Chapter 3 — Crime and Criminal History Characteristics

This chapter analyzes the nature of and the changes in the types of crimes for which Colorado's prison inmate and new commitment populations were convicted over the last ten years. This chapter also discusses the criminal history profiles of inmates sentenced to the DOC for violent and non-violent offenses between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006. Finally, this chapter examines the differences in the types of crimes committed by gender.

This chapter's highlights include the following:

- new commitments to the DOC grew at a 5.1 percent average annual rate between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006;
- between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006, the inmate population grew at a 6.8 percent average annual rate. The number of inmates incarcerated for non-violent offenses increased at a somewhat faster rate (7.8 percent) than those incarcerated for violent offenses (5.6 percent); and
- while 44.0 percent of the male prison population was incarcerated for violent offenses, only 24.0 percent of the female prison population was incarcerated for violent offenses on June 30, 2006.

INMATE POPULATION AND NEW COMMITMENTS – OVERVIEW

This chapter compares the DOC's new commitment population with the DOC's inmate population. The distinction between new commitments and the inmate population is an important one. The data on new commitments shows trends in the population being sentenced to the DOC while data on the inmate population reveals trends in the DOC's stock population (see Figures. 3.1 and 3.2).

- New commitments for violent offenses were 28.9 percent on June 30, 1996, while the percentage decreased to 25.8 percent on June 30, 2006.
- Inmates in prison for non-violent crimes grew from 52.7 percent of the inmate population on June 30, 1996 to 57.9 percent of the population on June 30, 2006.
- The inmate population has more violent offenders than the new commitment population because violent offenders have longer lengths of stay and, therefore, skew the inmate population.
- While there were 9 times as many men than women in prison, and 6.5 times more men than women were admitted to prison, the percent of new commitments for combined violent and non-violent offenses grew 56.9 percent for men, while new commitments for combined violent and non-violent offenses grew 142.2 percent for women between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006.
- The combined violent and non-violent male stock population grew 86.0 percent between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006. The combined violent and non-violent female stock population grew 195.8 percent during this same time.
- There were 210 women in prison for violent crimes on June 30, 1996, while on June 30, 2006, there were 531 women in prison for violent crimes, a 152.9 percent increase.
- The non-violent female inmate population increased from 530 female inmates on June 30, 1996, to 1,658 inmates on June 30, 2006, a 212.8 percent increase. This is due, in part, to changes in drug laws in Colorado during this period.

Figure 3.1: New Commitments and Stock Population Violent vs. Non-violent

	New Commitments				
	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		Growth
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Violent	1,276	28.9%	1,880	25.8%	47.3%
Non-violent	3,143	71.1%	5,397	74.2%	71.7%
Total	**4,419**	**100.0%**	**7,277**	**100.0%**	**64.7%**
	Stock Population				
	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		Growth
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Violent	5,327	47.3%	9,154	42.1%	71.8%
Non-violent	5,933	52.7%	12,603	57.9%	112.4%
Total	**11,260**	**100.0%**	**21,757**	**100.0%**	**93.2%**

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports, FY 1996 and FY 2006.

Figure 3.2: New Commitments and Stock Population, Violent vs. Non-violent, Males and Females

	Male					Female				
	New Commitments									
	June 30,1996		June 30, 2006		Growth	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		Growth
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Violent	1,212	30.2%	1,751	27.8%	44.5%	64	15.9%	129	13.2%	101.6%
Non-violent	2,804	69.8%	4,550	72.2%	62.3%	339	84.1%	847	86.8%	149.9%
Total	**4,016**	**100.0%**	**6,301**	**100.0%**	**56.9%**	**403**	**100.0%**	**976**	**100.0%**	**142.2%**
	Stock Population									
	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		Growth	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		Growth
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Violent	5,117	48.6%	8,623	44.1%	68.5%	210	28.4%	531	24.3%	152.9%
Non-violent	5,403	51.4%	10,945	55.9%	102.6%	530	71.6%	1,658	75.7%	212.8%
Total	**10,520**	**100.0%**	**19,568**	**100.0%**	**86.0%**	**740**	**100.0%**	**2,189**	**100.0%**	**195.8%**

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports, FY 1996 and FY 2006.

