Evidence-Based Policy Options that Reduce Crime and Save Money

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Washington State Institute for Public Policy

Nature of the Institute

✓ Non-partisan, created by 1983 Legislature
✓ General purpose legislative research unit
✓ Projects assigned by legislative bills
✓ Legislative & Executive Board

Directions to WSIPP from the WA Legislature

What works? What doesn’t?

What are the costs & benefits of policies to improve...

✓ Health Care (2012)
✓ Developmental Disabilities (2008)
✓ Teen Births (1994)
✓ Employment, Workforce Training (2009)
✓ Public Assistance (2009)
✓ Public Health (2009)
✓ Housing (2009)
Change in Crime Rates
United States and Washington: 1980 to 2011

United States  Washington

Crime Rates:  -45%  -46%
Homicide Rates:  -48%  -49%
**Results**

**What Works?**

**Milestones in WA**

**Big Picture**

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**Adult Prison Incarceration Rates:**

**1930 to 2012**

*Incarceration Rate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incarceration Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**United States**

**Washington**

*The incarceration rate is defined as the number of inmates in prisons per 1,000 resident population in Washington or the United States.*
Using Research to Craft Criminal Justice Policy: Washington’s Legislative Milestones

1984
- Sentencing Reform

1995
- Juvenile Justice → Budget Change

2000
- Adult Corrections → Budget Change

2003
- Prevention → Budget Change

2005-6
- What policy portfolio reduces crime & limits prison construction? → Budget Change, Silo

2007
- Caseload Forecast Council ties legislature's evidence-based investments to budget drivers.

2012 & 2013
- Evidence-based budget requirements (for juvenile justice, adult corrections, children’s mental health, child welfare, adult mental health & substance abuse).
Evidence-Based Policies that Reduce Crime and Save Money:
—four principles that improve the odds of success—

1. **Risk**
   More crime can be avoided when policies focus on higher-risk (rather than lower-risk) offender populations.

2. **Treatment** (delivered with fidelity)
   Benefit-cost evidence indicates that some policies work and others do not. Careful selection and implementation needed.

3. **Swift and Certain Apprehension/Punishment**
   Clear evidence (for crime deterrence) for certainty, but not for severity of punishment.

4. **Budget Drivers** (aka: incentives)
   Deliver savings to taxpayers by tying policies to budget drivers (e.g. fiscal notes & caseloads); incentive funding formulas.
WSIPP “Consumer Reports” Lists
Evidence-based policy options ranked by return on investment

Return on Investment:
Evidence-Based Options to Improve Statewide Outcomes
—April 2012 Update—

In the mid-1990s, the Washington State Legislature began to direct the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to identify “evidence-based” policies that have been shown to improve particular outcomes. The motivation for these assignments is straightforward: to provide Washington policymakers and budget writers with a list of well-researched policies that can have a high degree of probability that will improve state outcomes and a result that is more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

This short report provides a snapshot, as of April 2012, of our current list of evidence-based policy options on many public policy topics. Where possible, we provide an independent assessment of the benefits and costs of each option from the perspective of Washington citizens and taxpayers.

In this report, we report on our previous published reports on these topics. As we report in our discussion of policy options, we will update our assessments of the benefits and costs of each option at regular intervals. Therefore, this report represents a small sample of what we have learned about evidence-based policy options in the state of Washington.

WSIPP “Consumer Reports” Lists
Evidence-based policy options ranked by return on investment
What Works to Reduce Crime?  
(Examples from our latest results)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Offender Programs</th>
<th>Change In Crime (# of EB Studies)</th>
<th>Benefits Minus Costs, per-person, life cycle (Probability: you lose $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cog-Behavioral Treatment</td>
<td>-7% (38)</td>
<td>$9,283 (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Tx in Prison (TC or out-patient)</td>
<td>-12% (21)</td>
<td>$10,974 (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP: surveillance only</td>
<td>0% (14)</td>
<td>-$4,718 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP: treatment focus</td>
<td>-14% (17)</td>
<td>$7,295 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juvenile Offender Programs*</th>
<th>Change In Crime (# of EB Studies)</th>
<th>Benefits Minus Costs, per-person, life cycle (Probability: you lose $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Family Therapy</td>
<td>-22% (8)</td>
<td>$30,706 (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisystemic Therapy</td>
<td>-13% (11)</td>
<td>$24,751 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Repl. Training</td>
<td>-20% (4)</td>
<td>$29,740 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared Straight</td>
<td>+8% (10)</td>
<td>-$9,887 (100%)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison &amp; Policing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police Per Capita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Incarceration Per Capita</td>
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<tr>
<th>Prevention*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-School* (low income)</td>
<td>-21% (11)</td>
<td>$14,934 (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Family Partnership*</td>
<td>-17% (3)</td>
<td>$13,182 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Programs have a number of other non-crime benefits; all benefits reported here.

We located and meta-analyzed 38 rigorous outcome evaluations conducted in the United States, Canada, and UK.

We find, on average, the program reduces recidivism 7 percent. Without CBT, a moderate-to-high risk offender has a 69% chance of being reconvicted for a new felony or misdemeanor; with CBT, the odds drop to about 64%.

The reduced recidivism = a NET gain of $9,283 per participant.

We estimate CBT, which is done in groups, costs $412 per participant; benefits of reduced recidivism total $2,308 to taxpayers (lower criminal justice costs) and $7,387 to crime victims and others (reduced victimization). A total benefit-to-cost ratio of $21 to $1.

Risk: Less than 1% of the time you lose money (costs exceed benefits).

We ran the model 1,000 times testing the expected bottom line for the risk and uncertainty in our findings.

