Violent Offender Recidivism in Iowa

Prepared by:
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Executive Summary

A study was conducted examining recidivism of inmates released from Iowa prisons during State FY1996, FY1998, and FY2000 whose most serious conviction offense had been a crime against persons. These offenders were tracked for varying periods of time due to differing times of release, but all had been followed for at least three years.

The study used multiple definitions of recidivism, including the following:

- new arrests;
- new felony arrests;
- new arrests for violent crimes;
- new arrests for felony violent crimes;
- return to prison in Iowa;
- any return to prison; and
- any new arrest for a sex crime.

Data were also collected on new convictions, but due to shortcomings in out-of-state disposition reporting the conviction data were not used extensively.

The study found the following:

- 52.2 percent of releases were re-arrested within three years, compared to 61.7 percent of violent offenders in a recent Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) report.[1]
- 28.6 percent of releases were returned to prison within three years. This compares to 48.8 percent for violent offenders tracked in the BJS study.
- 23.6 percent of releases were returned to prison on new convictions within three years, compared to 25.4 percent in the BJS study.
- Cohort members were most likely to be re-arrested on new violent crimes during the tracking period, followed by arrests for property crimes and drug offenses.
- Generally, the risk of recidivism was highest during the first year after release from prison, with subsequent decreases the second and third years after release. Some groups, however, tended to show the highest rates of return to prison during the second year after release.
- After three years, the offense with the highest rate of re-arrest was Interference with Official Acts (resisting arrest). Eighty-one percent of the 16 offenders released after serving sentences for this offense were arrested within three years of release. Among the offenses involving larger groups of offenders, 69.5 percent of the 59 offenders of Assault with a Weapon were rearrested within three years.
- After three years, the offenses with the lowest rate of re-arrest were Homicide by Vehicle (14.3 percent), Sex Abuse-2nd (25.0 percent), and Sex Abuse-3rd (31.7 percent).
- 26.5 percent of the cohort were arrested for new felonies within three years of release. While those released after serving an Habitual Criminal sentence showed total arrest rates only slightly above the cohort's average (57.9 percent to 52.2 percent), they were the releases most likely to be arrested for new **felonies** (52.6 percent within three

[1] "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics; June, 2002 (hereafter cited as BJS, 2002).

years). Those released on Robbery-1st (44.4 percent) and Assault with Intent (43.1 percent) also demonstrated high rates of new felony arrests.

- The offenses having the lowest rate of new felony arrests after three years were Homicide by Vehicle (0.0 percent), Child Endangerment (7.9 percent), and Murder (10.5%).
- After three years, there was little difference in the rates of new arrests, new felony arrests, or returns to prison for men and women. Men, however, were much more likely to be arrested for a new violent crime (28.2 percent to 10.8 percent) or be arrested for a new violent **felony** (18.3 percent to 5.4 percent). Women tended to return to prison more quickly than men (16.0 percent in the first year, vs. 10.6 percent for men), although the men were arrested for new crimes more quickly than women (27.9 percent in the first year, vs. 21.6 percent for women).
- Considering recidivism and race, the 25 Native Americans in the study showed the highest rates of recidivism after three years. Of the racial groups containing larger numbers of offenders, African-Americans generally showed higher recidivism rates than Caucasians.
- While releases age 40 or over tended to show lower rates of re-arrest than younger offenders, there was little difference in the rate of new arrests for offender groups between age 18 and age 39, all of which were in excess of 50 percent. That said, those in the 18-20 age group generally showed the highest rate of new arrests after three years (73.5 percent were re-arrested and 42.6 percent were arrested for new felonies).
- Of the 52.2 percent who were re-arrested within three years, about half were re-arrested for a new violent crime (27.4 percent of total cohort). Only 2.4 percent of the releases were arrested for a new sex crime, although persons released on sex offenses had higher rates of new sex arrests than other offenders (4.7 percent to 1.4 percent). The rate of new sex crime arrests by the sex offender releases is comparable to figures published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.[2]
- Releases with high Board of Parole risk scores showed higher recidivism rates than those with low scores, regardless of the definition used. However, the association between risk and recidivism was statistically significant ($p<.10$) only for new arrests and for new sex crime arrests. The association between risk score and the other recidivism definitions ranged between .128 and 167, showing an association but not a statistically significant one.
- During the first year after release, those who were released after discharging their sentences (without parole) had rates of new **violent felonies** 43 percent higher than those released on parole. By the end of the third year, however, this differential had decreased to 14 percent. The lower rate of new violent felonies for parolees, especially during the first year after release, suggests that parole supervision may assist in reducing the incidence of these crimes during the period of supervision. Further analysis suggested that the benefits of supervision might be greatest for those serving sentences for non-sex crimes.