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 detail the change in the growth in the new commitment and stock populations. Both figures also illustrate the growth in the violent and non-violent new commitment and stock prison populations.

- New commitments grew, on average, 5.1 percent per year from June 30, 1996 to June 30, 2006.
- The inmate stock population in the DOC grew at a 6.8 percent average annual rate between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006.
- There was a slightly larger increase in the growth rate of inmates in prison for non-violent offenses than for violent offenses (7.8 percent compared with 5.6 percent).
- With regards to new commitments, there has been growth each year with the exception of June 30, 1999 to June 30, 2000 when there was a 3.1 percent decrease. The greatest increase was between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005 when there was a 15.2 percent increase in new commitments.
- While the number of non-violent new commitments on June 30, 2006 was nearly three times greater than the number of violent new commitments (5,397 to 1,880), the ratio of non-violent inmates to violent inmates is significantly smaller for the stock population (12,603 to 9,154) or 1.4 times greater, as violent prisoners have a greater average length of stay.
- With regards to the stock population, the number of inmates has grown each year between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006; however, the percent increase has fluctuated from year to year.
- The overall growth in new commitments and the stock population can be attributed to a number of factors including the creation of new crimes, changes in the felony classification of existing crimes, the degree to which society is focused on certain kinds of crimes, and how law enforcement, district attorneys, and courts respond.
- While it is easier to make determinations about the reasons for long term trends in these populations, year-to-year fluctuations are more difficult to attribute.

Figure 3.3: Ten-year Growth in New Commitments Violent vs. Non-violent

New Commitments						
Year	Violent	Change*	Non-violent	Change*	Total	Change*
June 30, 1996	1,276	n/a	3,143	n/a	4,419	n/a
June 30, 1997	1,366	7.1%	3,312	5.4%	4,678	5.9%
June 30, 1998	1,235	-9.6%	3,585	8.2%	4,820	3.0%
June 30, 1999	1,332	7.9%	3,501	-2.3%	4,833	0.3%
June 30, 2000	1,352	1.5%	3,333	-4.8%	4,685	-3.1%
June 30, 2001	1,386	2.5%	3,543	6.3%	4,929	5.2%
June 30, 2002	1,544	11.4%	3,987	12.5%	5,531	12.2%
June 30, 2003	1,656	7.3%	4,089	2.6%	5,745	3.9%
June 30, 2004	1,616	-2.4%	4,192	2.5%	5,808	1.1%
June 30, 2005	1,685	4.3%	5,007	19.4%	6,692	15.2%
June 30, 2006	1,880	11.6%	5,397	7.8%	7,277	8.7%

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports.
**"Change" is the percent change over the prior year.*

Figure 3.4: Ten-year Growth in Stock Population Violent vs. Non-violent

Stock Population						
Year	Violent	Change*	Non-violent	Change*	Total	Change*
June 30, 1996	5,327	n/a	5,933	n/a	11,260	n/a
June 30, 1997	5,672	6.5%	6,645	12.0%	12,317	9.4%
June 30, 1998	6,097	7.5%	7,594	14.3%	13,691	11.2%
June 30, 1999	6,430	5.5%	8,155	7.4%	14,585	6.5%
June 30, 2000	6,937	7.9%	8,909	9.2%	15,846	8.6%
June 30, 2001	7,384	6.4%	9,270	4.1%	16,654	5.1%
June 30, 2002	7,733	4.7%	10,134	9.3%	17,867	7.3%
June 30, 2003	8,133	5.2%	10,508	3.7%	18,641	4.3%
June 30, 2004	8,490	4.4%	10,857	3.3%	19,347	3.8%
June 30, 2005[+]	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
June 30, 2006	9,154	7.8%	12,603	16.1%	21,757	12.5%

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports.
NA = not available.
[+]Data not available for June 30, 2005. Change shown on June 30, 2006 is the change from 2004 to 2006.
**"Change" is the percent change over the prior year.*

NEW COMMITMENTS

This section discusses trends for both violent and non-violent new commitments. Figure 3.5 and Figure 3.6 illustrate the changes in the types of offenders committed to the DOC for violent and non-violent offenses between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006. It should be noted that, to some degree, the number of commitments to prison for particular crimes is influenced by society's stance toward those crimes, as well as by their prevalence.

