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Who's missing?

Social and Demographic Impacts from the Incarceration of Indigenous People in the Northern Territory

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Research Brief

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Who's missing? Social and Demographic Impacts from the Incarceration of Indigenous People in the Northern Territory

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RESEARCH AIM

The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Prison Census indicate increasing numbers of Indigenous people are incarcerated in Northern Territory prisons. As a result, there are potential social, economic and demographic impacts for small and remote communities in the Territory from which those in jail originate. This research focuses particularly on the demographic impacts for individual communities and attempts to articulate the types of demographic effects a community of an average demographic structure might experience. The research aims to highlight the magnitude of the impacts for some communities as well as to advocate for a targeting of resources towards reducing the gap in incarceration rates between Indigenous and other Australians.

KEY FINDINGS

- The rate of incarceration for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory is increasing more rapidly than for non-Indigenous people in the rest of Australia.
- In 2004, there were 9.5 Indigenous prisoners for every non-Indigenous prisoner in Australia as a whole, climbing to 12.9 by 2014. In the NT, the comparative ratios were 8.3 times (2004) and 15.4 (2014), an almost doubling of the ratio.
- The growth of incarceration rates in the NT is far outstripping population growth.
- The international literature highlights a range of negative impacts that might be expected for small and remote communities, from the incarceration of residents including a loss of social capital, and the loss of income through employment.
- Our modeling suggests at any given point in time, between 4-14% of men and 0-2% of women between 20-39 years are missing from an average community.
- These proportions have the potential to create severe dysfunction in terms of population structures, and social and economic impacts on affected communities.
- The results from this research highlight the need for a target to Close the Gap in social justice indicators, in line with the calls from the Social Justice Commissioner.

1. Introduction

In December 2014, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported on the release of the latest Social Justice and Native Title report by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda. It emphasised the substantial and increasing over representation of Aboriginal people in prisons. For example, from 2000-2013, the imprisonment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults increased by 57 per cent while the non-Indigenous rate remained fairly stable (Kidd, 2014). Mick Gooda called this development “...one of the most urgent human rights issues facing the nation today”, leading to “...knock-on effects in Indigenous communities” and having become “...an inter-generational problem” (Kidd, 2014).

Moreover, Gooda referred to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, remarking “We have a whole range of targets in the Closing the Gap strategies and the one missing, in my view, is one on justice.” (Kidd, 2014). In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) signed a partnership agreement to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). The main targets were outlined in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, which comprises specific performance indicators that were last reviewed in 2011. Targets exist on life expectancies, early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, healthy homes, safe communities as well as governance and leadership. There is, however, no direct target relating to social justice.

2. Overview of Indigenous imprisonment in Australia and the NT

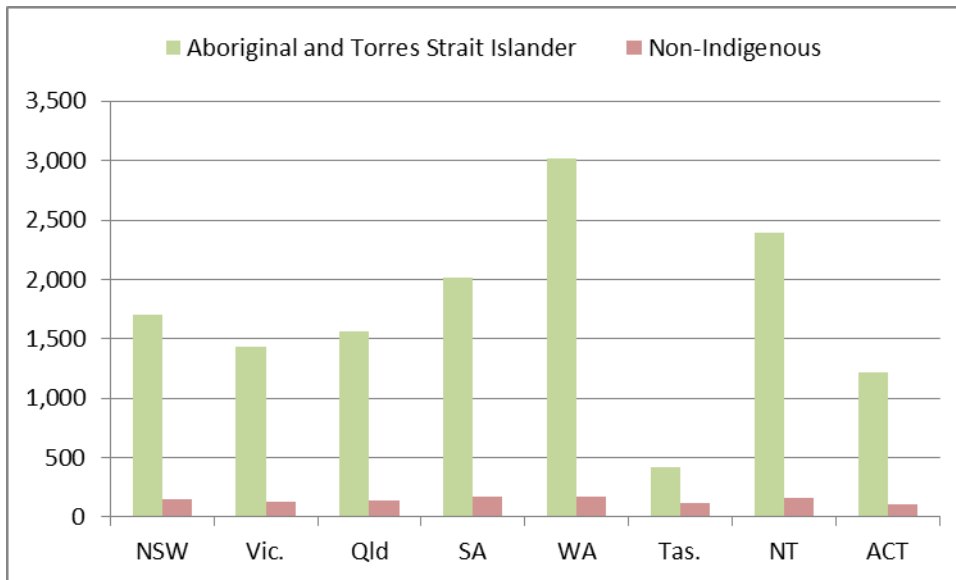
When it comes to information related to prisoners and imprisonment in Australia, a variety of data sources are available. These include, but are not limited to, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Prisons Census, the ABS Corrective Services Australia publication, the ABS Census of Population and Housing, and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. In combination, these sources of data allow us to present an overview of the current situation in relation to Indigenous incarceration in Australia.

The ABS defines an adult prisoner as a person who is aged 18 years and over in all states and territories (except Queensland where an adult prisoner is aged 17 years and over) remanded or sentenced to adult custodial corrective services agencies in Australia (ABS, 2014c). Persons included in the National Prisoner Census were counted in the State or Territory in which they were held in custody regardless of which State or Territory imposed the sentence being served.

