

Prisoner Reentry : National Trends and Challenges



**26th Wisconsin Family
Impact Seminar “Looking
Beyond the Prison Gate:
New Directions in Prisoner
Reentry”**

Jeremy Travis

**President, John Jay College
of Criminal Justice**

January 23, 2008



JOHN JAY COLLEGE
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



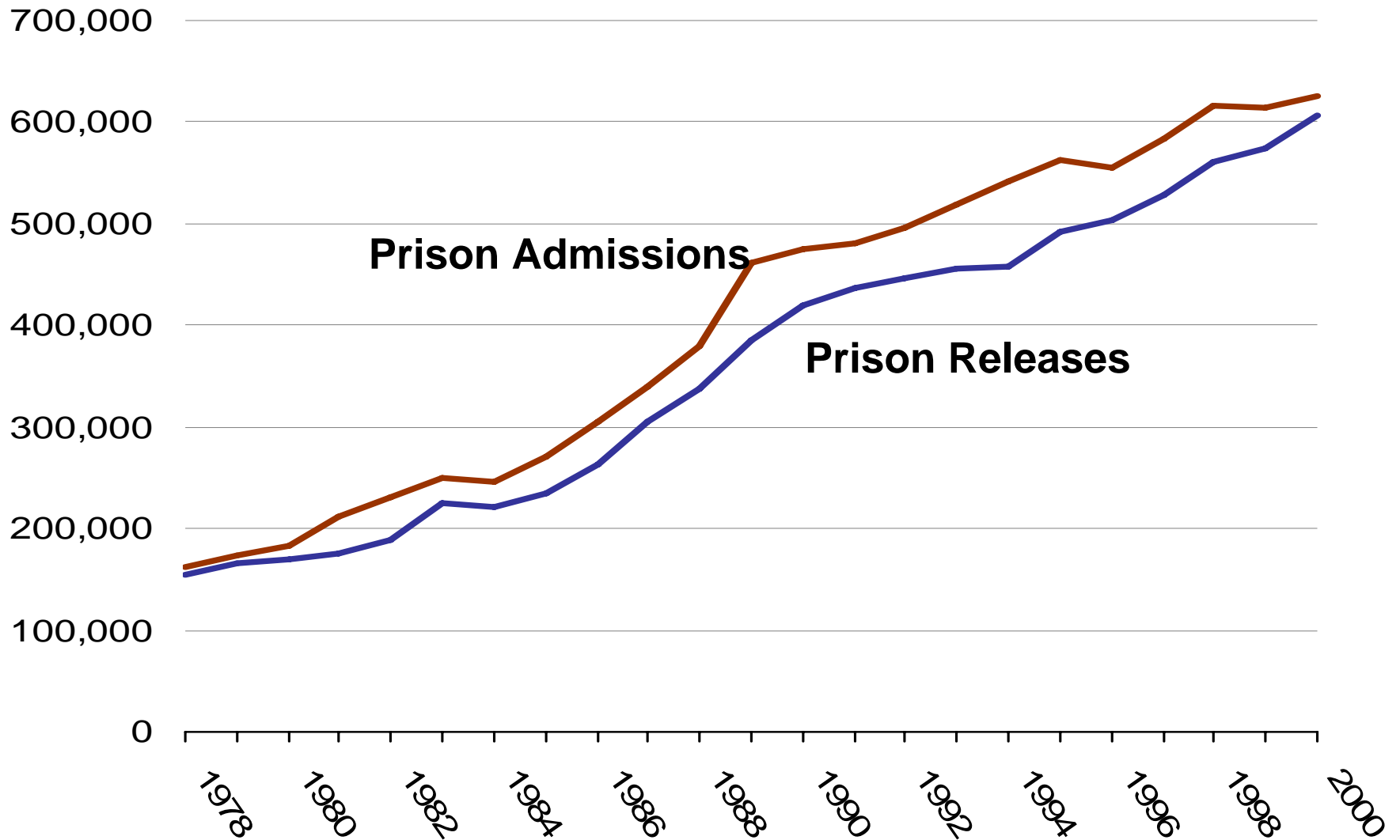
Key Points about Prisoner Reentry

- More people are leaving prison
- Returning prisoners are less prepared for reentry
- Diminished capacity to support reentry
- Significant challenges facing returning prisoners
- Consequences for communities and families

