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Abstract

Since the 1790s, prisons in the United States were built with the means of reducing crime rates through the usage of incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation. However, while it may seem intuitive to assume that higher incarceration rates yield lower crime rates, it is not regularly the case. Using the 2016 States dataset, I examine the effects of incarceration rates and its influence on crime rates in the United States; I suggest that states with higher incarceration rates will have higher crime rates than states with lower incarceration rates. Therefore, the evidence concludes states with high incarceration rates generate higher rates of violent, murder, property, and burglary crime rates than states with lower incarceration rates. However, the impact is relatively low. Conclusively, while there is a positive relationship between incarceration rates and crimes rates, the correlation is not strong nor consistent enough to make a solid argument; rather, the data suggest other factors, such as the education, per capita income and unemployment rate, are contributors to the rise of crime, thus, further research needs to be taken into consideration because incarceration rates cannot be the sole explanation as to why there is an increase of crime rates throughout the United States.

Keywords

incarceration rates, prison, crime rates, incarceration, crime, violence, states

Disciplines

American Politics | Criminology | Political Science

Comments

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Political Science
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Historical Context of Prisons in the United States

Since the American Revolution, imprisonment was a widespread form of criminal punishment; in 1790, the first prison was founded by Pennsylvanian Quakers (Jeness 2016). While the previous intentions of prisons were more of retribution based punishment, prisons then focused on achieving rehabilitation; thus, prisons intended to reduce any future violence through three major mechanisms; the first mechanism was incapacitation, the notion that individuals in prisons cannot commit acts of violence against the society; secondly, prisons reduce crime through deterrence, those who are imprisoned will be less likely to engage in violence after they are released, and lastly was through rehabilitation, a process where individuals receive productive treatment programs and services while in prison (Harding 2019). Additionally, prisons can also teach inmates job skills and treat those who have a record of substance abuse (Roodman 2017). As time progressed, there was an influx of prisons; since the 1970s, there was a massive expansion of prisons; higher incarceration rates and harshes criminal justice responses were a result of the “war on drugs” (Roodman 2017 & Rope 2018). Furthermore, the increase in incarceration rates was a reaction to the crime rates nearly doubling in the 1970s. The United States’ prison population increased by 500% in the past 40 years (Kanvinde 2019); while the total human population in the United States contributes 5% of the world’s population, it claims roughly one-quarter of the world’s prisoners (Gifford 2019). While it may seem intuitive to believe the notion that states with higher incarceration rates are more likely to have lower crime rates than states with low incarceration rates, this notion is not as straightforward as one might expect; rather, it is more complex and condensed than it is portrayed.

Does A Higher Prison Population Necessarily Mean a Reduction in Crime Rates?

Firstly, the paper will examine other scholarly articles and studies that have already begun to answer the question if higher incarceration rates yield lower crime rates, primarily focusing on how states' crime rates variation and observing if there are any vast differences between them. Additionally, the purpose of this paper is to answer the question proposed, which is: does imprisonment have an effect on crime rates? Furthermore, the paper will also look at other variables that have the potential to decrease the crime rates, such as unemployment rate and per capita income. Lastly, if evidence suggests that high prison populations do not result in a reduction of crime rates, then the paper will also suggest and inform other various solutions that can perhaps decrease crime rates committed at a faster rate. However, given by the information provided and studied, the correlation between incarceration and crime rates is inconsistent and unpredictable to formulate a strong and coherent argument that supports the claim mentioned above. Although the crime rates in the 1970s were higher, the trend was neither consistent nor linear; rather, it would fluctuate as time progressed, dropping one-sixth until the 1980s, rising in the early 1990s, declining one-third, and then returning to the same rate as it was in the 1970s during the 21st century (Clear 2008). Furthermore, incarceration through the 1990s only accounted for 6 to 25% of the total reduction in crime rates (Stemen 2017). Additionally, between the years 1980 and 2000, each 10% increase in incarceration rates merely lowered the crime rates by 2 to 4%, and the United States was spending \$33 billion for the same level of public safety it achieved in 1975 (Stemen 2017). Therefore, although the violent crime rate was nearly similar to the rate in 1975, one can observe how there is a steady increase in the incarceration rate. Therefore, this brings a reasonable and valid question to ask: if prisons were created with the intention of reducing crime in society, why is it that the effect of incarceration

