

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

Introduction

Starting in 1989 with the advent of DNA analyzation, 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.

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

- *Judicial election methods by State*. Ballotpedia. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2023, from https://ballotpedia.org/Judicial_election_methods_by_state.
- *National Registry of Exonerations*. The National Registry of Exonerations - Exoneration Registry. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2023, from <https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/about.aspx>.

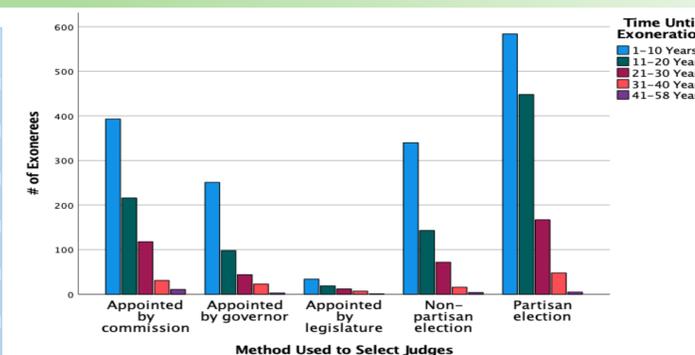
Hypothesis and Analysis

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

		Are They a Minority?			
		Yes	No	Total	
Time Until Exoneration	1-10 Years	Count	1056	679	1735
		%	48.3%	63.8%	53.4%
	11-20 Years	Count	698	235	933
		%	31.9%	22.1%	28.7%
	21-30 Years	Count	312	115	427
		%	14.3%	10.8%	13.1%
	31-40 Years	Count	96	33	129
		%	4.4%	3.1%	4.0%
	41-58 Years	Count	23	3	26
		%	1.1%	0.3%	0.8%
Total		Count	2185	1065	3250
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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.

		Method Used to Select Judges					Total	
		Appointed by commission	Appointed by governor	Appointed by legislature	Non-partisan election	Partisan election		
Time Until Exoneration	1-10 Years	Count	393	251	34	340	584	1602
		% within Method used to select appellate court judges	51.1%	59.9%	46.6%	59.1%	46.6%	51.9%
	11-20 Years	Count	216	98	19	143	448	924
		% within Method used to select appellate court judges	28.1%	23.4%	26.0%	24.9%	35.8%	29.9%
	21-30 Years	Count	118	44	12	72	167	413
		% within Method used to select appellate court judges	15.3%	10.5%	16.4%	12.5%	13.3%	13.4%
	31-40 Years	Count	31	23	7	16	48	125
		% within Method used to select appellate court judges	4.0%	5.5%	9.6%	2.8%	3.8%	4.0%
	41-58 Years	Count	11	3	1	4	5	24
		% within Method used to select appellate court judges	1.4%	0.7%	1.4%	0.7%	0.4%	0.8%
Total		Count	769	419	73	575	1252	3088
		% within Method used to select appellate court judges	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



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

		crime					
		Violent	Property	Sex	Financial	Total	
Time Until Exoneration	1-10 Years	Count	656	38	355	128	1177
		%	42.1%	86.4%	51.1%	72.7%	47.6%
	11-20 Years	Count	488	3	194	42	727
		%	31.3%	6.8%	27.9%	23.9%	29.4%
	21-30 Years	Count	299	2	118	6	425
		%	19.2%	4.5%	17.0%	3.4%	17.2%
	31-40 Years	Count	96	1	23	0	120
		%	6.2%	2.3%	3.3%	0.0%	4.9%
	41-58 Years	Count	20	0	5	0	25
		%	1.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	1.0%
Total		Count	1559	44	695	176	2474
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



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