

Policy development on reducing prison population paper

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



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paper In this paper, research will be made on reducing prison population and how policy affects and restores how the system works. In the research of how to reduce prison population will include statistics, facts, and public opinion history information which will support the policies claims. This topic has always been controversial and the following research will indentify the stakeholders and their opinions as they relate to the proposed policies and how politics will have an impact in its implementation of these policies.

Finally the author will provide policy recommendation and the justification for these policies. In the last several years, this country has gone through many changes in the criminal justice system and one of the major changes is prison overcrowding and the unwarranted prison costs that come with it. This problem not only affects one area of the nation's prisons, it is practically a problem in every state of the United States. One major question that policymakers should be addressing is whether is it worth having these expenses just to have low-level drug using criminals in jail that are consuming an estimated 65 billion a year? There have got to be a better way to deal with these types of low-level criminals which do not have any business in the prisons whatsoever. These drug offenders need help with rehabilitation and getting their drug problems handled not throwing them in prisons where they are only going to learn more criminal behaviors from the other violent inmates. Two major factors that contribute to the overcrowding of the prison population are: the technical violations those individuals brake like probation and parole, not showing up to court, and just following simple

instructions that the parole or probation officers give the offenders and they break those rules. The second factor is that prisons have their policies and if inmates do not follow them and break them they will be punished and serve more time, another reason is that policies change often and for that reason inmates have their sentences increased all the time. In order to reduce the prison overcrowding and maybe have some hope of sinking the recidivism rates, the criminal justice system needs to make some changes and try different alternatives to prison. With the implementation of community-based programs, reminiscent of drug rehabilitation programs, electronic monitoring and house arrest, there can be better results for individual who are trying to better their lives instead of throwing them to the prison system and having them learn new criminal skills from real violent criminals. To prevent overcrowding in the prison system, there are alternatives that the system can use instead of throwing everyone into prison and having to spend much more money for people that clearly do not belong in the prisons. One way to decrease the prison population is to evaluate the prisoners and really study the individuals who are ready to be rehabilitated and serve time in productive manner and this way the prisons can decrease costs at the same time (Heroux, 2011). There are people in this country that may have very extreme views about prisons, they feel that in a modern society, prisons should not exist and everyone has the right to be free (Heroux, 2011). In ones opinion, views like that have no place in this country or any country at all, because it is necessary to have prisons to have control over people that are really aggressive and violent who cannot live freely in our society or else they would cause nothing but chaos in the streets and citizens would not be

safe. Society may feel that if policies get tougher with our criminals, the results will be lower crime rates. Unfortunately it does not matter if policies and laws get tougher because not only in this country, but in the whole world, the criminals do not care about laws and policies. Criminals think, act and live a life of crime different than the normal law abiding citizens of this nation, which is why they do not follow the laws and going to prison just comes with the territory for them. A criminal is well aware that some day they will be behind bars and it does not matter how severe the laws or policies are they will continue to live that life of crime (Marion & Oliver, 2006). It is thought to be said that if all criminals were to be locked up, they would not commit any crimes and therefore society would be safer (Heroux, 2011). Statistics show that there is no relationship between mass incarceration and decreased crime rates (Heroux, 2011). Proponents of mass incarceration will lead you to believe that during the 1990s an increase in incarceration resulted in the decrease of crime rate, but this is just a typical case of cherry-picking data to mislead the public. There are three different cases with totally different outcomes that show no evidence that mass incarcerations will decrease the crime rate. In the first case since the 1930s throughout the 1960s, both incarceration and crime rates bounced up and down just a bit, but they stayed at a set level (Heroux, 2011). The second case showed that incarceration rates and crime rates shot up simultaneously in the late 1970s to 1980s (Heroux, 2011). The final case showed that incarceration rates sustained its level while crime rates decreased in the 1990s and in the 2000s the incarceration rates continued to increase while crime rates stayed at the same level (Heroux, 2011). So in order to deal with

