



Assessing the Impact of Georgia's Sentencing Reforms

Justice Reinvestment Initiative

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July 2017

Between 1990 and 2011, Georgia's prison population more than doubled, and annual corrections spending grew to more than \$1 billion. In response to this unprecedented and unsustainable growth, policymakers and criminal justice stakeholders began calling for changes to Georgia's corrections system—efforts that culminated in the passage of comprehensive reform legislation, House Bill (H.B.) 1176, which was signed into law by Republican Governor Nathan Deal in May 2012.

House Bill 1176 included numerous reforms to criminal justice policy and practice, with the goal of reducing prison population growth and improving public safety. The legislation aimed to focus prison space on people convicted of violent offenses, to reduce recidivism, to relieve crowding in local jails, and to improve performance measurement. One key element of the legislation was restructuring offense classifications and sentencing policies, changes intended to better tailor justice system responses to the severity of the offense. For example, H.B. 1176 created two degrees of burglary with different sentencing requirements based on severity, raised the felony threshold for theft and shoplifting, and created a graduated scale of penalties for drug possession based on substance weight.

In subsequent years, prison admissions declined slightly and the population growth that had been predicted before the reforms did not occur. By 2016, the number of people incarcerated in the state's prisons was 52,962, down from a peak of 54,895 in 2012 (GCCJR 2017).

This brief examines the impact of these sentencing changes in more detail, with a focus on trends in sentence lengths and time served for the offenses affected by H.B. 1176. Analysis of individual-level data on commitments and prison admissions in Georgia shows the following:

- Following implementation of H.B. 1176, commitments to prison for these offenses declined 13 percent, and probation commitments fell 9 percent.

- Sentence lengths for most offenses affected by H.B. 1176 declined following implementation. For example, the average prison sentence length for drug possession fell 1.5 years, from 7.2 years to 5.6 years (a 23 percent decline).
- Time served in prison and on probation has begun to decline for people convicted of offenses affected by H.B. 1176.

Background

In 2011, nearly 56,000 people were incarcerated in Georgia's prison system. The state had one of the nation's highest incarceration rates and was spending more than \$1 billion each year on corrections. These troubling trends were projected to continue, and the prison population and correctional spending were projected to grow substantially. Although the state prison system was operating at 107 percent capacity in 2011, officials estimated the prison population would increase an additional 8 percent in five years, costing an additional \$264 million (GCCJR 2014; Pew Center on the States 2012; SCCJRG 2011).

Despite high spending and incarceration levels, the system was not improving public safety. Recidivism rates had remained stagnant for at least a decade, and approximately 30 percent of people released from prison were reconvicted of a felony within three years (Pew Center on the States 2012).

Stakeholders across the political spectrum, including Georgia's newly elected governor, Republican Nathan Deal, recognized the need to reform the state's criminal justice system. State leaders sought support for these efforts through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, a public-private partnership jointly funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the US Department of Justice. In April 2011, H.B. 265 set reform efforts in motion by forming the Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform for Georgians, a group with bipartisan representation from all three branches of government, and the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice Reform, a committee of lawmakers that would be a liaison between the council and the state legislature (Pew Center on the States 2012; SCCJRG 2011).

The council analyzed Georgia's criminal justice system to determine the main causes of growth in the state's prison population. Pew and its partners at Applied Research Services Inc. and the Crime and Justice Institute provided technical assistance, and the council sought input from a diverse group of criminal justice stakeholders.

This analysis determined that the large and growing prison population was a result of policy decisions about who was being sent to prison and for how long. Many people evaluated as "low risk" were in prison, but alternatives to incarceration were scarce, and resources to supervise people on probation and parole were insufficient. As the prison population grew, the state faced a growing backlog of people being housed in local jails awaiting placement at a state prison facility. Furthermore, the state lacked a comprehensive performance measurement system to evaluate criminal justice system outcomes (Pew Center on the States 2012).

Based on these findings, the council assembled a list of policy recommendations, many of which were incorporated into H.B. 1176. The bill passed unanimously in both the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Deal on May 2, 2012. House Bill 1176 sought to improve the state's criminal justice system by doing the following:

- Revising felony thresholds and sentencing structures for drug and property crimes to focus prison space on the most serious offenses
- Strengthening probation and alternative sentencing options
- Relieving local jail crowding
- Improving performance measurement systems

In this brief, we focus on trends in commitments, sentencing, and time served before and after reform implementation. First, we examine general trends in commitments to prison and probation. Next, we analyze trends in sentencing for offense categories affected by the bill. Finally, we present preliminary evidence on changes to time served in prison and on probation following reform implementation.

Changes to Sentencing and Offense Classifications

Our analysis focuses on H.B. 1176's changes to classification and sentencing structures for burglary, theft, shoplifting, forgery, and drug possession. Table 1 summarizes how the legislation changed the classification and penalties for these offenses (SCCJRG 2012). For a full description of statutory changes included in the bill, see the appendix.

