



**Alabama Databook:
A Summary of Criminal Justice Statistics
for Alabama and the United States**

October 11, 2002

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The State Sentencing and Corrections Program of the Vera Institute of Justice

The State Sentencing and Corrections Program (SSC) of the Vera Institute of Justice provides non-partisan, non-agenda-driven help to policymakers. In the three years since the program's founding, SSC has worked with more than a dozen jurisdictions in the United States to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance on developing and implementing sentencing and corrections reform.

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Alabama Databook: A Summary of Criminal Justice Statistics for Alabama and the United States, the first cross-state databook of criminal justice statistics by the SSC program, was created to assist the Alabama Sentencing Commission in developing sentencing and corrections reform recommendations in the state. Together with the accompanying *Alabama: Prison Population Growth 1983-2000*, this report is meant to provide an analysis of Alabama's prison population and criminal justice response to crime in both an historical and current context.

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Introduction

Examining national trends in crime and justice provides a context for understanding state-level responses to crime and criminal justice policies. Law enforcement, sentencing, and corrections policies in a given state are often influenced as much by national or regional trends as by the state or local environment.

This report presents statistical information on state-level crime rates, arrests, commitments to prison, sentences imposed, time served, and incarceration rates in the United States. Data were derived from uniform statistics reported to national clearinghouses, including the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), and the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP). Every effort was made to include the most recent data available. Incarceration rates represent 2001 prison population statistics compiled by BJS. Crime and arrest statistics represent 2000 statistics compiled by the UCR. Information on commitments to prison, sentences imposed, and time served for all states rely on 1997 statistics compiled by the NCRP.

While every effort was made to include all states in the report, data for several states remained unavailable. Information derived from the NCRP includes only those 36 states reporting to the program. States were eliminated from other sections due to poor or incomplete reporting practices. Notes on missing data for individual states are included with each section.

The sections below disaggregate offenses into index, violent, property, and drug offenses. Index offenses include the reported crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft. Violent offenses include the reported crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property offenses include the reported crimes of burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.

Crime Rates

Crime Rates – Index Offenses

The overall incidence of crime is commonly measured by the index crime rate or the number of index offenses reported to the police per 100,000 population. Index offenses include the reported crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.

After peaking in 1991 at a rate of 5,898 crimes per 100,000 population, the United States experienced a steady decline in the index crime rate over the last decade (Figure 1). In 2000, the rate for the US reached its lowest point in thirty years, falling to 4,124 crimes per 100,000 population (Table 1).

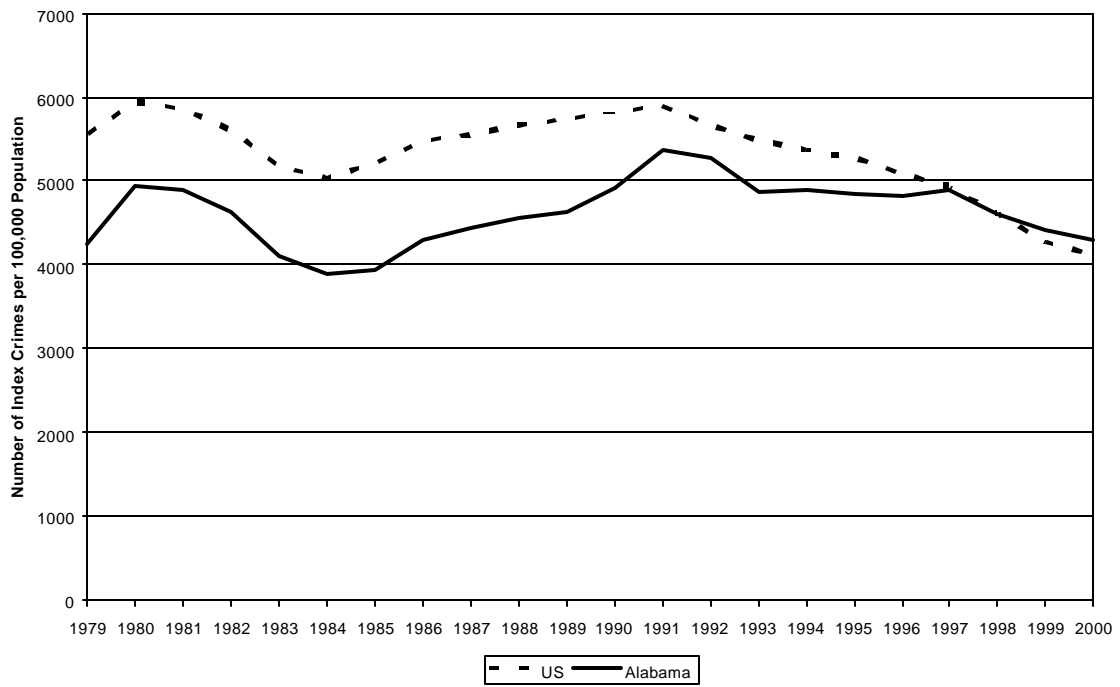
The index crime rate in **Alabama** followed a similar pattern over the last decade, peaking in the early 1990s and steadily falling through 2000 to a rate of 4,298 crimes per 100,000 population, a rate just above the national average (Figure 1).

In 2000, the index crime rate varied dramatically among states, ranging from a high of 5,829 crimes per 100,000 population in Arizona to a low of 2,288 crimes per 100,000 population in North Dakota (Table 1). In 2000, **Alabama** had the 19th highest index crime rate in the country.

Table 1. Index Crime Rates, 2000

Rank	State	Index Crime Rate
1	Arizona	5,829
2	Florida	5,694
3	New Mexico	5,518
4	Louisiana	5,422
5	South Carolina	5,221
6	Hawaii	5,198
7	Washington	5,105
8	Texas	4,955
9	North Carolina	4,919
10	Tennessee	4,890
11	Oregon	4,845
12	Maryland	4,816
13	Georgia	4,751
14	Oklahoma	4,558
15	Missouri	4,527
16	Delaware	4,478
17	Utah	4,476
18	Kansas	4,408
19	Alabama	4,298
20	Illinois	4,286
21	Nevada	4,268
22	Alaska	4,249
23	Arkansas	4,115
24	Michigan	4,109
25	Nebraska	4,095
26	Ohio	4,041
27	Mississippi	4,004
28	Colorado	3,982
29	Indiana	3,751
30	California	3,739
31	Montana	3,533
32	Minnesota	3,488
33	Rhode Island	3,476
34	Wyoming	3,298
35	Iowa	3,233
36	Connecticut	3,232
37	Wisconsin	3,209
38	Idaho	3,186
39	New Jersey	3,160
40	New York	3,099
41	Virginia	3,028
42	Massachusetts	3,026
43	Pennsylvania	2,995
44	Vermont	2,986
45	Kentucky	2,959
46	Maine	2,619
47	West Virginia	2,602
48	New Hampshire	2,433
49	South Dakota	2,319
50	North Dakota	2,288
	US	4,124

Figure 1. Index Crime Rate, 1979-2000



Crime Rates – Violent Offenses

The violent crime rate represents the number of violent offenses reported to the police per 100,000 population. Violent offenses include the reported crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

The violent crime rate in the United States rose steadily throughout the 1980s, peaking in 1991 at a rate of 758 violent crimes per 100,000 population (Figure 2). Between 1991 and 2000, the violent crime rate dropped 33% to a rate of 506 violent crimes per 100,000 population (Table 2).

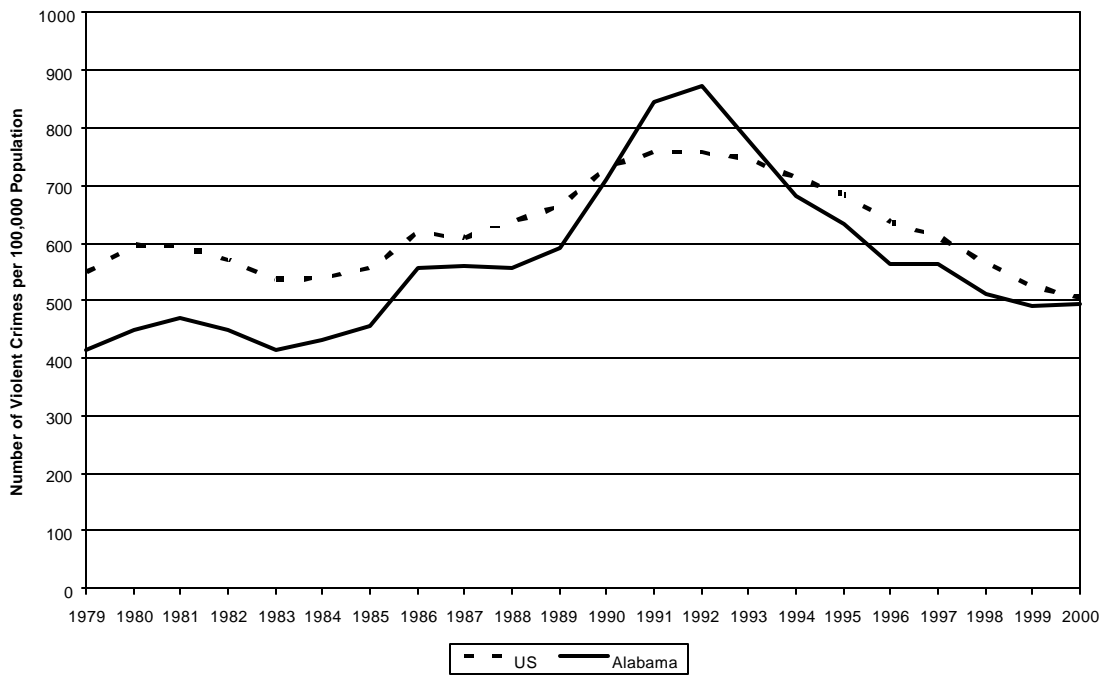
Alabama experienced more dramatic change. Between 1979 and 1992, the violent crime rate in Alabama increased 111% to a high of 871 violent crimes per 100,000 population (Figure 2). After peaking in 1992, the violent crime rate rapidly decreased 43% to a rate of 496 violent crimes per 100,000 population in 2000, a rate just below the national average (Table 2).

Like the index crime rate, the violent crime rate varied widely among states in 2000 from a high of 812 violent crimes per 100,000 population in Florida to a low of 81 violent crimes per 100,000 population in North Dakota. In 2000, **Alabama** had the 19th highest violent crime rate in the country.

Table 2. Violent Crime Rates, 2000

Rank	State	Violent Crime Rate
1	Florida	812
2	South Carolina	804
3	Maryland	786
4	New Mexico	757
5	Tennessee	707
6	Delaware	684
7	Louisiana	681
8	Illinois	656
9	California	621
10	Alaska	566
11	Michigan	555
12	New York	553
13	Texas	545
14	Arizona	531
15	Nevada	524
16	Georgia	504
17	Oklahoma	497
18	North Carolina	497
19	Alabama	496
20	Missouri	490
21	Massachusetts	476
22	Arkansas	445
23	Pennsylvania	420
24	Kansas	389
25	New Jersey	383
26	Washington	369
27	Mississippi	360
28	Oregon	350
29	Indiana	349
30	Ohio	334
31	Colorado	334
32	Nebraska	327
33	Connecticut	324
34	West Virginia	316
35	Rhode Island	297
36	Kentucky	294
37	Virginia	281
38	Minnesota	280
39	Wyoming	266
40	Iowa	266
41	Utah	255
42	Idaho	252
43	Hawaii	243
44	Montana	240
45	Wisconsin	236
46	New Hampshire	175
47	South Dakota	166
48	Vermont	113
49	Maine	109
50	North Dakota	81
	US	506

Figure 2. Violent Crime Rate, 1979-2000



Crime Rates – Property Offenses

The property crime rate represents the number of property offenses reported to the police per 100,000 population. Property offenses include the reported crimes of burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.

From its peak in 1991, the property crime rate dropped 21% nationally to a thirty-year low of 3,618 property crimes per 100,000 population in 2000 (Figure 3).

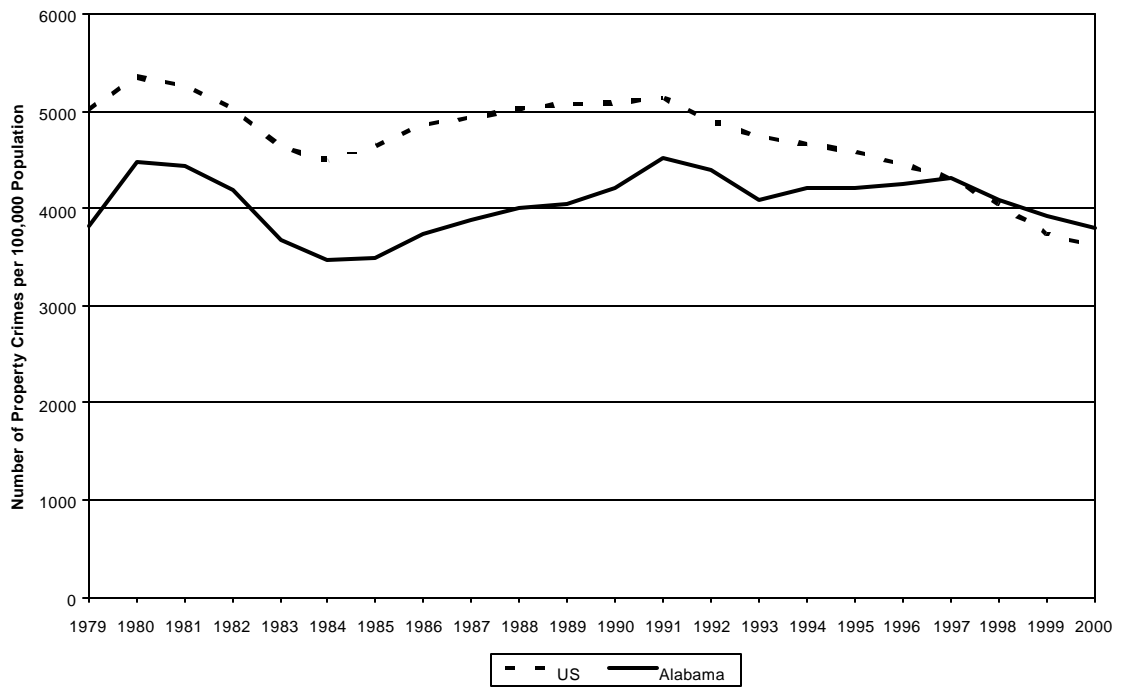
In **Alabama**, the property crime rate decreased more slowly during the same period (Figure 3). After peaking in 1991 at a rate of 4,521 property crimes per 100,000 population, the property crime rate in Alabama fell 16% to a rate of 3,801 property crimes per 100,000 population in 2000, a rate just above the national average (Table 3).

Individual states experienced greater declines in property crime rates, falling 44% in California and 43% in New York during the same period. In 2000, **Alabama** had the 18th highest property crime rate.

