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Bureau of Justice Statistics

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3 IN 4 FORMER PRISONERS IN 30 STATES ARRESTED WITHIN 5 YEARS OF RELEASE

WASHINGTON – An estimated two-thirds (68 percent) of 405,000 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 were arrested for a new crime within three years of release from prison, and three-quarters (77 percent) were arrested within five years, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today.

More than a third (37 percent) of prisoners who were arrested within five years of release were arrested within the first six months after release, with more than half (57 percent) arrested by the end of the first year.

These findings are based on a BJS data collection, *Recidivism of State Prisoners Released in 2005*, which tracked a sample of former prison inmates from 30 states for five years following release in 2005.

During the five years after release, prisoners in the study were arrested about 1.2 million times across the country. A sixth (16 percent) of released prisoners were responsible for nearly half (48 percent) of the arrests. About two in five (42 percent) released prisoners were either not arrested or were arrested no more than once in the five years after release.

The longer released prisoners went without being arrested, the less likely they were to be arrested at all during the follow-up period. For example, 43 percent of released prisoners were arrested within one year of release, compared to 13 percent of those not arrested by the end of year four who were arrested in the fifth year after release.

Among prisoners released in 2005 in 23 states with available data on inmates returned to prison, about half (50 percent) had either a parole or probation violation or an arrest for a new crime within three years that led to imprisonment, and more than half (55 percent) had a parole or probation violation or an arrest within five years that led to imprisonment.

Recidivism rates varied with the attributes of the inmate. Prisoners released after serving time for a property offense were the most likely to recidivate. Within five years of release, 82 percent of property offenders were arrested for a new crime, compared to 77 percent of drug offenders, 74 percent of public order offenders and 71 percent of violent offenders.

Released prisoners who were incarcerated for a violent, property or drug crime were more likely than other released inmates to be arrested for a similar type of crime. Regardless of the incarceration offense, the majority (58 percent) of released prisoners were arrested for a public order offense within five years of release. An estimated 39 percent of released prisoners were arrested within five years for a drug offense, 38 percent for a property offense and 29 percent for a violent offense.

Recidivism was highest among males, blacks and young adults. By the end of the fifth year after release, more than three-quarters (78 percent) of males and two-thirds (68 percent) of females were arrested, a 10 percentage point difference that remained relatively stable during the entire 5-year follow-up period.

Five years after release from prison, black offenders had the highest recidivism rate (81 percent), compared to Hispanic (75 percent) and white (73 percent) offenders.

Recidivism rates declined with age. Within five years of release, 84 percent of inmates who were age 24 or younger at release were arrested for a new offense, compared to 79 percent of inmates ages 25 to 39 and 69 percent of those age 40 or older.

The arrest of former prisoners after release increased with the extent of their criminal history. Within five years of release, 61 percent of released inmates with four or fewer arrests in their prior criminal history were arrested, compared to 86 percent of those who had 10 or more prior arrests.

Many inmates had multi-state criminal history records. About a tenth (11 percent) of prisoners had an arrest within five years of release in a state other than the one that released them, and nearly a quarter (25 percent) of the released prisoners had a prior out-of-state arrest.

These findings from the recidivism study on prisoners released in 2005 in 30 states and tracked to 2010 cannot be directly compared to the previous BJS study on prisoners released in 1994 in 15 states due to changes in the demographic characteristics and criminal histories of the U.S. prison population, an increase in the number of states in the study and improvements made to the quality and completeness of the nation's criminal history records since the mid-1990s.

The report, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010* (NCJ 244205), was written by BJS statisticians Matthew R. Durose, Alexia D. Cooper and Howard N. Snyder. The reports, related documents and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

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