

A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF 164 FEMALE OFFENDERS AT
MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION, FRAMINGHAM

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Massachusetts Correctional Institution Framingham, the second oldest women's penal institution in the United States, was opened in 1877 and has a land area of approximately 370 acres. It is located midway between Boston and Worcester (approximately 20 miles from either city) and about two miles from the downtown Framingham shopping area.

The present study is an attempt to describe 164 offenders who were confined at M.C.I. Framingham on January 1, 195⁹~~8~~ and to add some information to the existing knowledge of the adult female offender. Five female defective delinquents and three female drug addicts at M.C.I. Framingham on January 1, 1959 are not included in this study; these eight offenders are considered medical problems and not members of the general penal population by the Department of Correction.

(Table 1) Table 1 shows that 51 offenders or 31.10 percent percent were from 15 - 21 years of age at the time of their commitment, 30 offenders or 18.29 percent were from 22 - 29 years of age, 52 offenders or 31.71 percent were from 30 - 45 years of age and 31 offenders or 18.90 percent were 46 years of age or over at the time of their commitment.

The large number of offenders 21 years of age or under indicates a serious problem in that these girls must attempt to make an adjustment in a society where penal confinement is a social handicap.

An analysis of court records revealed that only three of the 51 offenders 21 years of age or under did not have a prior court record. This large number of youthful female offenders is consistent with the trend of an increase of juvenile female delinquents in Massachusetts. In 1950, 485 boys and 101 girls appeared before the Youth Service Board; in 1958, 857 boys and 220 girls appeared before the Youth Board. In eight years the ratio changed from approximately five boys to every girl to approximately four boys to every girl.

(Table 2) Of the 164 offenders, 33 offenders or 20.12 percent had from one to six grades of education, 70 or 42.68 percent had from seven to nine grades, 52 or 31.71 percent had from 10 to 12 grades, eight or 4.88 percent had some educational training after graduating from high school and none were college graduates. One elderly offender was reared in Lithuania and received no formal education but was taught to read and write by her parents.

(Table 3) One hundred and fifty-five offenders or 94.51 percent had a prior court record, 29 or 17.68 percent had served a juvenile commitment, 94 or 57.32 percent had served an adult commitment and 58 or 35.37 percent were recidivists at M. C. I. Framingham. The term recidivist refers to an offender who served a prior commitment at M. C. I. Framingham and at the time of this study was committed for a new crime. An offender who was returned on a parole technicality was not considered a recidivist. Of the 58 recidivists, 25 were committed for the crime of drunkenness.

The nine offenders who did not have a prior court record involved the following types of commitments; three murder, one manslaughter, one possession of narcotic drugs with intent to sell and deliver, two larceny, one stubbornness and one non-support.

(Table 4) In cases where offenders were convicted of more than one offense only the most serious offense is tabulated in Table 4, i. e., if an offender was convicted of stubbornness and larceny of over \$100 only the crime of larceny is tabulated.

Thirty-nine offenders or 23.78 percent were serving commitments for the crime of drunkenness. An analysis of their case histories revealed that two of these offenders were Negroes and 37 were White offenders.

A careful analysis of the case histories of the 164 offenders revealed that in addition to the 23.78 percent committed for the crime of drunkenness an additional 40 percent had a serious alcoholic problem although not committed as an alcoholic offender.

In Massachusetts when an offender is sentenced to M. C. I. Framingham for the crime of drunkenness she must serve from a minimum of 60 days to a maximum of six months, less time off for good conduct. After the completion of 60 days of the sentence, the Commissioner of Correction upon the recommendations of the doctor in charge of the alcoholic clinic and the superintendent of the institution may discharge the alcoholic offender. This is an absolute discharge and the offender cannot be returned to M. C. I. Framingham without another court commitment.

Doctor David J. Myerson on a report on women alcoholics at M. C. I. Framingham states:¹

There is no doubt that incarceration alone is not enough. As a group, these people represent an important therapeutic and social challenge. Without question, they are difficult to treat. Their impulsiveness, their infantile demands, and their sexuality make a sustaining, lasting therapeutic relationship troublesome. Yet many of them have some innate capacity to relate and to change, so that they can seek a satisfactory solution to their problems. The fact that they keep on procreating and recreating their very situation of deprivation presents a social challenge. Indeed, this prison group of alcoholics in their isolation offers an excellent opportunity for both individual and preventive therapy. The prison, with its lock and key, is the only effective set-up where the controls are adequate to deal therapeutically with these people. At the present time we are endeavoring to create this needed therapeutic setting within the framework of the prison.