Table 3. Property Crime Rates, 2000

Rank	State	Property Crime Rate
1	Arizona	5,298
2	Hawaii	4,955
3	Florida	4,883
4	New Mexico	4,761
5	Louisiana	4,742
6	Washington	4,736
7	Oregon	4,495
8	North Carolina	4,422
9	South Carolina	4,417
10	Texas	4,410
11	Georgia	4,246
12	Utah	4,220
13	Tennessee	4,183
14	Oklahoma	4,061
15	Missouri	4,038
16	Maryland	4,030
17	Kansas	4,019
18	Alabama	3,801
19	Delaware	3,794
20	Nebraska	3,768
21	Nevada	3,744
22	Ohio	3,708
23	Alaska	3,683
24	Arkansas	3,670
25	Colorado	3,649
26	Mississippi	3,644
27	Illinois	3,629
28	Michigan	3,555
29	Indiana	3,403
30	Montana	3,293
31	Minnesota	3,208
32	Rhode Island	3,179
33	California	3,118
34	Wyoming	3,032
35	Wisconsin	2,972
36	Iowa	2,967
37	Idaho	2,934
38	Connecticut	2,908
39	Vermont	2,873
40	New Jersey	2,777
41	Virginia	2,746
42	Kentucky	2,665
43	Pennsylvania	2,575
44	Massachusetts	2,550
45	New York	2,546
46	Maine	2,510
47	West Virginia	2,286
48	New Hampshire	2,258
49	North Dakota	2,207
50	South Dakota	2,153
	US	3,618

Figure 3. Property Crime Rate, 1979-2000



Arrest Rates

Arrest Rates – Index Offenses

While crime rates represent the most common measure of the incidence of crime, arrest rates or the number of arrests per 100,000 population provide an initial measure of the incidence of law enforcement. In a perfect system, the arrest rate would equal the crime rate, with an arrest occurring for every crime. By itself, the arrest rate can provide some indication of the workload placed on law enforcement; as the arrest rate rises, police are responding more to crime. However, arrest rates provide little information about the efficiency in responding to crime.¹

In the US, the index arrest rate remained fairly stable between 1979 and 1997 at roughly 1,100 arrests per 100,000 population, before declining through 2000 to a twenty-year low of 822 arrests per 100,000 (Figure 4). This has followed the general downward trend in the crime rate during the same period indicating that law enforcement has generally been very responsive to crime.

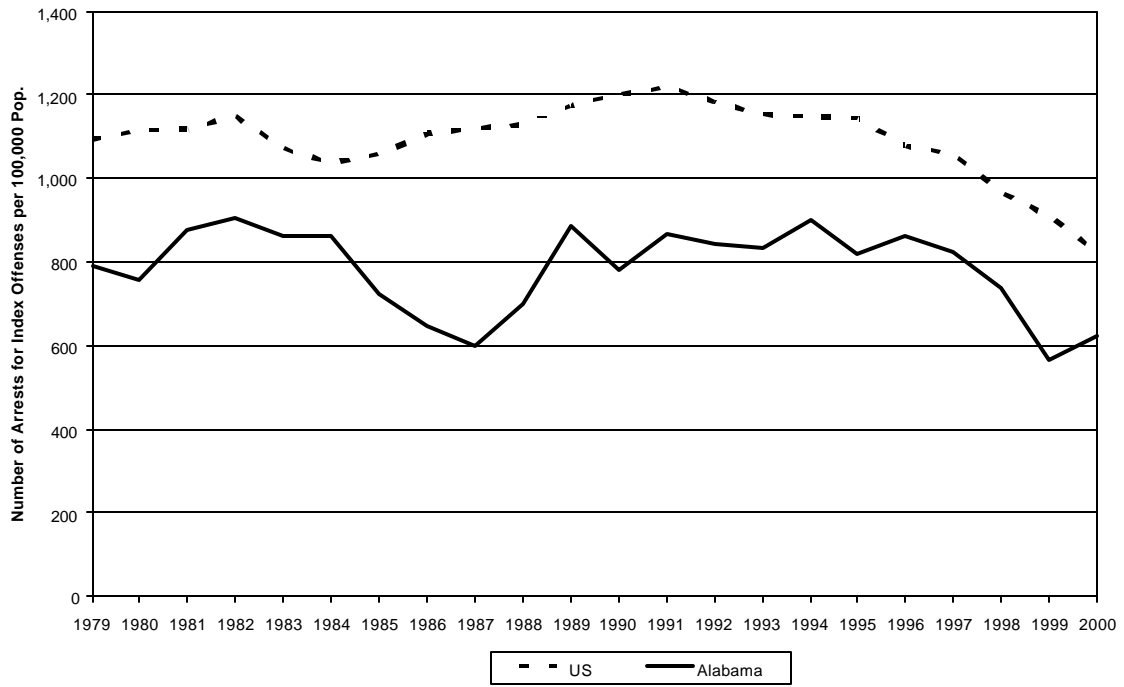
In **Alabama**, the index arrest rate followed a very similar pattern, mirroring the overall crime rate (Figure 4). After dropping 38% between 1997 and 1999, the index arrest rate rose in 2000, again following the pattern of the crime rate and indicating law enforcement's responsiveness to crime.

However, while Alabama had the 19th highest index crime rate, the state had the 37th highest index arrest rate, indicating that Alabama is less responsive to crime than several other states (Table 4).

Table 4. Index Arrest Rates per 100,000 Population, 2000²

Rank	State	Index Arrest Rate (per 100,000 Pop.)
1	Missouri	1,257
2	Louisiana	1,180
3	Florida	1,128
4	North Carolina	1,110
5	Nevada	1,059
6	Mississippi	1,059
7	Utah	1,040
8	Washington	1,035
9	Oregon	1,031
10	Alaska	1,008
11	Georgia	1,001
12	Arizona	980
13	Colorado	973
14	Maryland	907
15	Arkansas	906
16	California	878
17	Indiana	848
18	Nebraska	825
19	New Mexico	800
20	Pennsylvania	789
21	West Virginia	769
22	Connecticut	763
23	Montana	752
24	New York	752
25	Idaho	745
26	Hawaii	744
27	Ohio	731
28	Texas	714
29	Wyoming	711
30	South Dakota	707
31	Tennessee	706
32	Minnesota	703
33	Iowa	688
34	Oklahoma	664
35	New Jersey	658
36	Maine	643
37	Alabama	622
38	Massachusetts	586
39	Virginia	542
40	North Dakota	511
41	Rhode Island	494
42	Michigan	438
43	Vermont	361
44	New Hampshire	332
	US	822

Figure 4. Index Arrest Rate, 1979-2000



Arrest Rates – Violent Offenses

The violent arrest rate represents the number of arrests for violent offenses per 100,000 population.

The arrest rate for violent offenses increased rapidly in the United States between 1985 and 1995, rising 48% (Figure 5). This increase mirrored the dramatic rise in the violent crime rate during the same period, indicating a clear law enforcement response to crime.

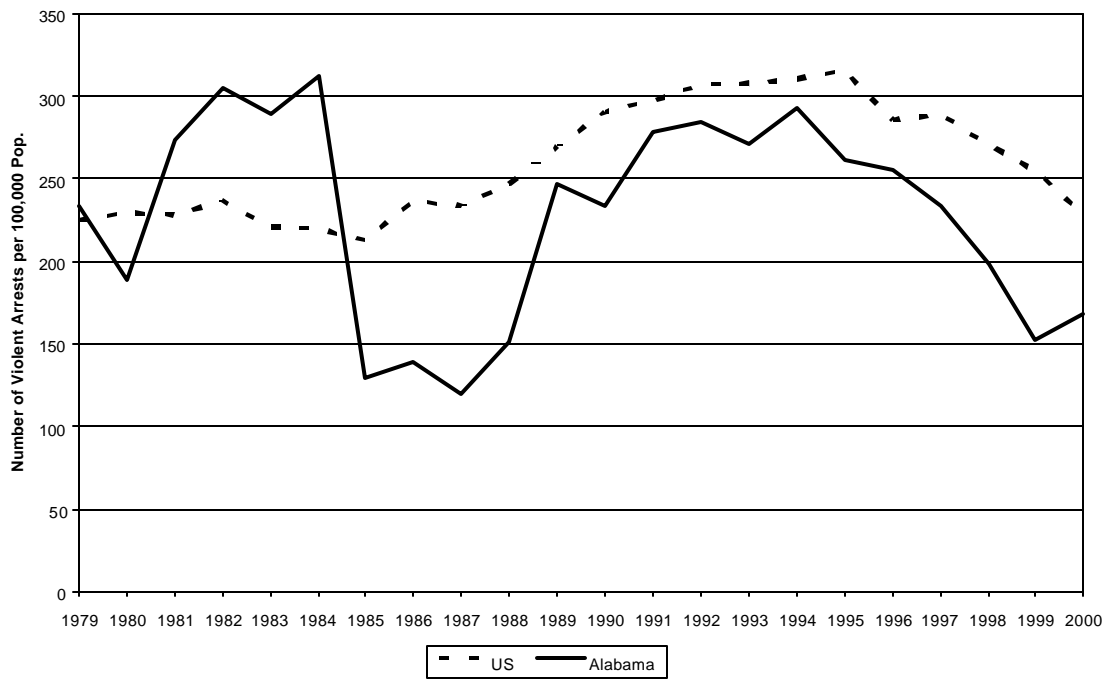
The violent arrest rate in **Alabama** was more erratic (Figure 5). However, the severe drop between 1984 and 1985³ is likely due to changes in reporting practices or crime definitions, rather than changes in law enforcement or crime rates.

The post-1985 rates represent a clearer picture of Alabama’s law enforcement response to crime. Between 1985 and 2000, the violent arrest rate closely mirrored the violent crime rate, rising to meet the increased incidence of crime in the state. Alabama’s arrest rate remained below the national average, which may reflect the state’s lower violent crime rate (Table 5).

Table 5. Violent Arrest Rates per 100,000 Population, 2000

Rank	State	Violent Arrest Rate (per 100,000 pop.)
1	California	383
2	Florida	344
3	Louisiana	334
4	North Carolina	322
5	Massachusetts	281
6	Missouri	266
7	Indiana	260
8	Pennsylvania	257
9	Georgia	254
10	New Mexico	243
11	Maryland	230
12	Arkansas	214
13	Alaska	211
14	Tennessee	208
15	New Jersey	190
16	Mississippi	179
17	Washington	176
18	Arizona	176
19	Connecticut	176
20	Ohio	175
21	Oklahoma	173
22	Alabama	168
23	Nevada	163
24	New York	161
25	Iowa	160
26	Colorado	159
27	Texas	153
28	Minnesota	140
29	West Virginia	139
30	Wyoming	131
31	Virginia	121
32	Hawaii	120
33	Oregon	119
34	Michigan	110
35	Idaho	107
36	Rhode Island	105
37	Montana	99
38	Utah	98
39	South Dakota	96
40	Nebraska	93
41	Maine	71
42	Vermont	58
43	New Hampshire	57
44	North Dakota	26
	US	228

Figure 5. Violent Arrest Rate, 1979-2000



Arrest Rates – Property Offenses

The property arrest rate represents the number of arrests for property offenses per 100,000 population.

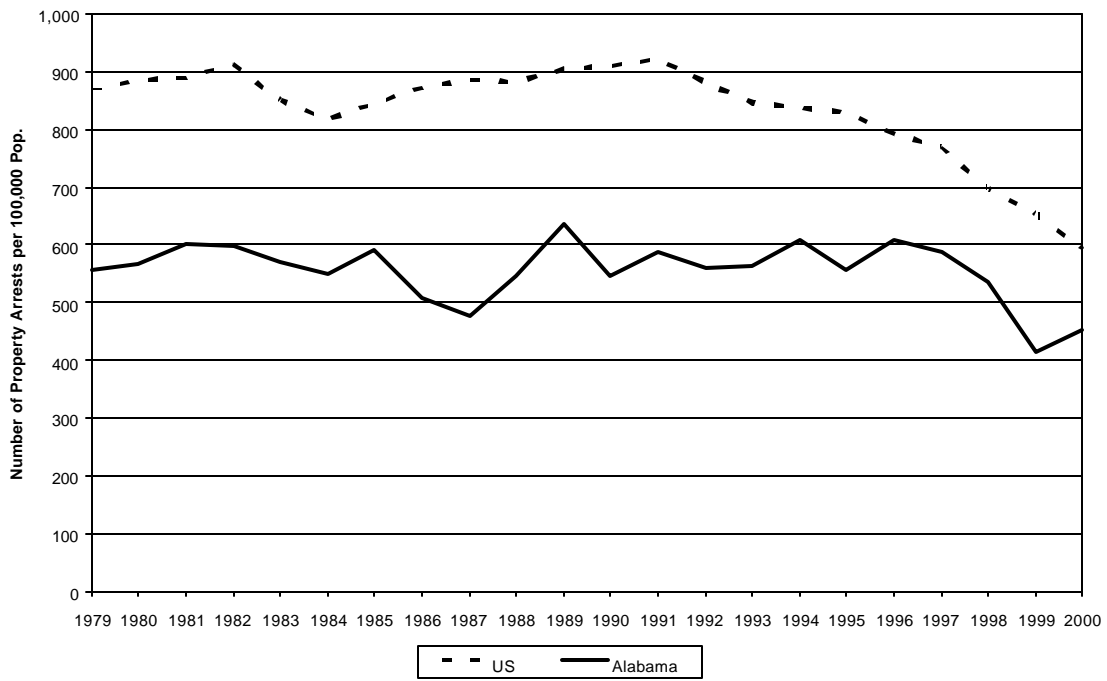
The property arrest rate in the United States followed a downward trend, decreasing 32% from 867 arrests per 100,000 population in 1979 to 593 arrests per 100,000 population in 2000 (Figure 6). Again, the pattern closely mirrors changes in the property crime rate during the same period.

In **Alabama**, the property arrest rate remained fairly stable over the last twenty years, following the general stability in the property crime rate (Figure 6). However, between 1996 and 1999, Alabama’s property arrest rate experienced a dramatic decline, falling 32% over four years. During the same period, the property crime rate declined just 8%, indicating a decreasing police response to property crimes.

Table 6. Property Arrest Rates per 100,000 Population, 2000

Rank	State	Property Arrest Rate (per 100,000 pop.)
1	Missouri	992
2	Utah	941
3	Oregon	912
4	Nevada	897
5	Mississippi	880
6	Washington	859
7	Louisiana	847
8	Colorado	814
9	Arizona	804
10	Alaska	797
11	North Carolina	787
12	Florida	784
13	Georgia	746
14	Nebraska	732
15	Arkansas	691
16	Maryland	677
17	Montana	653
18	Idaho	638
19	West Virginia	630
20	Hawaii	624
21	South Dakota	612
22	New York	591
23	Indiana	588
24	Connecticut	587
25	Wyoming	584
26	Maine	572
27	Minnesota	563
28	Texas	561
29	New Mexico	557
30	Ohio	556
31	Pennsylvania	532
32	Iowa	528
33	Tennessee	498
34	California	495
35	Oklahoma	490
36	North Dakota	485
37	New Jersey	468
38	Alabama	454
39	Virginia	421
40	Rhode Island	389
41	Michigan	328
42	Massachusetts	305
43	Vermont	303
44	New Hampshire	276
	US	594

Figure 6. Property Arrest Rate, 1979-2000



Arrest Rates – Drug Offenses

Unlike violent or property crime, drug crime is officially counted only when an arrest occurs. The drug arrest rate represents the number of arrests for drug offenses per 100,000 population.

