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## Introduction

The United States leads the world in the number of people incarcerated in federal and state correctional facilities. There are currently more than 2 million people in American prisons and jails.<sup>1</sup> Overall, individuals incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails report significantly lower levels of educational attainment than do those in the general population. Research has shown a relationship between high school graduation rates and crime rates, and a relationship between educational attainment and the likelihood of incarceration. The impact of policies related to education and public safety are concentrated among people of color, who are less likely to have access to quality educational opportunities, more likely to leave educational systems earlier, and more likely to be incarcerated.

This research brief summarizes recent findings on what is known about educational attainment as it relates to crime trends and public safety. JPI has compared state-level education data with crime rates and incarceration rates and found that those states that have focused the most on education tend to have lower violent crime rates and lower incarceration rates. While there is no silver bullet that will guarantee reductions in criminal activity or crime rates, the research suggests that increased investments in quality education can have a positive public safety benefit. Significant findings include:

- **Graduation rates were associated with positive public safety outcomes.** Researchers have found that a 5 percent increase in male high school graduation rates would produce an annual savings of almost \$5 billion in crime-related expenses.
- **States that had higher levels of educational attainment also had crime rates lower than the national average.** Nine out of the 10 states with the highest percentage of population who had attained a high school diploma or above were found to have lower violent crime rates than the national average, compared to just four of the 10 states with the lowest educational attainment per population.

<sup>1</sup> Sabol, William J., Todd D. Minton, and Paige M. Harrison. 2007. *Prison and jail inmates at midyear 2006*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- **States with higher college enrollment rates experienced lower violent crime rates than states with lower college enrollment rates.** Of the states with the 10 highest enrollment rates, nine had violent crime rates below the national average. Of the states with the lowest college enrollment rates, five had violent crime rates above the national average.
- **States that made bigger investments in higher education saw better public safety outcomes.** Of the 10 states that saw the biggest increases in higher education expenditure, eight saw violent crime rates decline, and five saw violent crime decline more than the national average. Of the 10 states that saw the smallest change in higher education expenditure, the violent crime rate rose in five states.
- **The risk of incarceration, higher violent crime rates, and low educational attainment are concentrated among communities of color, who are more likely to suffer from barriers to educational opportunities.** Disparities in educational opportunities contribute to a situation in which communities of color experience less educational attainment than whites, are more likely to be incarcerated, and more likely to face higher violent crime rates.

#### **What is educational attainment?**

Educational attainment is a measure of the amount of education that a person has completed at the time of the survey administered by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. This measure may be a reflection of disparate educational opportunities available to some communities and not a description of capability.

**1) Research has shown that increasing graduation rates may have a public safety benefit.**

A study reported in the *American Economic Review* on the effects of education on crime found that a one year increase in the average years of schooling completed reduces violent crime by almost 30 percent, motor vehicle theft by 20 percent, arson by 13 percent and burglary and larceny by about 6 percent.<sup>2</sup>

These same researchers concluded that “A 1 percent increase in the high school completion rate of all men ages 20-60 would save the United States as much as \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime incurred by victims and society at-large.”<sup>3</sup>

