

# The Changing Profile Of Ohio Inmates: 1984-1994

Office of Management Information Systems  
Bureau of Research  
February, 1996

George V. Voinovich  
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Research Study  
96-1S

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**THE CHANGING PROFILE OF OHIO INMATES: 1984 - 1994**

AUTHORS/ RESEARCHERS: Jay Foos, Shawn Schwaner

This study compares Ohio's inmate population from 1984 to 1994, as that population was described in a series of inmate census reports. Variables available for comparison were sex, race, age, county of commitment and sentence.

These are the key findings from the study:

1. Inmate sentences have moved toward the ends. There has been growth among the very short, determinate sentences, a pattern that all senior staff realized. Less obvious is that among indeterminate sentence inmates, there was a shift toward longer minimums and maximums, those just below life sentences. (Surprisingly, the proportion of inmates with life sentences is down.) Implications are, first, that the Department will be under stress to deal with large groups of inmates with very different time frames in the system. Second, the group of inmates with the longer sentences will generate more need for higher security cells; such institutions may be more stable, due to the low turnover of the population. At the same time the situation is more threatening, since the possibility of release in the immediate future has always helped to control behavior.
2. The inmate population is aging. This will have some consequences on behavior and costs, especially in the medical area. At the same time, there is no imminent aging crisis. The bulge of baby boomers has now reached the 40's, with proportionately no increase in the 50 and above age group.
3. The shift over the decade of African-Americans from a minority to a majority of the inmate population has social implications and may have implications for programming.
4. In many ways there was remarkable stability over the decade. Most changes did not vary as much as expected. The proportions of women and urban inmates were essentially unchanged over the decade.



# Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

1050 Freeway Drive, North,  
Columbus, Ohio 43229

George V. Voinovich, Governor

Reginald A. Wilkinson, Director

**To:** All Concerned

**From:** Steve Van Dine, Chief  
Bureau of Research

**RE:** The Changing Profile of Ohio Inmates

**Date:** February 23, 1996

Attached is a summary of how Ohio's prison population changed over the decade 1984 to 1994. As that population changes, it poses different management challenges. The changes since the early 1980's suggest the following concerns:

1. Inmate sentences have moved toward the ends. There has been growth among the very short, determinate sentences, a pattern that all senior staff realized. Less obvious is that among indeterminate sentence inmates, there was a shift toward longer minimums and maximums, those just below life sentences. (Surprisingly, the proportion of inmates with life sentences is down.) Implications are, first, that the Department will be under stress to deal with large groups of inmates with very different time frames in the system. Second, the group of inmates with the longer sentences will generate more need for higher security cells; such institutions may be more stable, due to the low turnover of the population. At the same time the situation is more threatening, since the possibility of release in the immediate future has always helped to control behavior.
2. The inmate population is aging. This will have some consequences on behavior and costs, especially in the medical area. At the same time, there is no imminent aging crisis. The bulge of baby boomers has now reached the 40's, with no increase in the 50 and above age group.
3. The shift over the decade of African-Americans from a minority to a majority of the inmate population has social implications and may have implications for programming.

Another observation is that there was remarkable stability over the decade. Most changes did not vary as much as this observer expected. The proportion of women and urban inmates did not modify at all.

I hope managers in the department may find this information useful. Please contact me if you have questions or comments.



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# Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

1050 Freeway Drive, North,  
Columbus, Ohio 43229

George V. Voinovich, Governor

Reginald A. Wilkinson, Director

**TO:** All Concerned

**FROM:** R. Jay Foos, Researcher; Shawn L. Schwaner, Intern

**DATE:** February 20, 1996

**SUBJECT:** Profile of Ohio Prison Census, July 1984 - July 1994

The following report profiles the prison population and prison sentences in Ohio from July 1984 through July 1994. The profile characteristics reported here include sex, race, county of commitment, minimum/maximum sentences and most serious offense.

The information contained within this report was generated from institutional Census Reports for that time period, and the information collected for the individual Census Reports came, in later years, from the on-line inmate data system, OBSCIS (Offender-Based Correctional Information System), and in earlier years from hand tallies. Data were not available for 1986 and 1988.