Provisions in the bill began to be implemented on July 1, 2012, the beginning of fiscal year 2013.¹

TABLE 1

Sentencing and Offense Classification Changes Made by House Bill 1176

Offense category	Changes enacted by House Bill 1176
Burglary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Created degrees of burglary based on seriousness of offense ■ Decreased maximum sentence length for second-degree burglary from 20 years to 5 years (1st conviction) and 8 years (2nd conviction) ■ Increased minimum and maximum sentence lengths for third and subsequent convictions of first-degree burglary ■ Allows sentences to probation up to the fourth conviction
Theft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raised felony theft threshold from \$500 to \$1,500 ■ Created graduated scale of penalties based on value of stolen items, reducing the maximum sentence for items valued at less than \$5,000 ■ Increased minimum and maximum sentence for the most serious theft (\$25,000 and above)
Shoplifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raised felony shoplifting threshold from \$300 to \$500
Forgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Created new degrees of forgery based on seriousness of the offense and a corresponding graduated scale of penalties ■ Allowed some forgeries (fourth degree) to be categorized as misdemeanors ■ Increased maximum sentence for the most serious forgeries
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raised felony fraud threshold from \$500 to \$1,500
Drug possession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Created degrees of drug possession based on weight and a corresponding graduated scale of penalties ■ Reduced the minimum and maximum sentence length for all drug weights ■ Removed drug possession from the recidivist statute

Source: H.B. 1176, 2011–12 Reg. Sess. (Ga. 2012).

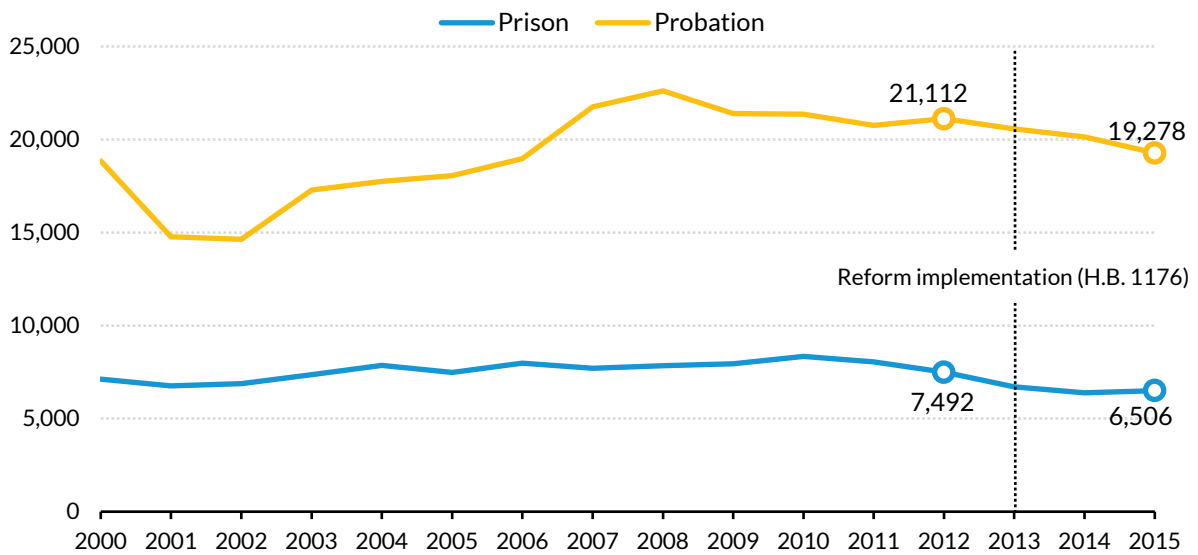
Commitments to Prison and Probation Declined

Since Georgia implemented sentencing reforms, commitments to both prison and probation declined. Overall commitments to prison and probation for these offenses fell from 28,604 in 2012 to 25,784 in 2015, a 10 percent decline. Prison commitments fell 13 percent, and probation commitments fell 9 percent during this period. The share of commitments to probation (relative to prison) increased slightly after H.B. 1176 took effect, rising 1 percentage point from 74 to 75 percent of commitments.

That prison and probation commitments both declined in Georgia is notable given the specific sentencing and classification changes made for these offense categories. One effect of reforms such as those included in H.B. 1176 (e.g., changes in felony theft thresholds and widened probation eligibility) can be that people are sentenced to probation when they would have otherwise received a prison sentence.² Prison admissions may fall, but the number of commitments to prison and probation could stay constant or even grow as people are sentenced to probation rather than prison (Elderbroom et al. 2016). In Georgia, this trend did not occur. Prison commitments fell, but so did probation commitments, suggesting that the effects of the reforms extended beyond shifting a certain number of would-be prison admissions to probation. These trends are reflected in figures 1 and 2, which show the number and percentage of commitments to prison and probation for offenses affected by H.B. 1176.

