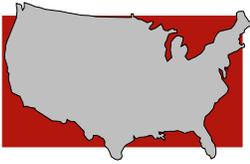


Historical Data





Introduction to Historical Data

The arrival of the new millennium provides an opportunity to reflect on the past and consider the challenges of the future. The 20th century saw remarkable changes in the administration of justice, and the 21st century will undoubtedly bring a host of new issues and challenges. As justice decisionmakers and administrators consider these future issues, it is helpful to look at the past for clues as to what the new century may bring.

Long-term trends can show us more clearly where we have been so that we can have a better understanding of where we may be going.

In the National Data and State Data components of the *Crime and Justice Atlas 2000*, we examine statistical trends over the past 20–25 years in law enforcement, sentencing, and corrections. This Historical Data section examines long-term trends that span the better part of the 20th century. Whereas short-term trends can show patterns in crime, arrest rates, sentencing, and correctional populations, long-term trends can reveal cycles in these rates, and can demonstrate how they are connected to social conditions and societal changes. What appears to be a pattern in the short-term can be seen as part of a larger cycle when examined over many more years. Long-term trends can show us more clearly where we have been so that we can have a better understanding of where we may be going.

The two-page graphs included in this section depict long-term trends in crime, arrests, and corrections. Each graph is accompanied by text that highlights the key changes shown in the graph. The first graph shows the index crime rate for the 66-year period from 1933 to 1998. Index crimes are reported by local law enforcement agencies to their states and ultimately to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which publishes the data as part of its Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. Since index crimes are considered to be the most serious of crimes, their aggregate gives a good indication of how the crime rate has changed over the latter two thirds of the century.

The second display shows the long-term trend in the most serious of crimes, murder. While murder is infrequent relative to other index crimes, it is often the type of crime that attracts the most public attention. The graph shows the murder rate from 1900 through 1998. These data are not from law enforcement agencies, since the national UCR program was not initiated until 1930. Instead, the data come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). NCHS, through the National Vital Statistics System, collects information on causes of death from death certificates. While these data are not generated by the justice system, they are an accurate indicator of the long-term trends in this most serious of crimes.

Perhaps more than any other crime type, drug crimes are affected by societal attitudes and justice system policies. The late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, was a period of relative permissiveness toward drug use, especially marijuana use. The mid-1980s saw the introduction of crack cocaine, along with the federal government's declaration of a "war on drugs." The response of local, state and national law enforcement agencies to these changes in policies and social mores is reflected in part in changes in arrest rates for drug sales and possession. The third display depicts the drug arrest rate for the 34-year period from 1965 to 1998. The display also focuses on the last 20 years to show the components of the larger trend (sale vs. possession, marijuana vs. cocaine/crack and heroin). The trends shown here suggest that the use of illegal substances will continue to be a major challenge for the justice system for the foreseeable future.

Over the last century, changes in policies and procedures in one area of the justice system have had clear impacts on other components of the system. The fourth display shows the trend in the size of the prison population from 1925 to 1997. These data were compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and are based on reports from states of their prison populations as of the end of each year. A number of factors contribute to the trend shown in the graph, including crime trends, law enforcement activities, sentencing policies and procedures, and policies regarding release and supervision.

The fifth display shows the 70-year trend in releases from prison, from 1926 through 1996. The graph shows changes in both conditional releases, comprising mainly discretionary releases to parole supervision, and unconditional releases, comprising mainly releases as a result of expiration of sentence. The number of releases from prison is clearly connected to the number of admissions to prison, since for much of the century most states did not have the capacity to house large numbers of prisoners for long periods of time. The changing nature of releases, however, may be the result of more modern sentencing and parole policies and practices.

One of the more contentious issues in the United States in the 20th century is capital punishment. States have varied greatly in their policies regarding the execution of criminals, and policies and attitudes within individual states, and the nation as a whole, have changed over time. The final display juxtaposes the number of offenders who were held in prisons under sentence of death from 1953 to 1998 with the number of prisoners executed between 1930 and 1999. These two graphs illustrate dramatically how social values may be reflected in justice system policies, and the implications of these policies for justice system managers and decisionmakers.

When taken as a whole, these historical displays provide some indication of how the justice system has responded to the problem of crime and criminals over the last 100 years. Justice system managers and decisionmakers will find this information useful as they attempt to meet the challenges posed by criminal activity in the 21st century.