To briefly summarize the data, several trends are evident over the period of July 1984 to July 1994. First, the State's prison population has increased from 17,340 to 40,501 (133.6%). Second, as of 1991 there are now more blacks than whites incarcerated in Ohio (55% to 45% of the prison population, respectively, in July 1994). Third, there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of male to female inmates in the institutions (-.5%). Fourth, Cuyahoga County continues to make up the highest percentage of institutional commitments, with the order of the top six counties remaining virtually unchanged.

Fifth, there has been some noticeable shifts in sentencing outcomes since 1984. The ratio of indeterminate sentences to determinate sentence has decreased from 1:6.1 to 1:3.5 (the lowest being 1:3.1 in 1993). The length of determinate sentences has generally increased since 1984. The proportion of those serving *half* year sentences dropped 6.5% (from 13.5% to 7%) and *one* year sentences dropped 17.8% (from 43.8% to 26%), while the proportion of sentences of 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, and *greater-than three* years increased markedly.

The structure of indeterminate sentencing has demonstrated similar patterns. The lengths of both minimum and maximum sentences have increased. The proportion of those serving *less-than five* year minimum sentences decreased from 56.2% in 1985 to 29.6% in 1994. A similar trend was found for life and death sentences, which showed a decrease in proportion from 8.9% to 4% over the same period. Increasing minimum sentence categories were *5 to 10.5* years (27% to 46.3%), *11 to 14.5* years (2.5% to 6%), and *greater-than fifteen* years (6.8% to 14.1%). The proportion of those serving indeterminate maximum sentences of *less-than or equal-to five* years decreased from 14.2% to 3.6%, *5.5 to 10* years from 8.8% to 8%, *20.5 to 25* years from 32.2% to 23.6%, and life or death sentences from 13.9% to 11.4%. Increasing maximum sentence categories were *10.5 to 15* years (19.1% to 24.3%), *15.5 to 20* years (1.8% to 7.8%), and *greater-than twenty* years (10% to 20.2%).

The remainder of this report summarizes the ten-year period in greater detail.

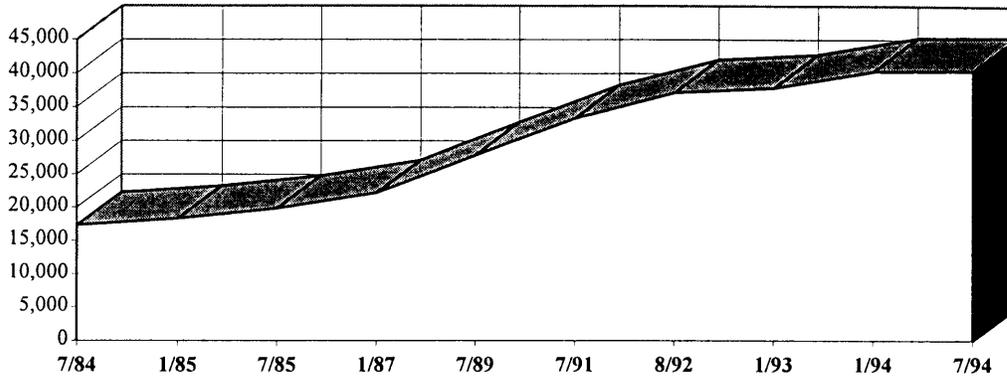


## TRENDS IN OHIO PRISON POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS: JULY 1984 TO JULY 1994

**TABLE 1. TOTAL INMATE POPULATION**

7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
17,340	18,351	19,861	22,175	27,847	33,353	37,131	37,887	40,335	40,501

