

Crime Prevention Effects of Prison

DANIEL S. NAGIN

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

NRC CRIME TRENDS ROUNDTABLE

APRIL 29, 2014

Crime Prevention and Imprisonment: Four Important Conclusions

- 1. There is no evidence of a specific deterrent effect**

Crime Prevention and Imprisonment: Four Important Conclusions

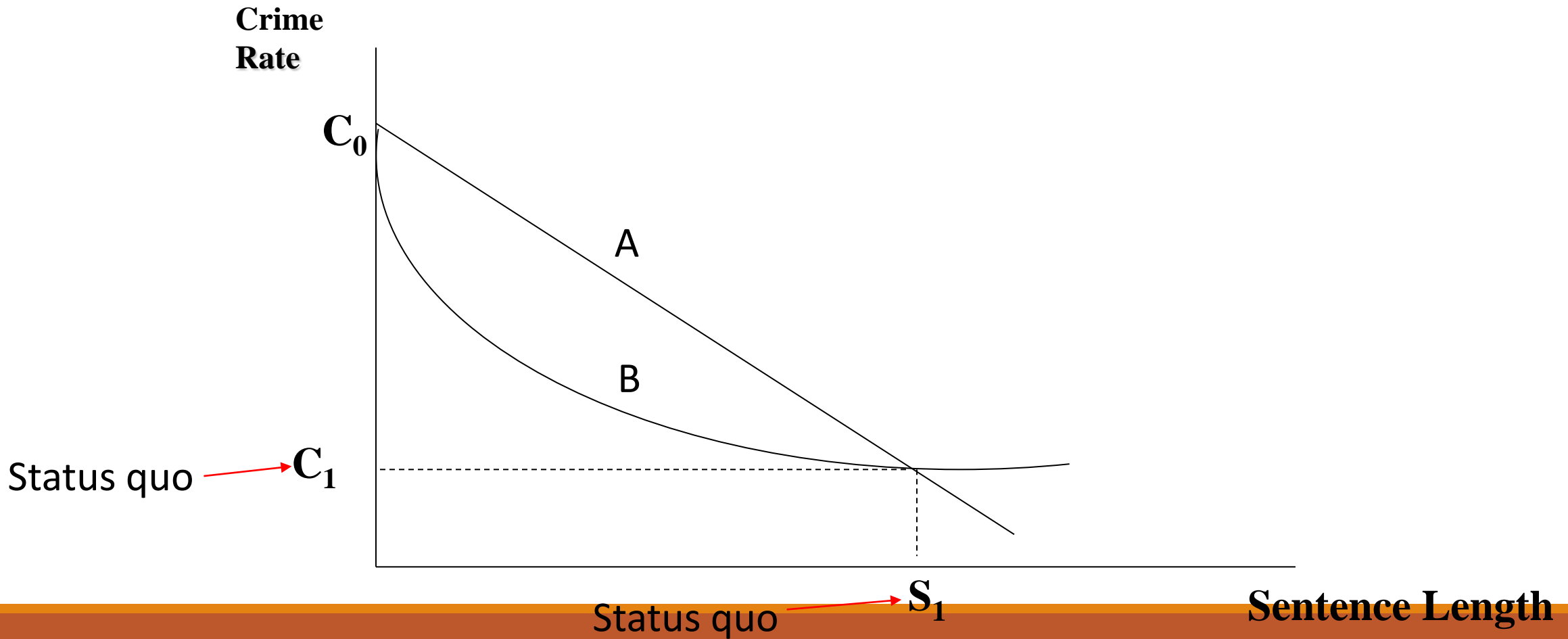
1. There is no evidence of a specific deterrent effect

“...compared to non-custodial sanctions, incarceration has a null or mildly criminogenic impact on future criminal involvement. We caution that this assessment is not sufficiently firm to guide policy, with the exception that it calls into question wild claims that imprisonment has strong specific deterrent effects.”