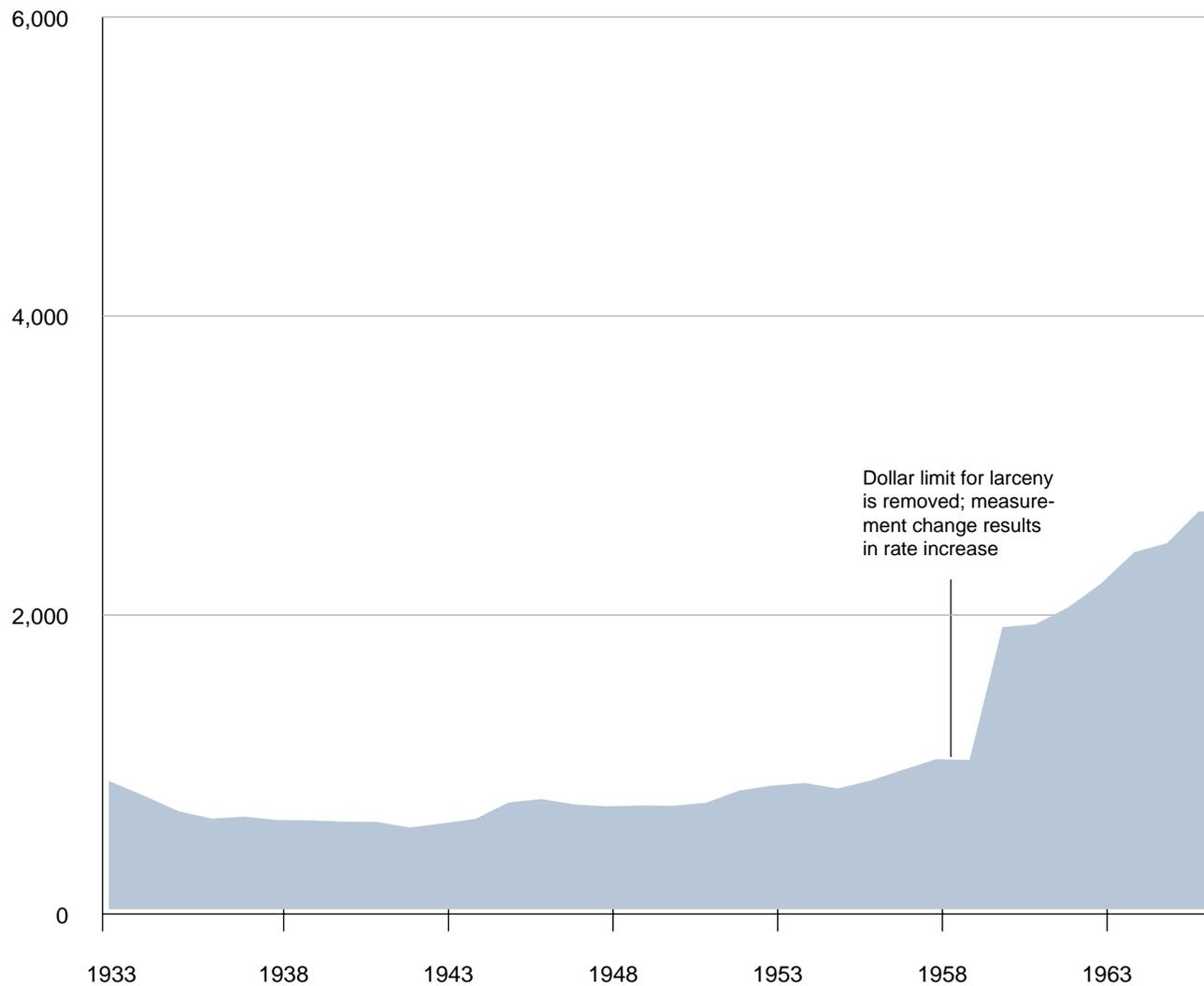
*Over the last century,
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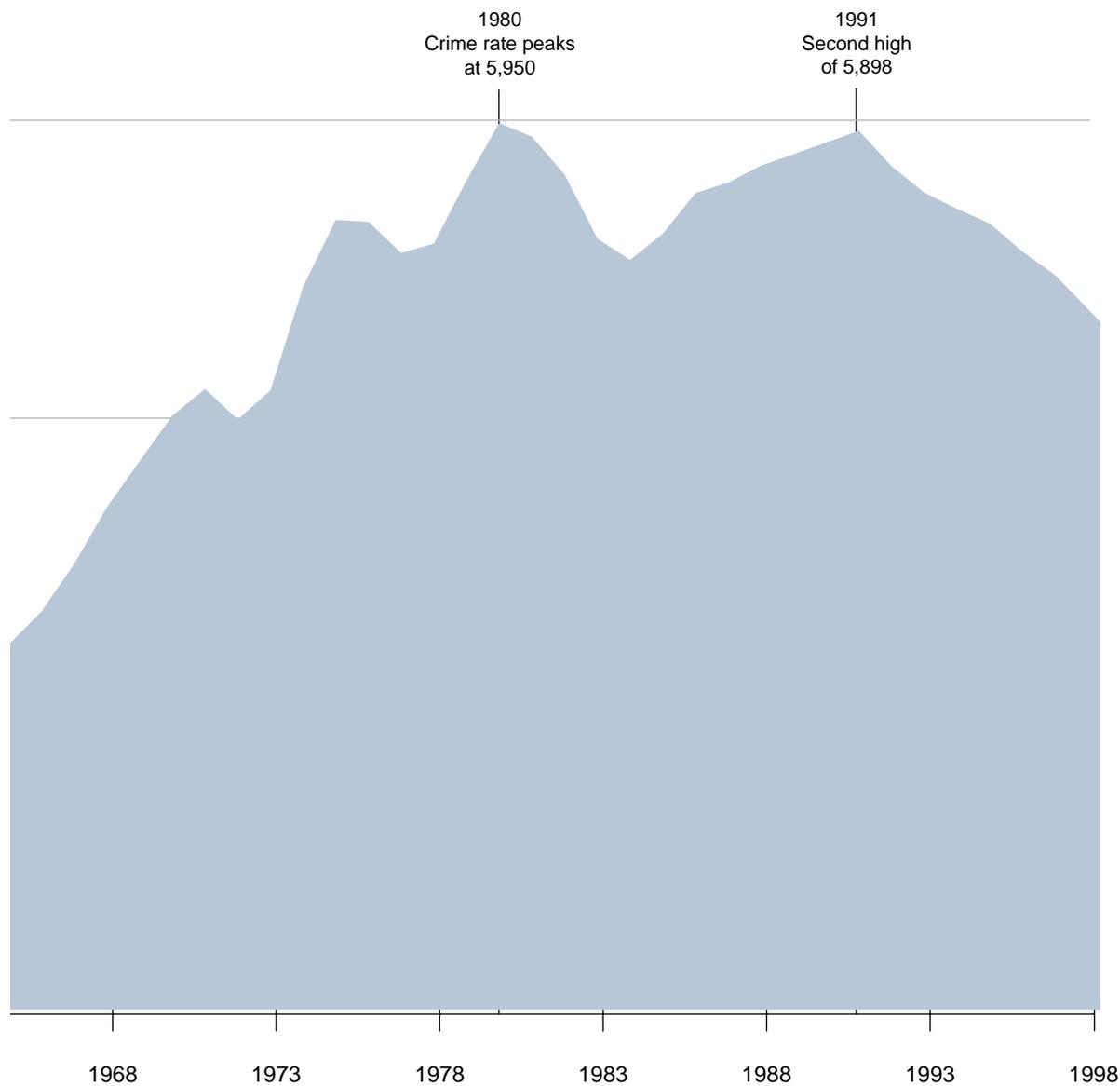
United States Index Crime Rate, 1933–1998

Changes in the overall incidence of crime are most often measured by examining the index crime rate, which includes the reported crimes of murder/nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. The reported crime rate was fairly level during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, before sharply increasing until the early 1970s. Although the crime rate plateaued during the last quarter

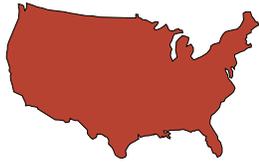
per 100,000 population



of the century, the rate has dropped and climbed by as much as 900 crimes per 100,000 population over the last 20 years. The United States is currently in the midst of the longest period of decline over the entire period shown, with a 1998 crime rate of 4,615 per 100,000 population, the lowest since 1973, when the rate was 4,155.



