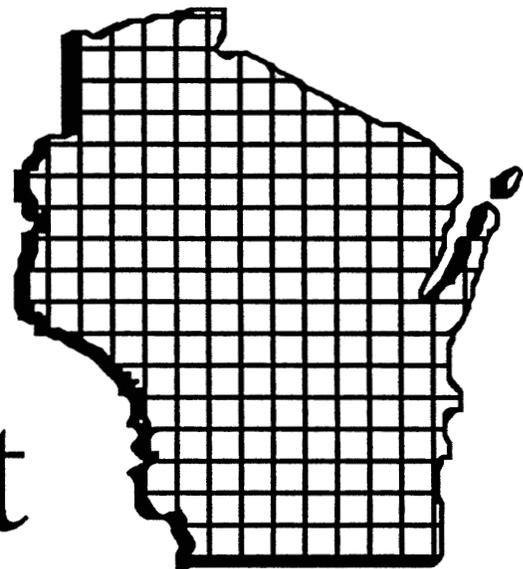


Wisconsin

Policy  
Research  
Institute

Report



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**CRIME  
AND  
PUNISHMENT  
IN  
WISCONSIN**

A Survey of Prisoners and an  
Analysis of the Net Benefit of  
Imprisonment in Wisconsin

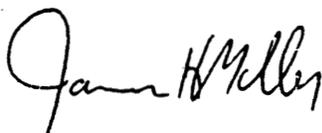
## Report from the President:

One of the great difficulties with the crime issue is that it stirs strong emotions and discourages dispassionate analysis. In particular, corrections policy, which encompasses prisons, jails, probation, and parole, has received relatively little serious attention from leading scholars. There is, for example, little reliable data on the characteristics of prisoners, and hence little basis for estimating the costs and benefits of imprisonment policies. Does imprisonment cost "too much"? Crime pays for the criminal, but does imprisoning criminals pay for the society?

Over the last several years, no single researcher has had more of an impact on the nation's corrections policies than John J. DiIulio, Jr., Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton University, and Director of Princeton's Center of Domestic and Comparative Policy Studies. Among DiIulio's many influential books and articles in the field are the widely-acclaimed *Governing Prisons: A Comparative Study of Correctional Management* (1987), and his 1989 essay, "Punishing Smarter: Penal Reforms for the 1990s," published in *The Brookings Review*, journal of the Brookings Institution. In addition, he has served as a consultant to federal, state, and local agencies, is chairman of New Jersey Governor James Florio's Corrections Task Force and has worked with both the Congress and the Bush Administration on corrections issues of national significance.

In this report, Professor DiIulio offers a general discussion of Wisconsin corrections and presents findings from a survey of a scientifically-selected sample of 425 Wisconsin prisoners conducted in July of 1990. This sample represents over 6% of the Wisconsin prisoner population, making it the largest such sample of its kind ever undertaken. The results of this survey are enlightening in their own right, but DiIulio has gone beyond mere reportage to use key findings of the survey in an analysis of the net benefit of imprisonment in Wisconsin. Basically, he finds that it costs Wisconsin twice as much to keep a criminal on the streets without supervision as it does to put the criminal behind prison bars.

As Professor DiIulio stresses in this report, over the next several years Wisconsin is very likely to need thousands of new beds for prisoners. Imprisonment is by no means the only policy option available, but it is a socially cost-effective option that must be a central part of any balanced approach to the State's future crime problems.



James H. Miller

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### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN WISCONSIN

by

**John J. DiIulio, Jr., Ph.D.**

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## Executive Summary

This report is intended to inform the policy makers, administrators, and citizens of Wisconsin who are interested in the future of the State's corrections policies. Part one of the report discusses the history, philosophy, and administration of Wisconsin corrections in national perspective and evaluates the recent decision to create a separate Department of Corrections. Part two of the report discusses the characteristics of Wisconsin prisoners. Part three of the report discusses the literature on estimating the net benefit of imprisonment and offers an analysis of the net benefit of imprisonment in Wisconsin. Among the key findings of this report are the following:

- Wisconsin has taken a balanced approach to corrections and now has one of the best corrections departments in the nation.
- About 54% of Wisconsin's nearly 7,000 prisoners are White, 38% are Black, 6% are Hispanic, and 2% are American Indian.
- Excluding lifers, the average length of sentence in Wisconsin is 10.5 years, but the average length of actual confinement is under 2 years.
- When on the streets, including drug sales, Wisconsin prisoners committed an average of 1,834 crimes per year; excluding drug sales, they committed an average of 141 crimes per year. The median figures were 25.5 and 12, respectively.
- It costs about twice as much to keep Wisconsin criminals on the streets without supervision as it does to imprison them.
- Over the next decade, Wisconsin will need thousands of new prison beds, and the benefits of providing these beds will almost certainly exceed the cost of providing them.

This report is punctuated by numerous caveats and qualifications, but its basic conclusion admits no hedging: Imprisonment is a valuable corrections option from which the State cannot afford to shrink. To date, Wisconsin has struggled rather successfully with the challenges posed by its growing populations of convicted criminals. It is my hope that this report will help the State to continue to cope with these difficult challenges in the years ahead, and to sort out, in a pragmatic fashion, the contemporary complexities of crime and punishment.

### **PART ONE: WISCONSIN CORRECTIONS IN NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE:**

*Some basic terms.* This report employs certain terms that are basic to understanding and evaluating correctional policies and practices in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the United States. One such term is corrections itself. As commonly defined, **corrections** refers to the aggregate of programs, services, facilities, and organizations responsible for the management of people who have been accused or convicted of criminal offenses. Over the last five years, private organizations, both non-profit and for-profit, have become increasingly active in corrections; but the overwhelming majority of corrections programs, services, facilities, and organizations are administered and financed directly by federal, state, and local (county or city) governments, or via various intergovernmental arrangements.

There are basically four types of correctional supervision: probation, parole, jail, and prison. **Probation** is a sentence an offender serves in the community. **Parole** is the conditional release of an offender after a portion of his or her sentence has been served in a penal facility.

**Jail** is a penal facility that maintains custody of persons awaiting trial (pretrial detainees) and sentenced misdemeanants for periods longer than forty-eight hours. Most jails are administered by county governments. **Prison** is a penal facility that maintains custody of convicted felons for periods ranging from one year to life. Most prisons are administered by state governments.

## **Corrections in the Nation**

***Corrections populations.*** At the end of 1990, over 3.6 million persons were under correctional supervision in the United States. As has been widely reported, in the 1980s the nation's prison population about doubled and the rate of imprisonment per 100,000 residential population did the same, rising from an estimated 150 in 1980 to an estimated 300 at the start of 1990.

But as has been much less widely reported, in the 1980s the rate of growth in community-based (probation and parole) correctional populations exceeded the rate of growth in prison and jail populations. Today, about three-quarters of all persons under correctional supervision are *not* incarcerated, and the typical convicted felon spends less than half of his sentence in confinement. Between 1987 and 1988, for example, the prison and jail population increased by 4.3 percent while the probation population increased by 5 percent. Over the last decade, the prison population increased by about 45 percent while the probation population increased by about 75 percent. Thus, overcrowding behind bars has not prevented "overloading" on the streets. In many jurisdictions, probation officers have caseloads of over 300; in some jurisdictions, a typical caseload exceeds 1,000.

***Causes of growth.*** One might suppose that such steep and sustained growth in correctional populations as occurred in the United States during the 1980s would be strongly correlated with arrest rates, crime rates, and relevant demographic trends. The available statistical and other evidence, however, points elsewhere; namely, to a series of parallel legislative decisions that were enacted by numerous jurisdictions in the 1970s and 1980s.

For example, in every methodologically sound study of the subject published over the last fifteen years, the relationship between crime rates and incarceration rates in the United States has been found to be ambiguous or nonexistent. Of course, this does not mean that no relationship exists, or that incarceration per se is futile as both a crime control measure and as a correctional sanction. Rather, it means only that, in statistical terms, variations in crime rates, either alone or in conjunction with other closely related factors, have not been found to explain most or all of relevant variations in incarceration rates. This is especially true for studies that have focused on the 1980s, a period when marginal increases in national crime rates were only weakly correlated with extreme increases in national incarceration rates.

Instead, as every major analysis of the subject has found, the growth in national correctional populations that occurred during the last decade was caused by legislative decisions that were calculated to increase the total number of persons under all types of correctional supervision, and by have had their intended effect.

This was, for example, the conclusion reached in the January 1990 report of California's Blue Ribbon Commission on Inmate Population Management. Established in 1987 by the California State Senate, the bipartisan Commission reported that the State's prison population had increased from about 22,500 in 1979 to over 86,000 in 1989. During the same period, the total number of persons under correctional supervision in California rose to over 172,000. The Commission projected that, under existing laws, by 1994 the State would hold over 136,000 prisoners and have a total correctional population of nearly 250,000.

The Commission concluded that the dramatic growth in the State's correctional population was due largely to policies enacted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Among other things, these laws mandated a radical expansion in the use of mandatory minimum prison terms that triggered an exceedingly sharp rise in the rate at which technical violations of parole resulted in a return to custody. In a May 1990 conference of national experts on corrections convened by the California Attorney General to explore the Commission's report, there was virtually unanimous agreement that it was mainly such policy decisions that accounted for the unprecedented growth in the State's correctional populations that occurred during the 1980s.

The same basic conclusion was reached by New Jersey's State and Local Expenditure and Revenue Policy Commission (SLERPC). In its 1987 report on corrections, SLERPC concluded that, as "in California, Ohio, Texas, and other major jurisdictions," the astronomical rise in New Jersey's corrections populations during the 1980s, including a near tripling in the State's prison population between 1980 and 1987, was "largely a product of legislative decisions." Echoing the SLERPC report, in the 1990 report of the Task Group on Corrections of the New Jersey Governor's Management Review Commission, it was concluded that "the dramatic growth in New Jersey's corrections populations is almost entirely the product of policy decisions enacted over the last eleven years." The report notes that between 1975 and 1990, New Jersey's arrest rate increased by 14 percent, its crime rate increased by 6 percent, and its residential population increased by 14 percent. But during this same period, the State's incarceration rate increased by 181 percent." The report attributes roughly 70 to 90 percent of the growth in the 1980s to specific policy decisions. As in California, among these decisions were laws that expanded greatly the use of mandatory minimum prison terms, and effected a variety of other population-increasing measures.

The same basic picture can be painted for the federal correctional system. Federal drug laws passed in the late 1980s, and the implementation of new sentencing guidelines that include the abolition of parole, have fueled a tremendous increase in the number of federal prisoners. Since 1985 the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) has added over a dozen new prisons to its stock. In its 1988 annual report, the agency projected that it will have twice as many inmates and staff by 1995 as it had in 1988.

Nationally, most analysts agree the prison population will easily surpass 1,000,000 by the turn of the century; indeed, a recent study by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency estimated that as soon as 1994 the country's prison population will surpass 1,130,000. Again, this growth in prison populations, and in correctional populations generally, cannot be explained by reference to crime rates or demographic shifts. Rather, the growth in correctional populations that occurred in the 1980s was caused mainly by changes in criminal laws, sentencing practices, and related policy decisions.

***Consequences of growth.*** Given that the growth in correctional populations that occurred in the United States during the 1980s was caused mainly by policy decisions calculated to bring it about, one might suppose that this growth has generally been managed in a planned and rational manner. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. In most, though by no means all, jurisdictions where it has occurred, the steady growth in correctional populations has had any number of perverse and unintended consequences, including runaway corrections budgets, institutional crowding, dangerous early release measures, a breakdown in probation and parole supervision, and sweeping judicial intervention. In the 1980s, corrections became a major governmental function in the United States, consuming an unprecedented share of the American public's human and financial resources. But for all of this growth, it is by no means clear that the American public and its purse are better protected by corrections policies and practices today than they were ten years ago.

## Corrections in Wisconsin

Wisconsin is arguably an exception to the rule of spiraling correctional populations, ill-conceived corrections policies, and poorly-administered correctional institutions and programs. Historically, the Wisconsin corrections system has been among the safest and most cost-effective in the country. Today, in the face of mounting challenges, the Wisconsin corrections system remains one of the nation's finest. Despite its reputation as an extremely "progressive" or "liberal" system, the fact is that the key to the system's relative success has been, and continues to be, its balanced approach to correctional policy making and administration. For much of its history, the Wisconsin corrections system has been blessed with dedicated leaders, talented managers, and well-trained line personnel, both behind bars and on the streets. Thus it is today.

Looking ahead, however, there are two central questions facing the State's corrections policy makers, administrators, and taxpayers: (1) Will the system continue to make a balanced use of sanctions, or will it handle its growing populations of offenders by overusing either community-based sanctions (probation and parole), or institutional sanctions (prison and jail), or both?; and (2) Will the system continue to be administered in a relatively professional and cost-effective fashion? The best way to begin answering these questions about the system's future is to explore briefly key aspects of its distant and recent past.

*History of Striking a Balance.* Wisconsin's reputation as a "progressive" or "liberal" correctional jurisdiction dates back to the nineteenth century when the State was among the first in the country to abolish the death penalty (1835), to reduce prisoners' terms for good behavior via "good time" laws (1860), to do away with black-and-white striped prisoner uniforms (1868), and to institute indeterminate sentences (1889). Wisconsin also was among the pioneer jurisdictions with respect to the administration of parole (1907) and probation (1910), establishing one of the nation's first administratively free-standing community-based corrections authorities (1932). After implementing a series of basic improvements in prison and jail conditions, beginning in the 1950s, Wisconsin, led by the nationally-reputed corrections chief, Sanger Powers, experimented broadly with programs intended to rehabilitate all types of offenders, including predatory felons with multiple convictions, and abolished sentences of life without the possibility of parole. This strong emphasis on rehabilitation or treatment measures persisted well into the 1970s and affected virtually every facet of correctional planning and operations in Wisconsin, including the development of the system's highly successful prison industry program (1977).

