

# The "Prisons Pay" Studies: Research or Ideology

By Christopher Baird

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, a number of articles and reports have been published documenting the rise in U.S. crime rates and advocating increased use of incarceration to reverse the trend. Leading the charge is a group of economists and policy analysts who have concluded that incarceration, while costly, is less expensive than the crime it prevents. Edwin Zedlewski pioneered this movement in *"Making Confinement Decisions"* (1987). He concluded that incarceration was remarkably cost-effective because each year of prison time saved taxpayers \$430,000 in criminal justice expenditures.

When serious flaws in Zedlewski's methodology were identified (Zimring and Hawkins, 1988), John DiIulio stepped into the fray, presenting himself as the voice of reason between highly disparate points of view. DiIulio conducted a study of Wisconsin prisoners and concluded that, although Zedlewski had indeed overstated the case for incarceration, prison was, never the less, cost effective (DiIulio, 1990). Other studies followed, advancing an "economic theory of crime" (Reynolds, 1991) which in turn led to several well-placed articles challenging conventional wisdom regarding relationships between crime, poverty, race, and incarceration (Methvin, 1992; DiIulio and Logan, 1992). According to the "economic theory of crime," crimes are committed because, after implicitly weighing the benefits and risk (cost),

criminals conclude that the benefit exceeds the cost. Reynolds concludes that, at least in Texas, the risk to criminals has decreased markedly in recent years. According to Reynolds, this decrease is directly responsible for the rise in Texas crime rates. Methvin extends this argument to the national level, adding Michigan and California as case examples.

Following Zedlewski's *"Making Confinement Decisions,"* each new study has used findings of preceding reports, often without mentioning that the conclusions have been strongly challenged by respected research organizations as well as some of the nation's foremost corrections officials (Johnson, 1992; Riveland, 1992). As a result, the "prisons pay" position continues to be quoted in the media and forms the basis for correctional policies advocated by no less a public figure than William Barr, the Attorney General of the United States in the last year of the Bush Administration.

Although criticisms of these studies have been rather cavalierly dismissed by their authors, reviews have often been incisive. In a critique of *"Making Confinement Decisions,"* Zimring and Hawkins concluded that Zedlewski's computations contained "compound catastrophic error." The National Council on Crime and Delinquency's (NCCD) review of DiIulio's work found "nonsensical comparisons" used to support the position that prisons pay. Other reviews have been equally critical, noting that some

studies use carefully selected time comparisons that support the views of the authors or rely on single factor models to explain changes in crime rates, grossly oversimplifying the complexities involved in analyzing the relationship between crime and punishment.

If it is true that these studies are fundamentally flawed, two primary questions emerge:

- How could serious researchers have made such egregious errors?
- Why have these studies continued to influence those in public policy positions?

Perhaps the answers to both questions lie more in political ideology than in research. The extent to which ideology has replaced science is critical to the American debate. Incarceration is expensive. If it is effective in protecting the public and avoiding other crime-related costs, it may well be worth the price. But if measures of effectiveness are based on data analyses shaped more by politics than scientific inquiry, the United States could continue down an expensive path that fails to improve the safety of its citizens. Such policies may represent "opportunities lost," funding an ever growing punishment industry rather than programs that could effectively reduce crime and violence in our cities.

Because Zedlewski's work has been thoroughly reviewed by others, this review focuses on the work of DiIulio, Reynolds, and Methvin.

## DOES PRISON PAY? (DIULIO)

Like the figures used in Zedlewski's analysis, estimates of both crime and costs in DiIulio's "*Does Prison Pay?*" have been questioned. However, there is a more fundamental error that requires attention. DiIulio's crime estimates were produced through a survey of Wisconsin prison inmates — felons who had been arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated. Then, in determining the incapacitation benefits of prison, DiIulio compares incarceration with only one alternative — "letting (criminals) freely roam the streets in search of victims" (1990, p. 53).

Quite obviously, the conclusions of any cost/benefit analysis are wholly dependent on the alternatives compared. The airline industry, for example, could easily demonstrate that air travel between New York and San Francisco is cost effective when it is compared to walking the 3,000 miles. But walking 3,000 miles is not a viable alternative to air travel and such a comparison would be viewed as preposterous.