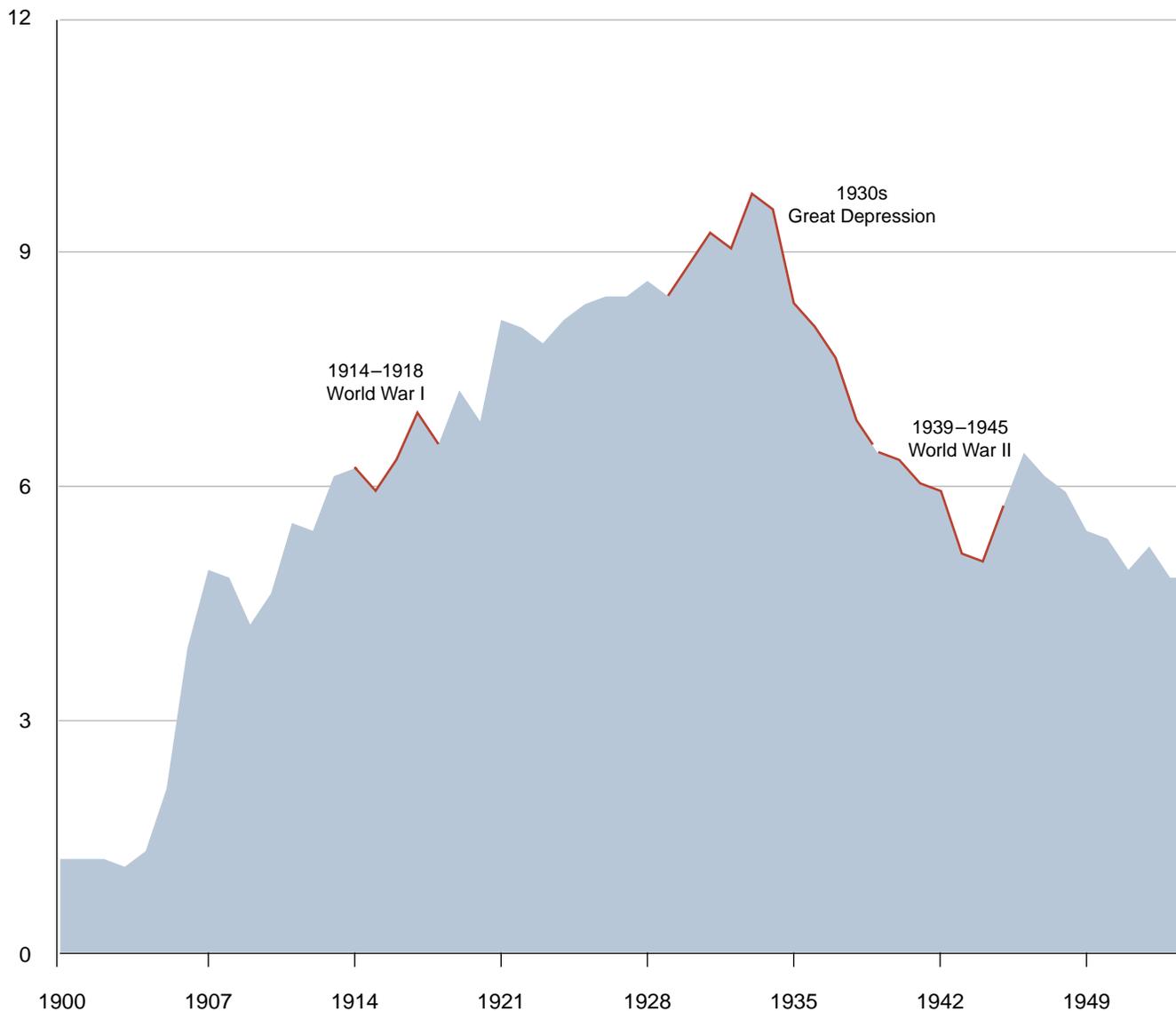
Source: *Uniform Crime Reports, 1933–1998*, Federal Bureau of Investigation.



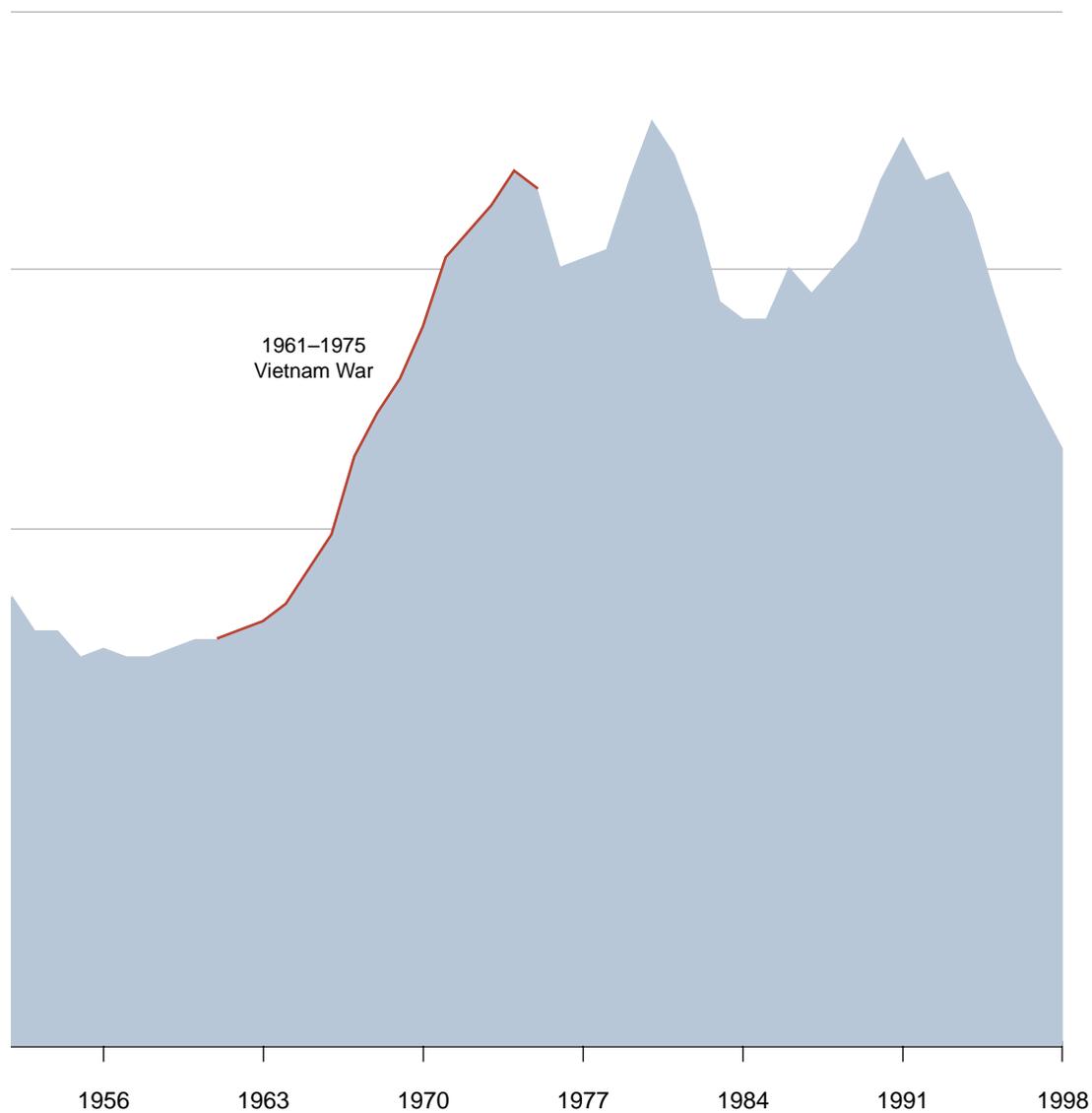
United States Murder Rate, 1900–1998

Across the country, and even internationally, the U.S. murder rate receives more attention than any other crime rate. The trend chart below shows the murder rate as a recurring flow of sustained increases and decreases spread over the 20th century. The rate increased through the early 1900s, peaking in 1933 at 9.7 murders per 100,000 population. The rate then decreased until 1960, followed by a sharp increase until the

per 100,000 population



mid-1970s. The murder rate fluctuated over the last 25 years at a historically high level, as did the overall index crime rate, but has declined rapidly during the 1990s. The murder rate in 1998, the last full year of available data, hit a 30-year low of 6.9 murders per 100,000 population. Preliminary FBI statistics show this downward trend continuing into 1999.