Indeed, when in the late 1970s and early 1980s many other correctional jurisdictions that were widely considered "progressive" or "liberal"--for example, California--were announcing cut-backs in rehabilitation programs and changing their penal statutes to reflect a more "punishment-centered" approach to corrections, Wisconsin was reaffirming its commitment to such measures. In 1983, for example, the State retained both indeterminate sentencing and its rehabilitation programs in the context of newly-developed sentencing guidelines. And in the same year, Wisconsin was one of only three states (Virginia and Iowa were the other two) to have its inmate grievance procedures certified by the U. S. Justice Department under Section 1977e of the Civil Rights Act.

As we enter the 1990s, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) is still managed around a fundamental commitment to rehabilitative measures that minimize the use of coercive and restrictive measures against offenders in custody. This is reflected not only in the DOC's official mission statement (poster-sized copies of which are plastered throughout DOC headquarters and institutions), but in the opinions expressed by DOC personnel at every level.

It is simply a misreading of the factual record, however, to characterize Wisconsin's correctional system, past or present, as purely "progressive" or "liberal." The DOC itself has made a version of this mistake in one of its official fact-sheets, which observes flatly that, by 1963, "treatment (had become) as important as security" to Wisconsin corrections officials. Having read the extant literature on the history of Wisconsin corrections, including several hundred monographs on Wisconsin corrections turned up through a customized search conducted by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service for this report, and having toured several Wisconsin correctional institutions and interviewed over two dozen DOC staff, it is clear to me that such observations are misleading.

Rather, it is nearer to the truth to say that Wisconsin has normally made a priority of the fundamental task of administering safe, well-ordered correctional institutions and programs, and, throughout much of its history, has done so as a necessary step in the process of developing rehabilitative, coercion-minimizing measures both within secure institutions and within the free community.

That the history of corrections in Wisconsin has been more solidly pragmatic than wildly progressive--that it has been a history of striking a rational balance rather than a history of running to ideological extremes--can be seen clearly in at least two ways.

First, it can be seen by comparing the State's record to those of jurisdictions that actually have at given points in their history engaged in unfettered attempts to rehabilitate convicted offenders without due concern for basic custodial controls and the imperatives of public safety. In the 1970s, California, for example, took its progressive prison management practices to such an extreme and experienced over 100 murders behind bars. By the same token, in the 1980s Michigan began granting "good time" credits even to prisoners who had dozens of disciplinary infractions, and granted an early release from custody to thousands of violent offenders who had served only a tiny fraction of their sentences in confinement. The results in Michigan were mayhem in the cellblocks and crime sprees in the neighborhoods.

Similar tales can be told for the correctional policies and practices of certain periods in at least a half-dozen other jurisdictions, including Minnesota and Washington. Wisconsin, however, has never let its genuine commitment to minimizing coercive measures and rehabilitating offenders run to such excesses. There are, to be sure, isolated incidents and examples of such excesses in the Wisconsin system; and there is in the record no shortage of official reports and plans that undervalue the State's capacity to incarcerate serious offenders rather than "treat" them in the community and that mispredict the State's future need for secure facilities. In the 1970s, for example, responsible Wisconsin officials on a Governor's Task Force called for a phase-out of all secure facilities; and the State sold a major facility to the Federal Bureau of Prisons that Wisconsin could have used to meet easily-foreseeable population pressures of its own. But there is in the history of Wisconsin corrections no pattern of such administrative excesses or wishful thinking, no system-wide or systemic evidence of inadequate attention to basic custodial goals and public protection. Indeed, also in the 1970s the State commissioned an independent study of its secure facilities needs, and heeded the findings of that study by authorizing a major expansion in prison capacity.

The second way to appreciate the essentially balanced, pragmatic approach that Wisconsin has taken to corrections is to look at how, and how well, the system has managed recent prison population increases.

***Pro-Active Coping with Crowding and Costs.*** Today, Wisconsin has about 7,000 prisoners. In mid-1979, Wisconsin had about 3,250 prisoners. By mid-1982, the State's prison population was approaching 4,500. Over the last nine years the prison population has risen steadily to its current level.

But while there has been such a steep increase in the Wisconsin prison population, and while many of the State's facilities now hold more prisoners than they were designed to hold, for six overlapping sets of reasons, there is as yet no crisis of prison crowding in Wisconsin, and the State's corrections budget is not yet out of control.

First, while rates of imprisonment in Wisconsin have increased, they have remained well below national averages. Between 1972 and 1989, for example, while the number of prisoners per 100,000 residential population went from about 50 to 150 in Wisconsin, it went from about 100 to 275 nationally. Indeed, in its 1989 report entitled, "Ranking the Nation's Most Punitive and Costly States," the National Council on Crime and Delinquency found that in 1987 Wisconsin had the ninth *lowest* rate of imprisonment in the nation (about 125). In addition, the report ranked the fifty States and the District of Columbia according to the ratio of prisoners to arrestees, and found that Wisconsin ranked 45th.

Second, while rates of imprisonment in Wisconsin have increased, the State has managed over three-quarters of its offenders in the community under various forms of probation and parole supervision. Several DOC officials have indicated that they hope and expect to see the fraction of community-based offenders reach or exceed 80 percent over the next few years. Notably, Wisconsin pioneered the use of certain types of intensive supervision probation and parole programs (ISPs), and has used them to supervise offenders who in many other jurisdictions would almost certainly remain in confinement. ISPs place a manageable number of offenders (generally 20-25 or fewer) in the community under supervision of a probation or parole agent, and subject the offenders to mandatory drug testing, curfews, educational or work activities, and so on. The DOC's ISPs have been evaluated both by in-house and extra-departmental researchers. While the data are mixed, the consensus view is that these programs have served both to reduce recidivism and to restrain costs. The experience with ISPs in most other jurisdictions that have tried them (for example, New Jersey, Georgia and Florida) has been much the same.

Third, Wisconsin has long had in place an objective offender classification procedure that systematically weights decisions about what type of institutional or community-based supervision an incoming offender requires to the offender's criminal history, treatment needs, and other relevant characteristics. Even today, many corrections systems are without such objective classification instruments, or have only weakly-designed or unsophisticated instruments of this kind (e.g., New Jersey). Because of its objective classification procedures, however, Wisconsin, has been able to rationally allocate the scarce and expensive resource of maximum-security prison space, and of secure facility space generally.

Fourth, Wisconsin has developed a strong tradition of management and staff training, pre-service and in-service. Objective measures are hard to fashion, but anyone who looks at the annual menu of training programs available is bound to be struck by its richness and diversity. Within corrections circles, Wisconsin's corrections managers and workers are regarded very highly; my own tours and interviews in the State did nothing to rebut, and much to bolster, this bit of conventional wisdom about the quality of the State's corrections professionals and staff. And while there is no systematic empirical evidence with which to substantiate the view, most corrections practitioners--federal, state, and local--believe in the efficacy of Wisconsin-style training programs as a means of reducing the incidence of problems, enhancing staff morale, and, over the long-run, containing costs.

Fifth, over most of the last two decades Wisconsin has spent at or below national annual per capita medians for corrections expenditures. The growth in the State's corrections budgets over the last decade has moved from its well below national average budget baseline.

In 1985-1986, for example, Wisconsin ranked 38th in per capita expenditures for all corrections activities. And with respect to spending on prisons, in 1989 Wisconsin's annual per prisoner costs were an estimated \$14,000, placing it below the estimated national per prisoner per year average.

Sixth and finally, Wisconsin corrections has had more than its share of administratively talented, politically astute, and forward-looking leaders. Although it is not a career agency at the highest levels, many of the former leaders of the agency have been successful in managing both the internal and the external demands and constraints that confront contemporary corrections executives. In 1988, for example, the present DOC administrator, Stephen E. Bablitch, chaired a Prison Overcrowding Study Group which examined the State's emerging crowding problem and searched intelligently for means to handle the problem before it got out of hand.

***A Separate Department of Corrections.*** None of the above, of course, should be taken to downplay the crowding and cost problems that now face Wisconsin corrections; to overlook the other administrative problems that have plagued, and continue to plague, the system (e.g., an underdeveloped management information systems network); or, least of all, to dismiss the grave corrections population pressures that may be on the horizon in Wisconsin, and hence to ignore the tough correctional policy choices that lie before the State's correctional policy makers, administrators, and taxpayers.

Indeed, if one reasonably assumes, for example, that sentencing practices, demographic trends, and crime and arrest rates in Wisconsin for the period 1991-1995, will remain constant (or closely simulate) the State's experience for the period 1985-1990, then the Wisconsin prison population may well reach over 9,000 by mid-decade, and well over 10,000 by the year 2000. Obviously, this would place new fiscal and administrative demands on the State's corrections system, including the need to build, staff, and operate more secure facilities, or to expand existing facilities as necessary. And this says nothing about the composition of this growing prison population, and the difficult-to-administer and costly programs that may be required for the potentially growing fraction of it that may consist of inmates who are severe substance abusers, afflicted with AIDS, or geriatric cases. Other jurisdictions have already begun to face these burdens; Wisconsin's turn is no doubt coming soon.

For that very reason, it is impossible to disagree with the recent decision to create a separate DOC within Wisconsin. For years, the State's corrections agency operated as one of seven divisions within the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). In 1982-1983, a special committee of the Wisconsin State Legislature examined the possibility of removing the agency from beneath the DHSS umbrella and creating a separate department of corrections. Even then, the growth in the State's corrections sector was evident, and the problems of administering within the DHSS structure caused a host of non-trivial administrative frictions and bureaucratic inefficiencies, not least among them an unduly complicated set of budgetary and personnel procedures.

To be sure, reorganization within government is more frequently a symptom of an organizational disease than a cure for one; just as often, government reorganization plans are nothing more than punts of a political football. Indeed, within corrections nationwide, in the 1970s there were over three-dozen major reorganizations, and some jurisdictions reorganized their corrections functions several times in the space of a few years. In many cases, the only demonstrable result was a new organization chart; in most cases, the effects of these reorganizations on performance and costs have been negligible or nonexistent.

Wisconsin's reorganization of corrections into a separate department, however, is proving to be a clear exception to this rule. The aforementioned 1982-1983 plan was spearheaded by State Democrats, and the 1989 decision was led by State Republicans.

The timing of the move was right, as population pressures created a clear and present need to develop a set of corrections-specific analytical capacities, personnel policies, management capabilities, and so on. As those population pressures mount, the wisdom of having a separate DOC will prove itself over and over again.

## **The Future of Corrections in Wisconsin**

***Punishing Smarter.*** Viewed in national perspective, therefore, Wisconsin's corrections dilemmas--present and future--look relatively manageable. It is not merely the fact that the system is smaller than many, for many of the smaller systems have nonetheless had the biggest problems. Rather, it is the fact that Wisconsin has developed a balanced, pragmatic approach to corrections that gives one confidence to think that it may meet the challenges of the 1990s not by punishing harder, or by punishing less, but by continuing to punish smarter. By "punishing smarter" is meant sustaining a sensible mix of corrections sanctions that protect the public and its purse and that provide inmates safe and humane conditions of confinement and community-based custody.

Perhaps the key element in a punishing smarter approach to corrections is how to allocate scarce and expensive prison space, and how to strike a viable balance between the use of incarceration, on the one hand, and the entire range of community-based sanctions, on the other. There are some experts, for example, who claim that most States, even Wisconsin, imprison "too much" and that prisons are "too costly." Some claim that many or most prisoners do not need to be behind bars, that they pose only negligible threats to the public, and that they can and should be handled "more cheaply" on the streets, confined for shorter periods of time, or simply be released from custody altogether.

The remaining parts of this report should help persons concerned about the future of corrections in Wisconsin to evaluate such arguments in light of the characteristics of the State's prison population as reported by a sample of Wisconsin prisoners themselves, and the results of an analysis of the general cost and benefits of the State's prison policies.

## **PART TWO: CHARACTERISTICS OF WISCONSIN PRISONERS**

### **Prisoners in the Nation**

There is widespread disagreement over how best to characterize the nation's prison population. Do some, most, or only a tiny fraction of the nation's prisoners "really need" to be imprisoned? Would either the prisoners, or the public, or both, be better off if more (or fewer) convicted criminals spent more (or less) time behind prison bars? Any intelligent response to this species of questions must depend, of course, on the known characteristics of the nation's prisoners as these characteristics are revealed in official arrest records, correctional records, and related statistical summaries. But for at least three reasons, the official information on the characteristics of prisoners is of limited value.

First, most of the official information on the characteristics of prisoners is quite limited in scope. It is not unreasonable, for example, to suppose that a non-trivial fraction of prisoners have committed more crimes than those for which they have been arrested, convicted, sentenced, and imprisoned. But most of the official records offer little information about undetected crimes committed by prisoners. Moreover, they offer virtually nothing in the way of detailed information about prisoners' criminal motivations.

Second, most of the official information on the characteristics of prisoners admits of widely varying and often highly selective interpretations. The official facts, as it were, do not speak for themselves. Based on official records, for example, one can say that over 90% of all U.S. prisoners are violent offenders, repeat offenders (two or more felony convictions), or violent repeat offenders; but one can also say that over 40% of all prisoners are "mere property offenders," and that an increasing fraction of the nation's prison population consists of first-time drug offenders who should be in community-based substance abuse programs instead of behind bars.

Third, most of the official information on the characteristics of prisoners nationally is not of direct practical relevance to corrections policy makers, administrators, and taxpayers who need to assess the costs and benefits of particular imprisonment policies in particular jurisdictions at particular times. By the time they are published, most official records are rather outdated, and the aggregate characteristics reported therein do not, in any case, furnish much guidance for those whose interest in the subject is not merely academic, and who must decide, in effect, whether the human and financial toll of their jurisdiction's extant imprisonment policies makes sense.

