

TRENDS IN OKLAHOMA'S AGING PRISON INMATES

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Prison populations are aging and Oklahoma's is no exception. Currently seven percent of Oklahoma's prison population is 50 years old or more, and this older population is growing at a faster rate than their younger counterparts. Changes in statutes related to sentencing, longer life expectancy, and an increase in crime committed by older individuals are all contributing to the situation. As prison populations age, the problems facing corrections officials will also change. The specialized needs of this particular segment of the prison population are not only different from those of traditionally younger inmates, but they are also diverse within the group. This trend towards a growing elderly prison population and its associated concerns and problems is forcing new thinking about incarceration.

Four trends are converging on state correctional systems with dangerous speed. First, baby boomers, the enormous birth cohort born from 1946-64, may generate larger numbers of older offenders than prison systems have historically handled. Second, political pressure demands legislation such as habitual offender laws, truth-in-sentencing and minimum mandatory sentences. Requirements for federal grants in the recent federal crime bill necessitates longer incarceration for future convictions. These two trends guarantee that increased numbers of older offenders will be dealt with through conventional criminal justice systems. The third trend, the inadequate funding of most, or all systems, virtually ensures that these older, longer-term offenders will be processed through traditional correctional methods and systems rather than less-expensive alternatives. Although alternative correctional methods may relieve prison budgets, they would add new spending to other already tight budgets. Finally, with modern medical technologies and lifestyle changes, people, including offenders, are living longer.

The question for the future, then, is: How will state correctional systems handle issues created by the increase in aging inmates? How will they handle the two different offender cultures that arise — younger, short-termers with little stake in long-term prison environments, and older long-termers with great stake in establishing the best possible quality of life under the circumstances? How will state correctional institutions handle the treatment of older offenders by younger inmates who will likely see of their elders as prey? How will they handle the different needs for recreation, food, vocation, health care, and other concerns of the offender fifty years old and older?

Unfortunately the current literature is of mixed value. While the problems of an aging inmate population have been deliberated, most of the useful studies are from the 1970's and early 1980's. Ironically, Chaiklin and Fultz lamented at the peak of the period for relevant research that, "The literature on the aged offender does not develop a comprehensive picture of who they are as individuals, what their needs are, and how they could be helped while in prison or for a life after prison" (1983, 2). Indeed, a 1990 U.S. Department of Justice report states that "The research that is available is limited both in terms of the number of issues examined and in terms of applicability to other jurisdictions" (1990, 91).

Oklahoma is not protected from these problems. In fact, as a state with one of the highest per capita rates of incarceration and the state with the greatest percent increase in per capita incarceration from 1989 to 1993 in those figures (Hoberock, 1994), Oklahoma may be the state most affected by an aging population. As a result, the state is well advised to begin consideration of the long-term costs related to such pressures.

This study details the state's current position concerning aging offenders and the direction in which it seems to be headed. Once the parameters of the present situation are outlined, we will present a possible scenario predicting increased costs of health care for that population to indicate the potential impact on Oklahoma's future budgets.

OKLAHOMA PRISON TRENDS

Oklahoma prison trends will be discussed for several different categories describing the Oklahoma inmate population for the selected years of 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1992 and 1994. Three separate sets of data, provided by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, were combined to create the data base of approximately 58,756 records used in this study. The first data base was provided by the 1993 study, *Trends in Sentence Length and Time Served in Okla-*

homa Corrections:1900-Present, (Connelly and Holley, 1993). The data termed "present" with release dates from 1980 through 1992, about 36,645 records, were included in this study. Also included were two data bases provided by the Department of Corrections' Planning and Research Unit in 1994, a data base of 5,241 inmates released from prison in 1993, and a third data base containing 16,870 records of active, in-facility inmates as of June 1994.

