

## **Fewer offenders claim welfare benefits after community service and electronic tagging than after serving prison sentences**

The future at the labour market for convicted offenders depends on how they serve their sentences. People, who have been in prison, fare worse than those, who have been sentenced to community service or who have served their sentences at home wearing an electronic tag.

The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit documents this in a new analysis.

The analysis shows that offenders who serve their sentences with an electronic tag instead of in prison are much better able to hold down jobs afterwards. Dependence on welfare benefits is correspondingly lower – in fact, around one-third lower, at less than six and a half weeks per year on average after electronic tagging as opposed to over nine weeks after a prison term.

‘Part of the explanation is that it is easier to continue to work with an electronic tag. Some people continue to work in exactly the same jobs as they had before their convictions during and after their sentences. In addition, it is presumably more stigmatising to have been in prison, as this sends out a clear signal to everyone – including potential employers – that an individual has committed a crime,’ explains Senior Researcher Signe Hald Andersen from the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.

A corresponding analysis carried out for people who complete community service sentences points in the same direction.

Those who serve a community service sentence instead of going to prison have the prospect of earning more subsequently, and being less dependent on welfare benefits. This is especially true for people who have been found guilty of drunkdriving offences or crimes of violence. On average, dependence on welfare benefits is 20 percent less, and income over 18 percent higher, among people who have been sentenced to community service instead of prison.



*Alternative sentences to prison, such as community service or electronic tagging, improve the employment prospects of offenders after they have served their sentences.*

### **Active labour market programmes result in lower crime**

This Rockwool Foundation Research Unit Newsletter also presents other research results concerning crime. These results show, among other things, that an active labour market policy reduces criminal behaviour among those who participate in active labour market programmes.

‘The notion that idleness encourages antisocial and self-destructive behaviour has always played a part in social policy, and it is also a factor in the new Danish social and labour market policies. Our results confirm that active labour market programmes reduces crime, particularly among the least successful of the unemployed. This is a very significant effect for society,’ claims Research Director Torben Tranæs.

Another result presented in this Newsletter demonstrates that a small increase in the length of sentences for violent crimes actually benefits the labour market attachment of offenders.

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## Summary and conclusions

This newsletter focuses on the effects of alternative forms of punishment and on the crime prevention effects of labour market activation schemes. This article sums up the results and places them in perspective . . . . . Page 13

### Publications from the study

Signe Hald Andersen. 2012. *Serving time or serving the community? Exploiting a policy reform to assess the causal effects of community service on income, social benefit dependency and recidivism*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Lars Højsgaard Andersen and Signe Hald Andersen. 2012. *Losing the stigma of incarceration: Does serving a sentence with electronic monitoring causally improve post-release labor market outcomes?* Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Signe Hald Andersen. 2012. *Unemployment and crime: Experimental evidence of the causal effects of intensified ALMPs on crime rates among unemployed individuals*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Peter Fallesen, Lars Pico Geerdsen, Susumu Imai and Torben Tranæs. 2012. *The effect of workfare on crime: Youth diligence and law obedience*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Rasmus Landersø. 2012. *Does incarceration length affect labor market outcomes for violent offenders?* Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

# Community service is better than prison for employment

Community service is better than prison – at least, in terms of employment after the sentence has been served.

Offenders who are sentenced to community service earn more on average after serving their sentences, and they are less dependent on welfare benefits, compared to offenders who are sent to prison.

This is one of the conclusions of a study of the effect of community service on the future of offenders receiving this type of sentence.

Specifically, the research project investigates whether offenders sentenced to community service and those sentenced to imprisonment differed by earned income, dependence on welfare benefits, and criminal behaviour after serving their sentence.

## More pay

The study shows that earnings are higher after community service than after imprisonment. As shown below, the two groups of convicted offenders included in the study were directly comparable before the conviction.

In the first year after conviction, there is no significant difference between the two groups in average earned income. However, two years after the conviction a difference begins to appear, and five years after the conviction there is an average difference of DKK 22,000 in annual earnings in favour of those sentenced to community service.

Offenders sentenced to community service are also less dependent on welfare benefits than those who are sent to prison. Again, this difference does not become evident until some years after conviction. Five years after conviction, those who were sentenced to community service received benefits for an average of 20 weeks per year. Those who were sent to prison received welfare benefits for five weeks more on average – 25 weeks in total.

Hence, whether a convicted offender is sentenced to community service or imprisonment affects his income and dependence on welfare benefits two to five years after conviction.

