Five in 6 (83%) state prisoners released in 2005 across 30 states were arrested at least once during the 9 years following their release. The 9-year follow-up period shows a much fuller picture of offending patterns and criminal activity of released prisoners than prior studies that used a 3- or 5-year follow-up period.

Long-term patterns

Overall, released state prisoners were arrested an estimated 2 million times within the 9 years following release in 2005. Extending the follow-up period to 9 years captured more than twice as many post-release arrests as were captured during a 3-year study. Six in 10 (60%) arrests occurred during years 4 through 9.

The percentage of prisoners who were arrested following release declined each year during the follow-up period. Forty-four percent of prisoners were arrested at least once during their first year after release, 34% were arrested during their third year, and 24% were arrested during their ninth year.

Type of offense of state prisoners arrested after release

Released property and drug offenders were more likely to be arrested than released violent offenders; however, released violent offenders were more likely to be arrested for a violent crime. More than three-quarters (77%) of released drug offenders were arrested for a non-drug crime within nine years, and more than a third (34%) were arrested for a violent crime.

Other key findings

The percentage of prisoners who were arrested following release in another state increased each year during the follow-up period. Eight percent of prisoners arrested during the first year following release were arrested outside of the state from which they were released. In comparison, 14% of prisoners who were arrested during the ninth year following release were arrested outside of their state of release.