### **Prisoners in Wisconsin**

One way to supplement official information so as to minimize the three problems outlined above is to survey prisoners. Over the years, several so-called prisoner self-report studies have been made, most notably by the RAND Corporation. RAND has published over half a dozen studies based on prisoner self-report data. In 1977, for example, Rand surveyed a small sample of incarcerated robbers; in 1981 it published a study based on a larger sample of California prisoners; and in 1982 it published a study based on a survey of over 2,000 jail and prison inmates in Texas, Michigan, and California.

In July of 1990, a sample of Wisconsin prisoners was surveyed. The text of that survey and the results are reported in the remainder of this section. By way of introduction, below is a brief description of the survey that summarizes and highlights certain results.

The Wisconsin prisoner survey was modelled closely on RAND's earlier efforts in Texas, Michigan, and California. Though the Wisconsin prisoner survey contained fewer items than the RAND survey of prison and jail inmates in Texas, Michigan, and California, it was administered to and completed by a relatively larger sample of prisoners. The Wisconsin prisoner survey was based on a randomly selected (by computer) sample of nearly 750 prisoners residing at one of three Wisconsin prisons--the minimum-security prison at Oakhill, the medium-security prison at Oshkosh, and the maximum-security prison at Columbia. Selected prisoners at each institution were given an informed consent form; a copy of that form appears as Appendix A. Over half of the prisoners selected at each institution participated in the survey. The survey was administered in the prisons by three researchers, each of whom was available to answer prisoners' questions. A total of 425 surveys were administered to and completed by Wisconsin prisoners, representing over 6% of the state's prison population. Table 2.1 summarizes the sample.

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**Table 2.1: Wisconsin Prisoner Survey\***

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i># Selected</i>	<i># Surveyed</i>
Oakhill	371	226	131
Oshkosh	525	250	141
Columbia	433	268	169

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In section three, some of the results of the Wisconsin prisoner survey are used to estimate the costs and benefits of imprisonment in Wisconsin in relation to the wider literature on the subject. Below is a summary of some of the official statistics on Wisconsin prisoner characteristics, followed by a sampling of the findings of the survey reported in detail in the remainder of the present section.

#### Official Statistics Highlights

- Over 90% of Wisconsin prisoners are male. About 54% are White, 38% are Black, 6% are Hispanic, and 2% are American Indian.
- Over 50% are under 30 years of age.
- About 55% are imprisoned for assaultive crimes; 35% are property offenders.
- Excluding lifers, the average length of sentence is about 10.5 years, and the average time imprisoned is not quite 2 years.
- About 55% have at least 1 prior felony conviction, and some 42% have been imprisoned in Wisconsin twice or more
- About 40% are classified by the Department of Corrections as high-risk offenders requiring maximum custody; 35% have medium custody ratings, and 25% have minimum custody ratings.

#### Highlights of Survey Results

- Excluding drug sales, Wisconsin prisoners committed an average of 141 crimes per year. Including drug sales, the average was 1,834 crimes per year.
- Excluding drug sales, Wisconsin prisoners committed a median of 12 crimes per year. Including drug sales, the median was 25.5.

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\*Notes: The randomly selected prisoners who declined to participate did not differ systematically in terms of classification status or other objective characteristics from those who agreed to participate. Participation rates were 58% at Oakhill, 56% at Oshkosh, and 63% at Columbia. Twenty-six inmates selected at random were in the most secure administrative segregation units; for security reasons, no survey was administered to these prisoners. Sixteen administered surveys were discarded because they were not completed. The 425 prisoners who participated represented over 6% of the State's total prison population at the time of the survey.

- Over 70% of the prisoners reported that they first got involved in crime to get money for drugs. About 30% reported that they first got involved in crime for excitement, and about 28% listed "to get money for high living--nice clothes, car, etc."
- Over 60% of the prisoners reported that they had been arrested four times or more. Over 13% reported that they had been arrested 16 times or more; and 7% reported having been arrested more than 25 times.
- Over 40% of the prisoners reported that they had been on probation two times or more, and on parole one time or more.
- Over 50% agreed with the statement that "Men who are really good at crime never seriously think about going straight." Nearly 50% reported that there was a 50-50 chance *or less* of going to prison for years from doing crimes.
- Over 70% reported that being in prison was about what they thought it would be like *or better* than they thought it would be like.
- Over 25% reported that they committed one or more robberies every week. Nearly 30% reported that they were never arrested for the robberies they committed. In nearly 70% of all robberies they carried a weapon "to threaten or injure someone." They made an average of \$1,721 per robbery, and a median of \$450 per robbery.

## Wisconsin Prisoner Survey

### PART A

The first questions are about your background. Some of the questions ask you to think back about your life and to remember things that happened. Please really think about the questions and give the most accurate answers you can.

1. How old were you when you were first arrested--that is, officially charged by the police? (This can be an adult or juvenile arrest, other than a traffic violation.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Years old

<b>Under 11</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>11-15</b>	<b>33.5%</b>
<b>16-17</b>	<b>17.1%</b>
<b>18-21</b>	<b>18.2%</b>
<b>Over 21</b>	<b>24.8%</b>

2. How old were you when you were first convicted of a criminal offense (an adult or juvenile conviction, other than a traffic violation)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years old

<b>Under 11</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
<b>11-15</b>	<b>19.7%</b>
<b>16-17</b>	<b>17.1%</b>
<b>18-21</b>	<b>25.4%</b>
<b>Over 21</b>	<b>33.3%</b>

3. What were the main reasons that you first got involved in crime?  
(Check all that apply)

- [ 27.8% ] For excitement
- [ 29.5% ] Friends got me into it
- [ 23.7% ] To get money for high living - nice clothes, car, etc.
- [ 16.0% ] Lost my temper
- [ 71.3% ] To get money for drugs - had a habit
- [ 24.9% ] To get money for day to day living - self or family support
- [ 7.0% ] For the reputation
- [ 14.0% ] Everyone I knew was doing crimes - just a normal way of life
- [ ] Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

20 wrote in Liquor Use

4. How old were you at that time?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years old

mean: 19.96  
median: 17

5. Were you ever sent to a juvenile institution?

NO [ 71% ] YES [ 29% ] How many times? \_\_\_\_\_ Times

6a. Before you were 18, did you ever do anything on this list?

- Broke into someplace
- Stole a car
- Stole something worth more than about \$100
- Used a stolen credit card
- Forged something

YES [ 55.8% ] NO [ 44.2% ]

6b. If you answered "yes" to question 6a: How old were you when you first did any of these things?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years old

mean: 14.27  
median: 14

6c. If you answered "yes" to question 6a: Before you were 18, how often did you do any of these things?

- [ 26.9% ] Once or twice
- [ 33.2% ] A few times
- [ 10.9% ] Sometimes
- [ 29.0% ] Often

7a. Before you were 18, did you ever do anything on this list?

- Robbed someone
- Threatened someone with a gun or knife or other weapon
- Hurt someone with a gun or knife or other weapon
- Beat someone badly
- Raped someone

YES [ 32.3% ]

NO [ 67.7% ]

7b. If you answered "yes" to question 7a: How old were you when you first did any of these things?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years old

mean: 14.77

median: 15

7c. If you answered "yes" to question 7a: Before you were 18, how often did you do any of these things?

- [ 45.3% ] Once or twice
- [ 29.2% ] A few times
- [ 9.5% ] Sometimes
- [ 16.1% ] Often

8. Before you were 18, how often did you use each of the things on the list below? (Circle one number on each line.)

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Just Once or Twice</u>	<u>Never</u>
Marijuana	43.2%	16.5%	8.1%	32.1%
LSD/Psychedelics/Cocaine	18.4%	9.9%	12.0%	59.6%

Crack cocaine	1.7%	3.7%	4.4%	90.2%
Uppers/Downers	14.4%	14.4%	11.0%	60.2%
Heroin	2.9%	1.9%	7.4%	87.8%

The next questions are about your whole life, both as an adult and as a juvenile.

9. Altogether in your life, how many times have you been arrested?  
(Don't count traffic violations.) *Check the appropriate box.*

- [ 13.7% ] Once
- [ 25.4% ] 2-3 times
- [ 22.3% ] 4-6 times
- [ 17.0% ] 7-10 times
- [ 8.4% ] 11-15 times
- [ 6.2% ] 16-25 times
- [ 7.0% ] More than 25 times

10. How many times have you been on probation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Times OR [ ] Never

- 0: [25.1%] 1: [33.4%] 2: [20.0%] 3: [10.0%] 4: [4.7%]
- 5: [2.9%] 6: [1.2%] 10: [0.5%] 11: [0.5%] 12: [0.2%]
- 15: [0.2%] 20: [0.2%]

11. How many different terms have you served in an adult prison? (Include the current term in your total count. Don't count parole revocations as a different term.)

- [ 8.5% ] None **\*Not a valid response for this sample.**
- [ 50.6% ] 1 term
- [ 23.4% ] 2 terms
- [ 9.9% ] 3 terms
- [ 4.0% ] 4 terms
- [ 1.4% ] 5 terms
- [ 2.1% ] 6 or more terms

12. How many times have you been on parole (count each time you were released on parole)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Times OR [ ] Never

0: [57.0%] 1: [23.6%] 2: [12.3%] 3: [4.0%] 4: [1.4%]  
 5: [0.2%] 6: [0.7%] 7: [0.2%] 11: [0.2%] 12: [0.2%]

13. How many times have you had probation or parole revoked?

\_\_\_\_\_ Times OR [ ] Never

0: [47.1%] 1: [31.4%] 2: [13.8%] 3: [3.8%] 4: [1.4%]  
 5: [1.2%] 6: [0.5%] 7: [0.5%] 8: [0.2%]

14. Altogether in your life, how many times have you been convicted of a felony?

[ 3.1% ] Never  
 [ 31.7% ] Once  
 [ 38.8% ] 2-3 times  
 [ 16.8% ] 4-6 times  
 [ 5.2% ] 7-10 times  
 [ 1.9% ] 11-15 times  
 [ 2.6% ] 16 or more times

15. Have you ever been committed to a drug treatment program?

YES [ 26.5% ] NO [ 73.5% ]

**PART B**

1. Here is a set of statements about the law, prisons, police and men who get involved in crime. Read each statement carefully. Think about your own experience and people you know. Then decide how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each statement. (*Circle one number next to each statement.*)

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
Whenever someone gets cut or shot there is usually a good reason	11.8%	23.3%	37.2%	27.8%
Men with a record get a bad deal in court	36.8%	38.9%	18.2%	6.1%

It is possible to get so good at crime that you'll never get caught	4.8%	10.5%	42.9%	41.9%
One good thing about crime is the fun of beating the system	4.8%	14.4%	44.0%	36.8%
If a man only does one or two crimes a year, chances are good he'll never get caught	7.1%	16.5%	52.7%	23.6%
You don't learn anything in jail or prison that helps you make it going straight	18.0%	14.9%	35.5%	31.7%
No matter how careful you are, you won't always get away with crime	39.7%	45.4%	9.7%	5.2%
A lot of men would stay out of crime if sentences were longer	9.9%	13.9%	36.8%	39.4%
Usually someone who gets cut or shot deserves it	3.6%	11.8%	45.5%	39.1%
Committing crime is pretty much a permanent way of life	5.0%	9.5%	47.7%	37.8%
If you keep doing crime, you know you will go to prison sometime	43.4%	48.3%	5.2%	3.1%
In court, no one really looks out for the defendant's rights	22.6%	30.7%	39.6%	7.1%
Men who are really good at crime never seriously think about going straight	17.9%	35.8%	35.3%	11.0%
Because of insurance, no one is really hurt by property crimes	1.9%	9.2%	53.4%	35.5%
When you've figured it out, doing prison time is not too hard	5.9%	21.0%	31.7%	41.4%
Crime is the easiest way to get what you want	6.9%	11.4%	42.7%	39.1%

The next few questions are about things that are uncertain. "No chance" means that something will not happen. "Low chance" means that something might happen, but less than 50-50. "Even chance" means that the chances something will happen are 50-50. "High chance" means that something is likely to happen, while "certain" means that something will happen for sure.

2. Here is a list of things that can happen in a person's life. What are the chances each of these things would happen to you from doing crimes? (Circle one number next to each thing listed.)

	<u>No Chance</u>	<u>Low Chance</u>	<u>Even Chance</u>	<u>High Chance</u>	<u>Certain</u>
Having friends	8.3%	27.4%	37.1%	9.0%	18.1%
Being bored	13.2%	24.2%	30.6%	18.4%	13.6%
Having money for necessities	9.8%	19.2%	29.5%	23.3%	18.2%
Getting arrested	7.7%	12.9%	24.4%	30.9%	24.2%
High living (nice clothes, cars, etc.)	11.6%	22.3%	35.5%	19.4%	11.1%
Having worries	4.8%	9.0%	13.6%	26.9%	45.7%
Owning expensive things	12.2%	22.1%	34.1%	20.6%	11.0%
Having hassles	4.8%	9.0%	13.6%	26.9%	45.7%
Being my own man	12.2%	22.1%	34.1%	20.6%	11.0%
Having people look down on me	7.7%	10.1%	18.9%	31.7%	31.7%
Having a lot of money	14.1%	17.4%	26.0%	19.8%	22.7%
Going to prison for years	7.4%	13.3%	27.3%	24.0%	28.0%
Having a family	15.7%	29.5%	29.3%	10.7%	14.8%
Getting injured or killed	9.3%	9.5%	32.3%	32.3%	16.6%
Having to do what other people want	18.3%	22.3%	27.8%	18.1%	13.5%
Being happy	22.0%	24.2%	32.0%	10.9%	10.9%

3. In the past, how many of the good things in the above list happened to you from doing crime? Check the appropriate box.