1. David J. Myerson, M. D. Clinical Observations On A Group of Alcoholic Prisoners With Special Reference To The Women. State Publication No. 83, CCA, 300, 12 - 58, No. 17.

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Table 4 shows that 30 offenders or 18.29 percent were serving commitments for sex offenses. This category includes lewdness, adultery, lewd and lascivious cohabitation, fornication, unnatural act, keeping a disorderly house, night walker and incest.

The nine cases of stubbornness involved four girls age 17, three age 18, and two 19 years of age. In Massachusetts the crime of stubbornness is a misdemeanor and carries a maximum sentence of two years to M. C. I. Framingham.

The category "other" includes the crimes of murder, manslaughter, armed robbery, arson, drug violations, carrying a weapon, possession of obscene pictures, forgery, destruction of property and escape from a penal institution.

(Table 5) Thirty-nine offenders or 23.78 percent were serving a maximum sentence of six months and all in this grouping were confined for the crime of drunkenness.

Seventy-eight offenders or 47.56 percent were serving an indefinite sentence of two years for crimes as; assault, destruction of property, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, larceny under \$100, disturbing the peace, vagrancy, idle and disorderly, stubbornness, common night walker, non-support, immoral solicitation, keeping a house of ill fame, lewd wanton and lascivious person in speech and behavior, fornication, lewd cohabitation and adultery.

Thirty-five offenders or 21.34 percent were serving an indefinite sentence of five years for crimes as; armed robbery, assault by means of a dangerous weapon, assault and unarmed robbery, breaking and entering in the night time, arson, forgery, possession and sale of narcotics, larceny over \$100 and unnatural act.

Although the Parole Board has the authority to release offenders serving indefinite sentences at any time prior to the expiration of their sentence it usually interviews an offender serving a two-year indefinite sentence at the completion of six months confinement; an offender serving a five-year indefinite sentence is usually interviewed after one year of confinement. An offender who is denied parole or one who does not want a parole release must serve her full term; however if she is entitled to good conduct time credits her period of confinement will be decreased by the amount of good conduct time that she has earned.

Four offenders or 2.44 percent were serving a definite sentence of five years and one day for crimes as; robbery, forgery, manslaughter, and possession and intent to sell narcotics.

Three offenders confined for the crime of murder and five confined for the crime of manslaughter were serving sentences ranging from six years to life.

(Table 6) At the time of their present commitment, 23 offenders or 14.02 percent considered themselves as alone in the world, i. e., not having relatives with whom they could live. An analysis of their records revealed that three were from 17 to 19 years of age, seven were from 30 to 41 years of age, seven were from 42 to 49 years of age and six were 50 years of age or over.

One hundred and twenty-five offenders or 76.22 percent had a family home in Massachusetts, two or 1.22 percent had a family home in other New England states, three or 1.83 percent had family homes in New York and eleven or 6.71 percent had family homes in other states. Of this group of 11 with family homes in other states, 10 were negro offenders and one was a white offender. The 10 negro offenders with homes in other states is an indication of the migration of negroes to the New England area.

(Table 7) Seventy-nine offenders or 48.17 percent were of less than average intelligence, 73 inmates or 44.51 percent were of average intelligence and 12 or 7.32 percent had a higher than average intelligence.

The large number of offenders with less than average intelligence indicates that these individuals need special help so that they may be able to make an adequate adjustment in society upon their institutional release.

(Table 8) An analysis of selected factors in the case histories of the 34 negro and 130 white offenders revealed that 20 negro and 44 white offenders came from homes that were broken before the offender was seven years of age. The term "broken home" is used in this study without regard to the cause of the break; it means a home from which one or both parents were removed by death, divorce or separation.