[22]“ Recidivism of Sex Offenders Released from Prison in 1994," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December, 2003 (hereafter cited as BJS, 2003).

Introduction

The current study is part of a larger effort by CJJP to conduct policy-relevant correctional research in Iowa. While the primary focus of this multi-year research is a recidivism study of probationers in Iowa, the correctional policy research has also permitted continued examination of the recidivism of those released from Iowa's prisons In this prison recidivism research CJJP has used multiple definitions of recidivism and lengthy tracking periods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of recidivism in the State.

While previous studies have included some examination of violent offender recidivism, there has not been an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon beyond showing that those released on violent crimes – and particularly, sex offenders -- typically show lower recidivism rates than some other groups of offenders.

This research has been facilitated by the Department of Public Safety and the Federal Bureau of Investigation by their permitting on-line access to multi-state criminal history records. Although earlier Iowa recidivism studies have only examined new arrests, convictions, or incarcerations *within Iowa*, the current research has included nationwide data limited only by the degree to which other states provide criminal history data to the FBI. Although having access to interstate data has been a boon to the research, it has resulted in one significant drawback, as the reporting of dispositions to the FBI from some states does not appear to be very complete. Because of this weakness, new convictions as a measure of recidivism has not been used extensively here.

The current research involved combining cohorts of offenders released in FY96, FY98, and FY2000 to ensure sufficient numbers of offenders for detailed analysis. Analysis of recidivism rates of specific violent offenses in Iowa has been problematic in part because Iowa's prison population includes proportionately fewer inmates committed for violent crimes than most other states. To overcome what would not ordinarily be perceived as a problem – low numbers of violent offenders in prison – the current study draws upon offenders released during three periods of time. Complete recidivism data had been previously collected on each of these cohorts; the releases included in this study included those released during these periods who had been imprisoned on a "lead"[3] charge classified as a violent crime.[4]

[3] The "lead" charge can be equated to the most serious charge, i.e., the offense that carries with it the longest maximum sentence. In the case of imprisonment for multiple offenses, the "lead" charge would be the one regarded as the most serious in terms of threat or property loss.

[4] In this report the term "violent crime" as a substitute for the more awkward "crime against persons". Obviously, not all crimes against persons are violent, but they all involve some direct personal threat to another human being.

Cohort Demographics

Table 1 presents the breakdown of lead offenses by sex. As would be expected in a cohort of violent offenders released from prison, most (95.7 percent) of those in the cohort are male; noteworthy numbers of females were found only among releases for Child Endangerment

Table 1. Distribution of Lead Offenses, by Sex

	Sex				
	Female		Male		
Lead Offense	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**Total**
Sex Abuse-3	4	1.7%	226	98.3%	230
Domestic Assault	2	1.1%	184	98.9%	186
Robbery-2	11	6.1%	168	93.9%	179
Lascivious Acts	6	4.2%	137	95.8%	143
Robbery-1	0	0.0%	92	100.0%	92
Assault-Sex Abuse	0	0.0%	79	100.0%	79
Going Armed w/intent	3	3.9%	73	96.1%	76
Willful Injury	2	2.8%	69	97.2%	71
Terrorism	0	0.0%	67	100.0%	67
Child Endangerment	12	18.2%	54	81.8%	66
Assault-Weapon	2	3.3%	58	96.7%	60
Assault w/intent	5	8.6%	53	91.4%	58
Extortion	6	14.6%	35	85.4%	41
Sex Abuse-2	1	2.5%	39	97.5%	40
Indecent Contact	0	0.0%	38	100.0%	38
Manslaughter	4	10.8%	33	89.2%	37
Assault in Felony	0	0.0%	34	100.0%	34
Assault	0	0.0%	32	100.0%	32
Homicide by Vehicle	3	10.0%	27	90.0%	30
Burglary-1st	1	4.3%	22	95.7%	23
Harassment	1	4.5%	21	95.5%	22
Habitual Criminal	0	0.0%	20	100.0%	20
Conspiracy	1	5.3%	18	94.7%	19
Kidnapping	1	5.9%	16	94.1%	17
Interference	1	6.3%	15	93.8%	16
Assault-no intent	1	7.7%	12	92.3%	13
Attempted+B4 Murder	0	0.0%	12	100.0%	12
Stalking	0	0.0%	10	100.0%	10
Arson	1	11.1%	8	88.9%	9
Murder	1	11.1%	8	88.9%	9
Abandonment	4	50.0%	4	50.0%	8
Incest	0	0.0%	8	100.0%	8
Sexual Exploitation	0	0.0%	6	100.0%	6
Witness Tampering	1	16.7%	5	83.3%	6
Indecent Exposure	0	0.0%	4	100.0%	4
Injury by Vehicle	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	2
Lascivious Conduct	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1
Nonsupport	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1
Riot	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1
Sex Abuse-Therapist	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1
Sex Predator	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1
Total	**75**	**4.2%**	**1,693**	**95.8%**	**1,768**