Comparing the age standardised imprisonment rates of adult prisoners across Australia in 2014 shows the highest Indigenous imprisonment rate per 100,000 people was in Western Australia (3,013 per 100,000 adult population), followed by the Northern Territory (2,390 per 100,000 adult population) and South Australia (2,016 per 100,000 adult population) (ABS, 2014a). Figure 1

demonstrates these rates as well as the particularly high proportion of Indigenous people compared to non-Indigenous people.

Figure 1: Age standardised imprisonment rate across Australia (per 100,000 adult population), 2014

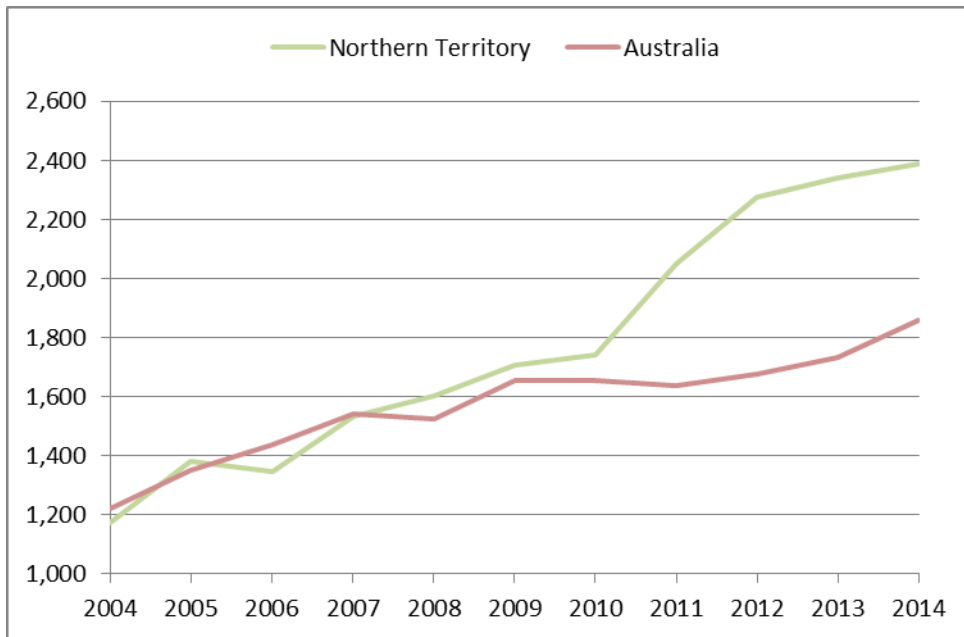


Source: ABS, 2014a.

With WA, the NT and SA having the highest imprisonment rates, the state comparison suggests remoteness is a key factor in determining rates (ABS, 2010). These indicate substantial numbers of residents might be ‘missing’ from remote communities, and particularly in the Northern Territory where a large proportion of remote residents live in small and remote communities (Taylor, 2011).

Time series data from the 2014 ABS Prison Census provides an age standardised rate for Indigenous prisoners (Figure 2). The data suggests a significantly higher rate has emerged in the Northern Territory since 2010 in comparison to Australia as a whole. The data highlights the continuous growth in incarceration rates for Indigenous people, in both the NT and Australia as a whole, with the NT showing a substantially higher rate of increase since 2010. The highest recorded Indigenous incarceration rate in the NT was in 2014 at 2,390 per 100,000 adult Indigenous people.

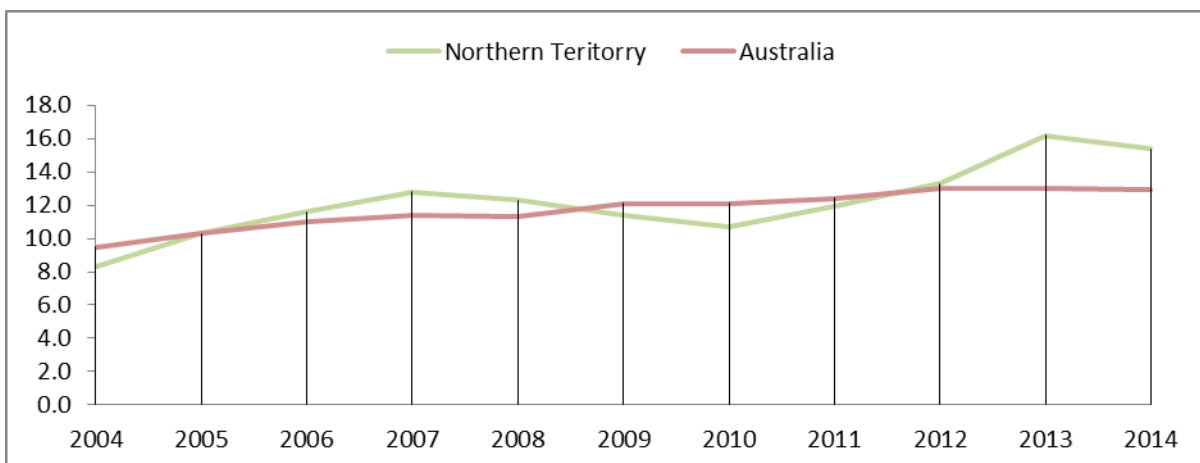
Figure 2: Age standardised Indigenous imprisonment rates (per 100,000 adult population), 2004-2014.