has such a weak impact on reducing crime rates? Thus, one can come under the assumption that the structure of the prison systems is inefficient in producing long-term intervention for crime rate prevention. On the other hand, in order to combat the crime frequently occurring throughout various locations in the United States, states began to lock people up in response to crime; therefore, one can also infer that states with higher incarceration rates tend to have higher levels of crime as well. Additionally, there is also evidence that suggests prisons can have alternative consequences and increase crime rates in particular areas. For instance, prisons can increase a person's likelihood to utilize violence, exacerbate pre-existing mental health problems or cause new ones to form, develop internal dispositions that are cynical and distrustful against the justice system, form aggressive strategies to cope, and erode social networks and introduce more obstacles after an inmate's release (Harding 2019). Additionally, incapacitation can also lead to an individual committing crimes during and after prison. Prisoners also face an obstacle, which can be criminogenic; alienation can be a struggle inmates face once they are released. It is also worth mentioning that there are more hurdles for prisoners to encounter once they try to re-enter the world, and these barriers may be far too challenging, cruel, and tedious, which may encourage prisoners to commit violent crimes. Additionally, crimes committed within the prisons may make people better criminals, where they are able to continue other offenses, learn from each other, or strengthen their allegiance with individuals who have social connections that extend outside prison life (Roodman 2017). On the other hand, because there have been budget cuts in mental health services, police and courts are more likely to arrest and convict troubled individuals who suffer from mental illnesses, even though prisons are not equipped to treat them properly and regularly (Glazer 2015). Moreover, people also fail to consider how high incarceration rates can have detrimental economic and social impacts on particular communities;

high incarceration rates have the potential to segregate minority and poor groups from experiencing the benefits that other groups are able to obtain. Having high prison populations throughout the country can impair children, families, mental and physical health, labor markets, and economic and political infrastructures (Clear 2008). Ultimately, there can be many disadvantages in having a high incarceration rate, and one should always consider that crime rates can be affected by other factors and does not necessarily suggest that a decline in crime rates is due to a higher percentage of prison populations. Nonetheless, the steady increase of crime rates has the possibility of increasing incarceration rates as well; while it may seem that prisons were intended to lower the levels of crime, there is a chance that crime rates drive up incarceration, suggesting that incarceration rates do not always yield a reduction in crime rates.

States' Actions Toward the Incarceration and Crime Rate Matter

As mentioned before, the primary goal of imprisonment is to reduce the likelihood of crime occurring in communities and protecting public safety; however, since the 1970s, the causes of future crimes are misunderstood by society (Harding 2019). Thus, there have been numerous studies performed in various states to substantiate or critique the argument that high incarceration rates do not yield low crime rates. Additionally, these articles provide further insight that highlight the need to find other resolutions that could have a greater impact than high incarceration rates. In response to the poor understanding, David J. Harding and other colleagues conducted a study to examine the effects of imprisonment on crime in the community among individuals who had probation and prison sentences. Thus, Harding drew his data from a population of people who were convicted of a felony in Michigan between the years 2003 and 2005 and followed through until June 2015 (Harding 2019). In the article "A Natural Experiment Study of the Effects of Imprisonment on Violence in the Community," Harding unveils that

being sentenced to prison had little to no significant impact on the arrest of convictions for violent crimes after being released from prison (Harding 2019, Mauer 2014, and Alper 2018). Another study conducted by Harding, while using the same approach of collecting data, also confirmed that not only does prison have a weak impact on reducing crime rates, but stringent post-prison parole supervision increased imprisonment, where 20% of former prisoners found themselves back in prisons due technical violations (Harding 2017). Therefore, under the studies conducted by Harding, incarceration is an endless cycle that generates more imprisonment and has less power of reducing crime rates. In addition, Harding's works demonstrate to the public in Michigan that there needs to be more effective long-term solutions other than increasing incarceration rates to prevent the rise of crime rates in their state.