Additional information on the 34 negro and 130 white offenders revealed that two negro and 37 white offenders were serving commitments for the crime of drunkenness; eight negro offenders were illegitimate and of the eight, five had illegitimate children; seven white offenders were illegitimate and of the seven, two had illegitimate children; none of the negro and eight of the white offenders had an education beyond High School; 18 negro and 48 white offenders were single. Although few of the offenders regularly attended religious devotions during the year prior to their commitment, 30 negro offenders considered themselves as Protestant and four negro offenders considered themselves as Catholic; of the white offenders 102 were considered as Catholic, 26 as Protestant and two of the Jewish religion.

(Table 9) Twenty of the 164 offenders were pregnant at the time of their commitment; of this number 12 were white and eight were negro. An analysis of the 20 records revealed that 10 were single; of this group, eight were under 21 years of age at the time of their commitment.

Of those who were not single, 3 were divorced, two although married had been separated from their husbands for more than one year, one had divorced her first husband and was separated more than one year from her second husband, two were in their first marriage and living with their husbands, one had divorced her first husband and was a widow by her second husband who was killed in an accident and one had divorced her first husband and was living with her second husband.

Expectant mothers committed to M. C. I. Framingham are sent to the Framingham Union Hospital for the birth of their babies. The Department of Public Welfare accepts the care of these children and may also accept the care of any child whose mother is committed to the institution.

SUMMARY

In general terms it may be stated that the offender at M. C. I. Framingham is a white female from a low socio-economic background who has had an unhappy infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. She suffers a profound and psychiatric disorder, intermingled with physical damage resulting from poor nutrition, injuries and addiction. She was reared in Massachusetts, is of low average intelligence and her education was completed at the junior high school level. She became promiscuous at an early age and her marital life has been a failure.

She had a court record prior to her present commitment; convicted and committed for a misdemeanor she will be confined for less than two years. She will be physically and emotionally improved due to the institution's rehabilitation program but because of her long term deteriorated social background and emotional difficulties she will encounter further difficulty with law enforcement agencies.

Table 1. Age of Offender at Time of Commitment

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
15-17	12	7.32
18-21	39	23.78
22-25	16	9.76
26-29	14	8.54
30-37	39	23.78
38-45	13	7.93
46 and over	31	18.90
Totals	164	100.01

Table 2. Education of Offender

<u>Education</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1st - 6th	33	20.12
7th - 9th	70	42.68
10th - 12th	52	31.71
Beyond High School	8	4.88
College Graduate	0	----
Unknown or none	1	0.61
Totals	164	100.00

Table 3. Court and Institutional Record

<u>Criminal Record</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Prior Court Record	155	94.51	9	5.49
Juvenile Commitment	29	17.68	135	82.32
Adult Commitment	94	57.32	70	42.68
Recidivist at M. C. I. F.	58	35.37	106	64.63

Table 4. Major Offense of Present Commitment

<u>Major Offense</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Drunkenness	39	23.78
Sex Crimes	30	18.29
Non-Support	16	9.76
Larceny	15	9.15
Idle and Disorderly	12	7.32
Stubbornness	9	5.49
Assault	4	2.44
Vagrancy	4	2.44
Other	35	21.34
Totals	164	100.01

Table 5. Maximum Length of Period of Confinement

<u>Period of Confinement</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
6 months	39	23.78
2 years	78	47.56
5 years	35	21.34
5 years and 1 day	4	2.44
Other	8	4.88
Totals	164	100.00

Table 6. Location of Family Home

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
No family home	23	14.02
Massachusetts	125	76.22
Other N. E. states	2	1.22
New York	3	1.83
Other states	11	6.71
Totals	164	100.00

Table 7. I. Q. of Offender

<u>I. Q.</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Feeble-minded (below 80)	30	18.29
Below Average (81 - 90)	49	29.88
Average (91 - 110)	73	44.51
Above Average (111 - 120)	9	5.49
Superior (121 and over)	3	1.83
Totals	164	100.00

Table 8. Race of Offender

<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Negro	34	20.73
White	130	79.27
Totals	164	100.00

Table 9. Offenders Pregnant at the Time of their Commitment by Race

<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
White	12	7.32
Negro	8	4.88
Totals	20	12.20

Flow Chart of Operations at Massachusetts Correctional Institution Framingham