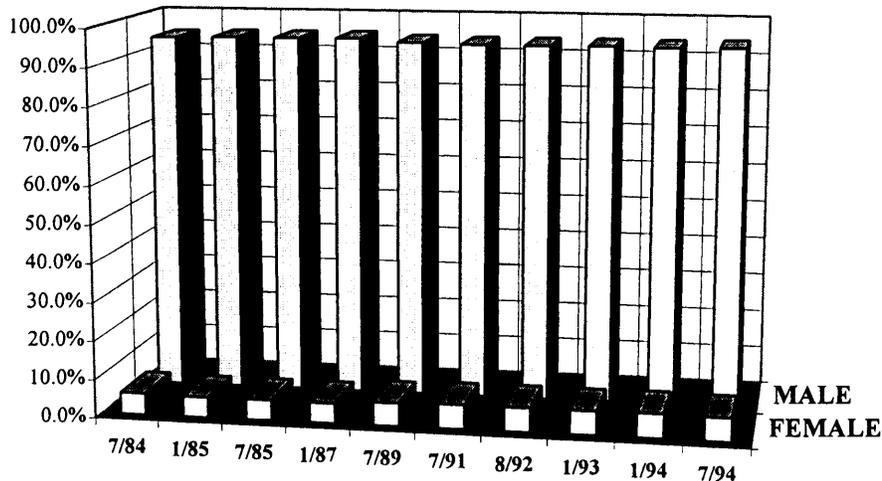
The institutional population in Ohio has increased 133.6% over the period July 1984 to July 1994, from 17,340 to 40,501.



**TABLE 2. SEX OF INMATE**

7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
<b>MALE</b>									
16,374	17,382	18,807	21,022	26,188	31,261	34,790	35,553	37,801	38,017
94.4%	94.7%	94.7%	94.8%	94.0%	93.7%	93.7%	93.8%	93.7%	93.9%
<b>FEMALE</b>									
966	969	1,054	1,153	1,659	2,092	2,341	2,334	2,534	2,484
5.6%	5.3%	5.3%	5.2%	6.0%	6.3%	6.3%	6.2%	6.3%	6.1%

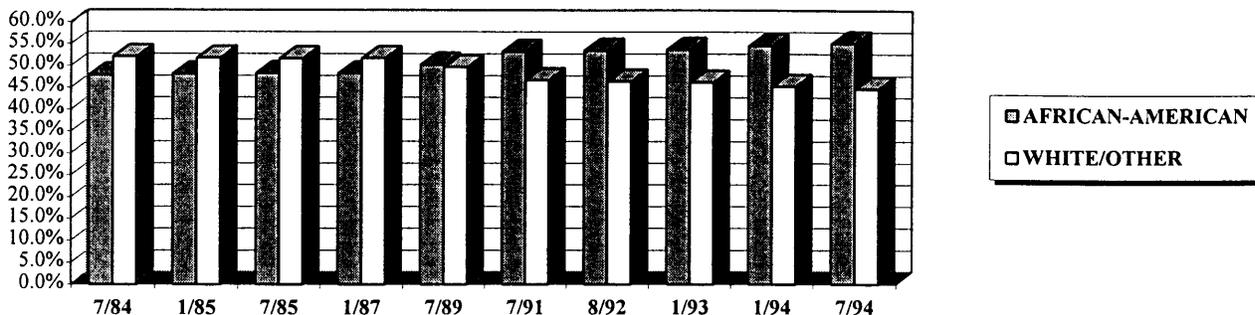
While males continue to overwhelmingly dominate the prison population, the percentage of female inmates has increased slightly, from 5.6% to 6.1%, with a low of 5.2% in 1987.



**TABLE 3. RACE OF INMATE**

7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
<b>AFRICAN-AMERICAN</b>									
8,846	8,838	9,598	10,703	13,997	17,771	19,889	20,380	22,048	22,366
47.9%	48.2%	48.3%	48.3%	50.3%	53.3%	53.6%	53.8%	54.7%	55.2%
<b>WHITE/OTHER</b>									
9,633	9,513	10,263	11,472	13,850	15,577	17,242	17,507	18,287	18,135
52.1%	51.8%	51.7%	51.7%	49.7%	46.7%	46.4%	46.2%	45.3%	44.8%

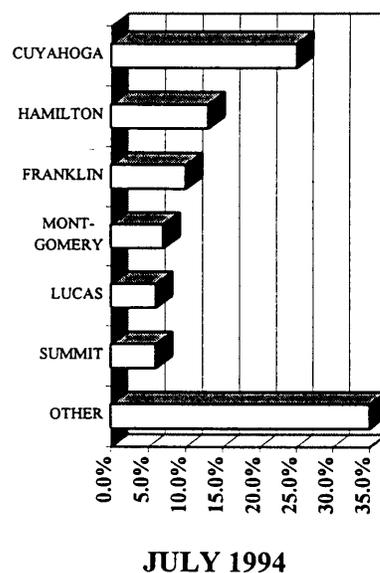
Figure 3 shows that between July 1989 and July 1991, African-Americans surpassed White/Others in percentage of the total inmate population. As of July 1994, African-Americans accounted for 55.2% of the total inmate population.