Source: *Vital Statistics*, National Center for Health Statistics. The 1998 data, which are preliminary, are from *Births and Deaths: Preliminary Data for 1998*, Vol. 47, No. 25, p.48.



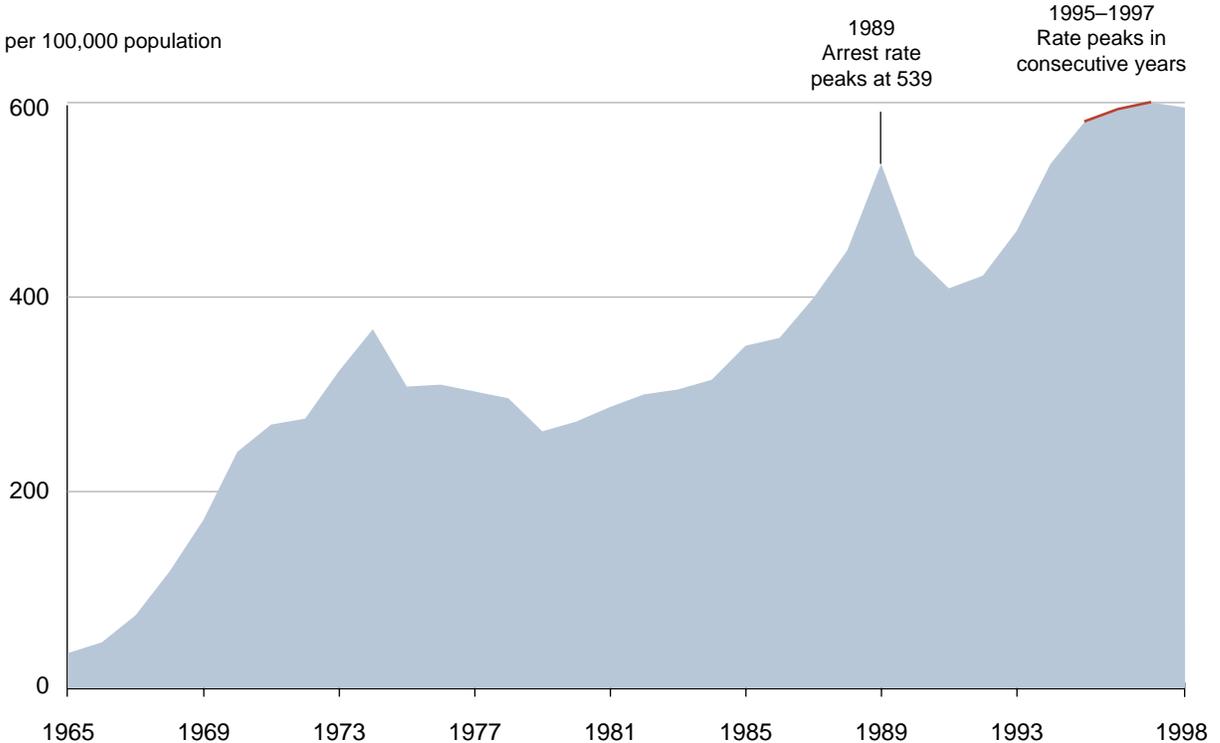
United States Drug Arrest Rate, 1965–1998

Unlike reported incidents of property or violent crime, drug crime is officially counted by police only when an arrest occurs. For this reason, using drug arrest data to measure overall illegal drug activity tends to be speculative, though drug arrest data can help measure police responses to drug crime, changes in drug use patterns, changes in the way drugs are sold and marketed, or shifts in public attitudes toward reducing drug-related crime. The following charts track drug arrest rates from 1965-1998.

The drug arrest rate increased rapidly from the mid-1960s until the mid-1970s, then declined and stabilized until the early 1980s. The rate rose quickly again until the late 1980s, decreased sharply from 1989 to 1991, then increased rapidly through 1995. A leveling occurred over the last several years shown.

Drug Arrests, 1965–1998

per 100,000 population

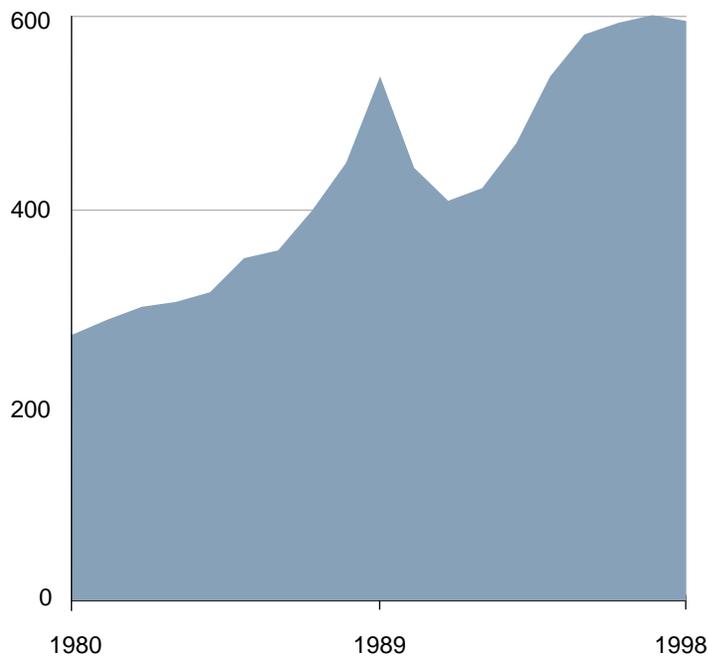


Source: *Uniform Crime Reports, 1965-1998*, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

