higher than the city average. East Garfield Park's Part I crime rate was 124.3, which is 88.6 percent above the city-wide rate for Chicago.

Even within the six Chicago communities that are home to high volumes of returning inmates, there are distinct concentrations of releasees (figures 41 and 42). These concentrations may be indicative of dwelling units such as public housing and apartment complexes or other more affordable housing units. These areas may also be the specific neighborhoods in which many released prisoners lived prior to incarceration, and to which they returned after release because of connections with family and friends.

### **Services for Returning Prisoners in Chicago City Communities<sup>220</sup>**

The profiles of these six neighborhood areas suggest that they are some of the most disadvantaged areas in the city, with relatively scarce economic and human capital resources. Perhaps it is not surprising that these communities are home to returning prisoners, but this raises important policy questions with regard to their ability both to provide resources to ex-prisoners and to insulate against the potential negative impact of a large percentage of returning prisoners. As shown in figure 43, only 24 percent of the organizations that provide a range of services to former prisoners—employment, housing, drug and/or alcohol treatment, or some combination of these support services—fell within the six neighborhoods that are home to the highest concentrations of returning prisoners. Our inventory, which may not include the universe of services for returning prisoners in the city, nonetheless did not identify any services located within West Englewood or Englewood (figure 44). In those neighborhoods with services, it is unclear whether returning prisoners are aware of the services that are available to them, and it is questionable whether the few service organizations in and around these communities can meet the demand of such high numbers of returning prisoners. In addition, the fact that the majority of services are not located within these neighborhoods suggests that transportation challenges may be a significant barrier to taking advantage of programs and assistance that might smooth the reintegration process.

**220** The process by which reentry-type services in Chicago were identified was as follows: An initial list of Chicago-based social service agencies was obtained from a database maintained by the United Way. A search of the Chicago telephone book generated a list of larger organizations (e.g., the Safer Foundation), which were contacted through telephone calls and e-mail in order to review the social service provider list and make any additions. This list was supplemented with information on services for ex-prisoners published in a handbook entitled, *Community Transitional Resource Guide*, which was prepared by the Social Service Committee of the Community Advisory Group, District One, for IDOC as a resource for exiting prisoners. Staff from the John Howard Association, Metropolis 20/20, and the Chicago Urban League, organizations that engage in policy-related work, were contacted and asked to review the list and make additions. Some of the social service agencies included on the list were also contacted to better understand the specific types of services offered, confirm their current operational status, and inquire as to other organizations in the area with which they were familiar that offered similar services to the releasee population. This process generated a total of 42 social service organizations in the city of Chicago that are specifically designed to serve ex-prisoners. The types of services they provide were categorized as follows: comprehensive, drug/alcohol treatment, employment, housing, housing/employment, and other services.



Prisoner release density in Chicago, Illinois, 2001

Area shown in detail in figure 41

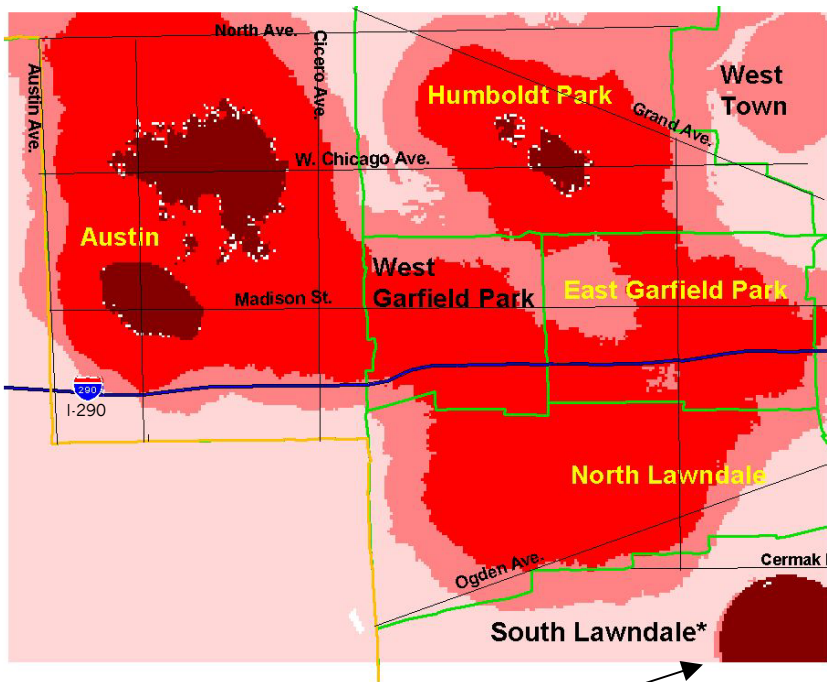
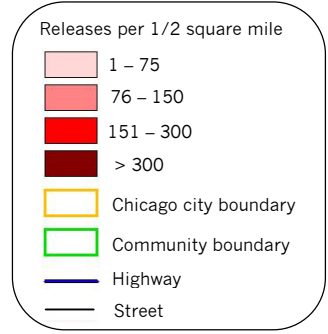