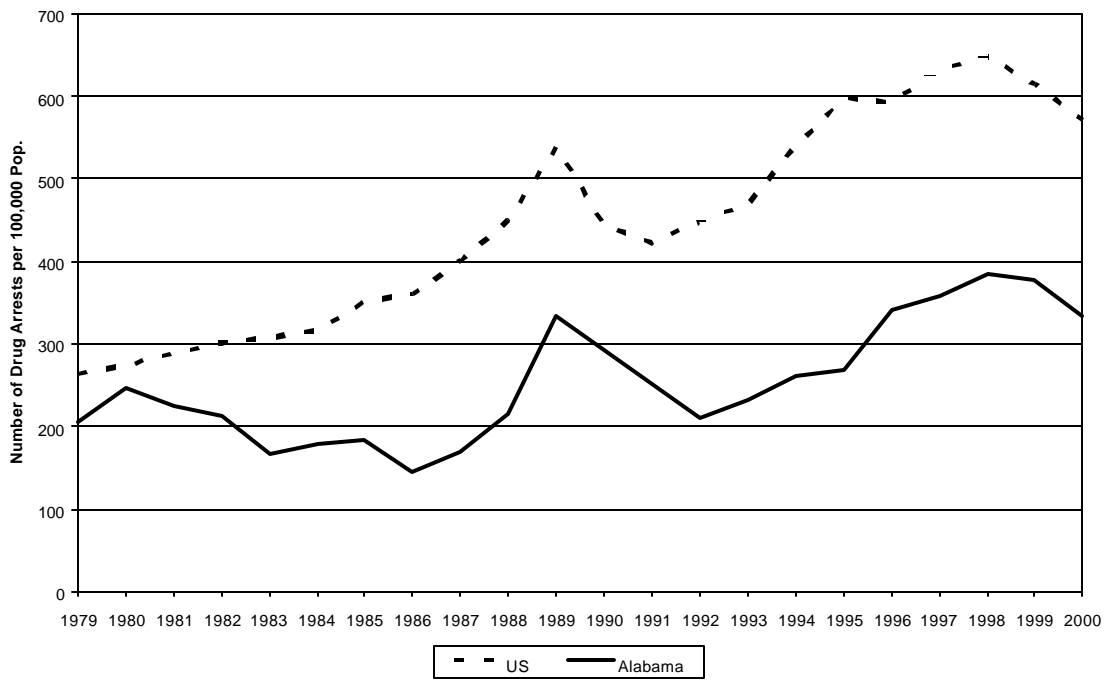
Following the heightened emphasis on drug crime in the 1980s, the drug arrest rate in the United States increased dramatically (Figure 7). Between 1979 and 2000, the drug arrest rate increased 116% from 264 arrests per 100,000 population to 572 arrests per 100,000 population. This rapid increase in arrests was in the face of huge decreases in the amount of drug use in the United States.

While drug arrests in **Alabama** increased during the same period, the growth was not as dramatic (Figure 7). Between 1979 and 2000, Alabama's arrest rate for drug offenses increased 63%, well below the national average. Indeed, in 2000, Alabama remained one of the states with the lowest arrest rates for drug offenses (Table 7), making 250 fewer arrests per 100,000 population than the rest of the country despite a rate of drug use very near the national average.

Table 7. Drug Arrest Rates per 100,000 Population, 2000

Rank	State	Drug Arrest Rate (per 100,000 pop.)
1	Maryland	1,637
2	Mississippi	1,594
3	Missouri	1,522
4	California	1,489
5	New Jersey	1,360
6	Nebraska	1,275
7	Arizona	1,231
8	Oregon	1,173
9	Louisiana	1,153
10	Connecticut	1,078
11	North Carolina	1,067
12	Washington	1,046
13	Texas	1,042
14	Arkansas	1,038
15	Nevada	1,010
16	Colorado	987
17	Minnesota	966
18	Wyoming	939
19	Pennsylvania	932
20	Tennessee	905
21	South Dakota	874
22	Indiana	869
23	Florida	836
24	Idaho	827
25	Maine	811
26	New Hampshire	803
27	Virginia	799
28	Rhode Island	798
29	Utah	791
30	New Mexico	769
31	Ohio	732
32	Iowa	705
33	Georgia	644
34	Oklahoma	636
35	Massachusetts	635
36	Alaska	614
37	New York	602
38	Michigan	598
39	Hawaii	463
40	North Dakota	430
41	Vermont	415
42	Alabama	335
43	West Virginia	240
44	Montana	53
	US	572

Figure 7. Drug Arrest Rate, 1979-2000



Arrest Risk

Arrest Risk -- Index Offenses

While arrest rates provide an indication of law enforcement response to crime, arrest risk or the number of arrests per 100 offenses approximates the overall conversion of offenses to arrests. While any shifts in arrest risk could represent changes in the underlying crime rate or in the size of the police force, it, nonetheless, provides an estimate of law enforcement efficiency in responding to crime. A higher arrest risk signifies increased police efficiency and a flat risk indicates a uniform or stable police response to crime over time.

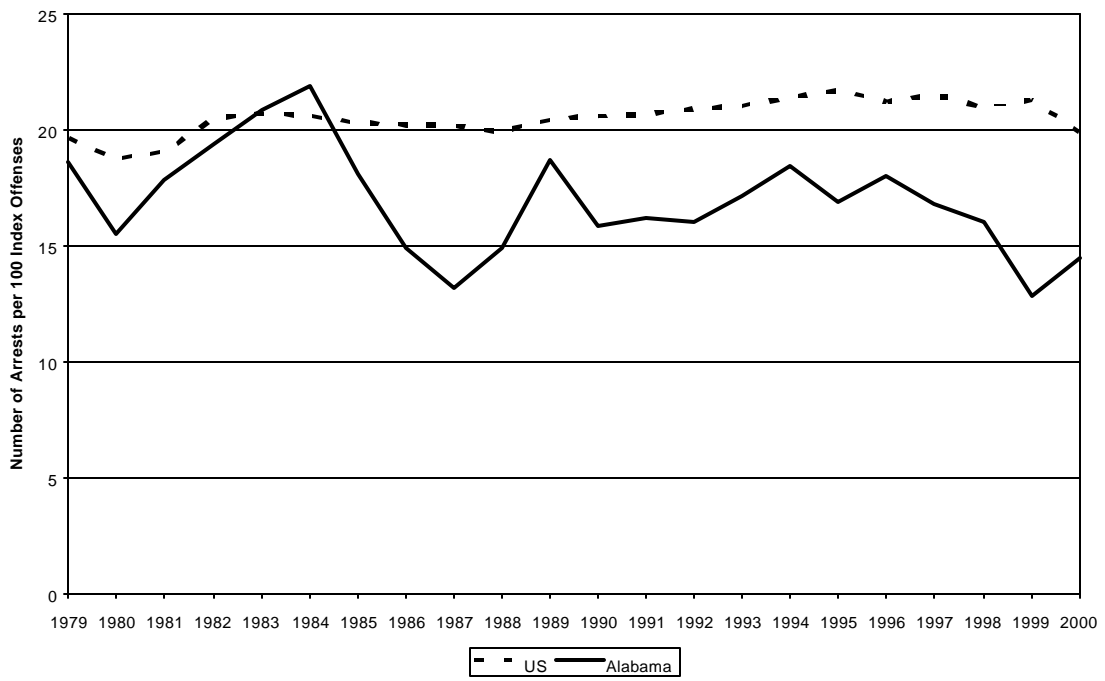
The index arrest risk in the United States has remained fairly stable over the last twenty years at around 21 arrests per 100 offenses; thus, roughly 21% of index offenses result in an arrest (Figure 8). This stability implies that police responses, nationally, have followed trends in crime.

In **Alabama**, the index arrest risk has been more erratic, displaying a series of peaks and valleys between 1979 and 2000 (Figure 8). For most of this period, Alabama's arrest risk remained below the national average, indicating a less active police response to crime. In 2000, the arrest risk increased sharply as the result of a declining crime rate and a sharp increase in arrests, yet Alabama's arrest risk still resulted in 5 fewer arrests per 100 offenses than the national average (Table 8).

Table 8. Index Arrest Risk, 2000

Rank	State	Index Arrest Risk
1	South Dakota	30.49
2	West Virginia	29.55
3	Missouri	27.77
4	Mississippi	26.44
5	Pennsylvania	26.33
6	Nevada	24.82
7	Maine	24.55
8	Colorado	24.42
9	New York	24.26
10	Alaska	23.73
11	Connecticut	23.61
12	California	23.48
13	Idaho	23.37
14	Utah	23.22
15	Indiana	22.61
16	North Carolina	22.56
17	North Dakota	22.35
18	Arkansas	22.01
19	Louisiana	21.77
20	Wyoming	21.57
21	Montana	21.28
22	Oregon	21.27
23	Iowa	21.27
24	Georgia	21.07
25	New Jersey	20.83
26	Washington	20.27
27	Minnesota	20.15
28	Nebraska	20.14
29	Florida	19.81
30	Massachusetts	19.35
31	Maryland	18.84
32	Ohio	18.09
33	Virginia	17.90
34	Arizona	16.81
35	Oklahoma	14.56
36	New Mexico	14.49
37	Alabama	14.47
38	Tennessee	14.44
39	Texas	14.41
40	Hawaii	14.30
41	Rhode Island	14.21
42	New Hampshire	13.66
43	Vermont	12.10
	US	19.93

Figure 8. Index Arrest Risk, 1979-2000



Arrest Risk – Violent Offenses

The violent arrest risk represents the number of arrests for violent offenses per 100 violent offenses reported to the police. Since violent crime is a priority for law enforcement, the arrest risk for violent crimes is much higher than the arrest risk for index offenses in general.

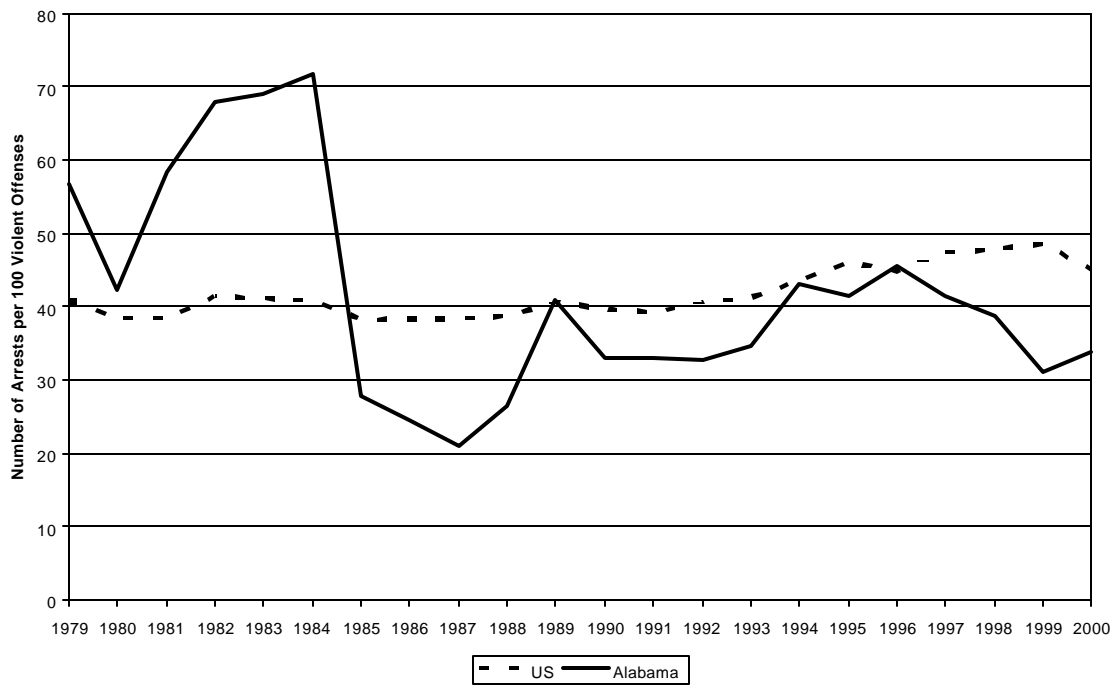
While the index arrest risk in the United States remained relatively stable over the last twenty years, the violent arrest risk increased 26% from a low of 38 arrests per 100 violent offenses in 1985 to a twenty-year high of 48 arrests per 100 violent offenses in 1999 (Figure 9). Although the raw number of crimes and arrests were both decreasing in the late 1990s, the incidence of crime decreased at a rate faster than that of arrests, thus, producing more arrests per offense. In 2000, the violent arrest risk was 45 arrests per 100 violent offenses (Table 9).

The violent arrest risk in **Alabama** was more erratic (Figure 9).⁴ The post-1985 figures for Alabama are a better indication of the true arrest risk in the state. Between 1985 and 2000, the violent arrest risk generally followed just below the national average, settling at 34 arrests per 100 violent offenses in 2000 (Table 9). The rate showed an overall rise since 1991, the product of a rapidly declining crime rate and a gradually declining arrest rate. However, as Table 9 indicates, Alabama makes roughly 11 fewer arrests per 100 violent offenses than the national average.

Table 9. Violent Arrest Risk, 2000

Rank	State	Violent Arrest Risk
1	Indiana	74.57
2	Maine	64.78
3	North Carolina	64.77
4	California	61.67
5	Pennsylvania	61.14
6	Iowa	60.10
7	Massachusetts	58.95
8	South Dakota	57.28
9	Missouri	54.19
10	Connecticut	54.19
11	Ohio	52.48
12	Vermont	51.03
13	Georgia	50.40
14	Minnesota	49.89
15	Mississippi	49.67
16	New Jersey	49.47
17	Hawaii	49.21
18	Wyoming	49.06
19	Louisiana	48.98
20	Arkansas	48.13
21	Washington	47.68
22	Colorado	47.59
23	West Virginia	43.89
24	Virginia	42.87
25	Idaho	42.42
26	Florida	42.36
27	Montana	41.32
28	Utah	38.47
29	Alaska	37.29
30	Rhode Island	35.23
31	Oklahoma	34.84
32	Alabama	33.87
33	Oregon	33.82
34	Arizona	33.13
35	New Hampshire	32.27
36	North Dakota	32.15
37	New Mexico	32.12
38	Nevada	31.03
39	Tennessee	29.42
40	Maryland	29.24
41	New York	29.00
42	Nebraska	28.47
43	Texas	28.10
	US	45.09

Figure 9. Violent Arrest Risk, 1979-2000



Arrest Risk – Property Offenses

The property arrest risk represents the number of arrests for property offenses per 100 property offenses reported to the police.

Like the index arrest risk, the property arrest risk in the US has remained fairly stable over the last thirty years at approximately 18 arrests per 100 property offenses, indicating a generally uniform response to property offenses (Figure 10).

