

**INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO**

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**A PROFILE OF NEW MEXICO PRISONERS  
1996, 1997**

**January 1998**

Prepared for the  
New Mexico Criminal and Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council

**NOTE:**

This Working Paper provides research information for the  
New Mexico Criminal and Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council.  
It is **NOT** a statement of the Council's views or opinions.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- ▶ This Working Paper presents information on prisoners under the supervision of the New Mexico Department of Corrections (NMDOC) in 1996 and 1997. For each year, information is presented for prisoners who were under NMDOC supervision on a given day (2/21/96 and 8/24/97). Information covers: prisoner status and location; offenses leading to imprisonment; sentence length; and demographic characteristics. Special sections are also included on parole violators and female offenders.

### **Prisoner Status and Location**

- ▶ Approximately 70% of prisoners were new commitments from court. The rest were mainly parole violators and probation violators.
- ▶ Approximately two thirds of prisoners were housed in medium security facilities.

### **Offenses Leading to Imprisonment**

- ▶ Approximately 50% of prisoners were sentenced for violent offenses, and 29% for property offenses.
- ▶ Just over one third of prisoners had a habitual offender enhancement added to their sentence; but only about 10% of prisoners had a firearm enhancement added to their sentence.
- ▶ About three quarters of prisoners had no prior recorded sentence of imprisonment in New Mexico, although most probably had previous convictions leading to probation, jail, or to imprisonment in another state.
- ▶ Among prisoners who had served a prior term in a New Mexico prison, the most common prior offense was a property crime. About 11% of prisoners who were serving a current prison term for a violent offense had also served a previous New Mexico prison term for a violent offense.

### **Sentence Length**

- ▶ The average length of sentenced imprisonment was between 13 and 14 years; but about half of all prisoners were serving sentences of less than six years.
- ▶ The length of sentence was about the same, or shorter, in 1997 than 1996, except for prisoners sentenced for DWI offenses, who were serving longer terms in 1997.
- ▶ Average sentence lengths for specific offenses, 1997:

First degree murder	28.02 years
Second degree murder	16.56
Armed robbery	14.11
Aggravated battery	3.45
Burglary	4.54
Forgery	4.28
Drug trafficking	6.59
Drug possession	2.87

Sentence for these offenses were longer for offenders who had been previously imprisoned in New Mexico than for offenders who had not.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

- ▶ Approximately 7.5% of the prisoners were female.
- ▶ 56% of prisoners were Hispanic and just over one quarter were white.
- ▶ The average age of prisoners was 34. Nearly 5% of prisoners were 20 or younger in both years.
- ▶ About 42% of prisoners did not have a high school diploma or a GED.

### **Parole Violators**

- ▶ About 15% of prisoners were serving time for parole violations.
- ▶ Current parole violators tended to report a much lower age at first arrest than other prisoners.
- ▶ Current parole violators tended to have a higher educational level than other prisoners.
- ▶ Parole violators were more likely than other prisoners to be property offenders and less likely to be violent offenders or drug offenders.
- ▶ Parole violators were more likely than other prisoners to have sentences that included a habitual offender enhancement.
- ▶ Parole violators were also more likely than other prisoners to have at least one prior term of imprisonment in New Mexico.

### **Female Prisoners**

- ▶ Women were more likely to be serving their basic sentence than men. Men had much higher proportions of admissions for parole and probation violations.
- ▶ There was no difference in the average age or educational level of male and female prisoners.
- ▶ Women were far less likely than men to have been in a New Mexico prison prior to serving the current sentence.
- ▶ Female prisoners were far less likely than male prisoners to be serving time for a violent offense, and far more likely to be serving time for a property or drug offense.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Apart from the death penalty, imprisonment represents the most severe and costly punishment used in response to crime. For that reason, much public attention focuses on prisons and prisoners. In New Mexico, there is ongoing debate about when and why imprisonment should be used, how many prison beds are needed, what mix of punishment and treatment should be present in the prison regimen, and what is the best response to offenders who violate parole (i.e., post-imprisonment supervision). When such debate is conducted in an attempt to evaluate existing policies on imprisonment, or to suggest new policies, much information is required regarding current prisoner and prison characteristics.

Since its inception, the New Mexico Criminal and Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council has (through the Institute for Social Research) collected and analyzed information on several aspects of New Mexico's prisons and prisoners, including a profile of incoming offenders (1991-1994), prison programs, program participation, and good time awards. In 1996, the Institute for Social Research prepared a profile of New Mexico's prisoners, based on information captured by the New Mexico Department of Corrections (NMDOC) on its inmate database (see Institute for Social Research Working Paper No. 15, Who is in New Mexico Prisons? A Summary Profile, July 1996). The current Working Paper offers an update on prisoner characteristics, using a snapshot of prisoners drawn in August 1997, and provides comparative information for February 1996 (the date of the first snapshot).

The analyses use data downloaded from NMDOC's inmate database, which contains information on almost all prisoners under the supervision of the Department on the day the downloading was performed. The prisoners we analyzed excluded those in transition (and not yet in the database). Analyses of prisoner demographic characteristics, offenses, and sentences generally include smaller numbers due to missing information in the original data.

<b>Year</b>	1996	1997
<b>Download Date</b>	February 21	August 24
<b>Number of Prisoners</b>	4143	4568

The report is organized by sections that cover:

- [Prisoner location and security status](#)
- [Offense profile](#)
- [Sentence length](#)
- [Demographic characteristics](#)

We also include special sections on current parole violators and female prisoners.

## 2. PRISONER LOCATION AND SECURITY STATUS

**Table 2.1: Facilities, Locations and Populations**

FACILITY	LOCATION	1996		1997	
		N	%	N	%
<b>STATE PRISON FACILITIES</b>					
Camp Sierra Blanca	Fort Stanton, NM	98	2.4	0	0.0
Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF)	Los Lunas, NM	468	11.3	491	10.7
Central Minimum Restrict Unit (CMRU)	Los Lunas, NM	274	6.6	298	6.5
Central Minimum Unit (CMU)	Los Lunas, NM	312	7.5	300	6.6
Fort Stanton Women's Correctional Center (WCC)	Fort Stanton, NM	0	0.0	45	1.0
New Mexico Women's Correctional Facility (Private - Correction Corporations of America) (NMWCF)	Grants, NM	240	5.8	296	6.5
Penitentiary of New Mexico-Main (PNM-Main)	Santa Fe, NM	402	9.7	364	8.0
Penitentiary of New Mexico-Minimum Restrict Unit (PNM-MRU)	Santa Fe, NM	278	6.7	283	6.2
Penitentiary of New Mexico-North (PNM-North)	Santa Fe, NM	285	6.9	286	6.3
Penitentiary of New Mexico-South (PNM-South)	Santa Fe, NM	248	6.0	245	5.4
Roswell Correctional Center (RCC)	Hagerman, NM	189	4.6	233	5.1
St. Vincent's Hospital	Santa Fe, NM	1	0.0	2	0.0
Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility (SNMCF)	Las Cruces, NM	455	11.0	519	11.4
Southern Minimum Restrict Unit (SMRU)	Las Cruces, NM	0	0.0	261	5.7
Western New Mexico Correctional Facility - Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC)	Grants, NM	176	4.2	137	3.0
Western New Mexico Correctional Facility - General Population/Minimum Restrict (GP/MR)	Grants, NM	113	2.7	136	3.0
<b>COUNTY FACILITIES</b>					
Court		50	1.2	40	0.9
County Jails		5	0.1	0	0.0
Cibola-County	Grants, NM	217	5.2	149	3.3
Torrance-County (Private)	Estancia, NM	81	2.0	65	1.4
<b>OUT OF STATE FACILITIES</b>					
Central Arizona		0	0.0	298	6.5
Dallas-County Department of Corrections - Texas		160	3.9	120	2.6
Tarrant-County - Texas		91	2.2	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>4143</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4568</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The NMDOC houses its prisoners in various facilities around the state, and in some facilities in neighboring states. Note that these data were collected prior to the November 1997 closing of the Main New Mexico Penitentiary. Table 2.1 above shows the distribution of prisoners among the 23 institutions used by the NMDOC during 1996 and 1997.

Close to 8% of prisoners in both years were housed in privately-run facilities.  
 The proportion of prisoners located in out-of-state facilities increased from 6% in 1996 to just over 9% in 1997.

## Security Status

Facilities are designed so that the state prison system offers a variety of levels of security for supervising prisoners. The level of security indicates the degree of restriction of inmate movement within a correctional facility. Currently, there are four security levels in New Mexico prison facilities:

**Close custody:** Prisoners classified to this institutional risk level present a significant risk of disruption to the safe, secure, and orderly operation of the institution or escape. Assignments and activities are limited to within the main perimeter where movement is restricted in order to provide direct and constant supervision.

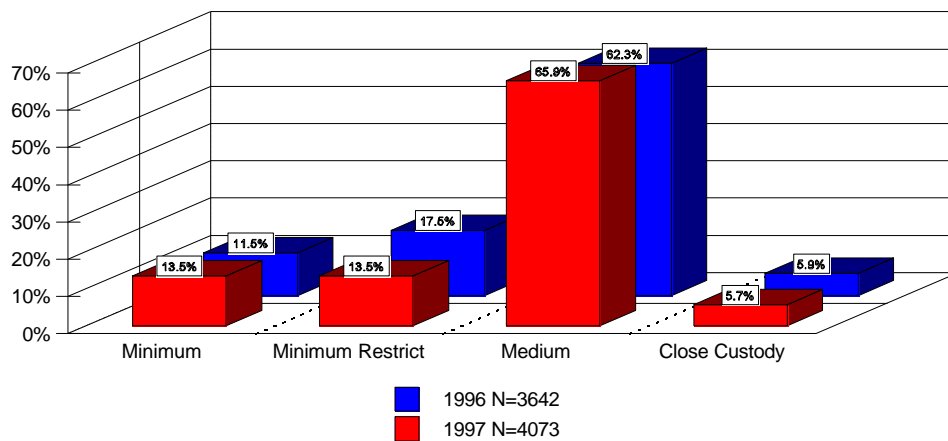
**Medium security:** Prisoners classified to this institutional risk level present a moderate risk of disruption to the safe, secure, and orderly operation of the institution or of escape. Assignments and activities are primarily limited to within the main perimeter where staff supervision and frequent staff observation is provided.

**Minimum restrict security:** Prisoners classified to this institutional risk level present a low risk of escape or disruption, but can work and live in a reduced security setting and work on outside details with direct staff supervision.

**Minimum security:** Prisoners classified to this institutional risk level present minimal threat to the security of the institution or of escape. Minimum-custody prisoners may be assigned to work on outside details with minimal supervision and are eligible for community based programs within policy and statutory requirements.

Although the proportions have changed between 1996 and 1997, the majority of prisoners in both years were located in medium security facilities. Figure 2.1 shows that the proportion of prisoners housed in medium security prisons increased from 62% in 1996 to 65.9% in 1997.