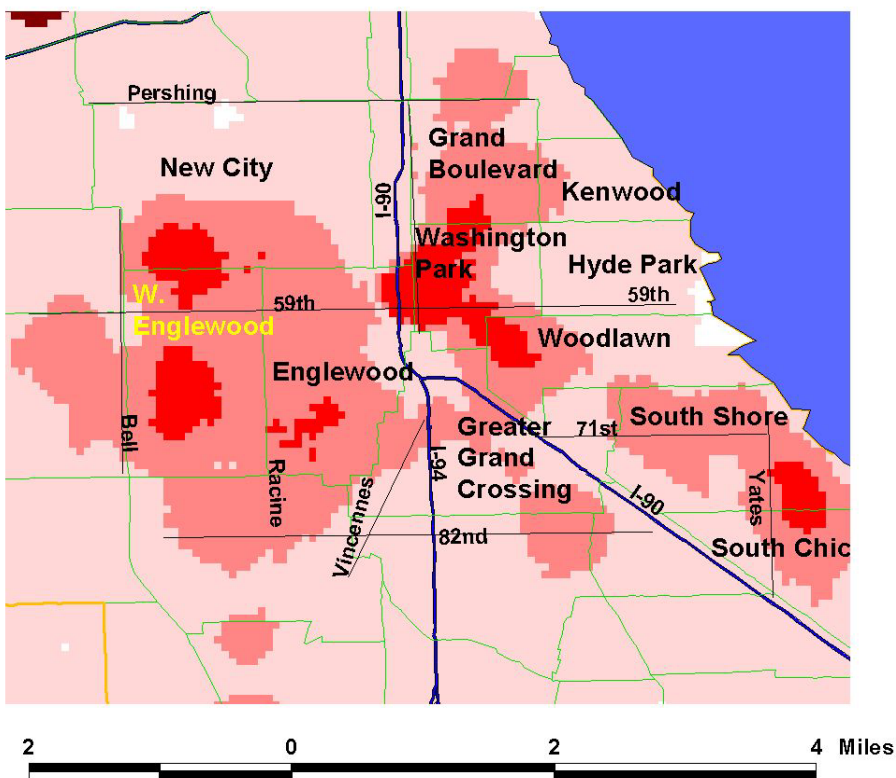
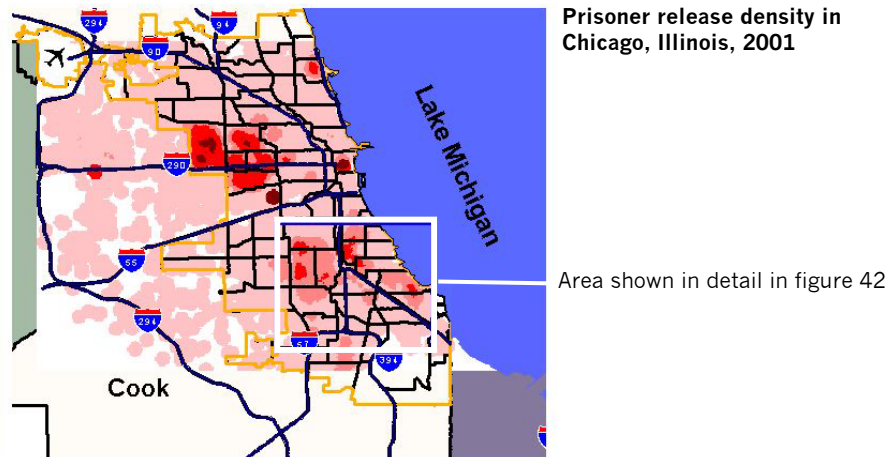
Figure 41. Prisoner release density, central Chicago, Illinois

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.



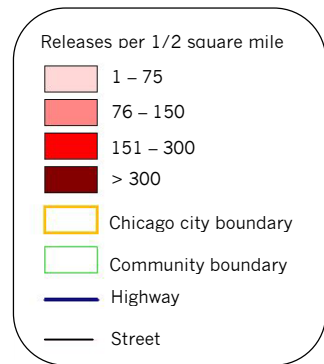
\*Most ex-prisoners in South Lawndale are returning to the Cook County Court with a total of 1,158 returning to this one address





**Figure 42. Prisoner release density, south Chicago, Illinois**

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections.