- New commitments for violent offenses grew at a 4.0 percent average annual rate between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006, while new commitments for non-violent offenses grew at a 5.6 percent average annual rate.

- The number of new commitments for violent offenses grew 47.3 percent between June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006.

- Among violent crimes, the number of commitments for menacing showed the greatest increase, a 105.9 percent increase from June 30, 1996 to June 30, 2006. Assaults grew by 37.3 percent. Homicide grew by 34.2 percent, and manslaughter *decreased* by 32.0 percent.

- On June 30, 2006, the crimes of murder, manslaughter, homicide, sexual assault, assault, and robbery comprised a smaller percentage of all violent crime when compared to from their June 30, 1996 totals (65.3 percent of all violent crimes on June 30, 1996 compared to 51.7 percent of all violent crimes on June 30, 2006).

- The crimes of murder and manslaughter saw decreases in actual occurrences from June 30, 1996 to June 30, 2006, with murders decreasing from 80 to 77 and manslaughter decreasing from 25 occurrences to 17.

- Prison commitments for non-violent crimes increased 71.7 percent during the 10-year period analyzed. Offenders sentenced to prison for non-violent crimes accounted for 74.2 percent of all new commitments on June 30, 2006, but offenders in prison for non-violent crimes comprised a smaller share (57.9 percent) of the inmate population because of their relatively shorter sentences.

- Drug offenses now account for 30.4 percent of new, non-violent-crime commitments, compared with 31.8 percent on June 30, 1996. This could partially be due to the effects of SB03-318 which reduced the felony offense level for possession of small amounts of certain controlled substances. However, drug offenders continue to represent the largest segment of non-violent commitments to prison.

- New commitments to prison for motor vehicle theft grew 160.2 percent over the last ten years. This could be due to changes made to the motor vehicle theft law that took effect in 2000 to add new felony and misdemeanor levels of this offense.

Figure 3.5: Violent New Commitments, June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006

	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		10-year change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Murder	80	6.3%	77	4.1%	-3	-3.8%
Manslaughter	25	2.0%	17	0.9%	-8	-32.0%
Homicide	38	3.0%	51	2.7%	13	34.2%
Sexual assault	245	19.2%	271	14.4%	26	10.6%
Assault	276	21.6%	379	20.2%	103	37.3%
Menacing	152	11.9%	313	16.6%	161	105.9%
Robbery	169	13.2%	177	9.4%	8	4.7%
Other	291	22.8%	595	31.6%	304	104.5%
Total	**1,276**	**100.0%**	**1,880**	**100.0%**	**604**	**47.3%**

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports, FY 1996 and FY 2006.
Other includes: kidnapping; attempt, conspiracy, and accessory to crimes; arson; weapons/explosives; and child abuse.

Figure 3.6: Non-Violent Commitments, June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006

	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		10-year change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Drugs	998	31.8%	1,638	30.4%	640	64.1%
Burglary	322	10.2%	366	6.8%	44	13.7%
Theft	333	10.6%	591	11.0%	258	77.5%
MV Theft	83	2.6%	216	4.0%	133	160.2%
Forgery/Fraud	210	6.7%	317	5.9%	107	51.0%
Trespassing	160	5.1%	214	4.0%	54	33.8%
Traffic	168	5.3%	155	2.9%	-13	-7.7%
Habitual	25	0.8%	26	0.5%	1	4.0%
Other	844	26.9%	1,874	34.7%	1,030	122.0%
Total	**3,143**	**100.0%**	**5,397**	**100.0%**	**2,254**	**71.7%**

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports, FY 1996 and FY 2006.
Other includes: attempt, conspiracy, and accessory to crimes; escape/contraband; criminal mischief; family crimes, court/corrections; and miscellaneous

INMATE POPULATION

This section discusses trends in the types of offenders in Colorado's inmate population. Figure 3.7 depicts the population imprisoned for violent offenses by type of crime, while Figure 3.8 depicts the population imprisoned for non-violent offenses.

