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Prisoner Reentry and Rochester's Neighborhoods

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Introduction

This paper will examine issues surrounding prison reentry in Rochester NY. The US prison population, after being nearly flat for many years began rising in the late 1970s and has largely continued on that path. In 1980 there were 320,000 inmates in the US. By last year there were nearly 2.5 million. Over 7 million people in the US are under some form of correctional supervision including prison, jail, probation and parole. During the past several years there has been a growing awareness that large numbers of prisoners who had been serving time for criminal offenses were being released back into the community.

Why has prisoner reentry become so important?

Today in the US over 650,000 prisoners are being released annually; about 1900 a day. That figure is about three times what it was in 1970. In New York over 23,000 state prisoners will be released this year. According to the most recent available data (2006), of all parole hearings 52% result in release. Of the 23,000 releases, 49% involve release on parole, 35% release on conditional release (determinate sentences with supervision) and 16% or nearly 4000 offenders are released at the completion of their sentence with no supervision of any kind.

Released state prisoners have spent an average of 43 months incarcerated by the time of their first release. Their average age is 34.1 yrs. They have a wide variety of problems including a drug abuse history (81%), an alcohol abuse history 47% and a history of unemployment 47%. Recidivism studies show that 39% will be returned to prison within three years including 12% for new commitment and almost 30% for parole violations.

Concern with prisoner reentry has grown as officials have realized that large number of ex-prisoners are returning to cities and pose a significant challenge with regard to preventing further criminality and reintegrating these returnees in employment, treatment and other aspects of community life. In the face of large numbers of reentering prisoners we should all be aware of the needs of these individuals as well as the potential threat to community safety and economic and social health and stability.

Where do they go when released from prison?

The New York State Division of Parole supervises approximately 54,000 parolees. The agency is divided into 5 regions. The Rochester Area office is in Region 5, the Western Southern region. At the end of 2008 the Rochester office oversaw supervision of just over 1600 parolees. The communities where the Rochester area paroles listed addresses are noted below:

| <u>Residence</u> | <u># of Parolees</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Brockport | 14 |
| Churchville | 6 |
| Fairport | 12 |
| Gates | 10 |
| Greece | 18 |
| Henrietta | 10 |
| Hilton | 7 |
| Irondequoit | 9 |
| Penfield | 10 |
| Rochester | 1421 |
| Spencerport | 8 |
| Webster | 19 |

In addition to the above areas, 30 other communities had 5 or fewer parolees supervised through the Rochester Area Office.

In Monroe County we currently send approximately 700 to 750 offenders to prison for first sentences each year. Approximately 1000 a year are now returning to Monroe County and almost all of those will return to the City of Rochester. That is to say about 20 prisoners a week are released from state prison to Rochester. Almost all of those settle in what has become known as Rochester's Crescent neighborhoods. And, these figures do not even include the approximately 1500 a year who are released back into the community from serving sentences in the local jail each year.

Monroe County is made up of 44 zip code areas. Of those 15 have more than one parolee listed as residing there. Two list only one parolee. The addresses of parolees are concentrated in a small number of Rochester zip codes, chief among these are 14605 with about 128 parolees, 14613 with about 100 parolees and 14621 with about 235 parolees. These zip codes have a rate of parolees of nearly 100 per 10,000 residents.

Where do other local offender populations live?

These same zip codes also house large numbers of persons under other forms of criminal justice supervision or were the locations of substantial numbers of state prisoners prior to their incarceration. The table below summarizes these numbers:

Table 1: Persons under various Criminal Justice Status by Zip Code

| Zip Code | Parolees | Probationers | Prisoners | Jail Inmates | Total rate/pop* | Young male rate* |
|----------|----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 14605 | 128 | 314 | 251 | 62 | 524 | 3135 |
| 14613 | 97 | 345 | 188 | 69 | 464 | 2176 |
| 14621 | 233 | 766 | 452 | 156 | 447 | 2538 |