**Figure 2.1: Type of Custody**  
 $\chi^2=44.7$ , d.f.=3, p=.00000



## Admission Status

Prisoners are in prison under a variety of legal dispositions:

**New commitments:** are prisoners serving a sentence imposed after conviction for one or more offenses.

**Probation violators:** are offenders who were originally assigned to probation, but who have violated the conditions of probation and have been sent to prison to serve the balance of their sentence.

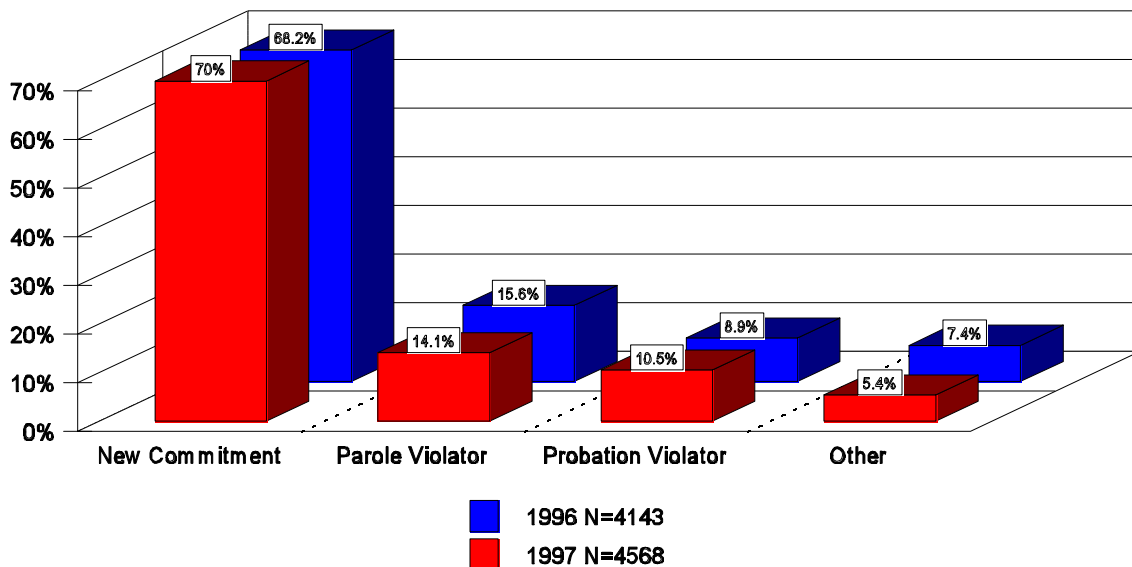
**Parole violators:** are offenders who have been returned to prison after violating the conditions set for their parole (post-prison supervision).

**Other prisoners:** are offenders committed to prison for a 60 day diagnostic and evaluation period, offenders returned from the reintegration program, returned escapees and absconders, and offenders being held for other jurisdictions.

Prisoners tended to be presently incarcerated because of new crimes. Figure 2.2 shows that approximately 70% of prisoners were new commitments from court. The second highest admission status (approximately 15%) was that of parole violators (it does not include prisoners who may have violated parole during a previous sentence and have since completed that sentence). The proportion of current parole violators decreased from 15.6% in 1996 to 14.1% in 1997.

**Figure 2.2: Admission Status**

$\chi^2=23.6$ , d.f.=3, p=.00003



### 3. OFFENSE PROFILE

In this section, we describe the offenses related to current sentences and previous sentences:

All prisoners were admitted under a **current** sentence, which may include more than one offense.

Some prisoners may also have had one or more **previous** sentences on their computer file, which referred to prior periods of imprisonment in New Mexico. Prior sentences involving jail or probation, or imprisonment in another state, are not recorded on the NMDOC inmate database.

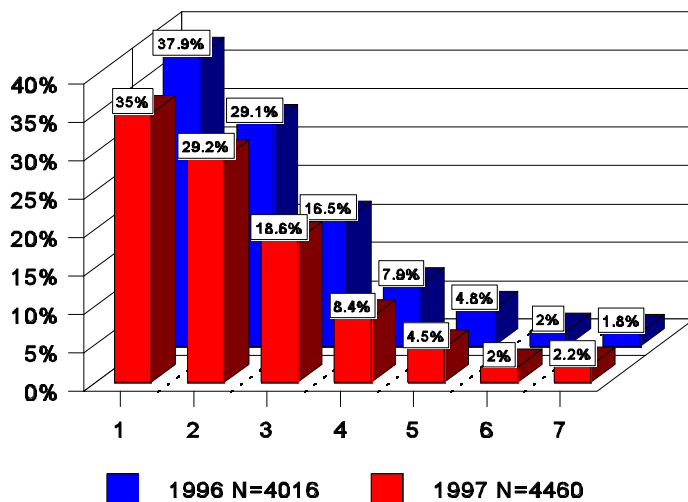
In order to simplify the analysis, we selected the most serious offense from the set of offenses included in a given sentence and called this the “current” (or “previous”) offense.

#### 3.1 Current Offenses

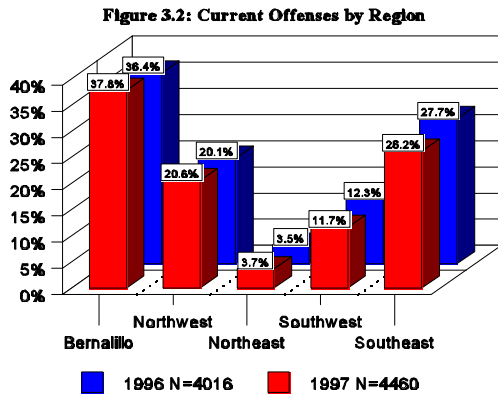
	1996	1997
Total number of prisoners	4046	4500
Total number of offenses	9133	10498
Average (t=-2.45, p=.014)	2.26	2.33

First we look at the number of offenses connected to the current sentence. In 1997, the 4,500 prisoners were incarcerated for committing a total of 10,498 offenses. This average of 2.33 offenses per prisoners was significantly higher than the 2.26 average in 1996.

Figure 3.1: Number of Offenses Leading to Current Sentence



The distribution of the number of offenses connected to each sentence in Figure 3.1 shows a decrease in the number of prisoners incarcerated for only one offense in 1997. The proportion of prisoners who were convicted of three and four offenses was significantly higher in 1997 than in 1996 ( $\chi^2=13.2$ , d.f.=6, p=.03962).



We grouped counties by region (keeping Bernalillo County separate) to examine the number of offenders sent to prison from each region of the state (keeping in mind that these rates were dependent on crime rates and prosecution rates in each region, not measured in these data). **Bernalillo County sent the highest number of offenders to prison. The southeast portion of the state incarcerated the next highest proportion. The northeast region sent the fewest offenders to prison.** No significant changes were observed between 1996 and 1997.

**Bernalillo:** Bernalillo County

**Northwest:** Santa Fe, McKinley, Valencia, San Juan, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Los Alamos, Cibola Counties

**Northeast:** Colfax, Quay, Union, Taos, Torrance, Guadalupe, Mora Counties

**Southwest:** Dona Ana, Grant, San Miguel, Luna, Sierra, Hidalgo, Socorro, Catron Counties

**Southeast:** Eddy, Chaves, Curry, Lea, Roosevelt, Otero, Lincoln, De Baca

Not included are cases with missing information.

Figure 3.3 shows the distribution of the most serious offenses for which each prisoner was incarcerated, broken down into five major categories. These proportions were not significantly different in 1996 and 1997. In both years:

50% of prisoners were convicted of at least one violent offense.

29% of offenders were convicted of a property offense.

Approximately 15% of prisoners were convicted of a drug offense.

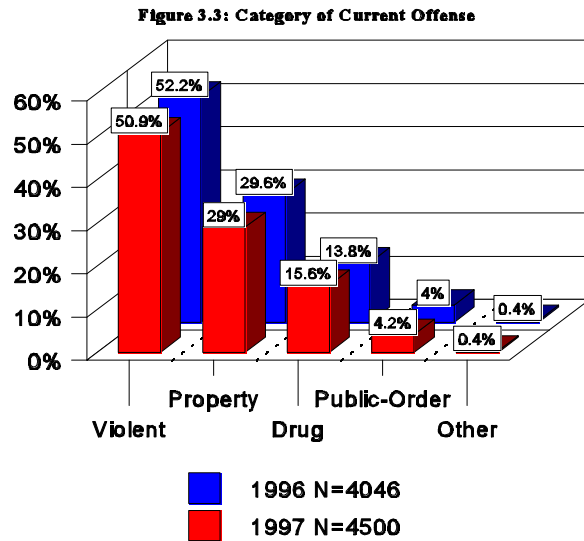


Table 3.1 (on the next page) shows a more detailed breakdown of offense types, subdivided by these five major categories. Again, overall differences between the two years were not significant, although it is notable that the proportion of prisoners convicted of drug trafficking offenses increased from 11.3% in 1996 to 12.4% in 1997.

**Table 3.1: Offenses Leading to Current NMDOC Prison Term<sup>a</sup>**

	1996 N	1996 %	1997 N	1997 %
<b>Violent Offenses</b>	<b>2114</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>2289</b>	<b>50.9</b>
Homicide <sup>b</sup>	444	11.0	481	10.7
Sexual Offenses <sup>c</sup>	341	8.4	339	7.5
Kidnapping	59	1.5	62	1.4
Armed Robbery	311	7.7	335	7.4
Other Homicides <sup>d</sup>	91	2.2	108	2.4
Other Sexual Offenses <sup>e</sup>	159	3.9	153	3.4
Robbery	152	3.8	150	3.3
Assault	454	11.2	523	11.6
Other Violent <sup>f</sup>	103	2.5	138	3.1
<b>Property Offenses</b>	<b>1197</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>1305</b>	<b>29.0</b>
Burglary	620	15.3	673	15.0
Larceny-Theft	194	4.8	196	4.4
Motor Vehicle Theft	45	1.1	59	1.3
Arson	7	0.2	7	0.2
Fraud	242	6.0	263	5.8
Stolen Property	80	2.2	101	2.2
Other Property	9	0.2	6	0.1
<b>Drug Offenses</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>15.6</b>
Trafficking	458	11.3	560	12.4
Possession	100	2.5	140	3.1
<b>Public-Order Offenses</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Weapons	30	0.7	33	0.7
DWI	81	2.0	90	2.0
Other Public-Order <sup>g</sup>	51	1.3	64	1.4
<b>Other Offenses<sup>h</sup></b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4046</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Offenses in this table represent the most serious offense among offenses in the most recent sentence (sentences may include more than one offense). A detailed offense classification is available in Appendix A.

<sup>b</sup> Homicide includes First and Second Degree Murder.

<sup>c</sup> Sexual Offenses include Rape and Criminal Sexual Penetration, First and Second Degree.

<sup>d</sup> Other Homicides include Voluntary and Involuntary Manslaughter, and Homicide by Vehicle.

<sup>e</sup> Other Sexual Offenses include Assault with Intent to Rape, Attempted Sodomy or Sodomy, Incest, Sexual Assault, and Criminal Sexual Penetration, Third Degree.

<sup>f</sup> Other Violent Offenses include Attempt to Commit a Violent Felony, Child Abuse, Child Abuse Resulting in Death, and Extortion.