FIGURE 1

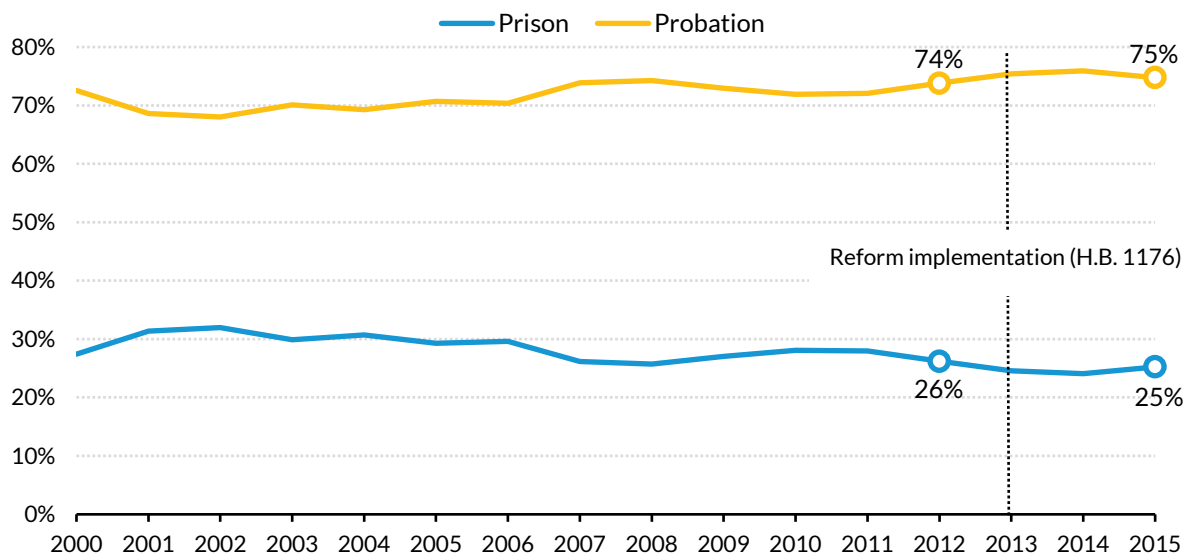
Commitment Trends for Offenses Affected by House Bill 1176: Number of Commitments



Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

FIGURE 2

Commitment Trends for Offenses Affected by House Bill 1176: Percentage of Commitments



Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

The trend of declining commitments to both prison and probation held within four of the six offense categories we analyzed (table 2). Between 2012 and 2015, there were fewer commitments to prison and probation for burglary, forgery, fraud, and theft. Shoplifting commitments to both prison and

probation rose. Prison commitments for drug possession stayed fairly steady while probation commitments increased.³

TABLE 2

Commitments by Offense Type, 2012–15

	Prison Commitments			Probation Commitments		
	2012	2015	Change	2012	2015	Change
Burglary	3,176	2,840	-10.6%	4,960	4,483	-9.6%
Drug possession	1,172	1,170	-0.2%	6,145	7,658	24.6%
Forgery	1,175	667	-43.2%	3,217	1,824	-43.3%
Fraud	3	2	-33.3%	70	24	-65.7%
Shoplifting	395	495	25.3%	1,135	1,236	8.9%
Theft	1,571	1,332	-15.2%	5,585	4,053	-27.4%
Total	7,492	6,506	-13.2%	21,112	19,278	-8.7%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Prison and Probation Sentence Lengths Declined for Most Offenses

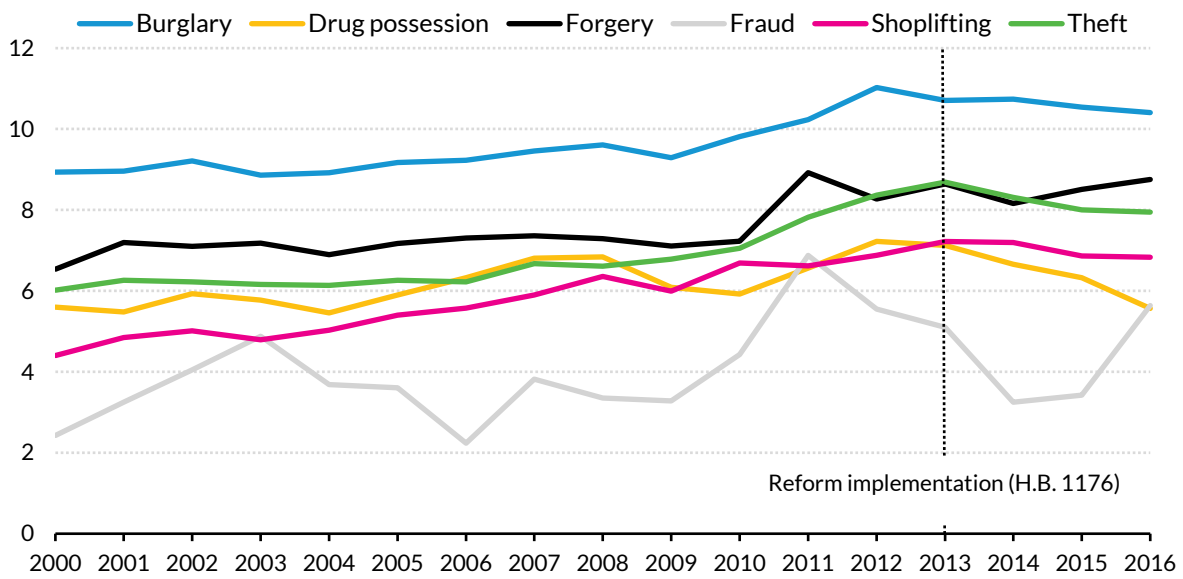
Sentence lengths for people sentenced to prison and probation have declined after implementation of H.B. 1176. For most offense categories affected by the legislation, sentences have been getting shorter, on average, after more than a decade of consistent growth. Prison sentence lengths for burglary, drug possession, theft, and shoplifting declined between 2012 and 2016. Prison sentence lengths for fraud and forgery increased slightly (figure 3). Over the same period, probation sentence lengths declined for burglary, theft, forgery, and drug possession and increased for shoplifting and fraud (figure 4).

