The Cruel Case of Wrongful Convictions: Conveying a Racial and Criminal Crisis in Our Courts

Introduction

Starting in 1989 with the advent of DNA analysis, discourse on wrongful conviction has become more prevalent in the U.S. but lacks an explanation for how they happen. Using data from the National Registry of Exonerations, I will display the potential causes of wrongful conviction.

Hypothesis and Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Minorities are more likely to be exonereed in a longer timeframe compared to those who are not.

Hypothesis 2: Exonerees in partisan-elected judge states were more likely to be held in prison for longer than those from non-partisan judge selection states.

Hypothesis 3: Those accused of sex crimes are more likely to spend longer in prison before exoneration compared to other exonerees.

Results and Implications

The data for the first hypothesis shows a difference in the amount of time spent wrongly in prison for minorities and shows a potential bias, with only a 16.4% drop in the first 10 years for minorities and a 41.7% drop for non-minorities and is affirmed based on this data.

The data for the second hypothesis shows that as a category, partisan election states have the most exonerees in every timeframe, but overall does not have as many compared to the combined appointed categories. Based on the significance, the hypothesis was not affirmed.

The third hypothesis displays that the category of crime correlates with the length of wrongful imprisonment, but it does not affirm the original hypothesis relating to how long those accused of sex crimes stay in prison.

Literature