Updated results available soon.
Evidence-Based Community Supervision of Adult Offenders: Three Findings from WSIPP Research Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Criminal Recidivism</th>
<th>Intensive Supervision: Surveillance-Oriented (14)*</th>
<th>Intensive Supervision: Treatment-Oriented (17)*</th>
<th>Supervision: Focused on Risk, Treatment, &amp; Response (6)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-10% ($1.93 b/c)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-16% ($6.83 b/c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number of high-quality research studies on which this finding is based.
Keeping Track of Results: Prison Beds Avoided
Cumulative Effect of Washington’s History of Evidence-based Programming

As of 2013, there are about 1,500 fewer people in prison as a result of Washington’s evidence-based adult, juvenile, & prevention programs. These effects are in the state prison forecast.

Blue Area = Actual Prison Population
Orange Area = What ADP would have been without the high ROI programs.

Years beyond 2013 are current state forecast.
Two Goals of Criminal Justice Policy:

- **Crime Reduction**
  (to achieve less crime in the future)

- **Justice**
  (to address criminal wrongs done in the past)

Benefit-cost and recidivism risk findings can help policymakers with the crime reduction goal, but they are pretty much silent on the justice goal.
Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates

Current long-term forecasts indicate that Washington will need two new prisons by 2020 and possibly another prison by 2030. Since a typical new prison costs about $250 million to build and $45 million a year to operate, the Washington State Legislature expressed an interest in identifying alternative “evidence-based” options that can: a) reduce the future need for prison beds, b) save money for state and local taxpayers, and c) contribute to lower crime rates.

The 2005 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to report, by October 2006, whether evidence-based and cost-beneficial policy options exist.

If economically sound options are available, then the Legislature also directed the Institute to project the total impact of alternative implementation scenarios.

This report describes our results to date. We begin by providing background information on historic and projected incarceration rates in Washington, as well as a history of crime rates and fiscal costs of the criminal justice system. We then describe the process we use to determine if evidence-based and economically sound options exist and present our findings. This is followed by our projections of the impact of alternative implementation scenarios. We conclude by discussing some implications of the findings and next steps. For technical readers, appendices begin on page 10 and describe our research methods and results in greater detail.

Summary

Under current long-term forecasts, Washington State faces the need to construct several new prisons in the next two decades. Since new prisons are costly, the 2005 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to project whether there are “evidence-based” options that can: a) reduce the future need for prison beds, b) save money for state and local taxpayers, c) contribute to lower crime rates.

We conducted a systematic review of all research evidence we could locate to identify what works, if anything, to reduce crime. We found and analyzed 529 rigorous comparison-group evaluations of adult corrections, juvenile corrections, and prevention programs, most of which were conducted in the United States. We then estimated the costs and benefits of many of these evidence-based options. Finally, we projected the degree to which alternative “portfolios” of these programs could affect future prison construction needs, criminal justice costs, and crime rates in Washington.

We find that some evidence-based programs can reduce crime, but others cannot. Per dollar of spending, several of the successful programs produce favorable returns on investment. Public policies incorporating these options can yield positive outcomes for Washington.

We project the long-run effects of three example portfolios of evidence-based options: a “current level” option as well as “moderate” and “aggressive” implementation portfolios.

We find that if Washington successfully implements a moderate-to-aggressive portfolio of evidence-based options, a significant level of future prison construction can be avoided, taxpayers can save money, and crime rates can be reduced.
Thank You
Appendix
Annual prison release cohorts by DOC risk classification level

**Violent Felony Re-conviction**

- Among moderate risk offenders released from prison in 1990, 31% were reconvicted for a new felony within three years.
- Among moderate risk offenders released from prison in 2007, 20% were reconvicted for a new felony within three years.

**Any Felony Re-conviction** (within 3 years after release)

- Among moderate risk offenders released from prison in 1990, 31% were reconvicted for a new felony within three years.
- Among moderate risk offenders released from prison in 2007, 20% were reconvicted for a new felony within three years.

**Risk Classification Level of Offenders In Prison by year of release from prison**

- **Lower Risk** (20% of total prison pop)
- **Moderate Risk** (17%)
- **High, Non-violent** (19%)
- **High, Violent** (44%)
Since 1990, the average violent felony risk score of offenders released from Washington prisons has increased more than 30%.
Crime Rates: Violent & Property
Washington and United States: 1980 to 2010

Violent Crime Rate*

- United States
- Washington

Violent crime has dropped since the mid-1990s, and Washington’s rate remains lower than the US.

Property Crime Rate*

- United States
- Washington

Property crime rates have declined, and the gap between Washington and the US has narrowed.

* Crime rates are the number of reported crimes to police per 1,000 resident population. Source: WASPC and FBI.
Prior to the mid-1990s, Washington’s juvenile arrest rate was consistently higher than the US rate.
The gap started to close in the mid-1990s.
Today, the two juvenile arrest rates are virtually identical.
DOC Risk-Level Classifications of Adult Offenders: The Timing of Recidivism in Washington State for...

...a New Felony Conviction

- Classified by DOC as: High, Violent
- High, Non-Violent
- Moderate
- Lower

...a Violent Felony Conviction

- Classified by DOC as: High, Violent

Source: WSIPP analysis of data from the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Department of Corrections
Keeping Track of Results: the Incarceration-Crime Relationship

Key Development:

- The long-term link between incarceration and crime in WA appears to have changed, favorably, around 2006.
- Crime is now falling without expensive increases in incarceration rates.
- Better public policies have had a role in the improved results.

Washington’s Crime Rate (non-drug crimes per 1,000 pop)

Washington’s Incarceration Rate (ADP per 1,000 pop)