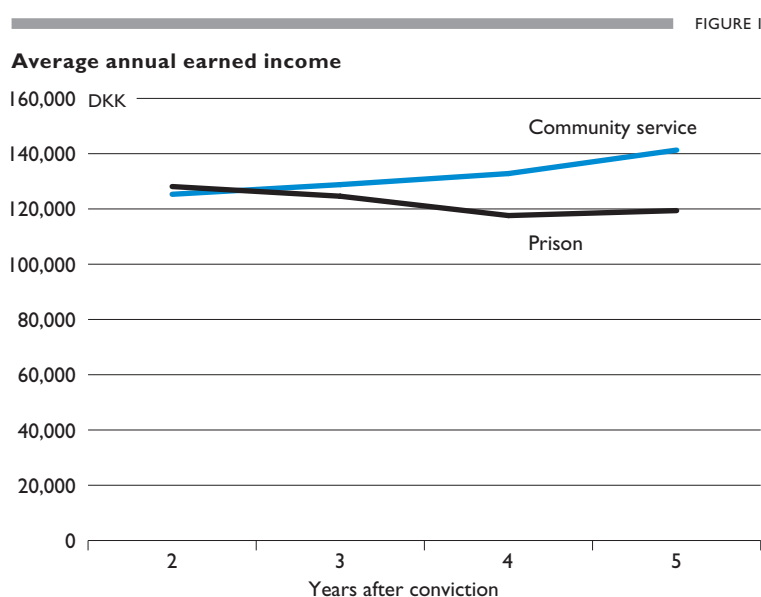
The study also shows that the probability that offenders commit new crimes

in the years following conviction is in general unaffected by type of punishment. Those sentenced to community service for committing petty crimes or crimes of minor violence are slightly less likely to commit new offences in the first year after conviction than those sentenced to prison for similar offences, but this difference disappears by the second year after conviction. Overall, then, the results of the study reveal that serving a community service sentence reduces the negative effect of punishment on earnings and unemployment. However, even though the community service group does not experience the deterrence effect of spending time in prison their rate of criminal recidivism is not increased.

## A benefit to those convicted of crimes of violence and drink-driving

Community service sentences are typically given to people convicted of drunk driving or other serious traffic offences, minor crimes of violence, and petty crimes such as vandalism and theft.

Compared to the people convicted of other offences, those convicted of violent



SOURCE: THE ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT

*Offenders sentenced to community service earned more after serving their sentences than offenders who were sent to prison. Five years after conviction, those who were sentenced to community service were earning an average of DKK 141,000 per year, while those sent to prison were earning an average of DKK 119,000 per year (all figures in year 2000 prices).*

TABLE I

**Difference between community service and prison five years after conviction, by type of crime.**

	Difference in annual earned income between offenders who were sentenced to community service and those sent to prison. Levels of difference are shown as percentages in <i>italics</i> .		Difference in welfare benefit dependency between offenders who were sentenced to community service and those sent to prison. Levels of difference are shown as percentages in <i>italics</i> .	
Violence	DKK +27,500	+22%	-4 weeks	-21%
Drunk driving	DKK +19,200	+14%	-5 weeks	-20%
Other serious traffic offences	(DKK +4,700)	+4%	(-1 week)	-6%
Petty crime	(DKK+24,900)	+24%	(-3 weeks)	-17%

Note: For figures given in parentheses, the differences between offenders given prison sentences and those sentenced to community service are not statistically significant.

SOURCE: THE ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT

*Five years after conviction, offenders who carried out community service were earning more on average than those who were sent to prison. At the same time, they were less dependent on welfare benefits. However, the size of the difference varied with the type of offence; for example, offenders convicted of violent crimes who did community service earned on average DKK 27,500 more per year than offenders sent to prison for the same type of crime. The corresponding figure for those convicted of drunk driving was DKK 19,200 more per year.*

crimes or drunk driving benefit most from being sentenced to community service instead of imprisonment.

Five years after conviction, those sentenced to community service for drunk driving earned DKK 19,000 more per year on average than those sent to prison for the same offence. Among people convicted of violent crimes, the difference was almost DKK 28,000 per year.

The same picture was found with regard to dependence on welfare benefits. Five years after conviction, those sentenced to community service for drunk driving and violent crimes were, on average, dependent on welfare benefits for four and five weeks less per year respectively than were people who had been sent to prison for similar offences.

Even though a tendency was also observed for petty criminals and those convicted of other traffic offences to benefit from a community service sentence, the difference between these people and those sent to prison was not statistically significant.

## Increased use of community service sentences

Community service was first used extensively as a sanction after a reform of the Danish Criminal Code in 2000. While fewer than 1,000 people were sentenced to perform community service in 1999, this type of sanction was applied in over 3,500 cases in 2001.

Before the 2000 reform, community service was only used in cases of petty crime or less serious cases of violence. The reform made it possible to sentence drunk drivers and other traffic offenders to community service.

The study on the effect of community service on earned income, welfare benefit dependency, and future criminal behaviour departs from the greatly increased use of this sanction.

