

Recidivism in America

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The United States is the country that imprisons the most people in the world. There are 655 prisoners per 100,000 people (Buchholz, 2019). The states spend well over 50 billion dollars each year on corrections, only to experience alarmingly high recidivism rates. Data has shown that more than four in 10 offenders returned to prison within three years of their release (The PEW Charitable Trusts, 2011). The United States should rethink reliance on long prison sentences and pivot to further developing evidence-based reentry and rehabilitation programs for the incarcerated and recently released. This will enable more ex-convicts to succeed in society and become law-abiding citizens. This paper will examine the pressing issue of recidivism and how it affects the criminal justice system, offer several recommendations on how to resolve the issue, and discuss the positive and negative implications that recidivism has on society as a whole.

Background

Recidivism is the repetition of criminal activity. "A recidivist refers to a person who has been arrested and released on parole, probation, or other conditions, and who repeats a crime within a specific time frame" (Recidivism, 2002, para. 1). In recent years, the United States has developed the get-tough on crime policy which holds that incarceration should be the primary form of punishment for all offenders. The prison population has increased by 700% from the year of 1972 to 2011 (Mears, et al., 2016). In 2014, there were seven million people in Federal, State, and County prisons, on probation, or parole in the United States (Munoz et al, 2016). Time served in prison has also increased as inmates who were released in 2009 served at least nine more months in prison compared to inmates who served time in earlier years (Mears et

al., 2016). These patterns were due to the get-tough on crime policy. This policy placed an emphasis on greater retribution for criminal offenses in order to create incapacitation and deter others in society from committing crimes. This stems from the belief that more time in prison would help to reduce recidivism rates, lower crime rates, and help control “dangerous classes.” However, scholars have stated that the reliance on long prison sentences can result in many social issues. It is clear that serving time in prison can have a negative impact on an offender’s relationships with family and friends, mental and physical health, and the ability to find a job or housing after release. This approach to reducing crime and recidivism rates in this country has led to mass incarceration and little to no improvement in recidivism rates. The Bureau of Justice Statistics National Assessment of Recidivism Rates found that within five years of release, 77% of offenders were rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor, 55% were reconvicted of a new crime, and 28% were sent back to prison for a new crime in the year of 2005 (Mears et al., 2016).

Four Major Schools of Thought

The four major schools of thought in criminal justice in regard to corrections and punishment are retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation. Retribution is the “eye for an eye” mentality and sees prison solely as a punishment to restore order after committing a wrongful act or harming another. Deterrence is the idea that putting people in prison for crime will ultimately deter or discourage others from committing crimes. Incapacitation is the belief that putting people in prison takes away their ability to do more harm to others, as they are isolated from the rest of society in an institution where inmates are closely monitored by guards. Lastly, rehabilitation seeks to understand the motive for

committing the crime and focus the punishment and treatment methods on weakening that motive. The main goal of rehabilitation is to transform the individual's negative behavior into positive behavior that will in return benefit society after release (Bailey, 2007).

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is the most effective way to reduce recidivism. Although not all criminals can be successfully rehabilitated, it has been effective for inmates that can effectively change their behavior and has helped to reduce recidivism and crime in general (Recidivism, 2002).

Rehabilitation can take place in many different forms. Rehabilitation efforts that have demonstrated successful outcomes include substance abuse programs, mental health treatment, educational programs, vocational training, and career development services. Studies have shown that the most successful rehabilitation programs have lowered the chance of re-offending by 10 to 15% (McKean & Ransford, 2004).

Reentry Programs

Preparation for release has also been an important aspect of prison life. Since the mid-1900's, states used indeterminate sentencing which released prisoners on a condition known as parole. As the correctional system shifted the focus towards rehabilitation efforts, many prisons began to incorporate educational programs, vocation programs, or counseling in order to help prepare offenders for release. Parole boards and officers were also very involved in the offender's life after release and would often recommend halfway houses, as a way to slowly help an ex-convict transition back into society. However, the 1980's introduced the get-tough on crime approach which ultimately led to a lack of confidence in rehabilitation efforts, reduced funding for reentry programs, and a drastic change in parole supervision methods. Now, many

inmates are serving very long sentences as the courts and correctional system use this method to deter crime and isolate offenders from the rest of society in order to avoid future crime. Prisons today tend to focus less on rehabilitation. It is common for prisons to use programs to keep the inmates busy and maintain order instead of using these programs to help prepare the offender for their release (Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Mass incarceration and the get-tough on crime policy led to a series of problems surrounding reentry. Longer sentences and limited rehabilitation efforts within most prisons led to a lack of skills among many offenders and a lack of resources for offenders being released. There are approximately 650,000 offenders being released each year from state and federal prisons. High recidivism rates began to pose a severe risk to community safety. The federal government began to address this issue in the early 2000's and launched the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, which provided funding to the states to develop their own re-entry programs (Fox, 2010). Many states now possess their own version of reentry programs that are designed to prepare an offender for release and help reduce the chances of reoffending.