Likewise, letting the offenders surveyed in DiIulio's study roam the streets in search of victims is not a viable alternative, certainly not one that would ever be considered by the Wisconsin legislature. A serious cost/benefit study would compare prison costs and outcomes to those of true alternatives: house arrest, electronic surveillance, intensive supervision, or even shorter periods of incarceration followed by such community-based offender control strategies. Indeed, when NCCD compared house arrest in Florida with incarceration, we found house arrest to be quite cost effective.

In his concluding chapter, DiIulio does mention the potential cost-effectiveness of alternatives to incarceration, but makes no attempt to include them in his cost/benefit calculations.

When DiIulio's cost comparisons were dubbed nonsensical by NCCD, he complained that we had "caricatured" his results (DiIulio and Piehl, 1991). Far from it. The approaches being compared in any

cost/benefit study are of *fundamental importance*. DiIulio himself stated that his analysis "does *not* mean that it is more cost effective to imprison offenders than to intensively supervise these same offenders in the community" (1990; p. 55). Since no one has suggested that we let offenders roam free in search of victims, we are left to wonder what, if anything, this study does mean. It certainly does not, in any sense, mean that prisons pay.

## CRIME IN TEXAS (REYNOLDS)

Morgan Reynolds, in a National Center for Policy Analysis publication, advances a very simple premise. As "expected punishment" for serious crime dropped in Texas, it *resulted* in an increase in the rate of serious crimes committed. Furthermore, using a calculation of "expected punishment" that includes the probabilities of arrest, conviction, and imprisonment, he derives alarmingly low estimates of actual prison time served per serious offense committed.

While the study can be criticized at several levels, there are two issues that are of primary importance. First, while Reynolds discusses other potential causes for increases in crime in Texas, none of these are factored into his model. With all of the social and economic change occurring in recent U.S. history, to attempt to explain crime rates with a single factor model represents a serious departure from reality. Even more importantly, a scan of Texas crime and incarceration data presented in appendices to Reynolds' report leaves one wondering how he can conclude that punishment for serious crime has declined in Texas. Prison admissions relative to crimes reported have *increased* since 1960 in every category presented except robbery and theft/larceny. Furthermore, for the most serious offenses, murder and rape, the increases have been dramatic. For example, in 1960, Texas reported 821 murders and only 216 prison admissions for murder. By 1988, 2,022 murders were reported and 1,888 persons were imprisoned on murder charges. The prison admission/murder ratio increased from 26 per 100 murders in 1960 to 93 per

100 murders in 1988. Lagging prison admissions to allow a year for arrest and prosecution produces very similar results and limiting the analysis to the 1980s (as the National Center for Policy Analysis did in its press release) shows substantial increases in admission to crime ratios for *all* categories presented in Reynolds' report.

It appears that the probability of imprisonment for serious offenses has *increased* in Texas over the last decade, yet crime increased substantially. Rather than supporting Reynolds' crime/punishment premise, the data seem to refute it. Another factor in Reynolds "expected punishment" calculation, the median time served, may have declined for some offenses in Texas. But this is true in other states faced with federal court orders to reduce crowding, usually caused, in part, by an over-reliance on incarceration. But the certainty of punishment, if not the length of time served, has increased for major crimes. And indeed, there is no evidence that length of time served is a deterrent to crime. In some states (e.g., Wisconsin) where length of stay increased significantly in the last decade, crime rates are now also increasing. The bottom line is that this issue deserves a thorough analysis of all the factors involved in the complexities of crime and punishment. To recommend broad policy changes based on this "research" represents a serious disservice to the state of Texas and the nation.

## DOUBLING THE PRISON POPULATION WILL BREAK AMERICA'S CRIME WAVE (METHVIN)

Perhaps no one has been a more vocal proponent of increasing the use of incarceration to combat crime as Readers Digest Senior Editor Eugene Methvin. Certainly, no one has been more misleading in their use of statistics. Methvin relies heavily on the work of Reynolds and others to establish his arguments, then selects specific states as case studies to support his contention that as punishment declines crime increases. What is most intriguing about Methvin's

case examples is that two of the three states selected, Michigan and California, are precisely those used by researchers to demonstrate that rising rates of incarceration have not reduced crime.