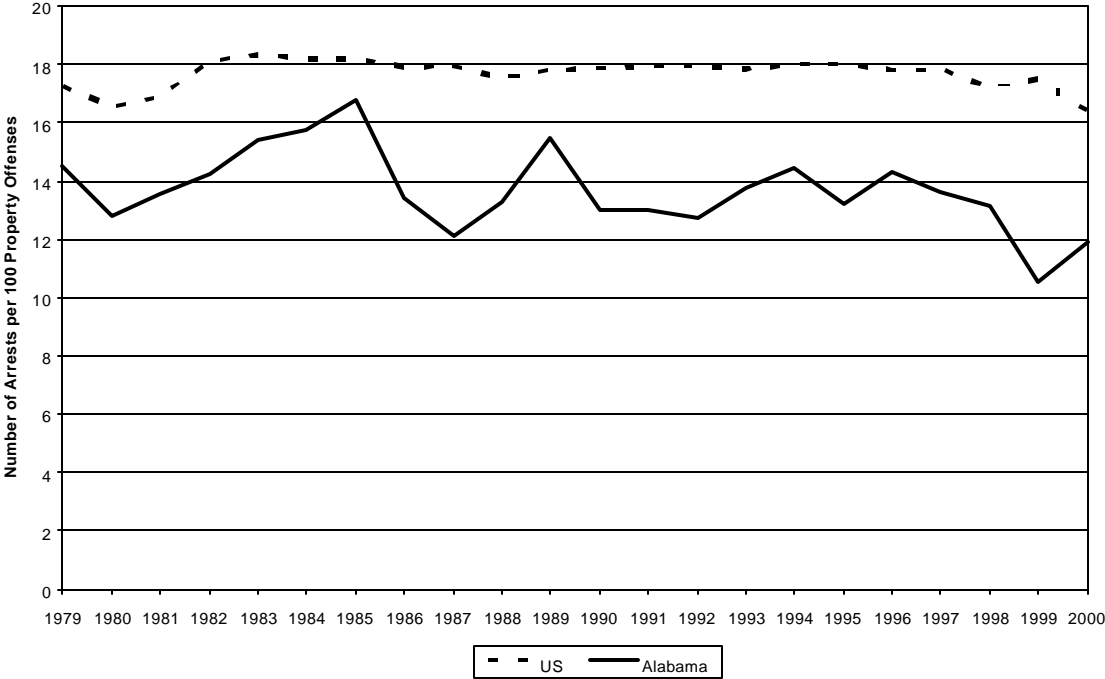
In **Alabama**, the property arrest risk rose 22% between 1979 and 1985, to a rate of 17 arrests per 100 property offenses (Figure 10). Between 1987 and 1997, the property arrests risk stabilized at roughly 13 arrests per 100 offenses before decreasing to a twenty-year low of 10.5 arrests per 100 offenses in 1999. Throughout the period, the property arrest risk in Alabama remained below the national average, with Alabama making roughly 5 fewer arrests per 100 crimes than the national average.

Most states exhibited relative stability in property arrest risk over the last twenty years. Yet, in 2000, property arrest risk varied widely among the states. In Vermont there were just 10 arrests per 100 offenses, while in South Dakota there were more than 28 arrests per 100 offenses. In 2000, Alabama had the 4th lowest property arrest risk in the country, with just 12 arrests per 100 offenses.

Table 10. Property Arrest Risk, 2000

Rank	State	Property Arrest Risk
1	South Dakota	28.41
2	West Virginia	27.57
3	Missouri	24.57
4	Mississippi	24.14
5	Nevada	23.95
6	New York	23.23
7	Maine	22.79
8	Colorado	22.30
9	Utah	22.30
10	North Dakota	21.99
11	Idaho	21.73
12	Alaska	21.64
13	Pennsylvania	20.65
14	Oregon	20.30
15	Connecticut	20.20
16	Montana	19.83
17	Nebraska	19.42
18	Wyoming	19.25
19	Arkansas	18.82
20	Washington	18.13
21	Louisiana	17.86
22	North Carolina	17.81
23	Iowa	17.78
24	Georgia	17.58
25	Minnesota	17.54
26	Indiana	17.28
27	New Jersey	16.87
28	Maryland	16.81
29	Florida	16.06
30	California	15.87
31	Virginia	15.33
32	Arizona	15.17
33	Ohio	14.99
34	Texas	12.72
35	Hawaii	12.59
36	Rhode Island	12.24
37	New Hampshire	12.22
38	Oklahoma	12.08
39	Massachusetts	11.96
40	Alabama	11.94
41	Tennessee	11.91
42	New Mexico	11.69
43	Vermont	10.56
	US	16.41

Figure 10. Property Arrest Risk, 1979-2000



Commitment Rates

Commitment Rates - Index Offenses⁵

The commitment rate,⁶ or the number of prison commitments per 100 arrests, measures the overall conversion of arrests into commitments to prison. While any shifts in the commitment rate could represent changes in prosecutions, convictions, or sentencing, the rate, nonetheless, provides a good estimate of the likelihood of a prison sentence given arrest, a higher commitment rate signifying a greater use of incarceration.

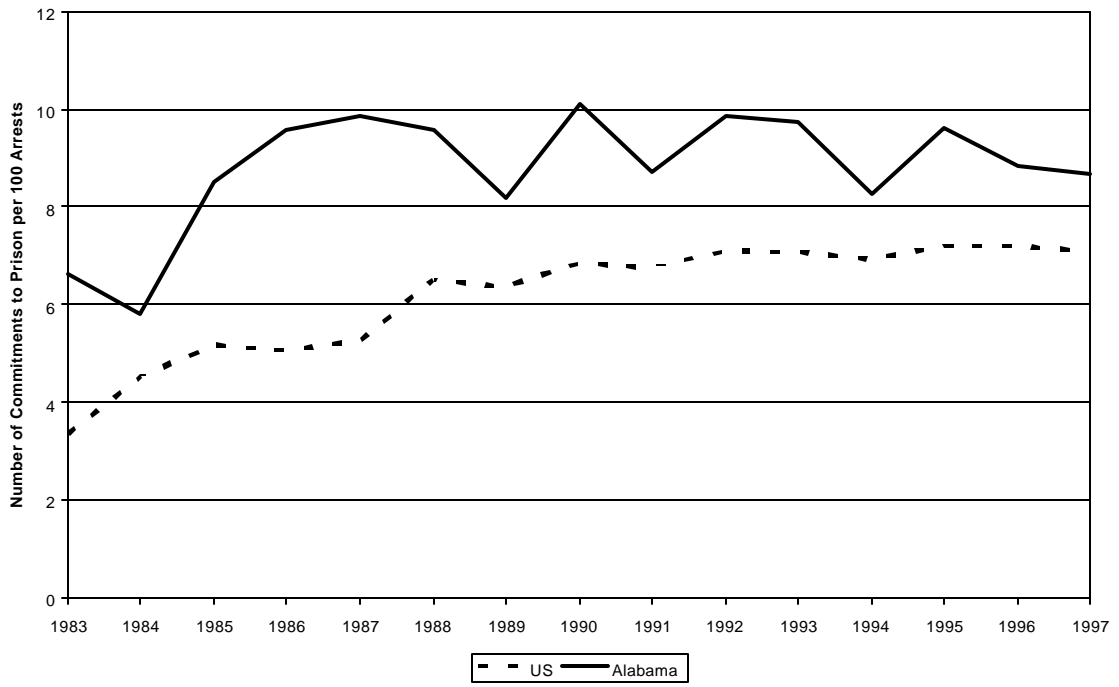
The commitment rate for index offenses in the United States increased sharply over the last twenty years, rising 110% from 3 commitments per 100 arrests in 1983 to 7 commitments per 100 arrests in 1997, indicating an increased reliance on incarceration as a sanction (Figure 11).

After rising sharply between 1983 and 1987, **Alabama's** commitment rate for index offenses stabilized at roughly 9 commitment per 100 arrests between 1987 and 1997, indicating a very stable sentencing response to crime (Figure 11). During this period, Alabama's commitment rate was an average of 1.8 commitments per 100 arrests higher than the national average, indicating a greater reliance on incarceration in Alabama. In 1997, Alabama remained one of ten states with the highest commitment rate given an arrest for index crimes (Table 11).

Table 11. Commitment Rates for Index Offenses, 1997⁷

Rank	State	Commitment Rate for Index Offenses
1	California	15.78
2	Tennessee	11.43
3	Texas	8.88
4	Alabama	8.66
5	Arkansas	8.39
6	Virginia	8.21
7	New Jersey	8.14
8	Mississippi	8.03
9	Ohio	8.01
10	Louisiana	7.98
11	Nevada	7.93
12	Oklahoma	7.76
13	Iowa	7.21
14	Missouri	6.55
15	New York	6.42
16	North Carolina	5.87
17	Maryland	5.72
18	Colorado	4.93
19	South Dakota	4.71
20	North Dakota	4.58
21	Utah	4.35
22	Pennsylvania	4.24
23	Minnesota	4.23
24	Nebraska	4.17
25	West Virginia	4.01
26	Oregon	3.90
27	Maine	3.09
28	Hawaii	3.03
29	Washington	3.01
30	New Hampshire	2.73
	US	7.10

Figure 11. Commitment Rate for Index Offenses, 1983-1997



Commitment Rates - Violent Offenses

Commitment rates commonly vary with the seriousness of the offense. Thus, the commitment rates for violent, property, and drug offenses are examined separately. The commitment rate for violent offenses represents the number of prison commitments for violent offenses per 100 arrests for violent offenses.

The commitment rate for violent offenses in the United States increased steadily between 1983 and 1997, growing 79% from 6 commitments per 100 arrests in 1983 to 11 commitments per 100 arrests in 1997, indicating a greater use of incarceration (Figure 12).

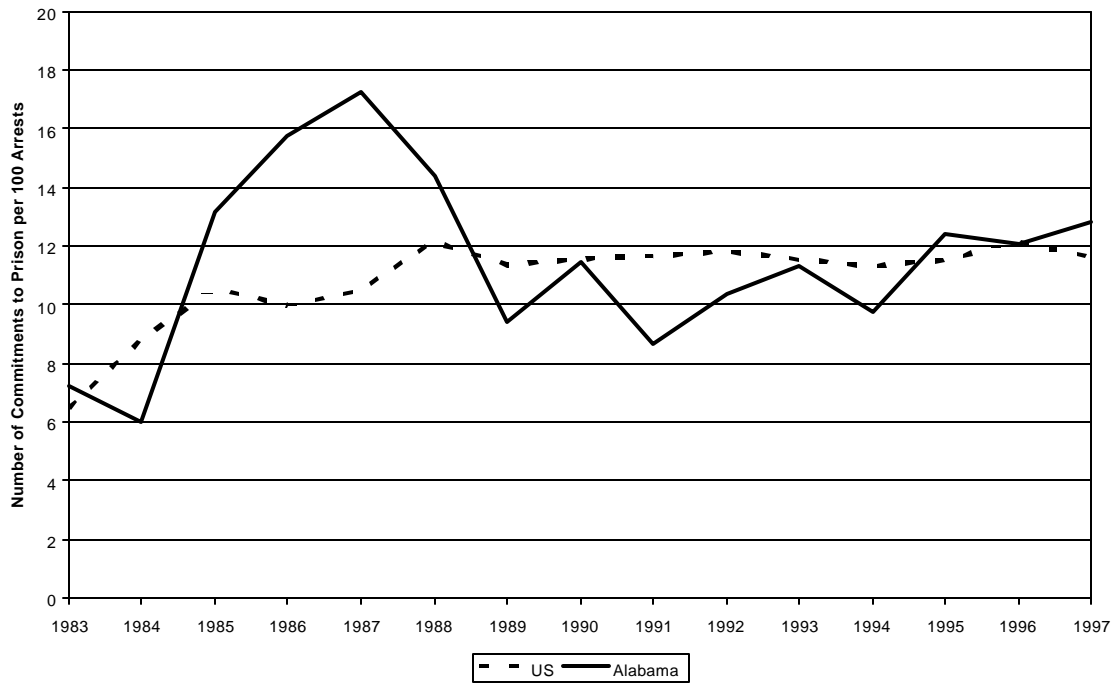
In **Alabama**, the commitment rate showed a more erratic trend (Figure 12).⁸ The post-1987 rate provides the best estimate of commitment rates, indicating a fairly stable rate of 10 to 11 commitments per 100 arrests for violent offenses. Between 1983 and 1997, Alabama experienced an overall increase of 90% in the commitment rate for violent offenses.

During this period, Alabama's commitment rate for violent offenses nearly equaled the national rate. Thus, Alabama's use of incarceration as a response to violent offenses is very similar to the national response (Table 12).

Table 12. Commitment Rates for Violent Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Commitment Rate for Violent Offenses
1	Oregon	21.04
2	Texas	19.94
3	Maine	19.89
4	North Dakota	19.41
5	Tennessee	18.88
6	Virginia	17.13
7	Utah	17.03
8	Ohio	16.26
9	New Jersey	16.14
10	Nebraska	16.08
11	Nevada	16.04
12	California	15.58
13	Colorado	13.88
14	Minnesota	13.84
15	Alabama	12.81
16	Mississippi	12.75
17	Louisiana	12.50
18	Arkansas	11.90
19	South Dakota	11.72
20	Washington	11.56
21	Missouri	10.60
22	Maryland	10.43
23	New York	10.41
24	Pennsylvania	10.26
25	Oklahoma	10.01
26	New Hampshire	9.71
27	North Carolina	9.22
28	Iowa	9.13
29	Hawaii	8.94
30	West Virginia	8.58
	US	11.64

Figure 12. Commitment Rate for Violent Offenses, 1983-1997



Commitment Rates - Property Offenses

The commitment rate for property offenses represents the number of commitments to prison for property offenses per 100 arrests for property offenses.

As Tables 12 and 13 indicate, commitment rates for violent offenses were higher than commitment rates for property offenses. On average, states had 8 more commitments per 100 arrests for violent offenses than for property offenses in 1997. Alabama admitted nearly twice as many violent offenders per 100 arrests than property offenders in 1997.

In the United States, the commitment rate for property offenses increased 111% between 1983 and 1997, indicating an increased interest in incarcerating property offenders (Figure 13).

In **Alabama**, the commitment rate for property offenses displayed a similar trend, rising to nearly 9 commitments per 100 arrests in 1992 (Figure 13). Between 1983 and 1992, Alabama had twice as many property commitments per 100 arrests than the national average, indicating a greater use of incarceration as a sanction in Alabama. By 1997, Alabama had the fifth highest commitment rate for property offenses (Table 13).

Table 13. Commitment Rates for Property Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Commitment Rate for Property Offenses
1	California	15.91
2	Tennessee	8.83
3	Arkansas	7.24
4	Oklahoma	7.18
5	Alabama	7.02
6	Mississippi	6.96
7	Iowa	6.70
8	Louisiana	6.32
9	Texas	6.08
10	Virginia	5.99
11	Nevada	5.99
12	Missouri	5.43
13	New Jersey	5.11
14	Ohio	4.84
15	North Carolina	4.32
16	Maryland	4.30
17	New York	3.94
18	South Dakota	3.77
19	North Dakota	3.72
20	Colorado	3.36
21	West Virginia	3.15
22	Utah	3.11
23	Nebraska	2.76
24	Minnesota	2.29
25	Hawaii	2.21
26	Oregon	1.96
27	Pennsylvania	1.85
28	Maine	1.68
29	Washington	1.52
30	New Hampshire	1.35
	US	5.39

Figure 13. Commitment Rate for Property Offenses, 1983-1997



Commitment Rates - Drug Offenses

The commitment rate for drug offenses represents the number of commitments to prison for drug offenses per 100 arrests for drug offenses. As Tables 12, 13, and 14 indicate, several states, including Alabama, commit drug offenders to prison at a rate far greater than property offenders and at a rate nearly equal to violent offenders.