- [ 4.3% ] All of them
- [ 12.7% ] Most of them
- [ 25.1% ] Some of them
- [ 33.3% ] A few of them
- [ 24.6% ] None

4. In the past, how many of the bad things in the above list happened to you from doing crime? *Check the appropriate box.*

- [ 13.4% ] All of them
- [ 29.2% ] Most of them
- [ 28.5% ] Some of them
- [ 22.7% ] A few of them
- [ 6.2% ] None

5. Here is the same list of things that can happen in a person's life. What are the chances each of these would happen to you if you had a regular job? (*Circle one number next to each thing listed.*)

	<u>No Chance</u>	<u>Low Chance</u>	<u>Even Chance</u>	<u>High Chance</u>	<u>Certain</u>
Having friends	3.3%	5.5%	26.0%	34.0%	31.2%
Being bored	15.5%	32.4%	34.3%	10.2%	7.6%
Having money for necessities	2.9%	7.7%	26.5%	35.9%	27.0%
Getting arrested	33.7%	46.2%	14.6%	3.3%	2.2%
High living (nice clothes, car, etc.)	5.0%	15.5%	45.3%	22.0%	12.2%
Having worries	7.7%	25.0%	44.0%	13.2%	10.1%
Owning expensive things	6.2%	17.3%	46.5%	20.4%	9.6%
Having hassles	8.7%	28.1%	43.3%	11.3%	8.7%
Being my own man	5.5%	9.1%	28.3%	26.9%	30.2%
Having people look down on me	17.5%	43.1%	28.2%	6.0%	5.3%
Having a lot of money	5.5%	20.3%	46.1%	19.1%	9.1%
Going to prison for years	43.1%	37.1%	13.2%	3.8%	2.9%
Having a family	4.3%	5.1%	29.6%	31.3%	29.6%
Getting injured or killed	16.1%	39.6%	36.2%	4.8%	3.4%
Having to do what other people want	13.6%	22.7%	34.6%	17.9%	11.2%
Being happy	4.8%	4.8%	33.8%	30.7%	26.0%

6. In the past, how many of the good things in the above list happened to you from having a regular job? *Check the appropriate box.*

- [ 12.6% ] All of them
- [ 36.3% ] Most of them
- [ 28.4% ] Some of them
- [ 17.7% ] A few of them
- [ 5.0% ] None

7. In the past, how many of the bad things in the above list happened to you from having a regular job? *Check the appropriate box.*

- [ 4.1% ] All of them
- [ 9.6% ] Most of them
- [ 27.8% ] Some of them
- [ 44.5% ] A few of them
- [ 14.1% ] None

8. Overall, in the past, how successful do you think you were in doing crime? *Check the appropriate box.*

- [ 5.9% ] Very successful
- [ 24.3% ] Somewhat successful
- [ 17.1% ] Somewhat unsuccessful
- [ 52.7% ] Very unsuccessful

9. What do you think the chances are that you will try to make it going straight when you get out? *(Circle the number that is your answer.)*

<u>No Chance</u>	<u>Low Chance</u>	<u>Even Chance</u>	<u>High Chance</u>	<u>Certain</u>
1.2%	1.7%	13.2%	37.3%	46.7%

10. What do you think the chances are that you will actually make it going straight on the outside? *(Circle the number that is your answer.)*

<u>No Chance</u>	<u>Low Chance</u>	<u>Even Chance</u>	<u>High Chance</u>	<u>Certain</u>
1.4%	5.6%	20.2%	36.5%	36.2%

11. What do you think the chances are that you will end up back in prison or jail after you get out? (Circle the number that is your answer.)

<u>No Chance</u>	<u>Low Chance</u>	<u>Even Chance</u>	<u>High Chance</u>	<u>Certain</u>
35.4%	42.5%	16.7%	4.0%	1.4%

12. What is being in prison like compared to what you thought it would be like? (Choose one.)

- [ 27.4% ] Better than I thought
- [ 24.0% ] Worse than I thought
- [ 48.6% ] About what I thought it would be

13. How do you think being in prison will change what your life is like on the outside? (Check all that apply.)

- [ 4.8% ] Easier to get away with crime because I know the system better
- [ 4.1% ] Easier to do crime because I have met people in prison who can help me
- [ 37.2% ] Easier to get a regular job because I have more education and/or training
- [ 47.5% ] Easier to keep a regular job because I have grown up
- [ 56.8% ] Harder to get a regular job because I have a record

### PART C

Oct | Nov | Dec

\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

Year of Arrest:

\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1. This question is about the month you were arrested for the sentence you are now serving. Looking at the calendar, what month was that? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If you were arrested several times for this sentence, use the earliest arrest.) Put an X in that month in the calendar.

What year was that? \_\_\_\_\_

During that month, were you:

in school?	YES [ 5.4% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison part time?	YES [ 16.0% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison the whole time?	YES [ 8.0% ]	NO [ ]
on parole or probation?	YES [ 34.8% ]	NO [ ]
working?	YES [ 49.2% ]	NO [ ]
on layoff?	YES [ 12.2% ]	NO [ ]
in the military service?	YES [ 1.2% ]	NO [ ]
looking for work?	YES [ 31.5% ]	NO [ ]

---

**Non-responses in this section are interpreted as "NO"s. Percentages are the number of "YES"s divided by the number of surveys (425).**

---

2. This question is about the month before that. Looking at the calendar, what month was that? \_\_\_\_\_  
Put an X in that month in the calendar.

During that month, were you:

in school?	YES [ 8.2% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison part time?	YES [ 6.1% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison the whole time?	YES [ 4.2% ]	NO [ ]
on parole or probation?	YES [ 33.6% ]	NO [ ]
working?	YES [ 57.2% ]	NO [ ]
on layoff?	YES [ 10.4% ]	NO [ ]
in the military service?	YES [ 1.4% ]	NO [ ]
looking for work?	YES [ 26.4% ]	NO [ ]

3. This question is about the month before that. Looking at the calendar, what month was that?  
Put an X in that month in the calendar.

During that month, were you:

in school?	YES [ 7.8% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison part time?	YES [ 6.4% ]	NO [ ]

in jail or prison the whole time?	YES [ 6.1% ]	NO [ ]
on parole or probation?	YES [ 31.5% ]	NO [ ]
working?	YES [ 59.1% ]	NO [ ]
on layoff?	YES [ 8.2% ]	NO [ ]
in the military service?	YES [ 1.4% ]	NO [ ]
looking for work?	YES [ 23.1% ]	NO [ ]

4. This question is about the month before that. Now we are thinking about the month which is 3 months before you were arrested. Looking at the calendar, what month was that? Put an X in that month in the calendar.

During that month, were you:

in school?	YES [ 7.8% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison part time?	YES [ 6.8% ]	NO [ ]
in jail or prison the whole time?	YES [ 6.8% ]	NO [ ]
on parole or probation?	YES [ 29.9% ]	NO [ ]
working?	YES [ 58.4% ]	NO [ ]
on layoff?	YES [ 8.0% ]	NO [ ]
in the military service?	YES [ 1.9% ]	NO [ ]
looking for work?	YES [ 22.1% ]	NO [ ]

The next questions are about the time you were on the street in the months with X's in the calendar. Do not include the months when you were in prison or jail the whole month. How many of the four months with X's does that leave?

\_\_\_\_\_ Months  
**mean: 4.65**  
**median: 4**

From now on we will call these the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR.

5. During the street months on the calendar did you have any jobs? (Include work release jobs.)

Yes [ 76.0% ]                      No [ 24.0% ]

6a. During how many of these months did you do any work for pay? Count months when you did any paid work and months on vacation or paid sick leave. Don't count months on layoff.

\_\_\_\_\_ Months worked                      [ ] None

0: [23.1] 1: [ 6.1%] 2: [ 9.2%] 3: [17.5%] 4: [23.6%] over 4: [20.4%]

6b. If you answered that you worked in question 6a: During the months you worked, how many hours did you usually work per week?

\_\_\_\_ Hours per week

**mean: 41.95**

**median: 40**

6c. If you answered that you worked in question 6a: During the months you worked, how much money did you usually make from these jobs?

\$\_\_\_\_ per week

**mean: 279.95**

**median: 200**

7a. During the street months on the calendar, did you receive any unemployment compensation?

[ 7.7% ] Yes

[ 92.3% ] No

7b. If you answered "yes" to question 7a: How much unemployment compensation did you receive per week, on average?

\$\_\_\_\_ per week

**mean: 74.61**

**median: 55**

8. Think about the last job you had before you were arrested. Did that employer make available to you medical, surgical, or hospital insurance that covers injuries or major illnesses off the job?

[ 43.3% ] Yes

[ 56.7% ] No

9. What type of job was the last job you held? \_\_\_\_\_

10. How long did you hold that job?

[ 0.0% ] less than a week

[ 2.7% ] one week to three weeks

[ 6.7% ] one month

[ 9.9% ] two months

[ 10.2% ] three months

[ 15.4% ] 3-6 months

[ 15.1% ] 6 months to one year

[ 40.0% ] over one year

11. When did you stop working at your last job?

Month \_\_\_\_ Year 19\_\_\_\_

12. How much did you earn on your last job? (Answer "per hour" if you were paid an hourly wage, answer "per week" if you were paid by the week, etc.) *Choose one.*

\$\_\_\_\_\_ per hour

\$\_\_\_\_\_ per day

mean: 6.40

mean: 94.71

median: 5.00

median: 70

\$\_\_\_\_\_ per week

\$\_\_\_\_\_ per month

mean: 270.30

mean: 1406.67

median: 200

median: 1000

13. Did you ever hold a job for more than 3 months?

YES [ 90.0% ] NO [ 10.0% ]

14. How long did you work at your longest job? \_\_\_\_\_ Months

mean: 48.36

median: 24

15. What type of job was your longest job? \_\_\_\_\_

16. When did you leave your longest job?

Month \_\_\_\_ Year 19\_\_\_\_

17. Why did you leave your longest job? (*Check one.*)

[ 9.9% ] Job ended

[ 11.2% ] Layoffs/Plant closing

[ 5.5% ] Just stopped going to work

[ 12.4% ] Quit to take another job

[ 15.9% ] Quit for other reasons, what? \_\_\_\_\_

[ 10.7% ] Fired

[ 7.9% ] Other, what? (*misc*) \_\_\_\_\_

[ 21.1% ] Went to Prison [ 5.5% ] Moved

18. How much did you earn on your longest job? (Answer "per hour" if you were paid an hourly wage, answer "per week" if you were paid by the week, etc.) *Choose one.*

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per hour

mean: 6.46  
median: 5.25

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per week  
mean: 343.59  
median: 213

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per day

mean: 74.67  
median: 62.5

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month

mean: 1363.27  
median: 900

#### PART D

The next questions are also only about the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR. Look at the calendar to help you remember what you were doing during these months.

I.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you do any burglaries? (Count any time that you broke into a house or a car or a business in order to take something.)

YES [ 20.6% ]

NO [ 79.4% ]

**IF YOU DID NO BURGLARIES IN THE STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR  
PLEASE GO ON TO PAGE 25**

2. In all, how many burglaries did you do?

[ ] 11 or more

[ ] 1 to 10

How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Burglaries

3. During how many of those months did you do one or more burglaries?

0: [11.3%] 1: [38.8%] 2: [13.8%] 3: [8.8%] 4: [16.3%]

5: [1.3%] 6: [5.0%] 7: [1.3%] 8: [0%] 9: [3.8%]

4. In the months when you did burglaries, how often did you usually do them? (*CHECK ONE BOX*)

EVERY DAY OR  
ALMOST EVERY DAY [ 9.0% ]

How many  
per *day*?

1-2: [57.2%]

3-4: [28.6%]

10: [14.3%]

How many days  
a week usually? [ ]

2: [37.5%]

4-5: [25.0%]

6: [25.0%]

SEVERAL TIMES  
A WEEK [17.9%]

How many  
per *week*? [ ]

2: [9.1%]

3: [72.7%]

4: [9.1%]

18: [9.1%]

EVERY WEEK OR  
ALMOST EVERY WEEK [20.9%]

How many  
per month? [ ]  
1: [ 7.7%]  
3-4: [61.6%]  
5: [ 7.7%]  
7: [ 7.7%]  
over 10: [15.4%]

LESS THAN  
EVERY WEEK [52.2%]

How many  
per month? [ ]  
1-2: [94.3%]  
3: [ 2.9%]  
5: [ 2.9%]

5. How many of these burglaries were you arrested for? (Include all of the times you were arrested for doing a burglary, even if you were charged with something else.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrests for burglaries

0: [25.8%] 1: [37.1%] 2: [10.1%] 3: [6.7%] 4: [7.9%] 5: [ 1.1%] 6: [ 6.7%]  
7: [ 2.2%] 13: [ 1.1%] 29: [ 1.1%]

6. When you entered or broke into places to do a burglary, how often did you carry a weapon or use a weapon to threaten or injure someone?

[ 11.8% ] All the time  
[ 6.5% ] Most of the time  
[ 2.2% ] About half the time  
[ 3.2% ] Some of the time  
[ 6.5% ] Once  
[ 69.9% ] Never

7. When you went on a burglary, did you go after cash or goods?

[ 31.5% ] Cash [ 3.4% ] Goods [ 65.2% ] Both

8. If you went after cash, about how much money could you get from a typical burglary?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per burglary

mean: 1276  
median: 300

9. If you went after goods, about how much money could you get from selling the goods from a typical burglary?

\$ \_\_\_\_ per burglary

mean: 2923

median: 500

II.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you rob any businesses, any persons, do any muggings, street robberies, purse snatches, or hold-ups in someone's house or car? (Do not include any hold-ups during a burglary that you already mentioned.)