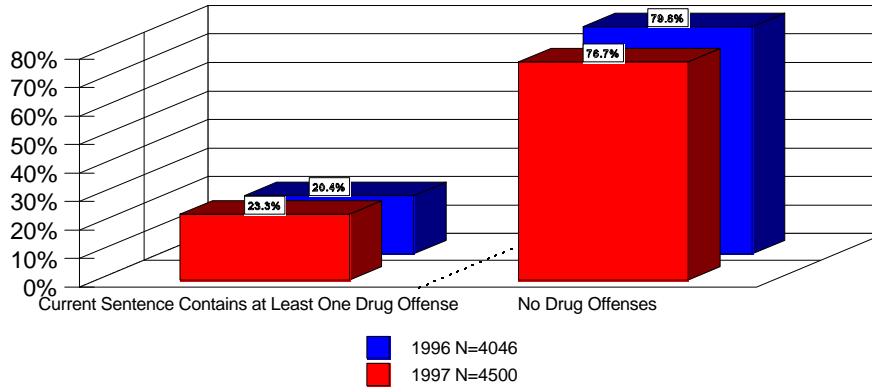
<sup>g</sup> Other Public Order Offenses include Criminal Solicitation, Escape from Jail/PNM, Evading and Officer, Failure to Appear, Taking Contraband into PNM, Tampering with Evidence, or Violation of Probation.

<sup>h</sup> Other Offenses include Civil Disorder, Conspiracy, and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor.

**Figure 3.4: Proportion of Current Sentences Including a Conviction for a Drug Offense**

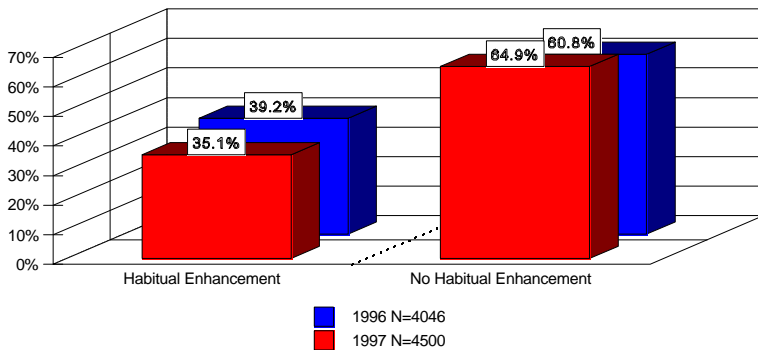
$\chi^2=10.6, d.f.=1, p=.00114$

While about 15% of sentences had a drug offense as the most serious conviction, over 20% of sentences included a conviction for a drug offense (and the proportion was 3% higher in 1997 than in 1996).



**Figure 3.5: Habitual Enhancements among Current Sentences**

$\chi^2=15.8, d.f.=1, p=.00007$

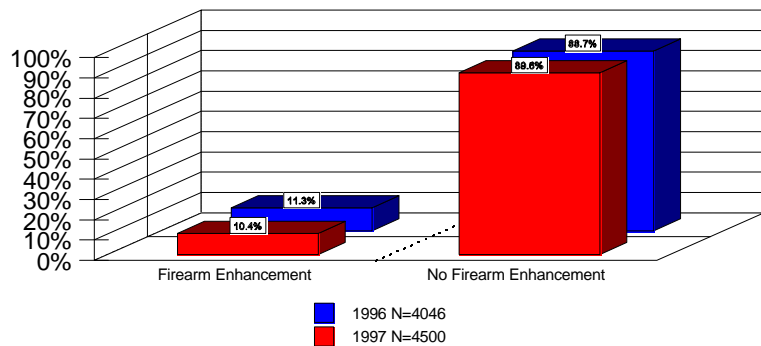


Over one third of current sentences included a habitual offender enhancement. The proportion of sentences with habitual offender enhancements decreased by 4% in 1997.

**Figure 3.6: Firearm Enhancements among Current Sentences**

$\chi^2=1.95, d.f.=1, p=.16235$

Slightly more than 10% of current sentences had a firearm enhancement in both years. The proportion of sentences with firearm enhancements was not significantly different in 1996 and 1997.





### 3.2 Prior Incarcerations and Related Offenses

Figure 3.7 shows that about 28% of prisoners had a prior period of imprisonment in New Mexico (prior sentences leading to incarceration in out of state facilities, jail terms, probations, fines, or community service were not recorded).

The distribution of prior offense convictions by the major offense categories remained the same in 1996 and 1997. Thus, about 13.5% of prisoners had previously served time for property offense and about 10% had served time for a violent offense.

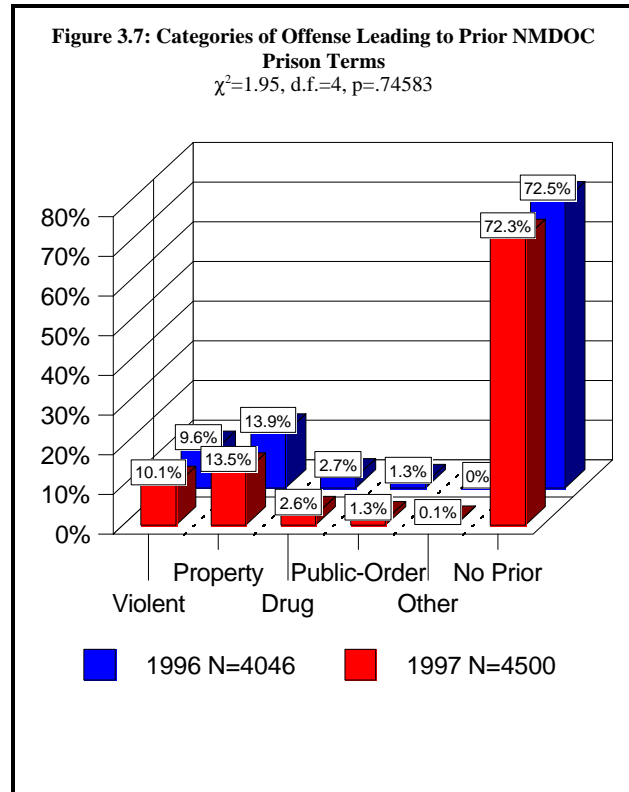


Table 3.2 (on the next page) shows a detailed breakdown of the most serious offense connected to prisoners’ prior incarcerations. The percentages are calculated two ways:

The third column for each year shows the proportion of offenses for all incarcerated prisoners, the bulk of which have “no previous incarceration.”

In the middle column for each year, the percentages show the proportion of offenses among the 27% of prisoners who had previous New Mexico incarcerations. These numbers can be compared to the percentages shown in Table 3.1, which shows the distribution of current offenses.

Whereas among current offenses (Table 3.1), approximately 50% were violent and about 30% were property, these proportions are the exact opposite for prior offenses (Table 3.2).

Approximately 35% of prior offenses were violent (slightly higher in 1997 than in 1996), and about 50% of prior offenses were property offenses (slightly lower in 1997 than in 1996). The proportion of drug and public-order offenses was nearly the same in both years and was also similar to those same proportions among the current offenses.

**Table 3.2: Offenses Leading to Prior NMDOC Prison Terms<sup>a</sup>**

	1996			1997		
	N	% of prisoners with a prior offense	% of all prisoners	N	% of prisoners with a prior offense	% of all prisoners
<b>Violent Offenses</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>10.1</b>
Homicide	22	2.0	0.5	29	2.3	0.6
Sexual Offenses	27	2.4	0.7	30	2.4	0.7
Kidnapping	8	0.7	0.2	7	0.6	0.2
Armed Robbery	78	7.0	1.9	90	7.2	2.0
Other Homicides	11	1.0	0.3	15	1.2	0.3
Other Sexual Offenses	38	3.4	0.9	38	3.1	0.8
Robbery	58	5.2	1.4	63	5.1	1.4
Assault	130	11.7	3.2	166	13.3	3.7
Other Violent	16	1.4	0.4	18	1.4	0.4
<b>Property Offenses</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>48.7</b>	<b>13.5</b>
Burglary	335	30.1	8.3	371	29.8	8.2
Larceny-Theft	71	6.4	1.8	87	7.0	1.9
Motor Vehicle Theft	28	2.5	0.7	31	2.5	0.7
Arson	6	0.5	0.1	3	0.2	0.1
Fraud	81	7.3	2.0	80	6.4	1.8
Stolen Property	36	3.2	0.9	31	2.5	0.7
Other Property	4	0.4	0.1	3	0.2	0.1
<b>Drug Offenses</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Trafficking	85	7.6	2.1	96	7.7	2.1
Possession	25	2.2	0.6	22	1.8	0.5
<b>Public-Order Offenses</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Weapons	13	1.2	0.3	17	1.4	0.4
DWI	8	0.7	0.2	13	1.0	0.3
Other Public-Order	32	2.9	0.8	30	2.4	0.7
<b>Other Offenses</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>No Previous Incarceration</b>	<b>2932</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>72.5</b>	<b>3255</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>72.3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4046</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4500</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Offenses in this table represent the most serious offense among all offenses which occurred before the current sentence. Only prior NM Department of Corrections incarcerations are included. Offenders who committed crimes in other states or who were convicted of offenses resulting in sentences other than imprisonment are not included.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 show the comparison of current and prior offenses. In these tables, the percentages are calculated across the table (among current offenses) and enable us to compare the types of previous offenses committed by those currently incarcerated for certain types of crimes (keeping in mind that we only have records of previous offenses for those who have been previously imprisoned in New Mexico). The patterns in these tables are similar for both years.

Table 3.3 compares current and prior offenses across the five major types. Generally, what we see is that offenders tended to commit the same types of crimes when they recidivated.

The first item to note for both years is the column referring to prisoners with no previous incarceration. These numbers show that prisoners whose most serious current offense was a violent offense, a drug offense, or an “other” offense, were far more likely not to have been incarcerated previously. Conversely, [property and public order offenders were more likely to have a previous incarceration in the New Mexico system.](#)

Comparing the percentages in the public order column, we see that [current public offenders were more likely than other types of offenders to have been incarcerated for a public order offense in the past \(8% compared to about 1% for others\).](#)

Looking at the drug offenses column, we see that [current drug offenders \(9%\) were more likely than other types of offenders to have been incarcerated for a drug offense in the past.](#)

[Property offenders were also more likely than other types of offenders to have been previously incarcerated for a property offense \(27% in the previous property offenses column\).](#)

The pattern for previous violent offenses (in the first column) was not quite as clear. [Current public order offenders were more likely than other types of current offenders \(including current violent offenders\) to have been incarcerated in the past for a violent offense.](#)

Similar patterns are apparent in Table 3.4, which compares current and previous offenses for the broad categories of violent and non-violent offenders.