The largest decreases were among burglary and drug possession, the offenses with the highest number of admissions each year. Between 2012 and 2016, prison sentence length for burglary fell 6 percent, from 11.0 to 10.4 years. Probation sentences for burglary fell 9 percent, from 8.7 to 8.0 years. The declines in sentence length for drug possession were especially striking. In 2016, the average prison sentence for drug possession was 5.6 years, a 23 percent decline since 2012. The average probation sentence for drug possession fell 29 percent between 2012 and 2016 from 5.3 to 3.8 years.

These findings are notable given that they happened as overall commitments declined within many offense categories. When statutory changes are expected to divert cases to probation that otherwise would have resulted in a prison commitment, fewer prison commitments for less serious offenses could cause average sentence length for prison admission cohorts to rise. But sentence lengths became shorter for most offenses affected by H.B. 1176. Further, this changing landscape shortened probation sentences, indicating a systemwide shift toward less punitive sentencing for these offenses.

FIGURE 3

Mean Prison Sentence Length for Offenses Affected by House Bill 1176

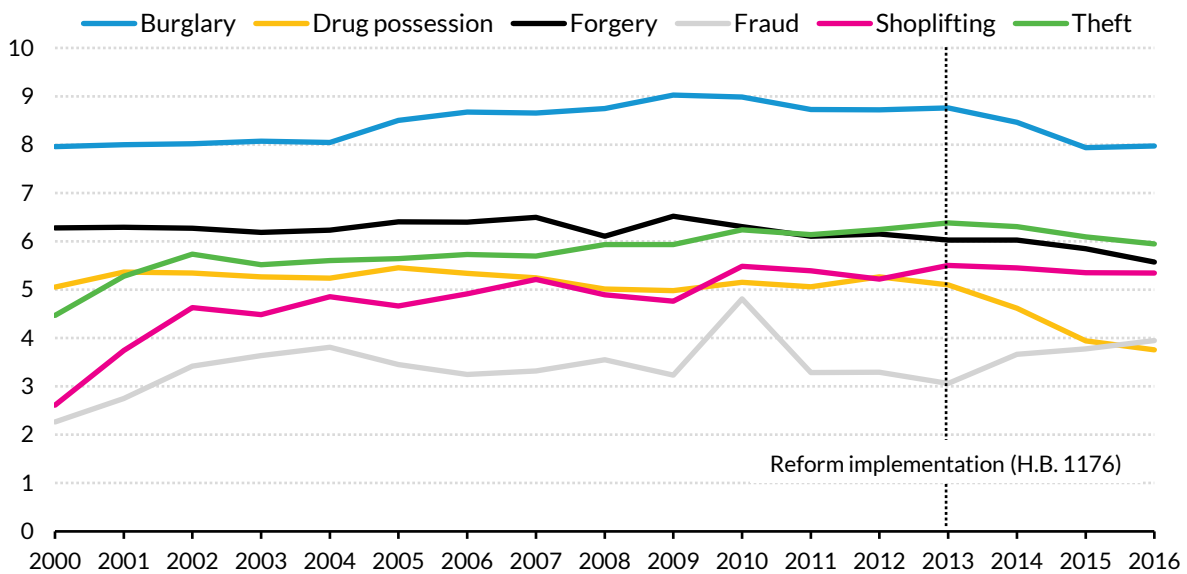


Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Note: The number of fraud commitments is small (between 2 and 12 per year). Dramatic changes in average sentence length in this category are likely because of this small n size.

FIGURE 4

Mean Probation Sentence Length for Offenses Affected by House Bill 1176



Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Length of Stay in Prison Declined

Preliminary analysis of exit trends for people in prison and on probation suggests people are serving less time in prison following H.B. 1176 implementation. Fewer people remained in prison after one, two, and three years for each postreform admission cohort compared with the 2012 (prereform) admission cohort (table 3). These trends largely held within specific offense types, too. For example, of people who were admitted to prison in 2013, 2014, and 2015 for burglary, drug possession, forgery, and theft, fewer remained in prison after one and two years compared with people who were admitted for the same offense in 2012.⁴

TABLE 3

Trends in Length of Stay in Prison

	Fiscal year cohort	Percentage Remaining in Prison			
		End of year 1	End of year 2	End of year 3	End of year 4
Prereform	2000	77.2	40.9	19.6	11.3
	2001	76.5	40.5	19.1	10.4
	2002	81.3	40.3	16.9	8.9
	2003	79.7	34.7	15.9	8.3
	2004	81.3	34.5	14.0	7.0
	2005	80.2	39.7	17.5	7.8
	2006	82.4	42.4	18.4	8.4
	2007	84.4	42.9	17.3	7.5
	2008	83.8	43.6	17.2	7.2
	2009	85.0	43.0	16.4	7.2
	2010	79.9	39.8	18.7	8.1
	2011	84.5	47.8	19.6	9.4
	2012	83.4	44.5	17.2	8.9
Postreform	2013	78.4	37.9	16.3	
	2014	75.8	37.5		
	2015	79.9			