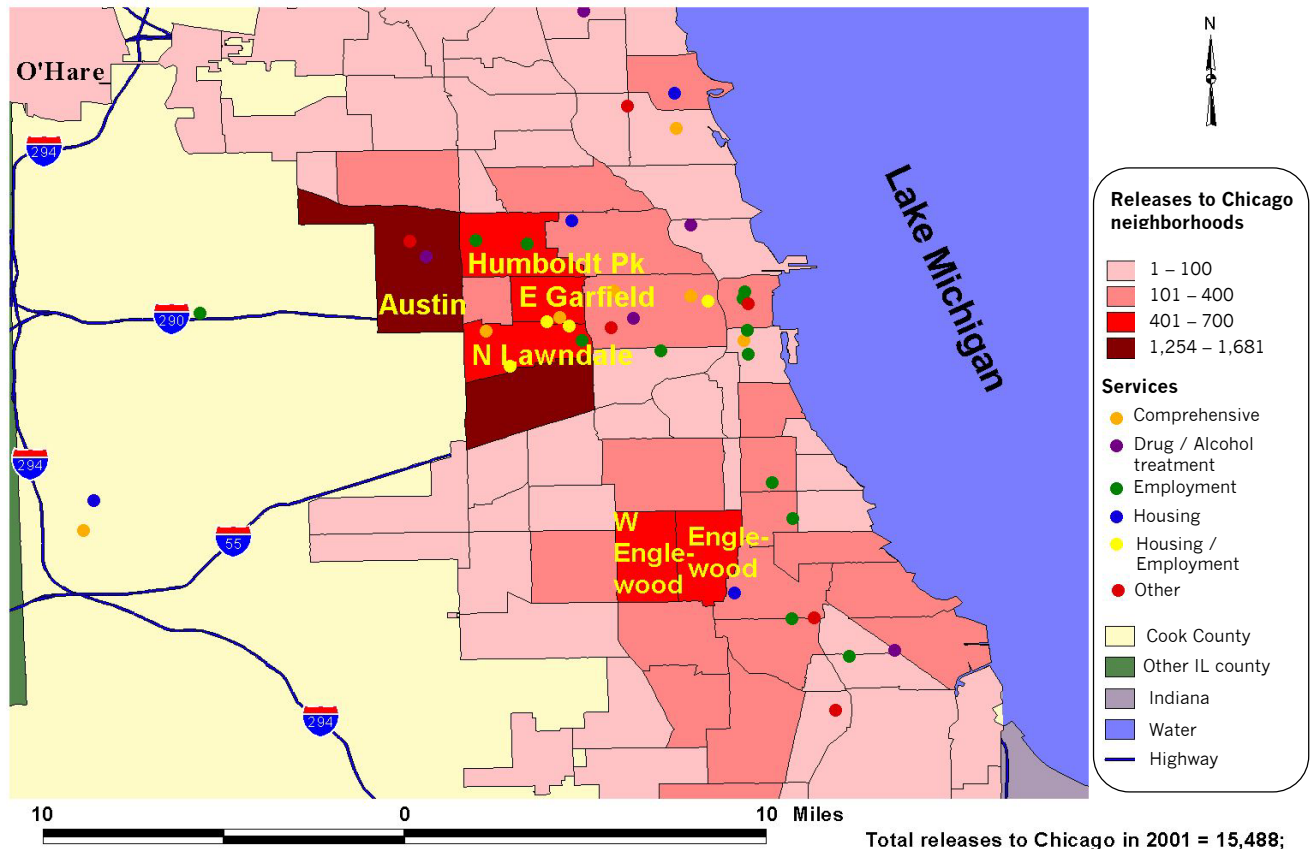
Community	Number and Percent of Social Service Providers	Type of Social Service
Austin	2 (4.8 %)	Other (1) and drug/alcohol treatment (1)
Humboldt Park	2 (4.8 %)	Employment (2)
North Lawndale	5 (11.9 %)	Comprehensive (1), housing/employment (3), and employment (1)
East Garfield Park	1 (2.4 %)	Comprehensive (1)

**Figure 43. Social service providers for Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, and East Garfield Park communities**

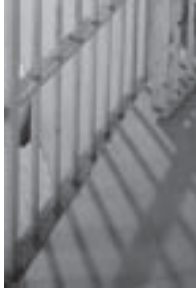
Source: See footnote 220.