Again, concentrating first on the column containing those with no previous offenses, violent offenders were more likely not to have been previously incarcerated. Conversely, [non-violent offenders were more likely to have been previously incarcerated in New Mexico prisons.](#)

A comparison of the percentages in the middle column, containing previous non-violent offenders, shows that [current non-violent offenders were more likely than current violent offenders to have been previously incarcerated for a non-violent offense.](#)

Finally, [current violent offenders were more likely than non-violent offenders to have been previously incarcerated for a violent offense.](#)

**Table 3.3: Comparison of Current and Prior Offenses Leading to NMDOC Prison Terms<sup>a</sup>**

<b>1996</b> ( $\chi^2=418$ , d.f.=20, p=.00000)							
<b>PREVIOUS OFFENSE</b>	<b>Violent Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Property Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Drug Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Public Order Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Other Offense % (N)</b>	<b>No Prior Incarceration % (N)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>CURRENT OFFENSE</b>							
<b>Violent Offense</b>	<b>10.9%</b> (230)	<b>7.8%</b> (165)	<b>1.5%</b> (31)	<b>1.1%</b> (23)	<b>0.0%</b> (1)	<b>78.7%</b> (1664)	<b>52.2%</b> (2114)
<b>Property Offense</b>	<b>8.1%</b> (97)	<b>26.8%</b> (321)	<b>2.0%</b> (24)	<b>0.9%</b> (11)	<b>0.1%</b> (1)	<b>62.1%</b> (743)	<b>29.6%</b> (1197)
<b>Drug Offense</b>	<b>5.9%</b> (33)	<b>9.9%</b> (55)	<b>9.0%</b> (50)	<b>1.1%</b> (6)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>74.2%</b> (414)	<b>13.8%</b> (558)
<b>Public Order Offense</b>	<b>16.7%</b> (27)	<b>11.7%</b> (19)	<b>3.1%</b> (5)	<b>8.0%</b> (13)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>60.5%</b> (98)	<b>4.0%</b> (162)
<b>Other Offense</b>	<b>6.7%</b> (1)	<b>6.7%</b> (1)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>86.7%</b> (13)	<b>0.4%</b> (15)
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.6%</b> (388)	<b>13.9%</b> (561)	<b>2.7%</b> (110)	<b>1.3%</b> (53)	<b>0.0%</b> (2)	<b>72.5%</b> (2932)	<b>100.0%</b> 4046

<b>1997</b> ( $\chi^2=423$ , d.f.=20, p=.00000)							
<b>PREVIOUS OFFENSE</b>	<b>Violent Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Property Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Drug Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Public Order Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Other Offense % (N)</b>	<b>No Prior Incarceration % (N)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>CURRENT OFFENSE</b>							
<b>Violent Offense</b>	<b>11.0%</b> (251)	<b>7.6%</b> (173)	<b>1.0%</b> (24)	<b>1.3%</b> (29)	<b>0.1%</b> (2)	<b>79.1%</b> (1810)	<b>50.9%</b> (2289)
<b>Property Offense</b>	<b>9.7%</b> (126)	<b>26.2%</b> (342)	<b>2.8%</b> (36)	<b>0.9%</b> (12)	<b>0.2%</b> (3)	<b>60.2%</b> (786)	<b>29.0%</b> (1305)
<b>Drug Offense</b>	<b>7.1%</b> (50)	<b>9.6%</b> (67)	<b>7.3%</b> (51)	<b>0.7%</b> (5)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>75.3%</b> (527)	<b>15.6%</b> (700)
<b>Public Order Offense</b>	<b>14.4%</b> (27)	<b>12.3%</b> (23)	<b>3.7%</b> (7)	<b>7.5%</b> (14)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>62.0%</b> (116)	<b>4.2%</b> (187)
<b>Other Offense</b>	<b>10.5%</b> (2)	<b>5.3%</b> (1)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>0%</b> (0)	<b>84.2%</b> (16)	<b>0.4%</b> (19)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.1%</b> (456)	<b>13.5%</b> (606)	<b>2.6%</b> (118)	<b>1.3%</b> (60)	<b>0.1%</b> (5)	<b>72.3%</b> (3255)	<b>100.0%</b> 4500

<sup>a</sup> Current offenses represent the most serious offense among offenses in the most recent sentence (sentences may include more than one offense). Previous offenses represent the most serious among all offenses which occurred before the current sentence. Only NM Department of Corrections incarcerations are included. Offenders who committed crimes in other states or who were convicted of offenses resulting in sentences other than imprisonment are not included.

**Table 3.4: Comparison of Violent and Non-Violent Offenses Leading to Current and Prior NMDOC Prison Terms<sup>a</sup>**

<b>1996</b> ( $\chi^2=172$ , d.f.=2, p=.00000)				
<b>PREVIOUS OFFENSE</b>	<b>Violent Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Non-Violent Offense % (N)</b>	<b>No Previous Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Total % (N)</b>
<b>CURRENT OFFENSE</b>				
<b>Violent Offense</b>	<b>10.9%</b> (230)	<b>10.4%</b> (30.3)	<b>78.7%</b> (1664)	<b>52.2%</b> (2114)
<b>Non-Violent Offense</b>	<b>8.2%</b> (158)	<b>26.2%</b> (506)	<b>65.6%</b> (1268)	<b>47.8%</b> (1932)
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.6%</b> (388)	<b>17.9%</b> (726)	<b>72.5%</b> (2932)	<b>100.0%</b> (4046)

<b>1997</b> ( $\chi^2=185$ , d.f.=2, p=.00000)				
<b>PREVIOUS OFFENSE</b>	<b>Violent Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Non-Violent Offense % (N)</b>	<b>No Previous Offense % (N)</b>	<b>Total % (N)</b>
<b>CURRENT OFFENSE</b>				
<b>Violent Offense</b>	<b>11.0%</b> (251)	<b>10.0%</b> (228)	<b>79.1%</b> (1810)	<b>50.9%</b> (2289)
<b>Non-Violent Offense</b>	<b>9.3%</b> (205)	<b>25.4%</b> (561)	<b>65.4%</b> (1445)	<b>49.1%</b> (2211)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.1%</b> (456)	<b>17.5%</b> (789)	<b>72.3%</b> (3255)	<b>100.0%</b> (4500)

<sup>a</sup> Current offenses represent the most serious offense among offenses in the most recent sentence (sentences may include more than one offense). Previous offenses represent the most serious among all offenses which occurred before the current sentence. Only NM Department of Corrections incarcerations are included. Offenders who committed crimes in other states or who were convicted of offenses resulting in sentences other than imprisonment are not included.

#### 4. SENTENCE LENGTH

We begin by examining total sentence length for each offender by adding together the maximum sentence handed down for each offense, taking into account whether the sentences were consecutive or concurrent. For this analysis, those with single determinate and indeterminate life sentences were assigned individual sentence lengths of thirty years. **Total and single sentence lengths are approximations--actual sentence lengths may be longer or shorter than those presented here due to methods of calculation and inaccuracies in data entry** [See Appendix B for details]. **No adjustments are made for likely reductions in sentence length arising from “good time.”**

In 1997, prisoners had an average (or mean) sentence length (total years of sentences divided by the total number of offenders) of 13.04 years across all types of offenses. The average in 1996 was closer to 14 years. Because there are a large number of very long sentences, the average gives a somewhat distorted picture of the length of sentence assigned to prisoners. The median, which represents the mid-point in the range of sentences, was 6 years for 1997 and 7 years for 1996. This means that in 1997 half of the prisoners were serving sentences greater than six years, and half were serving sentences less than six years. The mode, which indicates the most frequently assigned sentence length, was 3 years in both 1996 and 1997. Sentences in both years ranged from six months to 474 years.

Figure 4.1: Average Sentence Length (Years)

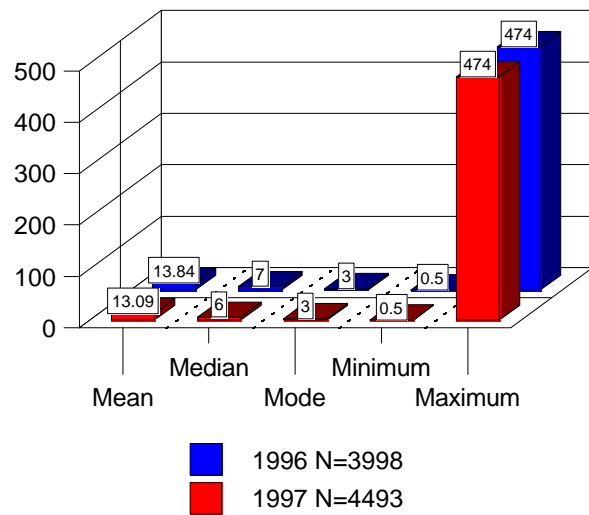


Table 4.1 (on the next page) shows the distribution of average sentence length by type of offense. The bold rows indicate the average sentence length for the five major types of offenses, and the rows in between give a more detailed breakdown of offenses. Table 4.1 shows that:

Sentences were generally about the same or shorter in 1997 than in 1996, with the exception of DWI offenses, where prisoners were serving significantly longer sentences in 1997.

In both years, violent offenders were serving the longest sentences.

Overall, in both years drug offenders were serving longer sentences than property offenders.

Public order and other offenders tended to serve the shortest sentences.

**Table 4.1: Average Sentence Length<sup>b</sup> (Years) for Current Conviction<sup>a</sup>**

	1996			1997		
	N	Average	Median	N	Average	Median
<b>Violent Offenses</b>	<b>2118</b>	<b>20.04</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>2316</b>	<b>19.32</b>	<b>10.00</b>
Homicide	473	34.78	30.00	518	35.10	30.00
Sexual Offenses	336	29.44	18.00	341	29.27	18.00
Kidnapping	61	34.20	18.00	63	28.56	15.00
Armed Robbery	309	20.22	10.00	333	18.18	9.00
Other Homicides	88	7.54	6.00	107	8.63	6.00
Other Sexual Offenses	158	12.23	6.00	151	14.56	6.00
Robbery	152	8.77	5.50	149	8.05	5.50
Battery and Assault	442	6.69	4.50	519	6.23	4.50
Other Violent	99	8.95	7.00	135	8.64	6.00
<b>Property Offenses</b>	<b>1165</b>	<b>6.57</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>1278</b>	<b>6.47</b>	<b>4.50</b>
Burglary	605	7.32	5.50	661	7.34	5.50
Larceny-Theft	188	5.78	4.00	191	6.10	4.00
Motor Vehicle Theft	43	4.69	4.00	59	4.27	3.50
Arson	7	9.50	4.50	7	9.45	4.00
Fraud	237	6.03	4.00	259	5.80	4.00
Stolen Property	76	5.36	3.00	95	4.29	3.84
Other Property	9	3.88	4.00	6	3.92	3.75
<b>Drug Offenses</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>7.90</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>5.00</b>
Trafficking	449	8.76	6.00	559	7.88	6.00
Possession	96	3.86	3.00	137	3.42	2.50
<b>Public-Order Offenses</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>5.77</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>4.58</b>	<b>1.50</b>
Weapons	26	5.96	4.00	89	2.04	1.50
DWI	81	2.05	1.50	64	8.04	2.00
Other Public-Order	50	11.69	3.00	16	4.27	1.88
<b>Other Offenses</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>1.88</b>

<sup>a</sup> Current offenses represent the most serious offense among offenses in the most recent sentence (sentences may include more than one offense).