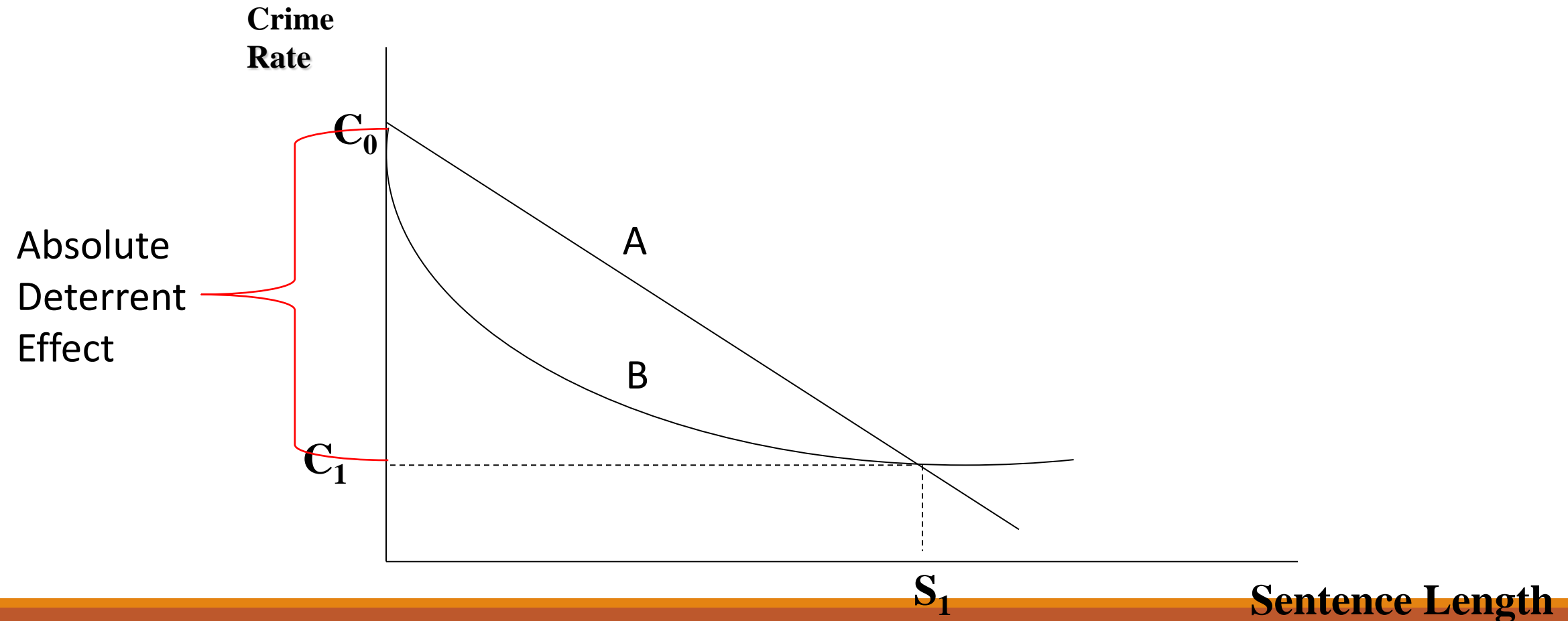
Crime Prevention and Imprisonment: Four Important Conclusions

1. There is no evidence of a specific deterrent effect
2. **The Incremental deterrent effect of long sentences is small**

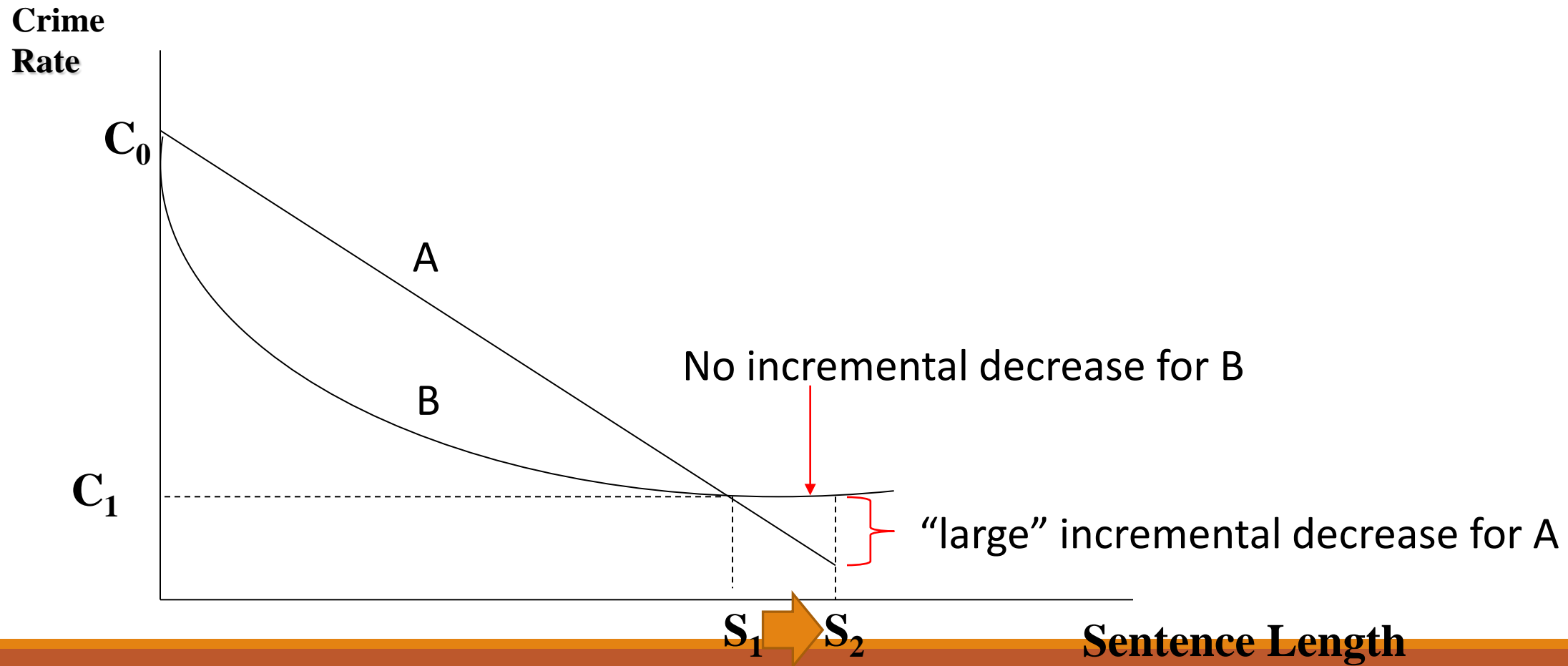
Incremental Versus Absolute Deterrent Effects