The Alliance for Excellent Education reported in 2006 that a 5 percent increase in male high school graduation rates would produce an annual savings of almost \$5 billion in crime-related expenses. Coupled with annual earnings of those who graduated, the U.S. would receive \$7.7 billion in benefits. California itself would receive over \$1 billion in benefits from these increasing graduation rates.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Rates on Crime Reduction and Earnings from a 5 Percent Increase in Male Graduation Rates.</b>			
<b>State</b>	<b>Annual Crime-Related Savings</b>	<b>Additional Annual Earnings</b>	<b>Total Benefit to State Economy</b>
Alabama	\$82,114,178	\$42,695,448	\$124,809,626
Alaska	\$10,385,910	\$8,229,446	\$18,615,356
Arizona	\$130,548,518	\$53,146,250	\$183,694,768
Arkansas	\$52,527,329	\$24,825,605	\$77,352,934
California	\$752,933,848	\$352,182,007	\$1,105,115,855
Colorado	\$49,051,830	\$42,954,144	\$92,005,974
Connecticut	\$31,624,059	\$31,692,936	\$63,316,995
Delaware	\$9,923,632	\$7,271,214	\$17,194,846
District of Columbia	\$66,503,310	\$3,237,663	\$69,740,973
Florida	\$332,386,028	\$174,243,833	\$506,629,861
Georgia	\$185,633,644	\$90,744,324	\$276,377,968
Hawaii	\$6,835,886	\$11,203,133	\$18,039,020
Idaho	\$7,374,662	\$13,817,814	\$21,192,476
Illinois	\$263,078,679	\$115,756,032	\$378,834,711
Indiana	\$95,731,795	\$56,133,136	\$151,864,932
Iowa	\$17,544,077	\$26,798,824	\$44,342,901
Kansas	\$36,327,968	\$26,397,581	\$62,725,549
Kentucky	\$50,190,235	\$37,221,909	\$87,412,144

<sup>2</sup>Serious violent crime includes murder and aggravated assault. Lochner, Lance and Enrico Moretti. 2004. The effect of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests, and self-reports.” *American Economic Review*. Vol. 94(1).

<sup>3</sup> Lochner, Lance and Enrico Moretti. 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. 2006. *Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The Impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings*. Washington, DC: <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/SavingFutures.pdf>

<b>Rates on Crime Reduction and Earnings from a 5 Percent Increase in Male Graduation Rates.</b>			
<b>State</b>	<b>Annual Crime-Related Savings</b>	<b>Additional Annual Earnings</b>	<b>Total Benefit to State Economy</b>
Louisiana	\$164,467,403	\$39,778,515	\$204,245,917
Maine	\$3,046,026	\$11,679,610	\$14,725,636
Maryland	\$160,557,762	\$50,869,458	\$211,427,220
Massachusetts	\$59,187,389	\$55,535,231	\$114,722,620
Michigan	\$175,304,759	\$105,034,655	\$280,339,414
Minnesota	\$30,608,540	\$47,171,157	\$77,779,698
Mississippi	\$66,976,174	\$26,274,832	\$93,251,006
Missouri	\$95,613,931	\$51,781,495	\$147,395,426
Montana	\$10,637,756	\$8,967,258	\$19,605,015
Nebraska	\$16,519,921	\$16,469,451	\$32,989,371
Nevada	\$55,973,838	\$22,464,341	\$78,438,180
New Hampshire	\$3,397,405	\$12,032,017	\$15,429,423
New Jersey	\$120,008,948	\$69,283,091	\$189,292,039
New Mexico	\$37,905,377	\$19,840,422	\$57,745,799
New York	\$286,896,473	\$170,426,743	\$457,323,216
North Carolina	\$151,947,826	\$80,880,868	\$232,828,694
North Dakota	2,480,026	\$6,408,013	\$8,888,039
Ohio	\$126,369,800	\$106,527,438	\$232,897,238
Oklahoma	\$63,248,994	\$33,164,601	\$96,413,595
Oregon	\$21,053,644	\$30,029,888	\$51,083,532
Pennsylvania	\$182,071,834	\$106,127,515	\$288,199,349
Rhode Island	5,946,578	\$9,485,971	\$15,432,549
South Carolina	\$105,184,170	\$45,366,883	\$150,551,053
South Dakota	\$1,636,287	\$7,048,154	\$8,684,441
Tennessee	\$132,841,628	\$50,196,980	\$183,038,608
Texas	\$428,340,492	\$263,016,258	\$691,356,750
Utah	\$15,180,026	\$24,155,106	\$39,335,132
Vermont	\$3,518,159	\$5,783,710	\$9,301,869
Virginia	\$109,091,336	\$70,200,407	\$179,291,743
Washington	\$50,235,943	\$60,499,296	\$110,735,239
West Virginia	\$19,811,155	\$15,995,614	\$35,806,769
Wisconsin	\$47,775,714	\$53,395,707	\$101,171,421
Wyoming	\$4,467,005	\$5,081,534	\$9,548,539
<b>United States</b>	<b>\$4,939,017,909</b>	<b>\$2,799,523,519</b>	<b>\$7,738,541,428</b>