Methvin's article is itself a case study in how data can be carefully manipulated to lead to the desired conclusion. Comparing Methvin's analysis to an unedited version of each states' crime and incarceration trends is illuminating. Michigan, Methvin notes, "tried it both ways" first holding prison populations relatively constant then rapidly increasing the use of imprisonment. According to Methvin, when Michigan prison populations dropped from 15,157 in 1981 to 14,604 in 1984, (a drop in the incarceration rate of one person per 100,000) violent crime soared 25 percent. Then from 1986 to 1991, Michigan doubled its prison population and "wonder of wonders" Michigan's crime rate dropped (1992; p. 34). Taken out of context, these data seem compelling. Now for the rest of the story...

- First, the crime rate in Michigan started its decline three years before Michigan began its dramatic increase in the use of incarceration. From 1981 through 1984, while the state's incarceration rate remained unchanged, total crime decreased 4.4 percent, an average of 1.5 percent per year. Then, while incarceration rates rose from 161/100,000 population in 1984 to 366/100,000 in 1990, the crime rate decreased 8.6 percent, an average of 1.4 percent per year. Hence, the decline in the Michigan crime rate began well before its prison construction binge. It may well have continued without a doubling of the incarceration rate.

- Second, violent crime did increase in Michigan during the 1981-84 period, but at a slower rate than Methvin reports (18 percent rather than 25 percent). But, after more than doubling the incarceration rate, the rate of violent crime in 1990 was still 4 percent above the 1984 rate and 25 percent higher than the rate at the beginning of the decade.

To support the conclusion that increased use of imprisonment resulted in fewer crimes of violence clearly requires very selective data comparisons, and Methvin

is selective, not only in his choice of years to compare, but in his choice of crimes as well. He initially claims that robbery and burglary rates are the best measures of the effectiveness of imprisonment, but quickly abandons robbery in favor of other crimes when analyzing trends in California.

Methvin's California statistics are equally misleading. He never precisely identifies a base year but states that in the 1990s, murder, rape, and burglary rates fell a "whopping 24 to 37 percent from their 1980-82 peaks." However, as Figure 1 illustrates, despite huge increases in the state's rate of incarceration, the total crime rate remained relatively stable from 1983 through 1990 while the rate of violent crime soared. Methvin is correct in noting that California did witness a substantial decrease in crime in the 1980s (13 percent versus a national decline of 3.5 percent), but virtually all of this decrease occurred by the end of 1983 when the state's incarceration rate was 150/100,000. Since that point, California has doubled the number of prisoners with no corresponding decline in crime.

### SCIENCE OR IDEOLOGY?

While these and other studies of this genre vary by degree in their attempts at objective scientific inquiry, all are seriously flawed. The problem with these studies is that they do not always represent variances in research methods that can be defended as honest differences in approach. Instead, these studies are based on overly simplistic analysis of complex issues, misleading comparisons of alternatives, or selective use of data to prove a point of view. As such, they are not the products of science, but of ideology. No serious study of crime would analyze its relationship to punishment without incorporating other important measures of social change. No serious study of the relative effectiveness of incarceration would fail to compare incarceration to important alternative sanctions.

Indeed, in some instances, the problems with both methodology and conclusions may have been recognized by funding organizations prior to their release.

Zedlewski's study, for example, was released without academic review. It received heavy press coverage without any of the criticism that came later. As a result, while the study has little credibility among researchers, it continues to surface as the "scientific basis" for continuing the nation's incarceration binge (U.S. Department of Justice, 1992). *The Case for More Incarceration*, published by the U.S. Department of Justice is more notable for what was left out of the report than for what was stated. No mention is made of studies funded by the Justice Department which clearly indicated that alternatives to incarceration work as well or better than imprisonment.