Incremental Versus Absolute Deterrent Effects



Incremental Versus Absolute Deterrent Effects

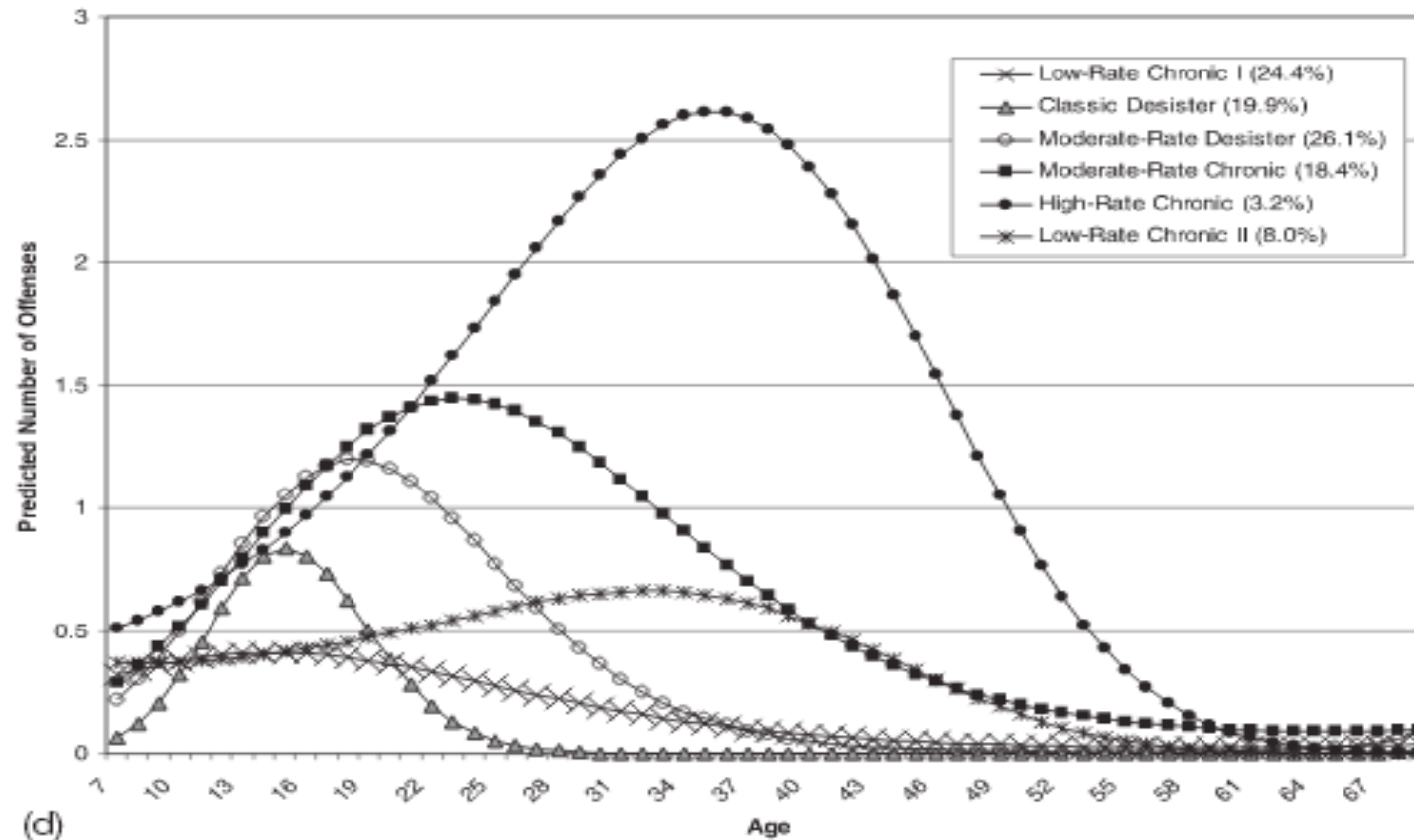


Crime Prevention and Imprisonment: Four Important Conclusions

1. There is no evidence of a specific deterrent effect
2. The Incremental deterrent effect of long sentences is small
3. **Incapacitation is generally an inefficient means of crime control**