However, the studies fail to incorporate how the failure to decrease crime is currently affecting their communities. Yet, while these studies do not focus on this setback, others have noticed the detrimental impacts communities are facing because imprisonment is unable to fully tackle the root problem of high crime rates; furthermore, prisons are unequipped and unprepared to handle various issues that occur within the prisons, such as prison crime, mental illness, and health issues, nor unable to prevent prisoners from continuing their criminal offenses once they are released (Glazer 2015 & Kanvinde 2019). Therefore, the concerning matters that are willingly dismissed or go by unnoticed will project itself onto society once prisoners leave and re-enter their communities. Gifford's information provides readers a broad sense on how incarceration can disrupt relationships, alter networks, embed burdens on governmental services, exacerbate mental illness on prisoners and their communities (2019). Additionally, there can be severe economic, political, and social disadvantages communities and prisoners encounter due to high rates of incarceration (Gifford 2019, Stemen 2017 & Clear 2008; Simes 2018 & Roodman

2017). Since there are communities in large urban cities and rural areas that suffer from poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and low-income, they are more susceptible to having continuous high crime rates, even though their prison admission rate is high (Simes 2018 & Eason 2016). The analysis of prison admission and the investigation of the level of admissions for the state of Massachusetts, analyzed by Jessica Simes, is an exemplar that highlights this very issue that many are facing across the country. Over half of the prison admissions were drawn from tracts that accounted for 15% of the state's population (Simes 2018). Therefore, the evidence stated by Simes puts an emphasis on how incarceration has the potential to lead to economic decline, untreated health and social problems, and punitive policies that specifically target societies instead of resolving the crime rate issue. Another article that supports the claim incarceration does not prevent crime from occurring is demonstrated in the study of Mariel Alper's study; the data provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, who analyzed the patterns of 67,966 prisoners to represent 401,288 prisoners released in 2005 in 30 states, declares that 83% of prisoners released in 2005 were arrested at least once during the 9 years following their release (Alper 2018). Recidivism is one factor that can diminish the effects of imprisonment and can rather cause former prisoners to be continuously arrested for violent crimes, merely maintaining or increasing the crime rates. Since the rise of incarceration rates seem to not heavily reduce crime rates, states have openly decided on changing prison sentences and decreasing their incarceration rates instead. States such as New Jersey, New York, and California, are all examples who achieved prison population reduction while simultaneously decreasing their crime rates at a faster rate than the national average (Mauer 2014). For instance, as mentioned in the article "Incarceration and Crime: Evidence from California's Public Safety Realignment Reform," the reform, ordered by the federal court, was created to resolve overcrowding in

prisons, which is a global issues as well (Lofstrom 2015 & 2016; Rope 2018); while the reduction was not as long-lasting and very limited, New York and New Jersey managed to reduce 26% of its prison population between 1999 and 2012, and decreased its crime rate 31% and 30% respectively (Lofstrom 2015 & Mauer 2014). While these three primary states provide evidence that high incarceration rates do not always yield lower crime rates, there are more states that are on the same path of reducing their prisons populations (Stemen 2017).

Finally, decarceration tends to have more of an influence on the crime rates than incarceration itself; additionally, the reduction of prison populations can encourage states to use a vast majority of money, intentionally used for prisons, and redirect it to more trustworthy resolutions that can significantly decrease the crime rates (Roodman 2017). Ultimately, the intentions of these articles are to shed light on how high rates of incarceration is not sufficient enough to resolve the crime rate concern many states are encountering; while studies and evidence performed by particular states heavily imply raising prison populations do not have an adequate long-lasting influence of reducing crime rates, there is an emphasis on states finding more reliable resolutions that can deter crime from reoccurring and becoming an immense threat to public safety (Stemen 2017, Lofstrom 2016, and Mauer 2014; Alper 2018).

Explanation and Hypothesis

Given the information provided by the articles and studies utilized, imprisonment seems to have a weak and insignificant effect on crime rates; therefore, a high incarceration rate does not imply there will be a reduction in crime rates. Additionally, while prisons were built with the intentions of reducing future crime, ensuring public safety is not threatened, and providing sufficient strategies to deter people away from crime for fear of being incarcerated, the structures of the prison systems are not exceeding their expectations and are only causing prisons to

overcrowd. Furthermore, the relationship between incarceration rates and crime rates is never consistent; while a state can reduce their prison population, it does not always imply that their crime rates will decline as well. On the other hand, imprisonment can generate more imprisonment, creating a repetitive cycle that can be hard for states to strain from. Therefore, states cannot fully rely on incarceration to battle crime rates because imprisonment does not have a sufficient long-term effect; thus, the information provided should enable states and counties to implement changes within their prison and criminal justice system to inhibit the rise of crime rates.