Source: Alliance for Excellent Education. 2006. *Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The Impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings*. Washington, DC:

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/SavingFutures.pdf>

**2) States with a higher proportion of residents with high school diplomas had lower violent crime rates.**

JPI examined the 10 states with the highest and lowest percentages of educational attainment per population, and reviewed their violent crime rates. On average, states that had higher levels of educational attainment also had crime rates lower than the national average.

On average, the 10 states with the highest percentage of population with a high school diploma or above had a 60 percent lower violent crime rate than that of the 10 states with the lowest percentage of population who had attained high school diplomas or above. Nine out of the 10 states with the highest percentage of population who had attained a high school diploma or above were found to have lower violent crime rates than the national average, compared to just four of the 10 states with the lowest educational attainment per population.

**States that have higher levels of educational attainment also had lower violent crime rates (ranked top/bottom 10 states for educational attainment)**

Ten states with the largest percentage of population with a high school education or above

State	Percent of Population 25 years and older with a high school diploma or higher	Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000)
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>84.3</b>	<b>469.2</b>
Minnesota	92.7	297.0
Utah	92.5	227.2
Montana	92.1	281.5
New Hampshire	91.9	132.0
Alaska	91.7	→ 631.9
Washington	91.5	345.8
Kansas	91.4	387.4
Wyoming	90.9	230.1
Wisconsin	90.4	241.5
Connecticut	90.0	274.5
<b>Average</b>	<b>91.5</b>	<b>304.89</b>

Ten states with the smallest percentage of population with a high school education or above

State	Percent of Population 25 years and older with a high school diploma or higher	Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000)
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>84.3</b>	<b>469.2</b>
West Virginia	82.5	272.8
Tennessee	81.8	→ 752.8
Arkansas	81.4	→ 527.5
New Mexico	81.2	→ 702.2
Alabama	80.9	431.7
California	80.4	→ 526.3
Louisiana	80.2	→ 594.4
Mississippi	79.8	278.4
Kentucky	78.9	266.8
Texas	78.2	→ 529.7
<b>Average</b>	<b>80.53</b>	<b>488.26</b>

Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States*, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table 13.

**3) States with higher college enrollment rates tended to experience lower violent crime rates.**

JPI examined the 10 states with the highest and lowest college enrollment rates, and reviewed their violent crime rates. On average, states with higher college enrollment rates experience lower violent crime rates than states with lower college enrollment rates.

Of the states with the 10 highest enrollment rates, eight had violent crime rates below the national average. Of the states with the lowest college enrollment rates, five had violent crime rates above the national average. The 10 states with the highest college enrollment rates had an average violent crime rate that was 40 percent lower than the national average, while the 10 states with the lowest college enrollment rates had an average violent crime rate that was about the same as the national average.

**States with higher college enrollment rates experience lower violent crime rates than states with lower college enrollment rates.**

Ten states with the highest college enrollment rates and the corresponding violent crime rates

Ten states with the lowest college enrollment rates and the corresponding violent crime rates