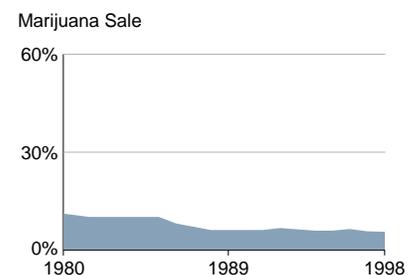
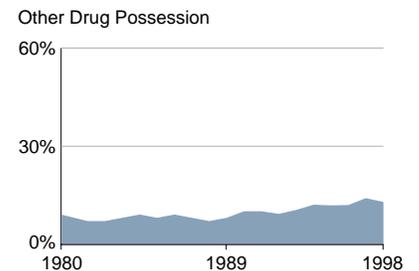
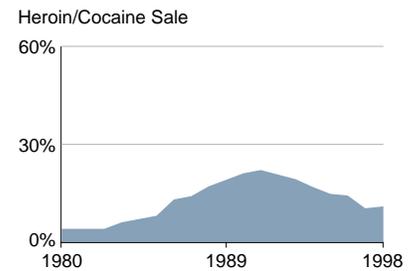
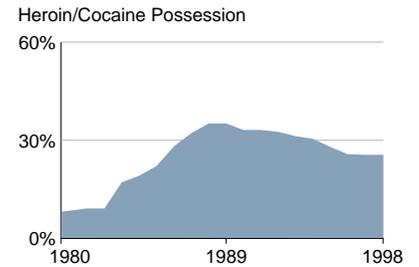
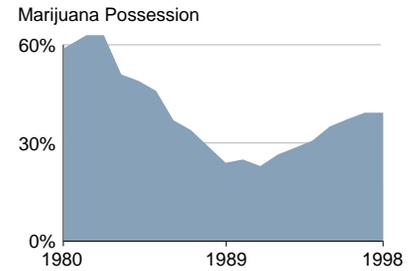
The smaller graphs show more precisely the particular crimes (sale vs. possession) and drug types (heroin/cocaine vs. marijuana) for which people have been arrested since 1980. Throughout most of the 1980s, arrests for drug crimes shifted from offenses involving marijuana to those involving heroin/cocaine (largely powder cocaine and “crack”). In recent years, though, the proportion of arrests involving marijuana has increased, with marijuana-related arrests now accounting for the majority of arrests.