Analysis

Scholars who are interested in the pressing topic of high recidivism rates in the United States have begun their research by examining the reasons for recidivism. There are several factors at play that impact an offender's decision to re-offend after release. The reasons for recidivism are ultimately essential to understand in order to develop effective rehabilitation programs that target the needs of inmates behind bars and ex-convicts that have been released.

Reasons for Recidivism

The United States has high recidivism rates compared to other countries. This is directly related to how criminals are treated in prisons and the fact that the United States tends to incarcerate people for long periods of time even for minor offenses. There are many causes for recidivism and several reasons as to why so many people decide to re-offend. The primary reason is known as familiarity, which is the developed level of knowledge or expertise in committing crimes and minimizing the risk of getting caught by law enforcement. This makes a life of crime acceptable to live for some career criminals because they rely on crime to be able to survive. Another cause of recidivism is becoming conditioned to prison life after long sentences. For some criminals, prison provides them with a stable environment, and they have no desire to return to society and work in order to support themselves. In this case, criminals may commit non-violent crimes in order to be put back in the comforts that they believe prisons provide. Also, many people who are released from prison have no intention of returning to a life of crime, but fall into desperation and return to crime as a means to support themselves. Many offenders are released from prison with very little money or no family that is willing to help them get back on their feet. The United States also makes it very hard for an ex-convict to find stable housing and employment. Due to these circumstances, many offenders return to crime out of pure desperation. Additionally, many offenders return to the same environment that they were once involved in before prison. They then may feel pressured by their peers to break the law again in order to fit in with the group. For some offenders, this is the only family or support system that they have and will succumb to this pressure from their peers in order to feel accepted and avoid feelings of loneliness (Recidivism, 2002).

Revolving Doors: Jason Bobbitt

Jason Bobbitt was released from prison 15 years ago and has been labeled a convicted felon. Bobbitt was trying to find an honest means of work in order to support his wife and five children. Bobbitt became frustrated when applying for jobs at places such as Home Depot, as he would only receive eight dollars an hour. This was not enough to support his family and he felt like a failure. Times got tough and Bobbitt made a mistake that would impact everyone around him. He was caught selling Cocaine, the same charge that landed him in prison fifteen years ago. Bobbitt served 18 months in prison and was released on parole. While he was incarcerated, his family suffered greatly. His wife was not able to support all five children on her own. All but one of his children dropped out of school, their grades suffered, and some began to do drugs and hang out with the wrong crowd. Ultimately, Bobbitt was the one who had to serve the time, but the consequences of his behavior impacted his wife and children the most and their lives may never be the same. Bobbitt is just one example of an ex-convict that struggled to survive after release from prison due to the stigma of being a convicted felon in America (Vice News, 2018). This is a prime example of how the criminal justice system is broken in many ways. The United States is known as the land of the free, yet incarcerates the most people in the world. Bobbitt is not the only one to experience these hardships and there are many more just like him that experience negative consequences of being a convicted felon on a daily basis.

Harsh Prison Conditions

Many countries throughout the nation admire Norway and its model prison system. Norwegian prisons are not overcrowded like United States prisons and offenders are not

sentenced as long as they are in the United States. Prisons in Norway are known to have outstanding conditions and correctional officers treat the inmates as human beings and aim to get to know the inmates on a personal level in order to offer guidance. This in return creates a better quality of life for prisoners and helps reduce recidivism (Johnsen et al., 2011). On the other hand, prison conditions in the United States are often very harsh and can dehumanize inmates to the point that they are unable to conform to societal standards after release. This results in a population of individuals that do not possess the necessary skills to survive in society, which in return makes them more likely to re-offend. Violence and rape within prisons have become very prevalent in both male and female prisons. Rape in prisons, especially for males, develops a sense of rage in the victim which may result in depression and violent behavior. These experiences tend to dehumanize the victim and the perpetrator of rape. The perpetrator will become immune to inflicting suffering on others and the victim may feel that these behaviors are tolerated or acceptable. The victims may place a lesser value on their lives and the lives of others due to this trauma. This cycle of learned violence follows the victims and the perpetrator outside of the prison walls. Inmates who experience rape behind bars may suppress their feelings of rage and shame until they are released and then feel the need to assert their masculinity on others through aggressive acts such as rape after release (Bailey, 2007).