2004	Enrollment Rate (per 100,000)	Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000)	2004	Enrollment Rate (per 100,000)	Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000)
<b>United States</b>	<b>991.1</b>	<b>465.5</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>991.1</b>	<b>465.5</b>
Rhode Island	1,573.7	247.4	Maryland	896.7	→ 700.5
North Dakota	1,513.3	79.4	Illinois	894.6	→ 542.9
Iowa	1,508.2	270.9	Oregon	884.2	298.3
Wyoming	1,298.6	229.6	Maine	857.7	103.5
Minnesota	1,221.8	269.6	California	853.2	→ 551.8
Massachusetts	1,211.5	→ 458.8	New Jersey	823.0	355.7
Oklahoma	1,205.6	→ 500.5	Hawaii	696.3	254.4
South Dakota	1,201.8	171.5	Washington	685.0	343.8
Utah	1,192.5	236.0	Nevada	631.0	→ 615.9
Mississippi	1,182.2	295.1	Alaska	518.5	→ 634.5
<b>Average</b>	<b>1,310.9</b>	<b>275.9</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>774.0</b>	<b>440.1</b>

Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States*, 2004; Knapp, L., Kelly-Reid, J., and R. Whitmore. 2006. *Enrollment in postsecondary institutions, Fall 2004*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

#### 4) States that made bigger investments in higher education saw bigger decreases in violent crime rates.

The disproportionate public sector investment in corrections versus education has been well documented by JPI and others. Between 1977 and 1999, total state and local expenditures on corrections increased by 946 percent—about 2.5 times the rate of increase of spending on all levels of education (370 percent).<sup>5</sup> Researchers from Post Secondary Opportunities found that between 1980 and 2000, when the national prison population quadrupled from 500,000 to 2 million, corrections' share of all state and local spending grew by 104 percent and higher education's share of all state and local spending dropped by 21 percent.<sup>6</sup>

JPI examined the 10 states with the highest and the lowest change in higher education expenditure from 2000 to 2005, and examined changes in their violent crime rates. Of the 10 states that saw the biggest increases in higher education expenditure, the violent crime rate declined in eight of the 10, and five states saw violent crime decline more than the national average. Of the 10 states that saw the smallest change in higher education expenditure, the violent crime rate rose in five states. Among the five states with the most modest change in higher educational investments that saw declining crime rates, three states saw violent crime fall at the same rate, or lower than the national average decline in violent crime.

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<sup>5</sup> Gifford, Sidra Lea. 2002. *Justice expenditure and employment in the United States, 1999*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>6</sup> Spending Figures: Rubanov, Natasha, and Tom Mortenson. 2001. *Table 3.16: Selected current expenditures by function of state and local governments: Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts*. Oskaloosa, IA: Postsecondary Education Opportunity Letter. [www.postsecondary.org](http://www.postsecondary.org).

**The 10 states that increased the amount of money spent on higher education saw a decrease in violent crime rates.<sup>7</sup>**

The 10 states with the greatest percent change in higher education spending and the corresponding violent crime rates from 2000-2005.

	Percent change in higher education expenditures (\$)	Percent change in the violent crime rate (per 100,000)
<b>United States</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>-7.30%</b>
North Carolina	45.8%	→-5.90%
Connecticut	44.7%	→-15.5%
Nevada	43.0%	15.8%
Vermont	39.7%	5.50%
New York	36.9%	→-19.5%
Wyoming	35.3%	→-13.7%
Texas	35.1%	→-2.80%
Massachusetts	33.6%	→-4.00%
Illinois	31.5%	→-15.6%
Alabama	30.2%	→-11.2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>37.6%</b>	<b>-6.70%</b>

The 10 states with the least percent change in higher education spending and the corresponding violent crime rates from 2000-2005.

	Percent change in higher education expenditures (\$)	Percent change in the violent crime rate (per 100,000)
<b>United States</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>-7.30%</b>
Missouri	12.4%	7.20%
Kentucky	11.7%	→-9.40%
Iowa	10.3%	9.30%
Louisiana	7.3%	→-12.7%
New Mexico	7.1%	→-7.30%
Minnesota	5.6%	5.80%
Indiana	3.7%	→-7.30%
Colorado	2.7%	18.7%
Michigan	1.9%	→-0.50%
Tennessee	1.7%	6.40%
<b>Average</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>1.00%</b>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Table 1. *State and Local Government Finances by Level of Government and by State: 2004-05, 1999-2000*; FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2000-2005*.

<sup>7</sup> Adjusted for inflation.