<sup>b</sup> Total and single sentence lengths are approximations--actual sentence lengths may be longer or shorter than those presented here due to methods of calculation and inaccuracies in data entry. See Appendix B for details.

## Average Sentence Length for the Most Common Offenses

In this section, we focus on the length of sentences being served for the eight most common current offenses (the most serious offense among those in the active sentence for each prisoner). We isolated the eight offenses occurring most frequently among all prisoners, and working with this approximately 50% sample, we analyzed the length of the single sentence connected to that offense, broken down by several other characteristics such as number of previous New Mexico incarcerations, region of the state and ethnicity.

Table 4.2 shows [longer sentences for the most serious offenses](#) (first and second degree murder and armed robbery). [The average sentences being served in 1997 were lower than in 1996 for all offenses except second degree murder.](#)

**Table 4.2: Average Sentence Length<sup>a</sup> by Offense Type**

	1996		1997	
	N	Average Sentence Length	N	Average Sentence Length
<b>First degree murder</b>	208	28.23	242	28.02
<b>Second degree murder</b>	225	15.98	225	16.56
<b>Armed robbery</b>	305	15.86	323	14.11
<b>Aggravated battery</b>	192	3.65	224	3.45
<b>Burglary</b>	493	4.98	535	4.54
<b>Forgery</b>	144	4.33	159	4.28
<b>Drug trafficking</b>	429	7.67	539	6.59
<b>Drug possession</b>	95	3.42	132	2.87
<b>Total</b>	2091	10.38	2379	9.62

<sup>a</sup> Total and single sentence lengths are approximations--actual sentence lengths may be longer or shorter than those presented here due to methods of calculation and inaccuracies in data entry. See Appendix B for details.

### INTERPRETING CHANGES IN AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH AMONG THE PRISON POPULATION

If the length of the average sentence being served by the prison population **goes up** from one year to the next, two things could be happening:

- Offenders with shorter sentences have finished their term, leaving offenders with longer terms still in prison.

- New offenders entering prison have longer sentences than offenders currently in prison.

Likewise, if the length of the average sentence being served by the prison population **goes down** from one year to the next, two things could be happening:

- Offenders with longer sentences have finished their term, leaving offenders with shorter terms still in prison.

- New offenders entering prison have shorter sentences than offenders currently in prison.



Table 4.3 shows that sentences for the eight specific offenses were significantly longer for those with previous New Mexico incarcerations than for those never incarcerated in New Mexico prisons. Average sentences in 1997 among those with previous incarcerations were similar to the average sentence lengths among previously incarcerated prisoners in 1996.

**Table 4.3: Average Sentence Length<sup>a</sup> by Offense Type and Previous NMDOC Incarcerations**

	1996				1997			
	No Previous Incarcerations		Previous Incarcerations		No Previous Incarcerations		Previous Incarcerations	
	N	Average Sentence	N	Average Sentence	N	Average Sentence	N	Average Sentence
<b>First degree murder</b>	182	28.30	26	27.69	212	28.28	30	26.18
<b>Second degree murder</b>	193	14.70	32	23.75	191	15.67	34	21.56
<b>Armed robbery</b>	201	14.04	104	19.38	239	12.33	84	19.14
<b>Aggravated battery</b>	152	3.42	40	4.52	168	3.29	56	3.93
<b>Burglary</b>	268	4.72	225	5.28	282	4.05	253	5.09
<b>Forgery</b>	103	3.76	41	5.75	111	3.82	48	5.34
<b>Drug trafficking</b>	337	6.78	92	10.93	419	5.80	120	9.35
<b>Drug possession</b>	47	2.63	48	4.19	83	2.24	49	3.95
<b>Total</b>	1483	10.38	608	10.37	1705	9.78	674	9.21

<sup>a</sup> Total and single sentence lengths are approximations--actual sentence lengths may be longer or shorter than those presented here due to methods of calculation and inaccuracies in data entry. See Appendix B for details.

Table 4.4 shows a breakdown of sentence length by type of offense and region of the state. **Overall** (looking at the “total” row), in both years prisoners from Bernalillo County and the Northwest region were serving slightly longer sentences than others. Prisoners from the southeast were serving slightly shorter sentences than others. These differences probably reflect the distribution of more serious and less serious crimes in the state.

**Focusing on specific offenses:**

- prisoners from the northwest were serving longer sentences for first degree murder
- prisoners from Bernalillo County and the southwest were serving considerably longer sentences for armed robbery
- prisoners from the southeast were serving longer sentences for drug trafficking

Some of the biggest changes in average sentence length between 1996 and 1997 were seen among prisoners from the northeast region, but here the averages were undoubtedly affected by the small number of prisoners being sentenced from that region.

**Table 4.4: Average Sentence Length by Type of Offense and Region**

1996										
	Bernalillo		Northwest		Northeast		Southwest		Southeast	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.	N	Avg.	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
<b>First degree murder</b>	78	26.91	40	34.14	11	20.91	27	27.26	52	27.70
<b>Second degree murder</b>	88	15.52	61	15.85	14	17.00	28	16.36	34	16.71
<b>Armed robbery</b>	176	18.42	49	11.38	4	9.25	35	15.00	41	11.56
<b>Aggravated battery</b>	66	3.68	45	3.41	11	2.95	24	3.60	46	4.04
<b>Burglary</b>	201	5.51	86	4.16	17	3.74	68	4.59	121	5.07
<b>Forgery</b>	37	4.67	30	3.92	3	2.08	12	3.42	62	4.60
<b>Drug trafficking</b>	127	6.43	66	9.83	6	6.69	52	6.27	178	8.19
<b>Drug possession</b>	24	3.77	6	3.92	1	1.00	20	2.53	44	3.62
<b>Total</b>	797	11.46	383	10.94	67	9.68	266	9.53	578	8.97

1997										
	Bernalillo		Northwest		Northeast		Southwest		Southeast	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.	N	Avg.	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
<b>First degree murder</b>	94	25.77	53	31.68	9	26.56	35	27.76	51	28.79
<b>Second degree murder</b>	84	16.63	60	16.35	11	19.00	31	16.52	39	16.08
<b>Armed robbery</b>	183	15.95	48	10.41	6	8.42	42	15.20	44	10.20
<b>Aggravated battery</b>	77	3.23	41	3.33	14	2.32	33	3.90	59	3.83
<b>Burglary</b>	238	4.98	81	4.45	13	4.96	70	4.34	133	3.89
<b>Forgery</b>	46	3.93	32	4.37	4	6.38	19	4.11	58	4.42
<b>Drug trafficking</b>	195	5.80	66	6.93	11	5.82	46	5.50	221	7.44
<b>Drug possession</b>	35	2.73	24	2.40	4	4.13	16	2.66	53	3.16
<b>Total</b>	952	10.06	405	10.64	72	9.74	292	10.03	658	8.14

**Bernalillo:** Bernalillo County only

**Northwest:** Santa Fe, McKinley, Valencia, San Juan, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Los Alamos, Cibola Counties

**Northeast:** Colfax, Quay, Union, Taos, Torrance, Guadalupe, Mora Counties

**Southwest:** Dona Ana, Grant, San Miguel, Luna, Sierra, Hidalgo, Socorro, Catron Counties

**Southeast:** Eddy, Chaves, Curry, Lea, Roosevelt, Otero, Lincoln, De Baca

Table 4.5 shows the average sentence length for each of the eight offenses, broken down by ethnicity.

Overall, whites tended to receive the longest sentences in both 1996 and 1997. In 1997, sentences being served by Native Americans increased by about two years to make that group of prisoners the second highest in average sentence length.

Focusing on individual offenses, the ethnic group serving the longest sentence for each type of offense was often different in 1997 compared to 1996. However, in both years:

- blacks were serving longer average sentences for first degree murder
- Hispanics were serving longer average sentences for armed robbery
- Native Americans were serving longer average sentences for aggravated battery
- blacks were serving longer average sentences for burglary
- whites were serving longer average sentences for drug possession

**Table 4.5: Average Sentence Length by Type of Offense and Ethnicity**

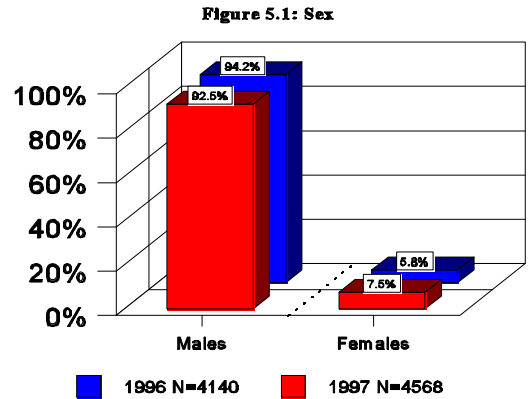
1996								
	White		Black		Hispanic		Native American	
	N	Average	N	Average	N	Average	N	Average
First degree murder	91	30.47	19	34.79	92	24.68	6	27.67
Second degree murder	62	18.77	20	16.35	132	14.80	11	13.91
Armed robbery	61	14.48	40	15.90	199	16.46	5	8.20
Aggravated battery	36	3.85	20	3.24	119	3.52	17	4.66
Burglary	105	4.94	41	6.23	329	4.94	18	3.09
Forgery	54	4.98	25	3.85	62	3.95	3	4.17
Drug trafficking	51	8.90	121	6.93	257	7.77	0	0.00
Drug possession	21	3.63	16	3.07	57	3.47	1	1.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>13.05</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>9.70</b>	<b>1247</b>	<b>9.61</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>8.34</b>

1997								
	White		Black		Hispanic		Native American	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
First degree murder	105	29.70	22	34.55	102	24.96	13	27.38
Second degree murder	59	19.15	21	19.71	132	15.08	13	14.77
Armed robbery	64	11.63	41	12.94	212	15.26	6	7.83
Aggravated battery	46	3.55	28	3.06	130	3.36	20	4.30
Burglary	113	4.42	36	6.38	375	4.43	11	3.64
Forgery	59	4.28	13	3.35	84	4.42	3	4.42
Drug trafficking	59	5.82	165	6.34	312	6.91	3	1.77
Drug possession	35	3.15	16	2.76	79	2.81	2	1.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>11.78</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>9.22</b>	<b>1426</b>	<b>8.85</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>10.46</b>

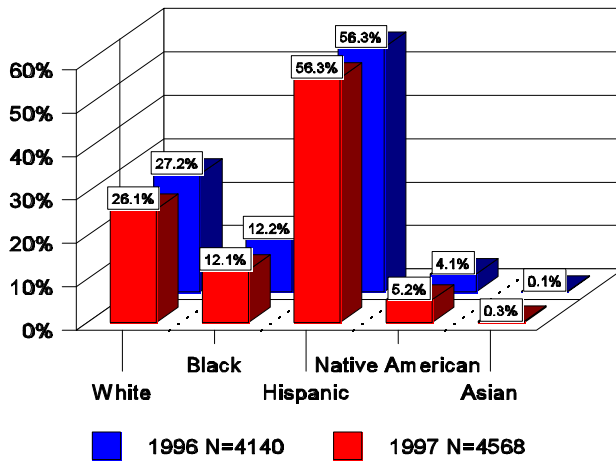
## 5. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Sex:

The majority of prisoners (92.5%) were male. The increase in the proportion of female prisoners from 5.8% to 7.5% between 1996 and 1997 is an artifact of the computer data, not a real trend. In 1996, a number of female prisoners were being housed in Florida and did not have records on the NMDOC computer system.