In the United States, commitment rates for drug offenses showed remarkable increases between 1983 and 1997, rising 500% from less than 2 commitments per 100 arrests in 1983 to over 11 commitments per 100 arrests in 1992 (Figure 14). By 1997, the rate had dropped to just over 8 commitments per 100 arrests (Table 14).

In **Alabama**, the commitment rate for drug offenses increased rapidly between 1983 and 1991, rising to a rate of 17 commitments per 100 arrests – 1.5 times the national average (Figure 14). In 1997, the commitment rate for drug offenses had decreased to 11 commitments per 100 arrests, yet it remained 100% above the 1983 level. In 1997, Alabama had 3 more commitments per 100 arrests for drug offenses than the national average and had one of the highest commitment rates for drug offenses, indicating a continued desire to incarcerate drug offenders (Table 14).

Table 14. Commitment Rates for Drug Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Commitment Rate for Drug Offenses
1	California	16.66
2	Louisiana	15.87
3	Arkansas	13.52
4	Oklahoma	12.77
5	New Jersey	11.81
6	Alabama	11.71
7	Tennessee	11.53
8	Virginia	10.97
9	Mississippi	10.93
10	North Dakota	10.39
11	Texas	10.04
12	Nevada	9.20
13	Utah	8.78
14	Maryland	8.30
15	Colorado	8.11
16	Iowa	7.91
17	Missouri	7.75
18	Pennsylvania	7.38
19	Hawaii	7.14
20	South Dakota	7.10
21	New York	7.10
22	Washington	6.84
23	Ohio	6.61
24	North Carolina	6.42
25	Nebraska	4.78
26	Oregon	3.77
27	West Virginia	3.59
28	New Hampshire	3.43
29	Minnesota	3.42
30	Maine	2.05
	US	8.60

Figure 14. Commitment Rate for Drug Offenses, 1983-1997



Prison Populations

Prison Populations - Index Offenses⁹

As a state increases incarceration for a particular offense type, the percentage of commitments to prison devoted to that offense type increases, indicating the state's policy change and providing an indication of how the state ranks different offenses. While any shift in the percentage of commitments to prison for a particular offense could represent changes in crime, arrests, prosecutions, convictions, or sentencing, the rate, nonetheless, provides a good snapshot of the mix of offenders entering prison and the state's focus on particular offenses.

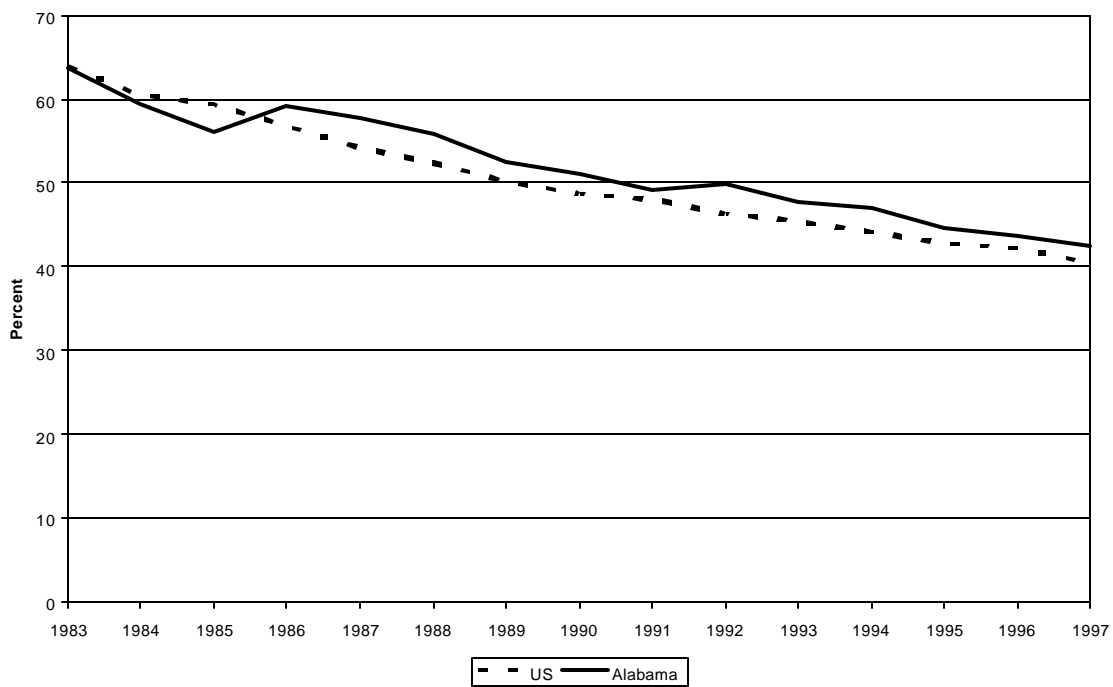
In the United States, the percentage of commitments for index offenses has declined steadily over the last twenty years, from 63% of commitments in 1983 to 40% of commitments in 1997 despite peaks and valleys in the index crime rate (Figure 15). The decline is due primarily to increases in commitments for drug offenses and public order offenses, signaling a national trend toward increased sanctioning.¹⁰

In **Alabama**, the percentage of commitments for index offenses followed an identical trend, falling from 63% of commitments in 1983 to 42% of commitments in 1997 (Figure 15). The decline in Alabama appears to be due largely to the rise in commitments to prison for drug offenses, indicated in Table 18.

Table 15. Percentage of Commitments for Index Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Percent of Commitments for Index Offenses
1	Tennessee	56.8
2	Florida	52.9
3	Ohio	52.7
4	Michigan	49.4
5	Minnesota	48.2
6	Wisconsin	46.0
7	Pennsylvania	44.3
8	Texas	43.9
9	California	43.8
10	West Virginia	43.8
11	South Carolina	43.7
12	Oregon	43.5
13	Alabama	42.4
14	Illinois	42.4
15	Virginia	41.7
16	Missouri	41.3
17	Utah	40.2
18	Mississippi	40.1
19	New York	40.0
20	North Carolina	39.6
21	Louisiana	39.4
22	Maine	39.0
23	Arkansas	39.0
24	Nevada	38.1
25	South Dakota	37.7
26	Iowa	37.5
27	Colorado	37.1
28	New Jersey	35.8
29	North Dakota	35.4
30	Nebraska	34.4
31	Maryland	33.8
32	Washington	33.8
33	Oklahoma	31.2
34	Kentucky	30.2
35	New Hampshire	28.5
36	Hawaii	22.9
	US	40.3

Table 15. Percent of Commitments to Prison for Index Offenses, 1983-1997



Prison Populations - Violent Offenses

The percentage of commitments to prison for violent offenses in the United States has decreased steadily over the last twenty years from 25% of total commitments in 1983 to 17% of commitments in 1997 (Figure 16), despite a national effort to target violent offenders and a violent crime rate that increased throughout the 1980s.

In **Alabama**, the percentage of commitments to prison for violent offenses dropped steadily from 23% of total commitments in 1983 to 16% of commitments in 1991, despite a rapidly rising violent crime rate (Figure 16). The percentage of commitments for violent offenses rose slightly between 1991 and 1997 to 17.8% of commitments, just above the national average (Table 16).

Table 16. Percentage of Commitments for Violent Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Percent of Commitments for Violent Offenses
1	Pennsylvania	30.4
2	Ohio	29.7
3	Florida	28.5
4	Minnesota	26.6
5	New York	24.9
6	Tennessee	24.3
7	Oregon	23.8
8	Michigan	23.4
9	Wisconsin	23.2
10	Texas	19.9
11	North Carolina	19.6
12	Maine	19.5
13	New Jersey	19.5
14	Washington	19.3
15	South Carolina	18.0
16	Alabama	17.8
17	California	17.8
18	Virginia	17.4
19	New Hampshire	16.8
20	Louisiana	16.7
21	Colorado	15.6
22	Illinois	15.3
23	Nevada	14.9
24	West Virginia	14.8
25	Missouri	14.5
26	Maryland	14.3
27	Nebraska	14.1
28	Utah	14.1
29	Arkansas	13.6
30	Mississippi	11.8
31	South Dakota	11.1
32	Kentucky	10.5
33	Iowa	10.0
34	Hawaii	8.3
35	North Dakota	8.3
36	Oklahoma	8.3
	US	16.9

Figure 16. Percent of Commitments to Prison for Violent Offenses, 1983-1997



Prison Populations - Property Offenses

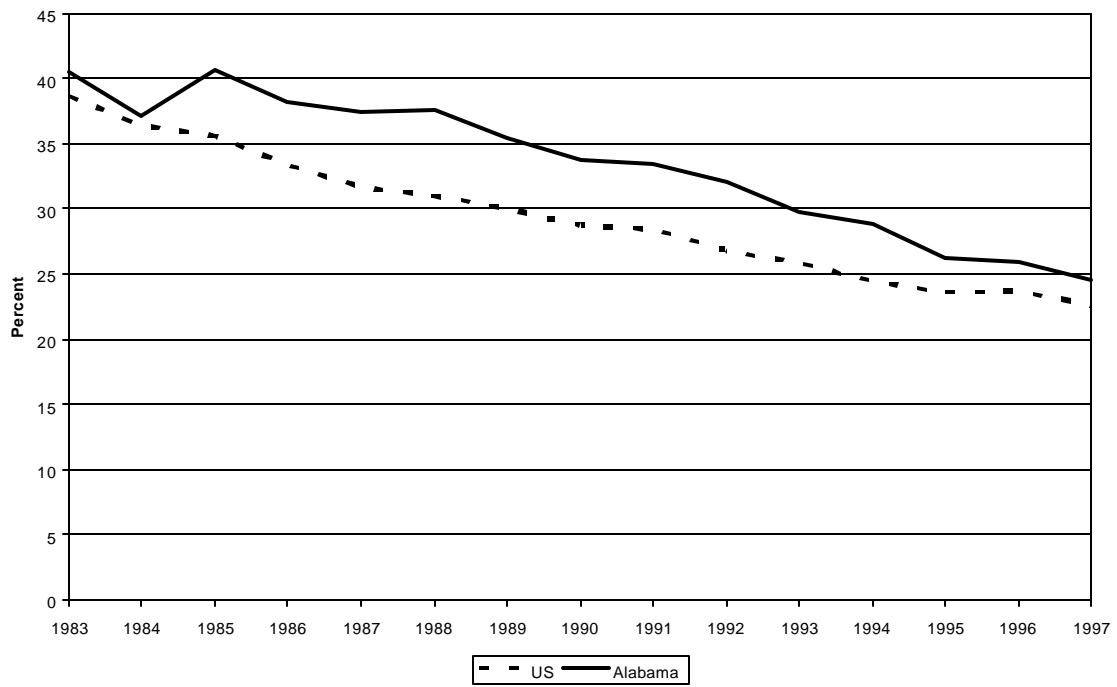
The percentage of commitments to prison for property offenses in the United States has also declined steadily from 38% of total commitments in 1983 to 22% of commitments in 1997 (Figure 17). Again, this was during a rising property crime rate through 1991.

In **Alabama**, the percentage of commitments to prison for property offenses has followed an identical trend, falling from over 40% of total commitments in 1983 to 24% of commitments in 1997, despite repeated peaks and valleys in the property crime rate (Figure 17). In 1997, the percentage of prison commitments that were for property offenses in Alabama was slightly higher than the national average.

Table 17. Percentage of Commitments for Property Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Percent of Commitments for Property Offenses
1	Tennessee	32.6
2	West Virginia	29.0
3	Mississippi	28.3
4	Iowa	27.6
5	North Dakota	27.2
6	Illinois	27.1
7	Missouri	26.9
8	South Dakota	26.7
9	Utah	26.2
10	California	26.1
11	Michigan	26.0
12	South Carolina	25.7
13	Arkansas	25.4
14	Alabama	24.6
15	Florida	24.4
16	Virginia	24.4
17	Texas	24.0
18	Nevada	23.2
19	Ohio	23.0
20	Oklahoma	22.9
21	Wisconsin	22.8
22	Louisiana	22.8
23	Minnesota	21.7
24	Colorado	21.5
25	Nebraska	20.3
26	North Carolina	20.0
27	Kentucky	19.8
28	Oregon	19.7
29	Maine	19.6
30	Maryland	19.6
31	New Jersey	16.3
32	New York	15.1
33	Hawaii	14.7
34	Washington	14.5
35	Pennsylvania	13.9
36	New Hampshire	11.8
	US	22.9

Figure 17. Percent of Commitments to Prison for Property Offenses, 1983-1997



Prison Populations - Drug Offenses

The percentage of commitments to prison for drug offenses in the United States has increased significantly over the last twenty years from 7% of total commitments in 1983 to over 26% of commitments in 1997 (Figure 18). During this period, the US has also experienced a steady decline in drug use among adults.

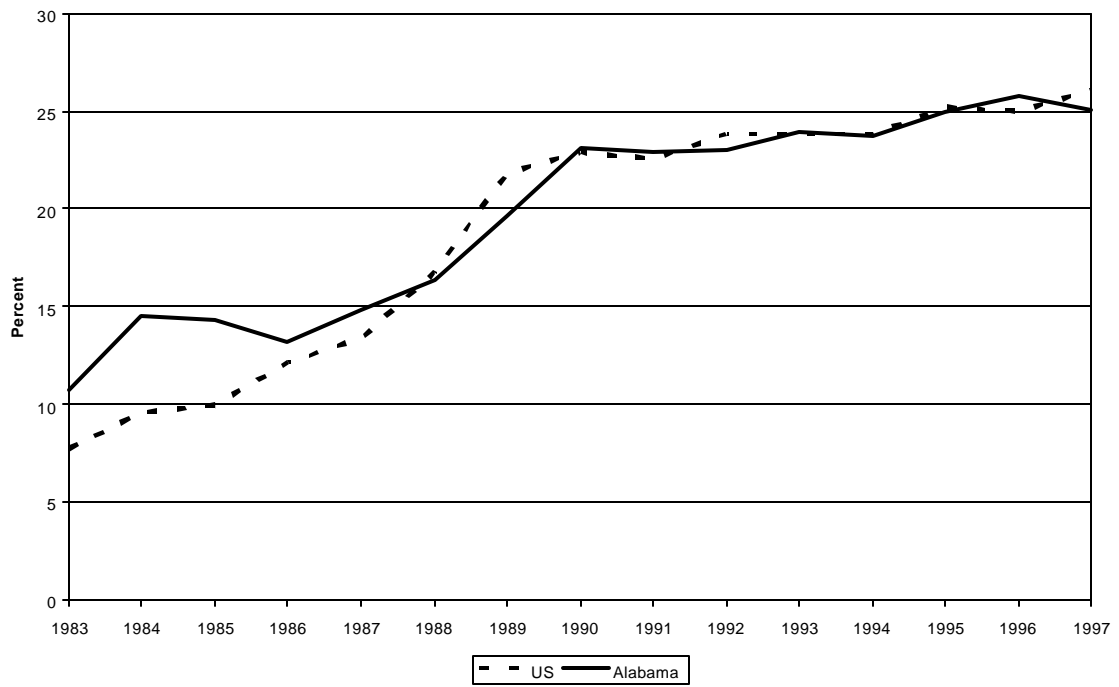
In **Alabama**, the percentage of commitments to prison for drug offenses followed an identical trend, increasing from 11% of total commitments in 1983 to 25% of commitments in 1997 (Figure 18). As Table 20 indicates, drug offenders now represent the largest percentage of offenders entering Alabama prisons.