**Figure 44. Prisoner releases and community services by Chicago communities, 2001**

Sources: Illinois Department of Corrections; E. Hong, Northwestern University.



# Summary



## HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past quarter-century, the growth in prison populations nationwide has translated into more and more people being released from prison and reentering society. The state of Illinois has experienced similar incarceration and release trends, and thus faces the reentry challenges that accompany such growth. Between 1970 and 2001, the Illinois prison population increased by more than 500 percent. This growth is attributable to increased admissions of people cycling through prison on shorter sentences, specifically drug offenders and parole violators, as well as inmates serving longer sentences due to the passage of determinate and truth-in-sentencing laws. In 1999, persons convicted of drug offenses represented the largest share of new commitments to Illinois prisons (40 percent), nearly four times the share of new commitments that they represented in 1988. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of parole violators returned to Illinois prisons rose by over 200 percent.

The number of people released from Illinois prisons reflects these rising admissions and population trends: In 2001, 30,068 prisoners were released from Illinois prisons, an increase of almost 250 percent from 1983. The majority of these released prisoners were male (90 percent) and black (67 percent). Almost three-quarters were between 20 and 40 years old at the time of their release, with the mean age at release being 32. Over one-third had been serving time for drug offenses; burglary and theft were the next most common conviction offenses. Sixty-three percent of the prisoners released in 2001 had served less than one year in prison, with the largest share of prisoners serving less than 20 percent of their original sentences.





The share of prisoners released by Prisoner Review Board decision in Illinois is extremely low, with 0.1 percent of prisoners being released by this method in 2001. Thus, in 2001, the vast majority of Illinois prisoners were released through nondiscretionary means, such as mandatory release or expiration of sentence. That is, these inmates did not appear in person before a parole board or other authority to be reviewed or to present a home or employment plan for after their release. While the number of releasees under parole supervision has increased by 60 percent in the past decade, the ratio of supervised to unsupervised releasees has remained relatively stable.

Returning prisoners in Illinois have many needs as they begin the process of reintegration, and the likelihood of recidivating is high. More than half of released inmates in Illinois had served prior terms in prison, and many had violated their parole at some point in their criminal careers. These extensive criminal histories do not bode well for maintaining crime-free lifestyles, and they can also create barriers to employment, housing, and eligibility for food stamps and other forms of welfare, and can limit opportunities for civic participation. The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), for example, considers criminal history as part of its admission criteria and bans individuals convicted of drug-related or violent crimes from public housing for up to 3 years. However, CHA admission policies also allow for exceptions to this ban if the individual has successfully completed a rehabilitation program or the circumstances surrounding the offense no longer exist.<sup>221</sup>

The largest share (51 percent) of released inmates who returned to Illinois returned to Chicago, and 34 percent of these released inmates returned to just 6 of Chicago's 77 communities: Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park. These high-concentration communities are also characterized by high levels of poverty, crime, and other measures of disadvantage, and one of them—Austin—received 1,681 released prisoners in 2001—more than the number that returned to most counties in Illinois. Only a handful of services for ex-prisoners are located within or in close proximity to these neighborhoods with high rates of returns, raising the question of whether prisoners returning to Chicago are able to access these resources.

This report also illustrates the fact that Illinois' rising prison population has placed a strain on already limited programming resources. Substance abuse, vocational training, and educational programs are available to a small fraction of those being released. The state plans to use its Going Home funds to develop a reentry program for inmates returning to North Lawndale, but that program will serve only a small proportion of inmates released to Chicago. It is clear that some Chicago communities are bur-

**221** Chicago Housing Authority. Management Analysis and Planning Department. Inter-Office Memorandum, March 24, 2003.

dened with challenges in accommodating returning inmates and providing the services needed to promote their successful reintegration.

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

This report represents the first stage of our research on reentry in Illinois and raises a number of questions that will be answered in later phases of our study. While we know much from our analysis of a cohort of released inmates in Illinois, there is much more to be learned. Additional knowledge can provide valuable guidance to practitioners and policymakers as they prepare to expand reentry efforts in the state.

We know, for example, that the majority of prisoners released in Illinois return to Chicago and that returning prisoners are even more concentrated within a few community areas in the city. An examination of demographic data for these areas indicates that they are economically disadvantaged compared to the city average. What we do not know from this research, however, is how these community characteristics might affect individual post-release outcomes. For example, are released prisoners returning to high-crime areas more likely to recidivate than those returning to areas in which the crime rate is closer to the city average?