More People are Leaving Prison

More than 600,000 Released in 2000

Sentenced Prisoners Admitted and Released from Federal and State Prison, 1977-2000





Costs Are High

Public Safety Risks

- 67% rearrested within 3 years (30% within 6 months)
- 47% reconvicted for new crime within 3 years
- 25% reincarcerated for new crime within 3 years

Fiscal Implications

- \$44B on corrections in 1999 - up from \$9B in 1982

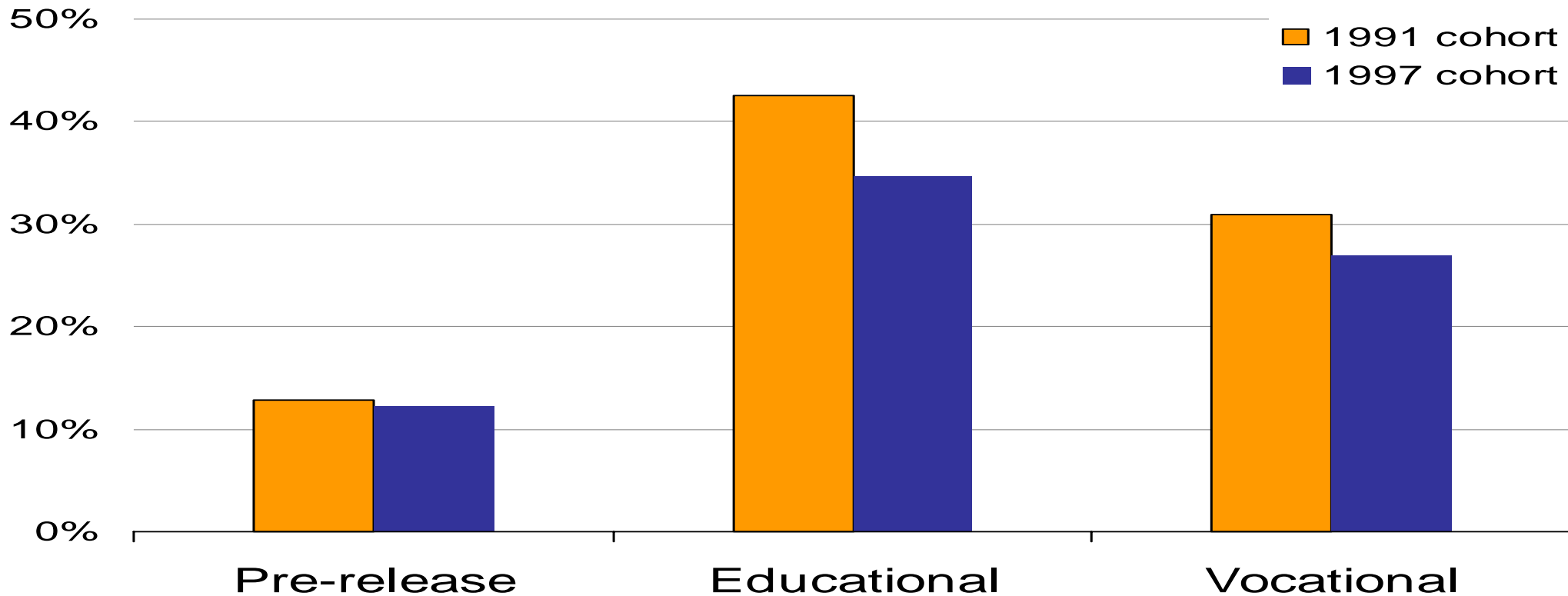
Social Costs

- public health, homelessness, disenfranchisement, social capital

Prisoners are Less Prepared for Reentry

Prison Program Participation Rates are Down

Prisoners to be Released in the Next 12 Months: Percent Participating in Prison Programs, 1991 and 1997



Source: J.P. Lynch and W.J. Sabol, *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*. Urban Institute Crime Policy Report, forthcoming.