As Tables 16, 17, and 18 indicate, the mix of offenders entering Alabama prisons is nearly identical to the national average, due primarily to the way Alabama's crime rates mirror the national rates.

Table 18. Percentage of Commitments for Drug Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Percent of Commitments for Drug Offenses
1	New York	45.1
2	New Jersey	45.0
3	Illinois	37.6
4	California	34.8
5	Louisiana	34.0
6	Maryland	32.9
7	Arkansas	30.9
8	Utah	30.8
9	Washington	30.7
10	Mississippi	30.6
11	Oklahoma	30.0
12	Pennsylvania	29.7
13	Virginia	28.9
14	South Carolina	28.8
15	Texas	28.0
16	Kentucky	27.4
17	Missouri	25.9
18	Nevada	25.7
19	Nebraska	25.6
20	Colorado	25.4
21	Tennessee	25.3
22	Alabama	25.1
23	Ohio	24.4
24	Florida	23.2
25	North Dakota	20.8
26	Wisconsin	20.3
27	Michigan	20.2
28	South Dakota	20.1
29	North Carolina	19.2
30	Iowa	18.2
31	Minnesota	17.4
32	Oregon	17.2
33	West Virginia	17.1
34	Hawaii	17.0
35	New Hampshire	14.3
36	Maine	10.7
	US	26.0

Figure 18. Percent of Commitments to Prison for Drug Offenses, 1983-1997



***Prison Populations –
Non-Index and Non-Drug
Offenses***

Examining the percentage of commitments to prison for non-index and non-drug offenses provides an indication of a state’s use of incarceration as a response to less serious offenses (e.g. forgery, DUI, trespassing, etc.).

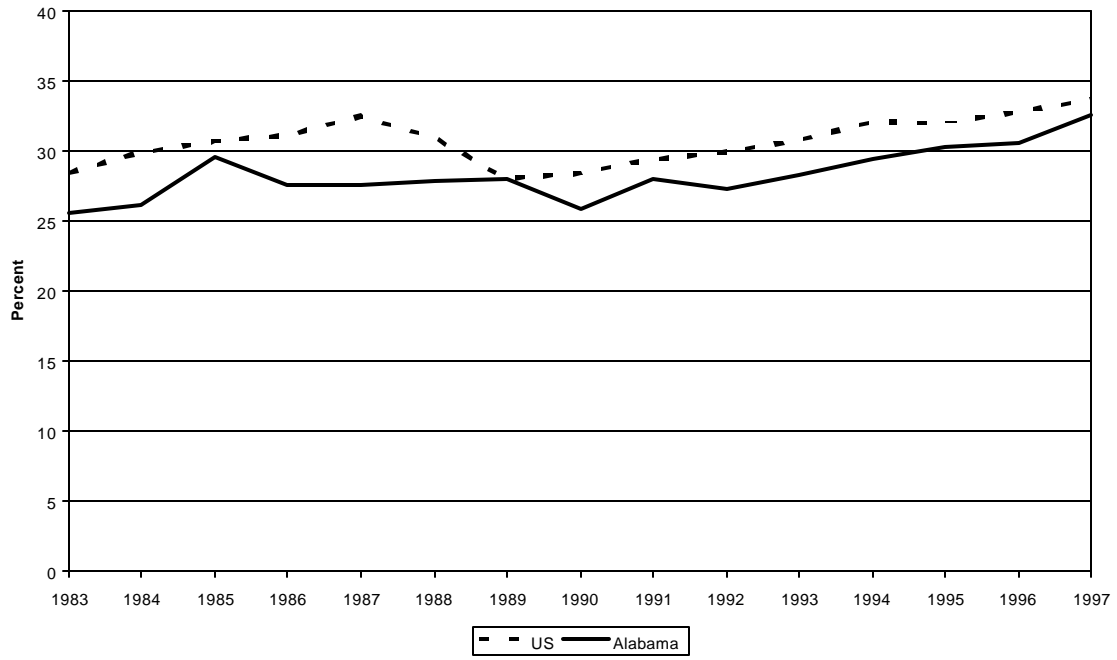
The percentage of commitments for non-index and non-drug offenses in the United States has risen slightly over the last twenty years from 28% of total commitments in 1983 to 33% of commitments in 1997 (Figure 19).

Alabama has experienced a similar increase, growing from 25% of total commitments in 1983 to 32% of commitments in 1997, indicating an increased use of incarceration as a response to less serious offenses (Figure 19).

Table 19. Percentage of Commitments for Non-Index and Non-Drug Offenses, 1997

Rank	State	Percent of Commitments for Non-Index and Non-Drug Offenses
1	Hawaii	60.0
2	New Hampshire	57.1
3	Maine	50.2
4	Iowa	44.2
5	North Dakota	43.7
6	Kentucky	42.2
7	South Dakota	42.1
8	North Carolina	41.2
9	Nebraska	40.0
10	Oregon	39.3
11	West Virginia	39.0
12	Oklahoma	38.7
13	Colorado	37.4
14	Nevada	36.2
15	Washington	35.4
16	Minnesota	34.2
17	Wisconsin	33.7
18	Maryland	33.3
19	Missouri	32.7
20	Alabama	32.4
21	Michigan	30.4
22	Arkansas	30.0
23	Virginia	29.3
24	Mississippi	29.3
25	Utah	28.9
26	Texas	28.1
27	South Carolina	27.4
28	Louisiana	26.5
29	Pennsylvania	25.9
30	Florida	23.8
31	Ohio	22.8
32	California	21.2
33	Illinois	19.9
34	New Jersey	19.2
35	Tennessee	17.8
36	New York	14.8
	US	33.6

Figure 19. Percent of Commitments to Prison for Non-Index and Non-Drug Offenses, 1983-1997



***Prison Populations –
All Offenses***

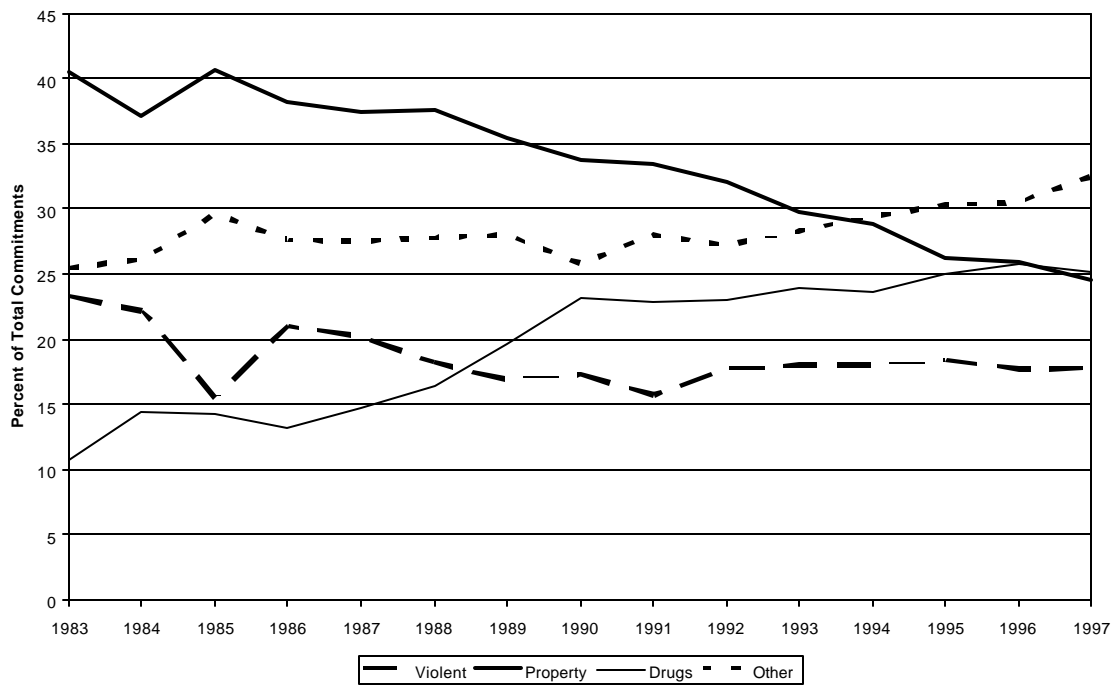
Table 20 provides a summary of Tables 16-19, showing the percentage of commitments to prison for each crime type and highlighting the mix of offenders committed to prison in 1997.

Figure 20 shows the trends in the mix of offenders committed to prison in **Alabama**. As the percentage of commitment to prison for property and violent offenses decreased between 1990 and 1997, the percentage of commitments for drug offenses and other offenses naturally increased, despite a rising violent crime rate and a slight rise in the property crime rate.

Table 20. Percentage of Commitments to Prison for All Offenses, 1997

State	Violent	Property	Drug	Other
Alabama	17.8	24.6	25.1	32.4
Arkansas	13.6	25.4	30.9	30.0
California	17.8	26.1	34.8	21.2
Colorado	15.6	21.5	25.4	37.4
Florida	28.5	24.4	23.2	23.8
Hawaii	8.3	14.7	17.0	60.0
Illinois	15.3	27.1	37.6	19.9
Iowa	10.0	27.6	18.2	44.2
Kentucky	10.5	19.8	27.4	42.2
Louisiana	16.7	22.8	34.0	26.5
Maine	19.5	19.6	10.7	50.2
Maryland	14.3	19.6	32.9	33.3
Michigan	23.4	26.0	20.2	30.4
Minnesota	26.6	21.7	17.4	34.2
Mississippi	11.8	28.3	30.6	29.3
Missouri	14.5	26.9	25.9	32.7
Nebraska	14.1	20.3	25.6	40.0
Nevada	14.9	23.2	25.7	36.2
New Hampshire	16.8	11.8	14.3	57.1
New Jersey	19.5	16.3	45.0	19.2
New York	24.9	15.1	45.1	14.8
North Carolina	19.6	20.0	19.2	41.2
North Dakota	8.30	27.2	20.8	43.7
Ohio	29.7	23.0	24.4	22.8
Oklahoma	8.30	22.9	30.0	38.7
Oregon	23.8	19.7	17.2	39.3
Pennsylvania	30.4	13.9	29.7	25.9
South Carolina	18.0	25.7	28.8	27.4
South Dakota	11.1	26.7	20.1	42.1
Tennessee	24.3	32.6	25.3	17.8
Texas	19.9	24.0	28.0	28.1
Utah	14.1	26.2	30.8	28.9
Virginia	17.4	24.4	28.9	29.3
Washington	19.3	14.5	30.7	35.4
West Virginia	14.8	29.0	17.1	39.0
Wisconsin	23.2	22.8	20.3	33.7
US	16.9	22.9	26.0	33.6

Figure 20. Mix of Offenses Committed to Prison, 1983-1997



Sentence Lengths

Sentence Length – Violent Offenses

While commitment rates and incarceration rates measure the overall use of incarceration, the severity of imprisonment can be estimated by the sentence length imposed. The sentence length represents the average sentence imposed for all inmates admitted to prison in a given year.¹¹

After peaking in 1989 at 158 months, the sentence length for violent offenses in the U.S. decreased and remained relatively stable at 134 months through 1995 (Figure 21). It then decreased, returning to 117 months in 1997 (Table 21).

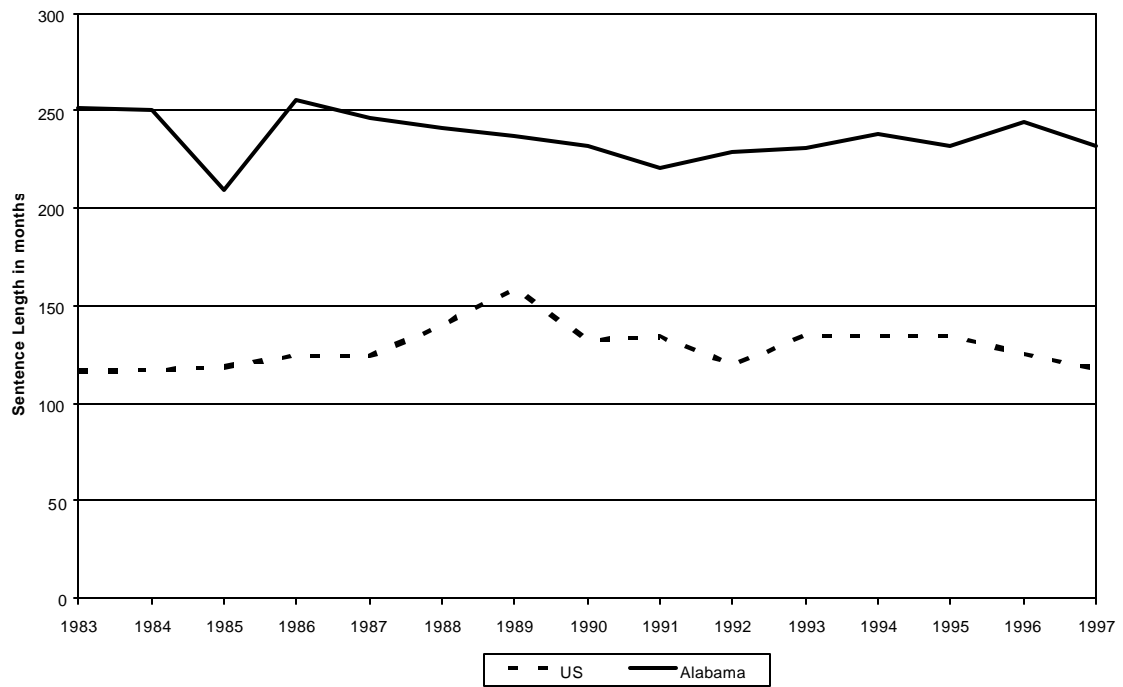
The sentence length for violent offenses in **Alabama** decreased steadily in the 1980s from a high of 255 months in 1986 to a low of 220 months in 1991, a decrease of nearly 3 years (Figure 21). Sentence lengths then rose slightly through 1997, to roughly 231 months. Throughout the period, Alabama's imposed sentences were nearly twice the national average.

As Table 21 indicates, states vary dramatically in sentences imposed. In 1997 Alabama had the longest imposed sentences for violent crimes, with sentences more than 3 times longer than those in California, the state with the shortest sentences.

