A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey

Jeremy Travis
Sinead Keegan
Eric Cadora
with Amy Solomon and Charles Swartz
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About the Authors

Jeremy Travis is a Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute and is co-chair of the Reentry Roundtable—a group of prominent academics, practitioners, service providers, and community leaders working to advance policies and innovations on prisoner reentry that reflect solid research. Before he joined the Urban Institute, Mr. Travis was the director of the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. Mr. Travis has been an active figure in the development of a policy and research agenda on the issue of prisoner reentry. He is the author of the article “But They All Come Back: Rethinking Prisoner Reentry,” and shaped the federal initiative on reentry courts and reentry partnerships.

Mr. Travis earned his JD, cum laude, from the New York University School of Law; an MPA from the New York University Wagner Graduate School of Public Service; and a BA in American Studies, cum laude, from Yale College.

Sinead Keegan is a Research Associate at the Urban Institute. Her primary research interests are the effects of crime and crime policy on communities. She is currently the Project and Data Manager for a project developing performance indicators for the U.S. Department of Justice’s Weed and Seed Program. In addition, Ms. Keegan is involved in a project examining whether Weed and Seed initiatives lead to the displacement of crime in southern Florida. She has also conducted research on prisoner reentry in the District of Columbia, with a particular focus on the availability of housing for ex-offenders.

Ms. Keegan has a Master’s in Public Policy from Georgetown University, and a BA in Government with a concentration in Public Service from the University of Notre Dame. Her Master’s thesis examined a number of previously unmeasured social costs of incarceration using advanced statistical techniques. Ms. Keegan originally hails from Bergen County, New Jersey.

Eric Cadora is a community justice consultant and a Program Officer for The After Prison Initiative of the Open Society Institute. The After Prison Initiative is a grantmaking program created to promote social and criminal justice policies that place reintegration and public safety equity at the center of the criminal justice mission. Mr. Cadora has helped to fashion The After Prison Initiative’s grantmaking agenda in four priority areas: Justice Reinvestment, New Leadership Development, National Re-Entry Policy Reform, and Reduction of Civil Barriers to Reintegration.

In 1998 with OSI funding, he launched The Community Justice Project at the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES), which advocates for a reinvestment of justice resources in communities suffering high rates of incarceration and provides technical assistance to corrections and communities to implement community justice programs. CASES is New York’s largest and longest running alternative to incarceration program. Employing an innovative geographical analysis of criminal justice activity at the neighborhood level, Eric speaks at national forums around the country about the impact of high rates of incarceration on low-income communities and promotes the use of financial reinvestment strategies to interrupt the decades-long cycle of incarceration, release, and re-incarceration that these core communities continue to suffer.

Amy Solomon is a Policy Associate at the Urban Institute, where she works to link the research activities of the Justice Policy Center to policy and practice arenas in the field. Her primary areas of concentration are prisoner reentry and problem-solving approaches to public safety.

Charles Swartz is the President of Geographic Research Solutions (GRS), a consulting company that provides research, mapping and spatial analysis services to both public and private sector clients. Before starting GRS, Charles was a Geographic Information Systems Researcher at the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES) in New York.
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Executive Summary

This report describes the process of prisoner reentry in New Jersey by examining the policy context surrounding prisoner reentry in the state, the characteristics of the state’s 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 New Jersey’s reentry policies and practices. Rather, the report consolidates existing data on incarceration and release trends and presents a new analysis of data on New Jersey prisoners released in 2002. The data used from this report were derived from several sources, including the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the New Jersey Department of Corrections, the New Jersey State Parole Board, and the New Jersey State Police, the Division of Probation in the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Department of Human Services, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Highlights from the report are presented below.

Historical Incarceration and Release Trends. New Jersey’s incarceration and reentry trends are similar to those observed at the national level. Between 1977 and 2002, the New Jersey prison population more than quadrupled, increasing from 6,017 to 27,891 people. The per capita rate of imprisonment in New Jersey rose from 76 to 331 per 100,000 residents in the state between 1980 and 2002, an increase of over 336 percent. The growth in New Jersey’s prison population is largely attributable to rising prison admissions, and may have resulted in part due to longer lengths of stay in prison. Prison admissions increased because of the rise in arrests for drug offenses, the increased use of mandatory minimum sentences in New Jersey, and a rising number of individuals returned to prison as a result of parole revocations. New Jersey’s release patterns reflect these admission and population trends: 14,849 prisoners were released from New Jersey prisons in 2002, nearly four times the number released in 1980 (3,910).
Profile of Prisoners Released in 2002. The majority of released prisoners were male (91 percent) and black (62 percent). The median age at release was 34 years. Over one-third had been serving time for drug offenses. The average time served for those released for the first time was just under two years. Thirty-nine percent were incarcerated for a violation of parole. One-third had been diagnosed with a physical or mental health condition. Educational skills are severely limited. A vast majority had a history of drug or alcohol abuse.

How Prisoners are Prepared for Release. In-prison program availability is limited in New Jersey. In 2001, 17 percent of all prison and jail inmates participated in academic programming and six percent participated in vocational programming provided by the Department of Corrections’ Office of Educational Services. Other work programs can accommodate about 12 percent of the population. Therapeutic substance abuse beds are available for about 6 percent of the population.

How New Jersey Prisoners are Released. In 2002, a majority, two-thirds, of all prisoners released were released to a period of supervision. However, the number and share of prisoners released without supervision in New Jersey increased over the 1990s.

Geographic Distribution of Released Prisoners. Almost one-third of prisoners released in 2002 came from two counties—Essex and Camden—that already face great economic and social disadvantage. The median household income in the central cities of these two counties is less than 50 percent of the statewide median household income. Unemployment in the central cities of these two counties is significantly higher than in the rest of the state, and large shares of the population live in poverty and in single parent households.
Introduction

This report examines the prisoner reentry phenomenon in the state of New Jersey. Prisoner reentry—the process of leaving prison and returning to society—has become a pressing issue both in New Jersey 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. 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.

And the challenges of reentry are many. More prisoners nationwide are returning home having spent longer terms behind bars, exacerbating the already significant challenges of finding employment 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. In addition to these personal circumstances, limited availability of jobs, housing, and social services in a community may affect the returning prisoner’s ability to successfully reintegrate.

These challenges affect more than returning prisoners and their families; they can also have serious implications for the communities to which prisoners return. Two-thirds of the prisoners released in 1996 returned to major metropolitan areas across the country—up from 50 percent in 1984. Within central cities, released prisoners are often concentrated in a few neighborhoods. These high concentrations of returning prisoners generate great costs to those communities, including potential increases in costs associated with crime and public safety, greater public health risks, and high rates of unemployment and homelessness. Thus, 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.

In many ways, the dimensions and challenges of prisoner reentry observed on the national level are mirrored in the state of New Jersey. Incarceration


6 Ibid.
increased dramatically in New Jersey in recent decades. Between 1977 and 2002, the New Jersey prison population more than quadrupled, increasing from 6,017 to 27,891 people. At the same time, the per capita rate of imprisonment in New Jersey rose from 76 to 322 per 100,000 residents in the state, an increase of over 336 percent.\(^7\) Admissions to New Jersey prisons climbed over this period as well. In 1980, fewer than 4,000 individuals were admitted to New Jersey’s prisons. By 2000, annual admissions had grown to over 15,000.\(^8\) State spending on corrections increased accordingly. Over the past 25 years, spending on corrections and parole has grown at twice the rate of the rest of the state budget. In fiscal year 1983, the state spent just under $200 million on corrections, parole, and the juvenile justice system. By fiscal year 2003, annual budgets for these departments had risen almost six-fold to $1.1 billion. The state budget as a whole increased threefold over this period. In fiscal year 2003, the budget for the Department of Corrections was $858 million, or about $28,000 per inmate.\(^9\)

As a consequence of the growth in imprisonment, the state of New Jersey has also experienced a dramatic growth in the number of people being released from prison. In 1980, only 3,910 individuals were released from the state’s prisons.\(^10\) Last year, 14,849 individuals were released to the community from New Jersey’s prisons. The vast majority—95 percent—of those released from New Jersey prisons in 2002 returned to communities in New Jersey.\(^11\) Almost one-third—31 percent—returned to two counties in the state, Essex and Camden. This included 2,430, or 16 percent of all releases, returning to Essex County, and 2,270 individuals, or 15 percent of the released population, returning to Camden County. The flow of prisoners was further concentrated in a small number of communities within these counties. Thirteen percent of all releases, or 1,705 individuals, returned to New Jersey’s largest city, Newark, in Essex County. Another 1,280 individuals, or ten percent of the total release population, returned to the city of Camden.

Government leaders, corrections officials, local organizations, and service providers are keenly aware of the reentry challenges numbers like these pose in New Jersey, and they have begun to use both research and programmatic knowledge to address them. In July 2002, the New Jersey State Parole Board was awarded $2 million over three years from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, as part of the federal government’s Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, which supports reentry initiatives nationwide. This grant provides the opportunity for New Jersey to focus the efforts of a number of state agencies on 200 juvenile and 100 adult offenders who are being released by the Juvenile Justice Commission or the Department of Corrections. These offenders have been classified as high-risk and are returning to Essex and Camden counties. Services begin before release and continue as the individual begins his or her life post-release. Programming includes job training and placement, educational services, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, restitution, housing assistance, mentoring, counseling, aftercare, crisis intervention, life skills training, supervision, and intensive case management.\(^12\) Implementation of this program began in January of 2003. All partici-
pating offenders will be released between October 2003 and April 2004. The grant expires in 2005.

New Jersey has also been selected as one of seven states to participate in the Reentry Policy Academy of the National Governors Association (NGA). Over the next 18 months, New Jersey policymakers from the Governor’s office will participate in an in-state policy workshop, two policy academy meetings, and customized technical assistance. The goal of this academy is for state teams to craft reentry strategies for their respective states. The aim is to reduce recidivism rates by improving services provided to inmates and ex-offenders.13

In 2001, New Jersey was selected by the National Institute of Corrections to participate in a technical assistance project to develop policy-driven responses to parole violations in the state of New Jersey. To fulfill the requirements of this grant, the Chairman of the State Parole Board convened a policy group consisting of leaders from a number of state agencies, including the Parole Board, the Department of Corrections, the Division of Probation, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health, the Attorney General’s office, and a number of community partners. This policy group participated in a number of local group meetings and a national forum at which they examined current parole policy and practice, and gathered empirical data on parole violations in 2 of the state’s 13 parole districts. This process concluded with the development of recommendations that the State Parole Board is interested in implementing.

