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N.Y. reports lower crime rate by ex-offenders

By MICHAEL VIRTANEN, The Associated Press

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

ALBANY >> Fewer than 10 percent of released state inmates are returning to New York prisons for new felonies, according to the latest data from corrections officials.

That's the lowest recidivism rate since authorities began monitoring in 1985, according the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

However, overall prison returns are continuing at about 40 percent, mainly for repeat violations of parole conditions that can include required drug programs, curfews and meetings. Most were back within 18 months.

"Watching the constant decline of ex-offenders returning to prison for new crimes is a win for all New Yorkers," said Mary Kavaney, assistant deputy secretary for public safety.

Programs aimed at smoothing prisoners' return to communities and parole monitoring helped, corrections and parole officials said.

Ex-inmates back for new felonies within three years have gradually declined from 19 percent in 1985 to 9 percent among those released in 2010, corrections officials said. Their new report on 24,605 state prisoners set free in 2010 shows 42 percent or 10,217 returned to custody in 2011-2013. They included 7,969 back for violating parole and 2,248 convicted of a new felony. Crimes included 13 slayings, 12 manslaughters, six rapes and 417 burglaries.

The 2,682 offenders released at the maximum expiration of their sentences without parole had a higher return rate at 18 percent. Individuals with more past convictions are likelier to return with new ones, the report said.

The state currently has about 52,250 inmates convicted of felonies, down from the historic high of 71,538 in 1999. Local jails hold prisoners with shorter sentences or awaiting court.

The decline accompanied amendments to tough Rockefeller-era drug sentencing laws and a roughly 20 percent drop violent crimes and serious property crimes statewide over the past 15 years.

The department's report showed younger ex-prisoners were more likely to return, including 53 percent of those released who were under 21. The rate drops steadily as people age.

Slightly more than half of former inmates convicted of burglary and robbery did come back, the highest return rates. The lowest, at 13 percent, was for convicted murderers.

About half of offenders from upstate urban counties went back to prison, more often than others.

The return rate for women was 29 percent.

<http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Research/Reports/2014/2010—releases—3yr—out.pdf>

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