**Figure 5.2: Ethnicity**



### Ethnicity:

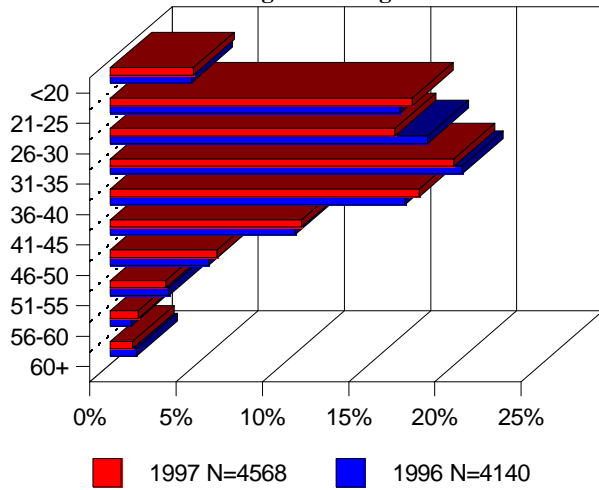
The distribution of ethnicity was fairly similar in 1996 and 1997. In both years, Hispanics represented 56% of the prison population. In 1997, the proportion of whites was 1% lower and the proportion of Native Americans was 1% higher than in 1996. These differences are significant at the .05 level.

### Age:

	1996	1997
Lowest age	15	16
Highest age	76	80
Average age	34	34

Prisoners under 18 were juveniles sentenced as either Youthful Offenders or Serious Youthful Offenders. Nearly 5% of prisoners were 20 or younger in both years.

Figure 5.3: Age



Compared to 1996, prisoners' ages in 1997 were slightly more dispersed around the average.

Table 5.1: Age

	1996		1997	
	N	%	N	%
15	1	.02	0	0
16	3	.07	4	.09
17	13	.31	11	.24
18	32	.77	32	.70
19	61	1.47	53	1.16
20	84	2.03	121	2.65
21-25	697	16.83	799	17.49
26-30	761	18.38	755	16.53
31-35	846	20.43	908	19.88
36-40	708	17.10	816	17.86
41-45	441	10.65	509	11.14
46-50	237	5.72	283	6.20
51-55	142	3.43	146	3.20
56-60	50	1.21	71	1.55
Over 60	64	1.55	60	1.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>4140</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4568</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 5.4: Age at First Arrest

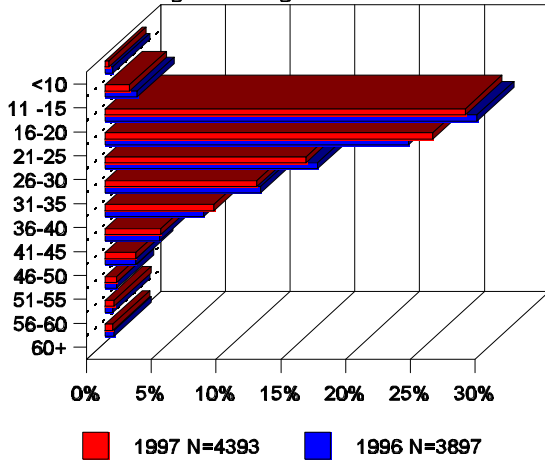


Table 5.2: Age at First Arrest

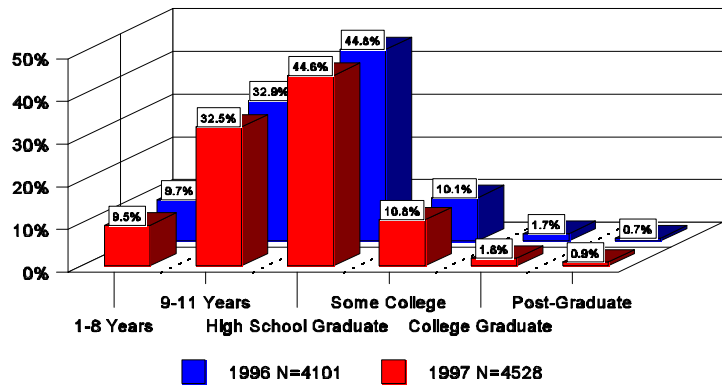
	1996		1997	
	N	%	N	%
<10	22	.6	15	.3
11-15	98	2.5	85	1.9
16-20	1120	28.7	1223	27.8
21-25	913	23.4	1113	25.3
26-30	639	16.4	682	15.5
31-35	467	12.0	515	11.7
36-40	295	7.6	371	8.4
41-45	163	4.2	188	4.3
46-50	94	2.4	106	2.4
51-55	35	.9	39	.9
56-60	24	.6	29	.7
Over 60	27	.7	27	.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3897</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4393</b>	<b>100.0</b>

First Arrest	1996	1997
Lowest age	7	7
Highest age	74	75
Average	27	27

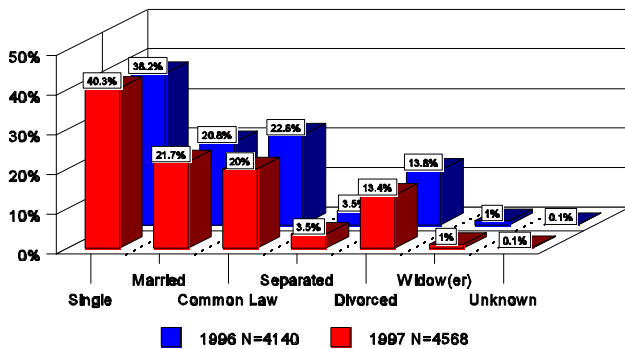
**Education:**

In both 1996 and 1997 prisoners reported an average of 11 years of education. The majority of prisoners reported at least a high school level education (high school graduate or GED). About 42% of prisoners reported not having at least the equivalent of a high school degree.

**Figure 5.5: Level of Education**



**Figure 5.6: Marital Status**



**Marital Status:**

Approximately 60% of prisoners in both years were married (including “common law” marriages) or had been married. Considering that New Mexico does not legally recognize common law marriages formed within the state, a relatively high number of prisoners in both years reported that they were in common law marriages.

**Occupations:**

Table 5.3 shows the distribution of occupations reported by prisoners prior to incarceration. In both years, ten percent of prisoners reported having been unemployed. The types of reported occupations did not vary greatly between 1996 and 1997. In both years, the highest categories were structural work, service, and miscellaneous.

**Table 5.3: Occupation**

	1996		1997	
	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	417	10.1	470	10.3
Professional	193	4.7	220	4.8
Clerical	113	2.7	111	2.4
Service	470	11.4	556	12.2
Agricultural	83	2.0	71	1.6
Processing	140	3.4	138	3.0
Machine Trades	301	7.3	339	7.4
Bench Work	102	2.5	112	2.5
Structural Work	1627	39.4	1696	37.2
Miscellaneous	688	16.6	850	18.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4134</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4563</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Religion:**

Of the one hundred religions reported by prisoners, Table 5.4 shows the distribution of the most common (at least 1% of prisoners in one or both years).

In both years, nearly half of prisoners reported being Roman Catholic.

The most frequent Protestant denomination among prisoners was Baptist.

Many prisoners reported their religion as “Christian Faith.”

Religious preferences changed slightly, although significantly, between 1996 and 1997, with prisoners in 1997 more often reporting Christian Faith and other types of religions.

**Table 5.4: Religion**

	1996		1997	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	1934	46.7	2070	45.3
<b>Christian Faith</b>	642	15.5	804	17.6
<b>Baptist</b>	526	12.7	509	11.1
<b>None</b>	402	9.7	462	10.1
<b>Other</b>	365	8.8	421	9.2
<b>Other Protestant</b>	105	2.5	130	2.8
<b>Christian - Disciples</b>	57	1.4	32	0.7
<b>Pentecostal</b>	38	0.9	49	1.1
<b>Methodist</b>	35	0.8	47	1.0
<b>Black Muslims</b>	39	0.9	44	1.0
<b>Total</b>	4143	100.0	4568	100.0

$\chi^2=23.7$ , d.f.=9, p=.005

**Military Service:**

In 1997, 7% of the prisoners reported previous military service, down from 10% in 1996.

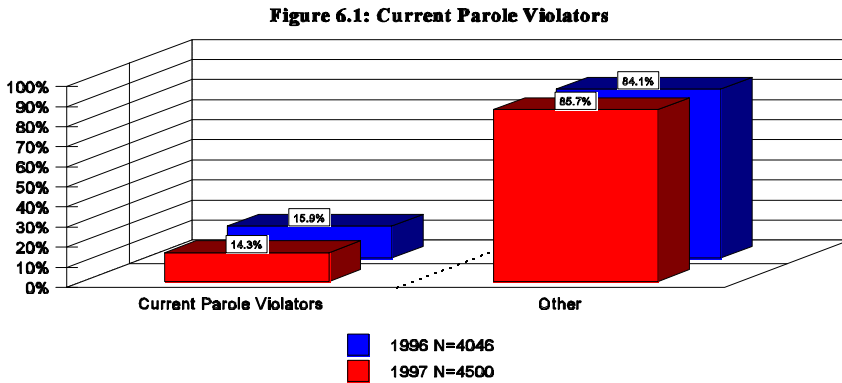
<b>Branch</b>	<b>1996</b> (N = 419)	<b>1997</b> (N = 332)
Army	54.4%	57.2%
Air Force	11.0	10.8
Marines	16.2	14.2
Navy	16.0	16.3
Coast Guard	2.4	1.5

<b>Discharge Status</b>	<b>1996</b> (N = 410)	<b>1997</b> (N = 322)
Honorable	87.8%	89.1%
Dishonorable	8.3	7.8
Medical	3.9	3.1

## 6. FOCUS ON PAROLE VIOLATORS

Parole violators are offenders who had been released from prison, but were subsequently returned because they violated the conditions set for them during the one or two year supervision period following prison. In this section, we compare parole violators and other prisoners in terms of demographic characteristics and the types of offenses they have committed. Note that other prisoners could have been parole violators on previous sentences served, but only violations of current parole terms are examined here.



In general, about 15% of prisoners were classified as parole violators. There were 645 prisoners currently incarcerated for parole violations in both 1996 and 1997. Due to the overall increase in the prison population, the proportion of prisoners with a current parole violation was lower in 1997 than in 1996.

### Parole Violators: Demographic Profile

Table 6.1 shows that in both years, [parole violators were more likely than other prisoners to be Hispanic](#) (1996: 65% compared to 55.3%) [and less likely to be white](#) (1997: 20.5% compared to 26.5%). In 1997, the proportion of black parole violators rose and the proportion of Hispanic parole violators fell by nearly 5%.

