

17-YEAR CENSUS OF MASSACHUSETTS FIRST-DEGREE LWOP PRISONERS, 1/1/2009 TO 12/31/2025^a

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
LWOP Census on January 1	938	964	991	1009	1040	1068	1029	1038	1057	1068	1080	1083	1051	1036	1041	1055	929	Avg/Yr 1028
# of New LWOP Commitments	39	38	26	41	40	35	25	35	21	25	24	6	13	25	31	26	28	478
LWOP Prisoner Deaths	-11	-4	-7	-6	-8	-10	-8	-12	-4	-8	-8	-9 [‡]	-13	-6	-6	-8	-9	-137
LWOP Medical Parole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-2	-3	-18	-9	-9	-8	-6	-8	-63
LWOP Medical Parole violated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	6
LWOP Court Releases ^b	-2	-7	-1	-4	-4	0	-8	-4	-6	-3	-10	-13	-9	-3	-2	-9	-4	-89
LWOP Clemency Commutations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-2	-1	0	0	-3
Change LWOP to LWP Diatchenko	0	0	0	0	0	-64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-64
Change LWOP to LWP by Mattis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-130	-40	-170
End of Year LWOP Census	964	991	1009	1040	1068	1029	1038	1057	1068	1080	1083	1051	1036	1041	1055	929	896	

^a Criminally Sentenced Jurisdiction population (Sources: public records from DOC 2011-2026 & Parole Board 2023-2026).

^b Sentence or verdict vacated/revoked due to wrongful conviction.

[‡] 3 of these prisoners died in hospital 2-4 days after getting emergent medical parole, so technically were not in custody at time of death.



AUTHOR COMMENT: It is notable that over 17 years 89 prisoners, comprising 8.7% of the LWOP prisoners incarcerated over that time (1), reversed their verdicts because the courts concluded that they were wrongfully convicted, after an average of some 29 years imprisonment (2). This likely represents only a fraction who, through extraordinary efforts, were able to actually prove their innocence. It is virtually certain that many others, although also wrongfully convicted, have been unable to achieve such a difficult result. Such high percentages of wrongful convictions represent unacceptable errors and forcefully argue that all LWOP prisoners deserve a second chance and deserve to become eligible for possible sentence review and/or parole.

References:

- (1) 89/1028 = 8.7% (1028 = the annual average # of LWOP prisoners over the 17 years);
- (2) D. Greineder "Wrongful First-Degree Murder Convictions in Massachusetts" (Lifer's Group Inc., July 2023).

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Lifer's Group reports are available at www.realcostofprisons.org/writing