Challenges for Reentry

Substance Abuse

Health (Physical and Mental)

Employment

Housing

- high prevalence of problem
- some in-prison intervention
- evidence of intervention effectiveness
- few linkages to aftercare





Most Prisoners Have History of Substance Abuse

- **74% of “soon-to-be-released” prisoners have substance abuse problem**
- **18% participate in formal treatment in-prison**
- **Studies show treatment is a cost-effective way to reduce both drug use and criminal activity**



High Rates of Infectious Disease and Mental Illness among State Prisoners

Public health opportunity

- **2-3% are HIV+/AIDS**
 - 5-7 times greater than US population
- **18% are infected with hepatitis C**
 - 9-10 times greater than US population
- **8-16% have serious mental health disorder**
 - 2-4 times higher than US population





Returning Prisoners Have Difficulty Finding Employment

- Having a job is associated with lower rates of reoffending
- Job training and placement programs can help
 - Improve the odds of getting a job and lower recidivism
- Yet
 - Insufficient job training and work opportunities in prison
 - Most returning prisoners unemployed



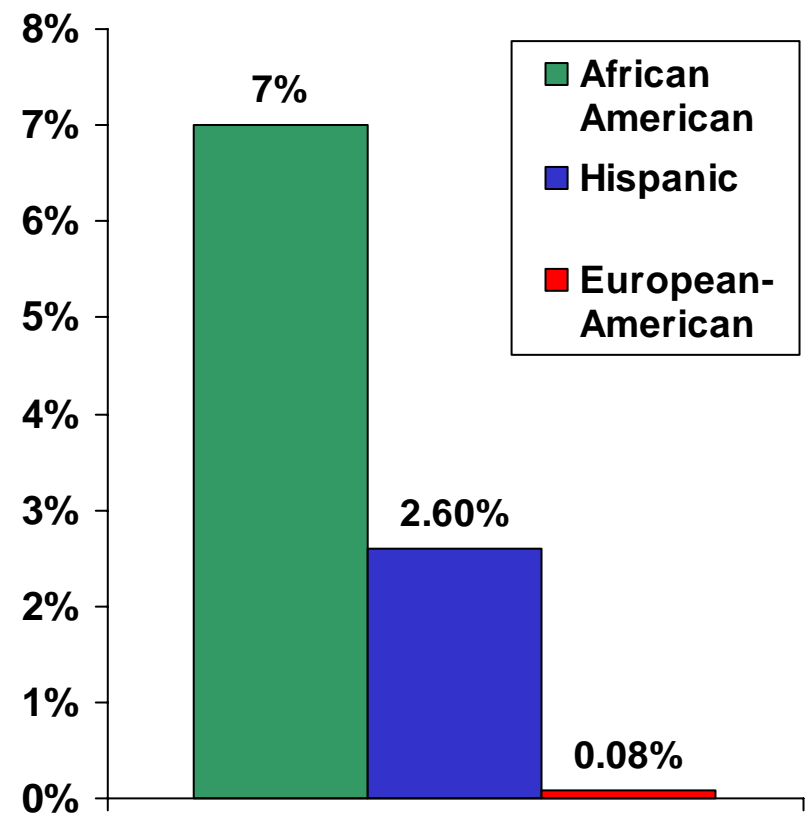
Housing is an Immediate Barrier

- **Private housing market challenges include money, time, and references**
- **Public housing challenges include federal laws, which bar certain individuals**
- **Risk of homelessness**

Implications for Families

- **1.5 million children with incarcerated parents (prison only)**
- **Majority under 10 years old**
- **Disproportionate impact on children of color**
- **Consequences for**
 - child care, custody and parental rights
 - child development and child welfare
 - family violence
 - future criminality of children

Minor Children with Incarcerated Parents, 1999



Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Incarcerated Parents and Their Children*. August 2000.



Implications for Communities

Concentrations

Returning prisoners concentrated in few neighborhoods

Brooklyn example

- 1 out of 8 parenting-age males is admitted to jail or prison in a single year in some neighborhoods
- 11% of the city blocks in Brooklyn account for 20% of the population but 50% of the parolees

Social Capital

- Increased incarceration destabilizes social networks, and leads to increases in crime?