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and the New Jersey Public Policy Research Institute have created the New Jersey Reentry Roundtable, a year-long initiative gathering policymakers, researchers, service providers, and other key stakeholders to assess and develop a strategic response to the challenge of prisoner reentry in New Jersey. Based on the Urban Institute’s Reentry Roundtable model, the New Jersey Reentry Roundtable has to date held meetings on health, juvenile reentry, and employment issues over the course of the year. In addition, they have commissioned research on a variety of topics affecting prisoner reentry in New Jersey, and will work to implement a series of recommendations resulting from this research and ongoing discussions. In the future, it is expected that the work of the Roundtable will provide a framework for New Jersey’s participation in the NGA Reentry Policy Academy.

This report is designed to contribute to the efforts currently underway in New Jersey 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 New Jersey’s reentry policies and practices. Rather, the processes and characteristics of prisoner reentry in New Jersey are described by answering several questions that frame the organization of the report:

- What is the policy context surrounding prisoner reentry in New Jersey? How do state sentencing and post-release supervision practices affect reentry in New Jersey?
- What are the characteristics of New Jersey’s returning inmates?

13 For more information see the NGA’s Press Release: http://www.nga.org/nga/news-Room/1,1169,C_PRESS_RELEASE%5ED_5751,00.html
How are New Jersey prisoners prepared for reentry?

What are the New Jersey communities with the greatest concentrations of returning inmates? What are the economic and social climates of those communities?

The report begins by describing the context of prisoner reentry at the state level, followed by a description of the characteristics of inmates released from New Jersey prisons in 2002. We then discuss the programming New Jersey inmates may receive while incarcerated to prepare them for release. This is followed by a discussion of prisoner release policy and practice in New Jersey, and an examination of parole supervision in the state. Chapter 5 provides a spatial analysis of the two counties with the highest numbers and concentrations of ex-offenders—Camden and Essex counties. It is our hope that this report will provide a useful, factual foundation for the individuals and organizations working to improve reentry outcomes for prisoners, their families and communities, and the general public in New Jersey.

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 New Jersey, for example, were derived from a mix of federal statistics, released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and statistics compiled by various agencies within the State of New Jersey, such as the Department of Corrections. Longitudinal crime report and police arrest data were gathered from New Jersey’s annual Uniform Crime Reports, produced by the New Jersey State Police.

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, readers will not always be able to make year-to-year comparisons across graphs.

Data on the population of inmates released from New Jersey prisons in calendar year 2002 were obtained from the New Jersey Department of Corrections and represent all inmates released from the New Jersey Department of Corrections. The New Jersey State Parole Board provided data on a “snapshot” of individuals on parole in late June 2003. For the geographic analysis of chapter 5, the Division of Probation provided data on a “snapshot” of all individuals from Camden and Essex Counties on probation on a day in late September 2003. The Juvenile Justice Commission provided data on admissions from Camden and Essex Counties to the custody of the Commission in 2001. The Department of Human Services provided data on the counts of TANF Recipients by zip codes in Camden and Essex Counties in March of 2003.
In order to understand the reentry phenomenon in New Jersey, it is first necessary to examine recent trends in sentencing and corrections practices in the state. This section provides an overview of recent sentencing and incarceration history in the state and describes the factors contributing to the growth in New Jersey’s inmate population. This context will help frame the reentry issue and will provide background for the discussion of the needs and challenges of returning inmates that follows later in this report.

PRISON POPULATION ON THE RISE

The New Jersey prison population has grown tremendously over the past two decades, reflecting the rise in prison populations nationwide. Between 1977 and 2002, the New Jersey prison population more than quadrupled, increasing from 6,017 to 27,891 people. (See figure 1.)

Between 1980 and 2002, the per capita rate of imprisonment in New Jersey rose from 76 to 331 per 100,000 residents in the state, an increase of over 336 percent, outpacing national trends. Nationally, the rate of incarceration increased 228 percent over this period. (See figure 2.) Unlike the national trends, the growth in incarceration in New Jersey has not been constant since 1980. After reaching a peak of 31,493 people in 1999, the prison population declined over the next three years to the 2002 level of 27,891. Likewise, the rate of incarceration peaked at 384 in 1999, and then dropped to the 2002 level of 322 per 100,000 residents.

As the incarceration rate has increased in New Jersey, so too has state spending on corrections. Over the past 25 years, spending on corrections, parole, and the juvenile justice system has grown at twice the rate of the rest of the state budget. In fiscal year 1983, the state spent just under $200 million on corrections, parole, and the juvenile justice systems. By fiscal year 2003, annual budgets for these programs had risen almost six-fold to $1.1 billion. The state budget as a whole increased threefold over this same period of time. In fiscal year 2003, the Department of Corrections spent $858 million, or about $28,000 per capita.
per inmate. For a further discussion of New Jersey’s spending on corrections, please see “Reentry: The Fiscal Consequences,” forthcoming, by Jon Shure, Mary Forsberg, and others.16

EXPLAINING NEW JERSEY INCARCERATION TRENDS

Over the past generation, American sentencing policy has become more punitive and policing practices more stringent. These shifts reflect, in part, heightened concerns about public safety and increases in the levels of violent crimes. These trends also influenced crime control and sentencing practices in New Jersey. This section describes how changes in New Jersey’s drug arrest rates,
sentencing policy, and parole revocation practices have contributed to increases in the number of individuals admitted to New Jersey’s prisons over time, driving the growth in New Jersey’s prison population.

The dramatic increases in the prison population in New Jersey over the last two decades are largely a result of a rising number of admissions to prison. Annual admissions to New Jersey’s prisons increased from under 4,000 in 1980 to over 15,000 in 2000, as is seen in figure 1. Analysis of available data show that three factors are primarily responsible for these increases. First, arrest rates for drug crimes escalated between 1980 and 2001. Second, sentencing reforms—principally the institution of mandatory minimum sentences, some as high as five years—were brought about by the New Jersey legislature for select crimes, including violent and drug crimes, sending more individuals to prison. Third, parole practice returned large numbers of parolees to prison for parole revocations. It is just as important to note, however, that the numbers of violent and property crimes reported to the police decreased overall during this period, and therefore did not contribute to the growth in imprisonment. Finally, according to available data, length of time served by inmates increased in the latter part of the 1990s, possibly contributing to increases in the prison population during that period. The increases caused by inmates spending more time in prison appear moderate compared to those caused by the increased admissions previously mentioned.

**Trends in Crime**

Increases in prison admissions may be the result of an increase in crime, measured by the number of crimes reported to the police. However, while the prison population steadily increased between 1980 and 2002, violent and property crimes reported to the police over this period followed a generally downward trend. The number of property crimes reported decreased by 43 percent, from over 425,000 in 1980 to just over 240,000 in 2001. Likewise, property crime rates—the number of property crimes per 100,000 residents—fell 51 percent over this period, from 5,797 crimes per 100,000 residents in 1980 to 2,835 per 100,000 in 2001. (See figure 3.) Trends in violent crime over this period were less consistent. Violent crimes reported to the police decreased in the early 1980s, and then increased from 1984 until 1990. Violent crime reports then stabilized until the late 1990s, during which they decreased to the lowest point in over two decades. By 2001, the number of crimes reported to police was just over 33,000, a 25 percent decrease from the 44,000 violent crimes reported in 1980. Accordingly, the trend in violent crime rates per 100,000 followed that for all violent crime in New Jersey, decreasing in the early 1980s, then increasing until 1990 and stabilizing, then decreasing in the late 1990s. In 2001, 390 violent crimes were reported per 100,000 residents of the state. In 1980, over 600 had been reported per 100,000 residents. (See figure 4.) These data suggest that the consistent increases in the prison population between 1980 and 1998 cannot be attributed to trends in violent and property crimes. Data on drugs crimes reported to the police are unavailable.
Admissions to prison may increase while fewer crimes are reported if police departments make more arrests. In New Jersey, arrests for property, violent, and drug crimes fluctuated between 1980 and 2001 while the state’s incarceration rate rose steadily. Property crime arrests decreased in the early 1980s, and then increased 13 percent between 1986 and 1991 from 55,878 to 63,187. Throughout the 1990s, property crime arrests decreased 40 percent to 37,851 in 2001. (See figure 5.) Arrests made by police for violent crimes increased slightly between 1980 and 1990, from 17,288 to 22,683, and then decreased 30 percent to 15,819 in 2001. (See figure 6.)

Arrests for drug crimes followed a very different trend. Between 1980 and 2001, drug arrests rose overall by a remarkable 150 percent. The trends in drug
arrests, however, were not consistent over this period. Between 1986 and 1989, drug arrests increased 70 percent, which was followed by a 33 percent decrease by 1991. This steep rise and fall in drug arrests was followed by a more gradual increase until 1997, when arrests for drug crimes started to decline again. (See figure 7.)

Implementation of the Comprehensive Drug Reform Act of 1987 (CDRA, see the sidebar “Sentencing Reforms in New Jersey” for a more detailed discussion), likely contributed to the increase in drug arrests in the mid 1980s. This act increased the types of drug offenses that were subject to criminal sanctions and has had dramatic implications for New Jersey’s criminal justice system, setting the fight against illegal drugs as the centerpiece of the state’s crime control strategy. It led to the implementation of a statewide master plan for comprehensive

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Figure 5. Number of Property Arrests in New Jersey, 1980–2001

![Figure 5](image_url)


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Figure 6. Number of Violent Arrests in New Jersey, 1980–2001

![Figure 6](image_url)


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This was stated in a memo from then-Attorney General when the Statewide Narcotics Action Plan was distributed to the New Jersey Law Enforcement Community on March 12, 1993.
drug enforcement—the Statewide Narcotics Action Plan—and to the development of “The State Police Plan of Action” in 1987. According to the New Jersey State Police, this plan involved an “updat[ing] of arrest, search and seizure laws and techniques” training of officers, and “increased enforcement action resulting in drug arrests increasing dramatically.”\(^\text{20}\) Explaining the subsequent decline and rise in drug arrests is beyond the scope of this report. Some possible explanations are a stabilizing of the illegal drug markets in the state, the movement of drug markets across state lines, or the reclassification of drug arrests for the purposes of statistical records.

**The Effects of Sentencing Reforms**

New Jersey follows a policy of indeterminate sentencing, whereby the sentencing judge has the discretion to sentence an offender to prison and to set the minimum and maximum terms of confinement. After serving a period of incarceration, prisoners are then eligible for release at the discretion of the State Parole Board. This is the traditional model used by criminal justice systems in the United States for most of the twentieth century. In recent decades, however, many states have moved towards systems of determinate sentencing, in which the discretion of judges is greatly limited, and sentences are largely established by statute.\(^\text{21}\) Unlike these states, New Jersey has generally maintained a system of indeterminate sentencing, but the legislature has nevertheless instituted a number of reforms limiting judges’ discretion in sentencing with respect to certain types of crimes, and requiring certain offenders to spend more of their sentence in prison.