- The number of inmates in prison for violent offenses increased at a 5.6 percent average annual rate between June 30, 1996, and June 30, 2006. This represents a greater rate of increase than new commitments for violent offenses (4.0 percent) because of longer sentences imposed for violent offenses during the time period examined.

- At the end of FY 2005-06, prisoners sentenced for assault comprised 19.0 percent of the violent stock population, followed by those sentenced for murder (18.8 percent), robbery (15.0 percent), and sex assault (14.5 percent).

- The number of inmates in prison for menacing convictions grew more rapidly than any other violent crime type, increasing at an 9.8 percent annual rate between June 30, 1996, and June 30, 2006.

- The number of inmates in prison for non-violent crimes increased at a 7.8 percent annualized pace between June 30, 1996, and June 30, 2006. This rate of growth is moderately faster than the growth in the number of new commitments for non-violent offenses (5.6 percent).

- Among the non-violent crimes, inmates in prison for motor vehicle theft, drug offenses, and theft showed the strongest growth during this period.

- Offenders convicted of motor vehicle theft grew at a faster average annual rate, 12.1 percent, than any other crime, displacing drug offenders as the fastest growing population during the 10-year period surveyed for the first time in recent reports. However, while the population of convicted drug offenders grew at a 11.0 percent annualized rate, they continue to comprise more than any other category of non-violent prison inmates, 33.0 percent, as of June 30, 2006.

- Following drug offenses, the crimes for which more inmates are in prison for non-violent offenses are theft and burglary, 13.9 and 12.1 percent respectively. However, there is a wide range of other crimes that are categorized as non-violent, many of which result in relatively few annual prison admissions.

- While such crimes individually do not account for a large part of the inmate population, inmates imprisoned for these miscellaneous crimes, including attempts and conspiracies to commit non-violent crimes, together make up 22.6 percent of the inmates in prison for non-violent offenses.

Figure 3.7: Violent Stock Population, June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006

	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		10-year change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Murder	803	15.1%	1,721	18.8%	918	114.3%
Manslaughter	111	2.1%	87	1.0%	-24	-21.6%
Homicide	101	1.9%	209	2.3%	108	106.9%
Sexual Assault	1,224	23.0%	1,328	14.5%	104	8.5%
Assault	867	16.3%	1,737	19.0%	870	100.3%
Menacing	259	4.9%	658	7.2%	399	154.1%
Robbery	827	15.5%	1,374	15.0%	547	66.1%
Other	1,135	21.3%	2,040	22.3%	905	79.7%
Total	**5,327**	**100.0%**	**9,154**	**100.0%**	**3,827**	**71.8%**

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports, FY 1996 and FY 2006.
Other includes: kidnapping, incest, arson, weapons/explosives, child abuse, and sex offenders under lifetime supervision.

Figure 3.8: Non-Violent Stock Population, June 30, 1996 and June 30, 2006

	June 30, 1996		June 30, 2006		10-year change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Drugs	1,463	24.7%	4,165	33.0%	2,702	184.7%
Burglary	1,041	17.5%	1,519	12.1%	478	45.9%
Theft	701	11.8%	1,754	13.9%	1,053	150.2%
MV Theft	181	3.1%	565	4.5%	384	212.2%
Forgery/Fraud	254	4.3%	477	3.8%	223	87.8%
Trespassing	263	4.4%	524	4.2%	261	99.2%
Traffic	154	2.6%	172	1.4%	18	11.7%
Habitual	334	5.6%	574	4.6%	240	71.9%
Other	1,542	26.0%	2,853	22.6%	1,311	85.0%
Total	**5,933**	**100.0%**	**12,603**	**100.0%**	**6,670**	**112.4%**

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Reports, FY 1996 and FY 2006.
Other includes: attempt, conspiracy, and accessory to crimes; vandalism; escape/contraband; family crimes, and miscellaneous

CRIMES OF MALE AND FEMALE DOC INMATES

The types of crimes for which male and female offenders are sentenced to prison differ significantly. Figure 3.9 shows the percentage of male and female inmates in prison for different types of offenses. Generally, males are convicted of more violent crimes than females. As shown in Figure 3.9, among the male DOC inmate population, nearly half (44.1 percent) were in prison for violent offenses, but less than one quarter (24.3 percent) of the female inmates were in prison for violent crimes. There are certain violent crimes committed by male inmates in prison that are rare among female inmates, such as sex offenses and robbery.