In contrast, since evidence suggests that incarceration is hardly making a dent in changing the crime rates, it is also the states' responsibilities to observe and study other factors that can cause crime rates to increase. Variables such as level of education, household incomes, unemployment, rate of correctional supervision, and police officers are all determining factors that can contribute to the rise of crime rates (Ajimotokin 2015). Furthermore, the relationship between poverty and crime is bidirectional and perhaps a stronger correlation than it has with incarceration rates. Cities that have the highest crime rates all share a common trait, the population below poverty rate is higher than 15.1%, which is the national average (Ajimotokin 2015). Therefore, this information demonstrates the need for states to improve and equally distribute resources that are not obtained in certain locations; furthermore, neighborhoods that suffer from poverty, low-income, and high incarceration rates are more vulnerable to being exposed to crime. If individuals who live in these environments believe they will never achieve social mobility, then it may encourage or exacerbate them to adopt criminal and deviant behavior and frequently encounter the criminal justice system (Eason 2017 & Kang 2016). On the other hand, the crime will continue to spread within the community and not in households with higher

income because there is a greater chance of criminals being detected. Since low-income neighborhoods are more exposed to the variables mentioned above, they are more susceptible to high crime rates, which then steers into victimization (Levit 1999). Ultimately, this paper will try to determine if high incarceration rates has enough strength to deter people from committing crimes; therefore, my hypothesis is in a comparison of states, states with higher incarceration rates will have higher crime rates than states with lower incarceration rates. If the other variables mentioned in the paper tend to have more a dramatic effect on crime rates than incarceration rates, then states should redirect the money that is normally used for prisons and utilize it to improve the livelihoods of individuals so they are less prone to commit crimes.

Research Design Section

Introduction

In order to test the hypothesis, I examined the data from the 2016 States dataset. The dataset's unit of analysis is states of the United States; therefore, the 2016 States dataset has 50 observations throughout the U.S.. Each observation represents one state, and I plan on using all of them for my research project.

I selected the dataset because my primary focus is to determine if a high percentage of incarceration rates yields a lower crime rate. Thus, this data will enable me to observe the percentages of the population incarcerated per 100,000 residents and the violent crime rate per 100,000 population. Studies have shown that there is a weak correlation that an increase of prison populations are effectively reducing the crime rates in their respective states; thus this study will contribute to the already established ideas and evidence. Additionally, with the influx of various states implementing changes and policies to reduce their prison populations, this study will determine whether or not the decision made is an effective and long-term resolution. On the

other hand, the States dataset provides other rates, such as property crime rates, burglary rates, and murder and non-negligent manslaughter rates; therefore, it would be worthy examining if the the relationship between incarceration rates and the other crime rates have similar or different results than the violent crime rates. Furthermore, the dataset gives one the opportunity to look for other potential factors that can yield better results at reducing the crime rates.

Variable Measurements

In order to operationalize the violent crime rate per 100,000 population, I used the incarceration rate per 100,000 state residents variable. That data keeps track of the prison population in each state, and the incarceration rate variable informs us that there are 38 values, with a range falling in between 280 prisoners to 1,050 prisoners for every 100,000 state residents. The mean of the variable was 590.6, and the standard deviation was 191.0. Table 1 demonstrates the percentiles of people incarcerated in each state, with the percentile starting at 10% to 90%.

Table 1: Population Incarcerated per 100,000 State Residents Percentiles					
	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
	325	410	595	720	830
Source: States 2016					

However, since I will be observing 50 states, this research will divide the states into different categories with respect to their percentiles once I graph the relationship between incarceration rates and crime rates. Therefore, the states were divided into four groups, ranging from lowest incarceration rate to the highest incarceration rate; the groups respectively had 13 states, 12

states, 13 states, and 12 states. On the other hand, Table 2 reveals the percentiles of violent crime rate per 100,000 population; this table has 50 variables which have a range beginning from 99.3 and ending at 635.8. Additionally, the mean of the dependent variable is 346.806, and the standard deviation was 128.819. While the standard deviations can be considered quite large, one should take into consideration that this paper intends to focus on every state and its residents.

Table 2: Violent Crime Rate, per 100,000 Population Percentiles					
10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	
203.9	259.2	325.1	427.3	527.6	
Source: States 2016					

Model Estimation

Therefore, since the independent and dependent variables are not binary variables but rather interval level measurements, I used regression to approximate the expected values for various conditions. My prime focus was to run a regression to estimate the probability of violent crime rates decreasing or increasing with the independent variable being states' incarceration rates. In this model, I controlled for the unemployment rate, per capita income, and those who obtained a college degree or higher; each of the control variables are interval level measurements. Additionally, I also decided to run three other regressions, one each for the murder crime rate, property crime rate, and burglary crime rate to further analyze the effectiveness of incarceration rates and compare these rates to the violent crime rates; similar to the first model, these three models also had unemployment rate, per capita income, and those who obtained a college degree or higher as control variables.