Individual records were selected from the entire data base for inclusion in this study if the inmate was in prison serving his or her sentence on January 1 of the study year. Using the 1980 study year as an example, if an inmate's receipt date into the prison system was before 1980 and his or her release date was after 1979, the inmate was considered to be in facility and the record was selected. All records for the 1980 study year were active, in facility, inmates as of January 1, 1980. Subsequent years were calculated using the same procedure with the exception of changing the dates to correspond to the study year being processed. The ages represented in the tables were also calculated and represent the inmate's age for the particular study year, creating an accurate account of active inmates for the specific year.

REVIEW BY AGE AND STUDY YEAR

Table 1 shows the trend by age and study year. The totals show the growth of the entire inmate population from 1,746 in facility inmates in 1980 to 13,689 in 1994, a 684 percent change. The percent change for the total shows a fluctuating range from a high of 102 percent for the change from 1980 to 1983, to a low of a 24 percent change from 1986 to 1989. In addition there was a 23 percent increase in the first six months of 1994.

The top section of Table 1 shows the breakdown of all the age groups. In 1980 and 1983 more than half of the inmate population was between the ages of 10 through 29. The group of inmates between 30 and 39 followed with 28 percent of the inmate population in 1980 and 26 percent in 1983. Looking only at these two age groups, a trend becomes evident beginning in 1986. The percent of the under 30 age group shows a steady decline while the 30 to 39 age group shows an increase, surpassing the 20 to 29 age group in 1994.

The other age groups are also displaying trends of increasing percentages within the age breakdown. The group 40 through 49 has increased from 9 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 1994. In the actual counts there was a 1338 percent change. In fact, 40 through 49 is the fastest growing of all the groups. The second section of Table 1 consolidates the age breakdowns into two groups, those under 50 and those 50 years of age and over. Although an overwhelming

TABLE 1

Oklahoma Prison Trends: Breakdown by Age and Study Year

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>	<i>June 1994</i>
10 - 29	58.71	60.27	50.22	43.42	40.69	38.69	36.60
30 - 39	27.72	26.06	32.22	36.62	37.90	38.93	39.20
40 - 49	8.71	9.46	12.23	14.36	15.41	15.96	17.30
50 - 59	3.95	3.35	3.82	4.07	4.49	4.99	5.30
60 - 69	0.92	0.71	1.17	1.22	1.28	1.19	1.30
70 - 89	0.00	0.14	0.32	0.29	0.22	0.23	0.20
Total	1746	3519	5283	6553	10262	13689	16870
Percent Change		101.55	50.13	24.04	56.60	33.40	23.24
Under 50							
Percent by Year	95.13	95.79	94.66	94.40	94.00	93.58	93.11
Percent Change		102.95	48.35	23.70	55.93	32.80	22.62
50 and Older							
Percent by Year	4.87	4.21	5.34	5.60	6.00	6.42	6.89
Percent Change		74.12	90.54	30.14	67.85	42.69	32.20

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

majority of inmates are under 50, this proportion is declining.

The patterns discussed above illustrate several points. Oklahoma's inmate population is growing at a steady rate, and certain segments of that population are growing faster than others. Since here we are concerned with those inmates 50 and older, the data show that, although this group composes only six percent of the inmates as of January 1, 1994, it is growing at a faster rate than those under 50. In addition, the groups to watch in the future are those currently between the ages of 30-39 and 40-49. These are the fastest growing segments of the inmate population, and, if the trends represented in Table 1 continue, these segments should pass forward into the older age groups as the current prisoners age and as the baby boomer population, approximately ages 31 to 49 today, pushes its way through the older age categories.

REVIEW BY RACE AND SEX

Table 2 displays the breakdown by race of inmates 50 years of age and older during the given study year. Looking at the percentage distribution by race for each study year, we see no dramatic trends. Percentages of blacks and native Americans have declined from 1980 to 1994, blacks dropped from 24 percent to 21 percent, and native Americans from 8 percent to 6 percent. Hispanics increased slightly, from 0 to 2 percent in the same period. Whites increased from 67 percent of the ethnic and race breakdown in 1980 to 71 percent in 1994 and remain the clear majority. The breakdown by sex for inmates 50 and older has remained constant over the 14 year period with inmate population composed of approximately 94 percent males and 6 percent females.