**Table 6.1: Parole Violators: Ethnicity**

	1996 <sup>a</sup> N=4046		1997 <sup>b</sup> N=4500	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
White	20.0%	28.1%	20.5%	26.5%
Black	11.8%	12.2%	14.4%	11.6%
Hispanic	65.0%	55.3%	60.4%	56.1%
Native American	3.3%	4.3%	4.7%	5.3%
Asian	0%	0.1%	0%	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=24.5$ , d.f.=1, p=.00006

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=15.8$ , d.f.=1, p=.00325

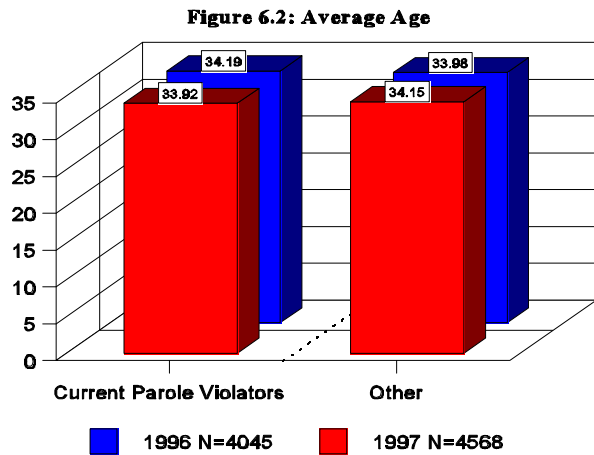


**Table 6.2: Parole Violators: Age**

	1996 <sup>a</sup>		1997 <sup>b</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other	Current Parole Violators	Other
20 and under	0.8%	5.3%	2.3%	5.3%
21-25	16.3%	17.1%	15.7%	17.9%
26-30	22.0%	17.7%	21.0%	15.9%
31-35	22.3%	20.2%	21.9%	19.6%
36-40	16.7%	17.3%	17.2%	17.9%
41-45	11.0%	10.5%	12.1%	11.0%
46-50	6.2%	5.6%	4.8%	6.3%
51-55	2.6%	3.5%	3.0%	3.1%
56-60	1.4%	1.2%	1.2%	1.6%
Over 60	0.6%	1.7%	0.8%	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=37.1$ , d.f.=9, p=.00003

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=26.2$ , d.f.=9, p=.00191



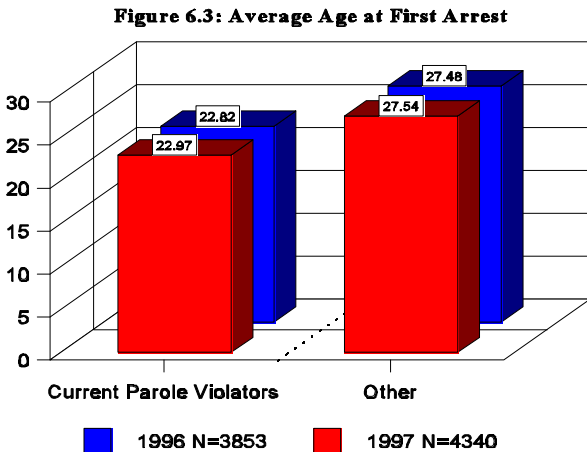
Parole violators tended to be older in 1996 and younger in 1997 than other prisoners. Parole violators in both years tended to be closer to the average age than other prisoners, i.e., there were fewer parole violators in the youngest and oldest categories.

**Table 6.3: Parole Violators: Age at First Arrest**

	1996 <sup>a</sup>		1997 <sup>b</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other	Current Parole Violators	Other
<b>10 and under</b>	1.0%	0.5%	0.8%	0.3%
<b>11-15</b>	4.3%	2.2%	3.3%	1.7%
<b>16-20</b>	41.2%	26.4%	39.0%	26.1%
<b>21-25</b>	27.4%	22.8%	29.1%	24.8%
<b>26-30</b>	13.3%	16.9%	16.2%	15.3%
<b>31-35</b>	8.2%	12.6%	6.7%	12.6%
<b>36-40</b>	2.9%	8.4%	3.5%	9.2%
<b>41-45</b>	1.1%	4.7%	1.1%	4.7%
<b>46-50</b>	0.6%	2.8%	0.3%	2.7%
<b>51-55</b>	0%	1.1%	0%	1.0%
<b>56-60</b>	0%	0.7%	0%	0.8%
<b>Over 60</b>	0%	0.8%	0%	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=133.9$ , d.f.=11, p=.00000

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=129.6$ , d.f.=11, p=.00000



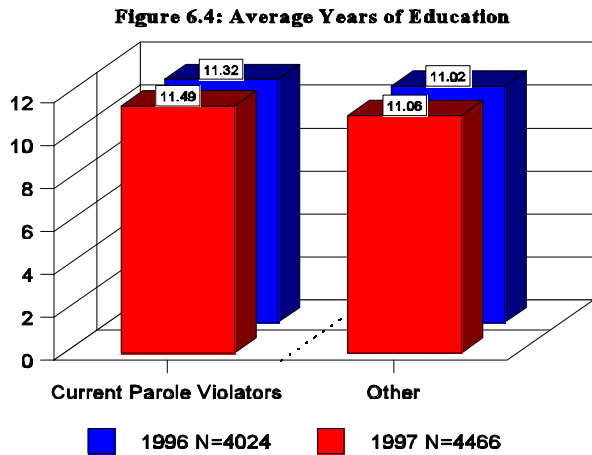
In both years, the average age at first arrest in both years was significantly lower among parole violators than it was for other prisoners. Similarly, a breakdown by categories of age shows a higher proportion of current parole violators in the lowest categories.

**Table 6.4: Parole Violators: Educational Level**

	1996 <sup>a</sup>		1997 <sup>b</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other	Current Parole Violators	Other
1-8 Years	6.9%	10.3%	5.6%	10.2%
9-11 Years	30.0%	33.6%	28.4%	33.5%
High School Graduate	52.1%	43.4%	53.5%	42.8%
Some College	8.4%	10.3%	9.0%	10.9%
College Graduate	2.0%	1.7%	3.0%	1.6%
Post-Graduate	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=20.1$ , d.f.=5, p=.00121

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=39.5$ , d.f.=5, p=.00000



Average years of education was not significantly different among parole violators and other prisoners. However, there was a **higher percentage of high school graduates among current parole violators** in both years.

## Parole Violators: Offense Profile

Table 6.5 shows that [parole violators were much more likely than other prisoners to be property offenders and less likely to be violent offenders or drug offenders](#). This pattern was stronger in 1997 than in 1996. For example in 1997, only 45.7% of parole violators had committed a violent offense, compared to 51.7% of other prisoners.

**Table 6.5: Parole Violators: Offense Leading to Most Recent Conviction<sup>a</sup>**

	1996 <sup>b</sup>		1997 <sup>c</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
<b>Violent Offense</b>	50.4%	52.6%	45.7%	51.7%
<b>Property Offense</b>	35.7%	28.4%	37.9%	27.5%
<b>Drug Offense</b>	9.1%	14.7%	12.1%	16.1%
<b>Public-Order Offense</b>	4.3%	3.9%	4.3%	4.1%
<b>Other</b>	0.5%	0.4%	0%	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> Current offenses represent the most serious offense among offenses in the most recent sentence (sentences may include more than one offense).

<sup>b</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=22.5$ , d.f.=4, p=.00016

<sup>c</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=33.5$ , d.f.=4, p=.00000

When we group all the non-violent offenses into one category and compare them to violent offenses as a group, we can see in Table 6.6 that in 1997, [current parole violators were much more likely than other prisoners to be serving time for a non-violent offense](#) (54.3% compared to 48.3%). In 1996, there was not much difference between parole violators and other prisoners in terms of whether or not the primary offense was a violent one.

**Table 6.6: Parole Violators: Current Violent Offenses<sup>a</sup>**

	1996 <sup>b</sup>		1997 <sup>c</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
<b>Violent Offenses</b>	50.4%	52.6%	45.7%	51.7%
<b>Non-Violent Offenses</b>	49.6%	47.4%	54.3%	48.3%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> Current offenses represent the most serious offense among offenses in the most recent sentence (sentences may include more than one offense).

<sup>b</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=1.1$ , d.f.=1, p=.30190

<sup>c</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=8.2$ , d.f.=1, p=.00424

Table 6.7 shows that in both years, current parole violators were less likely than other prisoners to have sentences that included at least one drug conviction, although in 1997 the difference was not statistically significant.

**Table 6.7: Parole Violators: Current Drug Offenses**

	1996 <sup>a</sup>		1997 <sup>b</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
Current Offenses Include at Least One Drug Offense	17.4%	21.0%	21.0%	23.7%
No Drug Offenses among Current Offenses	82.6%	79.0%	79.0%	76.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=4.4$ , d.f.=1, p=.03603

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=2.4$ , d.f.=1, p=.12440

In Table 6.8, we compare sentences of parole violators and other prisoners to find that parole violators were significantly more likely than other prisoners to have sentences that included at least one habitual enhancement. This pattern was large and significant in both years.

**Table 6.8: Parole Violators: Habitual Enhancement in Most Recent Sentence**

	1996 <sup>a</sup>		1997 <sup>b</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
Habitual Enhancement	49.8%	37.3%	46.1%	33.2%
No Habitual Enhancement	50.2%	62.7%	53.9%	66.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=35.6$ , d.f.=1, p=.00000

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=40.1$ , d.f.=1, p=.00000

We do the same comparison in Table 6.9 for firearm enhancements and find that in both years parole violators were no more likely than other prisoners to have sentences that included a firearm enhancement.

**Table 6.9: Parole Violators: Firearm Enhancement in Most Recent Sentence**

	1996 <sup>a</sup>		1997 <sup>b</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
Firearm Enhancement	10.1%	11.5%	8.4%	10.7%
No Firearm Enhancement	89.9%	88.5%	91.6%	89.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=1.1$ , d.f.=1, p=.28663

<sup>b</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=3.1$ , d.f.=1, p=.07623

In addition to comparing the current sentences of parole violators and other prisoners, we also look at offenses connected to previous New Mexico prison incarcerations. Again, information on previous incarcerations includes a limited offense history and also includes only incarcerations in New Mexico prison facilities. We do not have information on prior incarcerations in out-of-state facilities, jail terms, probations, fines, or community service. Table 6.10 compares parole violators and other prisoners to see whether they have been previously incarcerated in the New Mexico Corrections Department. In both years, **parole violators were much more likely than other prisoners to have at least one prior NMDOC incarceration** (close to 40% compared to 25%).

**Table 6.10: Parole Violators: Previous Prison Terms at NMDOC<sup>a</sup>**

	1996 <sup>b</sup>		1997 <sup>c</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
<b>Previous NMDOC Incarceration</b>	39.7%	25.2%	38.4%	25.9%
<b>No Previous NMDOC Incarceration</b>	60.3%	74.8%	61.6%	74.1%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> Only NM Department of Corrections incarcerations are included. Offenders who committed crimes in other states or who were convicted of offenses resulting in sentences other than imprisonment are not included.