The reform meant that many people who received a short prison sentence in 1999 for drunk driving or other traffic offences, petty crime or violent crimes would actually have been sentenced to community service if they had committed their offences in 2001. The reform thus presents a unique opportunity to compare two relatively similar groups who received different sentences.

People who are sentenced to community service are typically better educated, more often in employment and have fewer previous convictions than those who receive prison sentences. If these differences are not taken into account, a comparison of the outcomes of people sentenced to community service and people sentenced to imprisonment would simply be a reflection of the differences in their circumstances before the conviction. In this study, the problem is solved by comparing people from within the two groups who had similar characteristics before conviction.

The study concerns only men who have been convicted of one of the types of offence listed above, and who have been sentenced either to prison or to community service. Community service can only substitute prison sentences of less than one year, so people who were sentenced to prison terms of more than one year are not included in the study.

## **The rules concerning community service**

In Denmark, community service is an alternative to prison.

Community service consists of 30 to 240 hours of work that benefits society. The work is unpaid, and is performed for a public institution such as a library or kindergarten. Community service is carried out during leisure time, which means that the offender can continue to live and work as normal.

When a court considers whether an offender should go to prison or perform community service, the decision is taken on the basis of the individual's personal circumstances and an as-

essment of whether or not he or she is able to comply with the terms of community service. If this is not the case, then the offender will be sentenced to imprisonment.

In 2010, nearly 4,000 Danes were sentenced to perform community service. Nearly half the cases concerned traffic offences.

People in employment, people in active labour market programmes, unemployed persons, students and people outside the labour force can all be sentenced to community service.

## **Serving sentences at home leaves offenders less dependent on welfare benefits**

Offenders who serve their sentences at home with an electronic tag are less likely than others to claim welfare benefits after completing their sentences.

This is shown by a study that compares offenders serving their sentences with an electronic tag to offenders sent to prison. The study focuses on offenders sentenced to relatively short terms of imprisonment of up to three months. Some of those included in the study were sentenced at a time when prison was the only available option, while others were able to serve their sentences at home, thanks to a change in the law.

A comparison between offenders who were sentenced at the time when prison was the only option and offenders who also had the option of serving at home with an electronic tag showed that the people in the latter group were more likely to be self-supporting and less likely to claim welfare benefits.

Only men in employment or full-time education were included in the study. This is because only few women have served sentences with an electronic tag, and because the electronic tag scheme targets those in employment, those in education, and people in active labour market programmes. However we exclude the last

group, as information on active labour market programmes is not sufficiently accurate for this group.

### **More serve sentences at home**

The electronic tagging system was introduced in 2005. At that time, only traffic offenders sentenced to terms of up to three months could serve their sentences with electronic tags.

Since then, the system has been amended twice, each time enabling a wider range of offenders to serve their sentences with electronic tags. In 2006 the system was extended to cover everyone who was under the age of 25 at the time of the offence and who was sentenced to no more than three months of imprisonment, whatever the offence; and in 2008 the age limit was removed, so that also people above 25 could serve their sentences with an electronic tag.

The number of offenders serving their sentences with electronic tags has thus increased rapidly since the possibility became available. While around 650 offenders served their sentences with electronic tags in 2006, the number had risen to 1,900 in 2010.

In 2010 the system was reformed yet again, this time by extending the maxi-



mum sentence that can be served with electronic tagging from three months to four. This reform is not included in the study, since it is too soon to evaluate its effect.

### A certain type of person

Comparing offenders who serve their sentences with electronic tags with other offenders presents a challenge in terms of research method.

Even if an offender appears to be a candidate for serving his sentence with an electronic tag, it is not certain that this will in fact happen. There are additional requirements. The offender must formally request to serve the sentence in this way, and must have a suitable home. Anyone who lives with the offender must accept that he serves the sentence at home. The offender must have a job, be engaged in full-time study or, if unemployed, participate in an active labour market programme. Finally, the offender must not have received any conviction within the previous two years that resulted in more than a fine.

In other words, people who serve their sentences with electronic tags are offenders of a very specific type. This makes it difficult to find an appropriate comparison group.

However, when a reform to the penal code is implemented, from one day to the next, that opens up the possibility of electronic tagging, it becomes possible to overcome the research methodology problem, as it creates two comparable groups. The first consists of offenders in a specific age group who got a prison sentence of a specific length and who all served their sentences in prison, because they were convicted before the reform. The second group consists of offenders in the same age group who got a prison sentence of the same length, but who served their sentences either in prison or with electronic tags, because they were convicted after the reform. Both groups must be made up of offenders who would otherwise meet the requirements for serving a sentence with an electronic tag.

The question is, then, whether the members of the group in which some offenders served their sentences with electronic tags (and others in prison) were less dependent on welfare benefits after serving their sentences than the group in which all the offenders served their sentences in prison.