and Robbery-2nd. The largest groups of offenders were found among those committed to prison for Sex Abuse-3rd, Domestic Assault (including all degrees of seriousness), Robbery-2nd, and Lascivious Acts with a Child.

Table 2. Distribution of Lead Offenses, by Race/Ethnicity

	Race/Ethnicity						
Lead Offense	**White**	**African-Amer.**	**Hispanic**	**Native Amer.**	**Asian**	**Other**	**Total**
Sex Abuse-3	180	33	13	0	3	1	230
Domestic Assault	120	52	11	3	0	0	186
Robbery-2	90	77	8	2	2	0	179
Lascivious Acts	126	10	3	2	2	0	143
Robbery-1	60	31	0	0	1	0	92
Assault-Sex Abuse	53	17	6	3	0	0	79
Going Armed w/intent	37	31	2	5	1	0	76
Willful Injury	33	28	7	1	2	0	71
Terrorism	21	40	3	0	3	0	67
Child Endangerment	48	14	3	1	0	0	66
Assault-Weapon	38	18	2	1	0	1	60
Assault w/intent	35	15	4	3	1	0	58
Extortion	20	19	1	0	1	0	41
Sex Abuse-2	34	4	0	1	1	0	40
Indecent Contact	34	2	2	0	0	0	38
Manslaughter	24	12	1	0	0	0	37
Assault in Felony	21	10	2	0	1	0	34
Assault	23	7	2	0	0	0	32
Homicide by Vehicle	28	1	1	0	0	0	30
Burglary-1st	15	8	0	0	0	0	23
Harassment	17	4	1	0	0	0	22
Habitual Criminal	9	11	0	0	0	0	20
Conspiracy	11	7	0	1	0	0	19
Kidnapping	15	2	0	0	0	0	17
Interference	11	5	0	0	0	0	16
Assault-no intent	9	1	0	2	0	1	13
Attempted Murder	6	6	0	0	0	0	12
Stalking	7	3	0	0	0	0	10
Arson	7	2	0	0	0	0	9
Murder	5	4	0	0	0	0	9
Abandonment	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
Incest	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
Sexual Exploitation	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
Witness Tampering	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
Indecent Exposure	3	0	0	0	1	0	4
Injury by Vehicle	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Lascivious Conduct	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Nonsupport	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Riot	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sex Abuse-Therapist	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sex Predator	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**1,169**	**479**	**73**	**25**	**19**	**3**	**1,768**
Percent of Total	**66.1%**	**27.1%**	**4.1%**	**1.4%**	**1.1%**	**0.2%**	**100.0%**

African-Americans are proportionately over-represented in Iowa's prisons, with about 22 percent of the prison population on March 31, 2004 falling into that group. This violent offender cohort shows additional over-representation of African-Americans, with 27 percent of the cohort being identified as such. African-Americans are particularly over-represented in murder, robbery, and some of the assaultive offenses (terrorism, extortion, assault in felonies), but generally under-represented among the sex offenses. Hispanics, on the other hand, were most likely to be committed for Sex Abuse-3rd and Domestic Assault.