Rate= rate per 10,000

Young includes the ages of 20 through 49

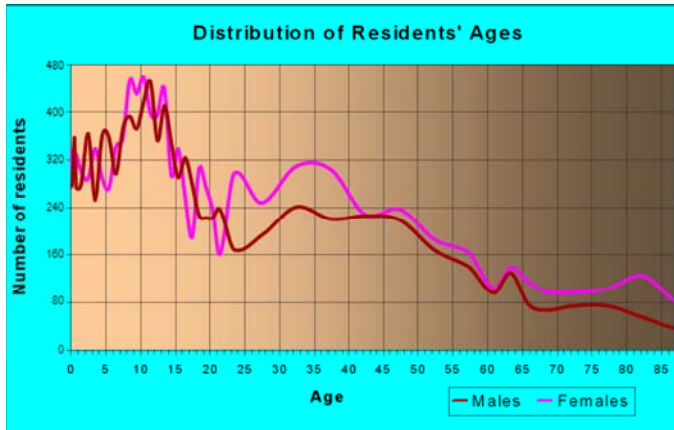
The columns to the right report rates across the criminal justice categories. Thus in 14605 the total rate for criminal justice supervised and incarcerated is 524 per 10,000 residents. For males between ages 20 and 49 the rate is 3135 out of 10,000. In 14606 this means that 1 of every 3.2 young males age 20-49 is under some form of criminal justice control. In 14613 it is 1 of every 4.6 and in 14621 it is 1 of every 3.9.

What are the consequences of this concentration?

Research has shown that high rates of incarceration in neighborhoods are often associated with reductions in the numbers of marriage age and eligible males. Rochester data indicate that in the zip codes with high concentrations of criminal justice populations there is also a smaller than expected number of young males. In zip code 14605 for example there are 163 females for every 100 males (for ages 20-49). In 14613 the ratio is 112 females to 100 males and in 14621 it is 122 females to every 100 males.

The expected ratio of females to males is just over 1 to 1 for almost all age groups. The reduction in males when compared with females as seen here, has been associated with a wide variety of social problems including effects on dating behavior, teen pregnancy, and sexually predatory behavior involving older men victimizing younger women and girls. These changes in dating behavior and sexual relationships have been described as resulting from the competition among females for the scarce male population.

Census data suggest another potential consequence of high crime and high rates of incarceration and the use of other sanctions over a long period of time. These processes may significantly influence the characteristics of neighborhoods including the demography of those areas. The charts below show the age and gender of populations for the three high criminal justice client zip codes.



14621



14605



14613

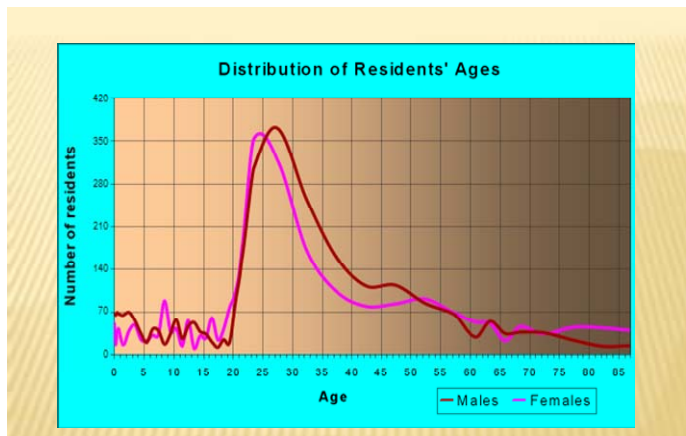
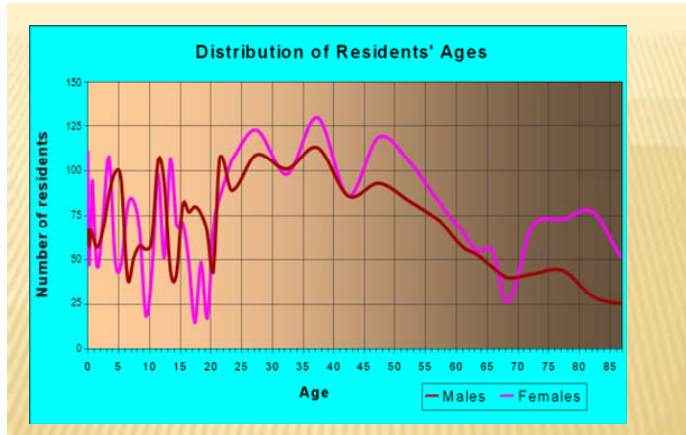
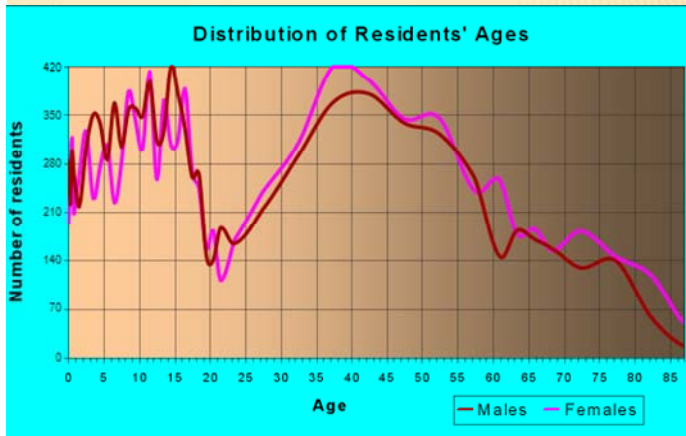
These graphs show the distribution of males and females by their ages in the three high criminal justice client zip codes.