TABLE 2

**Oklahoma Prison Trends:
Breakdown by Race and by Sex for Inmates 50 and Older (Percents)**

	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>
Race						
Black	24.42%	18.92%	21.35%	21.53%	21.66%	21.46%
Hispanic	0.00	2.03	1.42	1.91	2.12	2.05
Native American	8.14	4.05	6.05	5.72	5.05	5.59
White	67.44	75.00	71.17	70.84	71.17	70.89
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sex						
Male	94.19%	96.62%	94.33%	97.00%	94.48%	94.31%
Female	5.81	3.38	5.67	3.00	5.52	5.69
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

REVIEW BY RECEIPT AGE

Table 3 explores the possible trend of changing receipt ages for the elderly inmate. It depicts the age upon receipt into the Oklahoma prison system of each inmate who was over age 50. Over half the inmates were received into prison at the age of 50 through 59 in all study years, followed by ages 40 through 49. The age groups 30 through 39 and 40 through 49 are once again those showing increasing trends from 1980 to 1994. Age groups 50 through 59 and 60 through 69 show decreases in that period in their percentage share of the receipt age breakdown.

REVIEW BY SENTENCE

Several sentence trends are seen in Table 4. Sentences under ten years, although increasing in number, are decreasing in the percentage breakdown within each period. In 1980, the under ten year sentence constituted 53 percent of the total sentenced, while in 1994 the percentage is only 45 percent. The sentence increasing by the largest percent is the over 20 years. Life and life

TABLE 3

**Oklahoma Prison Trends:
Breakdown by Receipt Age for Inmates 50 and Older (Percents)**

<i>Age at Receipt</i>	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>
10-29	1.18%	1.35%	1.07%	1.37%	2.28%	2.16%
30-39	3.53	4.05	3.91	4.37	5.04	7.29
40-49	24.71	16.89	18.51	24.32	25.53	26.31
50-59	55.29	62.84	57.30	53.55	52.52	51.37
60-69	15.29	12.84	14.59	13.66	12.20	10.71
70-79	0.00	2.03	4.63	2.46	2.28	2.05
80-89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.16	0.11
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

TABLE 4

**Oklahoma Prison Trends:
Breakdown by Sentence for Inmates 50 and Older (Percents)**

<i>Sentence</i>	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>
Low-10 Years	53.49%	57.43%	58.16%	46.32%	44.48%	45.39%
20 Years-High	29.07	26.35	26.60	32.15	34.90	33.45
Life	16.28	14.86	14.18	19.62	18.34	18.32
Life Without Parole	0.00	0.68	0.35	0.27	0.32	1.14
Death	1.16	0.68	0.71	1.63	1.95	1.59
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

without parole for those 50 and older also showed slight increases of 2 and 1 percent while the death sentence remained relatively constant. All of these percentage changes, it must be remembered, are calculated on a rapidly growing base population. These changes indicate then that, not only is the 50 and older population growing in number, it is also receiving longer sentences, further adding to the implications of the aging inmate population.

REVIEW BY STATUTE

The tables in this section illustrate the changes in crime patterns over the years of study. Table 5 represents the statute groups broken down by violent crime, property crime, and other nonviolent crime, including driving under the influence (D.U.I.), controlled substance and sex offender statutes. The totals found on this table are lower than the previous totals because not all possible statutes have been included in this study.

The breakdown for inmates 50 and older based on statute groups has changed from 1980 to 1994. In 1980, 70 percent of inmates had committed violent crimes, followed by property and other nonviolent crimes. The trend from 1980 shows the violent and property crimes percents declining. Other nonviolent crimes, however, have increased.