The comparisons made in this study are based on the reforms of 2006 and 2008. The reform of 2005, which gave traffic offenders the possibility of serving sentences at home, was not included in the study, since there were very few people who actually served their sentences at home immediately after the reform; furthermore, other changes in the regulations concerning traffic offences make it impossible to carry out a satisfactory comparison.

In the case of each of the 2006 and 2008 reforms, comparisons are made between groups of relevant offenders who were sentenced up to 365 days before and after the reform in question. The results thus indicate the effects of the reforms.

Offenders aged over 25 who were able to serve their sentences either with electronic tags or in prison after the 2008 reform were supported by welfare benefits for approximately 3½ weeks less in the first year after their sentences than those offenders who could only serve their sentences in prison before the reform. For young people under 25 years of age, for whom the 2006 reform opened up the possibility of serving sentences with electronic tagging, the corresponding difference in welfare benefit dependency was 3 weeks.

TABLE 2

**Average dependency on welfare benefits during the first year after serving a sentence for the group for whom serving their sentences with electronic tagging was an option in comparison with the group who were only able to serve their sentences in prison. Both groups comprise men who were in employment or full-time education at the start of their sentences.**

	Sentence could only be served in prison	Sentence could be served in prison or with electronic tag	Difference	Percentage difference
Under 25 (2006-reform)	9½ weeks	6½ weeks	-3 weeks	-32%
Over 25 (2008-reform)	9½ weeks	6 weeks	-3½ weeks	-37%

SOURCE: THE ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT

*Offenders who were convicted before it was possible to serve sentences with electronic tagging were more dependent on welfare benefits than those who could serve sentences either in prison or with electronic tagging. For example, offenders who were convicted after the introduction of the 2008 ordinance depended on welfare benefits for one third less time, equivalent to 3½ weeks, in the first year after serving their sentences, than those who were convicted before the ordinance was introduced.*

## Possible explanations

There may be a variety of reasons why serving sentences with electronic tags – or, for that matter, doing community service – has fewer negative effects on offenders' lives than prison.

First, there is a risk that people in general will assume that offenders who have been to prison – to a greater degree than for offenders who have served sentences at home or done community service – are of bad character. This may mean, for example, that they are rejected in the selection process for a job, or that they find it more difficult to establish social relationships.

Another risk is that offenders will lose

their existing jobs while serving their sentences in prison. This means that they may become unemployed after serving their sentences. They may also lose their work skills, because they have not used those skills for a period.

A third risk is that offenders will lose contact with family, friends and acquaintances when in prison. There is also a risk of offenders making new acquaintances with specialised knowledge of crime as a way of life. This may increase the probability of offenders committing more crimes after release.

Finally, there is a risk that offenders' mental or physical health may suffer from the imprisonment.

## Rules for electronic tags

An electronic tag is a transmitter attached firmly to the ankle of a convicted offender. The transmitter allows the Danish Prison and Probation Service to monitor whether or not the offender follows an agreed time schedule.

Unemployed people who are not in active labour market programmes are not allowed to serve sentences with electronic tagging; the person in question must engage in some formal activity. Offenders serving sentences with electronic tags may continue to work, study or follow active labour market programmes in the normal way, but they may not leave their homes to visit friends or for other similar reasons.

Offenders are not allowed to drink alcohol or take euphoric drugs, they must participate in a crime prevention programme, and they must accept

that the Danish Prison and Probation Service makes unannounced visits to check compliance with the rules for serving sentences with electronic tagging. Failure to comply with these regulations means immediate transfer to a prison or other places of detention to serve the remainder of the sentence.

Of the 471 electronic tag sentences begun within one year of the 2006 reform, when the programme was expanded to cover offenders under 25 regardless of the type of crime they had committed, 52 arrangements were interrupted before completion, corresponding to 11 percent. And of the 668 electronic tags issued within one year of the 2008 reform, when the age requirement was removed, 83 arrangements were broken off prematurely, corresponding to 13 percent.

# Violent offenders fare worse after very short prison sentences than after slightly longer ones

Offenders convicted of violent crimes may benefit from not going to prison for only a very short time. This is the surprising finding of a new study.

The results of the study indicate that those who remain in prison a little longer – all else being equal – have a better chance of finding a job subsequent to their release, and of earning higher pay.

The study compared unemployment and earned income among offenders in the years after their release.

Specifically, comparisons were made between two groups of men aged 18-45 who had committed minor acts of violence (under Section 244 of the Danish criminal code) before and after a reform in 2002 that increased the sentences for such crimes. The types of violence included punching, biting, or kicking, typically in connection with domestic or street violence. While the *average* increase in sentences under the new sentencing guidelines was only 7 days, many individuals

who would previously have served only one month in prison served two months after the reform.

The study shows that the reform affected offenders' chances of finding work and of earning a good income.