Using pseudo-science to justify "get tough" policies more than adequately filled the gap left by the demise of the Willie Horton scare tactics. But these studies only represent a higher level of sophistication, not a real change in strategy. Accuracy still seems unimportant if public opinion can be swayed by the message. Though disguised in academic trappings, these studies retain many of the characteristics of the 30 second sound bite.

### CAUSES OF CRIME

Americans have become increasingly alarmed about increases in crime, drug abuse, and violence, particularly in the inner cities. Crime statistics certainly justify the high level of concern. The number of crimes reported to police has indeed mushroomed over the last four decades, from 1.8 million in 1950 to over 14 million in 1990. Other societal changes have been equally dramatic; the United States has undergone tremendous social and economic change since 1950. Today, our country and the lifestyles of most of its citizens bears little resemblance to the 1950 model.

The fact that overall crime rates were actually declining through much of the 1980s provided little comfort to those coping with guns in schools, drug dealers in their community, and drive-by shootings. The threat of gangs and drugs moving into the suburbs and smaller communities has kept middle America on edge as well.

Why is our society plagued by so much crime? What are its causes? Why has crime increased so markedly since World War II? The reasons for the rise in crime rates are undoubtedly as complex as the forces molding our society.

Demographers and criminologists have always linked crime to population trends, particularly to males under age 30, since this group is responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes. The downturn in crimes experienced in the 1980s, for example, was long forecast as a reflection of the aging of the post-World War II baby boomers. Population is obviously an important variable, but other factors have undoubtedly played a role as well. What follows is a summary of probable contributors.

**The Increasing Urbanization of America**

In 1960, about 30 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural settings. By 1990, the rural dwellers represented less than 25 percent of the total population. In total, 62 million more Americans lived in U.S. cities in 1990 than in 1960. Historically, crime rates are much higher in urban environments, often three to four times those reported in small towns, smaller cities, and in rural areas. Hence, our movement toward an urban society could help explain the rise in U.S. crime rates.

**Improvements in Crime Reporting**

Criminologists recognize that a portion of the increase in crime rates does not represent changes in behavior, but changes in the technology of crime reporting. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funneled millions of dollars to local law enforcement agencies to upgrade crime reporting and tracking capabilities. Following this investment, the number of reported crimes did increase substantially. The question is how much of this increase was due simply to better reporting and how much was due to actual increases in offenses committed.

Other factors have also influenced crime reporting, including increased public

awareness of such issues as child abuse, sexual assault, and drunk driving. Offenses committed within family units and many perpetrated against women and children were less likely to be reported in past decades. Although continued progress is needed, tolerance of destructive behavior has changed due to public education efforts and the work of special interest groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which these increases reflect changes in the number of crimes committed or the number of crimes reported, it seems clear that reporting has improved significantly and that these improvements explain some portion of the increase in the rate of reported crime.

**Changes in the Workplace**

The economy of the United States has undergone fundamental change over the last 20 years. In 1969, 20 million people

were employed in manufacturing. By 1989, the number of manufacturing employees had shrunk by 600,000, although the total U.S. population had increased from 203 million to 245 million people. As a result, employment prospects for youth without solid educational backgrounds have declined markedly. In the 1960s, high school graduates could look forward to good jobs in industry, jobs that paid well enough to sustain a reasonable standard of living. Today, a high school education is not a ticket to a decent paying job. Without additional education, many youth face a life of poverty.

During the 1980s we did experience significant job expansion, but the types of jobs created were different than those created in earlier growth periods. Between 1963 and 1973, a time of strong economic growth, less than 20 percent of all new jobs created paid poverty level wages.

**Figure 1**

**CALIFORNIA CRIME RATES**  
**1975 - 1990**  
 (per 100,000 Population)

Year	Crime Rate	Violent Crime Rate	Incarceration Rate
1975	7204.6	655.4	81
1976	7234.0	669.3	85
1977	7008.7	706.0	80
1978	7116.2	742.9	88
1979	7468.8	811.1	93
1980	7833.1	893.6	98
1981	7590.5	863.0	114
1982	7285.5	814.7	135
1983	6677.4	772.6	150
1984	6468.3	763.4	162
1985	6518.0	765.3	181
1986	6762.8	920.5	212
1987	6506.4	918.0	231
1988	6635.5	929.8	257
1989	6763.4	977.7	283
1990	6603.6	1045.2	311

However, from 1979 through 1985, nearly half of all new jobs created offered poverty level wages (Bluestone and Harris, 1987). These undereducated and unskilled workers are concentrated in our central cities. They face extremely limited employment prospects—a situation that, in all probability, increases the risks of crime and violence.