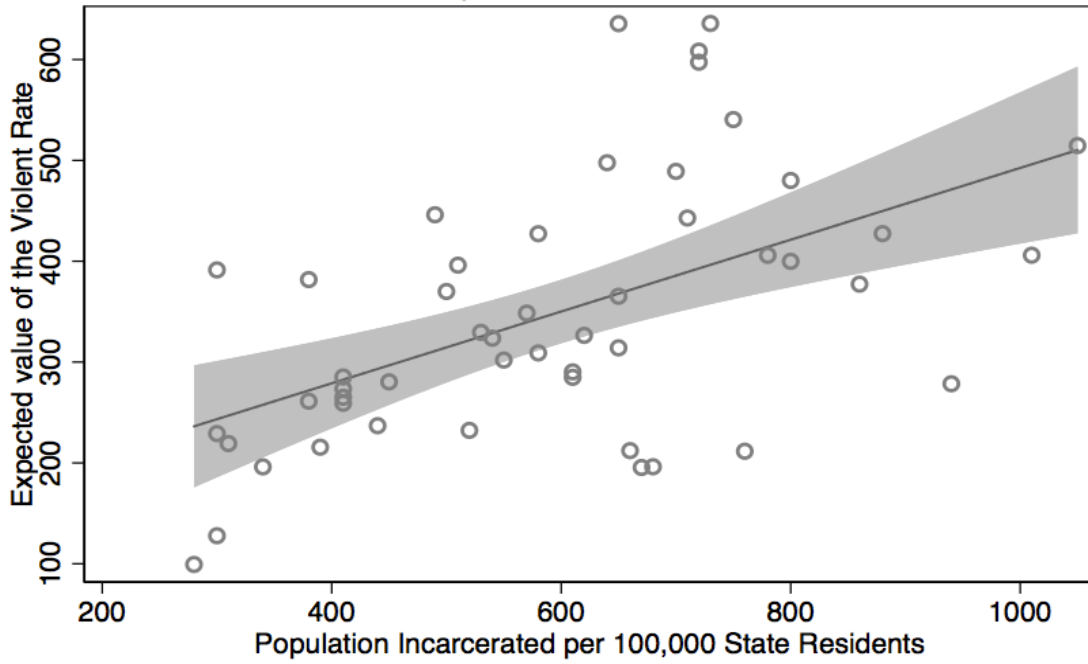
Results

Table 1: Regression for Probability Incarceration Rates Will Affect Violent, Murder, Property, and Burglary Crime Rates			
Violent Crime Rate	Murder Crime Rate	Property Crime Rate	Burglary Crime Rate
Incarceration Rate 0.353*** (0.106)	Incarceration Rate 0.00727*** (0.00125)	Incarceration Rate 1.543*** (0.448)	Incarceration Rate 0.455*** (0.138)
B.A. Degree or Higher 6.212 (6.103)	B.A. Degree or Higher 0.0536 (0.0719)	B.A. Degree or Higher 45.72* (25.84)	B.A. Degree or Higher 1.390 (7.965)
Unemployment Rate 28.44** (15.81)	Unemployment Rate 0.355* (0.186)	Unemployment Rate 99.74 (66.93)	Unemployment Rate 22.94 (20.63)
Per capita Income 0.0110* (0.0059)	Per capita Income 0.7e-05 (6.95e-05)	Per capita Income 0.0604** (0.025)	Per capita Income 0.00861 (0.00770)
Constant 191.1 (194.8)	Constant 3.512 (2.294)	Constant 1,811** (824.7)	Constant 452.7* (254.2)
Observations 50	Observations 50	Observations 50	Observations 50
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The table above supports the argument; states that have high incarceration rates yield higher rates of violent, murder, property and burglary crime rates than states that have lower incarceration rates; since the p value is less than 0.01 for the incarceration rate independent variable, which is consistent in every crime rate listed above, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the hypothesis. For the violent crime rate regression, the unemployment rate and the per capita income is significant because the p value was less than 0.1, but the education variable

