

# The Link between a Country's Welfare and Imprisonment

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## ABSTRACT

**This study aims to investigate the relationship between a country's welfare and its prison population. It further attempts to identify how closely these two variables are connected - both factually and theoretically. Data shows that changes in welfare policy and practices are strongly linked to jail policy and practice, as measured by the relative volume of incarceration, demonstrating that welfare reduction involves punitive expansionism which is a concept prison reformist have known for a long time. Lastly, the trend toward economic welfare liberalization is expected to exacerbate the already enormous obstacles that such analyses will face in the future.**

**Subject: Economics**

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that the welfare and criminal justice systems are frequently compared and contrasted, research has shown that the two have a trade-off. According to statistics collected in the United States and other nations, authorities that expend less on welfare benefits have greater imprisonment rates and costs. Cutting aid, according to one explanation, leads to increased social instability and criminality, and hence higher imprisonment rates, which is in line with the findings of other papers in this special issue (Guetzkow, 2020). Even when crime and poverty rates are taken into account, the trade-off persists, indicating a closer link between the welfare and criminal justice systems.

Excessive welfare expenditure operates as a placative method to "pay off" the poor, according to a scientific study on the relationship between incarceration and poverty, but jail serves as a punitive approach that threatens retribution for resistance. In this perspective, the negative correlation between welfare and jails might be regarded as an indication that authorities will choose one over the other when it comes to social control. It's also proposed that welfare reform and jail reform are both components of a larger policy framework aiming at reducing social marginalization, with differing degrees of commitment to include or exclude disadvantaged people. Existing theories leave important problems unanswered, such as whether they should be used to impose labor market discipline, retain societal control over the impoverished, or regulate social marginality. What is the link between criminal justice and welfare programs, and how does it contribute to the observed trade-off between benefit generosity and incarceration rates? The current analysis assumes that welfare and criminal justice systems respond to social control needs in a mechanical manner.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Guetzkow (2020), the link between prison population and welfare has predominantly been perceived as operationally corresponding methods of social control, with increased welfare expenditure functioning as a placated approach aimed at "acquiring off" the poor and incarceration acting as an aggressive strategy threatening sanctions for insubordination. The negative relationship between welfare and imprisonment, according to Guetzkow (2020), can be interpreted as an indication that authorities will prefer one strategy to the other for social control. Katherine Beckett and Bruce Western made a similar claim, claiming that welfare and criminal which differs in its "determination to integrate or eliminate marginalized individuals."

Bayliss (2003) maintains there is reasonable ground for governmental welfare on prisoners. His study found that in countries where the prison population is expanding, state support welfare, such as education, is becoming increasingly vital. The study also states that learning in prison has the primary impact of increasing ex-prisoner's prospects of

obtaining employment and thereby reducing recidivism. If this relationship is demonstrated, Bayliss (2003) argues it will "convince legislators, prison officers, and prisoners of the potential benefits of welfare, particularly jail education." Lastly, the study also asserts that educational programs should go beyond basic education, constitute an integral component of the prison system, and better prepare prisoners for life after incarceration as well as a greater level of contact with the outside world (Bayliss, 2003, p. 157).

According to Beckett et al. (2001), who reviewed US federal statistics, welfare provision and jail statistics are inversely related. Governments that spent on prisoner welfare had low rates of imprisonment (Gottschalk, 2015) except for Japan, nations experiencing the highest incarceration rates spent less than GDP's proportional welfare. Denmark, Sweden as well as Finland conforming to the previous premise - all spend a substantial percentage of their GDP's welfare and experience the minimal imprisonment rates. The understanding that welfare has a modest impact on rising crime rates is all too quickly replaced by the conviction that welfare makes things terrible. Welfare, as per Charles Murray (1984, 1991), becomes the source of the concern rather than being a solution. Murray's highly publicized and corporate think-tank-supported article asserts that substantial welfare programs encourage "impoverished" dependence and illegitimacy, which contributes to rising crime and recidivism rates. The solution is less welfare and more incarceration, and not the other way round. Although the weight of evidence strongly contradicts all elements of this article (Jencks and Peterson, 1991), Murray continues to promote it.

According to Schoenfeld (2018), it is comprehensible to see how discrepancies in welfare state welfare are linked to incarceration. A robust welfare state not only protects inhabitants from income loss but also fosters social coherence (Atkinson, 1999). A weaker robust welfare state, on the other perspective, is related to increased inequality among its residents and the resulting societal consequences (Gilbert, 2002). According to McMahon (2015), as the economy becomes more globalized, organizations are progressively enabled to relocate to places with lower wages and taxes, exerting substantial pressure on countries with large welfare programs. As a result, redistribution and equity between classes are less important, taxes are low, and social spending is low (Hansen et al., 2005).