YES [ 17.8% ]

NO [ 82.2% ]

**IF YOU DID NO ROBBERIES IN THE STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR  
PLEASE GO ON TO PAGE 27**

2. In all, how many robberies did you do?

[ ] 11 or more

[ ] 1 to 10

How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Robberies

3. During how many of those months did you rob someone? \_\_\_\_\_ Months

0: [3.1%] 1: [48.4%] 2: [12.5%] 3: [17.2%] 4: [7.8%] 5: [4.7%] 8: [1.6%]

9: [4.7%]

4. In the months when you robbed someone, how often did you do it? (CHECK ONE BOX)

EVERY DAY OR  
ALMOST EVERY DAY [ 7.0% ]

How many  
per day? [ ]

1: [20.0%]

2: [40.0%]

3: [20.0%]

5: [20.0%]

How many days  
a week usually? [ ]

1: [20.0%]

2: [40.0%]

3: [20.0%]

5: [20.0%]

SEVERAL TIMES  
A WEEK [12.3%]

How many  
per week? [ ]

2: [42.9%]

3: [42.9%]

4: [14.3%]

EVERY WEEK OR  
ALMOST EVERY WEEK [ 7.0% ]

How many  
per month? [ ]

3: [100%]

LESS THAN  
EVERY WEEK

[73.7%]

How many  
per month? [ ]

1: [70.6%]

2: [14.7%]

3: [5.9%]

4: [2.9%]

5: [5.9%]

5. How many of these robberies were you arrested for? (Include all of the times you were arrested for robbing a person even if you were charged with something else.)

\_\_\_ Arrests for robbing people

0: [29.6%] 1: [42.3%] 2: [12.7%] 3: [5.6%] 4: [5.6%] 5: [1.4%] 6: [2.8%]

6. When you robbed someone, how often did you carry a weapon or use a weapon to threaten or injure someone?

[ 31.2% ] All the time

[ 10.4% ] Most of the time

[ 2.6% ] About half the time

[ 3.9% ] Some of the time

[ 20.8% ] Once

[ 31.2% ] Never

7. About how much money did you make from these robberies?

\$ \_\_\_ per robbery

**mean: 1721**

**median: 450**

III.

- 1a. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you ever hurt or kill someone during a burglary (break-in) or a robbery?

YES [ 6.2% ]

NO [ 93.8% ]

- 1b. If you answered "yes" to question 1a: Altogether during these months how many people did you hurt or kill during a burglary or robbery?

\_\_\_ People

1: [61.9%] 2: [14.3%] 3: [19.0%] 4: [4.8%]

1c. If you answered "yes" to question 1a: What kind of weapon did you use to hurt or kill these people? (Check all that apply)

- [ 24.0% ] No weapon/Bare hands
- [ 32.0% ] Hand gun
- [ 48.0% ] Knife
- [ 20.0% ] Rifle/Shotgun
- [ 8.0% ] Other, what kind?  
Baseball bat [2 of 25 wrote in]

The frequencies above apply to the population answering "YES" to question III(1a).

IV. The questions on this page DO NOT include things that happened during a robbery or burglary. Look at the calendar. Remember to answer for the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR.

1. Even if no one was hurt, during the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you assault someone, threaten someone with a weapon, shoot at someone, try to cut someone, or beat or strangle someone?

YES [ 24.1% ]                      NO [ 75.9% ]

**IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTION 1, GO ON TO PAGE 31**

2. Altogether, during those months how many times did you do these things? (Not during a burglary or robbery)

\_\_\_\_\_ Times

0: [11.3%] 1: [48.5%] 2: [16.5%] 3: [11.3%] 4: [1.0%] 5: [3.1%] 6: [1.0%]  
7: [1.0%] 8: [1.0%] 10: [2.1%] 12: [1.0%] 15: [1.0%] 50: [1.0%]

3. How many people did you injure or kill? (Not during a burglary or robbery)

\_\_\_\_\_ People

0: [23.5%] 1: [43.9%] 2: [19.4%] 3: [7.1%] 4: [2.0%] 5: [2.0%] 6: [2.0%]

4. How many times were you arrested when you assaulted, threatened, shot at, tried to cut, or beat or strangled someone?

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrests

0: [28.3%] 1: [51.5%] 2: [15.2%] 3: [1.0%] 4: [2.0%] 10: [1.0%] 12: [1.0%]

5. When you did any of these things, how often did you use a weapon?

[ 14.5% ] All the time

[ 7.3% ] Most of the time

- [ 4.5% ] About half the time
- [ 8.2% ] Some of the time
- [ 26.4% ] Once
- [ 39.1% ] Never

6. What kind or weapon did you use?  
(Check all that apply)

- [ 27.8% ] No weapon/Bare hands
- [ 40.0% ] Hand gun
- [ 33.3% ] Knife
- [ 12.2% ] Rifle/Shotgun
- [ 13.3% ] Other, what kind?  
Baseball bat [4 of 90 wrote in]

7. Do you think that any person you hurt might have died? If so, how many persons?

NO [ 73.5% ] YES [ 26.5% ] How many? \_\_\_\_\_ People

1: [53.8%] 2: [8.7%] 3: [8.7%] 4: [3.8%] 5: [ 3.8%] No Answer: [23.1%]

V.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you do any theft or boosting? That is, did you steal from a till or cash register, shop lift, or pick pockets, or take something from someone without their knowledge? (Do not include car theft.)

YES [ 16.5% ] NO [ 83.5% ]

**IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTION 1, GO ON TO PAGE 33**

2. In all, how many thefts did you do?

[ ] 11 or more [ ] 1 to 10 How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Thefts

3. During how many of those months did you do one or more thefts?

\_\_\_\_\_ Months

0: [3.1%] 1: [29.2%] 2: [20.0%] 3: [16.9%] 4: [16.9%] 5: [1.4%] 6: [ 7.7%]  
7: [ 1.5%] 8: [ 1.5%] 9: [ 1.5%]

4. In the months when you did thefts, how often did you usually do them? (CHECK ONE BOX)

EVERY DAY OR  
ALMOST EVERY DAY [17.5%]

How many  
per *day*?  
1: [66.7%]  
2: [33.3%]

How many days  
a week usually? [ ]  
1: [14.3%]  
3: [14.3%]  
5: [28.6%]  
7: [42.9%]

SEVERAL TIMES  
A WEEK [26.3%]

How many  
per *week*? [ ]  
1: [7.7%]  
2: [38.5%]  
3: [7.7%]  
5: [38.5%]  
10: [7.7%]

EVERY WEEK OR  
ALMOST EVERY WEEK [8.8%]

How many  
per *month*? [ ]  
1: [20.0%]  
2: [20.0%]  
3: [20.0%]  
4: [20.0%]  
7: [20.0%]

LESS THAN  
EVERY WEEK [47.4%]

How many  
per *month*? [ ]  
1: [46.4%]  
2: [21.4%]  
3: [17.9%]  
4: [7.1%]  
5: [7.1%]

5. How many of these thefts were you arrested for? (Include all of the times you were arrested for doing a theft even if you were charged with something else.)

\_\_\_ Arrests for thefts

0: [45.5%] 1: [18.2%] 2: [16.7%] 3: [4.5%] 4: [4.5%] 6: [4.5%] 9: [1.5%]  
10: [1.5%] 12: [1.5%] 17: [1.5%]

6. About how much money did you make from these thefts? \$ \_\_\_ per theft

mean: 778  
median: 100

VI.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you steal any cars, trucks or motorcycles?

YES [8.5%] NO [91.5%]

IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTION 1, GO ON TO PAGE 35

2. In all, how many times did you steal a vehicle (a car, truck or motorcycle)?

11 or more     1 to 10    How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Vehicle thefts

3. During how many of those months did you steal one or more vehicles?

\_\_\_\_ Months

0: [5.7%] 1: [60.0%] 2: [2.9%] 3: [2.9%] 4: [11.4%] 5: [8.6%] 6: [0%]  
7: [2.9%] 9: [2.9%] 11: [2.9%]

4. In the months when you stole a vehicle, how often did you usually steal one? (CHECK ONE BOX)

EVERY DAY OR  
ALMOST EVERY DAY [12.5%]

How many  
per *day*?  
1: [100%]

How many days  
a week usually? [ ]  
1: [66.7%]  
7: [33.3%]

SEVERAL TIMES  
A WEEK [20.8%]

How many  
per *week*? [ ]  
1: [16.7%]  
2: [33.3%]  
3: [16.7%]  
4: [16.7%]  
5: [16.7%]

EVERY WEEK OR  
ALMOST EVERY WEEK [0%]

How many  
per *month*? [ ]

LESS THAN  
EVERY WEEK [66.7%]

How many  
per *month*? [ ]  
1: [86.7%]  
2: [6.7%]  
8: [6.7%]

5. How many of these vehicle thefts were you arrested for? (Include all of the times you were arrested for stealing a vehicle, even if you were charged with something else.)

\_\_\_\_ Arrests for vehicle thefts

0: [22.2%] 1: [38.9%] 2: [13.9%] 3: [8.3%] 4: [8.3%] 5: [2.8%] 7: [2.8%]  
13: [2.8%]

6. When you stole vehicles did you usually sell the vehicle or its parts?

YES [29.7%]

NO [70.3%]

7. About how much money did you make from vehicle thefts? \$ \_\_\_\_ per car, motorcycle, etc.

**mean: 651**

**median: 100**

VII.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you ever forge something, use a stolen or bad credit card, or pass a bad check?

YES [ 11.7% ]

NO [ 88.3% ]

**IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTION 1, GO ON TO PAGE 37**

2. In all, how many times did you forge something, use a bad credit card, or pass a bad check?

[ ] 11 or more [ ] 1 to 10 How many? \_\_\_\_ Forgeries/Cards/Checks

3. During how many of those months did you forge something, use a bad credit card, or pass a bad check?

\_\_\_\_ Months

0: [4.5%] 1: [45.5%] 2: [31.8%] 3: [4.5%] 4: [2.3%] 6: [2.3%] 7: [2.3%]

8: [4.5%] 30: [2.3%]

4. In the months when you did forgeries, used bad cards, or passed bad checks, how often did you usually do these things? (*CHECK ONE BOX*)

EVERY DAY OR  
ALMOST EVERY DAY [25.7%]

How many  
per *day*?

1: [22.2%]

2: [33.3%]

3: [11.1%]

5: [11.1%]

6: [11.1%]

10: [11.1%]

How many days  
a week usually? [ ]

2: [25.0%]

3: [25.0%]

5: [37.5%]

6: [12.5%]

SEVERAL TIMES  
A WEEK [25.7%]

How many  
per *week*? [ ]

1: [11.1%]

2: [11.1%]

3: [44.4%]

7: [22.2%]

20: [11.1%]

EVERY WEEK OR  
ALMOST EVERY WEEK [11.4%]

How many  
per *month*? [ ]

1: [20.0%]

2: [20.0%]

3: [20.0%]

5: [20.0%]

12: [20.0%]

LESS THAN EVERY WEEK	[37.1%]	How many per <i>month</i> ? [ ]
		1: [23.1%]
		2: [46.2%]
		4: [ 7.7%]
		6: [ 7.7%]
		12: [ 7.7%]
		30: [ 7.7%]

5. How many of these forgeries, bad checks, or credit cards were you arrested for? (Include all of the times you were arrested for doing one of these things even if you were charged with something else.)  
 \_\_\_ Arrests

0: [30.4%] 1: [30.4%] 2: [17.4%] 3: [4.3%] 4: [2.2%] 5: [4.3%] 6: [2.2%]  
 10: [2.2%] 12: [2.2%] 14: [2.2%] 30: [2.2%]

6. In a typical month on the street, about how much money would these forgeries, bad checks and credit cards add up to? \$ \_\_\_ per month

mean: 1643  
 median: 500

VIII.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you do any frauds or swindles (illegal cons) of a person, business, or the government?

YES [ 3.3% ] NO [ 96.7% ]

**IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTIONS 1, GO ON TO PAGE 39**

2. In all, how many frauds or swindles did you do?

[ ] 11 or more [ ] 1 to 10 How many? \_\_\_ Frauds or Swindles

3. During how many of those months did you do one or more frauds or swindles?

\_\_\_ Months

0: [14.3%] 1: [14.3%] 2: [14.3%] 3: [7.1%] 4: [14.3%] 6: [ 7.1%] 7: [ 7.1%]  
 8: [14.3%] 20: [7.1%]

4. In the months when you did a fraud or swindle, how often did you usually do them? (CHECK ONE BOX)

EVERY DAY OR ALMOST EVERY DAY [30.8%]	How many per <i>day</i> ?	How many days a week usually? [ ]
	1: [33.3%]	4: [33.3%]
	2: [33.3%]	5: [33.3%]
	20: [33.3%]	7: [33.3%]

SEVERAL TIMES  
A WEEK [ 7.7% ] How many  
per week? [ ]  
5: [100%]

EVERY WEEK OR  
ALMOST EVERY WEEK [ 0% ] How many  
per month? [ ]

LESS THAN  
EVERY WEEK [61.5%] How many  
per month? [ ]  
1: [71.4%]  
2: [14.3%]  
4: [14.3%]

5. How many of these frauds or swindles were you arrested for? (Include all of the times you were arrested for doing a fraud or swindle even if you were charged with something else.)

\_\_\_ Arrests for frauds or swindles

0: [57.1%] 1: [14.3%] 3: [14.3%] 4: [7.1%] 10: [7.1%]

6. In a typical month on the street, about how much money did you make from these frauds or swindles?  
\$ \_\_\_ per month

mean: 10,926

median: 1,000

IX.

1. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR did you ever deal in drugs? That is, did you make, sell, smuggle or move drugs?

YES [ 28.7% ]

NO [ 71.3% ]

**IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTION 1, GO ON TO PAGE 41**

2. In all, how many drug deals did you do?

[ ] 11 or more [ ] 1 to 10 How many? \_\_\_ Drug Deals

3. During how many of those months did you do one or more drug deals?

\_\_\_ Months

0: [2.7%] 1: [13.4%] 2: [11.6%] 3: [17.0%] 4: [37.5%] 6: [2.7%] 7: [0.9%]  
8: [2.7%] 10: [0.9%] 12: [5.4%] 15: [0.9%] 48: [0.9%] over 99: [2.7%]

4. In the months when you did drug deals how often did you usually do them? (CHECK ONE BOX)

EVERY DAY OR ALMOST EVERY DAY [62.6%]	How many per <i>day</i> ? 1-5: [39.1%] 6-10: [23.9%] 10-50: [24.0%] over 50:[13.1%]	How many days a week usually? [ ] 1-3: [ 6.6%] 4-6: [20.0%] 7-10: [66.7%] over 10:[ 4.4%]
--	--	--

SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK [16.8%]	How many per <i>week</i> ? [ ] 1-3: [44.5%] 4-6: [33.3%] 7-10: [16.8%] over 10:[ 5.6%]
---------------------------------	---

EVERY WEEK OR ALMOST EVERY WEEK [ 5.6%]	How many per <i>month</i> ? [ ] 1-3: [37.5%] 4-6: [62.5%]
--	--

LESS THAN EVERY WEEK [15.0%]	How many per <i>month</i> ? [ ] 1-3: [85.7%] 4-6: [ 4.8%] 7-10: [ 4.8%] over 10:[ 4.8%]
---------------------------------	--

5. How many of these drug deals were you arrested for? \_\_\_\_ Arrests for drugs  
0: [50.9%] 1: [26.3%] 2: [14.0%] 3: [6.1%] 5: [1.8%] 6: [ 1.9%]

6. What kinds of drugs did you deal? (check all that apply.)

- [ 7.0% ] Heroin
- [ 1.8% ] Methadone
- [ 9.6% ] Uppers
- [ 10.5% ] Downers
- [ 2.6% ] Crack
- [ 70.2% ] Cocaine
- [ 64.0% ] Marijuana
- [ 6.1% ] PCP/Angel Dust
- [ 12.3% ] Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

7. In a typical month on the street, about how much money did you make dealing drugs?

\$ \_\_\_\_ per month

mean: 4272

median: 1000

8. In a typical month on the street, about how much drugs, in money terms, did you use yourself?

\$ \_\_\_\_ per month

mean: 1220

median: 200

X.

1. This is a list of reasons men have given for doing crimes. Go through the whole list and show how important each reason was for the crimes you did during the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR. (Circle a number for each reason.)

	Did Not Happen/Does Not Apply	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Losing your job....	56.1%	8.3%	7.3%	10.4%	17.9%
Heavy debts.....	56.8%	11.5%	8.4%	11.3%	12.0%
Good opportunity....	41.2%	16.3%	14.2%	14.0%	14.2%
Couldn't get a job..	53.3%	11.4%	10.4%	9.6%	15.4%
Revenge or anger....	54.9%	14.5%	9.8%	6.0%	14.8%
Excitement and kicks	49.6%	18.0%	13.4%	12.3%	6.7%
To get money for good times and high living.....	48.0%	10.4%	12.4%	12.9%	16.2%
Friends' ideas.....	59.8%	16.0%	10.6%	8.2%	5.4%
To get money for drugs.....	56.5%	13.4%	8.4%	8.1%	13.7%
To get money for rent, food, self support.....	44.9%	6.3%	13.1%	10.6%	25.0%

Just felt nervous and tense.....	<b>60.0 %</b>	<b>16.4 %</b>	<b>11.0 %</b>	<b>8.2 %</b>	<b>4.4 %</b>
To support your family.....	<b>58.9 %</b>	<b>8.7 %</b>	<b>7.1 %</b>	<b>7.9 %</b>	<b>17.3 %</b>
Blew up -- lost your cool.....	<b>56.4 %</b>	<b>13.5 %</b>	<b>10.2 %</b>	<b>7.4 %</b>	<b>12.5 %</b>
Because you had taken drugs.....	<b>59.8 %</b>	<b>10.6 %</b>	<b>8.5 %</b>	<b>8.2 %</b>	<b>12.9 %</b>
Because you had been drinking.....	<b>45.7 %</b>	<b>10.7 %</b>	<b>11.7 %</b>	<b>10.4 %</b>	<b>21.6 %</b>

2. Again look at the calendar. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR how much of your total income came from crime?

- [ **47.7 %** ] 0%
- [ **14.1 %** ] Less than 10%
- [ **7.8 %** ] 10% to 25%
- [ **9.0 %** ] 25% to 50%
- [ **21.4 %** ] More than half

3. In a typical month during the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR, about how much money did you make from all your crimes?

\$ \_\_\_\_ per month

**mean: 6271**

**median: 125**

4. Look at the calendar. During the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR, how many times were you arrested for each of the following crimes? Count an arrest even if you did not actually do the crime you were arrested for. (Check *NONE* if not arrested for that crime.)

BURGLARY \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]

**23.4% arrested at least once**  
**6.6% arrested more than once**

ROBBERY OR ARMED ROBBERY \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]

**17.2% arrested at least once**  
**3.2% arrested more than once**

ASSAULT,  
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT OR  
ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
(Do not include sexual assault)

**21.1% arrested at least once**  
**5.8% arrested more than once**

MURDER OR  
 MANSLAUGHTER \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
 12.8% arrested at least once  
 0.3% arrested more than once

AUTO THEFT,  
 MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
 9.7% arrested at least once  
 2.7% arrested more than once

THEFT, GRAND THEFT,  
 LARCENY OR GRAND LARCENY \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
 9.4% arrested at least once  
 2.7% arrested more than once

FORGERY,  
 USE OF A STOLEN OR  
 BAD CREDIT CARD  
 OR BAD CHECK PASSING \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
 10.5% arrested at least once  
 2.7% arrested more than once

FRAUD \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
 2.4% arrested at least once  
 0.3% arrested more than once

SELLING DRUGS,  
 POSSESSING DRUGS FOR SALE,  
 OR TRANSPORTING DRUGS \_\_\_\_\_ arrests OR NONE [ ]  
 16.9% arrested at least once  
 4.6% arrested more than once

5a. The questions on this page are only for men who did a burglary (break-in), robbery, theft, car theft, forgery, fraud or swindle during the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR. Did you do any of these crimes during these months?  
 YES [ 41.1% ] NO [ 58.9% ]

5b. If you answered "yes" to question 5a: When you did these crimes, how often did you do each of the following things? (Circle one number next to each thing listed.)

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Always</u>
Worked out a plan for the crime before you went out to do it	45.8%	20.3%	11.9%	22.0%
Found places or persons with a lot of money.....	46.6%	12.5%	16.5%	24.4%
Learned about alarms, hours, or money transfers.....	67.2%	6.3%	9.8%	16.7%

Decided to do the crime on the spot.....	39.4%	26.3%	15.4%	18.9%
Worked out an escape plan before doing the crime.....	55.7%	10.3%	14.4%	19.5%
Got special equipment such as burglary tools.....	67.4%	11.4%	9.1%	12.0%
Worked with partners.....	54.6%	19.0%	10.3%	16.1%
Lined up a fence or buyer before the crime.....	68.8%	9.8%	6.4%	15.0%
Used tips to line places up....	71.1%	16.8%	7.5%	4.6%
Only cased a place or person just before the crime.....	53.2%	24.3%	10.4%	12.1%
Stole a car or got a gun that could not be traced.....	79.8%	9.2%	3.5%	7.5%
Followed a person to a safe place to do the crime.....	78.0%	12.7%	5.8%	3.5%

6. These questions are only about the crime(s) for which you are now serving a sentence. What charge(s) were you convicted of that you are serving time for now? (Check all that apply.)

- [ 9.8% ] Assault/ADW (not sexual assault)
- [ 4.5% ] Auto Theft/Vehicle Theft
- [ 17.0% ] Burglary
- [ 8.9% ] Drug Possession
- [ 12.9% ] Drug Sales
- [ 8.1% ] Forgery/Bad check/Bad credit card
- [ 1.9% ] Fraud or Swindle
- [ 1.9% ] Kidnapping
- [ 15.8% ] Murder/Manslaughter
- [ 1.9% ] Possession or receiving stolen property
- [ 7.7% ] Rape
- [ 13.9% ] Robbery
- [ 20.8% ] Sex offense (other than rape)
- [ 4.8% ] Theft/Grand theft/Larceny

- [ 6.7% ] Weapons charge
- [ 8.6% ] Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 Party to a crime
- 7 Arson
- 11 Attempted murder
- 2 Escape

7. Did you hire your own lawyer to defend you against these charges?

YES [ 26.3% ]                      NO [ 73.7% ]

8. For these convictions, what crimes, if any, do you think you really did? (*Check all that apply.*)

- [ 11.1% ] Assault/ADW (not sexual assault)
- [ 4.9% ] Auto Theft/Vehicle Theft
- [ 19.2% ] Burglary
- [ 11.7% ] Drug Possession
- [ 14.9% ] Drug Sales
- [ 9.2% ] Forgery/Bad check/Bad credit card
- [ 2.2% ] Fraud or Swindle
- [ 2.2% ] Kidnapping
- [ 11.7% ] Murder/Manslaughter
- [ 3.3% ] Possession or receiving stolen property
- [ 5.4% ] Rape
- [ 14.4% ] Robbery
- [ 17.3% ] Sex offense (other than rape)
- [ 6.8% ] Theft/Grand theft/Larceny
- [ 8.1% ] Weapons charge
- [ 8.1% ] Other, what?

9. Did you have a job at the time of your arrest?

YES [ 51.4% ]                      NO [ 48.6% ]

10. At the time you did the crime you were arrested for, did you think you would get caught?

YES [ 40.7% ]                      NO [ 58.8% ]

11. Do you think you could do the same crime(s) again without getting caught?

NO [ 80.5% ]                      YES [ 19.5% ] How many times? \_\_\_\_ times

0	15.2%
1	3.0%

2	15.2%
4	3.0%
5	9.1%
9	3.0%
10	18.2%
12	3.0%
over 50	30.3%

Here are three more questions about uncertainty.

	<u>No Chance</u>	<u>Low Chance</u>	<u>Even Chance</u>	<u>High Chance</u>	<u>Certain</u>
12. What is the chance the average person doing the same crime(s) would get caught?.....	2.4%	9.0%	33.7%	34.2%	20.6%
13. Once arrested, what is the chance of being convicted and sentenced to prison for this type of crime?.....	2.4%	5.8%	16.9%	43.7%	31.2%
14. What is the chance the average person doing a <u>burglary</u> would get caught?.....	1.0%	15.9%	43.0%	29.8%	10.3%

15. When you described your crimes during the STREET MONTHS ON THE CALENDAR, did you include any of the crimes you are now doing time on?

[ 63.0% ] Yes

[ 31.9% ] No

[ 5.1% ] Some but not all

16. How long have you served on your present sentence?

\_\_\_ Years and/or \_\_\_ Months

mean: 39.76 months

median: 24

17. How long do you think you have left to serve on your present sentence?

\_\_\_ Years and/or \_\_\_ Months

mean: 72.62 months

median: 26

18. If you were offered a full-time job paying \$3.85 an hour when you are released, would you take it?

YES [ 72.0% ]

NO [ 28.0% ]

### PART E

The last few questions are about your background.

1. When were you born?

\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Month \_\_\_ Year

2. What race do you most closely identify with?

[ ] Asian

[ 30.3% ] Black

[ 4.1% ] Native American

[ 59.9% ] White

[ 5.7% ] Other

3. Do you consider your ethnicity to be Hispanic?

[ 7.7% ] Hispanic

[ 92.3% ] Non-Hispanic

4. What is the highest grade you finished in school? Do not include classes you've taken in the current prison term.

[ 0.7% ] No schooling

[ 2.6% ] 6th grade or less

[ 12.1% ] 7th - 9th grade

[ 32.2% ] 10th - 11th grade

[ 19.7% ] High school graduate

[ 27.7% ] Some college (includes vocational schools)

[ 3.3% ] College graduate

[ 1.7% ] Post graduate study

5. At the present time, are you: (check one)

[ 17.5% ] Married

[ 2.6% ] Widowed

[ 24.2% ] Divorced

[ 6.9% ] Separated

[ 48.8% ] Never married

6. How many times have you been married?

[ ] Never OR \_\_\_ Times

0: [49.3%] 1: [35.3%] 2: [10.1%] 3+: [5.3%]

7. Do you have any children or other dependents?

YES [ 65.3% ] NO [ 34.7% ]

8a. Were you helping to support any children or other dependents at the time of your most recent arrest?

YES [ 58.5% ] How many? NO [ 41.5% ]

\_\_\_ dependents

1: [28.3%] 2: [31.9%] 3: [21.7%] 4: [11.5%] 5+: [6.6%]

8b. If you answered "yes" to question 8a: How are these dependents being supported now?

[ 37.5% ] Other parent

[ 7.8% ] Grandparents

[ 30.1% ] AFDC/Welfare

[ 3.9% ] Other government support

[ 10.5% ] Don't know

[ 5.1% ] Other, how?

Foster parents [2 wrote in]

Support themselves [11 wrote in]

## PART F

The last few questions are about prison programs you might have been in during your current prison term (at any prison, but only for this term).

1a. During this term, have you ever been in an adult basic education program (classes up to the 9th grade)?

YES [ 33.2% ] NO [ 66.8% ]

Why not?  
(Check the main reason below.)