## 5) Why investments in educational opportunities might benefit public safety.

Increased graduation rates, higher levels of educational attainment in a jurisdiction, and increased investments in higher education are associated with better public safety outcomes than places that invest less, or have lower educational outcomes. Why may educational outcomes relate to public safety outcomes?

### *Transforming Communities*

Different researchers have shown that education has the potential to augment access to employment and desired job markets, increase monetary return to the individual and the community, ostensibly creating a context where public safety goals are better realized. According to findings in a report commissioned by Columbia University, low educational attainment is linked to low wage return and hindered economic growth, which in turn increases public services spending such as health care, public assistance, and the criminal justice system.<sup>8</sup> The Alliance for Excellent Education says that expenses connected to crime, judicial operating budgets, law enforcement salaries, decreased tax returns due to inability of crime victims and or incarcerated people to produce wages, and especially the cost of incarceration, act as a massive drain on the economy.<sup>9</sup>

### *Helping individuals avoid negative life outcomes*

Along with transforming the community, increased investments in education have the potential to help individuals avoid negative life outcomes, and provide individuals with the social capital to avoid serious crime.

- Research has also shown that education increases patience and cultivates an aversion to risk-taking. This may in part be due to the heightened social bonds, responsibilities, or expectations that could be potentially damaged by a criminal conviction.<sup>10</sup>
- Educational attainment, primarily high school graduation, serves as an important benchmark in the process of transitioning into adulthood. Successful arrival at adulthood, as defined by life course analysis, can be determined by a series of events such as graduation from school into the labor market, from the labor market into marriage, from marriage into parenthood, and so on.<sup>11</sup>
- The trajectory to maturity, as defined by imperative events such as high school graduation, can be irreversibly altered by failure to complete one of these benchmarks. According to research conducted by the American Sociological Association, these life course transitions, if completed successfully, have a key “normalizing effect” on the

<sup>8</sup> Levin, Henry, Clive Belfield, Peter Muennig, and Cecilia Rouse. 2007. *The costs and benefits of an excellent education for all of America's children*. Teachers College, Columbia University.

<sup>9</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. 2006. *Saving futures, saving dollars: The impact of education on crime reduction and earnings*. Washington, DC: <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/SavingFutures.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Lochner, Lance and Enrico Moretti. 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Pettit, Becky and Bruce Western. 2004. Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class inequality in U.S. incarceration. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 69(2). pp. 153-4.

individual, creating community ties through pro-social networks and employment that enact informal social control and create aversion to crime.<sup>12</sup>

- Higher education correlates with increased access to desirable job markets, and thus higher potential wage earnings, heightened aversion to impulsivity due to cultivation of critical thought, and the added deterrent of strong social bonds with community and agency of employment.<sup>13</sup>

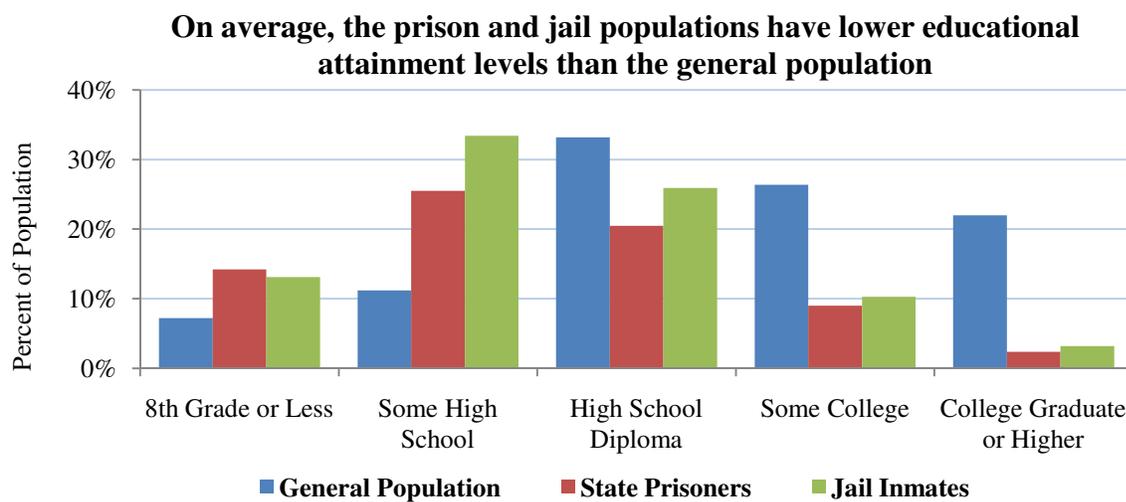
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<sup>12</sup> Pettit, Becky and Bruce Western. 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Lochner, Lance and Enrico Moretti, 2004.