Very little is known about the family circumstances of released prisoners or about the role that family and other peer and interpersonal relationships play in either facilitating or preventing recidivism. This information would be useful in developing the content of family reunification programs both behind bars and on the outside. It could also help guide counseling efforts aimed at encouraging ex-prisoners to establish or renew relationships with pro-social, rather than anti-social, peers.

In addition, we do not know much about the different types of reentry challenges that different populations might face. For example, youthful ex-prisoners are likely to have different issues and challenges than their older counterparts. Similarly, employment issues are probably different for those who have served long prison terms than those who served shorter terms. And reentry challenges experienced by women, who often have different and more pressing family issues, are likely to differ from those of men. Identifying the different needs for subpopulations of returning prisoners will aid in effective program design, avoiding the “one-size-fits-all” model in favor of one that targets individuals’ needs.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

As mentioned earlier, this report is the first product of a larger study, *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*, which is examining prisoner reentry in four states. Many of the unanswered questions described above, among others, will be explored through other components of the *Returning Home* Illinois study site, including interviews with inmates returning to Chicago both before and after their release and interviews with inmates' family members after inmates are released. These interviews are critical to understanding the individual, family, and community circumstances affecting reentry.

Such interviews, combined with analyses of official records, will help identify needs of returning inmates that are not currently being met, such as housing, employment, and health care. The longitudinal aspect of this study will help practitioners prioritize programs by focusing on some of these needs before others. For example, we may learn that for certain types of ex-prisoners, enrolling in an outpatient substance abuse program within the first 30 days after release is more important than finding a job. We may discover that some returning prisoners find a job too early, before they have become accustomed to life on the outside, making it difficult to keep the job while managing other pressures of reentry. Such findings can help case managers better prepare inmates for release and support them after release.

Interviews with family members may help identify factors that have a bearing on the returning inmate's ability to stay drug- and crime-free. For example, we may find that family support in drug rehabilitation is an important predictor of an inmate's staying off drugs after release from prison, suggesting the expansion of drug treatment programs that include family member involvement. These family interviews will also enable us to explore the role that expectations—on the part of both the inmate and the family member—may have on the inmate's reintegration experience.

*Returning Home* also explores the role of community setting and organizations on prisoner reentry through an assessment of local community resources, assets, and risks; analyses of community administrative and census data; interviews with community stakeholders; and focus groups with community residents. Interviews with community stakeholders will shed light on gaps in local resources available to returning prisoners, particularly in the areas of heaviest concentrations of returning inmates. Neighborhood focus groups can inform grassroots efforts to support returning inmates (e.g., helping them find housing and jobs and offering child care services). And, by linking individual data on released inmates to data on

neighborhood indicators, we can begin to explore the influence that community characteristics have on post-release success or failure.

It is clear that the challenges of reentry in Illinois are great, but so are the opportunities. The fact that the federal government has awarded the state of Illinois \$2 million to develop a reentry program that, if successful, will serve as a model to replicate across Chicago and throughout the state, is extremely promising. As Illinois plans to expand its reentry efforts, the Urban Institute is preparing to release reports and policy papers, as well as to convene a forum of practitioners and policymakers to discuss the results of the *Returning Home* study. We hope that this report and the *Returning Home* research that follows can help shape decisions about the best ways to serve the state's citizens, communities, and returning prisoners. Successful reentry is critical for ensuring public safety, reducing the costs of reincarceration, and promoting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

## Returning Home Research Questions

*Returning Home's* two primary research questions are **What is the experience of those being released from prison and returning home?** and **What factors influence a released prisoner's propensity to reoffend?** The first research question is primarily descriptive and qualitative in nature. We plan to document and describe the individual reentry trajectory—from prison release, to early entry, to reconnection, to full integration in society—exploring critical stages of integration and the role of individual life events, family support, community context, and state sentencing and release policies in this trajectory. The second research question is predictive in nature and is supported by ancillary questions, including the following:

- How do individual characteristics (e.g., demographics, family and criminal history, psychological attributes, life events, health and substance abuse status, and attitudes and beliefs) affect post-release criminal behavior?

- How does family support (emotional and financial) affect post-release criminal behavior?
- How do in-prison experiences (both formal and informal) affect post-release criminal behavior?
- How do an individual's post-release supervision status and conditions of release (if any) affect post-release criminal behavior?
- How do peer relationships affect post-release criminal behavior?
- How do community factors (e.g., economic viability, housing availability, social service delivery, crime rates, social capital) affect post-release criminal behavior?

We also plan to explore intermediate outcomes that represent positive post-prison adjustment and can, in turn, affect recidivism. Examples include acquiring and maintaining a job, obtaining and paying for housing, and remaining substance abuse-free.