**TABLE 4. COUNTY OF COMMITMENT**

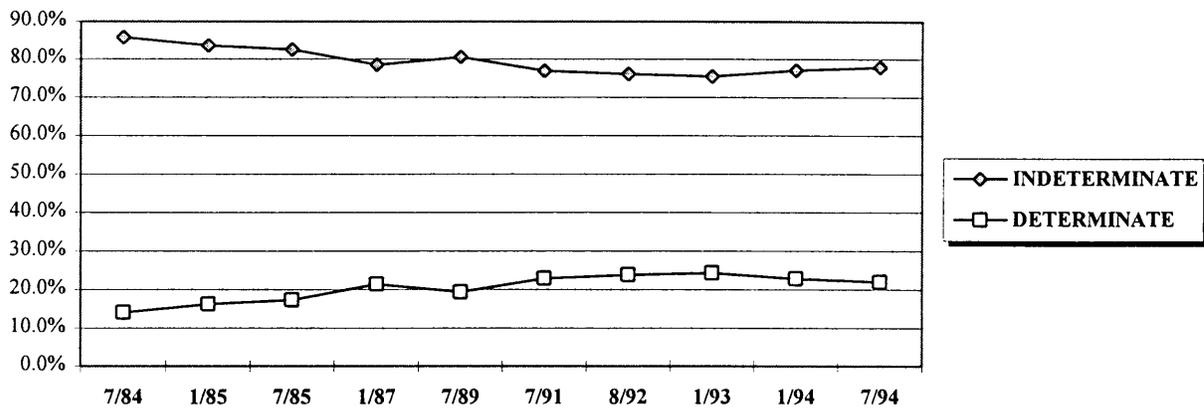
7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
<b>CUYAHOGA</b>									
3,842	3,932	4,462	5,131	6,736	8,386	9,208	9,443	10,027	9,947
22%	21%	22%	23%	24%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
<b>HAMILTON</b>									
2,250	2,235	2,591	2,735	3,338	3,896	4,345	4,411	4,778	5,067
13%	12%	13%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	13%
<b>FRANKLIN</b>									
1,830	1,954	2,139	2,538	2,940	3,505	3,885	3,934	4,166	4,063
11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	10%	10%	10%	10%
<b>MONTGOMERY</b>									
1,187	1,207	1,329	1,423	1,960	2,245	2,548	2,547	2,727	2,776
7%	7%	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
<b>LUCAS</b>									
934	1,025	1,265	1,452	1,841	2,063	2,256	2,329	2,361	2,285
5%	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
<b>SUMMIT</b>									
1,088	1,118	1,264	1,334	1,718	2,065	2,125	2,153	2,209	2,267
6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	6%
<b>OTHER</b>									
6,209	6,879	6,810	7,561	9,313	11,192	12,763	13,069	14,066	14,095
36%	37%	34%	34%	33%	34%	34%	34%	35%	35%

The ranking of county commitments has remained stable over the period, with Cuyahoga first, Hamilton second, Franklin third, Montgomery fourth and Lucas or Summit fifth or sixth.



**TABLE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF INDETERMINATE MAXIMUM AND DETERMINATE SENTENCES BY TYPE AND YEAR**

