Recidivism of State Prisoners Released in 2008 and 2012

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Presentation overview

1. How is recidivism defined
2. New BJS studies based on largest cohort and follow-up period to date
3. Comparing recidivism rates over time
Recidivism is defined multiple ways
Recidivism measures include three common traits

Starting event
- Placed on probation
- Released from prison

Outcome measure
- Arrest
- Conviction
- Return to prison

Follow-up period
- 1 year
- 3 years
- 5 years
- 8 years
- 10 years
BJS has studied recidivism since the early 1980’s
Multiple data sources used for sample selection and outcome measures

**Prisoner records**
- Prison admission and release dates
- Demographic characteristics
- Prison commitment offenses
- Sentence length

**Criminal history data**
- Data prior to and following prison release
- Data within and outside the state where released
  - Arrests
  - Convictions
  - Incarcerations
Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 34 States in 2012: A 5-Year Follow-Up Period
Largest sample for a BJS recidivism study to date

- State prisoners released in 2012 in 34 states
- Sampled 92,100 to represent 408,300 prisoners
- 79% of all prisoners released nationwide
- 5-year follow-up period

Males accounted for 9 in 10 prisoners released in 2012

89% Male
11% Female

White prisoners comprised the largest percentage of prisoners released in 2012

- 44% White
- 36% Black
- 16% Hispanic
- 2% American Indian/Alaska Native
- 1% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- 2% Other

The median age of prisoners released in 2012 was 33

- 16% 24 or younger
- 50% 25-39
- 34% 40 or older

About 1 in 4 prisoners were serving time for a violent offense

- Violent: 28%
- Property: 28%
- Drug: 26%
- Public order: 19%

About 4 in 10 prisoners had 10 or more prior arrests

- 4 or fewer: 26%
- 5-9: 31%
- 10 or more: 43%

7 in 10 prisoners released were arrested and about half returned to prison

Younger persons were arrested at higher rates than older persons following release

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
Those with more prior arrests in their criminal history were re-arrested at higher rates

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
1 in 3 were arrested for a drug offense

Other key findings

• About 1 in 10 were arrested within 5 years outside of the state that released them.
• An estimated 1.1 million arrests occurred within 5 years.
• The annual arrest percentage declined from 37% in Year 1 to 26% in Year 5.

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 24 States in 2008: A 10-Year Follow-Up Period
Longest follow-up period for a BJS recidivism study to date

- State prisoners released in 2008 in 24 states
- Sampled 73,600 to represent 409,300 prisoners
- 69% of all prisoners released nationwide
- 10-year follow-up period

Annual arrest rates declined from Year 1 to Year 5

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
Annual arrest rates declined from Year 5 to Year 10

2008 release cohort

Year after release

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
Females had lower arrest rates than males from Year 1 to Year 10

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
Have recidivism rates changed over time?
Percent arrested for any offense within 5 years declined from 2005 to 2012

Note: All reported differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.
Percent arrested for a violent offense within 5 years was similar among those released in 2005 and 2012.

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