## Lower unemployment and higher pay

Before their convictions, the two groups of offenders exhibited the same levels of unemployment. However, after serving their sentences, the members of the group that had served the longer sentences were more frequently employed than those sentenced to shorter terms of imprisonment. Three years after release, the level of unemployment was 25 percent among those convicted after the reform. While this was admittedly a high rate of unemployment, the level of unemployment among those convicted before the reform was 33 percent three years after release.

There were also differences in the average earnings of the two groups. Three years after release, those convicted before the reform – and who thus received slightly shorter sentences – earned just under DKK 9,500 per month on average before tax. The corresponding amount for those convicted after the reform – and who thus served slightly longer sentences – was DKK 10,500. The amounts have been corrected for inflation and are thus fully comparable.

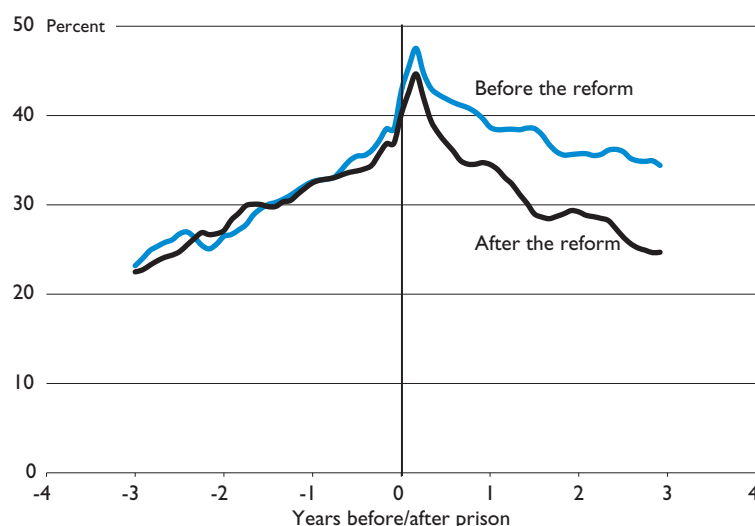
## Same types of offenders, but different punishments

It is often difficult to investigate how the length of prison sentences affects convicted offenders after serving their sentences. This is due to considerable differences among people who receive long and short sentences. The problem does not arise in this study, since the change in the sentencing guidelines in 2002 created a situation where people with the same characteristics received different sentences.

One problem that does arise, however, is that the two groups compared in the study completed their sentences at different times. Consequently, there is a risk

FIGURE 2

**Proportions of convicted offenders who were unemployed before and after prison**



SOURCE: THE ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT

In the figure above, point 0 on the x axis represents the time at which a given person entered prison. -1 indicates one year before the time of entering prison, -2 indicates two years, and so on. Time served in prison is not included in the figure, so 0 also indicates the time of release. 1 indicates one year after the time of release, 2 indicates two years, and so on.



that differences between the groups are simply reflections of differences in the economic cycle and its effects on the labour market.

The main results of the study are based on a comparison of people who were sentenced within periods of 18 months before and 18 months after the reform. This period of 36 months – three years – makes the results of the study vulnerable to the effects of changes in the economic cycle.

In order to control for differences in the state of the labour market, the period studied can be reduced to six months before and after the reform. In this setup the risk of the two groups being affected by differences in labour market conditions is much lower.

This check gives no indication that the differences in unemployment between the two groups were due to changes in the labour market. However, differences in the economic cycle may explain part – though not all – of the differences in earned income.

### Effects of term of imprisonment

The fact that criminals convicted of violent crimes have a stronger affiliation with the labour market if they remain in prison a little longer may result from them drawing greater benefit from the positive factors associated with a term of imprisonment.

A longer term of imprisonment might have both negative and positive effects on the labour market opportunities for the offender, insofar as prison itself can have positive and negative effects.

On the negative side, an offender sent to prison faces the risk of losing his job, because he has to remain in prison. The offender may also lose professional and personal skills and sections of his network, because he cannot maintain these during the period of imprisonment. Finally, the offender has a prison sentence on his criminal record, which may make it harder to find a job after release.

On the other hand, a period in prison can have a positive effect on the labour market attachment of an offender. In prison, inmates have access to therapy for abuse and to professional help in dealing with anger issues. They may increase their educational level, engage in other routine occupations, and receive support in connection with their forthcoming release. The last point, where a longer sen-

tence provides better opportunities for the authorities to prepare to support the offender on release, may be particularly important in this context. All the points listed above are aimed at meeting the imprisoned offenders function better in society after their sentences. Slightly longer prison sentences allow more time for these things. Furthermore, a longer prison sentence may have a greater deterrent effect that will have an impact on behaviour after release.