**Mandatory Minimum Sentences**

In 1979, the New Jersey Legislature reformed the state’s criminal code, in part by instituting mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes. Under this

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sentencing scheme, judges are required to sentence individuals convicted of these crimes to a prison term with a minimum term. During the 1980s and 1990s, the legislature expanded the types of crimes subject to mandatory minimum sentences, adding a number of violent crimes and many drug offenses. These reforms have had dramatic effects on the size and nature of the state’s prison population. They have contributed to the increases in prison admissions by requiring prison sentences for lesser offenses that may have previously been subject to other non-custodial sanctions, such as community service or probation. Since the implementation of mandatory minimums, the share of convicted offenders sentenced to prison or jail has increased. In 1977, only 40 percent of sentences imposed by judges were custodial, meaning the offender had to go to prison or jail. By 1990, custodial sentences were issued in 57 percent of cases, an increase of 43 percent.\(^2\) (For more on these reforms, see the sidebar, “Sentencing Reform in New Jersey.”)

As shown in figure 8, both the number and share of inmates subject to a mandatory minimum sentence increased significantly over the last two decades. In 1982, only 11 percent, or 870 inmates, had been committed with a mandatory minimum sentence. By 1987, the number of inmates serving mandatory minimums had increased almost seven-fold to about 5,900 inmates. They then comprised 41 percent of the inmate population. In 2002, the number subject to mandatory minimum sentences had increased to over 16,700, nearly triple the number just six years earlier and almost twenty times the number from two decades before. Prisoners with mandatory minimum sentences now account for a majority—61 percent—of all prisoners in New Jersey.\(^3\)

It is important to note that the entire increase in the prevalence of mandatory minimum sentences may not be attributable to statutory requirements. Judges in New Jersey have the discretion to impose mandatory minimum peri-

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ods of incarceration at the time of sentencing in cases involving particularly significant aggravating factors. Data from the Department of Corrections on the proportion of the population subject to mandatory minimums do not make a distinction between “true” mandatory minimums and cases such as those in which the judge has effectively increased the minimum that must be served before parole can be granted. But research using court data shows that about a quarter of the mandatory minimum terms that were instituted in 1990 (the only year for which data have been analyzed) were issued at a sentencing judge’s discretion; the remainder were mandate by statute.24

**Overall Sentence Length**

Changes in sentencing practices can affect prison populations by increasing the length of prison sentences imposed by judges, but this has not been the case in New Jersey. In fact, average sentence length in New Jersey has decreased in recent years.25 In 2001, a larger percentage of New Jersey offenders were serving shorter sentences (under five years) than was the case in 1991. The percent sentenced to one to four years increased from 23 to 26, while the number sentenced to over ten years decreased from 42 to 38 percent.26 (See figure 9.) In 2001, the median sentence for adult offenders was six years, down from seven years in 1993.27 This is likely the result of more offenders being sentenced to prison for lesser crimes that carry shorter sentences, the majority of which are drug-related offenses.

**Length of Stay**

Even as sentence lengths decrease, it is possible that the implementation of various sentencing reforms could increase prison populations by increasing the amount of time offenders actually spend in prison. Data on the time served by offenders released in the 1980s are unavailable, but inmates’ length of stay increased in the late 1990s. Inmates released in 1990 and 1995 had spent, on

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25 The length of a prisoner’s sentence, which is the term of imprisonment meted out by the court, does not necessarily correspond to the actual time served in prison (i.e. prisoners usually serve less time than their court-ordered sentence lengths.)


average, 18.8 months and 18.1 months, respectively, in prison. The average amount of time spent in prison by inmates released in 2000 was 24.2 months—33 percent higher than in 1995. The average time served for inmates released in 2002 then dropped slightly to 23.8 months. National data show similar overall trends. In 1990, the average time served for prisoners released from state prisons across the country was 22 months; by 1999, it had increased to 29 months.

Average lengths of stay in New Jersey increased between 1990 and 2002 for most types of offenders. Many violent offenders—including those whose most serious offense was homicide, manslaughter, assault, sexual assault, and robbery—and offenders convicted of distributing drugs experienced the greatest increases in the average time spent in prison. (See figure 10.)

It is unclear why average length of stay increased over this period. Because of the lack of available data for earlier years, it is not possible to determine whether this increase was part of a longer trend. Important changes were made in sentencing policy for violent offenders in 1997 with the passage and implementation of the No Early Release Act. It is unlikely, however, that this reform would have had such a significant effect on the length of time inmates spend in prison in such a short period of time. This is particularly true because violent offenders who would be most significantly affected by this reform in the early years of its implementation would not have begun to be released from prison by 2000.

**Prison Population and Admissions**

As a result of sentencing reforms and trends in drug arrest rates, the composition of both New Jersey’s prison population and of those admitted to prison in New Jersey, have changed over time. Data on the stock prison population are available for the 1980s and 1990s. Data on prison admissions, however, are only available for the 1990s.

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28 This is the median time served for first releases—excluding those who were released after being reincarcerated for a parole violation.


30 Statistics provided by the Office of Policy and Planning, New Jersey Department of Corrections.
The share of the stock prison population that consists of drug offenders (meaning prisoners whose most serious conviction was a drug offense) has increased dramatically over the last two decades. In 1980, only 6 percent of the population had been incarcerated for drug offenses. By 2002, this had increased sixfold to 36 percent. Perhaps more telling, in just three years following the implementation of the Comprehensive Drug Reform Act of 1987, the share more than tripled. In January 1987, 11 percent of the population was incarcerated for drug offenses. By 1990, this proportion had increased to 25 percent, and by 2002, it was 36 percent. Over this same period, the share of the population that was made up of violent offenders (persons whose most serious conviction was for a violent crime) decreased accordingly from 66 percent in 1980 to 42 percent in 2002. The share of non-violent offenders (primarily convicted of property crimes) also shrunk, from 28 percent in 1980 to 22 percent in 2002.31 (See figure 11.) It is important to note that the numbers of all three categories of offenders increased over this time period, but the number of drug offenders increased more dramatically than the numbers of the other two categories. New Jersey prisons housed 9,150 violent offenders, 3,575 non-violent offenders, and about 650 drug offenders in 1980. In 2002, there were an estimated 11,500 violent offenders, 6,000 non-violent, and over 9,800 drug offenders.

Changes in the composition of the prison population can result because of changes in admissions or because of changes in length of stay. Data on both are not readily available for the 1980s, when the Comprehensive Drug Reform Act was implemented. Available admissions data do reveal, however, that between 1990 and 2000, the share of the admission cohort that was incarcerated for a drug offense increased slightly from 46.5 percent to 49.1 percent. Property and violent offenders therefore decreased as a share of the population being admitted to New Jersey prisons over this period. In 2002, the share of admissions that were drug offenders dropped somewhat to 48.8 percent.32

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**Figure 11. Population by Offense Type, 1982–2002**

![Bar chart showing population by offense type, 1982–2002](chart.png)


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32 Data provided by NJ DOC.
Parole Revocations

The use of mandatory minimums is not the only factor that led to the increased prison population in New Jersey. More parolees have also been returning to prison for revocations of their conditions of parole. The number of parole violators returned to prison in New Jersey has increased over sixfold in the last two decades, from 1,192 in 1980 to 6,822 in 1998. In 1980, 30 percent of admissions to New Jersey’s prisons were for parole violations. In 1998, parole revocations comprised 41 percent of all admissions. The rise was not constant over this period, as can be seen in figure 12. After decreasing, increasing, and then decreasing again, the share of admissions that were parole violators doubled in the 1990s, from 21 percent in 1990 to 41 percent in 1998. This increase outpaces national trends in parole revocations over that period. In 1999, 35 percent of prison admissions nationally were parole violators, compared to 29 percent in 1990.

Much of the increase in the New Jersey prison population is likely due to changes in violation practice by parole officers. In particular, following two high-profile cases in 1995 and 1996 in which parolees under supervision committed violent crimes, it is believed that parole officers became more likely to revoke parole and to return a parolee to prison for lesser infractions than had previously been the case. Firearms have been issued to all parole officers since 1994. Many have attributed increases in the use of parole revocations in the 1990s to this practice, as it converted the parole staff to sworn law enforcement officers and is believed to have changed the culture of the agency.

A parole revocation may be the result of a technical violation of parole or the commission of a new crime by a parolee. There is limited readily available data on the nature of the violations for which parolees are returned to prison. Members of the Parole Board have recently begun to explore this issue on a limited scale for a National Institute of Corrections-sponsored project on parole

Figure 12. Percent of Total Prison Admissions by Type, 1977–1998.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoners Statistics Data Series (NPS-1).
revocation policy and practice, but the results of this analysis are not available for dissemination. According to the Parole Board, however, there were 4,582 revocations of parole issued in fiscal year 2003 (beginning July 1, 2002 and ending on June 30, 2003). The vast majority of these—96.5 percent, or 4,422—were issued for technical violations of parole. Only 160, or 3.5 percent of the revocations, were attributable to new crimes.37 It is important to note that nationally, research has shown that the administrative recording of parole violations often does not tell us much about the underlying behavior of the parolee. Although many violations are formally recorded as “technical,” they may not be crime-free in nature. Often technical violators are actually arrested (but not tried for) a new crime while under parole supervision, which leads to their revocation.

In calendar year 1999, 55 percent of New Jersey’s discharges from parole were considered “successful”—representing individuals who were released from parole because their parole term expired, not because of a revocation of parole for a violation. This is higher than the national average of 42 percent.38

SUMMARY

In sum, changes in arrest trends and in criminal justice policy over the last two decades have contributed to significant increases in the prison population in New Jersey. In particular, dramatic increases in arrests for drug offenses and the implementation of mandatory minimum sentences have considerably increased the number of individuals admitted to New Jersey’s prisons, and have changed the composition of the prison population. Rising numbers of individuals returning to prison as a result of parole revocations have also contributed to the escalating prison population. Increases in the length of time spent in prison by offenders may be another contributing factor.