Source: ABS, 2014a.

If we consider the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous imprisonment numbers from 2004 until 2014, a similar picture arises (Figure 3). In 2004, there were 9.5 Indigenous prisoners for every non-Indigenous prisoner in Australia as a whole, climbing to 12.9 by 2014. In the NT, the comparative ratios were 8.3 in 2004 and 15.4 in 2014. This suggests over representation of Indigenous people has increased by 50% for Australia as a whole, and nearly double for the NT.

Figure 3: Ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous imprisonment, 2004 to 2014

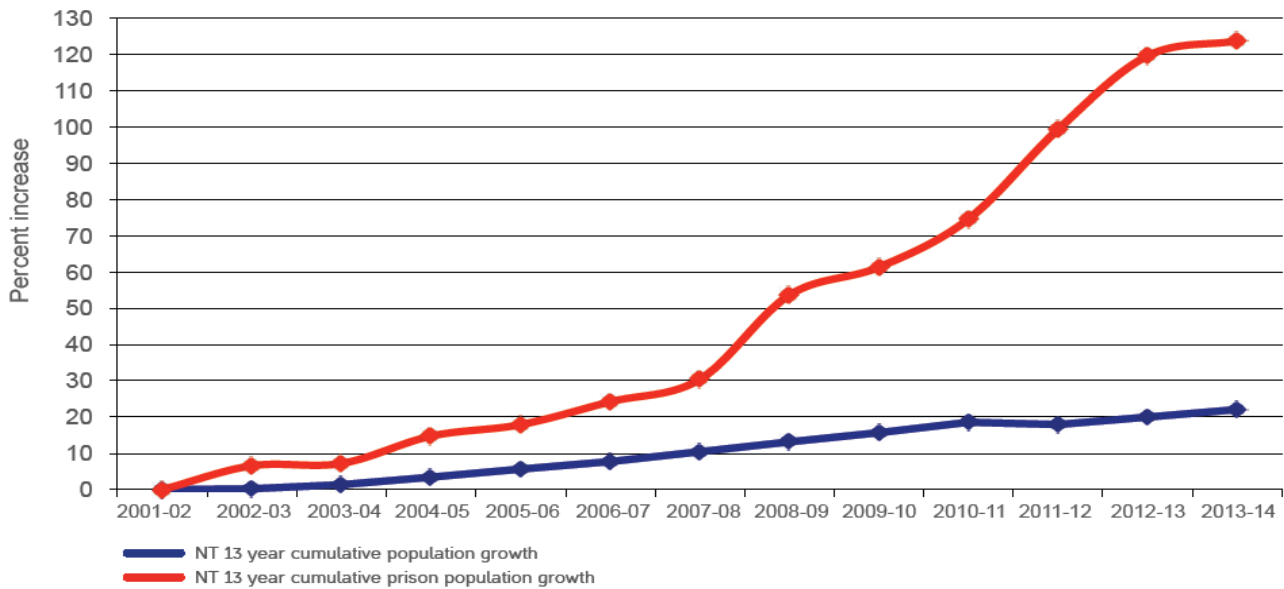


Source: ABS, 2014a.

Given NT residents in prison and the total NT population have increased over this period, the question arises as to whether increased numbers in prison simply represent long-term population growth. The following graph extracted from the NT Department of Correctional Services 2014 Annual Report compares the cumulative population and cumulative prison population growth

rates from 2001-02. It clearly indicates the increase in the Indigenous incarceration rate in the Territory is not a direct result of long-term population growth.

Figure 4: NT population growth vs. population prison growth rates, 2001-02 to 2013-14



