

PRISONER REENTRY: KEY STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES

G. Roger Jarjoura
School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Indiana University, Indianapolis

The Numbers...

- State and Federal authorities released 713,473 prisoners during 2006, up 2.1% from the number in 2004
- In 2006, new court commitments to State prison made up 64% of prison admissions, while the number of parole violators who were revoked and returned to prison was 35% of new admissions to state prisons

Projected Growth

- In a recent report by Public Safety Performance
 - Nationwide, we anticipate a 13% increase in prison populations
 - Imprisonment levels are expected to rise in 46 states
 - Imprisonment levels are not expected to decline in any states

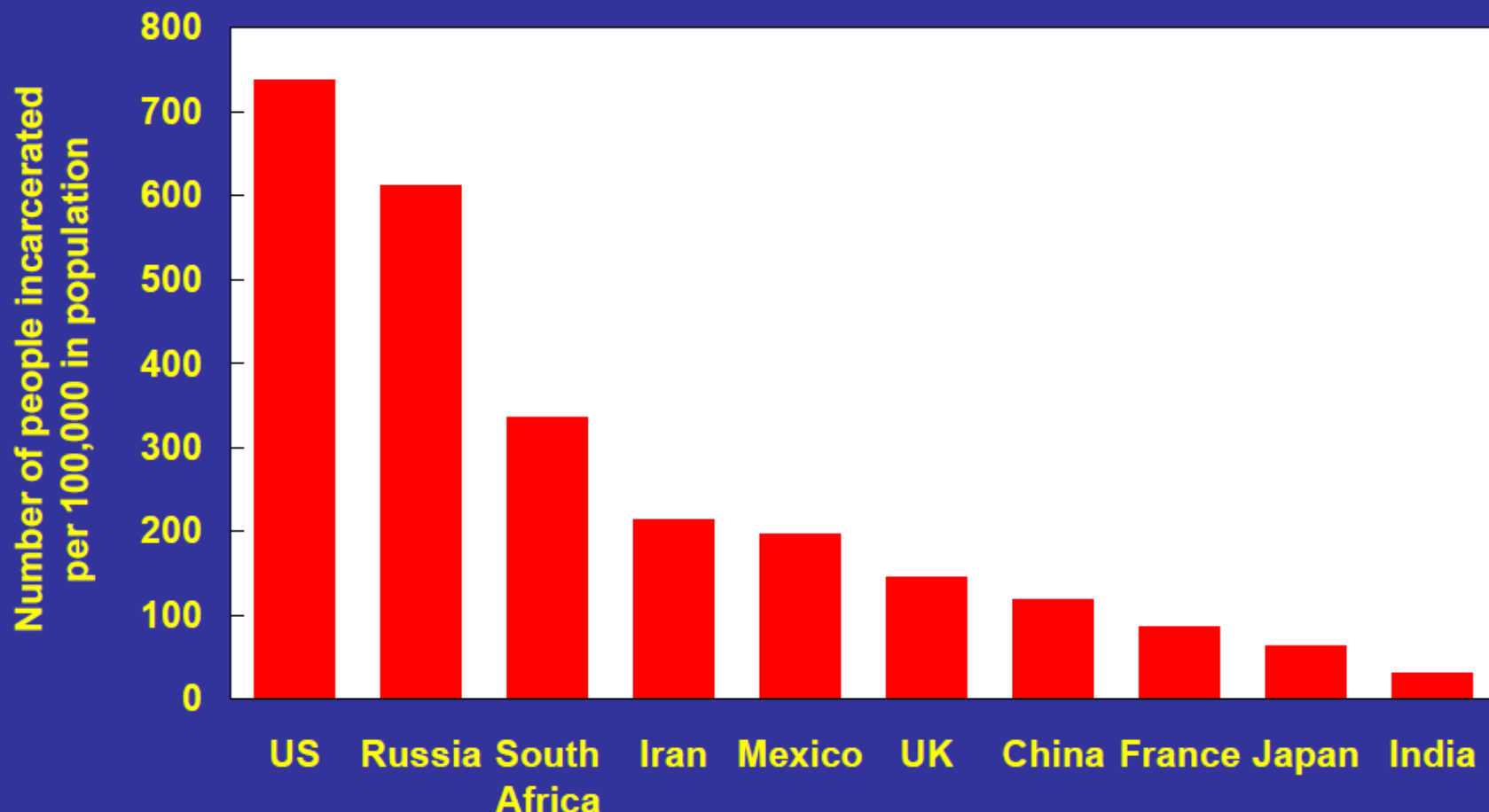
Disproportionate Confinement

- A recent report by Mauer and King of the Sentencing Project
- The national incarceration rate:
 - 412 per 100,000 residents for whites
 - 742 for Hispanics
 - 2,290 for African Americans
- 1 in 9 (11.7%) African American males between the ages of 25-29 is currently incarcerated in a prison or jail

Jeremy Travis (2005) tells us:

- 25% of the adults in the U.S. (47 million people) have a criminal record
- Just about 13 million people have been convicted of a felony
- As of 2001, 5.6 million U.S. residents had been in prison at some point
- It is estimated that 1 in 15 people born in 2001 will spend some time in prison if we do not change our incarceration strategies.