37 Per e-mail conversation with Kevin McHugh, 17 September 2003.
In 1979, New Jersey’s criminal code was dramatically reformed, in response to what was seen as “wide disparity” in sentencing practice.\(^{39}\) These reforms resulted in the development of Title 2C as New Jersey’s Criminal Code. This code mandates that all first and second degree offenders be sentenced to a period of imprisonment. These reforms developed mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes, including murder and kidnapping, among others. The prison population increased in the early 1980s after these reforms were implemented, but the composition of the population remained the same, with the greatest share of offenders convicted of violent offenses.\(^{40}\) Perhaps most importantly, the reforms of New Jersey’s Criminal Code in 1979 paved the way for the expansion of the use of mandatory minimum sentences in the 1980s and 1990s.\(^{41}\)

In 1987, in response to what was seen as an escalating drug problem,\(^{42}\) Governor Kean signed the Comprehensive Drug Reform Act (CDRA), setting stringent mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenders in New Jersey. This law has had a substantial impact on the size and nature of the New Jersey prison population by increasing the number of admissions for drug convictions, and thereby increasing the share of the prison population that consists of drug offenders. Under the CDRA, prison sentences of three and five years are mandated for the distribution of small amounts of controlled substances. Shorter sentences are mandated for simple possession of controlled substances.\(^{43}\)

The expectation of the CDRA was that more drug offenders would spend more time behind bars. Many offenders who would have previously received a sanction of community service or probation are subject to a mandatory prison term under CDRA. The legislation’s authors and supporters recognized that prison space would need to expand if they were to implement the act. In fact, the legislation stipulated that it would not go into effect until a prison building bond issue was authorized by New Jersey’s voters.\(^{44}\) This referendum was passed, and more prison beds were built to accommodate the increased number of offenders being sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Between fiscal years 1981 and 2002, almost 12,000 beds were added by the Department of Corrections. Almost 7,000 of these beds were added between 1998 and 2002.\(^{45}\)

One specific component of CDRA—the establishment of Drug Free School Zones—contributed significantly to the changing size and composition of the prison population. The CDRA made the crime of possessing or distributing drugs within 1,000 feet of a school subject to a mandatory prison sentence. The definition of “drug free zones” has since been expanded to include areas within 500 feet of a public building, including public housing complexes and areas around playgrounds and moving school buses. There has been little analysis of the effect of these drug free zones on the size and nature of the prison population.

A later reform—the No Early Release Act of 1997 (NERA)—increases the amount of time that must be served in prison by inmates convicted of certain violent crimes. Because of its recent implementation, there is no evidence to suggest that NERA has had a significant impact on the size of the prison population. The effects of NERA may be seen in the future, when more violent offenders remain in prison past what would have been their parole eligibility date. The Department of Corrections has, in fact, predicted that the prison population will begin to increase in the near future, in part because of the effects of NERA.\(^{46}\)

Other reforms implemented in the 1980s and 1990s led to continued increases in the prison population by expanding the list of crimes subject to mandatory minimum sentences. The list now includes all serious violent crimes, sexual offenses, and carjacking, among other crimes. Other reforms, such as the Graves Act (1982) and Megan’s Law (1993) may have had moderate impacts on the sentencing of persons convicted of violent weapons offenses and many sex offenses, respectively. The legislature also passed a Three Strikes Law in 1995, which applies only to homicide, kidnapping, robbery, and carjacking. Data are unavailable about the number of inmates that are subject to the Three Strikes Law, but most officials say it has rarely been used.\(^{47}\)

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41 The court, however, can determine that a sentence of imprisonment would be a serious injustice that overrides the need to deter the criminal conduct of others, and can impose an alternate sanction.


45 According to the Division of Operations in the Department of Corrections.


CHAPTER 2
What Are the Characteristics of New Jersey’s Returning Inmates?

In order to better understand prisoner reentry in New Jersey, it is important to examine the characteristics of the population being released from New Jersey prisons each year. This section describes the cohort released from the New Jersey Department of Corrections in 2002, examining basic demographics, reasons for incarceration, time served, recidivism, and physical and mental health conditions. Where information is unavailable for the 2002 release cohort, it is supplemented here with information available from other cohorts.

DEMOGRAPHICS
In 2002, 14,849 men and women were released to the community by the New Jersey Department of Corrections. This release cohort is very similar in composition to New Jersey’s prison population. The cohort is overwhelmingly male (91 percent) and mostly black (62 percent). The average age is 34. Nearly 78 percent of the population was between 20 and 40 years old at the time of their release. (See figures 13 and 14 for more detail.) While the marital status of about one-third of the release cohort is unknown, the vast majority (83 percent) of those for whom a status is reported were single. (See figure 15.)

CONVICTION OFFENSE
As discussed in chapter 1, an increase in arrests for drug offenses contributed to the dramatic increases in incarceration in New Jersey in the 1980s and 1990s. As a consequence, 38 percent of the population released in 2002 consisted of drug offenders. Figure 16 demonstrates that no other offense category accounted for even half that amount. For 16 percent of the population, a parole violation was categorized as the most serious offense committed. Smaller shares of the population had been convicted of robbery, burglary, assault, and other offenses.

TIME SERVED
According to statistics provided by the Department of Corrections, the average time served by prisoners released in 2002 was 23.8 months. This does not

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48 There were over 15,000 separate releases from the New Jersey Department of Corrections in 2002, but about 900 of these were individuals being released multiple times. For the analysis in this report, we examine the characteristics of the unique individuals released. Releases were from state prisons, county facilities, halfway houses, and other forms of custody.
include inmates who had been incarcerated for a violation of parole, e.g. only first releases. Offenders convicted of homicide spent the most time in prison, at almost 20 years. They were followed by those convicted of manslaughter, sexual assault, and robbery. See figure 17 for more information.

CRIMINAL HISTORY AND THE REVOLVING DOOR

Cycling in and out of prison is common among released prisoners, whether they are returned to prison while under parole supervision or not. A recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics tracked just over 38,000 prisoners who were released from prisons in 15 states, including New Jersey, in 1994. According to this study, within three years of their release, nearly 52 percent of those released nationally were back in prison for new prison sentences or for technical viola-

Figure 13. Race/Ethnicity of Released Inmates, 2002

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of NJ DOC data.

Figure 14. Age Distribution of Released Inmates, 2002

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of NJ DOC data.
tions of their release. Further, these same data from New Jersey show that within three years of release, 62 percent of the prisoners released in New Jersey in 1994 had been rearrested. Almost 43 percent had been reconvicted of another crime, and about 38 percent had been reincarcerated.\(^4\) According to these results, inmates released in New Jersey fare slightly better than the average of the other fourteen states. Analysis by the New Jersey Department of Corrections found that inmates released eleven years earlier had been just as likely to be re-arrested within three years of release, but had been less likely to have been reconvicted (38 percent of 1983 releases), and less likely to have been returned to prison or jail (24 percent for 1983 releases).\(^5\)

Of those inmates released in New Jersey in 2002, 39 percent were incarcerated for a violation of parole. Nearly 12 percent of the 2002 release cohort were

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**Figure 15. Marital Status of Released Inmates, 2002**

![Marital Status Pie Chart]

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of NJ DOC data.

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**Figure 16. Primary Offense of Released Inmates, 2002**

![Primary Offense Bar Chart]

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of NJ DOC data.

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again in the custody of the Department of Corrections in June of 2003 when we received their data.\textsuperscript{51}

**MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Prisoners nationwide suffer from a range of mental and physical health problems. In 1997, nearly one-third (31 percent) of state prisoners reported having a learning or speech disability, a hearing or vision problem, or a mental or physical condition.\textsuperscript{52} Many inmates suffer from co-occurring and chronic mental and physical health disorders that make it difficult for them to transition from prison to free society. We were able to obtain data on the prevalence of certain health conditions among the 2002 release cohort. About a third of the cohort has been diagnosed with at least one chronic and/or communicable physical or mental health condition. (See figure 18.)

A specific area of heightened concern is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in prison populations. Nationally, in 1999, 2.3 percent of state prisoners were HIV positive, and the overall rate of confirmed AIDS cases among the nation’s prison population was five times the rate in the U.S. general population (0.60 percent versus 0.12 percent).\textsuperscript{53} Less than one-third of one percent of the general population of New Jersey was known to be diagnosed with AIDS in 2000.\textsuperscript{54} In contrast, 3.4 percent of 2002 release population was HIV positive or diagnosed with AIDS. This included 0.7 percent of the population that was diagnosed with AIDS.\textsuperscript{55} Testing for HIV and AIDS is not mandatory for New Jersey inmates. Therefore, the percentages cited here are possibly an underestimate of the prevalence of HIV and AIDS in New Jersey’s release population. It is important to note that the female release population is more likely to be affected by HIV and/or AIDS. A 2000 study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 6.8 percent of females in New Jersey’s prisons were known to be HIV positive, more

\textsuperscript{51} Note that this is likely an underestimate of the extent to which offenders released in 2002 returned to prison at some point. We have no record of those individuals who were released only once in 2002 and were then admitted and released again before late June of 2003. 


\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
than double the 3.2 percent share of the general population that had been diagnosed with HIV.56

A 2002 report to Congress on the physical and mental health conditions of soon-to-be-released inmates by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care found that tens of thousands of prisoners are released to communities every year with communicable and chronic diseases that are left largely untreated.57 In New Jersey, 18 percent of prisoners released in 2002 suffered from at least one chronic condition, such as asthma, diabetes, or hypertension. Ten percent have been diagnosed with at least one communicable disease or condition, such as HIV, AIDS, tuberculosis, syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, Hepatitis-B, or Hepatitis-C, but this is likely an underestimate. Only 6 percent of the release population—or 880 individuals—have been diagnosed with Hepatitis-C. This is likely an underestimate, as testing for this disease is not required, and nationally, about 18 percent of soon-to-be released state prisoners are infected with Hepatitis-C.58 Mental illness has been identified in 11 percent of the releases. Over 50 percent of released inmates have been diagnosed with or assessed to have a drug or alcohol problem.59

Figure 18. Mental and Physical Health Diagnoses, Released New Jersey Prisoners, 2002

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of NJ DOC data.

58 Ibid.
59 Other estimates set the percent of the stock prison population with a substance abuse problem at 81 percent. The discrepancy may be due to incomplete data, or it could be true that substance abuse is less prevalent in the release population than in the stock population. This is unlikely, however.
Juvenile Reentry

Each year in New Jersey, about 1,600 youth return home from placement in a juvenile justice facility. Like their adult counterparts, these youth face a number of barriers to successful reentry.

Analysis has recently been conducted of data on the 1,262 youth committed to the Juvenile Justice Commission in 2002. This section will summarize this analysis. For a more detailed discussion of juvenile reentry in New Jersey, please see the original report by Bruce Stout, “Community Re-Entry of Adolescents from New Jersey’s Juvenile Justice System.”

Juveniles in New Jersey can be committed to a secure or non-secure out-of-home facility run by the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC). Alternatively, judges can place juveniles under probation, some of whom may be placed in JJC residential programs.

Stout’s analysis shows that the average individual committed to the JJC is male (93 percent), between 16 and 17 years old (56 percent), and African-American (67 percent). The vast majority (94 percent) has had at least one prior adjudication of delinquency. These juveniles also have particularly high rates of individual and family risk factors for future criminal involvement, including substance abuse (60 percent), involvement with the Division of Youth and Family Services (39 percent), a parent who has been incarcerated (26 percent), and many others.