SENTENCE	7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
<b>INDETERMINATE MAXIMUM TOTAL</b>										
Total	14,896	15,266	16,465	17,329	22,446	25,676	28,265	28,631	31,066	31,567
=< 10 Years	19.7%	17.0%	16.7%	13.0%	11.1%	10.7%	10.7%	10.3%	9.0%	9.0%
10.5 - 20 Years	18.0%	17.6%	17.9%	19.5%	22.0%	22.2%	22.8%	22.8%	24.9%	25.1%
=> 20.5 years	36.2%	36.2%	37.1%	36.1%	38.1%	35.5%	34.1%	21.9%	17.9%	18.4%
Life/Death	11.9%	11.7%	11.0%	10.0%	9.2%	8.7%	8.5%	8.3%	8.7%	8.9%
<b>DETERMINATE TOTAL</b>										
Total	2,455	2,967	3,462	4,743	5,401	7,677	8,866	9,256	9,215	8,934
=< 1.5 Years	12.2%	13.3%	12.4%	15.7%	13.0%	14.9%	15.7%	15.8%	14.0%	13.5%
=> 2 Years	2.0%	3.0%	5.0%	5.8%	6.4%	8.1%	8.2%	8.6%	8.9%	8.6%
Unknown	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>TOTAL INDETERMINATE AND DETERMINATE</b>										
Total	17,351	18,233	19,927	22,072	27,847	33,353	37,131	37,887	40,281	40,501
<b>PROPORTION OF DETERMINATE TO INDETERMINATE SENTENCES</b>										
1:	6.1	5.1	4.8	3.7	4.2	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.4	3.5

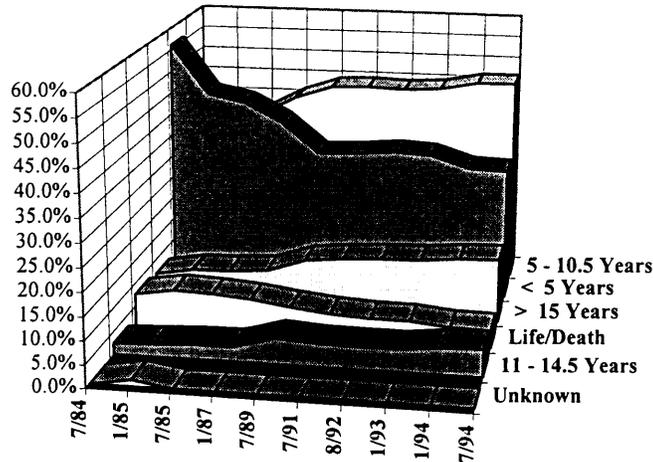


Overall, the pattern of indeterminate maximum and determinate sentencing has changed noticeably over the ten year period. First, there has been a shift away from shorter indeterminate maximums to longer indeterminate and fixed (determinate) ones. This matches the intent of Senate Bill 199, in effect in 1983. The greatest changes have occurred with the sentence categories of 10.5 - 20 years, greater-than 25 years, and for two or more fixed years. Interestingly, despite growing concern about crime and for tougher sentencing nationwide, there has been a steady decline in the proportion of those serving greater-than 20 years and life/death as maximum sentences.

Second, although indeterminate sentences continue to be used more frequently than determinate, the gap has narrowed considerably. In July 1984, there were 6.1 indeterminate sentences for every one determinate. In July 1994, this ratio had narrowed to 1 : 3.5. Although the total number of each type of sentence has increased over this time period, the rate of growth has been higher for determinate than indeterminate sentences. However, this was especially true in the 1980's, with a relatively stable ratio during the 1990's.

**TABLE 6. TRENDS IN INDETERMINATE MINIMUM SENTENCING**

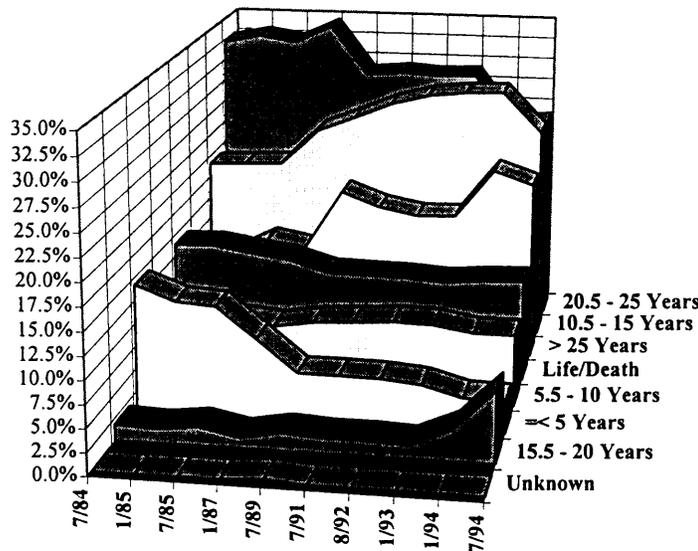
SENTENCE	7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
< 5 Years	56.2%	45.0%	43.3%	38.9%	32.0%	32.3%	33.1%	32.6%	29.9%	29.6%
5 - 10.5 Years	27.0%	33.7%	36.6%	41.1%	44.0%	44.3%	44.0%	44.5%	46.2%	46.3%
11 - 14.5 Years	2.5%	2.8%	3.2%	3.3%	5.7%	5.1%	4.9%	4.9%	5.8%	6.0%
> 15 Years	6.8%	8.2%	8.3%	8.9%	11.7%	12.5%	12.9%	13.1%	13.9%	14.1%
Life/Death	7.6%	8.9%	8.5%	7.8%	6.6%	5.6%	5.1%	5.0%	4.2%	4.0%
Unknown	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>OFFENDERS SERVING INDETERMINATE SENTENCES</b>										
TOTAL	17,278	15,266	16,465	17,239	22,446	25,676	28,265	28,631	31,066	31,567



