

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

August 7, 2017

Lifers In Wisconsin Prisons

I am providing 3 graphs which I had prepared based on data about lifers in Wisconsin prisons I obtained from DOC records. One graph shows the average time served to release for lifers from 1981 to 2016 along with the number of lifers released each year. Another graph shows the maximum, minimum and average time served by lifers for each year of release over the same time period. The final graph shows the number of lifers who have served 30 or more years and those who have served 40 or more years.

The purpose of these graphs is to demonstrate that lifers are being held in Wisconsin prisons for ever-increasing periods of time for no reason. The same people who are now held for 30 or 40 years would have been released by now had they committed their crimes decades earlier. Prior to 1990, there were no lifers who had served over 30 years. Prior to 2000, there were no lifers who had served over 40 years.

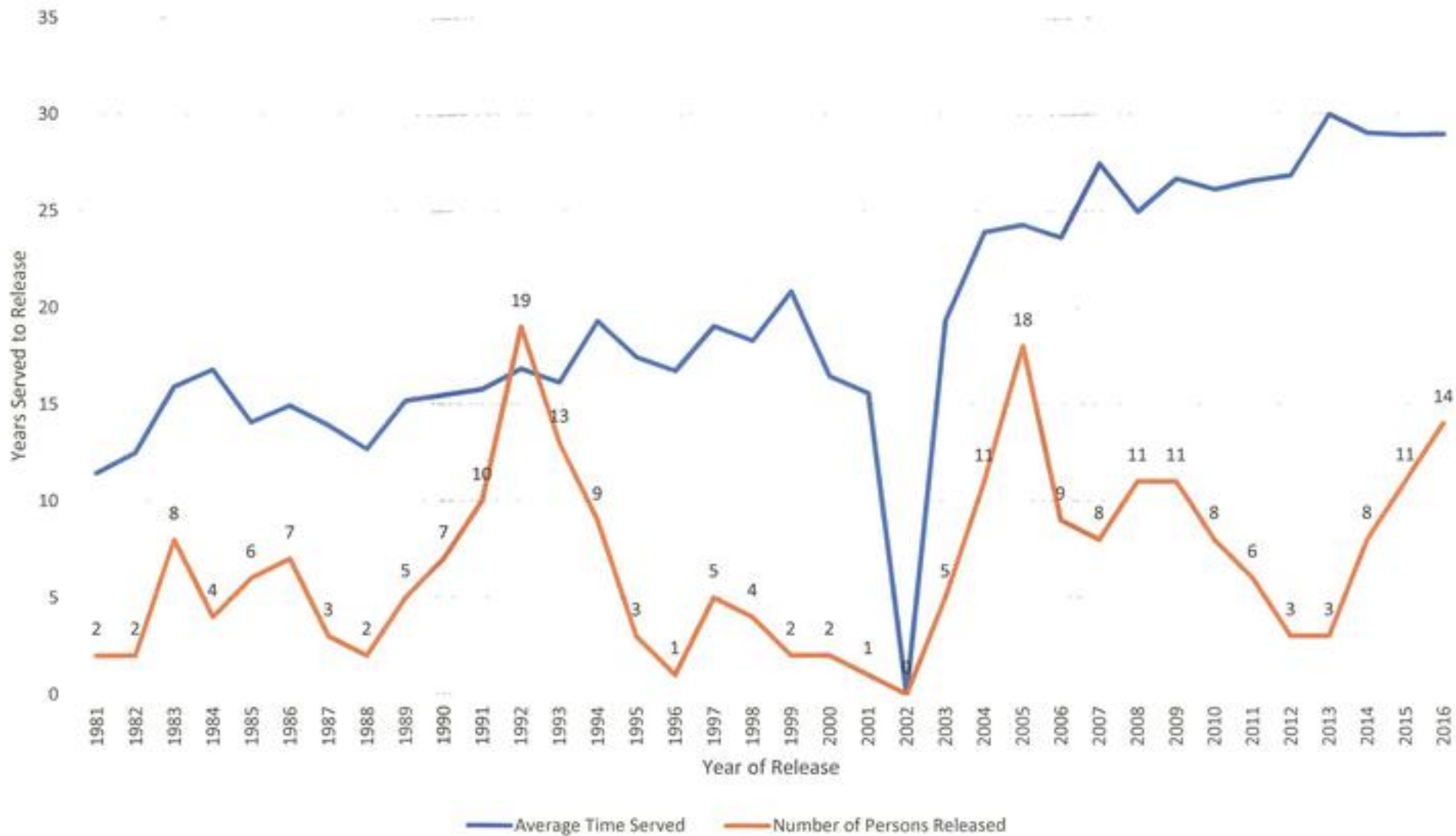
I personally know some of the guys who have been in prison over 40 years. Some will never get out - and rightly so. But others should have been released years ago. They are being warehoused for no legitimate reason. For those who have served over 30 years, many of them have excellent conduct record, completed all required treatment and do not pose a risk to anyone. Yet they are routinely denied release on parole because they have not "served sufficient time for punishment" or their "release would pose an unreasonable risk to the public." No facts are required to make these findings. They are based on the entirely subjective opinions or feelings of parole commission members.