For one-third of those committed in 2002, a technical violation of probation was their most serious offense. Another 21 percent had been adjudicated for a drug offense, 19 percent for a persons (generally violent) offense, and 14 percent for a property offense. Disorder and weapons offenders comprise the remaining 13 percent.

Four counties (Camden, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic) were responsible for 58 percent of juvenile commitments in 2002. Over 25 percent of the commitments came from Camden, 12 percent from Essex, and 10 percent each from Hudson and Passaic. Almost half of the youth committed to the JJC in 2002 will eventually return to five cities—Camden, Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, and Trenton.

Juvenile probationers placed in JJC residential facilities are demographically similar to committed juveniles—95 percent male, 69 percent African-American, and with an average age of 16.5. Two-thirds come from four counties, but not the same four counties as committed youth. In this case they are from Essex, Camden, Union, and Monmouth Counties.

All juveniles committed to the JJC are supervised post-incarceration by the JJC’s Division of Parole and Transitional Services. In May of 2003, there were 638 active parole cases and 24 parole officers. Juveniles spend, on average, 14 months on parole. Probationers are supervised post-release by the probation department in their local family court.

CHAPTER 3
How Are Prisoners Prepared for Release?

Historically, prison programming has played an important role in American corrections. Many prison administrators and others have believed that providing educational and vocational programming to prisoners increases the likelihood of prisoners’ successful return to the community. Recent research supports this rationale, showing that a range of prison-based programming can contribute to positive post-release outcomes for prisoners, including reduced recidivism. In addition to prison-based programming, community-based services for released inmates have also shown to increase the likelihood of successful reintegration and decrease the recidivism rate of returning prisoners. In fact, research has shown that some of the most effective programs are those that combine in-prison programming with aftercare in the community.  

The New Jersey Department of Corrections provides prison- and community-based programming, primarily in the areas of education and vocational services and substance abuse treatment. Unfortunately, low funding levels prevent these programs from being available to large shares of New Jersey’s prison population. This is not a comprehensive list of prison- and community-based programming for offenders, but a scan of the major programs run by the Department of Corrections to prepare inmates for reentry into society. One program discussed, the Mutual Agreement Program, is conducted by a cooperative of the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health, and the State Parole Board.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROGRAMMING

Despite the potential benefits of facility-based programs, participation in prison-based programs is on the decline nationwide. The number of soon-to-be-released prisoners who reported participating in vocational programs dropped nationally from 31 percent in 1991 to 27 percent in 1997. Similarly, the number who reported participating in education programs dropped from 43 percent to 35 percent, and the number of state prisoners who reported receiv-


ing formal substance abuse treatment dropped from 25 percent to 10 percent in that same period. These numbers are alarming, given the proven benefit of prison-based programs and the increasing number of prisoners who present needs. Only 23 percent of New Jersey prisoners participated in academic or vocational training in 2001—the same percentage that had participated in 1995.

### Educational Services

Inmates often enter prison with poor educational backgrounds and limited employment skills. Recent research has documented a link between education levels and recidivism—prisoners who have achieved higher levels of education have a lower rate of recidivism. A number of factors contribute to the recidivism rate of ex-offenders, but at least part of this discrepancy is due to the fact that upon release, educational achievement and literacy skills provide some of the tools an inmate needs to succeed in a competitive labor market once released from prison. Many New Jersey inmates lack these tools. Upon admission, the average New Jersey inmate is at a 6.0 grade level in reading and a 5.4 grade level in math.

The Office of Educational Services (OES), a subsidiary of the Department of Corrections (DOC), provides educational and vocational programming in each of New Jersey’s state prisons and youth facilities. While programming varies across facilities, at minimum, each facility offers pre-secondary and secondary academic training. Many offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as well. Lack of funding has made post-secondary education, at present, almost non-existent. A federal grant has underwritten Project IN-SIDE (Inmate Network: Skills in Developing Employment), which provides certificate-granting training courses for inmates under 25 within five years of parole, by contract with Union and Mercer County Community Colleges.

Despite the clear need for educational programs for offenders returning to the community, funding for and participation in such programs are limited. In 1995, only 1 to 2.5 percent of the DOC budget, on average, went to educational programming and services, and most of that money was earmarked for programs for juveniles. State law requires the Department of Corrections to provide academic services for all inmates under the age of 20 years who do not have a high school diploma or G.E.D. certificate. Of the inmates released in 2002, less than 1 percent were under 20 years old. And although approximately 75 percent of adult inmates incarcerated in the New Jersey Department of Corrections tested at the two lowest literacy levels in 1997, OES served 17 percent of the total prison and jail population with academic programming in 2001. Many, if not all, OES educational programs have waiting lists, as demand exceeds capacity.

### Employment Readiness

The difficulties inmates face within the labor market, before incarceration and after release, have been well documented by researchers. Unstable employment
histories undoubtedly contribute to this challenge. Additionally, the time spent in prison may diminish work skills, result in the forfeiture of opportunities to gain work experience, and sever interpersonal connections that could provide information about jobs.\footnote{Western, Bruce. 2003. Employment and Public Policy. Presented at the Third Reentry Roundtable, New York, NY. April.} After release, the stigma of ex-prisoner status makes the job search even more difficult.\footnote{Holzer, Harry, Stephen Raphael and Michael Stoll. Forthcoming. “Will Employers Hire Ex-Offenders? Employer Preferences, Background Checks and Their Determinants.” In The Impact of Incarceration on Families and Communities, edited by Mary Patillo, David Weiman and Bruce Western. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.} These obstacles to finding legitimate employment add to the reintegration challenges facing returning prisoners.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections maintains a number of occupational training and career development programs, in an attempt to prepare inmates to overcome the barriers to employment that they will face upon release. These include pre-vocational and vocational programs, an apprentice program, work release, and a correctional industries program.

Vocational assessment is available at all Department of Corrections facilities but is not conducted on all inmates. Pre-vocational and vocational programs are offered by OES in all facilities except the Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center for sex offenders. Programs are offered in 33 different trades, but all trades are not offered in all facilities. Three programs offer industry-based skills certificates. These include the automotive trade shops at East Jersey State Prison and Bayside State Prison, the culinary arts programs at East Jersey State Prison, and the cosmetology program at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women. A very small number of inmates participate in eight apprenticeship programs, also run by OES. In 1997, there were 54 registered apprentices in all eight programs. Overall, very small numbers of New Jersey inmates participate in vocational programs. In 2001, only 1,611 individuals, or just 6 percent of the population, participated in any of the vocational programs offered by OES.

Approximately 5 percent of the prison population—about 1,250 inmates—participate in the Community Labor Assistance Program. Work details of approximately 10 inmates each perform service for non-profit and public entities around the state. All participants are under minimum custody levels.\footnote{New Jersey Department of Corrections. 2000. State of New Jersey Department of Corrections Annual Report, 2002.}

The Department of Corrections runs DEPTCOR, the correctional industries program for the state. This program employs about 1,800 inmates, or about 7 percent of the population, in manufacturing and service industries that include furniture and license plate manufacturing, data entry, and tele-response, in 41 facility-based programs. Manufactured products from DEPTCOR industries are used by state prisons and operations and are sold to state and local government agencies. The main goals of the program are to reduce recidivism, instill positive work habits, and provide job training to incarcerated inmates, but DEPTCOR also provides an alternative source of income for the Department of Corrections. In many states, the share of the reentering population that has participated in correctional industries is small, because inmates in these programs tend to be those that have longer prison sentences. It is not clear whether this is the case in New Jersey.

The effects of New Jersey’s vocational programs and of DEPTCOR on recidivism, employment, and other outcomes of former participants are unknown. However, studies indicate that recidivism rates are lower for inmates with industries work experience than for inmates without this experience. A
1991 analysis conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons compared more than 7,000 correctional industries and vocational program participants to similar inmates who did not participate in either of these programs. An examination of outcomes over a two-year period found that those offenders who received training and work experience while in prison had fewer conduct problems and were less likely to be arrested the first year after release than those who did not. The study also found that prison workers were 24 percent more likely to obtain a full-time or day labor job by the end of the first year after release. Over 10 percent of the comparison group had been re-arrested or had their conditional release revoked, compared with 6.6 percent of the program participants.74

**Substance Abuse Treatment**

The relationship between substance abuse and crime is well documented. Studies have found that more than half of state prisoners across the nation reported that they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time they committed the offense that led to their imprisonment. Furthermore, 74 percent of state prisoners nationwide who expect to be released within the next 12 months reported a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse.75 The issues surrounding substance abuse in New Jersey are similar to the rest of the nation. According to the New Jersey Department of Corrections 2002 annual report, 50 percent of inmates in the state correctional population have been incarcerated due to a drug-related offense.76 In addition, 81 percent of inmates suffer from some type of drug or alcohol abuse problem, and at least 50 percent of the 2002 release cohort had been assessed to have a substance abuse problem.77

To address substance abuse issues among New Jersey inmates, the New Jersey Department of Corrections worked to develop and began to implement a Substance Use Disorder Continuum of Treatment plan in 2002. This program uses both prison-based and post-release residential programming and counseling to address substance abuse problems for inmates.

The first phase of this program is implemented while an offender is incarcerated. Services are provided within the prison facilities. Upon admission to any DOC facility, each inmate undergoes a medical, dental, psychological, and educational screening process at a Central Reception and Assignment Facility. Prisoners identified as having the most severe drug and alcohol addiction issues are referred to a prison-based therapeutic community program. Typically, residents spend nine to twelve months in a therapeutic community program. Eight facilities in the NJ DOC have therapeutic community programs and have the capacity to serve 1,588 inmates (including 60 female). This represents capacity for only 6 percent of the 2002 state prison population.

Treatment continues in the community with a series of residential programs and outpatient therapy. Inmates who have participated in therapeutic communities are assessed prior to release from the Department of Corrections, and may be placed in a treatment facility. These facilities are in the community, and provide substance abuse disorder treatment and other services. Typically, offenders remain in these facilities for two to five months. After completing a

77 New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC), Division of Programs and Community Services, Office of Drug Programs. 2003. “Prevalence of Addiction of the New Jersey State Inmate.” Preliminary Report. Updated April 29; UI analysis of NJ Department of Corrections data. The discrepancy between these two numbers may be a result of incomplete data on the release cohort.
program in these facilities, inmates typically enter a work release or education program.

**Residential Placement Programs**

In 2002, NJ DOC contracted 2,803 beds in 23 community-based facilities—both treatment facilities and halfway houses. About 18 percent of the prisoners released from the DOC in 2002 were released from one of these facilities. An unknown number of these individuals received substance abuse treatment while residing in these facilities. The private contractors who provide the facilities also provide other services, such as education; employment readiness; and training, counseling, and housing resources.