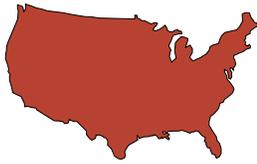
Drug Arrests, 1980–1998

per 100,000 population



Proportion of Drug Arrests 1980–1998

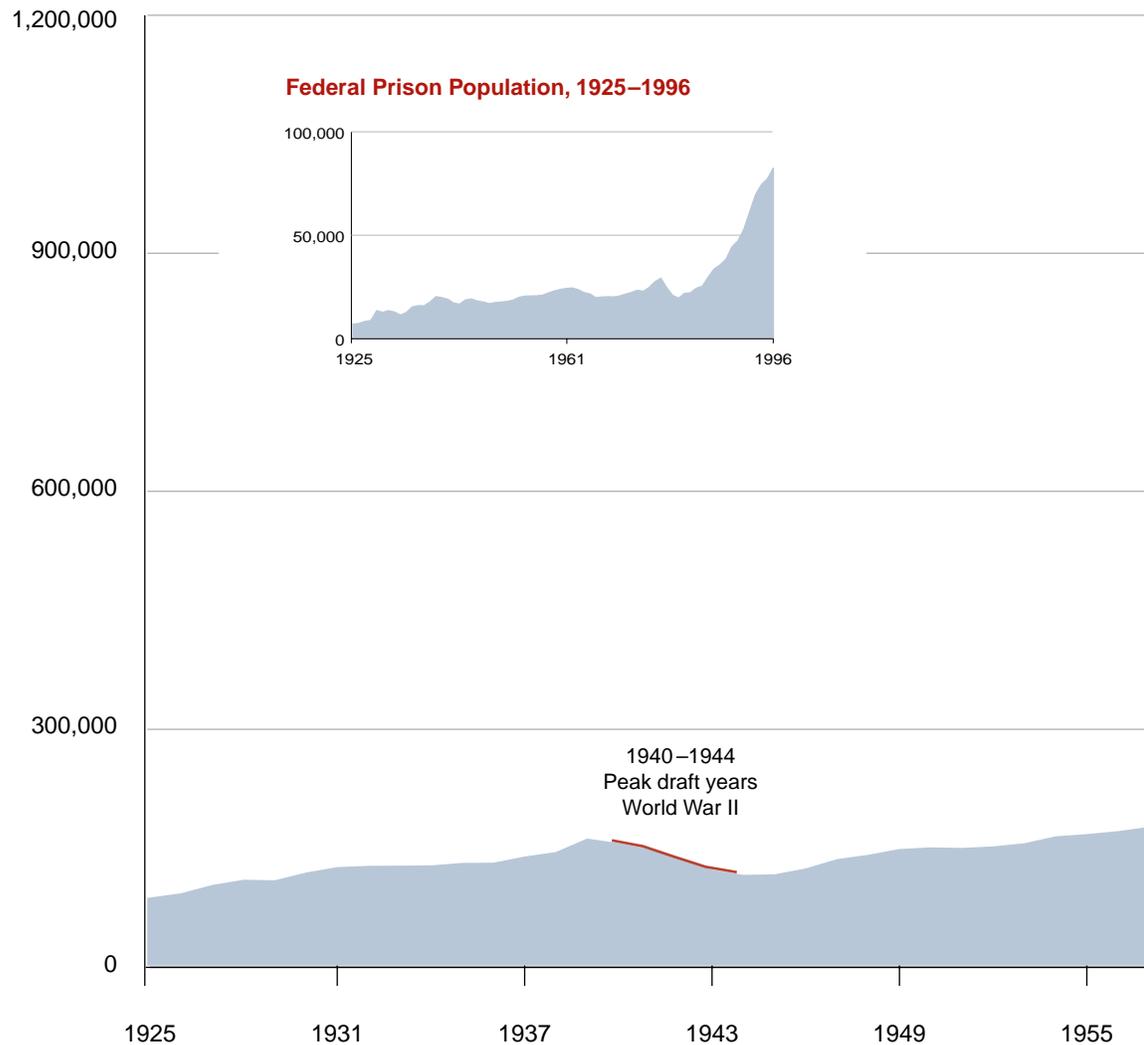




United States State Prison Population, 1925–1997

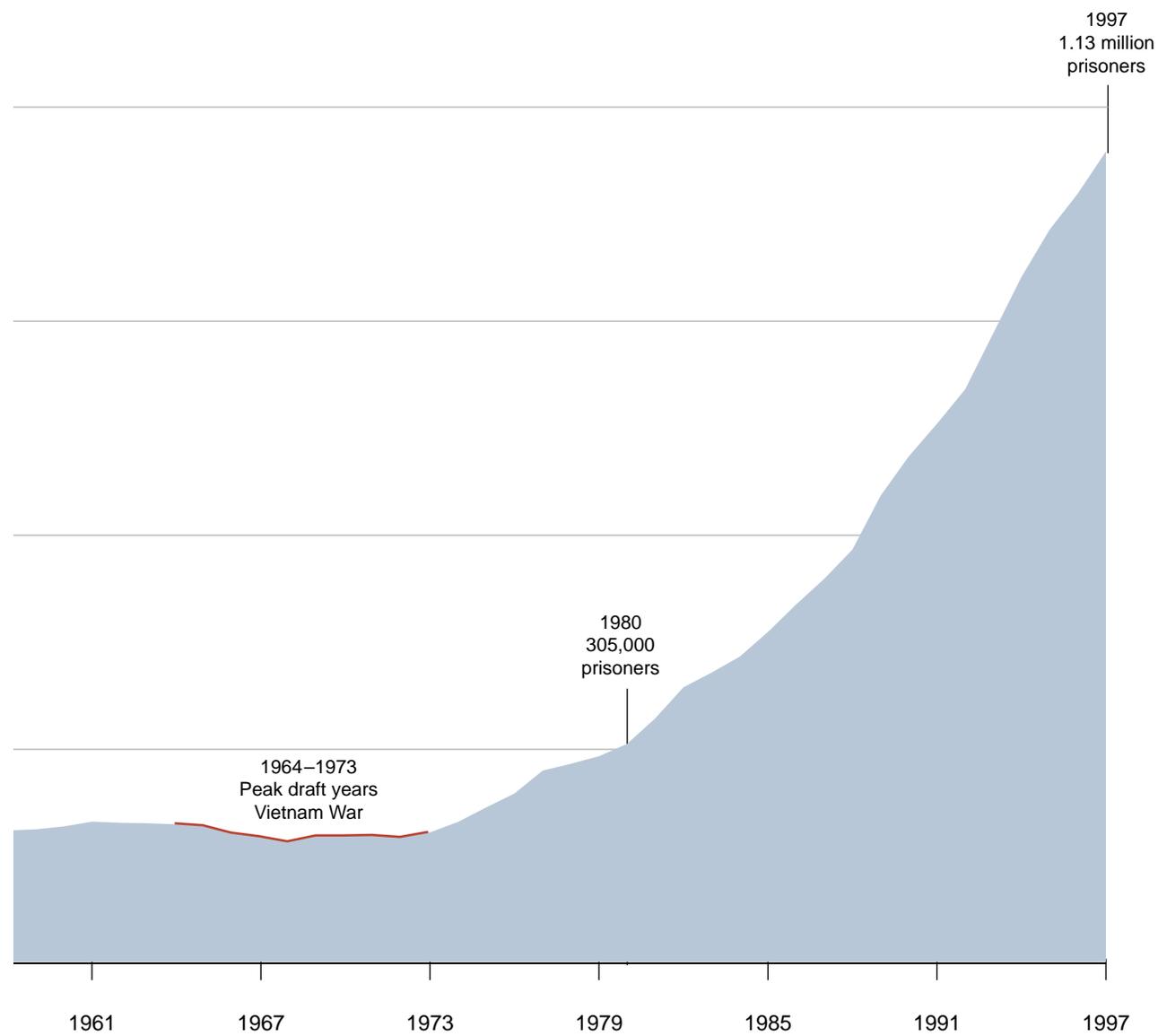
In general, the entire 75-year trend in U.S. state prison populations has been characterized by growth, with the most dramatic increases beginning in the mid-1970s. The average annual growth rate was about 4% for the period 1925–1997. However, for the period 1974–1997, the average annual growth rate was approximately 8%. The longest interruptions in the increase occurred in the peak selective service draft years during the

state prisoners



Sources: *Historical Statistics on Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions, Year End 1925–1986: United States; Correctional Populations in the United States, 1987–1996; Prisoners in 1998*: Bureau of Justice Statistics; *The Army Almanac*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950; *The Vietnam Almanac*, 1985.

World War II and Vietnam eras. These were the only years in which prison populations actually decreased. The pattern of federal prison population increases was similar to that of state correctional populations, although several peaks and valleys are more pronounced in the federal trend. Most noticeable is the peak in 1977, when there were 29,000 federal prisoners compared to 19,000 three years later.