In July 1984, the most frequent category of indeterminate minimum sentences was < 5 years (56.2%). By July 1994, this figure had dropped to 29.6%, with 5 - 10.5 year sentences becoming the most frequent minimum sentence (46.3%).

**TABLE 7. TRENDS IN INDETERMINATE MAXIMUM SENTENCING**

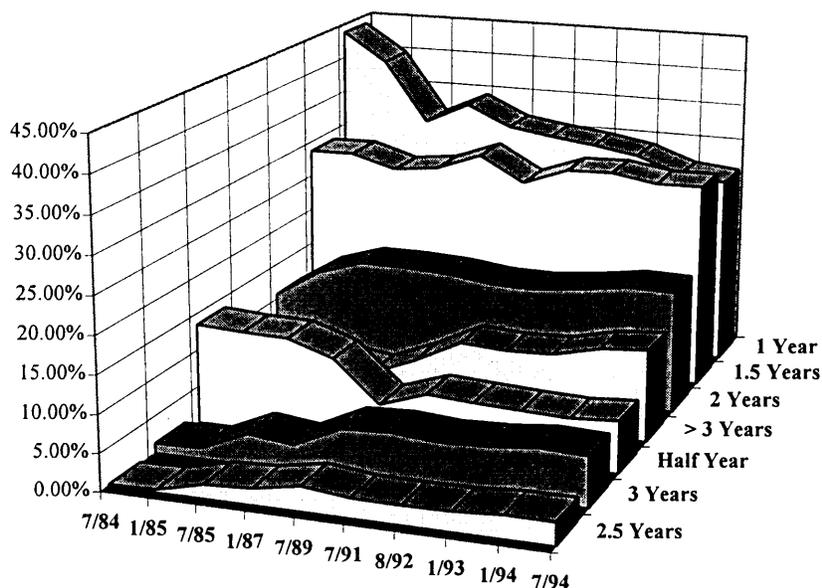
SENTENCE	7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
=< 5 Years	14.2%	12.5%	12.2%	8.9%	5.4%	5.4%	5.3%	4.9%	3.7%	3.6%
5.5 - 10 Years	8.8%	7.9%	8.0%	7.6%	8.3%	8.5%	8.8%	8.7%	8.0%	8.0%
10.5 - 15 Years	19.1%	19.3%	19.5%	23.6%	25.3%	27.1%	28.2%	28.7%	28.8%	24.3%
15.5 - 20 Years	1.8%	1.6%	2.1%	1.2%	2.0%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	3.4%	7.8%
20.5 - 25 Years	32.2%	33.1%	32.4%	34.4%	28.7%	29.1%	28.8%	29.0%	23.2%	23.6%
> 25 Years	10.0%	10.2%	12.4%	11.6%	18.5%	16.9%	16.1%	16.2%	21.7%	20.2%
Life/Death	13.9%	14.0%	13.3%	12.7%	11.4%	11.3%	11.2%	10.9%	11.3%	11.4%
Unknown	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>OFFENDERS SERVING INDETERMINATE SENTENCES</b>										
TOTAL	14,896	15,266	16,456	17,329	22,446	25,721	28,265	28,631	31,120	31,567



A similar trend can be seen with indeterminate maximum sentences. The use of =< 5 year sentences dropped from 14.2% to 3.6%, while > 25 years doubled, from 10.0% to 20.2% of all indeterminate maximum sentences.