Rehabilitation Programs

Rehabilitation is a very effective method and can offer benefits for the inmate and the community as a whole. In order to reduce recidivism rates, the United States should place more emphasis on rehabilitation efforts and reentry programs to prepare offenders for release and to

put an end to the revolving door that leads back to prison. The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center Staff suggests that the programs that address risk, need, and responsivity are the most effective, and more funding needs to be allocated towards programs that specifically address the needs of offenders that are most likely to re-offend. The CSG Justice Center Staff also explains that cognitive-behavioral programs are effective in targeting those who are likely to re-offend. Cognitive-behavioral programs help offenders to identify their feelings influence their actions. These programs include teaching an offender new skills, behaviors, and attitudes that will have a positive influence on future behavior. This includes addressing an offender's choice of peer groups, substance abuse, and relationships with family members. Cognitive behavior programs are action-oriented, meaning that the offender will actually get to practice these new skills and behaviors with an instructor through role-play (CSG Justice Center Staff, 2018).

Substance Abuse

Scholars emphasize the importance of targeting specific groups of offenders who are more prone to reoffending in order to successfully lower recidivism rates. American prisons are overwhelmed with large numbers of drug-involved offenders. The idea of substance abuse treatment for drug offenses arose due to overcrowding in prisons and high recidivism rates for drug-involved offenders in particular. Most importantly, the high incarceration rates for drug offenses have led to untreated substance abuse issues in many offenders making it very hard for them to stay sober and out of prison. Alternative treatment programs should be considered for offenders that display clear substance abuse issues and have had several contacts with the criminal justice system. Diversion programs, community treatment, and drug courts are

common alternatives for offenders with drug issues. Drug courts are a good way to place drug offenders into long-term treatment and keep them under supervision, as they work to become sober instead of placing them behind bars for many years with violent criminals. Studies have found that drug courts effectively help to reduce recidivism rates. Although drug courts seem to be effective, it is crucial that offenders follow through with other treatment methods or counseling after participation in a drug court. This should also be monitored by the courts and corrections to ensure that these programs remain successful in reducing recidivism for drug offenses (Belenko, 2004).

Probation and Parole

Offenders who are sentenced to probation or released on parole are required to follow strict rules such as avoiding contact with other criminals, attending counseling, submitting to drug tests, or paying restitution. If an offender breaks one of these rules or fails to meet a requirement, the supervising officer will most likely write them a violation which could result in a return to jail or prison. In the 2000's, many states required that an offender be reprimanded for even a minor violation. During this time, any violation typically resulted in a return back to prison. States have also slightly reduced the use of incarceration for all offenses and have shifted towards the use of community sanctions such as probation and parole for cases they see fit. A study done by Morash et al., in 2019 found decreased recidivism in women that were labeled as high risk for recidivism that were offered treatment in response to non-drug-related parole or probation violation compared to being given a punitive sanction which resulted in increased levels of recidivism (Morash et al., 2019). These findings indicate that offenders on probation and parole may benefit from alternative responses to a violation rather than being

sent back to prison for a minor mistake. Implementing various alternative responses to violations such as treatment, counseling, or even a short stay in jail may have a positive impact on reducing recidivism as this country has so many people on probation and parole. This could be a good start to help close the revolving door for those who have trouble staying away from the criminal justice system in particular. It is important to remember that change does not happen overnight and the road to becoming a law-abiding citizen is a journey and not a race. It would be very beneficial for an ex-convict to feel as if they have the correctional system on their side, rooting for them to succeed, rather than against them waiting to watch them fail.