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Notably, similar trends held for people on probation. Compared with the 2012 admission cohort, people beginning probation after H.B. 1176 implementation tended to have their terms end earlier. Of those who started probation terms after the reforms took effect (the 2013, 2014, and 2015 cohorts), a lower percentage were still on probation after one, two, and three years compared with those who began probation in 2012 (table 4).⁵ As with prison terms, these trends were largely consistent across offense categories. Among people sentenced to probation for burglary, drug possession, forgery, shoplifting, and theft, fewer people who began their probation terms in the years following reforms (2013–15) remained on probation after one and two years compared with the 2012 cohort. Trends for fraud were mixed.

TABLE 4

Trends in Length of Stay on Probation

	Fiscal year cohort	Percentage Remaining on Probation			
		End of year 1	End of year 2	End of year 3	End of year 4
Prereform	2000	92.2	67.9	52.9	40.8
	2001	91.3	76.2	62.2	48.9
	2002	90.7	78.5	65.0	52.0
	2003	91.8	79.9	66.2	52.7
	2004	91.1	79.7	65.7	51.9
	2005	92.3	80.2	66.9	53.1
	2006	93.4	82.3	68.6	54.3
	2007	94.3	84.3	70.6	55.8
	2008	94.2	84.1	71.5	55.9
	2009	94.6	85.8	72.6	54.9
	2010	95.8	85.5	71.0	54.8
	2011	94.5	82.2	68.6	53.8
	2012	92.7	82.2	69.9	56.4
Postreform	2013	91.0	81.2	68.9	
	2014	90.3	80.1		
	2015	91.1			

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Sentence Lengths for Burglary Convictions Diverged Based on Degree Classification

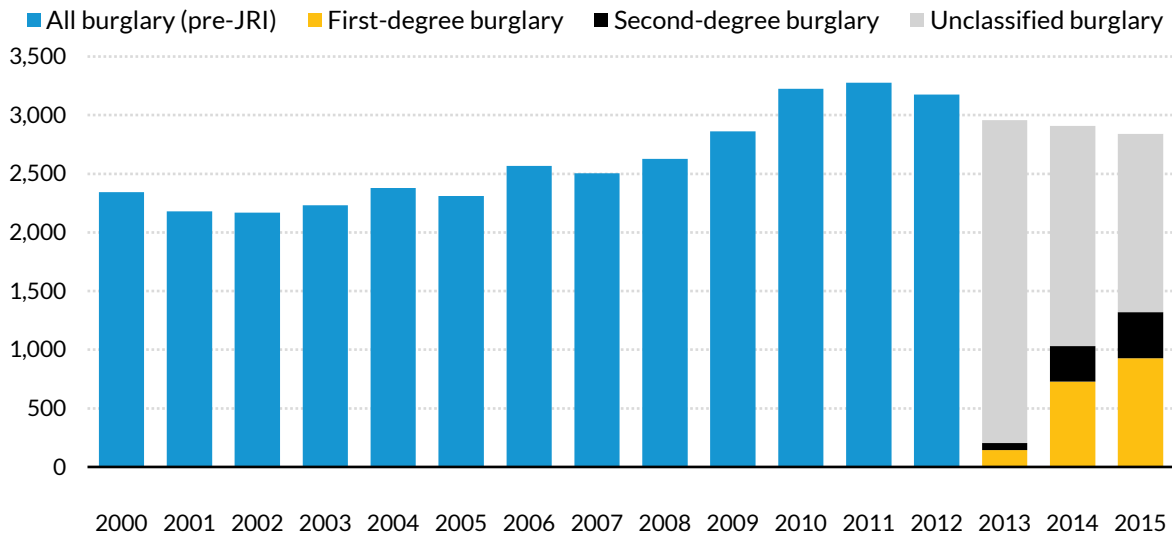
House Bill 1176 changed how burglary offenses are classified, creating two degrees of burglary and adjusting sentencing requirements to tailor sentencing to offense severity.

Many burglary commitments remained unclassified through 2015, but the proportion of unclassified cases has declined steadily since implementation. Burglary commitments could be unclassified in 2015 for several reasons, including (1) delays in case processing leading to postreform prison admissions having prereform offense codes, (2) probation revocation admissions retaining an offense categorization from a prereform year, or (3) a delay in adopting the new classification policy, either in classification of offenses or in coding of cases in recorded data, by justice system actors.⁶

Most classified burglary cases were first-degree burglary. In 2015, 70 percent of classified prison burglary commitments and 67 percent of classified probation burglary commitments were classified as first degree. Following H.B. 1176 implementation, burglary commitments to prison and probation declined relative to 2012 levels. Between 2012 and 2015, total commitments to prison and probation for burglary fell from 8,136 to 7,323, a 10 percent decline.