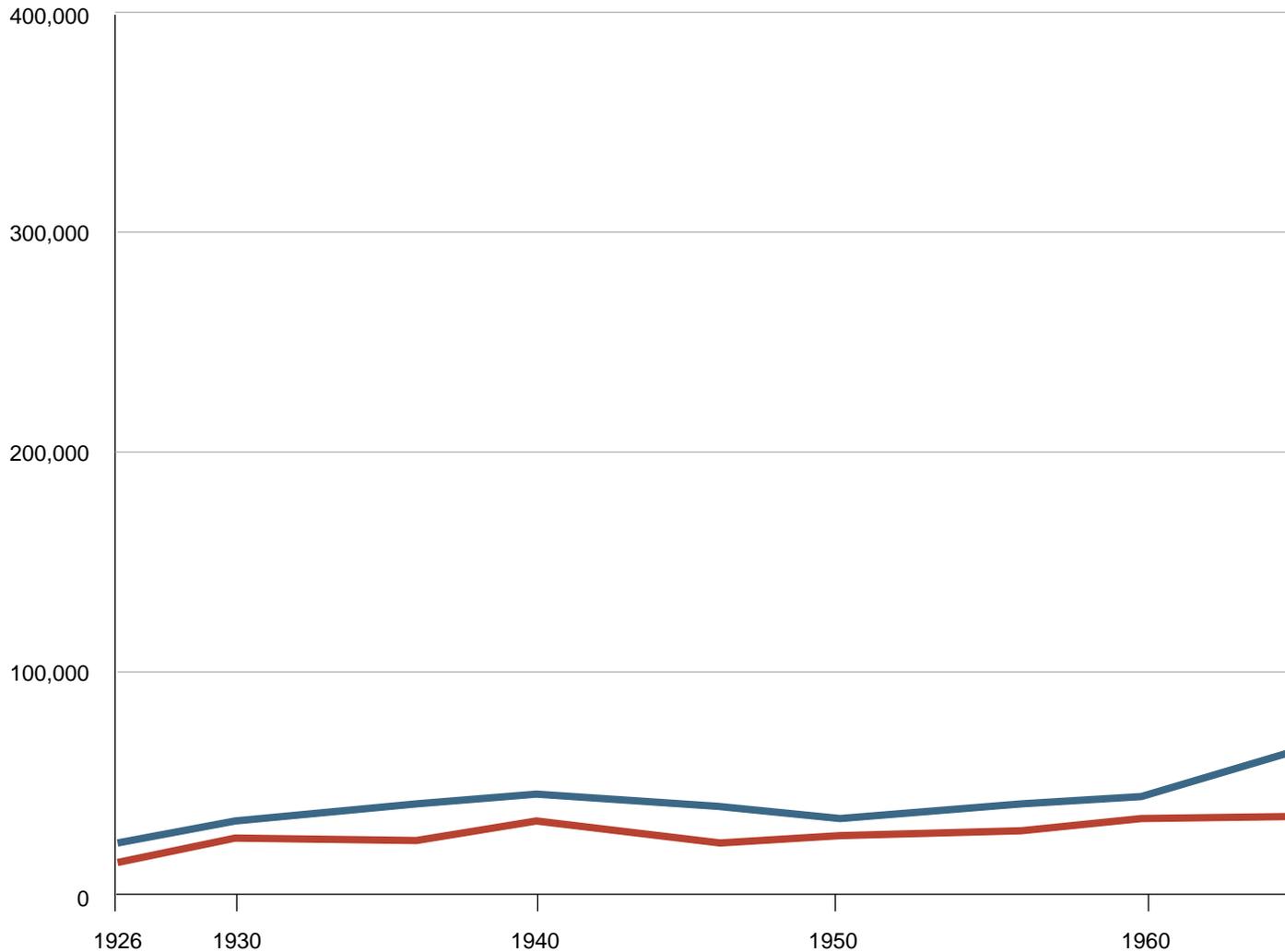




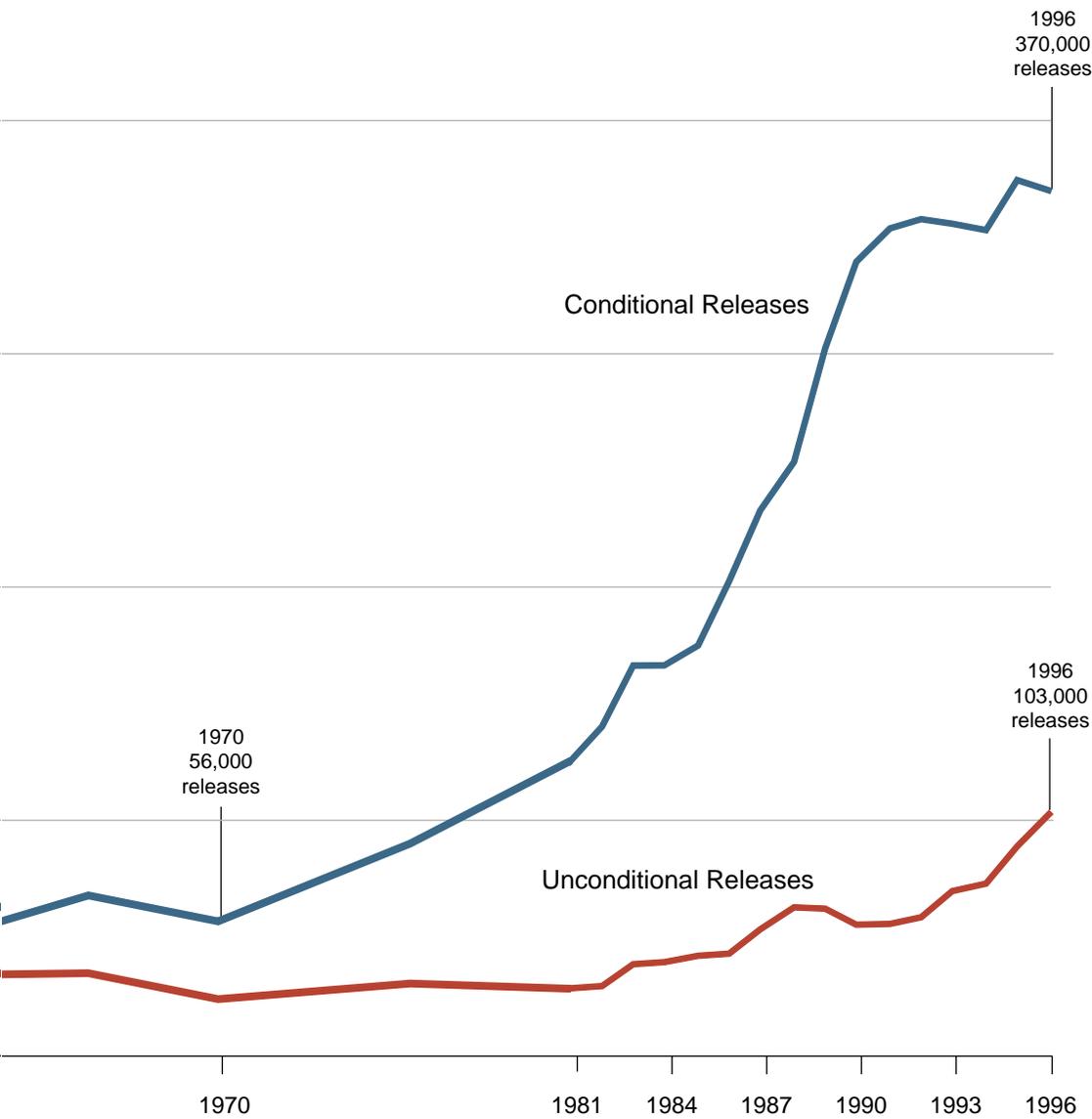
Releases From United States Prisons, 1926–1996

The number of people released from prison—like the number of people entering prison—increased most rapidly during the last quarter of the 20th century. Those released conditionally could be imprisoned again as part of their previous sentence if they violated the conditions of their release. Inmates released unconditionally could not be reimprisoned under the same sentence for which they were originally incarcerated. The

number of releases



number of conditional releases increased more than sixfold from 1970 to 1990 before starting to level during the period 1991–1994. The increase in unconditional releases began leveling earlier, in 1988, but has since maintained the fastest growth rate during the most current years displayed, rising 77% from 1992 to 1996.