In recent years, the effect of the trend away from high paying manufacturing jobs to low paying service industry jobs has been further exacerbated by a stagnant economy and a high rate of unemployment, placing even greater stress on inner cities. High unemployment strikes hardest at younger and low income workers. Most disturbingly, each recession since the 1970s has left us with a higher rate of joblessness than the one before. In turn, this helps account for the growing number of families dependent on public assistance (Currie, 1987).

Changes in the workplace have also created a growing inequality in incomes in the United States. The 1980s were a time of economic opportunity for the wealthy and their incomes soared. But the poorest Americans saw their incomes, in real terms, decline (see Figure 2). Today, inequality is perhaps more divisive than at any time in history.

**Family Disruption**

Much of the blame for society's ills has been placed on the demise of "family values." While the "values" issue is open to debate, it is obvious that the structure of the American family has changed significantly since the 1950s. In the last 20 years alone, the number of single parent households has increased 137 percent (Figure 3). Today, nearly 8 million homes have only a single caregiver present. Whether this is a cause or a symptom of society's problems may never be decided to everyone's satisfaction. Regardless of one's point of view, the absence of a caregiver adds significantly to the stress of parenting and reduces the family's ability to nurture, provide for, and supervise children. The weight of this problem has fallen principally on women, and the economic challenges

**Figure 2**  
**Changes in America's Economic Classes Income and Wealth**  
**1980 - 1990**

Economic Class	1980	1990	% Change
Top 20 Percent	\$ 58,896	\$ 78,032	32.5%
Top 1 Percent	213,675	399,697	87.1%
Bottom 20 Percent	7,357	6,973	-5.2%

Sources: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Congressional Budget Office

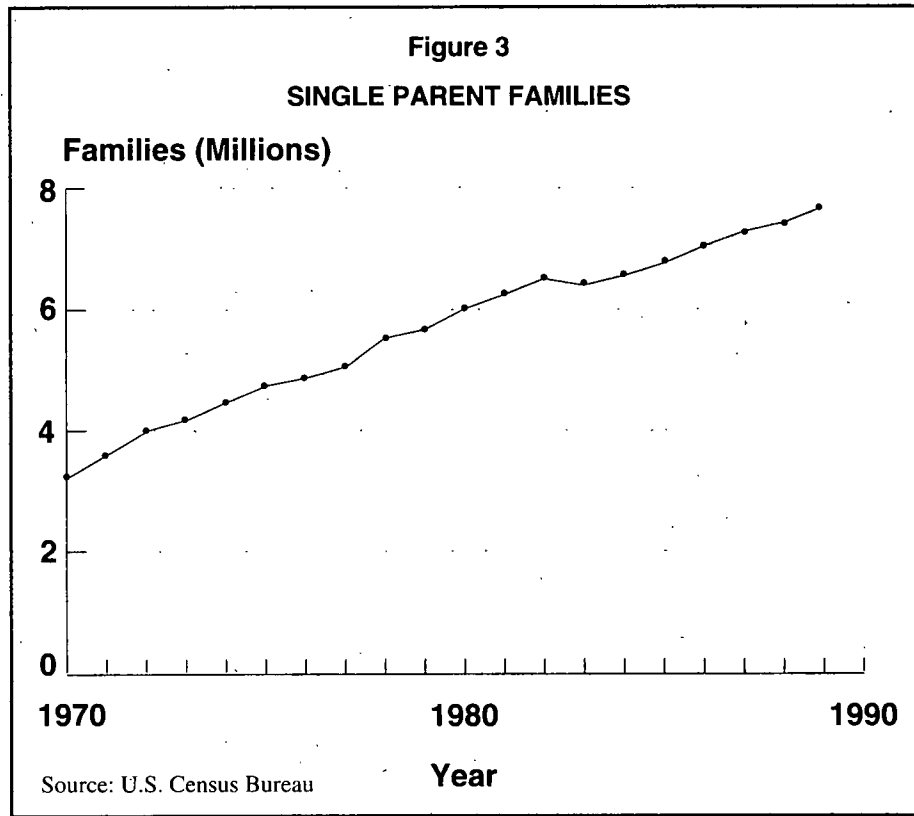
facing single women raising families is well documented. The expense of adequate child care and needed medical insurance forces many into a subsistence level existence, relying on public assistance to survive.