However, this study does not allow us to conclude that all offenders sentenced to prison would benefit from staying imprisoned a little longer. The study does not concern longer prison sentences in general, and does not tell if longer prison sentences would produce the same positive effect for people convicted of serious crimes of violence or crimes against property. This is both because these criminals are different types of people with different characteristics, backgrounds and motivations, and because the punishments for these types of crime differ significantly from the punishments that form the basis for this study, and may thus work through entirely different mechanisms.

### Only the punishment was different

It is often difficult to determine how the type and length of the sentence affects the convicted offender, because there are typically significant differences between people who are sent to prison and those who are not. These differences consist in part of observable characteristics, such as education and age, and it is possible to control for such differences. However, there are also characteristics which are more difficult to measure, such as personality, motives and temperament. These cannot be taken into account in an analysis. Many of these *unobservable* differences will often be reflected both in the crime itself – and consequently in the severity of the sentence – and also in the life of the offender subsequent to the completion of the sentence. Thus, it is not possible to be certain whether differences found in rate of unemployment or earned income after serving a sentence are due to differences in the sentence types and lengths or to differences among the offenders themselves.

When the sentencing guidelines change, as happened in Denmark in 2002, or a new form of sentence – such as the use of electronic tagging – is introduced, the change can indirectly be a great help to research. Some reforms such as these create situations where the people and offences are the same, and only the punishment varies.

# Active labour market programmes result in lower crime

Unemployed people who participate in active labour market programmes (ALMPs) commit less crime than other unemployed; and the earlier the unemployed enter the program, the less crime they commit.

This is found in a study on the effect of ALMPs on crime among uninsured unemployed.

The analysis exploits a series of labour market policy reforms that were implemented in the 1990s, and the programmes implemented before those reforms in the former Danish municipality of Farum. All the above changes meant that uninsured unemployed people had to participate in ALMPs earlier than others. Farum required uninsured unemployed of all age groups to participate in ALMPs from the beginning of 1987. In the rest of Denmark, the reforms implemented from 1990 onward gradually raised the age limit of the group that had to participate in ALMPs, and from the start of the new millennium all uninsured unemployed people under the age of 30 were obliged to enter ALMPs shortly after they became unemployed.

## Activation from day one

The study of the effect of ALMPs on criminality among the young unemployed is primarily based on the special ALMP introduced in Farum towards the end of the 1980s. All Farum residents who applied for welfare benefits were immediately en-

rolled in ALMPs where attendance every weekday was mandatory for the entire duration of the unemployment.

This immediate ALMP was launched in Farum in 1987, and was fully implemented in 1991 for all unemployed recipients of welfare benefits in the municipality. After 1997, ALMPs in Farum and in the rest of Denmark grew progressively more similar, but before that time immediate ALMP was generally not used elsewhere in Denmark. This special situation provides a good research basis to study how participation in ALMPs affects crime.

In the study, two comparisons were made between different groups of men aged 18-30. First, crime among men without unemployment insurance (regardless of whether or not they were unemployed) who lived outside Farum was compared with crime among an equivalent group who lived in Farum. The group who lived outside Farum committed an average of 13 offences per 100 persons per year. The group who lived in Farum committed an average of 9 offences per year per 100 persons. This is equivalent to a crime rate that was 34 percent lower among the Farum resident group. Before Farum began its new ALMP, the two groups of men exhibited roughly the same levels of crime.

Second, a group of *vulnerable* men aged 18-30 living in Farum, and thus subject to ALMP when unemployed after 1987, was compared with an equivalent group living outside Farum. The 'vulnerable' are defined as those who have been dependent on welfare benefits for at least 75 percent of a given month. The comparison showed that the vulnerable that did not immediately enrol in ALMPs committed 76 criminal offences per 100 persons, while the rate for those who enrolled immediately in ALMPs was 52 offences per 100 persons. This corresponds to a fall of 32 percent.

## Several explanations

ALMPs thus lead to less crime among those attending the programmes. The analysis tests four possible explanations of why the programmes should have a positive effect on the crime rate.

First, criminologists agree that unemployed people who obtain work commit

TABLE 3

**Average annual number of crimes (per 100 people) among men without unemployment insurance aged 18-30**

	No immediate ALMPs	Immediate ALMPs	Percentage difference
All	13 crimes	9 crimes	- 34%
Vulnerable	76 crimes	52 crimes	- 32%

Notes: 'All' indicates all men aged 18-30, regardless of whether or not they have experienced unemployment. 'Vulnerable' individuals are those who had been dependent on state benefits for a minimum of 75% of a month. Numbers of crimes are rounded to the nearest whole number.

SOURCE: THE ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT

*Immediate ALMPs results in lower crime. For example, vulnerable unemployed persons who were required to join ALMPs immediately committed 24 fewer criminal acts per year and per 100 persons than men who were not immediately sent to join the programmes. This corresponds to a fall in crime of 32%.*

less crime. One reason is that employed people have more to lose by offending, and that being at a workplace exposes people to social norms that may be less pronounced during unemployment (for example, that theft is not acceptable).

