

The Effect of Financial Sanctions on Prison Revocations

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December, 2018

Abstract

The increase in punitive sentencing policies that began in the 1980s has greatly increased the US male and female incarceration rates, with the female rate outpacing the male growth rate by a factor of two. While many states have in recent years undergone comprehensive justice reform, these reforms do little to address the increased use of financial sanctions. This dissertation examines the individual and collective implications of three court-ordered debts among two distinct felony probation cohorts in Utah. By modeling the relationship between public defender fees, fines, and restitution on being revoked to prison, this dissertation finds that court-ordered fines and restitution increases revocation rates. Being ordered multiple debts was of particular importance amongst a cohort of indigent female felony offenders. Policy implications around these debts are discussed, which has the potential to lead to short- and long-term cost savings. The large number of probationers coupled with the societal cost of male and female incarceration should encourage future researchers to continue exploring the implications of financial sanctions and future criminal justice involvement.

Keywords: criminal justice, financial sanctions, Bayesian methods

*This research fulfilled the requirements of a doctoral dissertation, completed through the Department of Economics at the University of Utah.