One state that has incorporated alternative sanctions for violations of probation and parole is Missouri. In 2004, the state of Missouri reported a recidivism rate of 54.4 percent. This was the third-highest recidivism rate among all the states. Missouri also reported that 40.3 percent of released offenders were re-arrested on a technical violation of probation or parole. Missouri state prisons were overcrowded, and the Governor stated that there was no money to increase prison capacity, meaning that the state would need to develop a plan to resolve this issue. Policymakers realized that mandatory minimum sentencing resulted in longer prison sentences and that too many offenders released on parole were being rearrested for a technical violation and returning to prison. The state realized that something needed to change. Over the next few years, the state of Missouri was able to develop a plan to improve the correctional system which began through new policies and procedures and extensive probation and parole staff training. Today, recently released offenders in Missouri experience evidence-based supervision. This means that when a violation occurs, probation and parole officers have a variety of different sanctions that they are able to impose. These sanctions range from a

verbal warning, change in conditions of probation or parole, electronic monitoring, drug treatment, or short periods of jail time which is known as “shock time.” The Director of Corrections explained that the state will use every resource they have in order to avoid sending an offender back to prison and that prison should only be used as the last resort in serious cases. These changes have resulted in a decrease in recidivism rates and the state of Missouri reported a recidivism rate of 36.4 percent in 2009 (The PEW Charitable Trusts, 2011).

Evidence-Based Reentry Programs

In the paper on how to design reentry programs to be successful, Listwan et al., suggests that a model reentry program includes three or more phases that are designed to help the inmate transition back into the community. Phase one would begin in the institution, phase two would take place as the inmate is released, and phase three is the relapse prevention phase, in which the offender would have access to ongoing support based on their specific needs (Listwan et al., 2006).

Phase one, which begins inside of the prison will identify risk, need, and responsivity. Offenders who need more assistance than others will be identified. It is also crucial to avoid mixing different populations of prisoners such as high-risk and low-risk offenders. This allows the program to target specific needs of offenders and to be more effective in teaching proper skills and behaviors (Listwan et al., 2006).

Phase two takes place as the inmate is released from prison and is very extensive. This phase focuses heavily on securing sustainable employment. For example, a prison may seek to collaborate with a local business in order to help train inmates in the field prior to release and provide them with a viable option for employment as they are released from the institution.

Phase two will also focus on education. Many states offer educational programs to inmates, however, studies found that only 11 percent of inmates participate in these programs if they are not mandatory. Phase two of reentry will focus on education and helping the offender to not only understand the world but also understand the consequences of their behaviors.

Another key aspect of phase two is the emphasis on family and relationships. Research has found that offenders who do not return to crime after release are often very connected to their families while incarcerated. However, often times inmates lose a strong connection with their families during incarceration for a variety of different reasons. This may be due to the impact of the crime committed or simply because it is difficult to stay connected with the outside world behind bars. Also, some inmates who have children may lose connection with the child if they are placed in foster care. Additionally, some families may not be able to properly handle the offender's needs after release. Therefore, family-based therapy is crucial to the reentry process, especially for families who have struggled throughout the course of incarceration. Family-based therapy and interventions help to strengthen the support system that the offender needs to be successful. Lastly, phase two will focus on community collaboration. The reentry process involves community-based social service agencies in order to provide inmates with information on housing, employment, counseling, and mental health services. These services require an extensive amount of planning and can be expensive, but they are necessary for success. Reentry programs should also examine how community factors play a role in recidivism. Returning to neighborhoods filled with peers that may have been involved in criminal behavior is risky and offenders should be taught strategies to deal with peer pressure (Listwan et al., 2006).

Phase three focuses on relapse prevention and after-care treatment. Research has suggested that an offender's needs should be readdressed in the months after they have been released in order to provide them with the necessary services. Offenders may begin their reentry plan with plans to be successful, but the struggles of daily life, issues with family, or reuniting with bad influences may negatively impact their journey. Successful reentry programs should recognize this and include frequent home visits within the months after release in order to continue caring for the offender and avoiding a breakdown in behavior (Listwan et al., 2006).

Reentry Programs: The Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative

Many inmates may learn to become better criminals while incarcerated due to the high rate of crime that occurs in prisons. They often learn how to cheat the system instead of learning skills that will benefit them in the real world. One solid strategy that has been implemented in order to reduce recidivism is beginning the preparation for release at the time of admission to prison. One state that has incorporated this strategy is Michigan, through the program known as the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative. This program was expanded statewide in 2008 due to the high recidivism rates that the state was experiencing. The MPRI begins at intake and the offender's strengths and weaknesses are measured in order to develop an individualized plan to benefit the specific offender based on their needs. Inmates are also transferred to a reentry facility prior to release where they will create a transition plan that addresses key issues such as housing, employment, transportation, and counseling. Lastly, after release, parole officers are trained to use firm but flexible sanctions for any parole violations, which helps to manage rule-breaking before it becomes more serious and results in further punishment (The PEW Charitable Trusts, 2011). This creates incentives for offenders to succeed

after release. Overall, recidivism has successfully been reduced by evidence-based programs in prisons and through the adequate supervision of those on probation or parole in the community. This should be the main focus behind resolving these issues.