U.S. Incarceration Rate Is Largest in the World

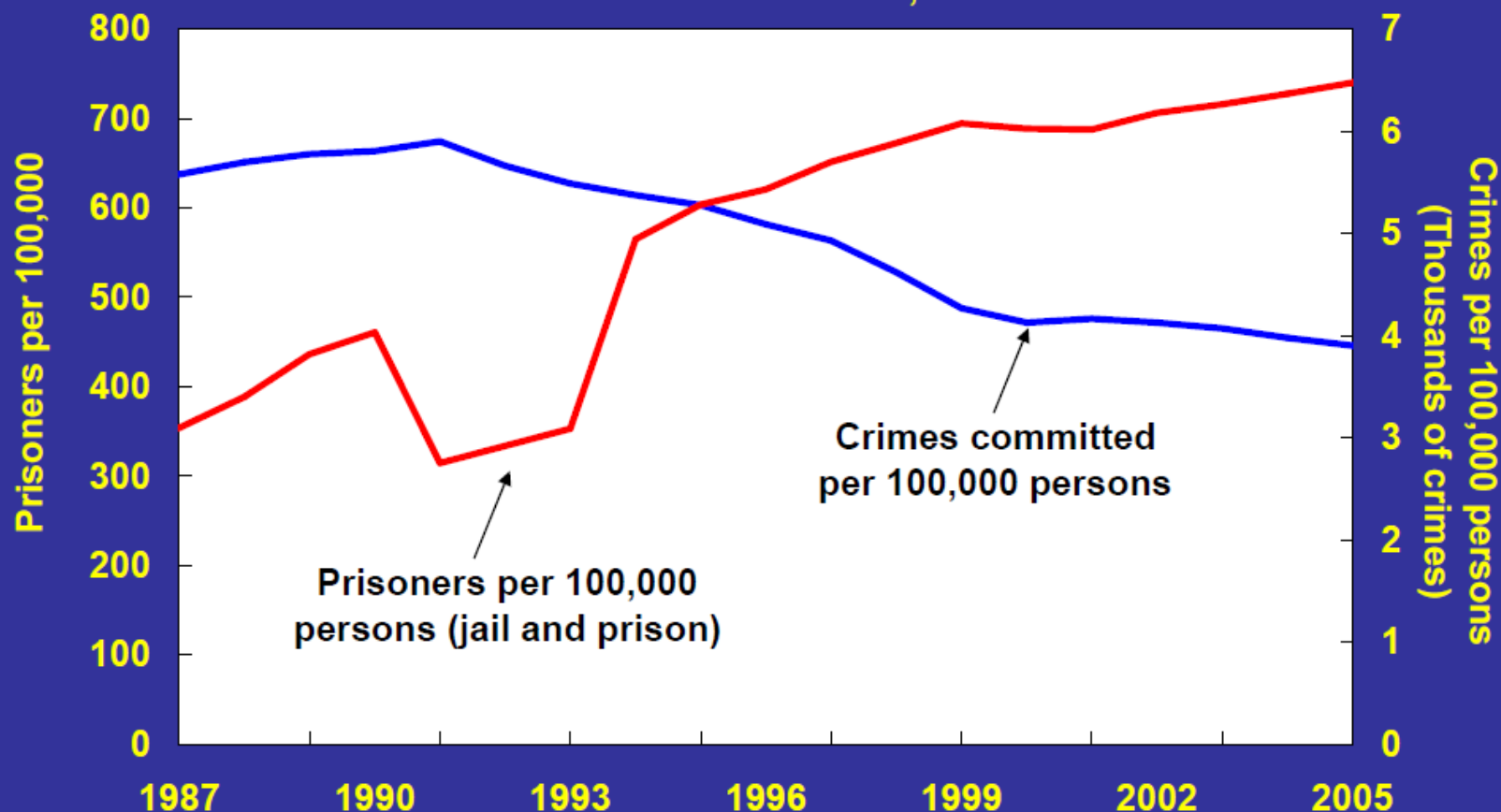


Note: Countries included in selection each have prison populations in excess of 50,000 people. Represents dates between 2004 and Oct. 2006.

Source: JEC Calculation based on data from Roy Walmsley, "World Prison Population List," International Centre for Prison Studies, King's College, London (2006).

The Incarceration Rate Has Continued to Rise Despite Falling Crime Rates

U.S. Crime and Incarceration, 1987-2005



Source: JEC Calculation based on data from Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice and *Crime in the United States 2006*, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Did you know?

- ⦿ Approximately **97%** of incarcerated persons will be released eventually.
- ⦿ Annually **7 million** released from jails in the U.S.
- ⦿ This is a public policy crisis!!
- ⦿ You can be part of the solution—Do you know how?

Rearrest Rates for those Released

- 2002 BJS Report by Langan and Levin provides the data that is most often used to describe the involvement of ex-prisoners in subsequent crime
- Within three years after release:
 - 67.5% had been rearrested for a new offense
 - 46.9% had been convicted for a new offense
 - 25% had been reincarcerated for a new offense
- Ex-prisoners account for 20% of all arrests

Jeremy Travis says:

- “I think the goal of everyone involved in the reentry process — the individual prisoner, his family, his community and the agencies of government — should be to improve the chances of successful reintegration for each returning prisoner. This means re-establishing (or, as the case may be, establishing) positive connections between the returning prisoner and his family, the world of work and the institutions of community.”

And....

- “this goal does not diminish the importance of a second goal, crime reduction. But we should recognize that reintegration is a separate objective. Improving reintegration outcomes may or may not be associated with crime reduction, but these are ultimately the more important goals. The literature on desistance shows that the crime producing years pass, and most ex-offenders live long lives after their criminal careers are over. So for millions of ex-felons amongst us who live crime free lives, the policy question is whether they are productive members of our society.”