all the prisoners who show potential to have a good rehabilitation in the system, we must provide them with good programs because they are still costing the states billions of dollars every year. First of all the correctional system should be looking closely at those individuals with a low level and first time offenders because they clearly do not belong in the prisons, they belong in programs where they can start paying they dues to society and get them ready to be productive members of society. These individuals have a much higher percentage of not returning to the system because they do not show signs of violent behaviors. Although they have broken the laws, these types of offenders usually have a higher rate of recidivism than other individuals who go through the prison system (Heroux, 2011). One major factor why offenders return to prison is because prison will habitually teach individuals to be aggressive and more often than not will make them engage in criminal behavior once they are released to the public sector (Heroux, 2011). On the other hand, alternative sanctions that are more suitable for offenders will eliminate that feeling of trying to commit a crime all the time; it will teach individuals new habits instead of teaching them how to be criminals. Here are different options in which the criminal justice system can adopt to eliminate some of that recidivism rate and decrease it so that the prisons will not be so overcrowded. The first sanction is electronic monitoring, this device had been around for some time now and it works as long the individual does not muddle with it and try to trick it a take it off. Another program in which offenders can be reprogrammed is with community service, probation, parole and restorative justice. Although these sanctions have been designed for individuals who can make a change and

have not shown to be violent in prisons, there are prisoners who definitely cannot participate in these types of programs for the reason that they cannot be rehabilitated due to mental issues and violent behaviors. Of course these programs are not for everyone, just because the programs are available it does not mean that anyone can participate in them. There are steps to be taken by the prison administrators and the courts before allowing an individual to go thru one of these alternative sanctions. One problem that is in the minds of politicians and the states is how much will these programs cost will it be cost effective to send these individuals through these programs to reduce the prison overcrowding. The data shows that alternative sanctions have been proven to be cost effective and they are successful in reducing the criminal behavior and decreasing the prison population (Heroux, 2011). The goal of the criminal justice system is not to eliminate all prisons all together, but to keep them full of individual who really deserve to be there, for instance violent, aggressive and mentally challenged individuals who cannot be walking around in the public because they pose a threat to the society. Another program that is helping many individuals and juveniles especially is the drug treatment programs. As we all know, jail and prisons do not always work for many individuals because they have different problems that need to be looked at by specialists, for example drug addiction. Adult and juveniles who were charged with drug offenses, but they were not violent had the chance to participate in these programs to try and rehabilitate themselves and not return to their bad habits and prisons. These alternative programs are there to give hope to many individuals who did not have the same opportunities that others had and with some training

they can be successful and be model citizens. As a condition to these criminals is that if they do not participate and cooperate with the program the only solution is to return them to prison where they can serve their remainder of their sentences. Drug treatment programs usually take from 16 to 24 months of residential drug treatment depending on the severity of the individual's addiction (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2012). Drug treatment programs have a successful track record in different states of the country. According to the National Reentry Resource Center, participants who were successful in completing the program were 33 percent less likely to return to prison, 45 percent less likely to be convicted (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2012). In conclusion, alternative sanctions exist so that individuals can have a second chance to straighten up their lives and not return to prisons where more damage can actually happen for them. The programs will not be easy to complete, but in the end they will feel proud of themselves and they will be ready to face the world in a different perspective. Studies have been shown that individuals who participated in alternative programs were more than likely to be more successful than individuals who did not participate in them. The programs mentioned above have been used for years and they have been proven to decrease the prison population, but in order to make a difference we as a society need to support these programs because they are very expensive and is the only way we are going to decrease the overcrowding in our prisons. References Dunn, W. N. (2008). *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Heroux, P. (2011). *Reducing Prison Overcrowding, Improving Justice and Preventing Crime*. Retrieved from [http://www.](http://www.https://assignbuster.com/policy-development-on-reducing-prison-population-paper/)

[huggingtonpost.com/paul-heroux/ways-to-reduce-prison-ove_b_925603.](http://huggingtonpost.com/paul-heroux/ways-to-reduce-prison-ove_b_925603.html)

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