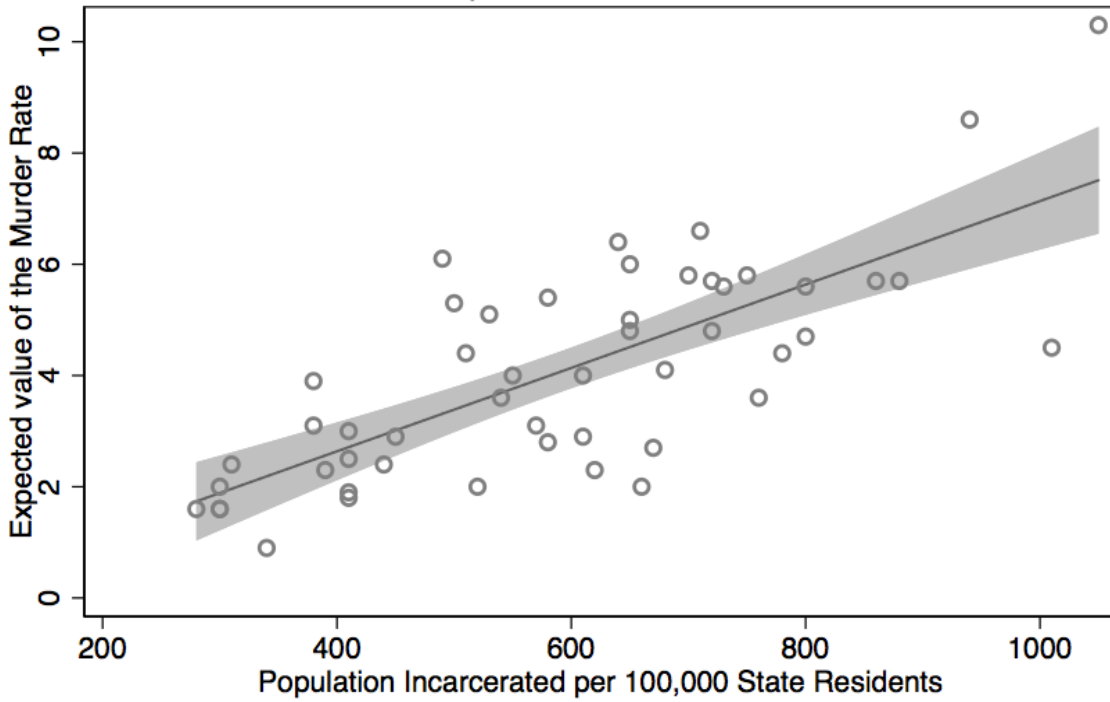
was not significant since the p value was above 0.1. The R-squared value was 0.366, meaning that around 37 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable; the 67 percent left can be explained by other variables that were not included in the regression equation. For the murder crime rate, the only variable that was significant was the unemployment rate, with a p value less than 0.1; the R-squared value was 0.602, signifying roughly 60 percent of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. On the other hand, for the property rate, the education and the per capita income variables are valuable because the p value is less than 0.1 and 0.05, respectively; additionally, the R-squared value is 0.431, suggesting that 43 percent of the variation within the dependent variable can be explained the independent variable. Finally, the burglary rate regression declares there are no other significant variables other than the incarceration rate because the p value is greater than 0.1. The R-squared value is 0.468, signifying roughly 47 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. Moreover, the model above supports the hypothesis that in a comparison of states, states with higher incarceration rates are more likely to have higher crime rates, such as violent, murder, property, and burglary, than states that have lower incarceration rates. Therefore, one should also take note that there are other factors not listed in this study that could also increase or decrease the crime rates in the United States; while one can state that incarceration, education, per capita income, and unemployment rates can determine the rate of the various types of crimes, one should also consider the idea that crimes rates can influence the prison populations. Furthermore, the relationship between the incarceration rates and the crime rates is more complex than expected.