The Mutual Agreement Program (MAP) is the only program offered to offenders that is a licensed residential treatment program. Private citizens also participate in this program. MAP was initially developed in 1984 as a “cooperative effort” between Department of Corrections, the Parole Board, and the Department of Health, which offers a highly structured environment with intensive addiction therapy. Participants generally begin treatment as inmates and transition to parolees while in the program. Outpatient services are also provided at five facilities for parolees who have completed a residential substance abuse treatment program. Most inmates sentenced to MAP facilities will be released to parole. There are 160 MAP beds available in New Jersey. Of these, 120 are reserved for parolees.
CHAPTER 4

How Are Prisoners Released in New Jersey?

The number and share of New Jersey prisoners being released without parole supervision has increased in recent years. As seen in figure 19, in 1990, the number of individuals released from New Jersey prisons without supervision increased 450 percent from 1,173 in 1990 to 5,340 in 2001. Accordingly, the share of prisoners that were released with supervision decreased over this period. As can be seen in figure 20, 81.4 percent of releases were to parole supervision in 1990. By 2001, this had dropped to 60.6 percent of releases. In 2002, 9,544 prisoners, 64 percent of all releases, were released to some form of supervision. The remaining 36 percent were released without supervision, meaning they had no conditions attached to their freedom, and are not required to report to a parole officer. The vast majority of prisoners released to supervision—almost 91 percent—were released to the supervision of the State Parole Board.78 The remaining 9 percent were released to the supervision of the Division of Probation, primarily to enter the Intensive Supervision Program.

PRISONER RELEASES

As New Jersey’s prison population has grown over the past two decades, so has the growth in prison releases. (See figure 1 in chapter 1.) In 2002, 14,849 people were released from the custody of the New Jersey Department of Corrections to the community, almost four times the number who were released two decades earlier (3,910 in 1980).79

In general, those individuals who were released to supervision were released through discretionary means—they appeared before a panel that reviewed their application and decided to approve their release. An unknown number of offenders released to supervision, however, experienced what is considered a mandatory release. These are certain violent offenders who were sentenced under the No Early Release Act (NERA) of 1997 (see discussion in chapter 1), who are required to serve a set period of community supervision after serving 85 percent of their sentence. NERA removed the discretion of the


79 These include individuals who were “continued on parole.”
Parole Board with respect to these offenders.\textsuperscript{80} The state does not keep data on the share of the parolee population that is subject to NERA, and we are therefore unable to estimate the share of the release cohort that was released through discretionary means.

All of the inmates who were released without supervision were released through mandatory means, primarily because they have completed their maximum sentence in prison. In 2002, 5,305 individuals, or about 36 percent of the released population, were released without supervision by mandatory release. These individuals had completed their maximum sentence (what is often referred to as “maxing out”).\textsuperscript{81} Over half (52 percent) of those who were released because they “maxed out” their sentence had previously been paroled, and had been returned to prison to complete their maximum sentence as a result of a

\textsuperscript{80} Conversation with Melinda Schlager, 21 August 2003. Data limitations do not allow us to estimate how many of the 2002 releasees were subject to this law.

\textsuperscript{81} It is not clear why a large number of inmates who are not parole violators would “max out” their prison sentence. Very few offenders in New Jersey are ineligible for parole, and those who are generally receive life sentences, and would therefore not be released. Representatives of the Department of Corrections contend that some inmates choose to remain in prison and serve out their term instead of being released to parole. There is no data to assess how significant this trend actually is. Many of the individuals had short terms, and may have earned enough diminution credits to “max out” before they became eligible for parole.
parole violation. Many of these individuals may have been ineligible for another parole term.\textsuperscript{82}

At the time of release from custody of the Department of Corrections, about 3,100, or 21 percent of the inmates released, had been residing “in the community.” Most of these—about 2,650 individuals or 18 percent of the entire release population—were released from 1 of 23 halfway houses operated and contracted by the state. Just over 450 of those residing in the community had been on electronic monitoring or in home confinement prior to release. Almost three-quarters of the inmates who had been residing in the community were supervised post-release, primarily by the Parole Board.

**POST-RELEASE SUPERVISION**

**Parole Supervision**

The Division of Parole of the New Jersey State Parole Board supervises parolees in the state.\textsuperscript{83} As New Jersey’s prison population has grown over the past two decades, so has the population under parole supervision in the state. As seen in figure 21, the parolee population increased from slightly more than 7,000 in 1977 to nearly 12,000 in 2001. In June of 2003, there were 13,195 individuals on the Division of Parole’s caseload.\textsuperscript{84}

The parolee population mirrors that of the incarcerated and released population. The majority of parolees—57 percent—are African-American, and 65 percent are between the ages of 21 and 40. Drug offenders made up about 44 percent of the population, and violent offenders made up 27 percent.

Almost half (47 percent, or 6,320 individuals) were under regular supervision.\textsuperscript{85} Less than one-third of these (1,789 individuals) were required to report to their parole officer monthly. The rest (3,571 individuals) were required to report more often than once a month—biweekly, weekly, or daily. Almost 20 percent of the parole caseload (2,486 individuals) were participating in what

**Figure 21. Parole Population in New Jersey, 1997–2001**

Source: BJS, Annual Parole Data Survey data series (CJ-7).

\textsuperscript{82} Individuals sentenced under NERA must complete their full maximum sentence when returned to prison for a parole violation and are wholly ineligible for another parole term.

\textsuperscript{83} Before September of 2001, the supervision of parolees was conducted by the Bureau of Parole in the Department of Corrections. The responsibilities were transferred to the State Parole Board by the legislature and the Governor at that time because it was believed that the processes of paroling inmates and supervising parolees would be more efficient if both functions were conducted by one entity. P.L. 2001, c.79, and Sullivan, John. 2001. “Merging of Prison System is Sought,” New York Times January 21. Section 14NJ; page 8; column 1.

\textsuperscript{84} This excludes 241 individuals who were classified as “deported” and 8 individuals who had died, but still owed fines.

\textsuperscript{85} This includes 300 individuals whose supervision level was “unspecified.”
the Parole Board considers Alternative Sanctions Programs. These programs are
described below. The Parole Board had issued warrants for approximately
12 percent of the population that was missing. Another 9 percent owed only
fines, and 7 percent were in a county jail or other facility pending a hearing or
court case for a technical parole violation or a new crime. Another 6 percent
were being supervised out of state. (See figure 22.)

In 2001, the State of New Jersey employed about 400 parole officers who
have an average caseload of about 35 (including specialized caseloads). Exclud-
ing specialized caseloads brings the average caseload to 45.

Alternative Sanctions Programs

The State Parole Board runs a number of specialized caseloads, initially designed
to tailor services and supervision levels to individuals with particular needs and
risk levels. These programs have evolved over time, and are currently being
reviewed, and those programs that are less effective may be eliminated. The
Parole Board is currently securing funding for a new 110-bed residential
program designed specifically for inmates with co-occurring mental health and
substance abuse disorders. Programs described below are those that are
currently being operated by the Parole Board.

Intensive Supervision/Surveillance Program (ISSP): This is a program for
parolees considered to be “high need,” including individuals with borderline
intelligence, psychological problems, and severe mental health issues. In addi-
tion, “high risk” parolees may be placed in ISSP, including individuals who have
committed serious offenses, have been committed to prison multiple times, or
who have failed multiple times under community supervision. New Jersey also
supervises out-of-state parolees who are transferred to New Jersey in this
program. Minimum participation is six months, the caseload ratio is 1:25, and
the program has the capacity for 975 parolees.

Figure 22. Parole Population by Supervision Status, 2003

Source: UI analysis of NJ State Parole Board Data; * Includes individuals for whom supervision status was unknown.
High Impact Diversion Program (HIDP): This program is designed for individuals with an intermediate level of risk. Each officer has no more than 15 cases. Participants are technical parole violators who can be safely diverted from re-incarceration with little risk to public safety. Program participation is for 90 days, and can be extended for an additional 30 days. In June of 2003, no parolees on the active caseload were classified as being in HIDP.

Intensive Parole Drug Program (IPDP): Any parolee with a substance abuse problem can be referred to IPDP. This program provides an intensive level of supervision, focusing primarily on relapse prevention, and with attention to interventions and counseling referrals. Participants in IPDP may have also participated in an institutional therapeutic community and/or the Mutual Agreement Program (see below). Caseload ratios are 1:25, and participation is for a minimum of six months, with an option to extend an additional three months.

Electronic Monitoring Program: This program is exclusively for parole violators, and is the most restrictive type of community supervision in New Jersey. Participants are subject to strictly enforced curfews, and are expected to find employment. There is “zero tolerance” for substance abuse. Participation is for a minimum of 90 days, and the caseload ratio is 1:20. This program has the capacity to supervise 400 parolees.

Day Reporting Centers (DRC): This alternative sanctions program requires technical parole violators to report daily to a non-residential center. They must spend all day, every day at this center until a Parole Officer releases them from this level of supervision. Programming is provided at this center, including education services (G.E.D and ESL classes), vocational employment services, substance abuse treatment, independent living skills, and a number of other services. There are seven DRCs across the state, each with 50 slots for parolees.

Halfway Back Programs (HWB): These assessment-driven residential treatment programs are designed for technical parole violators as an alternative to revoking parole and returning the violators to prison. Services are provided based on the needs of each individual offender. There are currently three Halfway Back Facilities, with a total program capacity of 450 parolees.

Mutual Agreement Program (MAP): See chapter 3 for more about this program for substance abusing inmates and parolees, run jointly by the Parole Board, the Department of Corrections, and the Department of Health.

Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI): In January of 2003, the Parole Board began to implement the state’s Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative. This program is funded by a $2 million grant over three years from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, which supports reentry initiatives nationwide. This grant provides the opportunity for New Jersey to focus the efforts of at least seven state agencies and a number of faith-based and community organizations on 200 juvenile and 100 adult offenders who are being released by the Juvenile Justice Commission or the Department of Corrections. These offenders have been classified as high-risk...
and are returning to Essex and Camden counties. Programming includes job training and placement, educational services, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, restitution, housing assistance, mentoring, counseling, aftercare, crisis intervention, life skills training, supervision, and intensive case management. The planning and development of the program began in July of 2002, and implementation of this program began in January of 2003. All participating offenders will be released between October 2003 and April 2004. The grant expires in 2005. The Parole Board views this program as a pilot program. Currently, it is designed to supervise about 2 percent of the parole population.

**Probation Supervision**

As previously stated, 9 percent of inmates who are supervised post-release are released to the supervision of the Division of Probation in the Administrative Office of the Courts. Almost all of these individuals are released to participate in the Intensive Supervision Program (ISP), a program run by the Division of Probation. Developed in 1983, this program is seen as an intermediate punishment, and serves as both an early release program and a form of supervision for its participants. It was initially developed to alleviate some of the overcrowding experienced by the state’s prisons.