**6) The risk of incarceration and the risk of low educational attainment are concentrated among communities of color.**

As the educational prospects of most Americans improved, the prison system continues to be filled with people who suffer from the disparities in education systems. Surveys of the incarcerated population have consistently shown that people in prisons and jails have less educational attainment than the general population in the United States. In *Educational and Correctional Populations*, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that in the late 1990s, 68 percent of people in state prisons had not received a high school diploma. While 48.4 percent of the general population had achieved a postsecondary education, only 12.7 percent of the incarcerated population had reached this achievement.<sup>14</sup>



Source: Harlow, Caroline W. 2003. *Education and correctional populations*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Table 1.

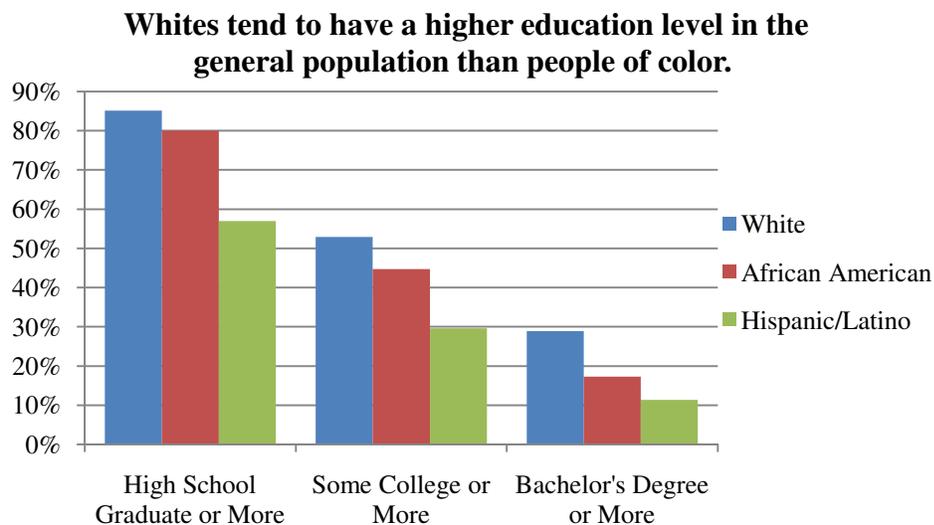
Princeton University academic Bruce Western has shown that 1 in 10 young (age 22-30) white high school drop outs were in prison or jail in 1999.<sup>15</sup> Among white men in their early thirties (age 30-34), 13 percent of high school drop outs had prison records by 1999. In 1999, an astonishing 52 percent of African American male high school dropouts had prison records by their early thirties (age 30-34). As stated above, Western has shown that among all African American men in their early thirties, the percent that would likely experience prison (22.4 percent) by 1999 was nearly double the percent who would likely earn a college degree (12.5 percent).<sup>16</sup> While African Americans with college degrees are still more likely than similarly situated whites to end up in prison, Western suggests the impact of the country’s increasing use of incarceration for both African American and white men is better understood as an increase in the use of imprisonment among men with less schooling.

