



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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Office of Justice Programs
Contact: Joan LaRocca
(202) 307-0703
www.ojp.gov

STATEMENT OF GREG RIDGEWAY, ACTING DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE ON THE FUNDED RESEARCH REPORT:

Predicting Erroneous Convictions: A Social Science Approach to Miscarriages of Justice

WASHINGTON – Dr. Greg Ridgeway, Acting Director of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), issued the following statement today on the findings from an NIJ-funded study to identify factors that cause a wrongful conviction.

“Today, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) announced the most scientifically rigorous study to date on why wrongful convictions occur. “Predicting Erroneous Convictions: A Social Science Approach to Miscarriages of Justice,” by American University researcher Jon B. Gould and his colleagues, identifies ten statistically significant factors that distinguish a wrongful conviction from a “near miss” in which an innocent defendant was acquitted or had charges dismissed before trial.

“Identifying and understanding the causes of wrongful convictions is critical to maintaining the integrity of our criminal justice system. Wrongful convictions of innocent persons undermine the public’s confidence in the system, tragically harm innocent individuals, deprive victims of justice, and allow guilty parties to go free to potentially victimize others.

“The study is part of NIJ’s growing body of scientific knowledge that seeks to identify the prevalence of errors in the criminal justice process, discover how and why the system can fail, and engage with practitioners to implement the most scientifically rigorous practices to prevent miscarriages of justice. This work includes: NIJ’s ongoing support of state agencies in locating biological evidence and performing DNA testing in post-conviction cases in which actual innocence might be demonstrated; last year’s publication of a study that examined the prevalence of wrongful convictions in more than 600 homicide and sexual assault cases in the Commonwealth of Virginia between 1973–1987; and support of the 2012 International Association of Chiefs of Police summit on wrongful convictions.”

For more information about the study visit
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/241389.pdf>.

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