Unlike traditional parole-based intensive supervision programs, ISP is designed and limited to offenders who are assessed as low-risk. The program was designed, in part, to test the cost-effectiveness of alternatives to incarceration. Since the program began in 1983 and September of 2002, approximately 10,000 ex-offenders had participated in the program. Over 4,600 participants have graduated from the program, and at any given time, there are about 1,200 individuals under supervision by ISP. The remainder—about 4,200 participants—failed to complete the program. Supervision by ISP involves extensive contact with an ISP officer, surveillance, a curfew, and frequent drug testing. Participants must maintain full-time employment, participate in 16 hours of community service monthly, keep a diary, attend treatment, and pay any child support, court fees, and costs of the program. Participants can be returned to prison for failing to adhere to program rules. Intermediate sanctions are used for all participant infractions. ISP’s own analysis has determined that the program works. The recidivism rate for program graduates is 7.9 percent. The program has been estimated to save the state almost $300 million dollars in avoided prison costs.
### Sentence Reduction Credits

There are a number of ways that New Jersey inmates can reduce their sentence through credits. The most common of these are commutation credits, otherwise known as “good time” credits. All inmates who are not subject to a mandatory minimum are awarded with a number of these credits at admission. The number of credits each inmate is awarded is calculated based on state statute. Inmates can lose these credits by committing infractions. The number of credits lost depends on the offense committed, and can be up to 365 days. They can earn back up to 75 percent of any credits that are lost by remaining charge-free for three years. This can also be prorated. For example, an individual could earn back 25 percent of credits lost by remaining charge-free for any one-year period.

Individuals can also earn work credits. For every five days spent in “productive custody,” they are issued one day of credit off of their sentence. In addition, they can earn “reduced custody credits,” which are earned by inmates in one of three reduced-security statuses (gang minimum custody, full-minimum custody, and community custody). For each month or part of a month spent in one of these statuses, inmates earn three days off their sentence. After they have remained in this status for a year, they earn five days a month.

These credits are subtracted from an inmate’s total sentence to calculate his or her parole eligibility date. Inmates who are subject to a period of parole ineligibility cannot reduce their period of ineligibility by earning sentence reduction credits. They can, however, earn time off their overall sentence.

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90 Conversation with Dave Levay, NJ Department of Corrections, 15 August 2003; E-mail conversation with the NJ Department of Corrections, Office of Policy and Planning, 14 October 2003.
Chapter 5
Where Are Prisoners Returning?

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. This chapter presents findings from a geographic analysis of returning inmates by county and examines this reentry distribution in relation to the socioeconomic characteristics of the counties with the highest percentages of released prisoners in 2002, Essex and Camden. In addition to an exploration of the geographic distribution of the incarcerated adult population, analyses of parolees, juvenile offenders, and probationers are also presented, as is their geographic overlap with recipients of needs-based government programs.

During 2002, 95 percent of prisoners released from New Jersey prisons returned to communities in New Jersey. Of the men and women released in New Jersey, almost one-third—31 percent—returned to two counties in the state, Essex and Camden. This included 2,430 or 16 percent of all releases, returning to Essex County, and 2,270 individuals, or 15 percent of the released population, returning to Camden County. The flow of prisoners was further concentrated in a small number of communities within these counties. Thirteen percent of all releases, or 1,705 individuals, returned to New Jersey’s largest city, Newark, in Essex County. Another 1,280 individuals, or 10 percent of the total release population, returned to the city of Camden.

Essex and Camden counties present challenges to adults and juveniles attempting to successfully reenter society from prison, especially with regard to finding or preparing oneself for employment and supporting oneself financially. The residents of Essex and Camden counties, and particularly those of the cities of Newark and Camden, face many economic and social disadvantages compared to many other parts of the state. The statewide median household income is $55,146. For the cities of Newark and Camden, however, it is $26,913 and $23,421, respectively. According to the 2000 Census, New Jersey’s unemployment rate was 3.7 percent. At the same time, unemployment in Newark was at 8.5 percent and Camden 7.8 percent. One-quarter of Newark’s families and one-
third of Camden’s families lived in poverty in 1999. Over one-third of Newark’s households and almost half of Camden’s were female-headed. Statewide, only 20 percent were female-headed.91

NEW JERSEY’S COUNTIES

New Jersey’s counties are home to a diverse population and divergent living conditions. These conditions provide the backdrop for the state’s criminal justice populations, which reside disproportionately in particular counties. Camden and Essex counties are home to more parolees and prisoners than are any other counties, and they also experience high per capita concentrations of parolees, admissions to, and releases from prison. With a per capita rate of 400 prison admissions per 100,000 residents, Camden county residents experience a rate of imprisonment 100 times higher than Morris County, at 4 prison admissions per 100,000 residents. As maps 1–3 illustrate, parolees, admissions to, and returns from prison are all disproportionately concentrated in a few counties.

As policymakers consider a number of approaches to addressing the challenges of concentrated prisoner reentry, they are increasingly looking for opportunities to make existing resources go further. One potential source of increased resource efficiency is found in the considerable overlap between criminal justice populations and populations being served by government needs-based program services, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Map 4 is suggestive of possibilities for cross-agency collaboration between departments of criminal justice and social services, whose overlapping client populations are highly concentrated within the same counties.

A closer examination of Essex and Camden counties further suggests the heightened challenges of prisoner reentry faced by particular communities within these counties. Concentrated populations affected by criminal justice agencies also suggest opportunities for cross-sector collaborations and economy of scale solutions.

Essex County and Newark

Social and Economic Characteristics

Essex County is home to a number of municipalities with diverse populations and divergent standards of living. Although ethnically diverse, the county’s residential population is geographically separated by race (map 5) with black populations concentrated in Newark, East Orange, and Irvington in the east and white populations distributed across the remaining cities in the west. Newark and East Orange suffer starkly lower household incomes (map 6), high rates of single parent households (map 7), and high rates of poverty (map 8). Together, these characteristics make up the social and economic backdrop to the county’s concentrated criminal justice activity, particularly in the communities of Newark.

Parolees account for 64 percent of the returning prisoner population in New Jersey. As such, they represent a snapshot of the communities to which prisoners return. In Essex County, parolees are concentrated in Newark, where they account for both the highest number (804) and highest per capita rate (294 per 100,000) among all other municipalities (map 9). But even within Newark, parolees reside in particular neighborhoods and not others. Some neighborhoods within the Central and Southern Wards of Newark are home to more than 10 parolees per 1,000 residents, while most neighborhoods in the Northern and Eastern Wards have less than one parolee per 1,000 residents (map 10). Likewise, a snapshot of probationers in Essex County illustrates that although there are many more probationers than parolees, they too concentrate at high numbers and per capita rates in Newark (map 11), and within Newark in the same Southern and Central Wards (map 12).

Ninety-five percent of people admitted to prison eventually return to their communities. Essex County accounts for 16.3 percent of New Jersey’s prison admissions with 54 percent of those coming from Newark alone (map 13). Within Newark, the Central and Southern Wards account for 55.3 percent of prison admissions from the city (map 14). Some neighborhoods within those wards send people to prison at a rate of more than 12 per 1,000 residents—in stark contrast to most neighborhoods in the Northern and Eastern Wards, which send less than 1 per 1,000 residents. The implications for those neighborhoods are substantial. Because most people sent to prison return to their communities in fewer than three years, the flow of large concentrations of residents out of and into a few isolated neighborhoods constitutes a virtual ongoing migration system that can undermine neighborhood stability and strain community resources.92

As previously stated, 41 percent of prison admissions in New Jersey in 1998 resulted from a revocation of parole. The vast majority of these resulted from technical violations. Of the 1,286 people admitted to prison in 2001 from Newark, 390 (30.3 percent) were admitted on the basis of technical violations of parole.

Another way to understand imprisonment geographically is as a public spending policy for the safety of places. Although decisions to incarcerate are made on an individual basis, cumulatively they amount to vast sums of money concentrated on dealing with the problems of a few neighborhoods. For example, within Essex County the state spends over $53 million a year to imprison residents from Newark (map 15).93 Within Newark, prison expenditures exceed $15 million annually for the Central Ward alone (map 16), where the state spends more than $1 million a year to incarcerate people from a single block.

Juvenile Justice

The same pattern of population concentrations and resource expenditures hold for the juvenile justice system. Essex County residents admitted to the custody of the state’s Juvenile Justice Commission are highly concentrated in Newark (130 juvenile admissions or 54 percent all juvenile admissions from Essex County) and within Newark come from a small number of neighborhoods.


93 This estimate is most likely low. It does not include imprisonment costs for people sent to prison who did not have an identifiable address for the county. Moreover, the cost estimates are based solely on average per diem costs of incarceration and estimated length of time prisoners will actually serve (calculated by George Washington University’s Institute of Crime, Justice & Corrections), and do not include associated law enforcement, judicial, or other collateral costs.
The costs associated with incarcerating juveniles from these few neighborhoods are likewise substantial, amounting to more than $8 million annually for juveniles from Newark alone (map 18).

**Social Services**

During these times of severe state budget constraints, policymakers are increasingly looking for ways to make existing resources go further. One emerging approach being considered is better coordination of government services across sectors that are serving the same populations. Geographic research on needs-based government programs, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is identifying the extent to which criminal justice populations reside in the same neighborhoods as TANF recipients (map 19). These two government sectors are not only serving the same neighborhoods, but are likely serving the same families and individuals. Further analysis could uncover opportunities to combine services and/or funding streams so that their efforts reinforce one another rather than operate in isolation.

**Camden County and the City of Camden**

**Social and Economic Characteristics**

Like Essex County, Camden County is home to a number of municipalities with diverse populations and divergent standards of living. Although ethnically diverse, the county’s residential population is geographically separated by race (map 20) with black populations almost entirely concentrated in the city of Camden with a slightly greater racial diversity in the middle of the county. Nevertheless, the city of Camden suffers starkly lower household incomes (map 21), higher rates of single parent households (map 22), and higher rates of poverty (map 23) than any other municipality in the county. Together, these characteristics provide the social and economic context to the county’s concentrated criminal justice activity, particularly in the city of Camden’s communities.