Evidence-Based Success in Oregon

Another state that has successfully implemented evidence-based programs in order to reduce recidivism rates is Oregon. In 2004, Oregon reported a recidivism rate of 22.8 percent. This was a 32 percent decline from the year 1999. This level of success has been achieved through a combination of efforts from the supervision officers, the judiciary the state corrections department, the communities, and the legislators. Oregon assesses all inmates beginning at intake, implements target case management during incarceration. Develops a detailed transition plan for each inmate which begins six months prior to release. Probation and parole officers also use a sanctioning grid to impose swift but consistent consequences for violations. These strategies are evidence-based, meaning they are a product of research and trial and error. These strategies are also frequently monitored and reassessed in order to ensure that they remain effective. The use of evidence-based programs within the Oregon correctional system was a resulted of the SB 267 bill, which required that any correctional programs receiving state money be evidence-based in design (The PEW Charitable Trusts, 2011).

Recommendations

Many scholars have provided suggestions on how to address and resolve the issue of high recidivism rates in this country. In order to make improvements going forward, the criminal justice system should reevaluate the reliance on long and harsh prison sentences and

focus on rehabilitative efforts and reentry programs. This can be accomplished through re-evaluating sentencing on a case-by-case basis, allocating more effort and funding towards rehabilitation programs that have been effective and that target those who are more likely to re-offend, and requiring prisons to prepare the inmates for release through evidence-based and effective reentry programs.

Re-evaluate Sentencing and Institutionalization

The United States is known for incarcerating people for long periods of time in order to deter crime. However, locking a person up and throwing away the key has resulted in the institutionalization of many individuals in which they do not know how to live a life of independence outside of prison. Institutionalization is the process by which inmates are shaped and transformed by institutional environments and is often referred to as prisonization when discussing the psychological effects of long prison sentences (Haney, 2003). Inmates are forced to comply with prison rules and lose their ability to make their own choices while incarcerated. An inmate's whole day is essentially mapped out for them and they know what time to wake up, eat, work, and go to bed. It is very common for inmates who have been incarcerated for many years to fully adjust to this way of life and become dependent on the institution. Institutionalization or prisonization may cause an offender to suffer greatly when released as they suddenly have the freedom to make their own decisions and must learn how to survive on their own, which is an aspect of life that an inmate did not have to think about for many years while incarcerated (Haney, 2003). There have also been many offenders that have served long sentences of 20 years or more for example, and when they are released, they return to a completely different world. In this case, it takes time for them to learn and adjust to social

norms. This process of preparing for reentry needs to begin while the offender is still behind bars in order to increase the chances of success and avoid the unfortunate circumstances that can result in a return to crime such as familiarity, prison conditioning, desperation, or pressure by peers to re-offend.

Focus on Education

Education is an extremely important aspect of good decision making. The majority of American prisons offer educational programs for inmates such as the opportunity to earn a GED or take college courses. Some prisons may mandate that inmates enroll in an educational program, and some may make this opportunity optional. However, educational programs should be mandatory for all inmates in the United States in one way or another. A study conducted by Nally et al., in 2014 found that education and post-release employment outcomes were significantly related to a decline in recidivism rates (Nally et al., 2014). The United States is a country that heavily emphasizes the importance of education and the direct correlation between education and employment. More often than not, the more educated an individual is, the more likely they are able to obtain a high-paying position. Education also allows one to become informed on societal issues and learn how to adhere to social norms. Inmates who participate in correctional education programs are 28% less to recidivate compared to inmates not enrolled in these programs (Bozick et al., 2018). This statistic makes it clear that education should be held to a higher standard within the correctional system as it has a positive impact on reducing recidivism.

Reentry Programs and Community Violations

Research strongly suggests that evidence-based reentry programs have been extremely effective for reducing recidivism rates in this country. States such as Michigan, Missouri, and Oregon, have seen outstanding results after implementing evidence-based reentry programs. These programs should begin at intake and inmates should be individually assessed in order to develop a personalized transition plan. These programs are most effective when they are actively used throughout the course of incarceration and are followed up by the supervising officer even months after release. Additionally, more states should also adopt extensive parole and probation staff training in order to reduce the number of offenders that are sent back to prison for a minor violation. Probation and parole officers should learn to use swift but firm sanctions that include a range of different consequences based on the seriousness of the violation.