Table 21. Mean Sentence Length for Violent Offenses (in months), 1997

Rank	State	Mean Sentence Length
1	Alabama	231.53
2	Utah	219.63
3	Arkansas	218.56
4	Michigan	214.54
5	West Virginia	198.30
6	Nevada	176.71
7	Mississippi	165.61
8	Iowa	163.33
9	Hawaii	161.57
10	Kentucky	156.39
11	Pennsylvania	154.12
12	Texas	152.57
13	Missouri	146.72
14	Maryland	140.79
15	New Hampshire	140.23
16	Illinois	139.39
17	New York	135.22
18	Louisiana	131.37
19	South Dakota	130.63
20	Nebraska	128.09
21	South Carolina	123.43
22	Ohio	122.86
23	New Jersey	119.38
24	Wisconsin	114.36
25	Virginia	112.30
26	Colorado	111.14
27	Tennessee	104.46
28	Washington	103.38
29	Florida	96.66
30	North Carolina	96.46
31	North Dakota	93.27
32	Minnesota	85.71
33	Maine	83.12
34	Oregon	81.87
35	California	73.26
	US	117.72

Figure 21. Average Sentence Length Imposed for Violent Offenses, 1983-1997



Sentence Length – Property Offenses

As Tables 21 and 22 indicate, sentences imposed for property offenses are well below those imposed for violent offenses. On average, property offenders nationally received sentences that were 64 months, or 5.3 years, shorter than violent offender.

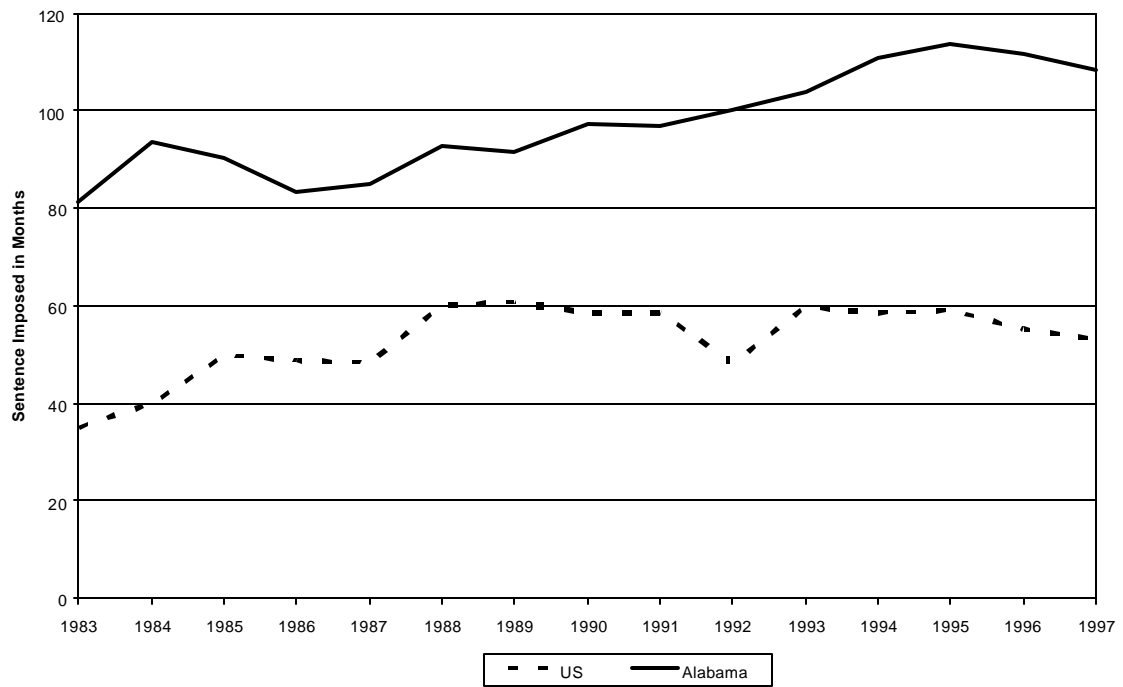
The sentence length for property offenders remained fairly stable through the 1990s. After climbing steadily from a low of 35 months in 1983 to 60 months in 1988, the sentence length for property offenders stabilized at roughly 59 months through 1997 (Figure 22).

In contrast, the sentence length for property offenders has increased steadily in **Alabama**, from 81 months in 1986 to 113 months in 1995 (Figure 22). Sentences in Alabama decreased slightly in 1997 to 108 months, yet sentence length for property offenders remains at nearly twice the national average.

Table 22. Mean Sentence Length for Property Offenses (in months), 1997

Rank	State	Mean Sentence Length
1	Michigan	133.42
2	Utah	109.08
3	Alabama	108.52
4	Texas	97.96
5	Pennsylvania	92.16
6	West Virginia	89.60
7	Iowa	74.96
8	Ohio	74.09
9	South Carolina	72.65
10	South Dakota	70.49
11	Hawaii	70.13
12	New York	68.68
13	Arkansas	67.64
14	North Carolina	60.12
15	Kentucky	59.74
16	New Hampshire	57.53
17	Missouri	56.79
18	Nevada	55.63
19	Mississippi	52.78
20	Colorado	52.19
21	Oregon	51.90
22	Wisconsin	51.55
23	Illinois	50.95
24	New Jersey	49.35
25	Nebraska	48.79
26	Louisiana	44.24
27	North Dakota	43.47
28	Maine	43.09
29	Florida	40.70
30	Maryland	38.38
31	Tennessee	34.12
32	Washington	33.53
33	Virginia	33.38
34	California	31.81
35	Minnesota	28.14
	US	53.17

Figure 22. Sentence Length Imposed for Property Offenses, 1983-1997



Sentence Length – Drug Offenses

As Tables 22 and 23 indicate, several states sentence drug offenders to sentences far longer than property offenders. In fact, nationally, the length of sentences imposed for drug offenses are roughly 2 months longer than those imposed on property offenders.

In the United States the sentence length imposed for drug offenses increased rapidly in the early 1980s, climbing 65% in just two years from 33 months in 1983 to 55 months in 1985 (Figure 23). The sentence length increased slightly and stabilized at roughly 60 months through 1997.

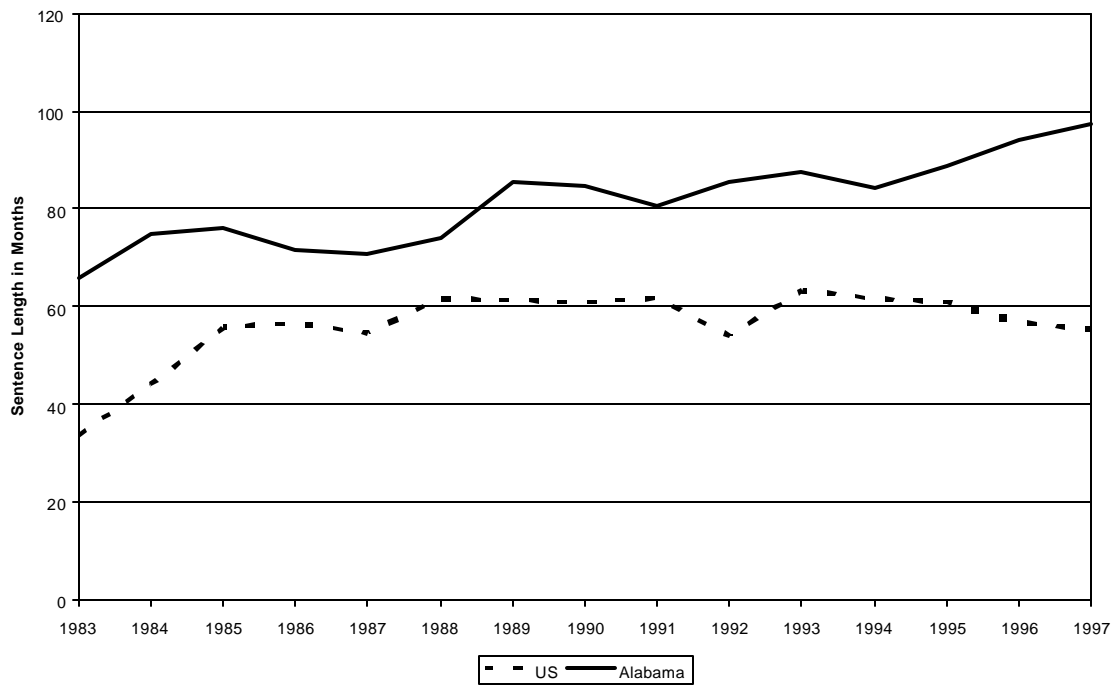
In **Alabama**, the sentence length imposed for drug offenses increased dramatically from 65 months in 1983 to 97 months in 1997, a rise of 50% (Figure 23). Like other offenses, sentence lengths imposed for drug offenses in Alabama were well above the national average, with sentence lengths 42 months longer than the average.

As Table 21, 22, and 23 indicate, Alabama consistently ranks among the states with the highest imposed sentences for all crime types.

Table 23. Mean Sentence Length for Drug Offenses (in months), 1997

Rank	State	Mean Sentence Length
1	Michigan	196.33
2	Iowa	124.55
3	New York	100.21
4	Utah	99.02
5	Alabama	97.10
6	West Virginia	95.49
7	Texas	92.73
8	Hawaii	76.51
9	Arkansas	74.88
10	Missouri	73.20
11	New Hampshire	73.13
12	Pennsylvania	70.17
13	Mississippi	68.21
14	South Carolina	67.55
15	South Dakota	54.35
16	New Jersey	53.99
17	Kentucky	53.87
18	Louisiana	53.55
19	Nevada	53.30
20	North Carolina	52.45
21	Colorado	50.29
22	Nebraska	50.14
23	Maine	50.13
24	Tennessee	49.94
25	Maryland	46.66
26	Wisconsin	45.71
27	North Dakota	45.59
28	Illinois	45.47
29	Ohio	41.91
30	Virginia	38.01
31	Florida	36.97
32	Washington	34.22
33	Minnesota	33.83
34	California	30.36
35	Oregon	25.78
	US	55.38

Figure 23. Sentence Length Imposed for Drug Offenses, 1983-1997



Time Served

Time Served – Violent Offenses

While sentence length estimates the severity of sentence imposed, time served estimates the severity of the sentence actually served. The time served for violent offenses represents the average time served for all inmates released from prison in a given year.¹²

Time served for violent offenses was stable in the United States between 1983 and 1997, at roughly 33 months (Figure 24).

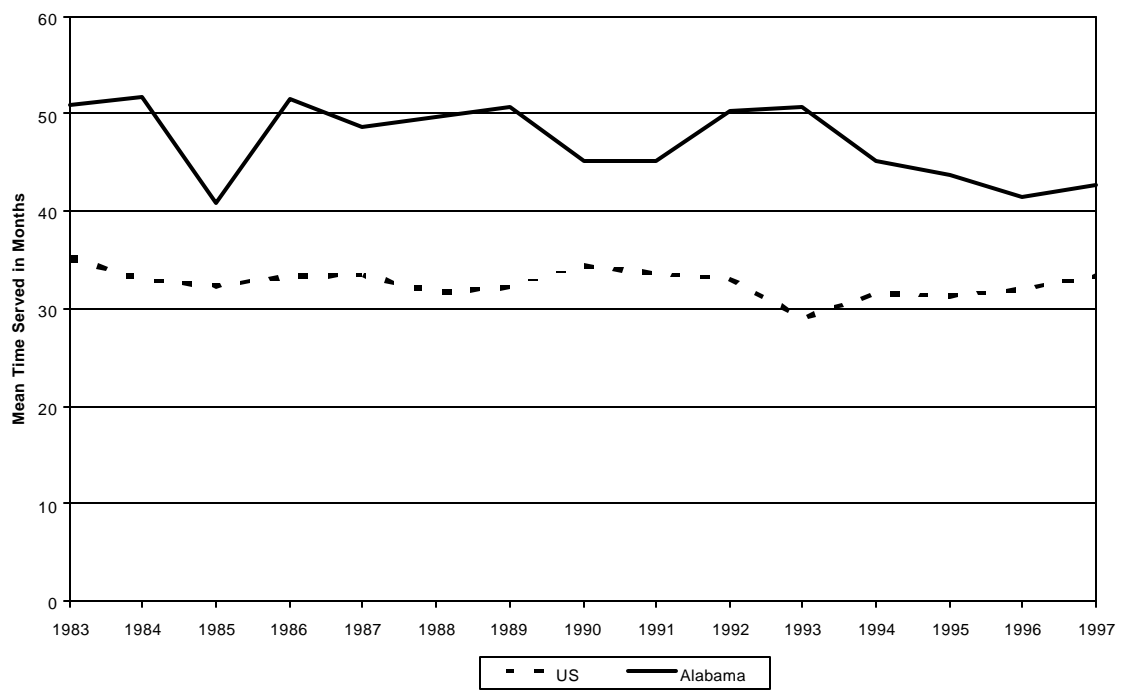
Time served in **Alabama** displayed a similar stability between 1983 and 1993, with time served for violent offenses hovering at roughly 50 months (Figure 24). Any sudden peaks in time served during this period are likely due to reporting practices or to the type of offenders exiting prison rather than any sudden changes in parole practices or sentences imposed. However, between 1993 and 1997, time served for violent offenses showed a steady decrease to 42 months, perhaps a reflection of shorter sentences imposed or a change in release practices.

While Alabama imposed sentences for violent offenses twice as long as the national average, time served was just above the national average. Indeed, while Alabama has the longest imposed sentences for violent offenses, they rank 12th in terms of time served.

Table 24. Mean Time Served for Violent Offenses (in months), 1997

Rank	State	Time Served
1	Pennsylvania	76.41
2	Maryland	68.90
3	Missouri	67.76
4	Hawaii	66.90
5	Texas	64.42
6	Maine	48.48
7	Florida	45.25
8	Mississippi	44.88
9	Virginia	44.39
10	Michigan	43.15
11	Arkansas	42.99
12	Alabama	42.59
13	North Carolina	41.69
14	Ohio	41.67
15	Kentucky	41.66
16	Nevada	40.42
17	South Dakota	40.02
18	Colorado	37.19
19	New Hampshire	37.05
20	Nebraska	36.69
21	Washington	34.08
22	Iowa	33.99
23	Illinois	33.23
24	Oregon	32.34
25	South Carolina	31.85
26	Wisconsin	31.13
27	Louisiana	31.01
28	New York	28.29
29	New Jersey	28.14
30	West Virginia	25.30
31	Utah	25.29
32	Tennessee	23.62
33	North Dakota	21.44
34	Minnesota	20.64
35	California	16.65
	US	33.39

Figure 24. Time Served for Violent Offenses, 1983-1997



Time Served – Property Offenses

The time served for property offenses represents the average time served to release for all inmates released from prison for property offenses in a given year. As Tables 24 and 25 indicate, time served for property offenses is much lower than time served for violent offenses in most states.