Figure 1: Violent Rate per Population Inarcerated per 100,000 State Residents with 95 percent confidence intervals



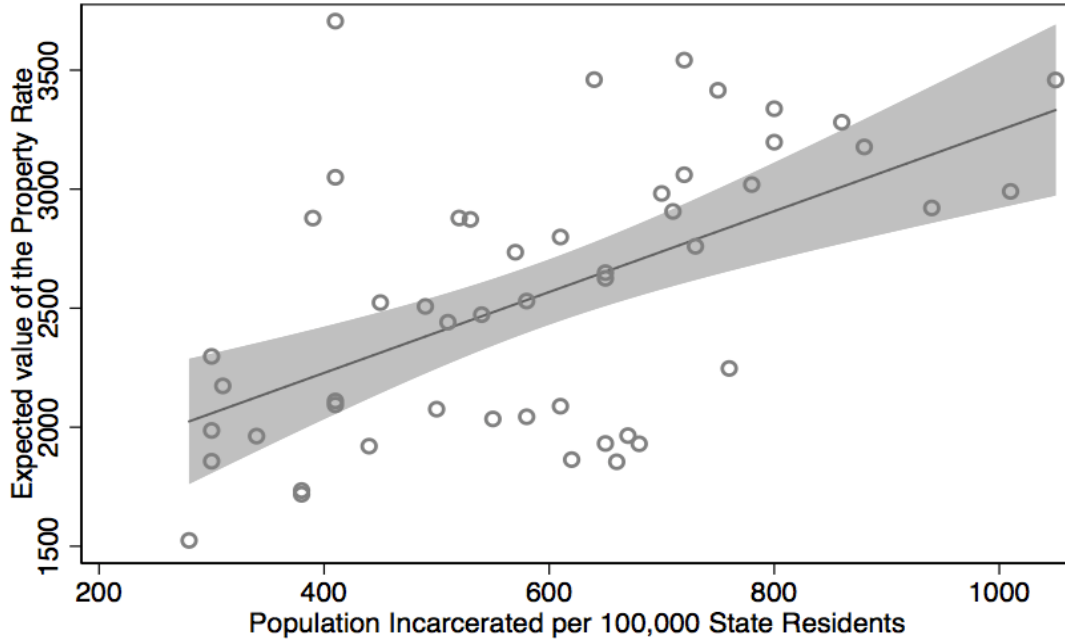
Source: States Dataset 2016

Figure 2: Murder Rate per Population Inarcerated per 100,000 State Residents with 95 percent confidence intervals



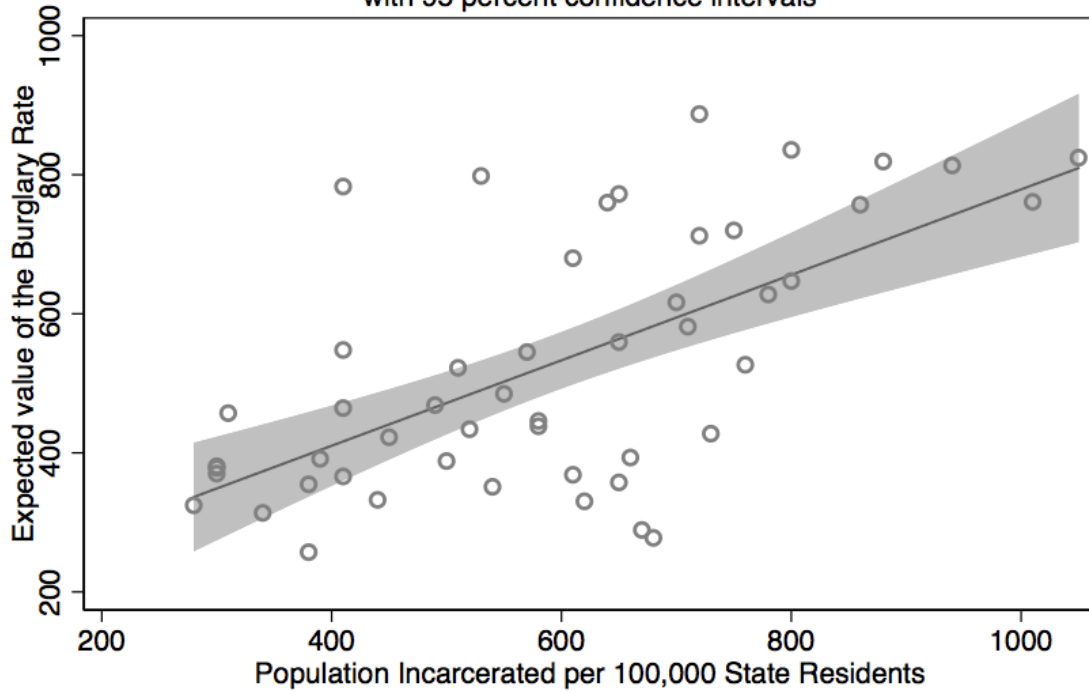
Source: States Dataset 2016

Figure 3: Property Rate per Population Inarcerated per 100,000 State Residents with 95 percent confidence intervals



