

Department of Corrections and Community Supervision

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Inmate Escapes: 2009-2013

This report provides descriptive information on incidents of inmate escape from New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision facilities from 2009 through 2013. The report presents information on demographic characteristics, as well as the legal history of escapees.

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) maintains specific information on escapes and, together with data files on under custody inmates, produces an annual report on inmate escapes. The report profiles inmate escapees and the circumstances surrounding escape incidents for the previous five years.

DOCCS defines an escape as any unauthorized departure from confinement or custody by an inmate. This can occur from a facility, an outside work detail, a vehicle while in transit, or from an outside hospital. This does not include absconders from Temporary Release programs.

There were ten inmates who escaped during the last five years. All escapes involved minimum-security inmates, medium-security inmates who were assigned to supervised work crews located outside the facility perimeter, or inmates who were in secure custody while in transit.

Historically, most escapes in New York State occur at minimum-security facilities or from less secure areas outside the perimeter fence of medium or maximum-security prisons. Additional escapes occur while inmates are on supervised work details providing services to local communities, services at state parks, or services along state highways. Inmates assigned to less secure areas who escape from immediate custody by walking away are commonly referred to as 'walkaways'. 'Walkaways' do not have to use more elaborate methods necessary to escape from a higher security assignment.

Secure assignments include housing that is inside medium and maximum-security prisons and those occasions when an inmate is escorted by correctional officers outside the facility for purposes of a court appearance or to a hospital. In the 2009-2013 five-year period, there were nine walkaways that escaped from less secure areas. There was one escape from secure custody; in 2012, one inmate escaped while in transit.

Table 1. Inmate Escapes by Facility Security Level, 2009-2013

Facility Security Level	Year					Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Minimum	1	3	3	0	1	8
Medium	0	0	1	0	0	1
Maximum	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	1	3	4	1	1	10

Table 1 presents data on the number of escapes from 2009 through 2013. A total of 10 inmates escaped during this five year period. Eight of these escapes were from minimum security facilities, while one escape was from medium security, and one was from maximum security.

Of the ten escapees, five were apprehended within six hours, and all of them were taken back into custody within one day.

Demographics of Escapees

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity by Age, 2009-2013

Race/Ethnicity	Age in Years at Escape				Total
	< 21	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	
White	2	2	0	0	4
Black	1	3	0	0	4
Hispanic	0	0	1	1	2
Total	3	5	1	1	10

All ten of the 2009-2013 escapees were male. Escapee race/ethnicity and age are presented in Table 2. Four escapees were white, four were black, and two were identified as Hispanic. Eight escapees were age 30 or younger, while two were 31 or older. All of the escapees under 31 were white or black, while the two Hispanic escapees were both over 30.

Criminal Records of Escapees

Table 3. Escapee Commitment Offense Type by Prior Adult Record

Commitment Offense Type	No Prior Arrests	No Prior Convictions	Prior Conviction	Prior Jail Sentence	Total
Violent Felony	0	1	2	1	4
Other Coercive	0	0	1	0	1
Drug Offenses	0	1	1	0	2
Property/Other	1	0	0	2	3
Total	1	2	4	3	10

The most serious commitment crime for each escaped inmate is shown above in Table 3. Of the ten escapees, four were incarcerated for violent felonies, three for property/other offenses, two for drug offenses, and one for other coercive offenses. Seven of the escapees had prior convictions and three had prior jail sentences. None of them had prior prison sentences. All but one of the escapees with violent felony or other coercive offenses had prior convictions.

The New York State Penal Law stipulates that either an indeterminate sentence or determinate sentence be imposed upon inmates sentenced to the state correctional system. An indeterminate sentence includes a range of years with a minimum and maximum time period that an inmate may serve. In general, the minimum sentence is the least amount of time an inmate will serve before eligibility for parole. The maximum sentence is the longest amount of time an inmate can serve prior to mandatory release from DOCCS. The structure of the minimum and maximum sentence range varies according to prior felony convictions and crime classification (Class A offenses are the most serious, while Class E offenses are the least serious).

Determinate sentencing is imposed upon second felony offenders convicted of a violent felony offense committed after October 1, 1995; first felony offenders convicted of a violent felony offense committed after September 1, 1998; drug offenders for an offense committed after January 13, 2005; and non-violent sex offenders after April 13, 2008. The determinate sentence consists of a specified number of years and, unless the inmate has lost good time, the inmate is released after serving 6/7 of the sentence. For purposes of this report, the 6/7 time-period is considered the minimum sentence for determinately sentenced inmates.

Table 4. Aggregate Minimum Sentence by Aggregate Maximum Sentence

Aggregate Min. Sentence	Aggregate Maximum Sentence					Total
	< 4 Years	4 Years	5 Years	6-9 Years	10-14 Years	
< 2 Years	3	0	0	0	0	3
2 Years	0	1	0	1	0	2
3 Years	0	1	0	1	0	2
4-5 Years	0	0	1	0	0	1
6-9 Years	0	0	0	1	1	2
Total	3	2	1	3	1	10

Table 4 compares the aggregate minimum sentences of escapees to their aggregate maximum sentences. All escapees had minimum sentences of less than 10 years and maximum sentences of less than 15 years. Five of the ten escapees had maximum sentences of four years or less.

Table 5. Time Served to Date of Escape by Aggregate Maximum Sentence

Time Served	Aggregated Maximum Sentence					Total
	< 4 Years	4 Years	5 Years	6-9 Years	10-14 Years	
< 1 Year	0	1	0	2	1	4
1 Year	3	1	1	0	0	5
4 Years	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	3	2	1	3	1	10

The amount of time served in years between admission and escape as compared to escapees' aggregated maximum sentences is displayed in Table 5. Nine of the ten escapees had served less than two years under custody; the remaining escapee had served four years at the time of his escape. Most of the escapees had only served brief custodial periods before their escapes.

Table 6. Escapes and Attempted Escapes, 1983-2013

Year	Completed Escapes	Attempted Escapes	Total
1983	29	24	53
1984	20	45	65
1985	19	17	36
1986	19	30	49
1987	12	13	25
1988	5	17	22
1989	12	9	21
1990	10	14	24
1991	11	11	22
1992	9	12	21
1993	17	13	30
1994	31	14	45
1995	8	18	26
1996	5	13	18
1997	9	18	27
1998	7	9	16
1999	14	12	26
2000	5	8	13
2001	6	12	18
2002	4	6	10
2003	7	5	12
2004	2	5	7
2005	2	4	6
2006	4	4	8
2007	2	1	3
2008	0	4	4
2009	1	2	3
2010	3	0	3
2011	4	2	6
2012	1	2	3
2013	1	1	2
Total	279	345	624

All of the escapes and attempted escapes from 1983-2013 are displayed in Table 6. The number of yearly escapes has declined from an average of 20 escapes a year in 1983-1987 to an average of two escapes a year in 2009-2013. Similarly, attempted escapes have also decreased, from an average of 26 per year in 1983-1987 to one attempted escape a year in 2009-2013.