<sup>14</sup> Harlow, Caroline W. 2003. *Education and correctional populations*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ecp.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ecp.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Western, Bruce, Vincent Schiraldi and Jason Ziedenberg. 2003. *Education and incarceration*. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute. [www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org)

<sup>16</sup> Western, Bruce, Vincent Schiraldi and Jason Ziedenberg. 2003.

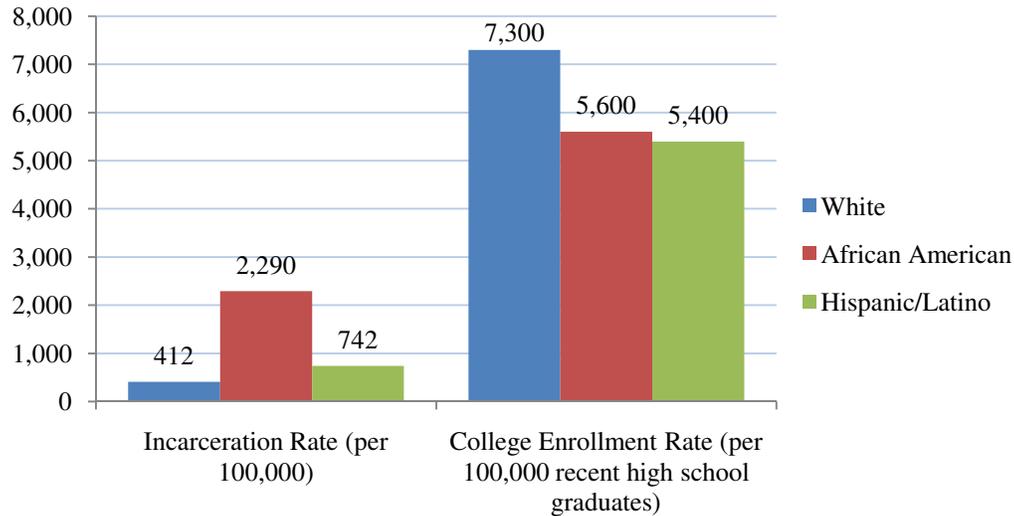
Although people of color have been enrolling in college at all-time highs, the percentage of African Americans and Latinos who are enrolling in college continues to fall short of the percentages of whites enrolling in institutions of higher education.<sup>17</sup>



Source: Stoops, Nicole. 2004. *Educational attainment in the United States: 2003*. U.S. Census Bureau, Table A. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-550.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> National Center on Education Statistics (NCES). May 2006. Table 187: *College enrollment and enrollment rates of recent high school completers, by race/ethnicity: 1960-2005*. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06\\_187.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_187.asp)

**Whites enroll in college at higher rates than people of color, and whites are also incarcerated at the lowest rates.**



Notes: Incarceration rates includes both prison and jail numbers. College enrollment numbers include enrollment in college as of October of each year for individuals ages 16 to 24 who completed high school within the preceding 12 months.

Sources: National Center on Education Statistics (NCES). May 2006. Table 187: *College enrollment and enrollment rates of recent high school completers, by race/ethnicity: 1960-2005*. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06\\_187.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_187.asp); Harrison, Paige M. and Allen J. Beck. 2006. *Prison and jail inmates at midyear 2005*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

The underrepresentation of people of color in institutions of higher education means that those community benefits that might accrue from education involvement are less likely to be realized. Exacerbating the problem is the continued increases in the incarceration rates of African Americans and Latinos.<sup>18</sup> Prison and jail have been found to interrupt education and employment, further disenfranchising people of color from their communities—something that also detracts from public safety.<sup>19</sup>

While the crime drop of the 1990s did impact all communities, regardless of race and income, African Americans are still victims of violent crime at a rate 30 percent higher than whites, and constitute nearly half of all the homicide victims in the United States.<sup>20</sup> The African American homicide and incarceration rate is six times that of the white incarceration and homicide rate.<sup>21</sup> Latinos are also victims of violent crimes at a higher rate than whites, and are incarcerated at higher rates than whites.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Sabol, William J., Todd D. Minton, and Paige M. Harrison. 2007. *Prison and jail inmates at midyear 2006*. Washington DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>19</sup> Western, Bruce and Katherine Beckett. 1999. How unregulated is the U.S. labor market?: The penal system as a labor market institution. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104.