The analysis supports the hypothesis that unemployed people who find work commit less crime. Part of the positive effect of ALMPs on crime is attributable to the fact that some of the unemployed obtain employment. However, the study also shows that the programmes have an equally large relative effect, and a larger absolute effect, on crime among the vulnerable unemployed, who typically tend not to find work. Thus the first explanation – that the unemployed find work – is not sufficient in itself.

A second potential explanation is that participation in ALMPs increase benefit levels (if, for example, they enter into a special agreement with a private firm), and that this increase in income reduces crime, by reducing the temptation or need to steal. However, controlling for income in the analyses does not alter the conclusions and the study may reject this explanation in this context

### **Time and attitudes**

A third possible explanation is that crime is less prevalent among people in ALMPs because the programs reduce time available for crime.

Finally, it might be thought – as a fourth possible explanation – that participation in ALMPs affects people's lifestyle or attitudes.

In order to investigate the third and fourth possible explanations, the study

exploited information from the Danish criminal records concerning the days on which offences were committed. It is the first time such an approach has been used. With this information, it is possible to see whether offences were committed on weekdays or at weekends. If the crime rate among those in ALMPs falls, we cannot dismiss the explanation that the programmes leave less time for crime. A lower crime rate during weekends supports the explanation that activation affects personality and lifestyles.

The study showed that crime among ALMP participants was lower both on weekdays and at weekends. Thus the fall in crime does not only result from a reduction in time available for criminal acts. The lifestyle of participants was also affected. Even though ALMPs does not encroach on free time at weekends, participants committed less crime on Saturdays and Sundays than non-participants.

### **Early activation reduces crime**

ALMPs reduce crime, and the earlier programs begin, the greater the effect. Average annual crime rates are markedly higher among those who, if unemployed, must wait for program participation, than among those participating from day one.

Crime varies with age, but if we consider, for example, men aged 29, the comparison shows that crime was 4% higher among those who had to wait a month after becoming unemployed to enter ALMPs compared to those who entered a programme on the first day of unemployment. And among those who had to wait six months for programmes to begin, crime was 24% higher.

# An ALMP experiment cuts crime among the insured unemployed

The conclusion that intensive active labour market programmes (ALMPs) reduce crime among the uninsured unemployed (see 'Active labour market programmes results in lower criminality' on p. 10) also applies to the insured unemployed – although this group commits very little crime in any case. This was shown in a labour market experiment conducted in 2005-06 in the then existing Danish counties of Storstrøm and Sønderjylland.

The experiment, named 'Quick off the mark' (*Hurtigt i gang*), involved approximately 5,000 unemployment benefit recipients who were randomly allocated to one of two groups. One group received standard ALMPs, whereas the other received a more intensive package.

The real aim of 'Quick off the mark' was to test whether intensive programmes affect job search behaviour among the unemployed. However, it is also possible to use the experiment to study something entirely different – namely, whether the two types of programmes affected participants' criminal behaviour.

Such a study reveals that the unemployed allocated to the more intensive programme committed half as many criminal offences as those allocated to the standard programme.

During unemployment, the group subjected to the intensive programme committed a total of 10 criminal offences. An equal-sized group subjected to the normal programme committed 18 criminal offences during their unemployment.

## Insured unemployed commit less crime

Of particular interest is the fact, that the reduced crime was achieved among a group of people who exhibited very little

criminal behaviour in the first place.

While the results reported in the article 'Active labour market programmes result in lower criminality' on p. 10 concerned the uninsured unemployed, the experiment in 2005-06 involved the insured unemployed. Importantly, uninsured unemployed commit significantly more crime than the insured.

This questions the value of using extra activation effort with the insured group as crime prevention.

However, even a single criminal act generates costs for the victim, for the criminal and for society. From that perspective, any reduction in crime among the insured unemployed must be seen as a positive side-effect of the more intensive activation effort.

## Controlling for differences

The results express the actual crime committed by the two groups.

However to ensure that the different crime levels resulted from the different levels of ALMPs, and not, for example, from differences between the two groups, we controlled for other differences in the study.

Two differences between the groups were in fact discovered despite their random allocation to groups. There were more immigrants and more people in older age groups in the group of unemployed people who received more intensive activation input. Second, one of the results of the more intensive ALMPs was that the unemployed people in that group found jobs more quickly.

Even after controlling for these differences, however, the significant difference in crime between the two groups persisted.

### **‘Quick off the mark’**

‘Quick off the mark’ was an experiment conducted by the Danish National Labour Market Authority in the counties of Storstrøm and Sønderjylland from November 2005 to March 2006. The aim was to establish whether more intensive ALMPs would affect the job search behaviour of insured unemployed.

