

Incarceration Length, Employment, and Earnings

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Data Appendix

The data used in this paper come from the administrative records of the state prison system in Florida and the federal judicial system in California, each linked to state administrative records about quarterly earnings. The Florida data were produced for this study in collaboration with the Florida Department of Corrections (FLDOC). The data were compiled by linking separate FLDOC files on correctional institution admission and release dates, jail credits, admission file demographics (filling in missing data with subsequent monthly status files), reception center test scores, and correctional institution disciplinary reports. Social Security Numbers (SSNs) from admission files were verified by the Social Security Administration (SSA) using their Employment Verification Service, matching names, birthdates, and race to SSA records of SSNs. The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program matched quarterly earnings data for 1993:3 through 2002:1 from the UI system to the FLDOC data.

The California data were produced under special confidential data-sharing agreements with the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (for data on terminated federal cases with individual and judge identifiers), the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (for demographic data and SSNs)¹, and the California Employment Development Department (for quarterly UI data from 1987:2 to 1997:1, linked by SSN).²

¹ Data archived with the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics was used with the permission of U.S. Pre-trial Services in the Central, Eastern, Northern, and Southern Districts of California

² Because the sentencing data did not contain unique individual identifiers, the sentencing data were linked to pre-trial services data using probabilistic matching techniques relying upon non-unique identifiers of name, date, and offense type. In a pilot study of Massachusetts cases that did have unique identifiers, the matching logic and clerical

Descriptive statistics for these data are shown in Appendix Table A. The first two columns show characteristics of the Florida prisoners in the data.³ The sample of inmates in column one began their incarceration spells in the calendar quarters 1994:3-1995:1. Given the available labor market outcome data, they are observed for four quarters prior to incarceration and 28 quarters after the incarceration spell began. In order to examine medium-term outcomes where all inmates have been released for at least two years (in Table 1), the analysis is limited to those with incarceration spells of no more than 4.5 years. I further limit the analysis to spells of at least six months, since nearly all shorter incarceration spells in Florida take place in local jails and not in the state prison system. This sample of incarceration lengths represents about 80 percent of all individuals committed to prison.⁴ The sample used to analyze effects of incarceration length shortly after release during the same period of calendar time (in Table 3) is described in column two, including releases in 1999:1-1999:3. This sample is slightly older, due to the restriction for subsequent analysis that all members of this sample be ages 25-64 two and a half years after release, but is otherwise quite similar to that in column one.

There are two main analytical samples based on California data. The third column of Appendix Table A describes a sample constructed to parallel that for Florida in column one, with expected incarceration spells of .5-4.5 years (used in Table 1). Actual time served is not observed in the California data, so the expected spell length is based on the sentence length and

review identified approximately 98 percent of all true matches with only .15 percent false matches. Despite this success, SSNs and demographic information were not collected in all years for each California district, resulting in a loss of 42 percent of the potential sample from 1983-94. A further 15 percent of the sample, which appear to be mainly immigrants, did not report SSNs. These data are collected prior to the assignment of a judge to the case, and reporting lapses appear to be independent of judge assignment.

³ Only new commitments to prison are used, not spells of incarceration that began in this period due to return to prison for violation of post-release conditions. The sample is also limited to those reporting that they were U.S. citizens and Florida residents at the time of arrest and to those released to a Florida destination in order to reduce the influence of out-of-state mobility on the results.

⁴ For the cohort incarcerated 1994:3-1995:1, 1.5 percent served less than 6 months and 17.5 percent served more than 4.5 years.

historical averages of proportion of time served published by the U.S. Department of Justice (1996). The fourth column describes the data used to estimate the instrumental variables model (in Table 2), which includes all cases that were randomly assigned to judges and have valid earnings data nine years after case filing. Although 19 percent of these inmates were expected to serve more than 4.5 years, 97 percent of the sample was expected to have been released within nine years after their incarceration spell began. Since this sample is used in the analysis to assess labor market outcomes nine years after case filing, the three percent of the sample with expected spell lengths of more than nine years were top-coded at nine years.

For simplicity, the quarterly earnings data in this table and in regression analyses in the paper consist of a single summary measure of pre-spell labor market outcomes for each individual, averaging over three calendar quarters to reduce transitory variability.⁵ Similarly, post-spell outcomes are the averages over three quarters.⁶

⁵ In column one, pre-spell outcomes are the averages of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters prior to the incarceration spell. In column two, pre-spell outcomes are the averages of the 22nd, 21st, and 20th quarters prior to release.

⁶ In column one, post-spell outcomes are the averages of the 26th, 27th, and 28th quarters after the incarceration spell. In column two, post-spell outcomes are the averages of the 8th, 9th, and 10th quarters after release.

Appendix Table A
Descriptive Statistics

	Florida Incarcerated 1994:3-95:1	Florida Released 1999:1-99:3	California OLS sample	California IV sample
No Incarceration	.00	.00	.00	.37
Incarceration less than 6 months	.00	.00	.00	.17
1 year incarceration (6-17 months)	.45	.43	.29	.08
2 years incarceration (18-29 months)	.32	.33	.20	.05
3 years incarceration (30-41 months)	.15	.16	.27	.08
4 years incarceration (42-53 months)	.08	.08	.24	.06
5+ years incarceration (54+ months)	.00	.00	.00	.19
Male	.92	.88	.90	.84
White	.42	.40	.57	.63
Black	.54	.56	.17	.17
Hispanic	.04	.04	.17	.15
Other race	.00	.00	.09	.06
Ages 18-29 at incarceration	.55	.42	.35	.38
Ages 30-39 at incarceration	.34	.40	.37	.38
Ages 40+ at incarceration	.11	.18	.28	.24
Education unknown	.01	.00	.29	.34
Less than high school	.72	.69	.21	.20
Completed high school	.21	.23	.24	.24
Completed at least some college	.06	.07	.25	.23
Prior incarceration	.48	.49	.34	.26
Violent or firearms offense	.35	.31	.23	.25
Drug offense	.28	.33	.34	.25
Property offense	.34	.31	.32	.38
Other offense	.03	.06	.11	.12
Self-reported employment unknown	.00	.00	.25	.30
Self-reported not employed at arrest	.35	.34	.38	.33
Self-reported employed at arrest	.65	.66	.37	.37
Pre-spell quarterly earnings fraction > \$0	.32	.31	n/a	n/a
Pre-spell quarterly earnings fraction > \$2340	.09	.12	n/a	n/a
Pre-spell quarterly earnings average	585	718	n/a	n/a
Post-spell quarterly earnings fraction > \$0	.31	.34	.26	.26
Post-spell quarterly earnings fraction > \$2340	.18	.20	.20	.21
Post-spell quarterly earnings average	1184	1290	1809	1985
Sample size	6821	6658	2575	4610

Notes. Florida sample incarcerated 1994:3-1995:1 is ages 25-64 seven years later. Florida sample released 1999:1-1999:3 is ages 25-64 two and a half years after release. Both Florida samples are of inmates with actual incarceration lengths of .5-4.5 years, with valid earnings data. California OLS sample is inmates with expected prison terms of .5-4.5 years with valid earnings data, cases filed 1983:2-1990:2, ages 25-64 seven years later. California IV sample is all defendants with cases filed prior to 11/1/1987 with valid earnings data, ages 25-64 nine years later. \$2340 is one quarter of the 2002 poverty threshold for a single adult, \$9359. Quarterly earnings adjusted to 2002 real dollars based on seasonally-adjusted national CPI.