**Criminal Justice**

In Camden County, parolees are concentrated in the city of Camden, where they account for both the highest number (1,144) and highest per capita rate (1,430 per 100,000 residents) among all other municipalities (map 24). Even within the city of Camden, parolees reside in particular neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods in Camden, such as Pyne Point, Lanning Square, Cooper Poynt, and Gateway are home to more than 20 parolees per 1,000 residents, while other neighborhoods such as Fairview, Biedeman, and the Central Business District have fewer than 7 parolees per 1,000 residents (map 25). Likewise, a snapshot of probationers in Camden County illustrates that, although there are many more probationers than parolees, they too are concentrated at high numbers and per capita rates in the city of Camden (map 26). Within the city of Camden, probationers reside in the same high-concentration neighborhoods as parolees (map 27).
Camden County accounts for 14 percent of New Jersey’s prison admissions with 60 percent of those coming from the city of Camden alone (map 28). Within the city of Camden, 7 of the city’s 21 neighborhoods account for 52.4 percent of prison admissions from the city (map 29). Some neighborhoods within those wards send people to prison at a rate of more than 22 per 1,000 residents—in stark contrast to better-off neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, which send less than 7 per 1,000 residents. As with neighborhoods in Newark, the implications of heavy flows of prison migration for these places can undermine neighborhood stability and strain community resources.

Of the 1,244 people admitted to prison in 2001 from the city of Camden, 351 (28.2 percent) were admitted on the basis of technical violations of parole.

From a public spending perspective, the state spends over $53 million dollars per year to imprison residents from the city of Camden (map 30). Within the city, prison expenditures for the Pyne Point and Whitman Park communities alone exceed $11 million annually (map 31), where the state spends more than $1 million a year to incarcerate people from a single block.

**Juvenile Justice**

The same pattern of population concentrations and resource expenditures holds for the juvenile justice system. Camden County residents admitted to the custody of the state’s Juvenile Justice Commission are highly concentrated in the city of Camden (287 or 67.7 percent) and within the city come from a small number of neighborhoods (map 32). The costs associated with incarcerating juveniles from these few neighborhoods are likewise substantial, amounting to more than $23 million annually for juveniles from the city of Camden alone (map 33).

**Social Services**

Geographic research on needs-based government programs is identifying the extent to which criminal justice populations in the city of Camden reside in the same neighborhoods as the bulk of TANF recipients (map 34), suggesting the sort of resource efficiencies that could be achieved as those identified in Newark and Essex County.
Map 1. Parolees per 1,000 Residents, New Jersey Counties, 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Parolees per 1,000</th>
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<td>Essex</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson</td>
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<td>Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passaic</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouth</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunterdon</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Admissions per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunterdon</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouth</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passaic</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admissions per 1,000 Residents

- 3.3 - 4.7
- 2.1 - 3.2
- 1.1 - 2.0
- 0.4 - 1.0
Map 3. Prison Releases per 1,000 Residents, New Jersey Counties, 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Prison Releases per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>2,430 3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>2,279 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>1,520 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>1,235 4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1,199 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passaic</td>
<td>1,114 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouth</td>
<td>904 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex</td>
<td>784 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>825 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer</td>
<td>531 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>423 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>384 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May</td>
<td>346 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>249 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>200 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>173 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>167 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>149 2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>125 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>95 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunterdon</td>
<td>71 0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map 4. TANF Cases per 1,000 Residents, New Jersey Counties, 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>TANF Cases per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>11347 14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>5628 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>4183 8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passaic</td>
<td>3074 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer</td>
<td>2213 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1987 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex</td>
<td>1496 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouth</td>
<td>1335 9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>1293 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>975 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>814 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>807 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>772 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>677 2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>349 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May</td>
<td>307 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>220 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>198 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>101 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunterdon</td>
<td>34 0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 5. Where Are Prisoners Returning?


Map 9. Parolees per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Essex County, New Jersey, 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Parolees per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Orange</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvington</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Orange</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Jersey</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Orange</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belleville</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maplewood</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingston</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Orange Grove</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Orange Village</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Ridge</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maplewood</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Grove</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Orange</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montclair</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Orange</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belleville</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutley</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingston</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex Fells</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Map 10. Parolees per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Newark, New Jersey, 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Parolees per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>185</td>
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<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Newark Wards
Parolees per 1,000 Residents

- 10.01 - 76.92
- 5.01 - 10.00
- 3.01 - 5.00
- 0.28 - 3.00
- 0
Map 11. Probationers per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Essex County, New Jersey, 2003.

Map 12. Probationers per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Newark, New Jersey, 2003.
Map 13. Prison Admissions per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Essex County, New Jersey, 2001.

Map 14. Prison Admissions per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Newark, New Jersey, 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>$93,097,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Orange</td>
<td>$12,995,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>$7,615,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Orange</td>
<td>36,774,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montclair</td>
<td>$4,597,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>$4,127,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Orange</td>
<td>$1,908,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>$1,638,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutley</td>
<td>$1,421,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Ridge</td>
<td>$1,278,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingston</td>
<td>$1,116,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Grove</td>
<td>$1,019,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belleville</td>
<td>$1,062,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Orange Village</td>
<td>$882,816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only Municipalities with > $500,000 are included in this table*


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>$15,374,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>$14,008,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>$12,176,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>$6,837,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>$5,610,244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 5. Where Are Prisoners Returning? 53

Map 19. TANF Cases per 1,000 Residents by Zip Code, Essex County, New Jersey, 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>TANF Cases per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEWARK</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST ORANGE</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRVINGTON</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY OF ORANGE</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELLEVILLE</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONTCLAIR</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAUPAUL</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only Municipalities with at least 20 TANF Cases are included in the table.*


Map 24. Parolees per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Camden County, New Jersey, 2002.

Map 25. Parolees per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Camden City, New Jersey, 2002.
Map 26. Probationers per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Camden County, New Jersey, 2003.

Map 27. Probationers per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Camden City, New Jersey, 2001.
Map 28. Prison Admissions per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Camden County, New Jersey, 2001.

Map 29. Prison Admissions per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group, Camden City, New Jersey, 2001.
Chapter 5. Where Are Prisoners Returning?


- Municipalities
- Prison Expenditure
- $1,000,000.01 - $1,974,252.00
- $500,000.01 - $1,000,000.00
- $200,000.01 - $500,000.00
- $26,904.00 - $200,000.00


- Neighborhood
- Prison Expenditure
- $1,000,000.01 - $1,974,252.00
- $750,000.01 - $1,000,000.00
- $500,000.01 - $750,000.00
- $132,012.00 - $500,000.00
**Map 32.** Juvenile Justice Commission Admissions to Custody, Camden County, New Jersey by Census Block-Group, 2001.

*Only Municipalities with an admission count greater than zero are included in this table.*

**Map 33.** Juvenile Justice Commission Expenditures for Custody, Camden County, New Jersey by Census Block-Group.

*Only Municipalities with an expenditure greater than zero are included in this table.*
Map 34. TANF Cases per 1,000 Residents by Zip Codes, Camden County, New Jersey, 2003.

*Only Municipalities with at least 20 TANF Cases are included in the table.
This report highlights the many challenges and opportunities prisoner reentry poses for the state of New Jersey and for the individuals released from New Jersey’s prisons. As the size of the New Jersey prison population has increased over the past two decades, so too has the number of inmates being released from prison. Thus, more and more returning prisoners are faced with the many challenges of reentry, including finding jobs, housing, and substance abuse treatment; reuniting with family; and reintegrating into the community. Given the increasing numbers of returning prisoners and the fact that they are returning to a small number of communities in the state, the impact of reentry on communities is a particularly pressing problem. Clearly, prisoner reentry is an important policy issue and one that has significant implications for public safety and quality of life across the state. This summary section highlights the key findings in this report and raises additional questions with regard to reentry in New Jersey.

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 New Jersey has experienced similar incarceration and release trends and thus faces the reentry challenges that accompany such growth. Between 1977 and 2002, the New Jersey prison population more than quadrupled. This growth is largely attributable to more people, specifically drug offenders and parole violators, being sent to prison. The share of the prison population that consists of drug offenders increased sixfold between 1980 and 2002, from 6 to 36 percent of the population. Between 1980 and 1998, the number of parole violators returning to prison in New Jersey has also increased over sixfold, reflecting an increase from 30 to 41 percent of all admissions to New Jersey prisons during that period. It is believed that the vast majority of these revocations were for technical violations and that relatively few were for new crimes.
The number of people released from New Jersey’s prisons reflects these rising admissions and population trends: 14,849 prisoners were released from New Jersey prisons in 2002, nearly four times the number released in 1980. The 2002 release cohort is overwhelmingly male (91 percent) and mostly black (63 percent). Over three-quarters of the population were between 20 and 40 years old at the time of release, with an average age of 34. Over one-third had been serving time for drug offenses. About a third of the cohort has been diagnosed with at least one chronic and/or communicable physical or mental health condition, not including substance abuse. Of those inmates released in New Jersey in 2002, 39 percent were incarcerated for a violation of parole. Nearly 12 percent of the cohort was again in the custody of the Department of Corrections in June of 2003 when we received their data.

Some programming is provided to prepare New Jersey’s inmates to successfully reenter society. Programs focus on academic and vocational services and substance abuse treatment. Limited funding prevents these programs from being available to large proportions of the prison population. Because of statutory requirements, the academic services that are available are focused on the youngest of inmates, who represent less than 1 percent of individuals released in 2002.

The share of New Jersey’s prisoners released to parole supervision has decreased in recent years. In 2002, 64 percent of all releases were released to some form of supervision. The majority of these were released at the discretion of the Parole Board. Of the 36 percent of releases who were released to no supervision, at least half had been returned to prison as a result of a parole revocation.

Almost one-third of prisoners released in 2002 came from two counties—Essex and Camden—that face great economic and social disadvantage. The median household income in the central cities of these two counties is less than 50 percent of the statewide median household income. Unemployment in the central cities is significantly higher than in the rest of the state, and large shares of the population live in poverty and in single parent households.

The high concentration of criminal justice populations returning to and residing in a few key inner city communities also suggests new opportunities for better combining scarce resources in ways that are more efficient and effective. With state budgets straining under the pressure of impending deficits, all government agencies are being asked to rethink the way they do business. The fact that reentry challenges are concentrated in a limited number of communities also means that targeted interventions and investments in those places could have economy of scale impacts that reverberate beyond those communities alone. Moreover, because all government agencies are facing the same budgetary challenges, there is an increased incentive to look across agencies for opportunities to work collaboratively so that policies do not work in isolation of one another and instead reinforce community-targeted solutions to the related issues of high levels of criminal justice, needs-based program services, poverty, and family instability.

It is clear that the challenges of reentry in New Jersey are great, but so are the opportunities. The fact that the federal government has awarded the State of New Jersey $2 million over three years to support a pilot reentry program holds
great promise for the reentry prospects of future cohorts of released prisoners. The work of the New Jersey Reentry Roundtable, along with the state’s participation in the National Governor’s Association Reentry Policy Academy, will help the state to develop a strategic response to the challenge of prisoner reentry in New Jersey. We hope that this report 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.