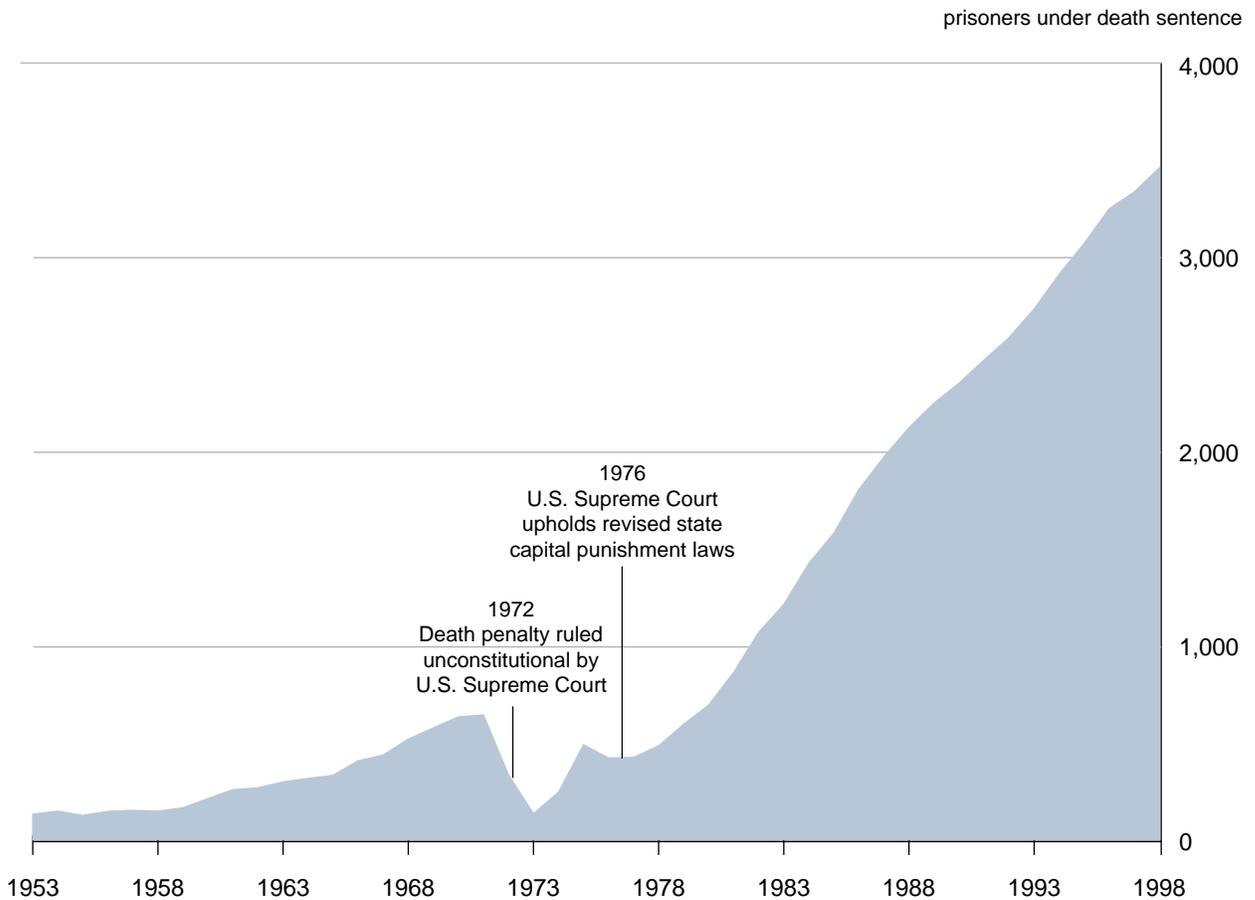
Sources: *Historical Statistics on Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions, Year End 1925–1986: United States and Correctional Populations in the United States, 1987–1996*, Bureau of Justice Statistics.



Capital Punishment in the United States

The history of the death penalty in the United States, shaped by legislation, public opinion, and judicial rulings, has had a powerful effect on the number of prisoners on death row and the number of prisoners executed. The first chart shows how many persons were under the sentence of death during each year from 1953 to 1998. The number of condemned prisoners grew slowly, but steadily, until 1971, when 620 persons were under a death sentence. With the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling the death penalty unconstitutional, the number of sentenced prisoners dropped to 162 by 1973. In 1976, the Supreme Court upheld revised state capital punishment laws, and starting in 1978, the number of death row inmates rose rapidly through 1998.

Prisoners Under Death Sentence, 1953–1998

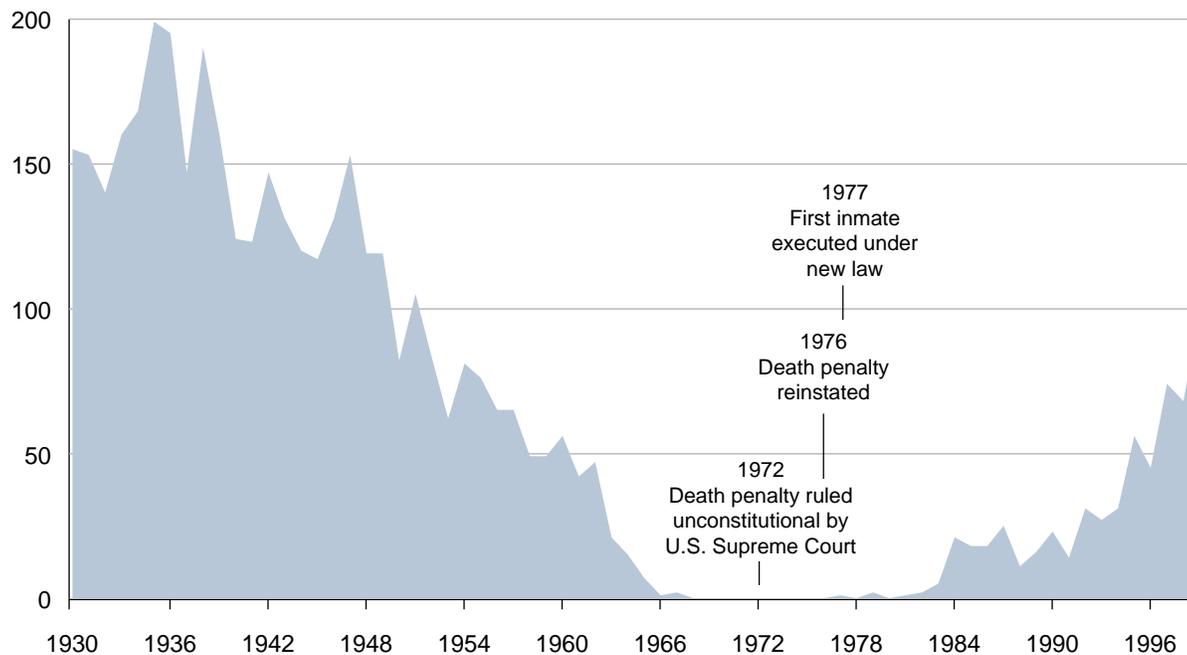


Sources: *Capital Punishment, 1998*, Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Furman v. Georgia*, 408 U.S. 238 (1972) declares the death penalty under current statutes "arbitrary and capricious," and

The second chart shows the number of persons executed in the United States from 1930 to 1999. In general, far fewer persons are executed than are under the sentence of death, although the ratio has varied greatly over time. In 1953, 131 persons were on death row, while 62 were executed, a ratio of 2:1. In 1960, the ratio of death sentences to executions was 4:1, and by 1984, the ratio was 67:1. The number of executions has increased 300% during the 1990s, with a doubling between 1996 and 1999.

Prisoners Executed, 1930–1999

prisoners executed (scale is 1/25 the size of death sentence scale on left)



therefore unconstitutional under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. *Gregg v. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153 (1976) reinstates the death penalty under a model of guided discretion.