In my situation, I have served almost 33 years for stabbing a man in a fight. I spent 9 years in minimum and community custody which included 19 months of work release and driving a state van unescorted over 30,000 miles throughout northwestern Wisconsin taking prisoners to and from their work release sites.

In 2011, I was returned to medium security for no reason and am still here. I argued to the parole commission and the courts that my extensive time on work release and driving a van proved that I was not an unreasonable risk to the public. The parole commission said that I was an unreasonable risk to the public in spite of the facts before it. The courts upheld the parole commission so here I sit (along with hundreds of other prisoners) denied release on parole to suit Governor Walker's ideologically-driven conservative agenda.

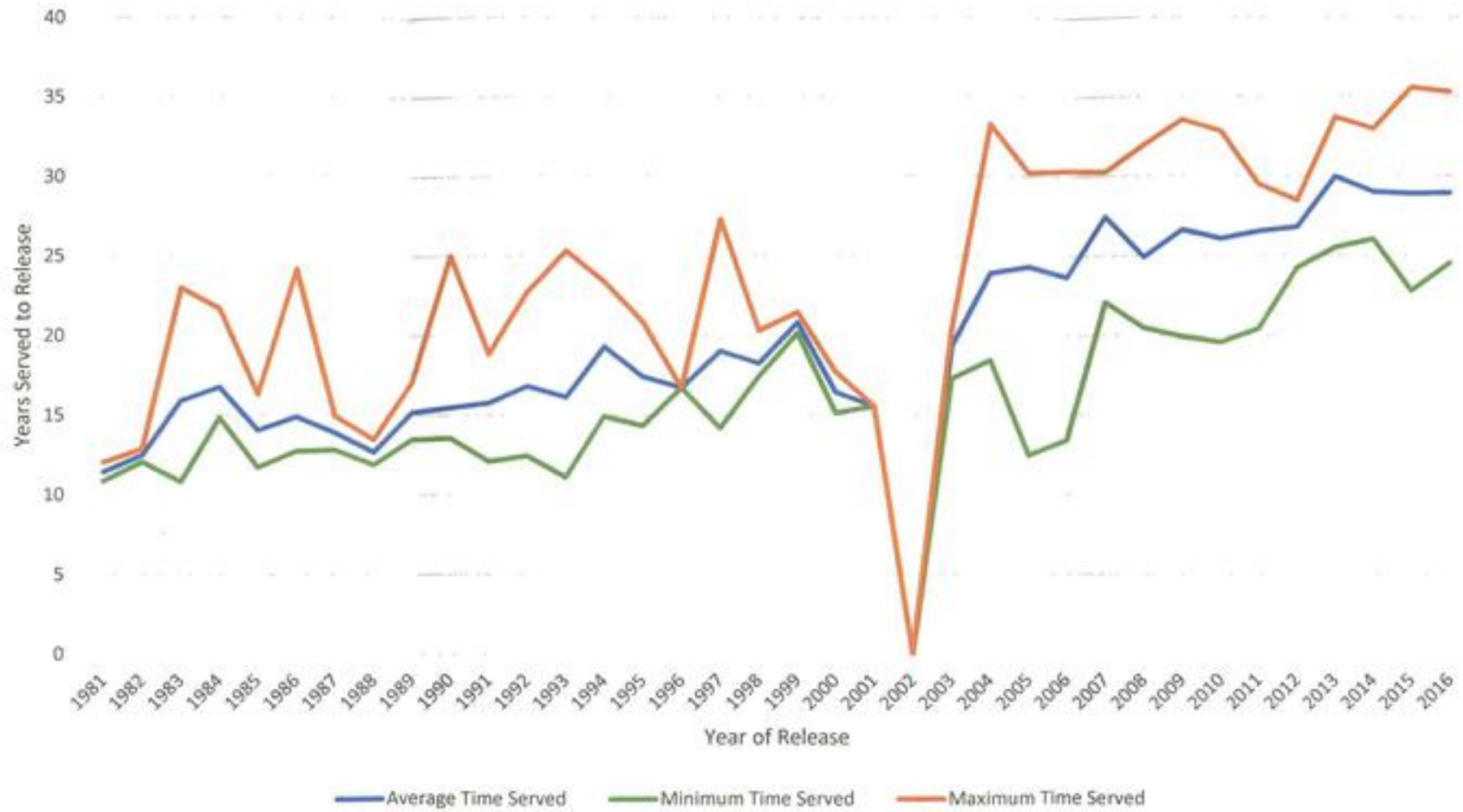
There's nothing I can do about it but bear witness to the injustice. In decades to come, Governor Walker, ex-Governor Thompson and others like them will be vilified for the things they have done. For society to acknowledge the unjustness of this endless warehousing decades after my death is a pyrrhic victory at best. But perhaps it will save others from being treated as unfairly as we are now being treated.