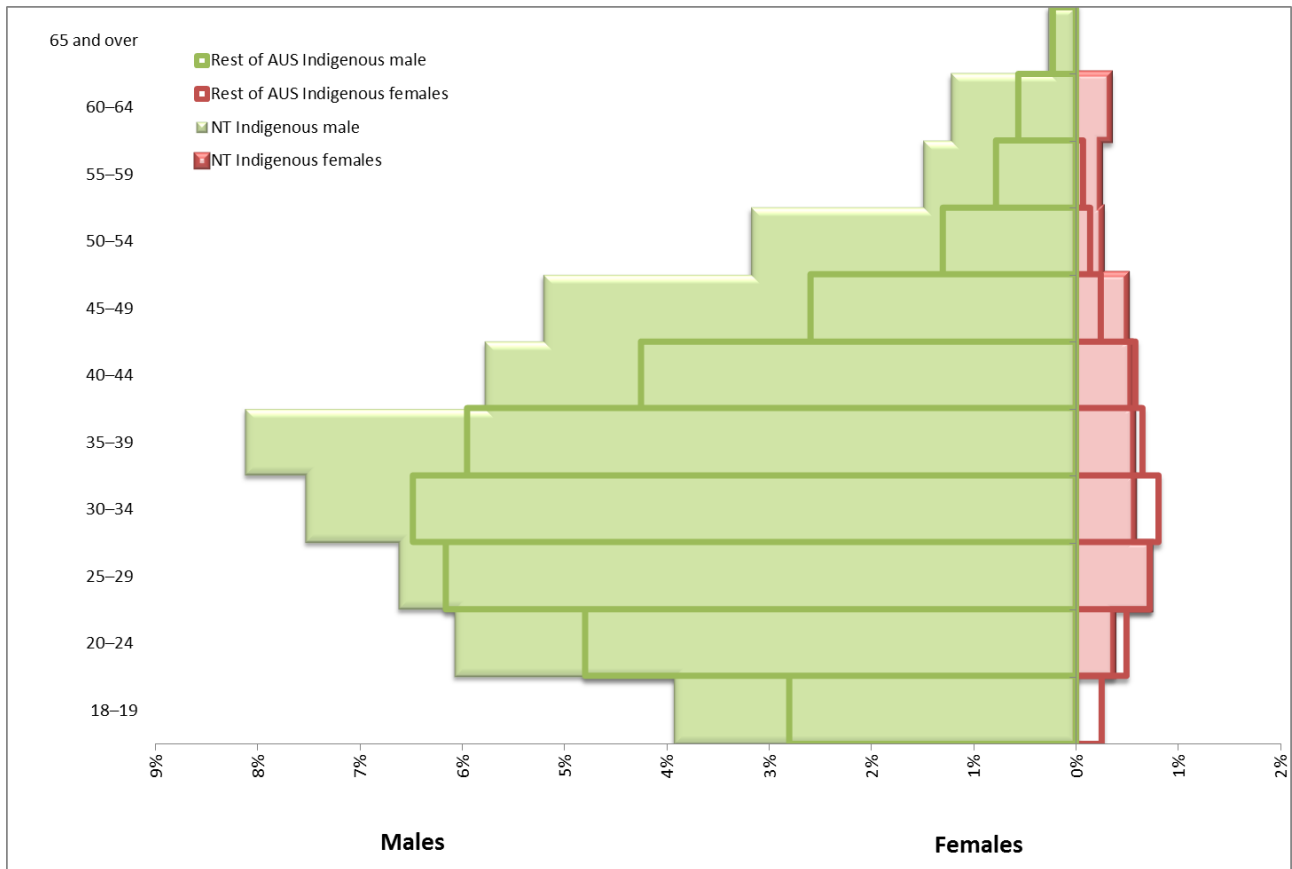
Source: Northern Territory Department of Correctional Services, 2014

3. A Profile of Prisoners in the NT

In this section we profile Northern Territory prisoners’ characteristics using the latest ABS information from the National Prisoner Census on prisoners held in custody in Australian adult prisons on 30 June 2014 (ABS, 2014a). In the NT there were 1,494 inmates (18 years and older) incarcerated at this particular point in time, of which 85.6% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, the highest proportion in the country.

Standardising the 2014 Prison Census numbers by age and Indigenous status shows, although 2.9% of all Indigenous Territorians (aged 18 years and older) were in jail (compared to 2.2% in Australia as a whole), the imprisoned share for some specific age groups was much higher for both the NT and for Australia. Figure 5 illustrates age and sex rates of Indigenous incarceration in the NT in 2014 compared to the rest of Australia. The data demonstrates the significantly higher proportion of Indigenous males in prison in the NT for every age group, and for both sexes compared to the rest of Australia. Female incarceration rates are much lower than male rates for every age group but only for older age groups (>45yrs) does the NT have higher rates of female incarceration than Australia. The proportion was especially high for Indigenous male Territorians aged 35 to 39 years at 8.1% of all Indigenous residents in that age group in the Territory. For the rest of Australia, the highest proportion of incarcerated Indigenous males was in the 30 to 34 years age group at 6.5%.