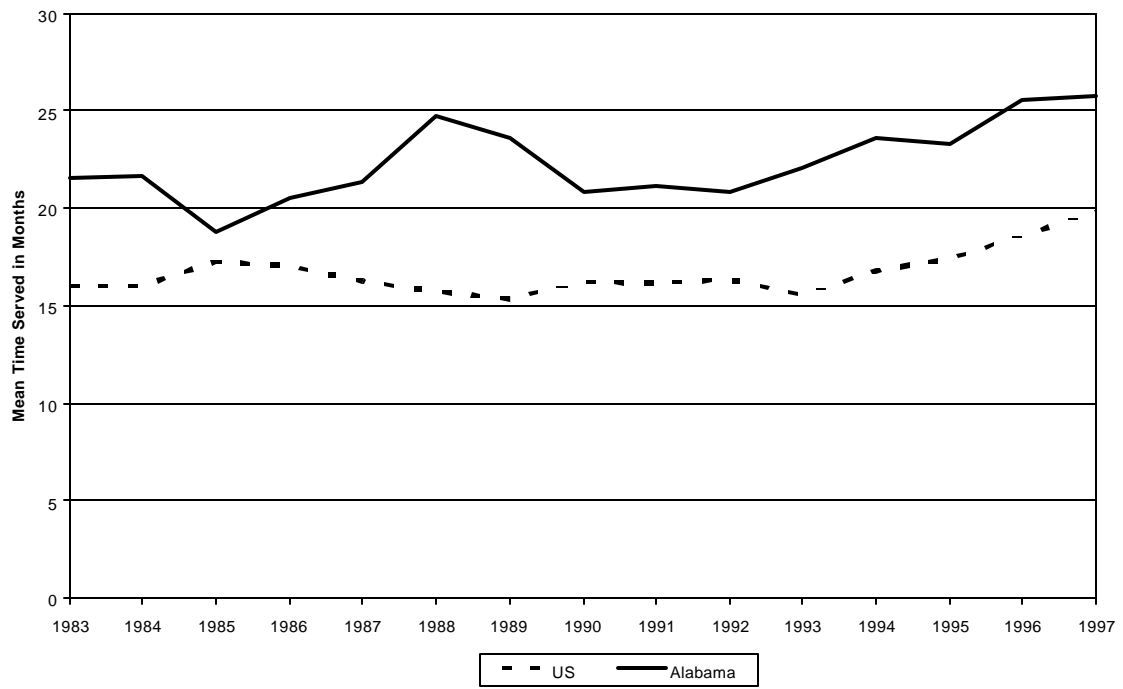
Like violent offenses, average time served for property offenses remained fairly stable in the United States, hovering around 16 months between 1983 and 1993 (Figure 25). In 1994, time served started to increase, rising to nearly 20 months in 1997.

The trend in **Alabama** followed a similar pattern, hovering around 20 to 21 months between 1983 and 1992 before rising steadily through 1997, likely due to the rise in the length of sentences imposed in the 1990s (Figure 25). In 1997, property offenders in Alabama were serving sentences 6 months longer than the national average.

Table 25. Mean Time Served for Property Offenses (in months), 1997

Rank	State	Time Served
1	Pennsylvania	64.94
2	Texas	40.51
3	North Carolina	33.88
4	Florida	32.08
5	Maine	31.83
6	Hawaii	31.37
7	Missouri	31.37
8	Alabama	25.73
9	Virginia	25.16
10	Michigan	24.65
11	New Hampshire	24.44
12	Nevada	24.36
13	Iowa	23.98
14	Ohio	23.98
15	Colorado	23.83
16	Wisconsin	22.93
17	South Dakota	22.28
18	South Carolina	21.66
19	Maryland	21.20
20	West Virginia	19.32
21	Louisiana	18.98
22	Arkansas	18.52
23	Washington	18.02
24	Kentucky	17.82
25	New York	17.73
26	Mississippi	17.21
27	Oregon	17.19
28	Nebraska	16.38
29	Utah	14.91
30	Illinois	14.87
31	New Jersey	14.42
32	North Dakota	13.93
33	Minnesota	11.62
34	Tennessee	10.52
35	California	9.70
	US	19.81

Figure 25. Time Served for Property Offenses, 1983-1997



Time Served – Drug Offenses

The time served for drug offenses represents the average time served to release for all inmates released from prison for drug offenses in a given year. As Tables 25 and 26 indicate, time served for drug offenses is nearly the same as that for property offenses in most states.

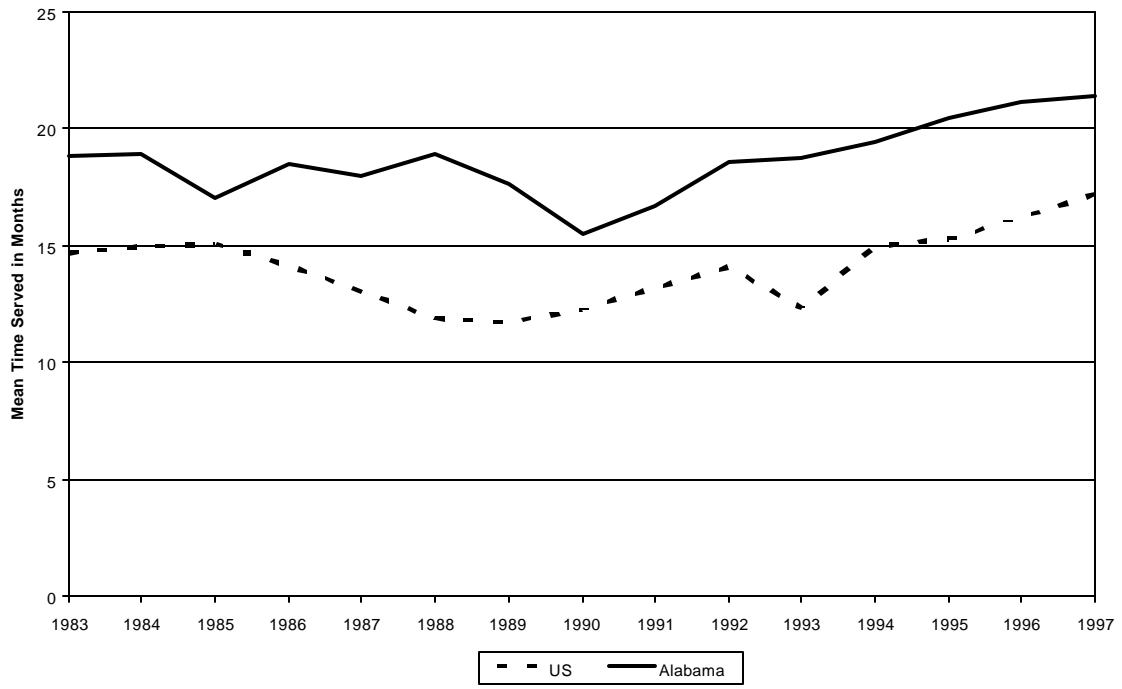
Time served for drug offenses decreased slightly in the United States during the 1980s, to just 11 months in 1989 (Figure 26). Between 1990 and 1997, time served began a steady increase, climbing to 17 months in 1997, a 55% increase.

In **Alabama**, time served for drug offenses remained very stable during the 1980s at roughly 18 months (Figure 26). After a one-year drop to 15 months in 1990, time served began a steady rise to 21 months in 1997, approximately 5 months longer than the national average.

Table 26. Mean Time Served for Drug Offenses (in months), 1997

Rank	State	Time Served
1	Pennsylvania	39.51
2	Texas	31.28
3	Florida	30.10
4	Missouri	29.87
5	Hawaii	28.66
6	Maine	25.42
7	North Carolina	24.40
8	Nevada	23.98
9	Iowa	23.51
10	Michigan	22.26
11	South Carolina	21.74
12	New Hampshire	21.68
13	Alabama	21.38
14	Maryland	21.28
15	Virginia	20.26
16	Louisiana	20.06
17	New York	19.50
18	Washington	17.57
19	Colorado	16.96
20	Mississippi	16.44
21	New Jersey	15.20
22	Ohio	15.13
23	Wisconsin	15.03
24	Nebraska	14.94
25	Arkansas	13.83
26	West Virginia	13.34
27	Oregon	12.62
28	Kentucky	12.35
29	South Dakota	12.24
30	Utah	11.98
31	Illinois	11.94
32	Minnesota	11.60
33	North Dakota	10.73
34	California	9.74
35	Tennessee	9.36
	US	17.18

Figure 26. Time Served for Drug Offenses, 1983-1997



Incarceration Rates

Incarceration Rates

The overall use of imprisonment is generally measured by the incarceration rate, or the number of sentenced prisoners per 100,000 population. Since any shifts in the incarceration rate could represent changes in crime, arrests, prosecutions, convictions, or sentencing, inferences drawn from the incarceration rate can only be speculative.

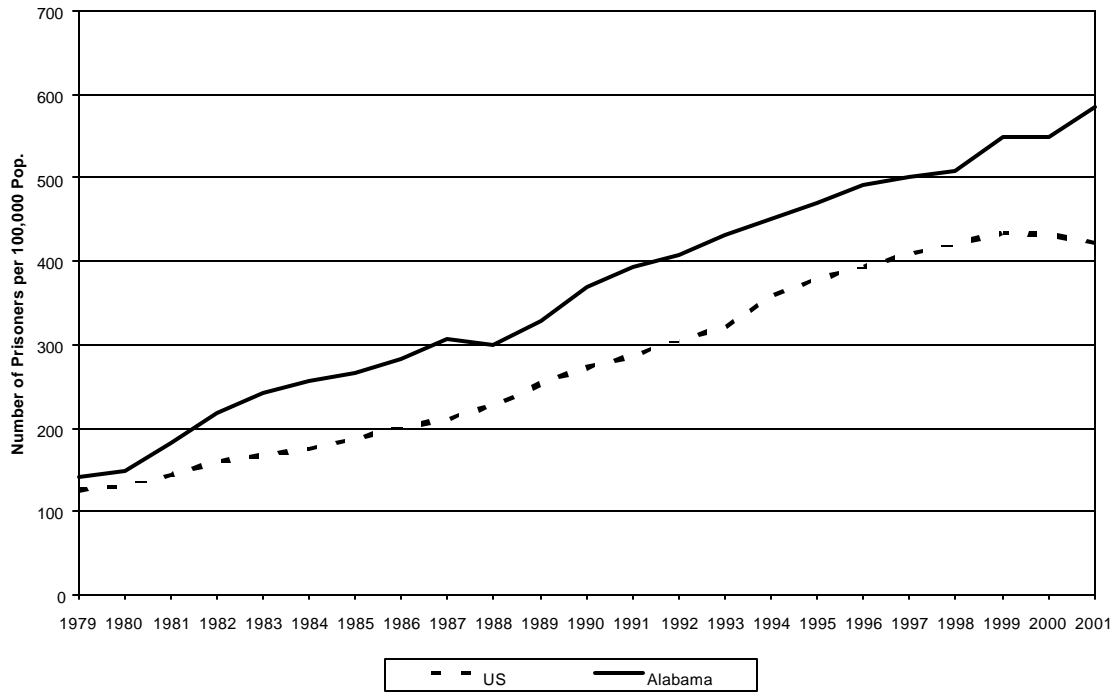
The incarceration rate in the United States has increased radically over the last three decades, growing 234% from 126 inmates per 100,000 population in 1979 to 422 inmates per 100,000 population in 2001 (Figure 27). While most states have continued to face ever-increasing prison populations, the overall incarceration rate declined in the US in 2001, falling 0.7% nationally.

The rise in the incarceration rate was even more dramatic in **Alabama**, increasing 326% between 1979 and 2001 (Figure 27). Given Alabama's comparably low crime rates, low risk of arrest and high rate of commitments per arrest, the rise in incarceration appears to result from commitment decisions (i.e., Alabama commits more arrestees to prison than the national average). In addition, the growth appears primarily due to the rapid increase in the number of drug offenders sentenced to prison.

Table 27. Incarceration Rates, 2001

Rank	State	Incarceration Rate
1	Louisiana	800
2	Mississippi	715
3	Texas	711
4	Oklahoma	658
5	Alabama	584
6	Georgia	542
7	South Carolina	529
8	Missouri	509
9	Delaware	504
10	Arizona	492
11	Michigan	488
12	Nevada	474
13	California	453
14	Idaho	451
15	Arkansas	447
16	Florida	437
17	Virginia	431
18	Maryland	422
19	Tennessee	411
20	Ohio	398
21	Colorado	391
22	Connecticut	387
23	Wisconsin	383
24	Kentucky	371
25	South Dakota	370
26	Montana	368
27	New York	355
28	Illinois	355
29	Indiana	341
30	Wyoming	340
31	North Carolina	335
32	New Jersey	331
33	Oregon	327
34	Kansas	318
35	Pennsylvania	310
36	Alaska	300
37	Hawaii	298
38	New Mexico	295
39	Iowa	272
40	Washington	249
41	Massachusetts	243
42	West Virginia	231
43	Utah	230
44	Nebraska	225
45	Vermont	213
46	New Hampshire	188
47	Rhode Island	181
48	North Dakota	161
49	Minnesota	132
50	Maine	127
	US	422

Figure 27. Incarceration Rates, 1979-2000



Notes

¹ A note of caution must accompany any discussion of arrest rates in the United States. Arrests in the United States are reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation; however, jurisdictions are not required to report arrests and many do not file reports with the FBI. Thus, the number of arrests recorded for any state can be misleading if few jurisdictions in the state report to the FBI. Several states are not included in this report because of such poor reporting practices. Total arrests for the United States, however, are estimated by the FBI and, thus, represent a fairly accurate picture of arrest practices nationally. Similarly, over 90% of Alabama jurisdictions routinely report arrests to the FBI; thus, the numbers reported here are a fairly accurate picture of arrest practices in the state.

² Kansas, Illinois, and Kentucky are not included in the index, violent, property, and drug arrest rate calculations because of low arrest reporting rates. Maine and Oklahoma arrest rates are based on 1998 data. Wisconsin arrest rates are based on 1997 data.

³ After peaking in 1984 at a rate of 310 arrests per 100,000 population (a rate nearly 1.5 times the national average), the violent arrest rate dropped 54% in a single year to 140 arrests per 100,000 population 1985.

⁴ As stated above, these erratic changes are likely due to changes in reporting practices or crime definitions, rather than changes in law enforcement or crime rates.

⁵ Calculations of index, violent, property, and drug commitment rates include only those 35 states reporting data to the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP). Illinois and Kentucky are excluded because of low arrest reporting rates. 1997 is the most current year for which NCRP data are available.

⁶ Index offenses include the reported crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.

⁷ 1997 represents the year for which the most recent data is available.

⁸ The erratic trend in the commitment rate is due primarily to changes in reporting practices for prison commitments.

⁹ The percentage of commitments for index offenses is calculated by dividing the number of commitments to prison for index offenses by the total number of commitments to prison. Calculations of percent of commitments for index, violent, property, and drug offenses include only those 35 states reporting data to the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP).

¹⁰ Public order offenses include weapons, drunk driving, DUI, escape, court offenses, obstruction, commercialized vice, morals and decency charges, liquor law violations, and other public order offenses.

¹¹ Sentence lengths are derived from data on individual offenders entering prison as reported to the National Corrections Reporting Program.

¹² Since time served estimates are derived only once an inmate has been released from prison, any such estimate will underestimate actual time served (since releases are more likely to be for those with shorter sentences). This is particularly true for violent offenses, which may include some extremely long sentences or inmates serving life sentences. Thus, time served should be used cautiously for comparison purposes.