Average Time Served / Number of Persons Released for Persons Serving Life Sentences in Wisconsin



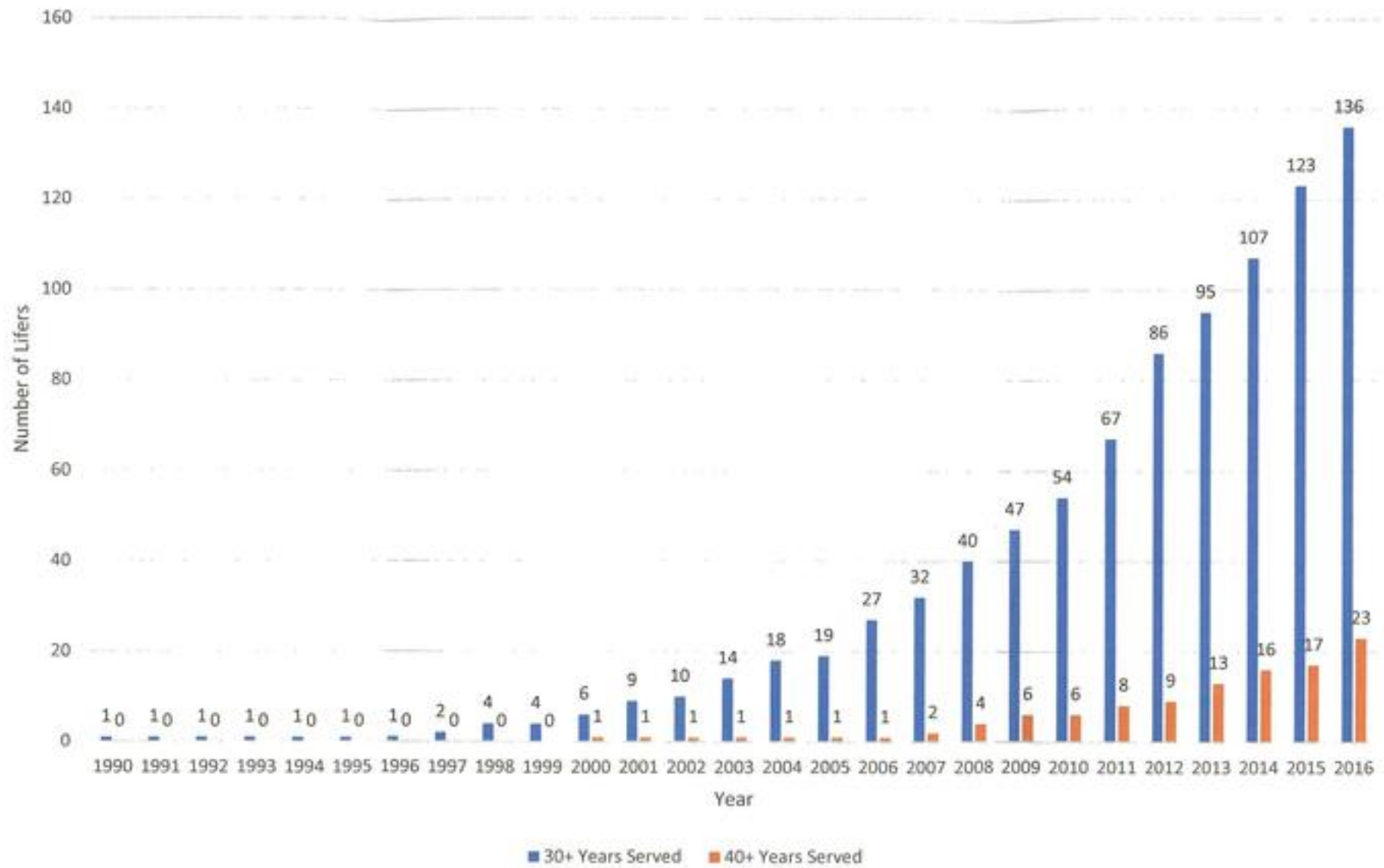
Data compiled by Harlan Richards in May 2017 based on DOC Records

Time Served to Release for Persons Serving Life Sentences in Wisconsin



Data compiled by Harlan Richards in May 2017 based on DOC Records

Time Served by Persons with Life Sentences Who are Still Incarcerated in Wisconsin



Data compiled by Harlan Richards in May 2017 based on DOC Records