Notice the large numbers of young children and the relative absence of young to middle age adults.

Notice also the gap between 20-40 year old males and females.

These data indicate that in these neighborhoods there are relatively few adults available to supervise and care for young children.

One implication of this is that notions of community efficacy or the tendency to take responsibility for neighborhood conditions including wayward children are hampered by the very structure of the neighborhood population.



Compare the charts above with these graphs of three non-high criminal justice client zip codes in the suburbs and in the city.

In the top two charts you see that the numbers of children are approximately matched by people in parenting age groups.

They also show similar numbers of male and female adults in the zip codes.

The third chart shows a zip code in which there are few young children and few older adults and large number so young adults.

Can you guess which zip codes are represented in these charts? The answers are below.

14580 Webster
14610 Browncroft
14607 Park Ave.

Summary

Rochester faces a significant problem relating to offender reentry. Reentry poses important questions not only about crime but also about quality of life in neighborhoods and about the reintegration of parolees themselves. In fact, reentry offenders are being concentrated in Rochester's already often struggling neighborhoods. They find themselves there with large numbers of other persons under some form of criminal justice supervision. Large numbers of others from these neighborhoods are also currently incarcerated in prison or jail. Those same neighborhoods also appear to show the long term effects of crime and incarceration in that they have fewer than expect young men in them and also have large numbers of children but comparatively small numbers of adults to supervise those children.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The data in this paper support several broad policy initiatives. Clearly significant efforts must be made to prevent and respond to crime in the neighborhoods with high ex-offender populations. Likewise a major effort must be undertaken to provide appropriate services and opportunities for returning inmates to maximize their likelihood of success and minimize their disruption of the community. Finally, the data suggest the very real need for neighborhood interventions designed to address the weaknesses associated with long term demographic shifts and changes in family and community structure. Those interventions should also seek to mitigate the potential harm resulting from both crime and the criminal justice systems responses to it. The following specific strategies are consistent with the analysis above:

1. Focused enforcement efforts designed to prevent crime in targeted areas identified as having high rates of crime and high numbers of parolees.
2. Enforcement strategies that identify known high rate offenders and concentrate on close supervision of those offenders and on arrest and prosecution of those offenders who engage in crime.
3. Efforts to provide a wide range of services and linkages for reentering inmates particularly those housed in high criminal justice client areas. These services should include a wide range of "wrap around" services including housing, employment and education and substance abuse treatment services.
4. Casework and outreach services with small caseloads and the use of cognitive interventions geographically focused on the high parolee neighborhoods.
5. Broad social interventions such as the nurse-family visitation programs to support families with young children in neighborhoods identified by either disproportionate numbers of female residents or unexpectedly low numbers of adults.
6. Mentoring programs concentrated in the neighborhoods of low numbers of adults.
7. Problem solving courts such as community courts which seek to employ alternative sanctions for early and lower serious offenses and seek to reduce the need for detention and incarceration over the long run.

Methodological Concerns and Data Issues

This paper utilizes a variety of sources of data. Census data are used, including the most recently available population estimates. While these are the best data available caution must be taken in drawing conclusions due to the potential underreporting. Some of the Census data used are reported at <http://www.city-data.com/zip/>

Prisoner and parolee characteristics and recidivism statistics are from the New York Department of Correctional Services. Local criminal justice populations are based on official sources and reflect data for the month of December 2008. Jail and Prison inmate data for zip codes are based on estimates drawn from the numbers of Monroe county inmates in these facilities. The numbers for prison inmates are distributed across zip codes based on the actual distribution of parolees and the numbers of jail inmates are distributed across zip codes based on the actual number of probationers.