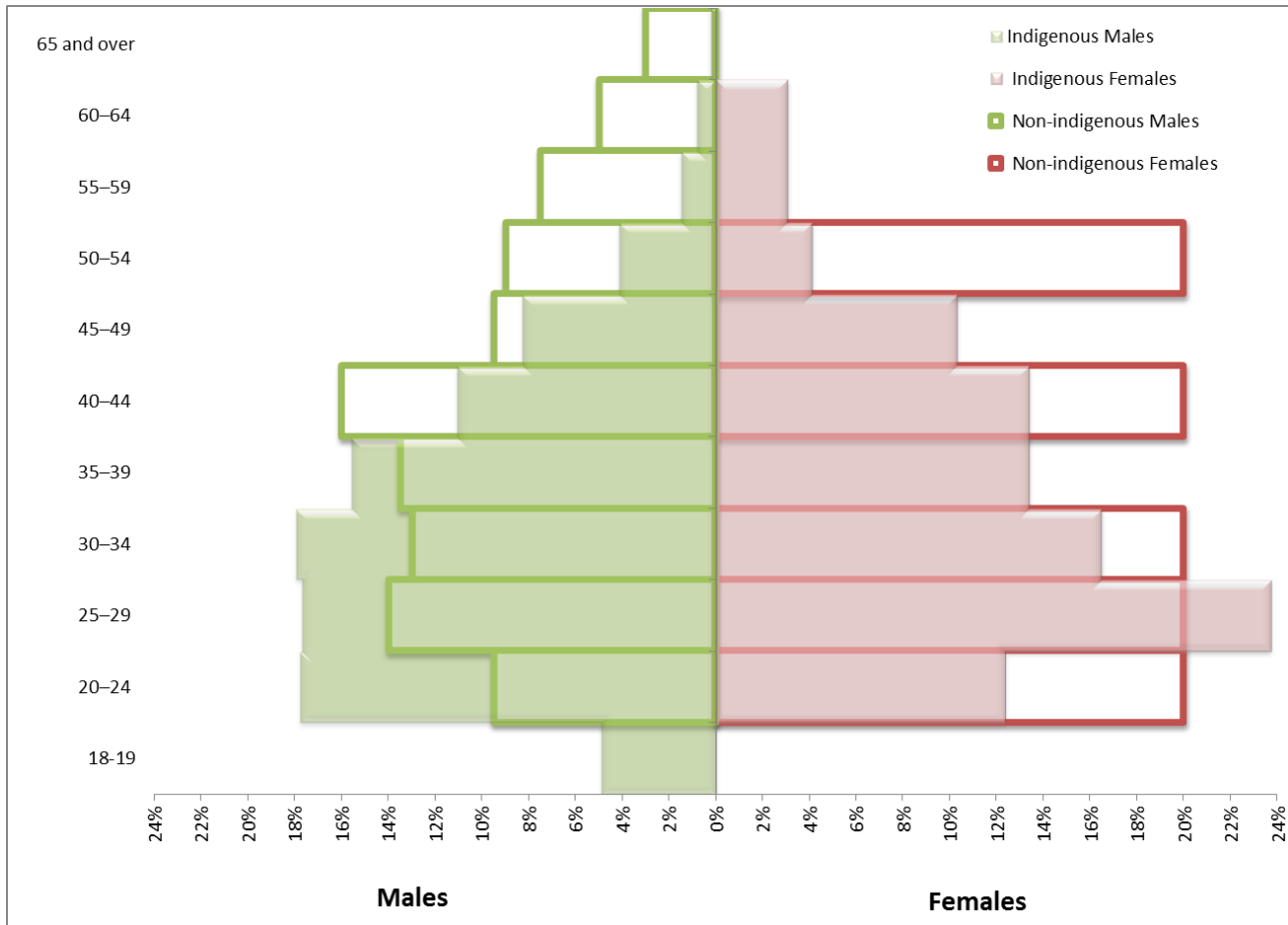
Figure 5: Proportion of Indigenous people in the NT and rest of Australia incarcerated by age and sex, 2014



Source: Author’s calculations based on ABS, 2014a; NT Department of Treasury and Finance

The age and sex distributions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners in the Northern Territory are compared in Figure 6. This figure breaks down the Indigenous and non-Indigenous prison population by age and sex. The median age for Indigenous males in prison in the Territory was 32.5 years, compared to 36.9 for non-Indigenous. The median age for Indigenous females in prisons in the NT was 33.2 years in 2014, although there was a cluster of nearly a quarter of Indigenous females in prison aged 25-29 at that time. Comparatively, the median age for non-indigenous women was 31.5 years. The Indigenous prisoner median age, while concentrated in age groups below 40 years, was nevertheless relatively older than the median age of Indigenous people in the Territory of 23 years at the 2011 Census and more in line with the median age of the total population at 31 years (ABS, 2013).

Figure 6: Age-Sex distribution between Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners in the NT, 2014



Source: ABS, 2014a.

With the significant number of Aboriginal men and women in prison in the NT at any given point in time, we argue there is a range of potential impacts for individual remote communities including social, economic and demographic impacts. In this brief we focus on the latter, on the basis the imprisonment data represents significant numbers of men and women ‘missing’ from individual communities at any point in time. We discuss demographic impacts for communities and apply statistical techniques to articulate the sorts of demographic effects a community with an average demographic structure might experience in order to demonstrate the potential scale of effects at community levels. We commence by discussing the current body of international knowledge on community and social impacts from imprisonment with a focus on Indigenous people and communities.

4. Current Body of Knowledge

From an academic point of view, there is limited literature on the effects and impacts of the incarceration of Indigenous people in remote areas specifically. Many existing studies are based on findings from the United States and particularly point to the effects of maternal and paternal incarceration on children, as well as the social consequences and financial costs for concerned

families and communities (for example, Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Roberts, 2004; Clear, 2008; Dawson, Jackson & Nyamathi, 2012; Foster & Hagan 2013).

Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999) were among the first to summarise impacts from imprisonment in highlighting in particular the depletion of human and social capital resources for families and communities. They found increasing strain (e.g. older children having to assume unexpected role responsibilities), socialisation issues (e.g. loss of role models) and stigmatisation (e.g. exclusion of social groups) were prevailing consequences of maternal as well as paternal imprisonment, especially during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The concept of social capital can be described as the social networks we find ourselves in, the exchanges that arise from them and the value of these for achieving mutual benefits in a community (Schuller, Baron and Field, 2000, p. 1). Referring to the Australian context, Edney (2002) contests social capital in Indigenous communities is particularly undermined through imprisonment. He contends the effects of imprisonment in conjunction with the numerous other social, economic and health indicators on which Indigenous communities fare poorly, in comparison with non-Indigenous communities, ensures Aboriginal communities are continually fragmented. Those effects are so significant that imprisonment for Indigenous communities is foremost a political issue and therefore central to the content of self-determination in the post-colonial context of Australia. In this respect, Cunneen (2001) warns the accumulative effects from the criminalisation and incarceration of Indigenous people in Australia lead to the creation of a new generation of Indigenous people construed as criminal.

Evidently, the absence of people who might be of importance to the social, economic and demographic fabric of individual communities, is potentially detrimental and particularly in the context of small communities.

Meanwhile, Dawson, Jackson & Nyamathi (2012) did an extensive review of qualitative literature in order to detail the experiences of children and young adults of incarcerated parents in an American setting. Their findings indicated parental imprisonment was reflected in children in several areas, describing in particular the adverse effects and experiences for children, including violence and abuse, stigmatisation and discrimination, behavioural issues (including physical aggressiveness), early sexual activity or drug abuse, as well as emotional and financial stress.

Turning to more general studies on the effects of imprisonment, a large Swedish survey in the 1950s investigated the intergenerational transmission of criminality and the effects of parental incarceration on children (Murray, Janson & Farrington, 2007). They found the more times offspring's parents were incarcerated (before the children were 19) the more offenses offspring were likely to commit (ages 19 to 30). This suggested that, although parental incarceration predicted offspring's own offending, this might have been because incarcerated parents were highly criminal, not because incarceration itself had specific effects on offspring.

In a more recent study, Foster & Hagan (2013) analysed the influences of maternal and paternal imprisonment on young adult's mental health. The findings point to a "gendered loss perspective",

meaning maternal incarceration increases depressive symptoms, whereas paternal incarceration increases substance use problems (for example, role disruptions linked to alcohol and drug use).

Exploring the effects of imprisonment on the wider community, Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999) outline the following consequences:

- A loss of community cohesion
- A loss of working males and consequently income
- The diversion of funds away from schools and communities in order to cope with the increasing costs of imprisonment
- The circumstance that, once one person is removed from the community for criminal activities, a new participant will usually take over the role

The impacts of high imprisonment rates on communities were also investigated by Clear (2008) who examined several studies that specifically dealt with the effects of incarceration on communities. Similar to Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999), he observed incarcerating someone who is actively criminal may destabilise criminal networks but in ways that provoke even more violence rather than less.

Moreover, he found opportunity costs are borne by social networks in places with high incarceration rates: young men are supposed to be entering the labor market meeting new people, thereby expanding the productive capacity of all the networks of which they are a part of, as well as bridging their personal networks to those of others. However, men in prison cannot perform this role in the free world, but only link their networks within the domain of the prison. In line with Clear's findings, Roberts (2004, p. 1294) particularly remarks *"the spatial concentration of incarceration . . . impedes access to jobs for youth in those (African American) communities because it decreases the pool of men who can serve as their mentors and their links to the working world... generating employment discrimination against entire neighbourhoods."*

Drawing on the results of a study in North Carolina (Thomas & Torrone, 2006), a further effect noted from high imprisonment rates within communities was an increase in rates of gonorrhoea, syphilis, and chlamydia among women due to the restricted number of male partners available in the neighbourhood. In addition, it found higher incarceration rates increased the incidence of childbirth by teenage women. Consequently, high rates of incarceration can contribute to adverse health outcomes and destabilise communities.

Clear (2008) concluded incarceration leads to higher unemployment and lower incomes in the community, but sees difficulties in determining the degree of this. Moreover, he observed the prevalence of methodological challenges when it comes to analysing the effects of imprisonment, but remarks the circumstance that concentrated incarceration has become "criminogenic" (p. 102) in its effects on involved communities has become stronger. In general, it can be argued incarceration damages social networks, starting at the family level and reverberating throughout the communities where families are situated (Roberts, 2004).

The literature highlights the potentially severe effect of high incarceration rates for communities, Indigenous or otherwise. The effects discussed in the literature may be magnified because remote communities are relatively small, concentrated and isolated settlements. Given the order of magnitude in the rates of Indigenous imprisonment in the NT and elsewhere compared to non-Indigenous residents, this represents a worsening situation in Australia. In this study we focus on describing the possible demographic effect for NT communities.

5. Method

Based on the effects from imprisonment which are outlined in international literature, the following research questions were posed:

- What proportions of Indigenous men and women are away in prison from remote communities in the NT at any point in time? and
- What does this number consequently mean for the demographic and social fabric of small remote communities in the NT?