**Putting Punishment in Context**

While the above issues in no way represent an exhaustive list of possible contributors to the rise in crime in the United States, they are certainly among those factors that need to be considered in any analysis

of crime rates. To focus on the relationship between crime and punishment without their consideration is inexcusable, particularly when such analyses are used to establish criminal justice policy for the nation.

The following discussion is simply an attempt to put the crime and punishment relationship into a larger context. While it is obviously not an in-depth analysis required to comprehensively examine factors that influence crime rates, it does illustrate



how little impact changes in correctional policy have in controlling crime.

Two simple analyses are presented. The first uses measures of the above demographic and economic issues as well as a measure of punishment in a series of multivariate analyses to estimate the relative influence of each factor on changes in crime rates. The period 1960 through 1990 is used, representing three decades of change. Variables were entered after various lagging and smoothing techniques were used to maximize the bivariate relationship between each factor and the change in crime rates. The second analysis is simply a comparison between two states (Wisconsin and Minnesota) with similar demographic profiles and very different incarceration policies.

Relationships between demographics and economic factors and the crime rate are not easily quantified. Attempts to do so are plagued by errors in measurement, changes in data definitions over time, and

simply by the complexities involved in establishing causation in social science research. On the surface, some relationships between crime and demographics seem extraordinarily strong. The correlation for 1960 through 1990 between crime rates and one population subgroup, males, age 15-29, is nearly perfect (.98). However, a significant portion of the relationship is simply serial correlation — that is, since both indices generally move in the same direction over time, the beginning and ending points of the data sets account for much of the correlation attained. When annual *changes* in crime rates and population estimates are compared, the correlation between the two measures declines markedly (to .44). In attempting to determine the *causes* of changes in crime rates, it is necessary to reduce that data to annual differences.<sup>1</sup>

Generally stated, the analyses tested the hypothesis that changes in the U.S. crime rate are a function of:

- a. Changes in the population of males 15-29;
- b. Changes in the urban population;
- c. Changes in the number of single parent families;<sup>2</sup>
- d. Changes in the unemployment rate;
- e. Changes in the ratio of prison admissions for serious crimes committed.

The last variable constitutes the measure of punishment used. Relating prison admissions to crime rather than population has long been advocated by "prisons pay" proponents.

None of the statistical analyses undertaken were particularly successful in explaining the variance in U.S. crime rates (the maximum  $r^2$  attained was approximately .5). Males 15-29 accounted for most of the variance explained in total crime rates, while changes in urban population was the factor that best explained the variance in violent crime followed by changes in unemployment and single parent families. *In every instance, the punishment measure proved to be insignificant in explaining variances in crime.*

Comparisons of crime and incarceration rates in Wisconsin and Minnesota are equally telling. The two states were chosen because of their geographic, historical, and demographic similarities, and very different punishment policies. Minnesota introduced sentencing guidelines in 1980 with the clearly articulated goal of controlling prison growth. As a result, the state's incarceration rate has increased slowly from 51 per 100,000 in 1979 (the year before guidelines) to 72 in 1990. Remarkably, the 1990 rate in Minnesota is less than one-fourth the national rate.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, while still incarcerating far below the national average, saw its rate more than double from 1979 to 1990, nearly matching the U.S. rate of growth. If the punishment/crime relationship promoted by Barr, Zedlewski, Reynolds, and others is valid, crime rates in the two states should have taken very different courses. As Figure 4