[ 83.7% ] Don't need this program

- [ 1.9% ] Not given at this prison
- [ 0.8% ] Heard bad things about it
- [ 1.9% ] Staff didn't want me to take it
- [ 1.6% ] Too busy to take it
- [ 1.6% ] Not qualified to take it
- [ 8.5% ] Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

1b. If you answered "yes" to question 1a: Counting this month, how many months altogether have you taken adult basic education classes?

\_\_\_ Months

mean: 8.03

median: 6

1c. If you answered "yes" to question 1a: How many hours a week did you spend in the classes?

\_\_\_ Hours per week

mean: 19.36

median: 15.5

1d. If you answered "yes" to question 1a: Here is a list of reasons why some men take adult basic education programs. How important was each of these reasons to you? (Circle one number next to *each* reason.)

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Break up boredom, see what it was like.....	47.1%	20.0%	16.8%	16.1%
Be with friends or make friends.....	57.8%	22.1%	11.0%	9.1%
Help make parole.....	34.8%	17.4%	17.4%	30.3%
Help myself; learn or work toward a diploma.....	11.1%	4.3%	14.2%	70.4%

1e. If you answered "yes" to question 1a: How important do you think this adult basic education program is to helping you do the following things? (Circle one number for *each*.)

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Adjust to prison life.....	43.4%	23.0%	15.1%	18.4%
Get a better education....	7.6%	7.0%	13.9%	71.5%
Get and keep a job.....	13.5%	9.0%	20.5%	57.1%
Stay out of crime.....	15.1%	9.4%	11.9%	63.5%

2a. During this term, have you ever been in a high school education program to get your G.E.D. or diploma?

YES [ 30.8% ]

NO [ 69.2% ] Why not? (Check the main reason below.)

[ 80.3% ] Don't need this program

[ 1.8% ] Not given at this prison

[ 0% ] Heard bad things about it

[ 0.9% ] Staff didn't want me to take it

[ 2.8% ] Too busy to take it

[ 4.6% ] Not qualified to take it

[ 9.6% ] Other, what?

2b. If you answered "yes" to question 2a: Counting this month, how many months altogether have you taken high school education classes?

\_\_\_ Months

**mean: 10.14**

**median: 6**

2c. If you answered "yes" to question 2a: How many hours a week did you spend in the classes?

\_\_\_ Hours per week

**mean: 19.64**

**median: 15**

2d. If you answered "yes" to question 2a: Here is a list of reasons why some men take high school education programs. How important was each of these reasons to you? (Circle one number next to each reason.)

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Break up boredom, see what it was like.....	48.5%	23.1%	16.2%	12.3%
Be with friends or make friends.....	60.3%	20.6%	9.9%	9.2%
Help make parole.....	32.8%	11.5%	23.7%	32.1%
Help myself; learn or work toward a diploma.....	10.0%	3.6%	10.7%	75.7%

2e. If you answered "yes" to question 2a: How important do you think this high school education program is to helping you do the following things? (*Circle one number for each.*)

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Adjust to prison life.....	48.9%	23.0%	11.5%	16.5%
Get a better education....	10.6%	4.3%	18.4%	66.7%
Get and keep a job.....	12.9%	9.4%	21.6%	56.1%
Stay out of crime.....	21.1%	9.9%	12.7%	56.3%

3a. During this term, have you ever been in a vocational training program (skill or trade training, but not a prison work assignment)?

YES [ 52.5% ]

NO [ 47.5% ]

Why not?  
(Check the main reason below.)

[ 37.2% ] Already have a trade or license

[ 9.0% ] Not given at this prison

[ 1.4% ] Heard bad things about it

[ 9.7% ] Staff didn't want me to take it

[ 7.6% ] Too busy to take it

[ 10.3% ] Not qualified to take it

[ 24.8% ] Other, what?

3b. If you answered "yes" to question 3a: Counting this month, how many months altogether have you been in a vocational training program? \_\_\_\_ Months

**mean: 9.66**  
**median: 7**

3c. If you answered "yes" to question 3a: How many hours a week did you spend in the program?  
\_\_\_\_ Hours per week

**mean: 26**  
**median: 25**

3d. If you answered "yes" to question 3a: Here is a list of reasons why some men take vocational training programs. How important was each of these reasons to you? (*Circle one number next to each reason.*)

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Break up boredom, see what it was like.....	37.7%	24.2%	20.8%	17.4%
Be with friends or make friends.....	56.1%	20.5%	16.6%	6.8%
Help make parole.....	41.3%	11.5%	20.7%	36.5%
Help myself; learn or work toward a diploma.....	7.1%	4.0%	7.1%	81.8%

3e. If you answered "yes" to question 3a: How important do you think this vocational training program is to helping you do the following things? (*Circle one number for each.*)

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Adjust to prison life.....	46.8%	23.6%	13.9%	15.7%
Get a better education....	5.9%	8.6%	20.4%	65.2%
Get and keep a job.....	7.2%	5.8%	20.2%	66.8%
Stay out of crime.....	14.4%	5.9%	14.9%	64.9%

**That is the end of the survey. Thank you for participating. Please put the survey in the envelope and seal it.**

### **PART THREE: THE NET BENEFIT OF IMPRISONMENT IN WISCONSIN**

Based on some of the information provided by the Wisconsin prisoner survey, it is possible to estimate the costs and benefits of imprisonment in Wisconsin. Needless to say, there are many empirical and normative issues that a benefit-cost analysis of imprisonment addresses weakly or not at all. But benefit-cost analyses of imprisonment have figured of late in national debates about corrections policy, and many judgments about the efficacy of imprisonment policies rest on implicit estimates of the costs and benefits of imprisonment.

In simplest form, a benefit-cost ratio of imprisonment can be expressed as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Net Benefit of Imprisonment}}{\text{Per prisoner per year cost of imprisonment}} = \frac{\text{Number of crimes per prisoner per year} \times \text{Social cost per crime}}{\text{Per prisoner per year cost of imprisonment}}$$

The simplicity of the benefit-cost formula, however, masks certain profound analytical difficulties and methodological hurdles. In estimating the benefits and costs of imprisonment in Wisconsin, we have addressed many of these problems. But before turning to these calculations and findings, a review of some of the recent literature in this area, and of the controversies it has engendered, is in order.

***The Zedlewski Controversy.*** In July of 1987 the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) published a report entitled "Making Confinement Decisions." The author of the report was NIJ economist Edwin Zedlewski. Essentially, Zedlewski's study was a benefit-cost analysis of imprisonment. He surveyed cost data from several prison systems and estimated that the annual per prisoner cost of confinement was \$25,000. Using national crime data and the findings of criminal victimization surveys, he estimated that the typical offender commits 187 crimes per year, and that the typical crime exacts \$2,300 in property losses and/or in physical injuries and human suffering. Multiplying these two figures (187 times \$2,300), he calculated that, when on the streets, the typical imprisoned felon was responsible for \$430,000 in "social costs" each year. Dividing that figure by \$25,000 (his estimate of the annual per prisoner cost of confinement), he concluded that incarceration in prison has a benefit-cost ratio of just over 17.

This benefit-cost ratio can be expressed in many ways. For example, according to Zedlewski's analysis, putting 1,000 felons behind prison bars costs society \$25 million per year. But not putting these same felons behind prison bars costs society about \$430 million per year (187,000 crimes times \$2,300 per crime).

At least within criminal justice circles, NIJ's reports tend to get noticed, and like any study that bucks the conventional wisdom in a credible (or credible-looking) way, Zedlewski's analysis attracted its share of critical attention. For example, in their 1988 article, "The New Mathematics of Imprisonment," published in *Crime and Delinquency*, a journal of the National Council of Crime and Delinquency, noted penologists Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins charged that Zedlewski's analysis was fatally flawed.

Essentially, Zimring and Hawkins argued that Zedlewski had overstated the net benefit of incarceration by inflating the numerator (crimes per offender and social costs per crime) and deflating the denominator (annual per prisoner costs of confinement). They cited several good studies to bolster their charge, including one indicating that the typical offender commits fewer than 20 (as opposed to 187) crimes per year.

But like Zedlewski's other critics, Zimring and Hawkins did not use their insights into Zedlewski's methodological errors to recalculate the benefit-cost ratio of imprisonment. Instead, they asserted that such measures were inherently unreliable, dismissed Zedlewski's study as "the wrong dog barking up the wrong tree," and concluded by decrying the fact that, despite sharp escalations in the nation's prison population, many people continue to demand more prisons.

There was, indeed, no shortage of serious methodological and related problems with Zedlewski's analysis. Zedlewski, for example, quoted the results of a survey by the RAND Corporation that "inmates averaged between 187 and 287 crimes per year, exclusive of drug deals." Although he noted that half of the population committed fewer than 15 crimes per year, he utilized the mean in his analysis. Making this one adjustment (using 15 rather than 187 for the number of crimes averted through incapacitation of a criminal), reduces the benefit-cost ratio to 1.38.

Zedlewski has argued that his conclusion holds even if there are large errors in the estimates. The foregoing simple example reveals that this is not the case. In addition, Zedlewski's research brings up several aggregation issues, both across crimes and across jurisdictions. The RAND survey of offenders in prisons and jails in California, Michigan, and Texas contained self-report data on criminal activity, demographics, and criminal records. The Rand study reported that inmates who committed burglaries averaged between 76 and 118 annually, while lesser thieves reported they averaged between 135 and 202 thefts per year. Although there is substantial variation in offense rates, the general pattern is that the pettier the crime, the more frequent the offense. Zedlewski's use of averages obscured these distinctions and inflated savings estimates.

The controversy surrounding Zedlewski's analysis widened with Richard B. Abell's 1989 essay "Beyond Willie Horton: The Battle of the Prison Bulge," published in *Policy Review*, a journal of the Heritage Foundation. In this article, Abell, an Assistant Attorney General of the United States, repeated Zedlewski's findings. He used anecdotes to put flesh on the reality behind the numbers, and to illustrate the potential costs of not imprisoning criminals.

For example, Abell recounted the tale of a Michigan prisoner who in 1975 brutally shot and killed two people in a Detroit bar. A plea-bargain reduced the killer's two first-degree murder charges to second degree, and he received a 20-40 year prison term. But on the day he entered prison he was automatically granted nearly ten years of "good-time" credits. He kept those "credits" even though, after dozens of major disciplinary infractions, his behind-bars behavior was anything but good. His confinement time was further reduced under the terms of State laws designed to relieve prison overcrowding. In 1984, after serving only eight and a half years of his minimum sentence, the killer returned to the streets. Within three months of his early parole, he and a female accomplice--a fugitive who had been serving time in a halfway house--killed again. This time the victims were a local policeman and father of six, and a young woman who was shot as she opened her front door.

Abell's article generated a storm of commentary, especially after an excerpt from it appeared as a featured op-ed essay in the *Wall Street Journal*. In addition to railing against Abell's use of a graph that depicted a powerfully inverse relationship between crime rates and imprisonment rates, many experts challenged his uncritical reliance on Zedlewski's findings and ridiculed his use of "sensationalistic" anecdotes such as the one summarized in the preceding paragraph.

Abell's crime-imprisonment graph was misleading, but not half as much as the critics' assertion that no relationship exists between the probability of being imprisoned and the propensity to commit crime. As noted in Part One of this report, based on existing statistical evidence, the relationship between crime rates and imprisonment rates is ambiguous. By the same token, Abell's embrace of Zedlewski's analysis was uncritical, but no more so than the facile rejection of the same by his (and Zedlewski's) critics.

Finally, there was nothing sensationalistic about Abell's account. Policies that effect the release of convicted criminals have consequences, some of them ugly. It is not sensationalism to recount true stories of innocent persons whose lives were ruined as a result of these policies. And it is not responsible to bury detailed evidence of the harms caused by these policies alongside their victims.

Indeed, the Michigan killer discussed by Abell was atypical in that he had served *more* time in prison than most murderers now do. After lavishing good time credits on its prisoners and reducing their sentences to relieve overcrowding, Michigan released thousands of violent criminals who had served less than half of their sentences in confinement, with tragic results for many of the State's citizens. Similar policies and programs have operated with similar results in many jurisdictions.

Still, the public debate over imprisonment policy is not enriched by analyses, systematic or anecdotal, that overdramatize the benefits of keeping criminals behind bars. Weighing in on the other side, in a September 1989 report prepared for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the RAND Corporation summarized and endorsed the academic and popular literature critical of Zedlewski's analysis. In a footnote, RAND stressed that Zedlewski had erred in using the average figure of 187 crimes per year instead of the median figure of fewer than 15 crimes per year. The report as a whole stressed the need to compare the costs and benefits of imprisonment to the costs and benefits of other correctional sanctions, especially intensively supervised probation programs.

The debate, however, has continued. Zedlewski has defended his research against its critics, and the chief finding of "Making Confinement Decisions" continues to be cited as settled fact in the popular media. In the November 1990 issue of *Reader's Digest*, for example, Zedlewski's 1987 study was cited to support the argument that "to pen every serious offender will cost billions, but it's money well spent." The entire text of this article was reprinted as a full-page ad in *The New York Times* on October 17, 1990.

***The Net Benefit of Imprisonment in Wisconsin.*** As the still brewing Zedlewski controversy suggests, reasonable minds can and do differ over how best to conduct cost-benefit analyses of imprisonment policies, how best to interpret the results of such analyses, and how, if at all, to fashion or reorient public policies accordingly. Based on an analysis of relevant data from the Wisconsin prisoner self-report survey presented in Part Two of this report, however, extremists on either side of this debate are bound to be disappointed. In Wisconsin, the net benefits of imprisonment are neither as large as Zedlewski's analysis would predict, nor as small (or negative) as Zedlewski's fiercest critics would assert.