Source: States Dataset 2016

Figure 4: Burglary Rate per Population Inarcerated per 100,000 State Residents with 95 percent confidence intervals



Source: States Dataset 2016

The figures above demonstrate the different relationships incarceration rate has on the various types of crimes: violent, murder, property, and burglary. The data suggests there is a positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable; as incarceration rates increase, the violent, murder, property, and burglary crime rates increase as well. The violent crime rate had a coefficient of 0.353, suggesting that for every 1 percent increase in the incarceration rate, there is a corresponding increase in the violent crime rate by 0.353. For the murder crime rate, the coefficient was 0.007, which is a significantly lower value than the crime rate coefficient; the influence incarceration rates has on the murder crime rate is positive, but not at the same frequency as the other variables. On the other hand, the coefficient for the property crime rate was 1.543, declaring that for every 1 percent increase in the incarceration rate, there is a corresponding increase in the property crime rate by 1.543. Lastly, the burglary crime rate had a coefficient of 0.457. In conclusion, the figures indicate that while the relationship between the incarceration rate and crime rates is positive, the coefficients state that the influence of incarceration is distinct among each crime rate, thus concluding that the effect incarceration rates is inconsistent.

Moreover, the data also states that the degree of correlation between incarceration rates and crime rates is relatively low. While both variables tend to increase in response to one another, the relationship between the two variables is not as strong or consistent as we expected. Therefore, although the incarceration rates do increase the various crime rates, the correlation is relatively weak. Ultimately, the evidence provided by the graphs indicate the hypothesis is supported, but a certain extent; thus, one needs to consider the assumption that crime rates can determine if incarceration rates increases, since the relationship between the two variables is circular.

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the effect of incarceration rates has a relatively low impact on the increase of violent, murder, property, and burglary crime rates; however, evidence still suggests the higher the incarceration rates are, the more likely crime rates will increase as well. Moreover, the hypothesis is accepted, but to a particular degree. There is a positive relationship between incarceration rates and crime rates, but the correlation is not strong nor consistent enough to make a solid argument; rather, the data suggests that other factors, such as the education an individual obtains, the per capita income and the unemployment rate, need to be taken into consideration because incarceration rates cannot be the sole explanation as to why there is an increase of crime rates throughout the United States. Instead, there should be more research done that particularly examines the effect crime rates have on incarceration rates.

While one generally assumes the effects of imprisonment are effective and long-term, the research information provided states the opposite; incarceration is not a strategic method to deter one away from crime; rather, areas that tend to have a higher population of people incarcerated are more prone to be exposed to poverty, violence, hunger, and etc. Consequently, instead of deterring people away from committing crimes, high incarceration rates yields individuals to do criminal activity. On the other hand, incarceration does not have the full potential to prevent released prisoners from committing the same, or different, crimes; therefore, mass incarceration becomes an endless conflict because it is not effectively decreasing the rates of crime within particular areas. Contrarily, while the high rates of imprisonment can influence the crime rates, crime rates also have the possibility to affect incarceration rates; therefore, the circular relationship between the two variables is highly important to examine because if studies focus on the factors that contribute to the rising levels of crime, it can also decrease incarceration

rates as well. Additionally, the findings discovered in this paper further substantiate the already-established arguments. While other research and studies conclude this to a certain degree, incarceration does yield individuals to commit more crimes due to its negative consequences, this research further explores the various types of crimes and the individual effect incarceration has on each variable. Furthermore, the additional information provided by this paper contributes to the argument that high incarceration rates does not necessarily mean a reduction in crime rates; on the other hand, the purpose of the research was to enforce the notion that there are perhaps better solutions to prevent the crimes mentioned above. Lastly, future research should analyze particular areas throughout the U.S. that suffer from various issues, such as crime rates, poverty, lack of education and resources, and low-income, in order to properly investigate the degree of impact incarceration rates have on these specific locations. Ultimately, there is a necessity to find other explanations; therefore, conducting research that focuses on other prominent variables and its effect on crime rates is vital to fully understand the distinct relationship between incarceration rates and crime rates. Rather than observing the issue of mass incarceration and the rise of crime rates by solely focusing on incarceration rates as the only dependent variable, this matter should be analyzed through an accumulation of potential contributing factors, which need to be taken into consideration to address the national problem.

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