**Figure 4**  
**WISCONSIN/MINNESOTA COMPARISONS**  
(RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION)

	Wisconsin			Minnesota		
	Total Crime Rate	Violent Crime Rate	Total Incarceration Rate	Total Crime Rate	Violent Crime Rate	Total Incarceration Rate
1979	4388.0	166.1	73	4392.8	221.0	51
1980	4798.6	182.6	85	4799.5	227.8	49
1981	4766.8	187.9	93	4736.7	228.5	49
1982	4439.1	190.5	96	4454.6	219.3	50
1983	4255.7	190.9	102	4034.2	190.9	52
1984	4172.3	196.5	105	3841.5	211.5	52
1985	4016.7	206.9	113	4134.2	256.4	56
1986	4096.8	257.9	119	4362.2	284.6	58
1987	4169.4	249.9	126	4615.8	285.4	60
1988	3972.0	214.4	130	4314.7	290.1	64
1989	4164.8	222.6	138	4383.2	288.3	71
1990	4395.1	264.7	149	4538.8	306.1	72

demonstrates, this is clearly not the case. In 1979, the year before the Minnesota guidelines were initiated, total crime rates in the two states were virtually identical. In the 11 years that follow, Minnesota reported significantly lower rates twice and nearly identical rates three times. In 1990, despite an incarceration rate twice that of Minnesota, Wisconsin's crime rate was only 3 percent below Minnesota's. Clearly, Wisconsin's heavy investment in imprisonment has not produced significantly better results than Minnesota's more judicious use of incarceration.

Minnesota has historically reported a higher rate of violence than Wisconsin, but even that is somewhat misleading. Comparisons of each state's major metropolitan areas indicates that residents of Milwaukee are more exposed to gun-related violence than citizens of Minneapolis/St. Paul. In fact, in 1991, the number of murders committed in Milwaukee was nearly double the number reported in Minneapolis/St. Paul. In total, the higher overall rate of violence in Minnesota is due largely to a huge difference in reported assaults, perhaps reflecting differences in crime reporting (see figure 5).

The Minnesota experience should be particularly instructive. No other state with a large metropolitan population has managed to keep prison costs so low. Yet, Minnesota's rate of crime has also remained low. The fact that neighboring states have not followed Minnesota's example is testimony to the pervasiveness of the "get tough" rhetoric.

**Conclusions**

Advocates of increased incarceration have, at best, presented an incomplete picture to the American public. Their simplistic approach to complex issues and, at times, careful manipulation of data has led to a conclusion that more thorough study would not support. The huge and expensive increase in the use of imprisonment over the last decade has not led to decreases in crime. The evidence that the imprisonment binge has not produced the desired results is absolutely

**Figure 5**  
**1991**  
**Violent Crime Comparisons**

	Population	Violent Crime Rate	Homicides Related	Gun Assaulted Robberies	Aggravated Assaults	Gun Related Assaulted
Milwaukee	601,000	710	112	1,153	1,281	875
Minneapolis/St. Paul	610,000	1,282	61	768	3,738	874

overwhelming. Attempts to manufacture a different scenario have been based on limited and slanted analyses.

It is time to abandon the "prisons pay" myth and move on to affordable intermediate sanctions that adequately protect the public while offering more hope for long-term reductions in crime.

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**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Annual differences in rates may not be the best measure of change. Annual crime rates tend to go up and down, sometimes inexplicably. In-depth research would attempt to identify crime cycles, perhaps "smoothing" these fluctuations by using 24 or 36 month changes, or moving averages.

<sup>2</sup> The number of single parent families is available only since 1970.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Christopher Baird is Senior Vice President of NCCD. Mr. Baird has written several articles dealing with the risk classification and protection of juveniles.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CRIME  
AND DELINQUENCY**

**Headquarters Office**

685 Market Street, Suite 620  
San Francisco, California 94105  
(415) 896-6223

**Midwest Office**

6409 Odana Road  
Madison, Wisconsin 53719  
(608) 274-8882

**East Coast Office**

S.I. Newhouse Center at Rutgers  
15 Washington Street, Fourth Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102  
(201) 643-5805

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