FIGURE 5.A

Trends in Classification of Burglary Commitments (Prison)

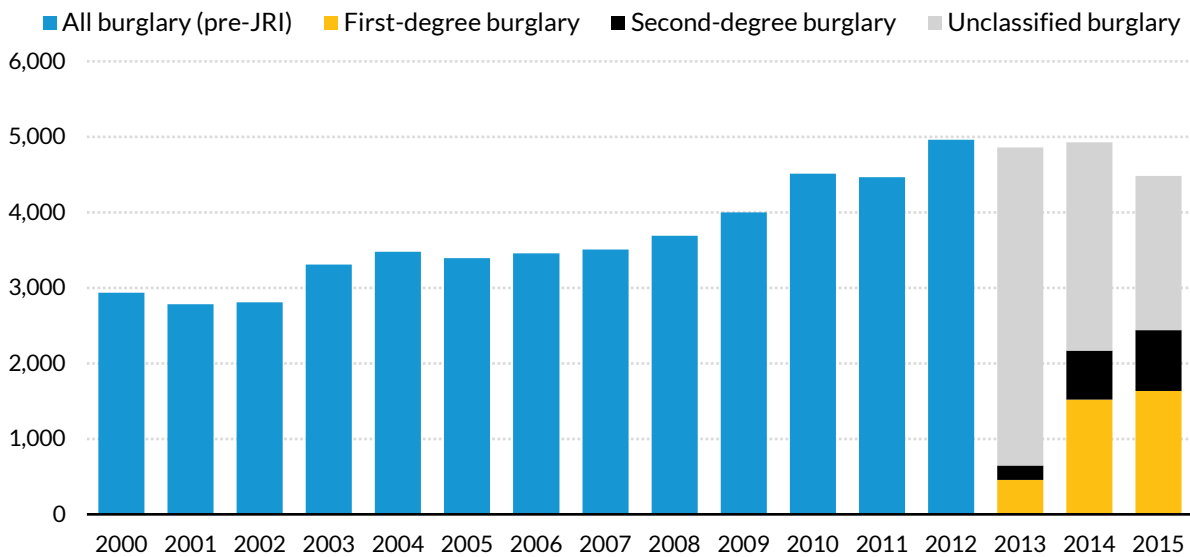


Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Note: JRI = Justice Reinvestment Initiative.

FIGURE 5.B

Trends in Classification of Burglary Commitments (Probation)



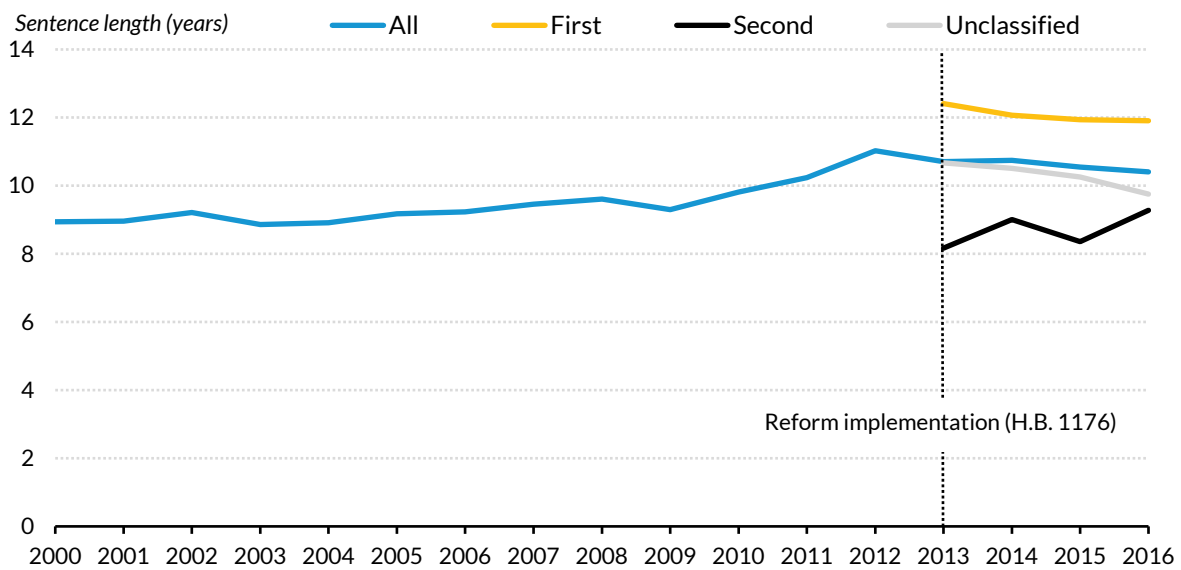
Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Note: JRI = Justice Reinvestment Initiative.

We also analyzed trends in sentence length for the new burglary classifications. The mean sentence length for first-degree burglary is significantly higher than the mean sentence length for second-degree burglary. This is true for prison sentences and probation sentences. In 2016, the mean prison sentence for first-degree burglary was 11.9 years, and the mean prison sentence for second-degree burglary was 9.3 years. The mean probation sentence for first-degree burglary was 7.9 years, and the mean probation sentence for second-degree burglary was 5.8 years. Between 2012 and 2016, average sentence length for burglary fell from 11.0 to 10.4 years for prison sentences and from 8.7 to 8.0 years for probation sentences.