Social Implications

High recidivism rates have had negative impacts on society. The most prevalent impact has been the overall lack of confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole. Additionally, alarmingly high recidivism rates result in more crime within communities and cause citizens to fear for their safety. Addressing this issue and implementing several strategies to reduce recidivism will result in the positive social implications that society needs in order to restore confidence in the criminal justice system.

Negative Social Implications

High recidivism rates have caused society to feel a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole which includes the police, the courts, and corrections. The ultimate

goal of the criminal justice system is to advance public safety and to promote accountability for wrongdoing (Klinge, 2019). Currently, these goals are not being achieved and there must be a change in action. There must be more emphasis on the fact that the United States criminal justice system has a responsibility to rehabilitate an offender before releasing them back into society. An offender should come out of prison displaying a change in behavior and should seek to positively contribute to society. However, this has not been the case in recent years and ex-convicts often become alienated from society and return to criminal behavior. The United States makes it difficult for convicted felons to find jobs and housing due to background checks and the stigma that surrounds being a convicted felon or violent offender. This can cause an ex-convict to feel as if there is no honest way to succeed and they may become vulnerable to fall back into a life of crime. This is especially prevalent for offenders of color and offenders that come from a life of poverty, as there are often limited opportunities for success for minorities living in low-income neighborhoods. Offenders that are released with very little money or no family to turn to for support may struggle and return to crime because they have no outlets to turn to for assistance (Recidivism, 2002). Ultimately, recidivism leads to more crime in American communities and this does not help to advance public safety or promote law-abiding behavior. A rise in crime in communities also causes citizens to fear that they will one day become a victim to crime. This may also deter business owners from operating their business in areas vulnerable to crime. This may result in less jobs and negatively impacts the community and the economy.

The College Admissions Scandal

Americans also do not believe that justice is being served in certain situations. Many offenders are sentenced unfairly by either receiving too harsh of a sentence for their involvement in a crime or receiving too light of a sentence that will not benefit them nor hold them accountable for their wrongful actions. Some offenders may even be acquitted of all charges or be granted the ability to be on probation or parole simply due to their social status which is corrupt and causes outrage among society.

One recent example of unjust sentencing can be seen through the college admissions scandal in 2019. This large scandal included over a dozen of elite individuals that were involved in helping their children cheat on college entrance exams and bribing coaches and admissions staff in exchange for admission of their child to prestigious schools as fake athletic recruits. Famous actresses Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin were involved in this scandal and received fairly light sentences, which caused anger and frustration among society. Huffman was charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud and only served 14 days in prison. Huffman will also spend one year on supervised release and be mandated to pay a thirty thousand dollar fine for her involvement in the scandal. Loughlin, who was accused of paying half of one million dollars in bribes to get her two daughters into the University of Southern California, was charged with conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud. Loughlin only served two months, will have to endure two years of supervised release, and pay a hefty fine (United States Attorney's Office, 2021). This is just one example of injustice within the United States criminal justice system which negatively impacts society.

Positive Social Implications

Recidivism must be addressed, and this process should begin the first time an individual has contact with the criminal justice system. The correctional system should re-evaluate its reliance on long sentences and shift the focus more on rehabilitation. Evidence-based reentry programs are also effective in reducing recidivism rates and should be incorporated in prisons throughout the country. With the use of these strategies combined with the adequate supervision of those on probation and parole within the communities, recidivism rates have the potential to decrease, which will result in positive implications on society. Lower recidivism rates will help society to restore trust in the criminal justice system. Lower recidivism rates will also help to reduce crime and help to keep people out of prison, which is a major issue. The United States imprisons the most people in the world and has struggled with the issue of mass incarceration for decades which has had severe impacts on society. Successfully using these strategies to slowly reduce recidivism rates will be a step in the right direction for the United States criminal justice system and progress may even be admired by other countries with similar issues.

Conclusion

Overall, the United States imprisons the most people in the world and experiences alarmingly high recidivism rates each year. This has resulted in the overcrowding of prisons and has caused society to lack confidence in the criminal justice system which is supposed to keep the people of America safe from harm. The United States should rethink reliance on long prison sentences and pivot to further developing evidence-based reentry and rehabilitation programs for the incarcerated and recently released. This will allow more ex-convicts to learn the skills

that they need to succeed in society and help to close the revolving door that leads straight back to prison. Implementing these strategies will help to reduce recidivism, but they also have the potential to transform the lives of many offenders who have struggled to stay on the right path. A strong focus on rehabilitation and evidence-based correctional programs is necessary to improve the current state of this country and will help society to restore its faith in the criminal justice system.

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