



ALASKA JUSTICE FORUM

A Publication of the Justice Center

Spring/Summer
2008

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UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Vol. 25, No. 1-2

Recidivism of Alaska Sex Offenders

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McKelvie, Alan R. 2008. "Recidivism of Alaska Sex Offenders." *Alaska Justice Forum* 25(1-2): 14-15. This article reports results of a study which compared recidivism rates of sexual offenders released from prison in 2001 with recidivism rates of a random sample of non-sex offenders also released in 2001. The study found rates of recidivism that by most measures, the rates of recidivism for sexual offenders were no higher than for offenders in general for the three years after the offenders left prison.

See also: A recent study of sexual offenders released from incarceration in Alaska shows that for the three years after the offenders left prison in 2001, the rates of recidivism for sexual offenders were, by most measures, no higher than for offenders in general. The study, which was done by the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center, a subdivision of the Justice Center, compared recidivism for sexual offenders released from prison in 2001 with a random sample of non-sex offenders also released in 2001. The analysis used the three measures most commonly used to determine recidivism: incidents of remand to custody, rearrest, and reconviction on any new offense. The results are similar to those found in an earlier study done by the Alaska Judicial Council. (See Alaska Felony Process: 1999, Alaska Judicial Council, 2004.)

The following analysis is based on data from the Departments of Corrections and Public Safety and the Alaska Court System. The Alaska Department of Corrections released 232 male sex offenders in 2001. This analysis focuses on offender recidivism over the three-year period following release. Recidivism is calculated for remand—reentry to prison as a result of probation/parole/technical violations, rearrest, or reconviction for any type of crime. Overall recidivism rates and frequencies for all sex offenders and for a randomly sampled cohort of other types of offenders also released in 2001 are presented. Also given are rates according to the types of sexual offense involved in the original conviction: sexual assault or sexual abuse of a minor.

Overall, during the three-year period, 70 percent of all offenders were remanded (68% of sex offenders and 72% of non-sex offenders), 61 percent were rearrested (54% of sex offenders and 68% of non-sex offenders), and 40 percent were convicted on some charge (39% of sex offenders and 35% of non-sex offenders).

For the categories of sex offense, 63 percent of those convicted of sexual abuse of a minor were remanded, 50 percent were rearrested and 36 percent were convicted of another offense—although not necessarily a sexual offense. For offenders convicted of sexual assault, the rates were 79 percent, 63 percent, and 45 percent respectively.

In the case of rearrest for a new sex offense, there was a slight but statistically insignificant difference between the sex offender group—3.4 percent—and the non-sex offender group—1.3 percent.

Methodology

The Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) provided the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) with a data set of all releases from DOC facilities in 2001. SAC personnel filtered the set for state statutes that identify a sexual offense and require registration on the state's sex offender registry. Once the sex offenders were identified, an equivalent number of offenders from the remaining pool were randomly sampled to provide a comparison group. Current and past information on status, movements, court cases, etc. involving the offender was also obtained from DOC. The Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS) provided the SAC with criminal histories for the sampled offenders and the Alaska Court System provided record access to court records through the web-based interface, Court View (CV).

For this report, only first release cases were used—that is, if an offender was initially released some time prior to 2001 and returned for some reason, such as a probation violation, and then released again in 2001, that case was excluded. Also, some offenders were released more than once during 2001. The first release constituted the base measure; a subsequent release was an indication of a new arrest event.

In the rare instances of discrepancy, the date of the first event was used in the analysis. For instance, DOC and CV might have had the same date for an arrest/filing that did not appear in the criminal history. This situation generally indicated a remand to custody that did not get reported as a new court case and resulted in incarceration under the original court case—such as for parole, probation, and technical violations.

Demographics

Table 1 shows racial categories for the groups of offenders. Alaska Natives constituted 49 percent of the sex offender group and 46 percent of offenders overall. Whites were 32 percent of sex offenders and 39 percent of the overall offender pool. Table 1 also presents the breakdown for the two sex offense categories.

Table 2 shows a comparison of age and number of prior arrests and convictions for the groups of offenders. The average age of the sex offenders was significantly lower than that of the non-sex offenders. For the two sex offender categories, however, there was no significant difference in age. An analysis of prior convictions shows a significant difference between sex offenders and non-sex offenders for any prior conviction but not for sex offense convictions. The non-sex offenders had significantly more prior convictions than the sex offenders.