Since no Australian datasets record a reliable 'home community' or 'pre-prison address' these questions cannot be tackled directly, requiring an indirect and indicative approach. For the purposes of this analysis we use the Poisson distribution, a statistical probability distribution describing the behaviour of simple random events. For our analyses we have chosen to explore the number of people (both men and women) aged 20-39 years who might typically be 'missing' from communities at any one time, since the Prison census shows most prisoners fall into this age category. We then relate the findings from the Poisson analysis to the types of demographic and consequently social effects such communities might experience. This study does not focus on any particular community, but instead estimates the likely impacts for a 'typical' community of 'average demographic structure'.

The Poisson distribution characterises the chance of observing any distinct number of events (i.e. 0, 1, 2,...), given an underlying mean count or rate of events, assuming the timing of the events is random and independent (Osgood, 2000). In relation to crime, Osgood explains the Poisson distribution for a mean count of 4.5, for instance, would describe the proportion of times we should expect to observe any specific count of robberies (0, 1, 2,...) in a neighbourhood, if the "true" (and unchanging) annual rate for typical comparable neighbourhood were 4.5, if the occurrence of one robbery had no impact on the likelihood of the next, and if we had an unlimited number of years to observe. 'Counts' in the frame of this analysis is the percentage of men or women aged 20-39 who may be incarcerated at any given point in time.

To obtain a Poisson distribution, we let the total number of males and females in this age range in NT communities be T with P of them in prison. Consequently, the percentage of the population of 20-39 year old males in communities which are in prison is $M = (P/T)*100$.

In a next step we take into account the average community size (C). We assume every community has the same age-sex distribution and that there are $X\%$ in each community who are

males/females aged 20-39, implying for the purpose of this analysis all 'communities' have identical demographic structures. This means the number of 20-39 males normally 'living' in each community is $S = C*(X/100)$. Assuming whether or not an individual is in prison is independent of whether any other person of that community is in prison, then the number of men or women aged 20-39 in that community who are actually in prison will follow a Poisson distribution with a mean estimated by F .

F can be estimated for a 'typical' community by simple substitution as

$$F = (M/100)*S = (((P/T)*100)/100)*(C*(X/100)).$$

For our purposes we can approximate the Poisson distribution with a Normal distribution. So, a Poisson distribution with mean F is approximately described by a Normal distribution with mean F and variance F . For a Normal distribution, a 95% confidence interval is given by (mean $\pm 1.96*\sqrt{\text{variance}}$). So for the Poisson distribution with mean F , a 95% confidence interval is approximated by $(F \pm 1.96*\sqrt{F})$.

To obtain the percentage of men and women missing, the following variables need to be calculated:

- C (Average size of a community),
- T (Total number of males between 20-39 years in NT communities),
- P (Total number of males between 20-39 years of NT communities in prison) and
- X (Proportion of that age group in one community).

The average size of a community (C) was determined by taking the total number of people in remote Indigenous communities divided by the number of remote Indigenous communities. This number was derived using custom built tables in ABS Tablebuilder. To approximately adjust for census counting errors and for people who did not state their Indigenous status, we increased the average size of a community by 19%, based on the estimated net Indigenous undercount rate for the 2011 Census (ABS, 2012).

The total number of males/females between 20-39 years in NT remote communities (T) was likewise derived from ABS Tablebuilder and adjusted upwards by 19%. The total number of males/females between 20-39 years from remote communities in prison were estimated by first dividing the total number of males/females in that age group in remote communities by the total number of Indigenous males/females in the NT. We then assumed this proportion is similar to the proportion of males/females from remote communities being in prison.

Finally, P was calculated by taking the ABS Prison Census data on Indigenous men/women in that age group in prison multiplied by the proportion of males/females living in remote communities.

The proportion of males/females between 20-39 years old in one community (X) was determined by dividing the average number of males/females in that age group by the average size of a community.

6. Results

The calculation of the variables results in the following formula for estimating the average number of men missing at any point from an average sized community:

$$F = (((611/6831)*100)/100)*(343*(16/100)) = 4.91$$

The 95% upper (u) and lower (l) confidence interval is calculated as:

$$CI(u) = 4.9087+1.96*2.2155= 9.25$$

$$CI(l) = 4.9087-1.96*2.2155 = 0.57$$

Consequently, we can say on average between 4% and 14% of men aged 20-39 years are away from their community and in prison at any given point in time.

The final formula for calculating the average number of women away from their communities is:

$$F = (((51/7380)*100)/100)*(343*(17/100)) = 0.40$$

The 95% upper and lower confidence interval is calculated through the same formula as above:

$$CI(u) = 0.4029+1.96*0.6347= 1.65$$

$$CI(l) = 0.4029-1.96*0.6347 = -0.84$$

Consequently, the approximate confidence interval mean number of women missing from an averaged sized community is between 0% and 2%, since the Poisson distribution does not allow a negative count.

