

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Parole is a critical component of the criminal legal system** in Alaska; we must ensure that the Board of Parole operates fairly and gives all incarcerated people the opportunity to achieve parole.
- **Recent trends have demonstrated that many parole applicants are not getting a fair shake.** People who have demonstrated that they can return safely to their communities are being denied arbitrarily and without explanation.
- **Alaska's criminal justice system is based on the premise of rehabilitation alongside punishment.** When a person serves their time, takes responsibility for their offense, and puts together a plan to return to their community, they deserve a meaningful opportunity to do so.

GENERAL TRENDS DEMONSTRATING THE NEED FOR CHANGE

- **Since 2020, the Alaska Board of Parole has released 79% fewer people and is holding 75% fewer hearings** than before the pandemic. The high rate of denials contributes to overcrowding in Alaska's prisons.
- **Only 33% of incarcerated Alaskans who applied for discretionary parole had their applications granted in 2023**, down from a high of 66% in 2015.
- **Racial disparities in Alaska's prison population are reflected in parole rates** — data from 2022 shows incarcerated white people were about twice as likely as Alaska Native/American Indian and Black people to be granted discretionary parole.
- **Alaska's prison population is aging.** During the last ten years, the number of people 55 and older has grown by 50 percent. Incarcerating people in this stage of life is expensive, and research has shown that criminal behavior declines significantly with age.
- **Many incarcerated individuals are eligible for geriatric parole**, which is available for people who are at least 60 years old and have served at least ten years of their sentence. However, the Board has considered only two applications for geriatric parole in the last seven years and denied them both.
- **The Board's decisions should be transparent.** It does not publish any information on its rationale for granting or denying parole applications. While each applicant must be considered on their own, the Board is inconsistent in its rulings, and we have observed different outcomes for similarly situated applicants.

Source: Alaska Department of Corrections, "Quick Facts," 2022, 2023. <https://doc.alaska.gov/parole-board/historical-statistics>

GENERAL TRENDS DEMONSTRATING THE NEED FOR CHANGE, CONT.

- **Parole increases institutional safety.** When the board consistently denies parole to people who have good institutional records and have completed extensive rehabilitative programming, it diminishes hope and an important incentive for good behavior. Institutions are safer for incarcerated Alaskans and for Department of Corrections staff when parole is an achievable goal and when people who are eligible know that taking positive steps in rehabilitation will realistically improve their chances of being granted release.

ABOUT THE ALASKA BOARD AND PAROLE

- **In Alaska, a five-person board makes decisions about parole** — including granting or denying applications for parole and setting conditions for release.
- **There are four types of parole** — the most common are mandatory parole, when a person has served their sentence, and discretionary parole, when a person applies to be considered for early release based on a good institutional record and a comprehensive release plan.
- **Most current members of the Alaska Board of Parole have a law enforcement background within the Department of Corrections**, and none have a primary professional background in behavioral or mental health, human development, or similar fields. State law requires only one person to have experience in the field of criminal justice.



Scan to read more about parole in Alaska

Contact: Michael Garvey, Advocacy Director – mgarvey@acluak.org
Megan Edge, Prison Project Director - medge@acluak.org