Table 1. Sex Offenders and Randomized Sample of Other Offenders Released in 2001, by Race

	Sex offenders						Non-sex offenders		Total for all offenders	
	Sexual assault		Sexual abuse of a minor		Total sex offenders					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alaska Native	40	56.3 %	73	45.3 %	113	48.7 %	101	43.5 %	214	46.1 %
White	15	21.1	59	36.6	74	31.9	106	45.7	180	38.8
Indian	6	8.5	15	9.3	21	9.1	3	1.3	24	5.2
Black	6	8.5	4	2.5	10	4.3	18	7.8	28	6.0
Hispanic	0	0.0	2	1.2	2	0.9	3	1.3	5	1.1
Other	4	5.6	8	5.0	12	5.2	1	0.4	13	2.8
Total	71		161		232		232		464	

Table 2. Age and Priors for Sex Offenders and Randomized Sample of Other Offenders Released in 2001

	Sex offenders									
	Sexual assault		Sexual abuse of a minor		Total for sex offenders		Non-sex offenders		Total for all offenders	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Age	71	33.9	161	34.9	232	34.6	232	40.9	464	37.7
Prior arrests	71	10.7	159	8.7	230	9.3	232	21.6	462	15.5
Prior convictions	69	7.4	155	5.9	224	6.4	232	14.9	456	10.7
Prior sex arrests	64	1.6	157	1.7	221	1.7	63	1.3	284	1.6
Prior sex convictions	48	1.6	116	1.5	164	1.5	47	1.3	211	1.5
Total	323		748		1,071		806		1,877	

Rearrests for Any Crime

Table 3 shows recidivism rates for remands, rearrests, and reconvictions for the sex offenders and non-sex offenders. Non-sex offenders were more likely to be rearrested than sex offenders but for remands and convictions there was no significant difference between sex offenders and non-sex offenders. Table 3 also shows the recidivism rates for the two sex offender categories. Those originally incarcerated for sexual abuse of a minor were less likely to be remanded than other sex offenders, less likely to be rearrested, and less likely to be reconvicted.

Table 3. Remands, Arrests, and Convictions for Sex Offenders and Randomized Sample of Other Offenders Released in 2001

	Sex offenders									
	Sexual assault N = 71		Sexual abuse of a minor N = 161		Total for sex offenders N = 232		Non-sex offenders N = 232		Total for all offenders N = 464	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Remands										
Remanded	56	78.9 %	102	63.4 %	158	68.1 %	166	71.6 %	324	69.8 %
Not remanded	15	21.1	59	36.6	74	31.9	66	28.4	140	30.2
Arrests										
Arrested	45	63.4 %	80	49.7 %	125	53.9 %	157	67.7 %	282	60.8 %
Not arrested	26	36.6	81	50.3	107	46.1	75	32.3	182	39.2
Convictions										
Convicted	32	45.1 %	58	36.0 %	90	38.8 %	81	34.9 %	171	36.9 %
Not convicted	39	54.9	103	64.0	142	61.2	151	65.1	293	63.1

Rearrests for a Sex Crime

Table 4 shows the recidivism rates for the sex offenders and non-sex offenders for new sex crimes. While there is a slight difference in rearrests—3.4 percent for the sex offender group vs. 1.3 percent for the non-sex offender group—this difference is not statistically significant.

Table 4 also shows the equivalent analysis for the sex crime category grouping. Again, there is a slight but non-significant difference between the two groups.

Alan McKelvie is the director of the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center.

Table 4. Rearrest for Sex Crimes of Sex Offenders and Randomized Sample of Other Offenders Released in 2001

		Sex offenders						Non-sex offenders		Total for all offenders	
		Sexual assault		Sexual abuse of a minor		Total for sex offenders					
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Arrests											
	Arrested	4	5.6 %	4	2.5 %	8	3.4 %	3	1.3 %	11	2.4 %
	Not arrested	67	94.4	157	97.5	224	96.6	229	98.7	453	97.6
	Total	71		161		232		232		464	

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Last updated 07-Oct-2008 by ayjust@uaa.alaska.edu