Consider:

- ◎ You may not responsible for being down, but you are responsible for getting up.
- ◎ Are you helping the offenders embrace accountability and self efficacy OR are you allowing them to feel victimized and entitled to help?

The Three “R’s” of Reentry

by Lehman, Beatty, Maloney, Russell, Seymour, and Shapiro

- ⦿ Reparative Justice
- ⦿ Relationships
- ⦿ Responsibility

Reparative Justice

- Hold the offender accountable to make reparations
- Involve the stakeholders in a process that builds capacity to prevent the harm from reoccurring
- The “voice of the victim” is critical to building offender accountability
- Developing a reentry plan that is structured to protect against risk factors and builds on strengths and assets of the offender

Relationships

- Networks of relationships can help protect victims
- Networks of relationships can influence the behavior of offenders and monitor their behaviors
- Informal social control that is proximate to the offender
- **Successful reentry is all about relationships**

Responsibility

- ⦿ Responsibilities of offenders to victims
- ⦿ Responsibilities of offenders to the community
- ⦿ Responsibilities of the community to the offender
- ⦿ Responsibilities of the criminal and juvenile justice systems to the community and victims
- ⦿ Responsibilities of the criminal and juvenile justice systems to offenders

As Joseph Lehman notes:

- ◎ Preventing recidivism is not simply about the offender
 - It is also about places and relationships
- ◎ Reentry is collaborative
 - We must immerse ourselves in the relationships in the community
 - Communities must be part of the solution

National Research Council Report

- ◎ To achieve the highest likelihood for desistance,
 - Provide major support at the time of release
 - Intensive and detailed prerelease and postrelease counseling
 - Immediate enrollment in drug treatment programs

Also,

- ⦿ Intensive parole supervision
- ⦿ Assistance in finding work
- ⦿ Short-term halfway houses
- ⦿ Mentors available at the time of release
- ⦿ Assistance in obtaining identification, clothes, and other immediate needs

Key Points

- ◎ Person should not leave prison without an immediately available person and plan for release
- ◎ Long-term assistance should include cognitive-behavioral treatment approaches

Who Desists?