- While 6.7 percent of male inmates are imprisoned for sex offenses, only 1.0 percent of female inmates are in prison for such crimes.

- Robbery and assault crimes together account for 14.9 percent of male inmates, but only 8.7 percent of female inmates.

- More than half of female prison inmates (66.3 percent) have been imprisoned for four non-violent categories of offenses; controlled substance abuse offenses, escape and contraband offenses, theft, and forgery/fraud. These same four offenses comprise only 35.8 percent of the male inmate population.

- The difference in crimes between male and female inmates is generally only reflected among violent crimes. The only non-violent crime for which male inmates greatly exceed female inmates as a percentage of their respective populations is burglary.

- In past reports, males have shown a greater share of habitual offender convictions than females. However, in this report, the gap has narrowed. Habitual offenders may be convicted of any offense, but are sentenced as habitual offenders for their criminal histories with repeated felony convictions.

- Female inmates accounted for 10.1 percent of the DOC population as of June 30, 2006. Thus, when considering the information presented in the table on the following page, keep in mind that the percentages shown are relative to the total prison population of each gender and, for every type of crime, there are far more males in prison than females.

- For example, for crimes which the female percentage is significantly greater than the male percentage, such as controlled substance abuse offenses and forgery/fraud, there are far more male inmates imprisoned for those crimes than females.

Figure 3.9: Inmate Population by Gender and Crime
June 30, 2006

Most Serious Crime of Conviction Violent crimes are designated in regular type. *Non-violent crimes are designated in italic type.*	Male Inmates	Percent of Male Inmates	Female Inmates	Percent of Female Inmates
Crimes for Which Males and Females are Incarcerated in Similar Proportions				
Menacing	614	3.1%	44	2.0%
Motor Vehicle Theft	*503*	*2.6%*	*62*	*2.8%*
Habitual Offenders	*556*	*2.8%*	*18*	*0.8%*
Trespassing/Mischief	*496*	*2.5%*	*28*	*1.3%*
Other Non-Violent Offenses	*932*	*4.8%*	*72*	*3.3%*
Subtotal	*3,101*	*15.8%*	*224*	*10.2%*
Crimes for Which Males are Incarcerated in Larger Proportions				
Murder/Manslaughter/Homicide	1,874	9.6%	143	6.5%
Sexual Assault/Exploit Child	1,304	6.7%	24	1.1%
Assault/Vehicular Assault	1,619	8.3%	118	5.4%
Robbery	1,295	6.6%	79	3.6%
Other Violent Crimes	1,511	7.7%	33	1.5%
Burglary	*1,458*	*7.5%*	*61*	*2.8%*
Subtotal	*9,061*	*46.3%*	*458*	*20.9%*
Crimes for Which Females are Incarcerated in Larger Proportions				
Child Abuse	406	2.1%	90	4.1%
Controlled Substance Abuse Offenses	*3,561*	*18.2%*	*604*	*27.6%*
Theft	*1,384*	*7.1%*	*370*	*16.9%*
Escape/Contraband Offenses	*1,708*	*8.7%*	*313*	*14.3%*
Forgery/Fraud	*347*	*1.8%*	*130*	*5.9%*
Subtotal	*7,406*	*37.8%*	*1,507*	*68.8%*
Total	19,568	100.0%	2,189	100.0%
Total Violent	8,623	44.1%	531	24.3%
Total Non-violent	*10,945*	*55.9%*	*1,658*	*75.7%*

Source: Department of Corrections, Statistical Report, FY 2006.

Violent other includes: kidnapping, incest, arson, weapons/explosives, and sex offenders sentenced under lifetime supervision laws.

Non-violent other includes: traffic and miscellaneous.