



AGING & LONG SENTENCES IN NEW YORK STATE PRISONS

- In NYS, there are roughly 9,000 people (18% of the prison population) serving a **life sentence**—the eighth highest number in the country, surpassing states like Texas and Georgia.
- Of this group, **more than 1,000 people are serving Life Without Parole or virtual life without parole** sentences (a minimum sentence of 50 years or more).
- More than **10,000 people in NYS prisons—20% of the prison population—are aged 50 or older**. The vast majority are **Black and Latinx people**.
- It costs New York between **\$120,000 and \$240,000 annually to incarcerate one older person** (compared to an average of \$60,000 for all people in NYS prisons).
- While the prison population in NYS fell by 27% between 2000 and 2016, **the percentage of incarcerated older people, many of whom are serving life sentences, more than doubled from 4,706 to 10,239 people**.
- Older people, especially those who have been convicted of serious crimes, have the **lowest recidivism rates** of any age cohort, **posing little, if any risk to public safety**.

PAROLE RELEASE IN NEW YORK STATE

- The New York State Board of Parole is the administrative body responsible for making parole release determinations for all parole-eligible people. While the statute permits 19 Commissioners, there are currently only 12 active Commissioners.
- The Board interviews **more than 11,000 people** every year—**roughly 60 hearings per day—via videoconferences** that last an average of 15 minutes.
- The Board **denies release to the majority of all parole-eligible people**. Many have served additional decades in prison due to the punitive, retributive and racist culture of the Board.
- For those serving long sentences, the Board repeatedly **denies parole based on one, unchangeable factor—the nature of a person’s crime**—and not a person’s age, many accomplishments in prison, personal transformation or network of support.
- **Parole is highly political**. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Candidates contribute to the campaigns of elected officials to secure their appointments, and once appointed, bend to the political pressure of special interest groups.

ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

1. **Fair and Timely Parole (S497A/A4346A)**: Ensures that the parole release process is based on who people are today and their many accomplishments in prison, not solely their crime of conviction.
2. **Elder Parole (S2144/A9040)**: Allows for the consideration of parole release for people aged 55 and older who have served at least 15 consecutive years in prison.

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