

CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES RESEARCH BRIEF

WASHINGTON STATE'S CI OUTCOME EVALUATION

DECEMBER 2015

Work is considered an essential component of prisons important to both institutional management and offender change. Although work takes many forms within prison, Correctional Industries (CI) is structured as a business to create work environments that replicate employment expectations in the community. CI achieves this by teaching *technical skills* that qualify offenders for jobs and cognitive-behavioral *soft skills* that help offenders keep jobs by knowing how to interact and communicate with others. As a correctional intervention CI is aimed at promoting prosocial work-life routines that translates into positive institutional and post release outcomes.

Washington State University recently completed an outcome evaluation of Washington State Department of Correction's Correctional Industries. The evaluation assessed the impact of CI on institutional behavior, recidivism, and employment. The study compared 703 CI inmates with a statistically similar group of 627 non-CI inmates who were released from prison during the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. The average follow-up period was 4 years.

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Full Report: *Washington State Correctional Industries: An Outcome Evaluation of its Effects on Institutional Behavior, Employment, and Recidivism*. Unpublished research report submitted to Washington State Department of Correction's Correctional Industries, December 10, 2015.

KEY FINDINGS

Criminal Justice Outcomes

Inmates who participated in CI

- were significantly *less likely* to commit a
 - ✓ new offense leading to a conviction—35% vs 43%.
 - ✓ felony when recidivism did occur—19 vs. 25 percent.
 - ✓ new offense the longer they spent working in CI—20 vs. 11 months.
- were significantly *more likely* to
 - ✓ remain in the community longer without committing a new offense.

Institutional Behavior

- were significantly *less likely* to commit a
 - ✓ violent infraction while working in a CI job.
 - ✓ violent infraction post-CI employment
- were significantly *more likely* to receive a
 - ✓ certificate of program completion

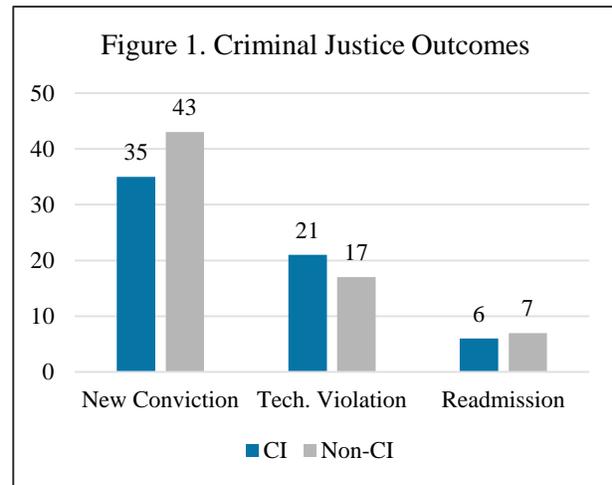
Post Prison Employment

- were significantly *more likely* to
 - ✓ have a legal source of income—61 vs. 56 percent
 - ✓ earn more than \$1,000 per month—36 vs. 26 percent
 - ✓ earn on average \$1.03 more per hour

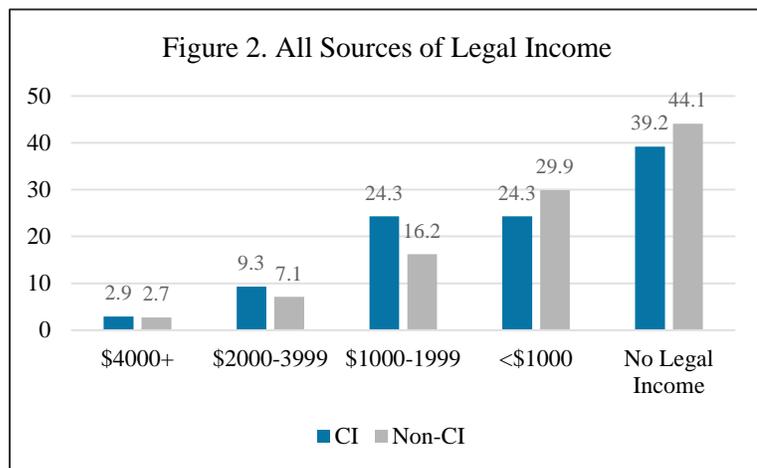


Research Design The research population includes all inmates assessed eligible for CI work at their point of entry into any prison where Correctional Industries is located. To reduce the potential for selection bias between the CI and non-CI groups, propensity score matching (PSM) was used to statistically balance the differences between groups on all theoretically relevant pre-intervention characteristics. This procedure produced a sample of 1,330 research subjects.

Criminal Justice Outcomes CI participants when compared to non-CI participants were significantly less likely to be convicted of a new crime and were significantly more likely to remain in the community longer without being convicted of a new offense (41 vs. 39 months). For those who committed a new offense, the majority in both groups tended to commit a non-violent offense (CI 73 vs. 63%) and CI inmates were significantly less likely to commit a violent offense (19 vs. 25%) or to commit a drug offense (8 vs. 13%). Among those with new offenses, there were no significant differences between groups for readmission to prison or the time to failure between groups. Those experiencing a new conviction worked in CI on average 11 months compared to 20 months for those who did not experience a new conviction.



Employment Outcomes CI inmates were significantly less likely to have never been employed (6% vs. 11%) and more likely to have been employed for 1 or more years (54% vs. 51%). The CI group was also significantly more likely to have some source of legal income (61% vs. 56%) and to earn at least \$1,000 to \$4,000 per month (36% vs. 26%).



Research Summary The results from this evaluation suggest that CI has a positive effect on inmate's institutional behavior and post prison outcomes related to recidivism and employment. CI's aim to replicate real world work expectations within a prison environment may help to create a prison niche where inmates learn how to be successful employees over time. These findings indicate that work

is important to both institutional management and offender change initiatives. The reduction in violent infractions creates a safer institution for both inmates and staff while laying the foundation for improving community safety through reductions in recidivism and increases in employment.