

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE
STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF COURT COMMITMENTS TO
MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS DURING 1977

Massachusetts Department of Correction

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Commissioner

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This report presents some of the highlights from A STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF COURT COMMITMENTS TO THE MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS DURING 1977.

During 1977, there were 1145 persons sentenced to the state correctional system. This represents the second highest number of court commitments in over 40 years. (The highest number was 1371 commitments in 1976.)

Present Offense

Commitment Institution. Forty-one percent of the commitments were sentenced to Walpole; 45% were sentenced to Concord; and 14% were sentenced to Framingham. Thus, 86% of those sentenced were male and 14% were female.

Sentencing Courts. About half of these commitments were sentenced in two of the Superior Courts of the Commonwealth - Suffolk (34%) and Middlesex (17%).

Offense. The majority of commitments (72%) were for offenses vs. person. The single offense for which individuals were most frequently sentenced was Armed Robbery (33%).

Sentence. The median sentence for Walpole commitments was a minimum sentence of seven years and a maximum sentence of ten years. All Concord commitments and most Framingham commitments receive indeterminate sentences, and accordingly, do not have minimum sentences. The median maximum sentence for Concord commitments was six years, and the median maximum sentence for Framingham commitments was slightly under one year. Finally, 50 individuals (4%) were sentenced to life terms.

Background Characteristics

Age. The median age was 23 years - 27 years for Walpole commitments; 21 years for Concord commitments; and 23 years for Framingham commitments.

Race. Sixty-two percent were white, 35% were black, and 4% were other.

Education. The median educational level was tenth grade. Twenty-seven percent had an eighth grade education or less; 28% were high school graduates; and less than 1% were college graduates.

Occupation. Most of the commitments (82%) held manual or service jobs or were unemployed, and only half of them held any job for a year or longer.

Military Service. The majority (78%) did not serve in the military; 11% received an honorable discharge from military service.

Marital Status. Most (61%) were single; 21% were married; and, 18% were divorced, separated, or widowed.

Criminal History

Prior Arrests. The median age at first arrest was 16 years. Most of the commitments (89%) had been arrested at least once prior to their present offense. Twenty-five percent had more than 15 prior arrests.

A majority had prior arrests for offenses vs. person (87%) or for property offenses (82%), while most did not have prior arrests for sex offenses (81%) or for drug offenses (58%).

Prior Incarcerations. Twenty-eight percent had been incarcerated as juveniles; 40% had prior House of Correction incarcerations; and, 27% had prior incarcerations in state or federal correctional institutions.

Overall, 57% had served time in some type of correctional facility prior to their present commitment, and 50% had served time as an adult.

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