Justice Reinvestment: Winding Back Imprisonment?
Justice Reinvestment

The goal of justice reinvestment is to redirect some portion of the $54 billion America now spends on prisons to rebuilding the human resources and physical infrastructure — the schools, healthcare facilities, parks, and public spaces — of neighborhoods devastated by high levels of incarceration.

(Tucker and Cadora, 2003:3)
## International Imprisonment Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000 pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>148</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>121</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>106</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early JRI

JRI was launched as a three-part strategy:
• Work with state legislatures to analyze criminal justice populations and budgets and recommend ways to reduce them to generate savings for reinvestment in local high incarceration communities;
• Engage development experts to identify and steer investment opportunities; and
• Organize demand by affected communities, advocates and institutions for neighborhood reinvestment.

(Austin et al., 2013:6)
TEXAS PROJECTED PRISON POPULATION

2001 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09

140,000 145,000 150,000 155,000 160,000 165,000

2007 PROJECTION

ACTUAL POPULATION

*PROJECTED TSCI POPULATION FOR DECEMBER 2009 FROM THE MOST RECENT PROJECTION (JANUARY 2009, LBB)
TEXAS:

Began JRI in 2006, with a projected prison population growth of 14,000 in 5 years at a cost of US$523 million

Implementation:

• Substance abuse treatment programs
• 1,700 new beds in halfway houses
• 3,200 new beds in in-prison treatment programs
• Changing probation and parole regimes

Outcome:

• 2008-2010: decrease in prison population by 1,125
• 2008-2009 budget: net saving of US$443.9 million
• $4.3 million pulled from the 2008–2009 corrections budget for a violence prevention program, the Nurse–Family Partnerships, to be delivered to 2000 families in identified ‘high stakes’ communities
• The 2013 inmate population is however lower than the population in 2006 when JR first started, which was 152,889.
Problems with the implementation of JRI

1. The focus on state government policy makers, often to the exclusion of local stakeholders.
2. The short term nature of technical assistance with a heavy leaning towards legislative packages.
3. Re-investment has dropped out (and with it, the place-based foundations of JR).
4. Insufficient attention to structural disincentives to decarceration.
Reflections on the fieldwork

- Local level JR is more likely to take up drivers of imprisonment specific to a location
- Insufficient attention to the racialised nature of imprisonment.
- Savings are of ‘projected’ costs which might not become available for reinvestment (and the lions share of what reinvestment does occur is CJS reinvestment).
Systemic effects

• Much of the research on the effects of incarceration has focused on individual-level outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals and sometimes their families. Yet because of the extreme social concentration of incarceration, the most important effects may be systemic, for groups and communities’ (National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014:355)
JR, data and social justice; competing claims

Exacerbating social inequality

• Attorney General Eric Holder to Oppose Data-Driven Sentencing - US AG Eric Holder

Guaranteeing social justice

• To Minimize Injustice, Use Big Data

Anne Milgram former New Jersey AG, now VP of criminal justice at the Laura and John Arnold Foundation

*Time magazine 2014*
• ‘In the domain of justice, empirical evidence by itself cannot point the way to policy’. Normative principles are needed.

• Reducing high levels of incarceration is not just about penal policy, but also about social policy.

(National Research Council of the National Academies 2014)
For more information about the AJR Project

– Access our website: justicereinvestment.unsw.edu.au
– Visit our facebook page: facebook.com/arjp
– Join our mailing list: email courtney.young@unsw.edu.au