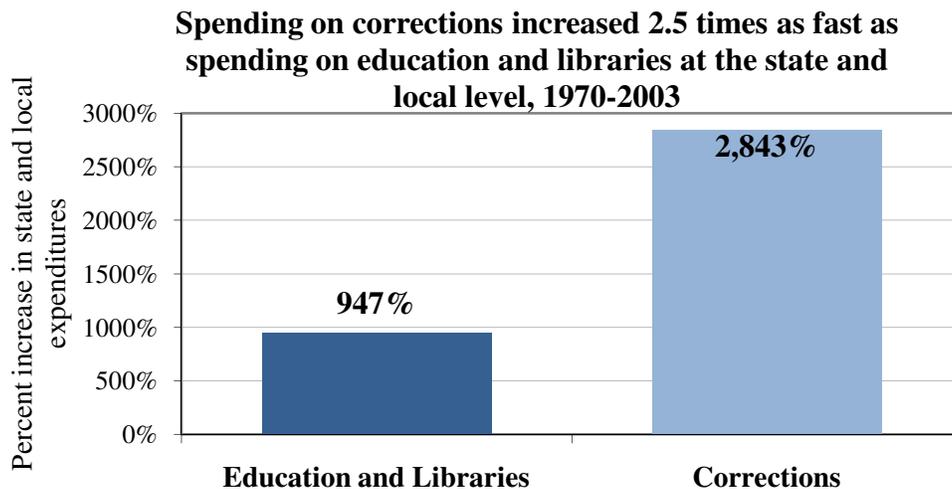
<sup>20</sup> Catalano, Shannon M. 2005. *National Crime Victimization Survey, 2004*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; FBI, Supplemental Homicide Reports, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, Paige M. and Allen J. Beck. 2006. *Prisoners in 2005*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; and FBI, Supplementary Homicide Reports, 1976-2004. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics

<sup>22</sup> Harrell, Erika. 2007. *Black victims of violent crime*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Harrison, Paige M. and Allen J. Beck. 2006. *Prisoners in 2005*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics

## Recommendations

Incarceration rates and corrections budgets have continued to increase at an unprecedented rate over the last 30 years. Though research indicates that investments in education are effective at reducing crime rates, funding for education has fallen severely behind budget allocations for corrections. Funding for corrections has increased more than 2.5 times the rate of education and libraries in the last 30 years.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics, Tables and Figures 2005*. Table 27.

States and communities should first consider education a long-term investment that may not necessarily bring about immediate changes, but would create lasting changes for communities in terms of economic development, civic involvement and crime. Shifting money away from law enforcement and corrections and into building educational opportunities would create improvements in public safety. Such attention to spending should be particularly focused in communities of color and high school aged youth.

As evidenced by the research in this policy brief, the higher the level of educational attainment, the greater the benefits to the community. Young people should continue to be encouraged to pursue education. Research has found that states requiring 11 or more years of compulsory attendance have 5.5 percent fewer drop outs than states requiring eight years of education.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in states requiring nine years of mandatory enrollment, the dropout rate is 3.3 percent lower than those requiring eight years or less of attendance.

<sup>23</sup> Lochner, Lance and Enrico Moretti. 2004.

## Research limitations

Although investments in education, employment and other social factors have been shown to promote public safety and strong communities, there is no single solution that will entirely reduce the probability that a person will be involved in criminal activity. The research is not conclusive on what single factor will solve every community's public safety challenges, as different communities have diverse needs and what works for one may not be the solution for another. All of these social factors should be considered in the context of individual communities in order to establish policies that effectively ensure and promote lasting public safety.

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