The percentage change within each statute from one study year to the next is erratic. Violent crimes show a relatively steady decrease in percent

TABLE 5

**Oklahoma Prison Trends:
Breakdown by Statute Group (Percents)**

<i>Statute</i>	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>
Violent						
Percent by Year	69.70%	54.55%	55.51%	59.72%	46.54%	41.80%
Percent Change		43.48	90.91	36.51	40.70	35.95
Property						
Percent by Year	16.67	19.01	13.66	11.81	6.92	14.99
Percent Change		109.09	34.78	9.68	5.88	227.78
Other Non-Violent						
Percent by Year	13.64	26.45	30.84	28.47	46.54	43.20
Percent Change		255.56	118.75	17.14	195.12	40.50
Total Prisoners						
Percent Change	66	121	227	288	520	787
		83.33	87.60	26.87	80.56	51.35

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

change averaging approximately 40 percent per year (except 1983 to 1986). Property statutes showed a high percentage increase of 228 percent in 1994, and a low 6 percent change for 1989 to 1992. Other nonviolent crime is also erratic, showing a 256 percent increase between 1980 and 1983, and only a 17 percent gain in 1986 to 1989.

Table 6 addresses the violent crime category in more detail. Violent crimes are broken down into five types: assault, murder, manslaughter, robbery, and rape. Reviewing the percent breakdown by type of violent crime within each type, the data show a positive percentage change from 1980 to 1994 for assault and rape. The percent of violent crime represented by murder remained relatively constant over the years, with declines in manslaughter and robbery.

Of violent crime in 1994, the major type committed is murder, composing 42 percent of the violent crime category, followed by rape, robbery, assault, and manslaughter.

Turning to property crimes (see Table 7), we see that, in 1980, 64 percent property crimes were attributed to larceny, 27 percent to burglary and 9 percent

TABLE 6
Breakdown of Violent Crimes by Statute Type and Study Year
Inmates Aged 50 and Older (Percents)

<i>Violent</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>1980</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>1983</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>1986</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>1989</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>1992</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>1994</i>
Assault						
Percent by Year	4.35%	9.09%	11.90%	13.37%	12.40%	11.25%
Percent Change		200.00	150.00	53.33	30.43	23.33
Murder						
Percent by Year	41.30	37.88	34.92	36.05	39.67	41.64
Percent Change		31.58	76.00	40.91	54.84	42.71
Manslaughter						
Percent by Year	15.22	24.24	23.81	13.95	9.50	9.73
Percent Change		128.57	87.50	-20.00	-4.17	39.13
Robbery						
Percent by Year	23.91	13.64	19.05	19.77	20.25	16.72
Percent Change		-18.18	166.67	41.67	44.12	12.24
Rape						
Percent by Year	15.22	15.15	10.32	16.86	18.18	20.67
Percent Change		42.86	30.00	123.08	51.72	54.55
Total						
Percent by Year	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Percent Change		43.48	90.91	36.51	40.70	35.95

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

to forgery. The counts associated with these percentages are small, allowing small changes to result in large percentage changes. As a result, general patterns should not be inferred, with the exception that larceny and burglary compose the larger percentages of property crime each year.

There is a relatively large overall increase in property crime with a percent change from 1992 to 1994 of 228 percent. The majority of the increase can be credited to changes in larceny, followed by forgery. Both show a higher number of older prisoners committing the crimes.

The last category is other non-violent crime by inmates 50 years old and

TABLE 7

**Breakdown of Property Crimes by Statute Type and Study Year
Inmates Aged 50 and Older (Percents)**

<i>Crime</i>	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>
Property Burglary						
Percent by Year	27.27%	39.13%	48.39%	32.35%	69.44%	38.14%
Percent Change		200.00	66.67	-26.67	127.27	80.00
False Ck.						
Percent Change	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.56	0.00
Percent by Year						-100.00
Forgery						
Percent by Year	9.09	13.04	9.68	5.88	5.56	10.17
Percent Change		200.00	0.00	-33.33	0.00	500.00
Larceny						
Percent by Year	63.64	43.48	32.26	55.88	8.33	44.92
Percent Change		42.86	0.00	90.00	-84.21	1666.67
Stolen Vehicles						
Percent by Year	0.00	4.35	9.68	5.88	11.11	6.78
Percent Change			200.00	-33.33	100.00	100.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Percent Change		109.09	34.78	9.68	5.88	227.78

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

older shown in Table 8. The most prominent finding in this data is the growth of sex offenses by the elderly. In 1980 and 1983 there were only two cases each year. In 1994 there are 205 sex offense crimes, contributing to 60 percent of other non-violent crime for the inmate 50 and older. The individual statute contributing to this category is lewd or indecent proposal or acts to a child. In addition to higher elderly crime, the rise in this crime can probably be attributed to the higher profile and prosecution of this type of crime. The other area showing a growth trend is controlled substance. In 1980 controlled substance crime accounted for only two cases. In 1994 it accounted for 87 offenders, or 26 percent of all other non-violent cases.

HEALTH CARE COSTS AND AGING INMATES

Given the increasing population of inmates 50 and over in Oklahoma prisons detailed above, we must ask what the budgetary implications for the state might be. Spending on elderly inmates can be devoted to special recreational, dietary, security, and facility requirements and total millions of dollars otherwise assignable to other state programs or left in taxpayers pockets. However, the area of greatest probable need and future expenditure facing correctional officials everywhere is health care.

We sent mail surveys to all fifty state departments of corrections or their equivalents and received responses from thirty-one. Of those responding, twenty-seven said that medical needs and related factors were the most important or significant variables with respect to their costs for aging inmates. Yet twenty-two indicated that their states do not currently have programs or policies spe-

TABLE 8
Breakdown of Other Non-Violent Crimes
by StatuteType and Study Year
Inmates Aged 50 and Older (Percents)

<i>Crime</i>	<i>Jan 1980</i>	<i>Jan 1983</i>	<i>Jan 1986</i>	<i>Jan 1989</i>	<i>Jan 1992</i>	<i>Jan 1994</i>
Other Non-Violent						
D. U. I.						
Percent by Year	55.56%	81.25%	81.25%	34.15%	16.94%	14.12%
Percent Change		420.00	50.00	-28.21	46.43	17.07
Controlled Substance						
Percent by Year	22.22	12.50	14.29	23.17	22.13	25.59
Percent Change		100.00	150.00	90.00	184.00	61.11
Sex Offender						
Percent by Year	22.22	6.25	30.00	42.68	60.74	60.29
Percent Change		0.00	950.00	66.67	320.00	39.46
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Percent Change		255.56	118.75	17.14	195.12	40.50

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

cifically directed toward the needs of those inmates, presumably because current budgets are so tight and tomorrow can be worried about tomorrow.

The problem is real. Edith Flynn cites a 1980 U.S. Department of Justice finding on future needs for medical treatment of aging inmates in federal prisons. The study reported that older inmates will "have many chronic health problems requiring specialized, continuous health care, including special diets, pharmacy services, physical therapy, skilled nursing care, and other supportive services" (Flynn 1992).

These needs will cost substantially more than those of the nonelderly population. The Illinois Department of Corrections estimated in 1994 that geriatric inmates cost 50 percent more to imprison than nongeriatric, with most of the difference attributable to medical needs (1994). Another study cited by Durham stated that "the elderly convict suffers from an average of three chronic illnesses, tripling the costs of his care from a yearly average of \$23,000 to over \$70,000" (Durham 1994).

Precise prediction of future medical costs for inmates 50 and over is virtually impossible. This is due, among other factors, to the current instability of the health care market, inadequate record-keeping within the correctional system, and changing policies in response to political and economic pressures associated with an aging population generally, and in prison. The best researchers can do is to propose alternative scenarios to provide guidance and ideas to other analysts and to policymakers (Patton and Sawicki 1993).

Scenarios have an important role in policy development, implementation, evaluation, and decision making. According to Patton and Sawicki, they are helpful "to describe future states of the world in which one or more alternatives are being implemented" (1993, 313). They "help the analyst think about political problems and pitfalls in a realistic way" (1993, 315). Scenarios can project qualitative and quantitative trends and variables in meaningful ways to clarify and highlight potentially vital concerns.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) provided one such scenario concerning health care costs for aging inmates in 1989. Its study identified projected costs of four categories of illnesses generally associated with inmates 50 and over: two forms of cardiac disorder and two forms of hypertension disorder (BOP 1989). According to the study, "[t]reating these four medical problems consumes one-third of the annual budget for outside care" (BOP 1989). As Table 9 demonstrates, a roughly 60 percent expected increase from 1988 to 2005 in federal inmate population 50 years old and over with these four conditions translated into an \$87 million increase in costs in inflated health care dollars. While the assumptions underlying the projected cost increases are certainly debatable, the exercise nevertheless highlighted for federal officials a possible

TABLE 9
Projected Bureau of Prisons Population Age 50 & Over,
the Number Having Four Types of Medical Problems
and Projected Annual Cost for Outside Care to Treat Them

<i>Year</i>	<i>July Proj. Population 50+</i>	<i>Percent of Population 50+</i>	<i>Cardiac I</i>	<i>Cardiac II</i>	<i>Number Hyper I</i>	<i>Number Hyper II</i>	<i>Outside Cost in 1988 Dollars</i>	<i>Care with 14% Inflation</i>
1988	5014	11.748	426	178	632	374	\$6,731,000	\$0
1989	5043	11.570	427	178	635	376	6,750,000	7,695,000
1990	5086	11.471	430	179	639	378	6,792,000	8,826,883
1991	5147	11.416	433	181	645	383	6,857,500	10,159,688
1992	5234	11.440	438	183	655	388	6,943,000	11,726,450
1993	5398	11.649	449	187	672	398	7,114,000	13,697,399
1994	5526	11.786	457	190	687	403	7,236,500	15,883,919
1995	5651	11.924	465	193	701	415	7,381,500	18,470,497
1996	5761	12.044	473	196	714	423	7,510,500	21,424,350
1997	6078	12.620	494	204	749	444	7,852,000	25,534,300
1998	6307	13.027	510	210	776	460	8,112,000	30,072,979
1999	6553	13.470	528	217	804	477	8,398,500	35,494,012
2000	6807	13.938	546	223	834	495	8,683,500	41,836,277
2005	7930	16.055	637	259	974	577	10,120,500	93,882,456

SOURCE: BOP, 1989.

future and the need to plan for undoubted expenditure increases if action were not taken.

A similar scenario can be prepared for Oklahoma corrections. Using the population projections of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC 1994) in Table 10 we can begin with estimated inmates from 1994 through 2001. The 1994 number is the actual population as of January 1, 1994; as we recall from Table 1, it had swelled to 16,870 by June 28, 1994. We can then estimate the size of the inmate population aged 50 and over by starting with the actual percentage of inmates 50 and over on January 1, 1994 and increasing that percentage each year through 2001 by the mean annual percentage rise of 0.5 percent in that population experienced by the ODOC between 1983 and 1994, the years of steady increase. Multiplying the estimated overall population by its estimated percentage 50 and over gives us an estimate of the population 50 and over each year through 2001.

Of immediate note here is the increase in the inmate population 50 and over to a larger size than the entire inmate population in 1980. Even conservatively assuming a constant mean increase in its percentage of the total inmate population rather than the growing rates of increase actually seen since 1983, the inmates 50 and over will rise to 2,400 by 2001 if nothing is done to reverse the trends. In 1980 the total inmate population was "only" 1,746. In effect, the costs and concerns of the entire correctional system in 1980 will likely be more than matched simply by inmates aged 50 and over, with their greater needs and expenditures. As discussed, one of the greatest needs will be health care.