**TABLE 8. TRENDS IN DETERMINATE SENTENCING**

SENTENCE	7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
Half Year	13.50%	13.10%	12.9%	10.9%	5.4%	7.5%	7.1%	6.8%	6.6%	7.0%
1 Year	43.80%	39.80%	31.4%	34.3%	31.5%	30.6%	29.8%	28.8%	26.6%	26.0%
1.5 Years	28.70%	28.80%	27.0%	27.7%	30.0%	26.6%	28.9%	29.1%	28.1%	28.2%
2 Years	10.70%	14.50%	16.5%	16.4%	16.1%	15.3%	15.2%	15.9%	16.8%	16.7%
2.5 Years	0.30%	0.40%	1.9%	2.2%	3.3%	2.6%	2.5%	2.6%	3.0%	3.0%
3 Years	1.40%	1.50%	4.2%	3.5%	6.4%	6.7%	6.2%	6.4%	7.0%	6.8%
> 3 Years	1.50%	2.00%	6.0%	5.0%	7.5%	10.6%	10.2%	10.4%	11.9%	12.4%
<b>OFFENDERS SERVING DETERMINATE SENTENCES</b>										
TOTAL	2,455	2,967	3,462	4,743	5,401	7,677	8,866	9,256	9,215	8,934



The graph above illustrates a noticeable shift in the distribution of determinate sentences over the ten year period. Proportionately, all sentencing categories under *two years* declined in use, while all *two years and over* increased in use. The sharpest decline came in the *one year* sentence, which accounted for 43.8% of determinate sentences in July 1984 and only 26% in July 1994. The largest increase was for *greater than three years* (1.5% to 12.4% of determinate sentences in July 1984 and July 1994, respectively).

**TABLE 9. DISTRIBUTION OF INDETERMINATE MINIMUM AND DETERMINATE SENTENCES BY TYPE AND YEAR**

SENTENCE	7/84	1/85	7/85	1/87	7/89	7/91	8/92	1/93	1/94	7/94
<b>INDETERMINATE MINIMUM TOTAL</b>										
Total	14,896	15,266	16,465	17,329	22,446	25,676	28,265	28,631	31,066	31,567
=< 5 Years	46.7%	37.6%	35.8%	30.6%	25.8%	24.9%	25.2%	24.6%	23.0%	23.0%
5 - 14.5 Years	26.4%	30.6%	32.9%	34.9%	40.0%	38.0%	37.2%	37.3%	40.1%	40.8%
=> 15 years	6.0%	6.9%	6.9%	7.0%	9.5%	9.7%	9.8%	9.9%	10.7%	11.0%
Life/Death	6.7%	7.4%	7.0%	6.1%	5.3%	4.3%	3.9%	3.7%	3.2%	3.1%
<b>DETERMINATE TOTAL</b>										
Total	2,455	2,967	3,462	4,743	5,401	7,677	8,866	9,256	9,215	8,934
=< 1.5 Years	12.2%	13.3%	12.4%	15.7%	13.0%	14.9%	15.7%	15.8%	14.0%	13.5%
=> 2 Years	2.0%	3.0%	5.0%	5.8%	6.4%	8.1%	8.2%	8.6%	8.9%	8.6%
Unknown	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>TOTAL INDETERMINATE AND DETERMINATE</b>										
Total	17,351	18,233	19,927	22,072	27,847	33,353	37,131	37,887	40,281	40,501

Table 9 illustrates a noticeable shift in indeterminate minimum sentencing patterns over the ten year period. In July 1984, 46.7% were serving indeterminate minimum sentences of five years or less, while 26.4% were serving 5 - 14.5 years. By 1994, however, this pattern had reversed, with 23% serving five years or less and 40.8% serving 5 - 14.5 years. The proportion of those serving greater-than 15 year sentences increased from 6% to 11% of all sentences, while life/death declined from 6.7% to 3.1%.