### MATERIALS & METHODS

The number of individuals in jail includes both those who are awaiting trial and those who have been convicted and sentenced. This number is used to determine prisoners incarcerated from 100,000 adult's population. The inmates' data originate from the US bureau of census database. Welfare expenditures data (which covers state expenditure on a variety of services) may be obtained in the OECD's social expenditure data source (2020), published in societal (OECD, 2020). The OECD also provides GDP statistics, which is paired with welfare expenditure to determine the percentage of GDP spent on welfare. OECD additionally provides data on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is aggregated with welfare expenditures to estimate the proportion allocated to welfare. A variety of control variables are also employed, including international criminality levels.

**Table 1: Imprisonment descriptive statistics across several countries in 2020.**

Country	Ranking on Imprisonment	Imprisonment rate(per 100,000)	GDP Proportion spent on Welfare	Welfare Score
USA	1	665	14.5	-8.2
UK	4	120	20.8	-2
Canada	5	115	18	-4.8
Spain	6	110	19.5	-3.1
Germany	8	95	25	3.5
Italy	11	85	25.1	2.5
Netherlands	13	85	24.5	1.9

Denmark	14	65	28.5	7.5
Sweden	16	60	31	8.4
Japan	18	42	14.5	-7.8

### Correlation

	<i>Imprisonment rate(per 100,000)</i>	<i>GDP Proportion spent on Welfare</i>
Imprisonment rate(per 100,000)	1	
GDP Proportion spent on Welfare	-0.498898261	1

### RESULTS

According to a Spearman rank correlation, the percentage of GDP spent on prisoner welfare was -0.49 (P-value 0.01). Except for Japan, all of the ten nations with the largest incarceration rates spend less than 1% of their GDP's welfare, whereas those with the lowest incarceration proportion spent more than 1% of their GDP on welfare. Denmark and Sweden, for example, both spend a substantial share of their GDP on welfare while having low incarceration rates. When analyzing statistics across the period, we can observe how these numbers have changed over the period in terms of incarceration and welfare spending. This may provide insight into the factors that cause the apparent disparities in imprisonment rates in the cross-sectional dataset.

It's critical to understand the difference between levels at one moment in time and fluctuations throughout time. The rate of imprisonment has increased in several countries in the last ten years or so. According to Walmsley (2000), in the 1990s, the overall trend in incarceration was upwards, with most countries witnessing increases of more than 20%. Only Sweden has experienced a drop in the number of people imprisoned. Changes in crime rates, which have remained stable or even dropped in many countries, can explain these rises. Additionally, the demographics and socioeconomic characteristics that influence crime have not changed enough to justify large adjustments in incarceration.

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to study the link between a country's welfare and the prisoner population. The objective was to examine how precisely these two variables may be related factually as well as conceptually. The data demonstrates that modifications in welfare provision have a strong relationship with prison policy and practice, as assessed by the relative magnitude of imprisonment, implying that welfare reduction entails punitive expansionism. Prison reformists have long supported this view.

The tendency towards economic liberalization of welfare is projected to aggravate the already significant challenges that comparable analyses will encounter in the future. In the United Kingdom, increasing welfare expenditures have corresponded with an increase in the prison population in the contemporary decade. Nonetheless, the most conspicuous element of the enhanced expenditures has been its apparent failure to cascade into other forms of care, at least to the amount that was envisaged. For instance, considering that the aged receive a disproportionate share of welfare spending, although they are seldom involved in crime or punishment, it is reasonable to inquire as to what the welfare/punishment relationship entails. The aged, on the other hand, embodies much of what is symbolized in the apprehension of crime and the quality of care provided to the most vulnerable, both of which are indirect indicators of the social balance achieved between compassion and self-interest. Regardless of being obvious, the relationships are convoluted and oblique, Richard Wilkinson (2000).

### Managerial Implications

To provide each prison with a fully resourced welfare function, sufficient funding must be provided. Substantial funds are required to finance welfare services such as prison education for inmates with special educational needs, such as

literacy and cognitive difficulties. When local circumstances warrant it, it is a managerial implication to observe the prisoner beliefs as well as their cultural perceptions to which the convicts belong as a basis of state welfare. Prisons' obligations for the custody of inmates and the protection of society from crime are carried out per a state's welfare and other social purposes, as well as its inherent responsibilities for fostering the well and development of all inmates.

### Future Scope of Study

This article has suggested some of the research areas that could be explored further in the future. To co-produce information and insights, as well as identify difficulties and suggest solutions that prioritize prisoner perspectives and their population management in prisons, a study on convicts participating in collaborative policymaking ought to be done. Prisoners' perspectives on the type of state welfare they perceive they need, the constraints that prevent them from participating in welfare, and the extent to which the welfare concerns of persons in jail are fulfilled might all be examined through collaborative study initiatives.

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