Age and Crime: Glueck Data

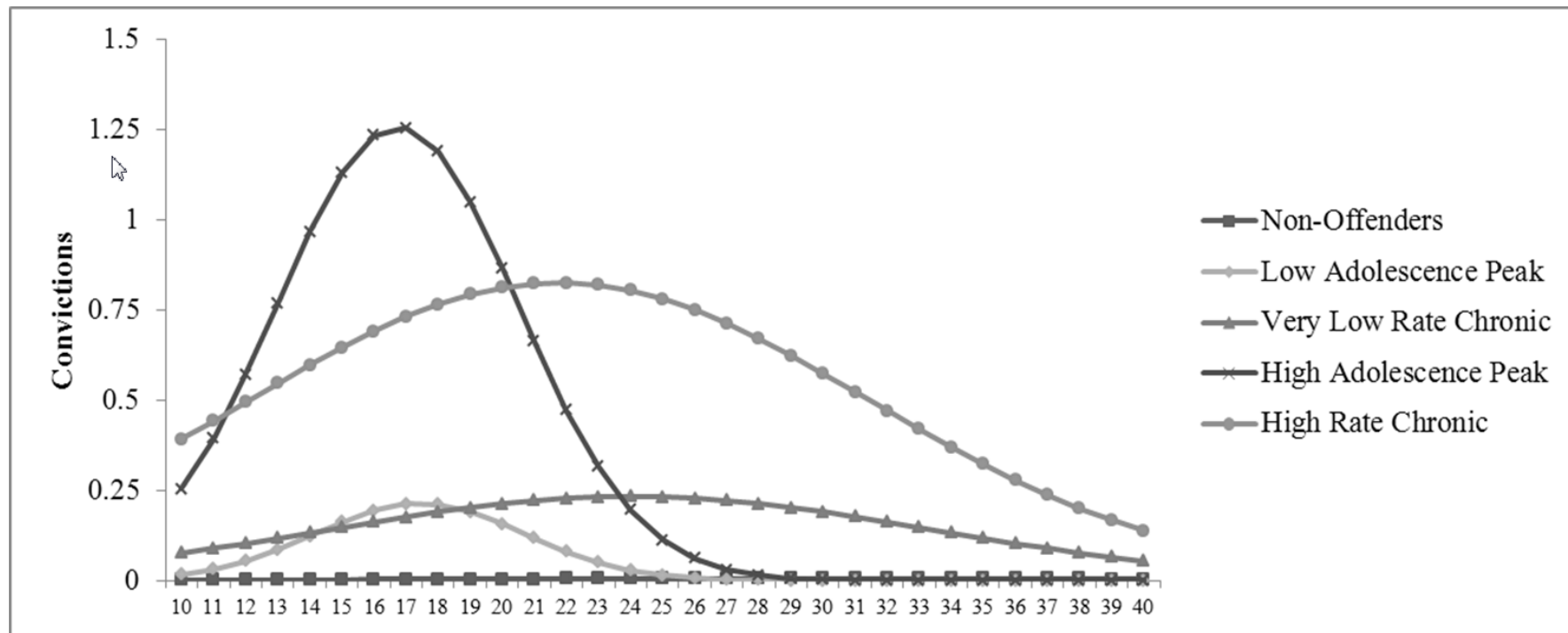
Eggleston, Laub and Sampson (2004)



Age and Crime: London Data

Farrington, Piquero, and Jennings (2013)

Figure 5.4
Ages 10-40 Trajectories



High rate offenders are a small fraction of total Offenders

- Chronic trajectory groups are a small
- Wolfgang: 6% of cohort accounted for 50% of arrests
- Farrington: 8% of sample accounted for 53% of convictions
- Pathways to Desistance: 2%-5% of sample accounted for 50% of self-reported offending

Crime Prevention and Imprisonment: Four Important Conclusions

1. There is no evidence of a specific deterrent effect
2. The Incremental deterrent effect of long sentences is small
3. Incapacitation is generally an inefficient means of crime control
4. **The certainty of apprehension, not the severity of the ensuing consequences, is the most effective deterrent.**