Table 3.1 shows the yearly rate of crime commission per Wisconsin prisoner measured in four different ways. The average (mean) number of crimes per prisoner per year including drug sales is 1,834. The average (mean) number of crimes per prisoner per year excluding drug sales is 141. The median number of crimes per prisoner per year including drug sales is 25.5. The median number of crimes per prisoner per year excluding drug sales is 12.

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**Table 3.1: Wisconsin Prisoners' Yearly Rate of Crime Commission**

	Including Drug Sales	Excluding Drug Sales
Average	1,834	141
Median	25.5	12

---

Table 3.2 shows the net benefits of imprisonment in Wisconsin measured in six ways. Each measure employs a social cost per crime of \$2,300. Measures 1, 2, and 3 employ the average yearly rate of crime commission with (measure 1) and without (measures 2 and 3) drug sales. Measures 4, 5, and 6 employ the median yearly rate of crime commission with (measure 4) and without (measures 5 and 6) drug sales. Measures 1, 2, 4, and 5 employ a yearly cost per prisoner of \$25,000; measures 3 and 6 employ a yearly cost per prisoner of \$14,000. Thus, for example, measure 1--168.7--is calculated by multiplying 1,834 crimes by \$2,300 and dividing by \$25,000. Likewise, measure 6--1.97--is calculated by multiplying 12 crimes by \$2,300 and dividing by \$14,000.

---

**Table 3.2: Net Benefit of Imprisonment in Wisconsin**

Including Drug Sales, \$25,000 Per Prisoner Per Year Cost:	
Average	Median
1. 168.7	4. 2.3
Excluding Drug Sales, \$25,000 Per Prisoner Per Year Cost:	
2. 13	5. 1.1
Excluding Drug Sales, \$14,000 Per Prisoner Per Year Cost	
3. 23.2	6. 1.97

---

What do these crude figures tell us? The first thing to note is that the figures vary widely; but the second thing to note is that, despite the wide variations all the figures are greater than 1, indicating that in Wisconsin the benefits of imprisonment exceed the costs of imprisonment.

There are arguments for and against each method of measuring the net benefit of imprisonment displayed above. With RAND and other critics of Zedlewski's 1987 study, one might consider any measurement based on the average yearly rate of crime commission to overstate the net benefits of imprisonment due to skewed distribution. While a few offenders commit the majority of crimes, a simple average attributes these crimes evenly across the criminal population. To the extent that the enforcement and judicial systems can assess the relative criminality of offenders, the mean overstates the social savings per individual due to incapacitation.

Though not entirely without justification, the use of averages is highly questionable. Let us, therefore, restrict our attention to the measures based on the survey's findings about the median yearly rate of crime commission--measures 4, 5, and 6 in Table 3.2.

Using the median yearly rate of crime commission including drug sales (25.5), the benefit-cost ratio of imprisonment reaches 2.3 (measure 4 above). But most analysts, including both Zedlewski and RAND, would omit drug sales from any calculation of the net benefits of imprisonment. There is no absolute methodological reason why drug sales should not be included in such calculations.

Drug sales are crimes, and they involve both direct and indirect social costs. Systematic empirical knowledge about the economic and other consequences of drug sales is scarce. Such data as exist--for example, the June 1990 RAND report on drug dealing in Washington, DC.--do not point clearly in the direction of leaving drug sales out of such calculations. Finally, one's moral attitudes toward the distribution of illegal drugs may make one more or less inclined to include drug sales in such calculations, as some people view drug sales as "victimless crimes" and favor drug legalization, while others view drug sales as serious crimes at the root of many other criminal activities and social ills.

Let us, however, concede the case against including drug sales in calculations of the net benefit of imprisonment. Having already adopted the median yearly rate of crime commission as the proper measure, this restricts us to measures 5 and 6 in Table 3.2 above. Measure 5--1.1--is calculated based on a per prisoner per year cost of \$25,000; measure 6--1.97--is based on a per prisoner per year cost of \$14,000. Both Zedlewski and RAND have used \$25,000. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections, however, estimates that it spends about \$14,000 per prisoner per year. If one accepts that estimate, then measure 6--1.97--is the appropriate one.

Based on the foregoing analysis, therefore, **the best available estimate of the net benefit of imprisonment in Wisconsin is probably 1.97 or about 2.** Let us now turn to discuss some of the possible objections to this conclusion, and related policy implications.

***Does Prison Pay in Wisconsin?*** The estimate of a benefit-cost ratio of imprisonment in Wisconsin of 2 can be expressed in several ways. For example, imprisoning a typical felon costs the State \$14,000 per year, but letting him freely roam the streets in search of victims costs society \$28,000 per year; imprisoning 1,000 Wisconsin prisoners costs the state's citizens \$14,000,000, but leaving these criminals on the streets costs the State's citizens \$28,000,000. From this analysis, therefore, it appears that "prison pays" in Wisconsin, though not nearly as much as one would predict based on the widely-debated Zedlewski analysis discussed above.

But is 2 really a good estimate of the net benefit of imprisonment in Wisconsin? Indeed, is not the net benefit of imprisonment in Wisconsin much higher--or far lower--than 2? The answers are that 2 probably does represent a fair estimate, and that, while 2 may be a slight over-estimate of the net benefit of imprisonment in the State, the net is almost undoubtedly greater than 1.

First, it is certainly possible that, as calculated from the Wisconsin prisoner survey, the median yearly rate of crime commission excluding drug sales--12--is either too high or too low; that is, it is possible that the survey understates or exaggerates the amount of criminal activity generated by Wisconsin prisoners when they were on the streets.

Other prisoner surveys have reported a higher median figure, but nothing far out of line with our finding of 12. There is, of course, always the possibility that prisoners in a given survey might exaggerate (or understate) the level of criminal activity, and/or that the extrapolations built into the calculations might exaggerate or understate the actual level of criminal activity among prisoners in the sample. But even if one discounts for these potential data biases by reducing the median figure by 25% from 12 to 9, one still gets a benefit-cost ratio of nearly 1.5. Indeed, one would have to assume that the reported median figure is twice the actual figure in order to get the ratio below 1, and there is absolutely no theoretical or empirical reason for making such an assumption.

Second, one might argue that the social costs per crime figure of \$2,300 is either too high or too low. The *prima facie* argument that it is too high would be strong if we were including drug sales in our calculation of the net benefit of imprisonment; but drug sales have been excluded.

As noted above, Zedlewski's use of \$2,300 was based on his analysis of victimization surveys and related data. In its aforementioned 1989 report, RAND noted that Zedlewski *correctly* included victim losses, expenditures for police, and several other measures, in his estimate of \$2,300 in social costs per crime. RAND, however, maintained that some of Zedlewski's social cost factors (e.g., private security) were inappropriate and served merely to inflate his benefit-cost measure. RAND has estimated the social costs per crime at closer to \$500. On the other hand, more recent victimization surveys, including studies of the socio-economic impact of drug-related crime on "underclass" inner-city neighborhoods, might lead one to judge \$2,300 a gross underestimate of the social costs per crime. But even if one ignores arguments that \$2,300 understates the actual social cost per crime, uses it as an upper-bound estimate, and splits the difference between this estimate and RAND's (i.e., average of \$2,300 and \$500 equals \$1,400), one gets a benefit-cost ratio of 1.2.

Third, one might argue that the Wisconsin Department of Corrections spends more per prisoner per year than its official records indicate. But even if one rejects the Department's own cost figure as too low, increasing it by over 42% to the estimated national average of \$20,000, the resulting estimate of the net benefit of imprisonment is 1.38. Strikingly if only coincidentally, 1.38 is exactly the figure that one gets if one redoes Zedlewski's RAND-data-based analysis but employs a median yearly rate of crime commission of 15 instead of the average figure of 187.

There are at least two other species of objections that could be raised to the finding of a net benefit of imprisonment of about 2 as related above. One species of objections is anchored in a selective reading of the available data and a biased set of methodological assumptions that result in a much higher, or far lower, estimate. The other species of objections is anchored in a facile rejection of any such mode of analysis. Both species are so dumb that they are bound to become extinct.

If one were bent and determined to pick and choose among the available data in ways that might inflate or deflate the net benefit of imprisonment estimate, one could easily do so. On the one side, to get the figure below 1, one might use the median yearly rate of crime commission figure, discount it by 25% for ostensible exaggeration effects or other upward biases, arbitrarily adopt \$500 as the social cost per crime, and impute per prisoner per year costs that are more than 50% above officially calculated costs. On the other side, to reinforce Zedlewski's finding of 17 or to amplify it by a factor of 10 or more, one could calculate on the basis of the average yearly rate of crime commission including drug sales, arbitrarily adopt a figure above \$2,300 as the social cost per crime, and impute per prisoner per year costs that are at or below officially calculated costs. In each case, the findings of the analysis would be more dramatic than what is reported above, but the analysis itself would be of little genuine value to pragmatic-minded corrections policy makers, administrators, and taxpayers--more a source of ideological heat than of policy-relevant light.

Among the fiercest critics of Zedlewski's analysis were analysts and popular commentators who, in effect, wanted to have their corrections cake and eat it too. After enumerating the methodological and other errors of his analysis, they concluded that the findings of any such analysis were inherently unreliable. Theirs was the logic of nihilists who insist not only that people believe in nothing, but in their particular version of nothing. Metaphorically speaking, one is free to believe that the benefit-cost analysis ballpark does not exist, but if one takes that position, then one cannot logically proclaim anyone to be out in left field.

Granted, the range of measures that one can generate by changing this or that element of the analysis might give even the most reasonable-minded person cause to mutter "Garbage in, garbage out." And even if one were to conduct a far more sophisticated study of the same subject, certitude about its findings would still be impossible.

But making imprisonment policy based on implicit assumptions about the criminal characteristics of prisoners is merely a path of lesser intellectual resistance. Getting a rough handle on the net benefit of imprisonment by the type of analysis presented above is a useful way of introducing a measure of rationality into debates about the future of corrections. Both those who insist that prisons are costless panaceas, and those who shout that prisons cost "too much," resist such analysis because they prefer to make corrections policy in the dark.

*Summary and Policy Implications.* Historically, Wisconsin has taken a balanced approach to corrections. Though rooted in liberal and progressive penological traditions, the Wisconsin corrections complex has been, and continues to be, guided by talented and dedicated officials who have done a relatively fine job of protecting Wisconsin's public and its purse. The recent creation of a separate Department of Corrections was a sensible move, and bodes well for the future administration of corrections in Wisconsin.

Over the next decade, Wisconsin is almost certainly going to need to increase its prison capacity by several thousand beds. Based on a large scientific sample of the State's prisoners, and an analysis of the net benefit of imprisonment, it appears that Wisconsin should embark on this expansion without the sense that imprisonment represents a waste of scarce human and financial resources. Generally speaking, the analysis suggests that it costs the State's citizens twice as much to leave the typical felon on the streets, without custodial supervision, than it does to imprison him.

To indicate that "prison pays," however, does not mean that every convicted criminal deserves prison; it does not mean that it is cost-effective to imprison every convicted felon; and it does not mean that it is more cost-effective to imprison offenders than to intensively supervise these same offenders in the community. Indeed, the State's intensive supervision programs are among its most promising, proven, and viable corrections options.

What it does mean, however, is that Wisconsin has reason to make a balanced use of its correctional sanctions, that imprisonment is not "too expensive," and that an affirmative response to the clear and present need for more prison beds is a necessary if unfortunate social investment that will probably pay dividends over time.

**Appendix A**

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM:**

**POLICY INSTITUTE INMATE SURVEY**

This form describes the Policy Institute survey of Wisconsin inmates. It is also the form which you use to indicate that you agree to take the survey. If you agree to participate in the survey, print your name in the space below.

I agree to participate in a survey being conducted by the Policy Institute, an organization that does research on public policy issues. I understand that the purpose of the survey is to collect information from men who are serving time in prison in Wisconsin to find out our opinions and experiences with the criminal justice system, how we are treated in prison, and what are our opinions, past activities, and experiences in doing crime.

I agree to answer the questions I am given to the best of my ability. I understand that my name will be used only to connect my answers to standard information about my stays in Wisconsin prisons (for example, my current sentence, mandatory release date, etc.) My survey will not be seen by an Department of Corrections officials. In addition, my name will not appear in any of the research results.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. I can refuse to answer the questions either now or after I have seen the survey booklet. In return for my participation, I will receive a payment of \$5.00 in my prison account.

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

FIRST

LAST

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Corrections Number

June, 1990

# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

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The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute is a not-for-profit institute established to study public policy issues affecting the state of Wisconsin.

Under the new federalism, government policy increasingly is made at the state and local level. These public policy decisions affect the lives of every citizen in the state of Wisconsin. Our goal is to provide nonpartisan research on key issues that affect citizens living in Wisconsin so that their elected representatives are able to make informed decisions to improve the quality of life and future of the State.

Our major priority is to improve the accountability of Wisconsin's government. State and local government must be responsive to the citizens of Wisconsin in terms of the programs they devise and the tax money they spend. Accountability should be made available in every major area to which Wisconsin devotes the public's funds.

The agenda for the Institute's activities will direct attention and resources to study the following issues: education; welfare and social services; criminal justice; taxes and spending; and economic development.

We believe that the views of the citizens of Wisconsin should guide the decisions of government officials. To help accomplish this, we will conduct semi-annual public opinion polls that are structured to enable the citizens of Wisconsin to inform government officials about how they view major statewide issues. These polls will be disseminated through the media and be made available to the general public and to the legislative and executive branches of State government. It is essential that elected officials remember that all the programs established and all the money spent comes from the citizens of the State of Wisconsin and is made available through their taxes. Public policy should reflect the real needs and concerns of all the citizens of Wisconsin and not those of specific special interest groups.