FIGURE 6

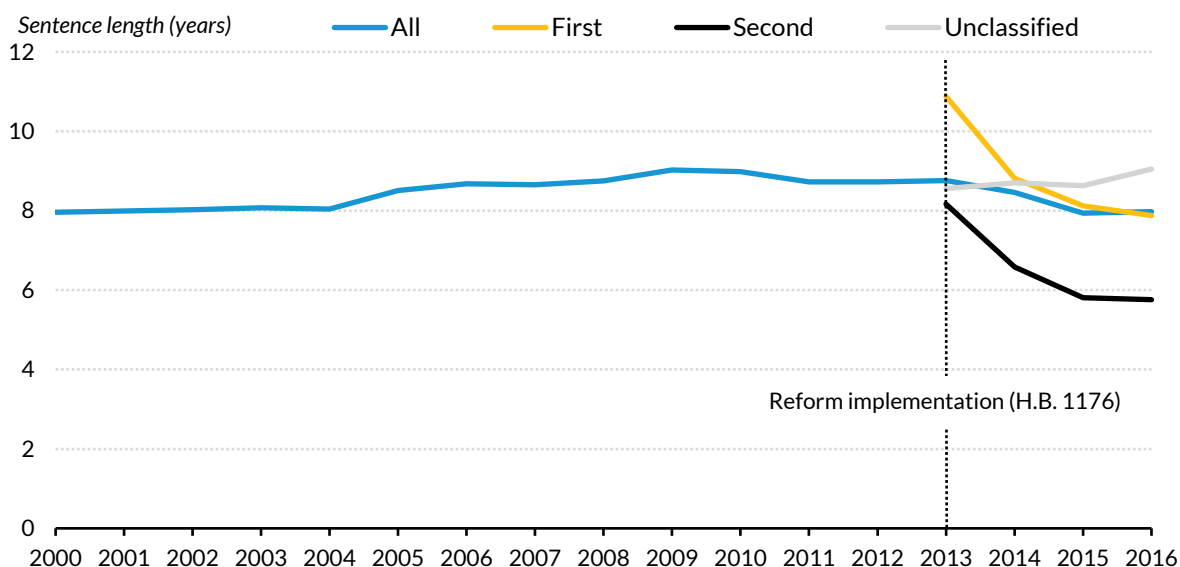
Mean Sentence Length for Burglary Convictions by Degree (Prison)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

FIGURE 7

Mean Sentence Length for Burglary Convictions by Degree (Probation)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by Applied Research Services Inc.

Conclusion

Based on our analysis of commitments, sentence lengths, and time served, we see evidence of reduced incarceration for offenses affected by H.B. 1176 reforms. After the bill’s passage, the number of probation commitments declined, as did admissions to prison. Mean prison and probation sentence lengths also declined for most offenses, and initial trends indicate a decline in time served in prison and on probation.

Our ability to draw conclusions about causal factors motivating these observed changes was limited because of data availability. Except for burglary, we could not distinguish among different degrees of offenses or observe trends specific to the newly created offense categories. Our data contained no information on the weight or quantity of drugs, making it impossible to differentiate between degrees of drug possession commitments. Furthermore, we could not classify commitments as felonies or misdemeanors, so we could only observe the effects of shifting felony thresholds through indirect measures, such as total commitments, sentence length, and time served. We also could not link arrest data to commitments data because there were no consistent coding systems or individual identifiers between these two datasets. This limited our ability to isolate sentencing reforms as the main driver of the changes we saw.

Although we focus on specific offense categories affected by changes in H.B. 1176, this bill was only one element of the state’s efforts to reform its justice system through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. The trends we observed in Georgia occurred within a broader context of significant policy

change. In 2013, the state tackled juvenile justice reform through H.B. 242, which focused on reducing the number of youths, especially those charged with low-level offenses, housed in out-of-home facilities, instead diverting them to community-based alternative programs. In 2014, the state turned its focus to reentry, creating the Georgia Prisoner Reentry Initiative to reduce recidivism among formerly incarcerated people. Since then, Georgia has enacted other legislative reforms, including merging probation and parole into one state agency (H.B. 310) and strengthening the state's accountability courts (H.B. 328 and Senate Bill 367) (GCCJR 2017). The Council on Criminal Justice Reform has overseen implementation and made recommendations for new legislative priorities to tackle. Further analysis to evaluate these later policies and other aspects of H.B. 1176 that this brief could not assess directly (e.g., changes to Georgia's recidivist statute), will be valuable as the state moves forward with reforms.

As Georgia focuses on this issue through changes to policy and practice, broad, system-level indicators have shown signs of positive outcomes. By the end of 2016, the prison population had fallen 3.5 percent from its peak in 2012 (from 54,895 to 52,962). Annual commitments to prison fell 17.4 percent between 2010 and 2016 (from 21,841 to 18,035). The composition of the prison population by offense type has also shifted. The share of the prison population convicted of the most serious offenses rose from 58 percent in 2009 to 67 percent in 2017. The jail backlog has fallen 84 percent from a high of 5,338 in March 2009 to 818 in January 2016 (GCCJR 2017). Our findings add specificity to these broad trends, focusing only on offense categories directly affected by H.B. 1176 reforms.