- ◉ Married
- ◉ Working
- ◉ Transformation of personal identity
- ◉ Reduced exposure to delinquent peers
- ◉ Reduced consumption of illegal drugs
- ◉ Increase in education

Barriers to Effective Reentry

- ◉ Family relationships, if not already problematic, are often weakened by incarceration
- ◉ Convicted felons have difficulties in finding employment, and this can be aggravated by prison experiences
- ◉ Educational attainment is often low for ex-prisoners
- ◉ Unmet health and mental health needs
- ◉ Housing issues
- ◉ Collateral barriers related to civic participation

Collateral Barriers

- Criminal records made publicly available
- Legal restrictions related to certain careers
- Restrictions on hiring, bonding and licensing of ex-prisoners
- Employers with access to criminal records
- Restrictions on public assistance, welfare
- Restrictions on public housing, rentals
- Restrictions on parental rights

And of course:

- Registration and community notification of sex offenders
- Check out: <http://www.lac.org/>

Other Barriers to Effective Reentry

- $\frac{3}{4}$ return with history of substance abuse
- 60% have no high school diploma
- 30% have serious mental illness 2 to 4 times higher than general population.
- 55% have children under 18; owe +\$20,000 in child support upon release.
- Return to overcrowded community with little resources

What Do We Hope Happened in Prison?

- ⦿ Vocational training
- ⦿ In-prison therapeutic communities
- ⦿ Increasing academic achievement
- ⦿ Programming for sex offenders and violent offenders
- ⦿ Prison prerelease programs

Recent Evidence on Post-Release Employment from Urban Institute

- In a sample of 400 men returning to Chicago after prison,
 - Less than 30 percent were employed at the time of the interview at six months after release
 - About half reported having worked at least one month since their release
 - Employment before prison, participation in job training during prison, strong family relationships, and an absence of health problems led to a greater likelihood of finding work after release.

Transitional Jobs Programs are Promising

- Partnership between community and social service agencies and employers
- Paid on-the-job learning in subsidized transitional jobs
- Jobs typically last 2 to 6 months, pay an hourly wage, are part-to-full time in nature
- Job is supplemented by additional vocational training, soft skills training, case management, and other supportive services
- At the end of the transitional period, the program works to find a permanent unsubsidized job for the participant

Health and Reentry:

- More prisoners report being diagnosed with a medical condition than report receiving medication or treatment for the condition while incarcerated.
- Discharge planning often poor with little preparation for addressing health care needs upon release, making continuity of care difficult.
- The vast majority of returning prisoners do not have any form of medical insurance.

Housing and Reentry:

- The majority of returning prisoners live with family members or intimate partners upon release.
- Many former prisoners return home to living arrangements that are only temporary.
- Housing options for those who do not stay with family members or friends are extremely limited.
- There are few evidence-based reentry housing programs that target returning prisoners with mental illness.

Regarding Families and Reentry:

- **Strong family support before prison may reduce the likelihood of recidivism.**
- **While most prisoners have some regular contact with family members during their prison term, relatively few ever receive visits.**
- **Close family relationships may improve employment outcomes for returning prisoners.**

Regarding Communities and Reentry:

- ◎ **A relatively large number of prisoners return to a small number of cities in each state.**
- ◎ **Returning prisoners are often clustered in a few neighborhoods within those cities.**
- ◎ **High levels of social and economic disadvantage often characterize the communities to which prisoners return.**

More on Communities:

- **Former prisoners who relocate after they are released tend to move to neighborhoods similar to the ones they left.**
- **Prisoners returning to neighborhoods perceived to be unsafe and lacking in social capital are at greater risk of recidivism.**

Principles of Effective Reentry

- In his recent book “But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry,” Jeremy Travis proposes five principles of effective reentry

Principle 1: Prepare for Reentry

- In most prisons we are not preparing inmates for reentry
- Instead, prisons should ensure:
 - Prisoners have made contact with family
 - Housing is arranged prior to release
 - Health and treatment needs are addressed
 - Work and/or school is lined up
 - A plan to ensure public safety is in place
- Personal expectations of the prisoner are key!