The experiment involved randomly allocating each person who became unemployed during the period of the experiment into one of two groups. The first group received normal ALMPs. The other group received pro-

grammes that differed from the normal procedure in several respects. For example, they were required to meet more frequently with their case workers, they were required to participate in a two-week job search course, and they were obliged to start their participation in an activation scheme at an earlier stage.

SFI, the Danish National Centre for Social Research, studied the employment effect of the experiment. The results showed that the intensive program increased exits to employment by between 20 and 30 percent.

## **Summary and conclusions**

### **New research on the significance of sentence forms and crime prevention.**

The first part of this newsletter focused on the effects of some important reforms in sentence types and sentence length for minor crimes.

We focused on how the reforms affected income and dependence on welfare benefits after serving a sentence. Where data on crime was available, we furthermore studied the effect of alternative types of sentences on recidivism.

It is never the aim of short or long sentences to damage the future life prospects of the offender. On the contrary, the declared aim is to prevent this from happening, and this factor has been emphasised as a specific reason for introducing new ways of serving sentences, namely electronic tagging and community service.

Enabling the offender to live a normal life after serving a sentence is an aim in itself, but it is also considered important for reducing recidivism.

Thus, when evaluating how a particular sentence type affects the lives of offenders, a focus on labour market outcomes comes natural.

The second part of the newsletter focused on evaluations of the crime prevention effect of active labour market programmes (ALMPs). We presented analyses of the effects on both insured and un-

insured unemployed. The first group exhibited a far lower rate of crime than the other.

The saying that ‘the devil finds work for idle hands to do’ is more than just an aphorism. The fear that idleness encourages antisocial and self-destructive behaviour has always played a part in formulating social policy – particularly in former times – but it has also been a factor in more recent Danish social and labour market policies. Given the extensive Danish emphasis on ALMPs in recent decades, it seems natural to investigate whether the programmes has had any effect on, for example, antisocial behaviour such as crime.

The results reported in both parts of the newsletter thus constitute an empirical contribution to the current debate on judicial and social policies, just as they elucidate the effects of reforms of recent years.

### **ALMPs help prevent crime**

The studies show that ALMPs have a preventative effect on crime.

We found that the programmes reduce the crime rate, and that the sooner activation begins, the greater the effect. In absolute terms, the preventative effect on crime is greatest for the most marginalised labour market group, i.e. young men



who are highly dependent on welfare benefits. The results also show – rather surprisingly – that the unemployed in the programmes change their behaviour not only on the days when they are attending activation activities, but also at weekends.

The crime prevention effect seems to be a general phenomenon, in that it is also found among insured unemployed. People in this category commit relatively little crime, but even so activation reduces the crime rate amongst this group as well.

### **New types of sentences**

With regards to effects in the other area – the significance of various sentencing reforms on offenders' subsequent relationship to the labour market – the results were as follows.

Offenders who were given the choice to serve their sentences with electronic tagging were less dependent on social security benefits after sentence completion. For comparable groups, dependency on welfare benefits was reduced by one third among those who were convicted at a time when it was possible to serve sentences at home wearing an electronic tag. Instead of an average of nine and a half weeks of welfare benefit dependency during the first year after completing their sentence, those who served their sentences after the introduction of electronic tagging depended on welfare benefits for only six weeks on average.

Another finding from the study was that people who completed their sentences in the form of community service fared better in relation to the labour market than those sent to prison. They were unemployed for less time on average, and earned more when employed. The study also showed that there was no significant difference in recidivism between the two groups. There were some indications that people who were convicted of minor crimes of violence or petty theft and who were sentenced to community service instead of imprisonment were less likely to

re-offend during the first year after serving their sentences.

These results demonstrate that the sentencing reforms have not only helped to alleviate the problem of overcrowding in Danish prisons, but that they have also achieved another of their original goals – as described in the preparatory documents resulting from the work of the Parliamentary Judiciary committee – of improving the relationship of offenders to the labour market.

While these two studies describe the effects of alternative ways of serving prison sentences, the third study reported here focuses on a specific aspect of prison sentences, namely their length. The study reveals that people sentenced to prison for minor crimes of violence fare worse after their release if they receive a very short prison sentence than if they are imprisoned for a slightly longer period.

It is important to note, however, that this study does not necessarily provide grounds for concluding that longer prison sentences generally produce a better relationship with the labour market. This is a very specific result that concerns only the relatively short sentences given for minor crimes of violence.

### **Two important functions**

The focus of this newsletter was on the effects of alternative forms of sentence on the subsequent relationship of offenders to the labour market, and on the crime prevention effects of ALMPs for the unemployed.

However, the studies reported do not consider two functions of punishment that are often thought of as being the most important. These are, first, that punishment should deter potential offenders from committing crimes, and second, that punishment should relate to the sense of justice of the community – that the nature and extent of punishment should fit the nature of the offence committed.

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