Georgia is continuing to pursue criminal justice reform through legislation that will likely contribute to changes in the metrics we studied. For example, state officials anticipate that probation reforms included in Senate Bill 174, signed by the governor May 9, 2017, will further reduce time served on probation through behavioral incentive dates, which automatically trigger the end of some probation terms after three years. Analyzing and tracking outcomes will be essential as the state works on these issues.

Appendix

Sentencing and Offense Classification Changes Made by H.B. 1176

	Pre-H.B. 1176		Post-H.B. 1176	
	Definition	Punishment	Definition	Punishment
Burglary	1st conviction (any building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–20 years Probation eligible 	2nd degree (nondwelling building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st conviction: 1–5 years 2nd + conviction: 1–8 years Probation eligible until 4th conviction
	2nd conviction (any building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2–20 years Probation eligible 	1st degree (any building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st conviction: 1–20 years 2nd + conviction: 2–20 years 3rd + conviction: 5–25 years Probation eligible until 4th conviction
	3rd conviction (any building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5–20 years Not probation eligible 		
Forgery	2nd degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–5 years 	4th degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st and 2nd convictions: misdemeanor 3rd + convictions: felony, 1–5 years
	1st degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–10 years 	2nd or 3rd degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–5 years
Theft	< \$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor 	1st degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–15 years
	\$500 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–10 years or misdemeanor 	\$1,500–\$5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor 1–5 years or misdemeanor
			\$5,000–\$25,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–10 years or misdemeanor
Drug possession	Schedule I & II narcotics: any amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st conviction: 2–15 years 2nd+ conviction: 5–30 years 	Schedule I & II narcotics: < 1 gram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–3 years 3rd + convictions: Max. penalty doubled
			1–4 grams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–8 years 3rd + convictions: Max. penalty doubled
			4 + grams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–15 years 3rd + convictions: Max. penalty doubled
Shoplifting	≤ \$300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor 	≤ \$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor
	\$300 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–10 years 	\$500 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–10 years
Fraud	< \$100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor; fine ≤ \$500 and/or up to 1 year 	< \$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor; fine ≤ \$500 and/or up to 1 year
	\$100–\$300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor; fine ≤ \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year 	\$500–\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misdemeanor; fine ≤ \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year
	\$300–\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High and aggravated misdemeanor 	\$1,000–\$1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High and aggravated misdemeanor
	\$500 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felony; fine \$500–\$5,000 and/or up to 3 years 	\$1,500+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felony; fine \$500–\$5,000 and/or up to 3 years

Source: H.B. 1176, 2011–12 Reg. Sess. (Ga. 2012).

Notes

1. Select provisions related to drug possession did not take effect immediately and were scheduled to be implemented in 2013 or 2014.
2. We cannot distinguish between felony and misdemeanor commitments in the data, limiting our ability to evaluate the effect of the felony threshold.
3. One reason for the increase in shoplifting commitments may be a change in charging practices because of the reforms. The felony threshold for theft was raised to \$1,500, but the shoplifting threshold only increased to \$500. Compared with the shoplifting sentencing requirements, the post-H.B. 1176 requirements for theft place more restrictions on sentencing for the same value of items. It is possible that the rise in shoplifting commitments resulted in part from cases being charged as shoplifting that previously would have been theft.
4. Similar trends held for shoplifting, except that after one year, slightly more of the 2013 admission cohort remained in prison compared with the 2012 cohort. There were too few fraud cases to conduct a meaningful analysis.
5. We also considered that declines in prison time served could reflect a rise in time spent on probation as opposed to prison as part of a split sentence. Our analysis did not reveal evidence of this phenomenon. When we linked prison terms to subsequent probation terms and considered them as part of a single split sentence, the same trend in time served held as it did with separate prison and probation terms. The prison admission cohorts that we estimated to have split sentences who entered prison after H.B. 1176 implementation tended to end their entire term (prison plus probation) earlier, compared with prereform cohorts.
6. We conducted further analysis to test whether the large number of unclassified burglaries in postreform years was largely because of admissions for probation revocations coded with an offense code from a prereform year. Revocations could not be identified precisely in the data, but we estimated which cases were revocations based on existing variables and our own linking of prison and probation terms. When revocations were eliminated from the analysis, the fraction of cases still unclassified in 2015 declined significantly, but was not eliminated. This points to a confluence of factors affecting trends in burglary classification during early implementation of H.B. 1176. Offense codes carried over because of revocation admissions appear to have played a role, but other factors, such as the natural timing of case processing and delays in practice change, are likely to have affected burglary classification a few years after reform.

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About the Authors



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Ryan King is a senior fellow in the Justice Policy Center, where he works on sentencing and corrections issues with a focus on mass incarceration. His objective is to produce high-quality empirical research on the impact of sentencing and corrections policies at the state and federal level and to work with policymakers, practitioners, and community advocates to identify strategies that assist in the pursuit of a fair, effective, and rational criminal justice system.

Acknowledgments

This brief was funded by grant number 2015-ZB-BX-K005, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the US Department of Justice or to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at www.urban.org/support.

In addition, Urban would like to thank John Speir of Applied Research Services Inc. for assistance obtaining data, thoughtful feedback, and valuable insights into the state's justice system.



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