**TABLE 10. DISTRIBUTION OF INMATES BY AGE AND SEX**

AGE GROUP	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	1984	1994	1984	1994	1984	1994
15 - 20	1,110	2,340	36	50	1,146	2,390
	6.8%	6.2%	3.7%	2.0%	6.6%	5.9%
21 - 25	4,711	8,030	201	382	4,912	8,412
	28.8%	21.1%	20.8%	15.4%	28.3%	20.8%
26 - 30	4,227	7,195	255	568	4,482	7,195
	25.8%	18.9%	26.4%	22.9%	25.8%	17.8%
31 - 35	2,888	7,410	192	572	3,080	7,982
	17.6%	19.5%	19.9%	23.0%	17.8%	19.7%
36 - 40	1,472	5,836	121	465	1,593	6,301
	9.0%	15.4%	12.5%	18.7%	9.2%	15.6%
41 - 50	1,047	5,278	98	359	1,145	5,637
	6.4%	13.9%	10.2%	14.5%	6.6%	13.9%
> 50	925	1,928	62	88	987	2,016
	5.6%	5.1%	6.4%	3.5%	5.7%	5.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,380</b>	<b>38,017</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>2,484</b>	<b>17,345</b>	<b>40,501</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>33.5</b>		
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>33</b>		

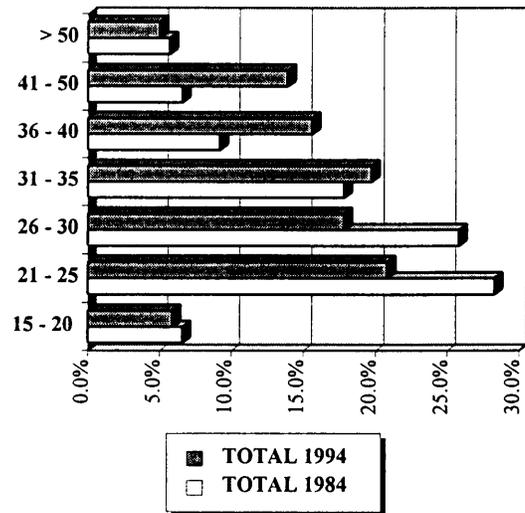
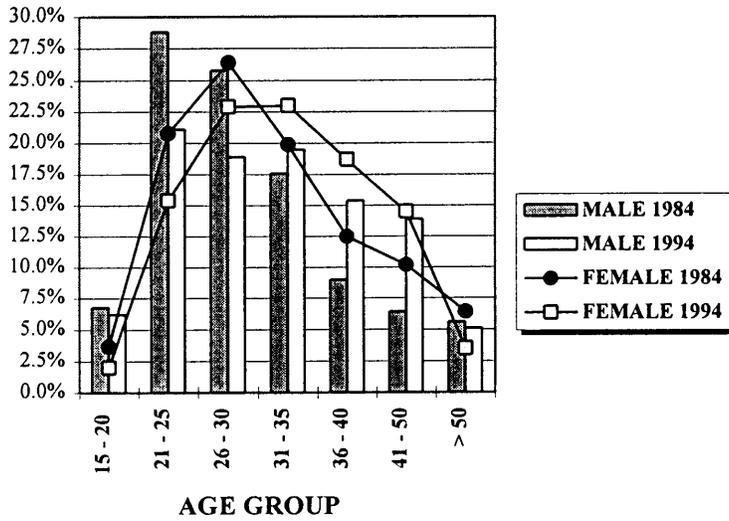


Table 10 and the graphs illustrate that 78.5% of those incarcerated in Ohio in 1984 were under the age of 36, while in 1994 this figure had dropped to 64.2%. The mean age of males in 1984 was 30.4, and in 1994 it was 32.7, while the mean for increased from 32.5 in 1984 to 33.5 in 1994. This aging of the prison population is evident in the



median ages for both males and females as well, and is probably a result of the overall pattern of sentence lengthening during the ten year period detailed in previous tables. For both males and females, the proportion of the total inmate population increases with age until the 31 - 35 age group, then steadily declines, with only 5% of inmates age 51 and over. The modal, or most common, category for males in both 1984 and 1994 was age 21 - 26, while for females it was 26 - 30 in 1984 and 31 - 35 in 1994.