7. Discussion & Conclusion

In this research brief we have highlighted the increasing rates of incarceration for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory and discussed the potential social, economic and demographic impacts for small and remote communities. The research focused particularly on the demographic impacts and has described the types of demographic effects a community of average demographic structure might experience. The results show up to 14% of men and up to 2% of women between 20-39 years from individual remote Indigenous communities might be in prison at any given point in time. Moreover, the results for men indicate there is no community that would not be affected by the increasing incarceration rate since the lower part of the range is at 4%. These findings support the assumption that remoteness plays a factor and remote residents are over represented in the prison population, and in turn are 'missing' from remote communities. Independent of the size of a community, the proportion of men or women 'missing' suggests impacts will be significant enough to affect present and future population growth and change. For example, the absence of males is likely to increase the proportion of single parent families.

The analysis is based on a large number of assumptions but, if it were possible to relax any of the individual assumptions, for example the independent chances of going to prison or the common size of communities and demographic structures, then the impact would tend to make the results

of the analyses even more dispersed, resulting in wider confidence intervals. This means, in reality, some communities may be subject to even higher proportions of people missing in jail across all age groups. With rates of incarceration increasing in the NT in recent years, the potential social, economic and demographic effects may be devastating. With the prison population for Indigenous people being significantly older than the overall Indigenous population, those with social, cultural and knowledge capital are likely missing. Clearly, at any point in time, a number of fathers and grandfathers may be missing from individual communities and their families.

There is, however, not only the issue of people missing at any point in time. The prison population is constantly churning as individuals are released and others 'join' the prison population. With varying sentence lengths, this means significant churn is likely for individual communities as a result of the incarceration of residents. The latest Prison Census (ABS, 2014a), for example, indicates 77.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the NT experienced prior imprisonment and the rate is rising.

A range of demographic impacts might be anticipated given the worrying numbers presented in this brief. Besides a rise in single parent households and a reduction in the number of newborns (from women and men in their prime child bearing years being in prison), incarceration represents another form of temporary out 'migration', with flow-on effects for the community. In the light of our research findings, we discovered such flow-on effects can be of social and economic nature. These range from adverse health effects, to financial distress and social dysfunction. The literature also highlights imprisonment can have inter-generational and lasting effects, particularly with the high amount of men (and possibly fathers) absent from their community taking with them the opportunity to be role models, father figures and mentors for their community. Various prison programs have attempted to address this issue in Australia, such as the fathering program at Hakea Prison in Canning Vale, Western Australia (Western Suburbs Weekly, 2009), and the Brothers Inside project at the Cessnock Correctional Centre in New South Wales. These highlight the importance of the father role in communities and the significance of communication between incarcerated men and their children (Stuart & Hammond, 2010).

The large increases in the Indigenous incarceration rate in the Northern Territory in recent years (and to a greater extent, also in the rest of Australia) have also fuelled debates about the re-introduction of the mandatory sentencing and its effects on the rate of incarceration. Senior members of the Northern Territory's legal fraternity, for instance, warned mandatory sentencing in the Territory has negative effects, particularly on the Aboriginal community (Stein, 2014). Besides mandatory sentencing, other reasons for an increase in the incarceration rate were explored. Others have argued increasing incarceration rates are a long-term societal outcome from a growing punitive public attitude towards crime (Australian Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2013). Tough-on-crime policies are increasingly evident, including increased sentences, the increased use of incarceration for non-violent offenses (such as drugs, breaching of the peace, and traffic violations) and changes to the use of bail and remand so less offenders receive bail, or are remanded for technical breaches of bail (Australian Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2013).

Both, the Social Justice and Native Title Report, as well as the report by the Australian Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee on the 'Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia', consider 'Justice Reinvestment' (JR) as a means to reduce the raising rate of incarcerations and consequently the social, economic and cultural difficulties. The idea of justice reinvestment is based on the diversion of a portion of the funds for imprisonment to local communities where there is a high concentration of offenders. The money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested into services that address the underlying causes of crime in these communities. Wood (2014) investigated the degree to which justice reinvestment could deliver some or all of its promises, but also its problems in terms of implementation, use and long-term viability in Australia. Based on the experiences from implementing JR in the United States, he concludes JR will be far less likely to succeed or to fail due to problems of bad policy transfer than to several other factors. These factors include the ability of JR advocates to implement JR initiatives within a society with its own brand of penal populism as well as a society with unique problems facing deprived and high-stakes communities. Moreover, Australia holds a markedly different political and correctional administrative structure than the United States and a poor record to date of addressing the social effects of colonialism, factors that influence the implementation of JR.

This research brief has provided first insights into the complex issue of incarceration and its associated impacts for small and remote communities in the NT. Looking into the future, further research is necessary. For example, a projection forward of the rates of incarceration based on existing trends would be of interest to ascertain likely future impacts for communities. What this research shows clearly is the rates of incarceration in the NT are presently extremely high. Our research demonstrates the demographic implications with up to 14% of men in prime working and fatherhood ages being absent from individual communities. These sorts of rates validate the likelihood of severe and ongoing dysfunction for communities, not least from the constant churn of people through incarceration. The data also demonstrate the very large differences in rates between Indigenous Territorians and others, reinforcing Mick Gooda's call for the need for a social justice indicator as part of the Closing the Gap strategy. A simple measure and target could be to reduce the gap in the imprisonment rates for 20-39 year olds during the next decade.

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