<sup>b</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=56.8$ , d.f.=1, p=.00000

<sup>c</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=42.9$ , d.f.=1, p=.00000

In Table 6.11 we compare current parole violators and other prisoners in terms of the types of offenses leading to prior incarcerations in New Mexico. Although there were no significant differences between the two groups in 1996, in 1997 **parole violators were more likely than other prisoners to have committed property and public-order offenses and less likely to have committed violent and drug offenses as crimes leading to previous NM incarcerations.**

**Table 6.11: Parole Violators: Type of Offense Leading to a Previous NMDOC Prison Term<sup>a</sup>**

	1996 <sup>b</sup>		1997 <sup>c</sup>	
	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners	Current Parole Violators	Other Prisoners
<b>Violent Offense</b>	30.9%	36.0%	31.6%	37.9%
<b>Property Offense</b>	54.7%	49.1%	52.6%	47.7%
<b>Drug Offense</b>	9.0%	10.1%	7.7%	9.9%
<b>Public-Order Offense</b>	5.1%	4.7%	7.3%	4.2%
<b>Other</b>	0.4%	0.1%	0.8%	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> Percentages are among all those with previous offenses. Previous offenses represent the most serious among all offenses which occurred before the current sentence. Only NM Department of Corrections incarcerations are included. Offenders who committed crimes in other states or who were convicted of offenses resulting in sentences other than imprisonment are not included.

<sup>b</sup> 1996:  $\chi^2=3.9$ , d.f.=4, p=.41915

<sup>c</sup> 1997:  $\chi^2=9.3$ , d.f.=4, p=.05305

## 7. FOCUS ON FEMALE PRISONERS

This section of the working paper focuses on women incarcerated in New Mexico prison facilities on August 24 1997. The 1996 data are not used in this section because a significant number of women were housed in out-of-state facilities and were not included in the 1996 data collection. It should be noted that because the number of incarcerated women is small, it is difficult to generalize these results to other women or other populations.

### Proportion of Women in the Prison Population:

These data show that 339 (or approximately 7.5%) of current DOC prisoners were women. Daily population counts from NMDOC indicate that this proportion has not changed significantly over the last several years.

### Admission Status:

Women were more likely than men to be new commitments and less likely to be serving time for probation and parole violations (see Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1: Admission Status by Gender**

	Female	Male	All Prisoners
New Commitments from Court	86.3%	68.7%	70.0%
Parole Violators	11.4%	14.3%	14.3%
Probation Violators	0.3%	11.3%	10.5%
Other	2.0%	5.6%	5.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

### Location:

Women were housed at the New Mexico Women's Correctional Facility (86.5% of women) or at the Fort Stanton Correctional Facility (13.2% of women). One female prisoner (0.3%) was in court on the day we downloaded these data.

### Region:

There was no significant difference between men and women in the region of the state where the offenses were committed.

## Demographic Characteristics

### Age:

The average age of female prisoners was 33.54 years, compared to 34.16 years for men. This difference is not statistically significant. An examination of the distribution across age categories (broken down into five year ranges) shows that women were more likely to be clustered around the average age. Thus, compared to men, there were fewer women in the lowest and highest age categories.

### Education:

Average years of education were not significantly different for men and women--11.27 years for women and 11.11 years for men. The education distribution across categories shows that men were more likely to be clustered around the average education level. The distribution of women across the categories was more diverse.

## Offense Characteristics

### Number of Current Offenses:

Women were serving time for an average of 2.0 offenses, whereas men were serving time for an average of 2.4 offenses. This small but significant difference can be further examined by noting that the proportion of women serving time for a single offense was 42.5% compared to 34.5% for men. The proportion of prisoners serving time for two offenses was also higher for women (31.9%) than for men (29.1%). **Men were more likely to serve time for 3 or more offenses than were women.**

### Number of Prior Incarcerations in New Mexico Prison Facilities:

An examination of offenses connected to the “inactive” sentences recorded for prisoners shows that **women were far less likely than men to have previous periods of imprisonment.** The proportion of women who had no recorded previous incarcerations in New Mexico was 92.4% compared to 70.9% for men.



**Current Offense Type:**

Women were far less likely than men to have been incarcerated for a violent offense. Table 7.2 shows a breakdown of the most serious current offense by gender. In addition to a dramatically smaller proportion of women incarcerated for violent offenses, we also see a higher proportion of women incarcerated for property and drug offenses. (See Appendix A for a breakdown of offense categories).

**Table 7.2: Most Serious Current Offense by Gender**

	Female	Male	All Prisoners
Violent Offense	28.3%	53.2%	51.4%
Property Offense	37.5%	28.0%	28.7%
Drug Offense	28.6%	14.3%	15.4%
Public-Order Offense	5.6%	4.0%	28.7%
Other Offense	0%	0.5%	15.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## Sentence Length

Overall, women were serving far shorter sentences than were men. The most likely reason for this difference is that women were more likely than men to have been convicted of property and drug offenses (which generally receive shorter sentences) and less likely than men to have been convicted of violent offenses (which generally receive longer sentences). The average sentence length for all women was 8.2 years, compared to 13.5 years for men. The median sentence length, which represents the mid-point in the range of sentences, was four years for women and seven years for men.

An analysis of differences in sentence length between women and men for specific offenses gives a different picture. We examined the eight offenses occurring most frequently among all sentences, and working with this sample (representing about 50% of prisoners), we analyzed the length of the single sentence connected to that offense. Table 7.3 shows the number of prisoners in each category and the mean sentence served for each type of offense, broken down by gender. From this table it is clear that these women received far longer sentences for both first and second degree murder than did the men. Due to the small number of women (14 in each category), it is impossible to draw any conclusions about the reasons for the differences. It very well may be that these 28 cases involved unusual circumstances that contributed to the longer sentence length. For the other types of offenses in Table 3, the average sentence length for women was either lower or about the same as that for men.

**Table 7.3: Average Sentence Length (Years) by Type of Offense and Gender <sup>a</sup>**

	Women		Men		All Prisoners	
	N	Mean Sentence	N	Mean Sentence	N	Mean Sentence
<b>First degree murder</b>	14	44.32	228	27.02	242	28.02
<b>Second degree murder</b>	14	22.89	211	16.14	225	16.56
<b>Armed robbery</b>	7	5.43	316	14.30	323	14.11
<b>Aggravated battery</b>	13	2.89	211	3.48	224	3.45
<b>Burglary</b>	23	4.28	512	4.55	535	4.54
<b>Forgery</b>	36	3.50	123	4.51	159	4.28
<b>Drug trafficking</b>	66	5.56	473	6.73	539	6.59
<b>Drug possession</b>	28	2.88	104	2.87	132	2.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>8.40</b>	<b>2246</b>	<b>9.73</b>	<b>2379</b>	<b>9.62</b>

<sup>a</sup> This table includes only prisoners who were incarcerated for these particular offenses. Other types of offenders are excluded from the analysis.

## APPENDIX A: DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF OFFENSE CATEGORIES

### VIOLENT:

**Homicide:** Murder, first degree; Murder, second degree

**Sexual Offense:** Rape; Rape of a child under age 13; Sexual penetration, first degree; Sexual penetration, second degree

**Kidnapping:** Kidnapping; Custodial interference

**Armed Robbery:** Robbery, armed

**Other Homicide:** Homicide by vehicle; Manslaughter, voluntary; Manslaughter, involuntary

**Other Sexual Offense:** Assault with intent to rape; Attempted sodomy or sodomy; Rape, statutory; Sexual assault; Sexual penetration, third degree; Sexual contact; Sex exploitation of a child; Enticement of a child

**Robbery:** Robbery

**Assault:** Aggravated assault; Aggravated battery; Assault; Assault/battery on peace officer; Assault with a deadly weapon; Assault with intent to kill

**Other Violent Offense:** Attempt to commit violent felony; Child abuse; Child abuse resulting in death; Extortion; False imprisonment; Intimidating a witness; Great bodily harm by vehicle

### NON-VIOLENT:

#### Property

**Burglary:** Breaking and entering; Burglary; Aggravated burglary

**Larceny-Theft:** Larceny, grand; Shoplifting; Theft or larceny; Stealing from an auto

**Motor Vehicle Theft:** Theft of auto

**Arson:** Attempted arson or arson

**Fraud:** Embezzlement; Fraud; Fraudulent use of credit cards; Forgery; Issuing worthless checks; Obtaining money or property under false pretenses

### (NON-VIOLENT, Property)

**Stolen Property:** Receiving, concealing, or possessing stolen property

**Other Property Offense:** Damage to property; Possession of burglary tools; Unauthorized entry

#### Drug

**Drug Trafficking:** Sale/manufacture-controlled substance; Trafficking/distribution-controlled substance

**Drug Possession:** Possession of controlled substance

#### Public-Order

**Weapons Offense:** Possession of deadly weapon; Unlawful firearms in liquor store; Felon in possession of firearm

**Driving While Intoxicated:** DWI or driving on a revoked license; Driving while intoxicated

**Other Public-Order Offense:** Escape from jail or PNM; Failure to appear; Harboring or aiding a felon; Tampering with evidence; Habitual; Bribery of witness; Violation of probation; Taking contraband into PNM; Perjury; Dangerous use of explosives; Criminal solicitation; Evading an officer; Under influence of alcohol; Possession of explosive/incendiary device; Driving recklessly (auto); Driving/revoked license

#### Other

**Other Offense:** Conspiracy; Contributing to delinquency of minors; Antiterrorism act/civil disorder; Antiterrorism act/unlawful acts (includes drive-by shootings)

## APPENDIX B: CALCULATION OF SENTENCE LENGTH

Total sentence length was calculated by analyzing all of the concurrent sentences in the current sentence, selecting the largest one, then adding all consecutive, single, and separate sentences to the largest concurrent sentence. Life sentences, indeterminate life sentences, and determinate life sentences were all assigned single sentences of thirty years.

This calculation technique tends to underestimate sentence length in two ways:

1. Many non-life sentences are for fifty years. Although meritorious deductions on these sentences will likely mean that these prisoners will serve less time than those prisoners on life sentences or indeterminate life sentences, the sentences for these non-life prisoners appear longer than for those with thirty year life sentences.
2. It is impossible to tell from these data which sentences should run concurrently with other concurrent sentences. There are examples of cases where a subset of concurrent sentences run together but separate from other concurrent sentences in the total sentence. Our calculation technique would lump all these concurrent sentences together and only count the largest one. Given the way the data are coded, it is impossible to separate the offenses from each other to calculate the largest sentences from each subset.

These data may also lead to over-estimates in both single and total sentence length due to problems with data entry. There are situations where the Corrections Department receives a judgement and sentencing report from the courts where the single sentences are not specified - only the total sentence is indicated. Data entry operators were instructed to enter the total sentence for each offense. If there are three single sentences for a prisoner in this situation, the data would indicate a sentence three times longer than the actual sentence. Also minor offenses in the sentence would appear to have sentences much longer than the sentence that was actually assigned.

These problems mean that information on the total sentence lengths prepared from these data should be treated with care. For example, we should not look at average sentence length for the total population or for a specific offense, decide it is too long or too short and make policy recommendations based on these numbers. However, since these problems occur across all our categories of offenses, we can safely compare sentence lengths across categories of offenses. Thus, we can examine sentence lengths for one type of offense *compared to other types of offenses*.