Principle 2: Build Bridges between Prisons and Communities

- Connections among criminal justice agencies—parole, probation, reentry courts, law enforcement
- Connections to the community—families, employers, service providers, faith-based organizations, ex-offender organizations

Principle 3: Seize the Moment of Release

- The moment of release can often increase the odds of recidivism
- Consider:
 - What time of day are prisoners released?
 - What part of town are released in?
 - What are they wearing when released?
 - How much money do they have on their person when released?
 - What is lined up in terms of housing, work, health and mental health treatment?
 - What messages are given to prisoner at release?

Principle 4: Strengthen the Concentric Circles of Support



Principle 5: Promote Successful Reintegration

- Longer-term initiatives that lead to integration of offender into the community
- Important to recognize milestones and celebrate accomplishments

Suggested Steps

- Create sentence reduction incentives for reentry preparation
- Supervision should take place at the local level—make the local community accountable for effective reentry
- If no new offense has occurred, then revocation should be applied in only the most serious cases (where there are repeat violations)
- Reduce collateral sanctions
- Create reentry courts

Source: Travis (2005) *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*

Making a Plan

- ① Identify programs **within prison** that can assist offenders in the areas of education, substance abuse treatment, job training, etc.
- ① Describe the composition and role of the transition team.
- ① Develop an offender risk and an offender needs assessment system.
- ① Document proposed terms and conditions of offender participation.

Education and Vocational Training

- Teach inmates functional, educational, and vocational competencies based on employment market demand and public safety requirements.
- Offer program that enable individuals to be functionally literate to increase capabilities to receive high school or higher credentials.
- Encourage inmates to participate in educational and job training programs

Work Experience

- Provide opportunities to participate in work assignments to build successful careers in community.
- Provide work assignments in prison that correspond to the needs of the employment market
- Develop pre-apprenticeship work assignments with clear path into community-based apprenticeship programs in high demand occupations
- Establish work or work release programs with community organization so participants gain work experience without competing with other potential employees

Identification and Benefits

- Ensure that individuals exit prison with appropriate forms of identification and that those eligible for **public benefits** receive them immediately upon their release.
- Interagency collaboration
 - Veterans' benefits
 - Medicaid, TANF
 - Public housing

Do Women have Special Needs?

- ⦿ We must ensure they are returning to a situation that is free from victimization
- ⦿ Special emphasis is needed to restructure relationships with family
- ⦿ Substance abuse issues must be attended to
- ⦿ Healthy relationship skills are very important

Issues that are of more concern for women

- ⦿ Reunification with children
- ⦿ Prevalence of drug offenses
 - Relationships with men
 - Consequences for welfare benefits

Gender-Specific Programming

- ⦿ Female counselors
- ⦿ Atmosphere less confrontational than with male offenders
- ⦿ History of sexual abuse must be addressed
- ⦿ Single-sex programming

Gender-Specific Programming

- Environment emphasizes support and encouragement, not strict rules and harsh consequences
- Development of trusting relationships with an adult female role model
- Family counseling, esp. focusing on mother-daughter relationship

Substance Abuse Treatment

- 80% of prisoners report histories of drug or alcohol abuse
- 55% report using drugs or alcohol when committing the crime that led to their incarceration
- 90% have not received formal substance abuse treatment during incarceration
- 75% recidivate when no treatment is received while incarcerated
- 27% recidivate when treatment is received while incarcerated

Best Practice:

- ⦿ In-prison treatment is coupled with community-based treatment after release
- ⦿ Programs that focus on:
 - Improving interpersonal skills
 - Self control
 - Anger management
 - Substance abuse resistance...may reduce recidivism by as much as 50%

Better Outcomes Associated With:

- Treatments longer in duration
- Treatments with more contact hours
- Trained mental health professionals delivering the treatment
- Highly structured treatment
- Focus on the development of basic social skills
- Individual counseling that addresses behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions