

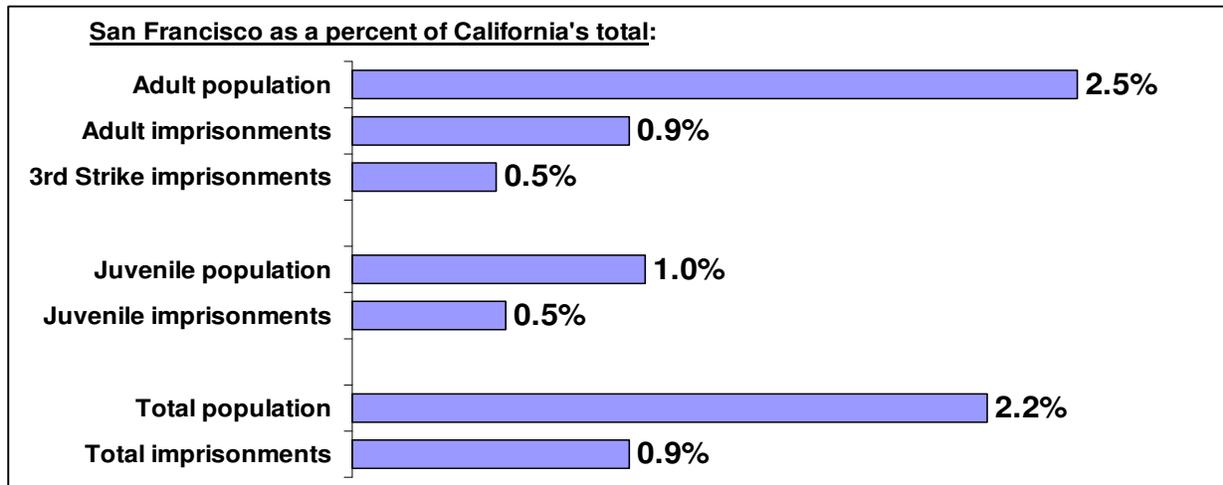
Policy Brief

**SAN FRANCISCO’S LOCALLY SELF-RELIANT INCARCERATION
POLICIES ARE SAVING STATE TAXPAYERS HUNDREDS OF
MILLIONS OF DOLLARS A YEAR**

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San Francisco’s criminal justice agencies send offenders to state adult and juvenile prisons at well below the average for other counties, saving California taxpayers \$147 million to \$278 million in 2010 (Table 1). Despite making up 2.2% of California’s overall population San Francisco accounts for only 0.9% of California’s state imprisonments. In addition, San Francisco’s sparing use of the “Three Strikes and You’re Out” law has saved at least \$248 million to \$416 million in long-term liabilities for high-cost 25-years-to-life imprisonments.

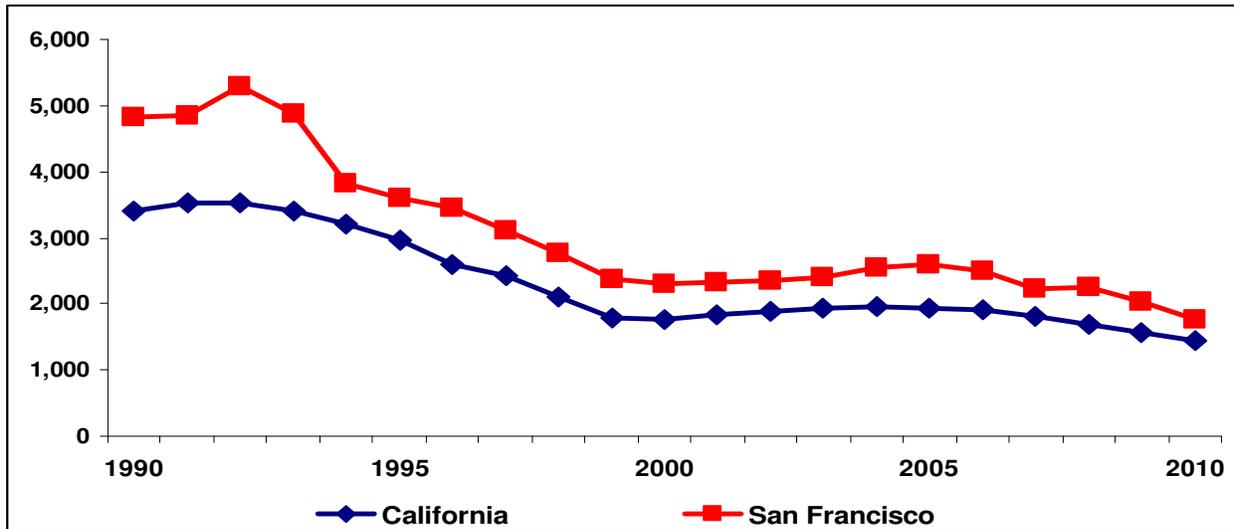
Graph 1: San Francisco’s incarceration rates as a percent of California’s total, 2010.



Source: CJSC (2011); CDCR (2011); DJF (2011); US Census Bureau (2011).

Instead, San Francisco has pursued and invested in local non-incarceration interventions at both the juvenile and adult level. The city’s larger than average decline in crime indicates local non-incarceration and alternative policies for non-serious offenders are effective. In fact, between 1990 and 2010 San Francisco’s serious and violent crime rate fell by 63%, compared to the rest of California which experienced a decline of 58%.

Graph 2: Serious and violent (Part I) crime rates per 100,000 population, 1990-2010.



Source: CJSC (2011); US Census Bureau (2011).

The latest, December 31, 2010, figures show San Francisco sent 1,568 adults to California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR, 2011) prisons, including 43 sentenced to 25-years-to-life as third strikers, and seven juveniles to the state Division of Juvenile Facilities (DJF, 2011). It costs approximately \$57,500 to imprison an inmate in adult prison for a year and \$243,000 to imprison a juvenile in DJF (updated for inflation from LAO [2010, 2011] calculations). Thus, the city’s inmates cost state taxpayers \$92 million (\$90 million for adults, \$2 million for juveniles) in 2010, or around \$5,500 in state imprisonment costs per annual felony arrest, based on 2009 arrest totals.

In contrast, California’s other 57 counties sent 164,351 adults to CDCR prisons, including 8,684 sentenced to 25-years-to-life as third strikers, and 1,325 juveniles to DJF, costing state taxpayers nearly \$9.8 billion in 2010 (\$9.45 billion for adults, \$320 million for juveniles), or around \$21,800 in state imprisonment costs per annual felony arrest—nearly four times the per-felon cost imposed by San Francisco. Below, three comparisons depict the estimated cost to taxpayers if San Francisco had used state incarceration policies equivalent to the state average in 2010.

Table 1. Actual 2010 imprisonments from San Francisco versus 2010 imprisonment estimates for San Francisco based on the state average.

<u>Numbers</u>	Felony arrest proportions			Percent <u>difference</u>	Population proportions			Percent <u>difference</u>
	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>		<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>	
Adult	6,318	1,568	-4,750	-75%	4,097	1,568	-2,529	-62%
Juvenile	26	7	-19	-73%	14	7	-7	-49%
3 rd strike	332	43	-289	-87%	215	43	-172	-80%
<u>Costs per year (millions of 2011 dollars)</u>								
Adult	\$364	\$90	-\$273		\$236	\$90	-\$146	
<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>\$6</u>	<u>\$2</u>	<u>-\$5</u>		<u>\$3</u>	<u>\$2</u>	<u>-\$2</u>	
Total	\$370	\$92	-\$278		\$239	\$92	-\$147	
<u>Costs over 25 years (millions of 2011 dollars, 3rd strike prisoners only)</u>								
3 rd strike	\$478	\$62	-\$416		\$310	\$62	-\$248	

Source: CJSC (2011); US Census Bureau (2011).

Savings based on population

The 2010 Census shows the city has 2.5% of California's adult and 1% of its juvenile, population. Had San Francisco imprisoned its residents at the state average, it would have sent 2,529 more adults and seven more juveniles to state prisons at an annual cost of \$239 million.

Savings based on felony arrests

The Criminal Justice Statistics Center's figures show San Francisco accounted for 3.8% of California's adult and 2% of its juvenile felony arrests in 2009, an average level for cities its size. Had San Francisco imprisoned its offenders at the state average, it would have sent 4,750 more adults and 19 more juveniles to state prisons at an annual cost of \$370 million.

Savings in long-term "Third Strike" liabilities

Had San Francisco used the "Three Strikes" law at the state average, it would have sent 332 third strikers to prison through 2010, eight times more than it did. Based on the minimum cost of 25-years-to-life sentences; \$1.18 million per third striker, the city's sparing use of the law has reduced state liabilities for long-term incarceration by \$248 million to \$416 million.

Conclusion

This preliminary report indicates that San Francisco residents' locally self-reliant incarceration policies save state taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in prison costs every year (costs that will multiply as aging prisoners require more health care). However, San Franciscans continue to pay higher taxes to shoulder the burden of other state-dependent counties that send excessive numbers of non-serious offenders to state prison.

Currently, San Francisco residents' pro-rated annual share of taxes to pay total state prison costs amounts to around \$213 million, but the city's prisoners generate only around \$92 million in annual state prison costs, a net loss to local taxpayers of over \$100 million per year, or around \$120 per city resident.

Whether certain counties should be allowed to continue imposing huge costs for imprisoning thousands of low-level offenders in state prisons on taxpayers from counties that manage their lower-level offenders at local expense is a question fiscal analysts and the Legislature should address. In addition, examining the extent to which San Francisco's local policies also contributed to its larger than average decline in crime could contribute to insights into reducing state prison populations and costs as well.

References

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