To calculate how many aged 50 and over will need additional health care, we apply a conservative estimate of 30 percent of the total estimated elderly population. This is based on the percentages used by the BOP in its 1989 study and is, in fact, slightly less than its estimated percentage of inmates 50 and over needing care for the four conditions outlined there. The intent is to use an estimate that will be based on credible supposition previously documented by other researchers. The 30 percent calculation gives us a likely underestimate of the actual future numbers.

Similarly, we use the BOP study as a base for likely health care costs. We assume that the cost per inmate 50 and over will not exceed the mean \$4,181 found in 1988 for the four treatment areas in the BOP analysis and then inflated at 10 percent a year through 1994 and to 2001. The effect, again, is to be conservative in estimated costs as clearly more than the four medical problems discussed by BOP can be expected. Moreover, a 10 percent inflation rate in health care costs has frequently been exceeded in recent years and is less than the BOP analysts used in their study.

TABLE 10

**Estimate of Additional Outside Care Health Costs
for Oklahoma Aged Inmates
1994 - 2001**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Inmates</i>	<i>Percent of Total Pop 50 & Over</i>	<i>Percent of Inmates 50 & Over</i>	<i>Number Needing Health Care</i>	<i>Outside Care Costs</i>	<i>Total</i>
1994	13,689	6.4	879	264	\$7,441	\$1,964,424
1995	18,690	6.9	1,290	387	8,185	3,167,595
1996	19,895	7.4	1,472	442	9,004	3,979,768
1997	21,045	7.9	1,663	499	9,904	4,942,096
1998	21,895	8.4	1,839	552	10,894	6,013,488
1999	22,697	8.9	2,020	606	11,984	7,262,304
2000	23,310	9.4	2,191	657	13,182	8,660,571
2001	24,002	9.9	2,376	713	14,500	10,338,500
TOTAL						\$46,328,649
1995 - 2001						\$44,364,225

SOURCE: Authors' calculations.

Multiplying the estimated population 50 and over needing extra health care by the estimated inflated costs provides us with very conservative estimates of the increase to state corrections budgets predictable from its growing aging population. By 2001, costs over 1994 will be more than five times greater, and the total costs of the eight year period will add over \$46 million to the state budget to the extent that the assumptions underlying the scenario hold.

We realize that the preceding exercise is at best an informed guess. However, it is based on demonstrably reasonable assumptions that are similar to other accepted projections and are, in fact, very likely to be underestimating overall increases, *ceteris parabus*. The point is not to fix an exact total but to demonstrate the potential enormity of the impact of the growing aging population on state resources. Faced with this or other possible scenarios, state analysts and policymakers must begin to consider less expensive alternatives to imprisonment for offenders aged 50 and over. Or it must find alternatives to the

public services displaced by their incarceration and the special facilities (and even more funding) necessary to maintain the inmates. Failure to provide adequate health care will, of course, leave the state subject to potentially greater costs through resulting litigation and court judgments.

CONCLUSION

The steady and growing aging of the inmate population in Oklahoma poses hard questions to states and decisionmakers, just as an aging population has raised for the entire nation. A variety of factors discussed herein continue to push inmates generally, and inmate populations aged 50 and over specifically, higher and higher. The impact of legislation currently being considered is not yet knowable. Therefore, projections of the future costs of Oklahoma prisons must begin with the current trends and estimate their continued consequences. The scenario put forth in this study makes reasonable, if debatable, assumptions about health care costs and populations into the next century and projects substantial expenditure increases. If state policymakers understand the potential enormity of those costs, under any of many possible scenarios, they can plan action which will nullify the projections and save money for other public or private purposes. For example, as the Department of Corrections plans less expensive community incarceration and other alternative sanctions, it may direct special attention to long-term inmates past the common age of most criminal activity. Or, as the department plans new prisons, the special needs of the elderly inmates in the area of recreation, health care, dietary requirements, and, in general, the aid to daily living, may be taken into account in the facilities. If they do not take appropriate actions, the dollars allocated to correctional programs for aging inmates will continue to increase as dramatically as the number of such inmates themselves.

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