Table 3 shows the age distribution of the cohorts, by race/ethnicity. The largest groups of offenders fell into the 25-29 and 30-34 year age groups, with only slightly fewer in the 21-24 and 35-39 groups. Minority members of the current cohort tend to be younger than whites, and the modal age for African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans was found in the 21-24-year group. Overall, the cohort is very similar in mean and median to Iowa's current prison population (March, 2004), which shows an overall mean of 34 and median of 33.

Table 3. Age and Race/Ethnicity of Violent Offender Cohort

	Race/Ethnicity						
Age	**White**	**African-Amer.**	**Hispanic**	**Native Amer.**	**Asian**	**Other**	**Total**
18-20	38	25	3	2	2	0	70
21-24	155	105	19	7	2	2	290
25-29	232	89	17	4	8	0	350
30-34	235	98	16	3	1	0	353
35-39	206	76	10	5	3	0	300
40-44	124	57	2	2	2	1	188
45-49	90	16	2	1	0	0	109
50-54	34	7	2	0	1	0	44
55-59	20	2	1	0	0	0	23
60-69	29	4	0	1	0	0	34
70 & over	6	0	1	0	0	0	7
Total	**1169**	**479**	**73**	**25**	**19**	**3**	**1,768**
Mean	**34.5**	**31.6**	**30.7**	**31.0**	**30.1**	**28.0**	**33.4**
Median	**33.0**	**31.0**	**29.0**	**29.0**	**27.0**	**22.0**	**32.0**

A further age breakdown is shown in Table 4. Offenses have been grouped in this table to reduce offense categories and present clearer results. Offenses including fewer than ten releases have been grouped into the "other" category, the various assault crimes have been grouped, as have murder/manslaughter and the various degrees of sex abuse (including sexual assault) and robbery.

Further analysis by age showed that the men in the cohort tended to be slightly over one year older than the women (mean 33.5 years to 32.0 years; median 32 to 30.0 years).

Table 4. Mean and Median Age at Release, by Release Offense

Release Offense	N	Mean	Median
Habitual Criminal	20	38.6	37.0
Indecent Contact	42	39.0	36.5
Burglary-1st	23	35.3	36.0
Stalking	10	33.9	36.0
Harassment	22	36.5	35.5
Other	43	36.4	35.0
Sex Abuse	350	36.7	35.0
Murder	88	33.4	33.5
Domestic Assault	186	33.7	33.0
Kidnapping	17	32.2	33.0
Lascivious Acts	143	35.5	33.0
Robbery	271	32.3	32.0
Child Endangerment	66	31.3	29.5
Assault	197	31.4	29.0
Willful Injury	71	31.5	29.0
Extortion	41	29.1	28.0
Going Armed w/intent	76	30.1	27.5
Interference	16	26.9	27.0
Conspiracy	19	29.2	25.0
Terrorism	67	26.8	24.0
Total	**1,768**	**33.4**	**32.0**

Table 5 shows great variation in the statistical risk of the cohort. Iowa's Board of Parole risk assessment tool was developed based upon previous recidivism findings which showed such offenses as robbery having high rates of recidivism and many of the sex offenses with low rates. The criterion used in developing the tool was return to prison, with the severity of new offenses weighted to help predict the most serious new offenses resulting in re-imprisonment. Risk scores currently run from two to nine, with the highest risks receiving the highest scores. The relationship between offense and risk tends to be supported here, with Habitual Criminal and Robbery showing high mean and median risk and Child Endangerment, Homicide by Vehicle, and several of the sex offenses showing low statistical risk. Note that the number of cohort members included in this table is lower than previous tables due to missing risk assessments.

Table 5. Risk by Lead Offense

Offense Name	N	Mean	Median
Habitual Criminal	20	8.1	9.0
Robbery	269	7.0	8.0
Domestic Assault	173	6.5	8.0
Kidnapping	17	6.4	8.0
Conspiracy	18	6.2	7.5
Interference	14	6.4	7.0
Extortion	41	6.1	6.0
Assault	183	5.9	6.0
Harassment	21	5.7	6.0
Willful Injury	70	5.6	6.0
Terrorism	67	5.1	6.0
Burglary-1st	23	5.0	6.0
Other	38	4.9	6.0
Stalking	8	4.9	4.5
Sex Abuse	336	4.6	3.0
Child Endangerment	61	4.5	3.0
Murder	84	4.3	3.0
Lascivious Acts	140	4.1	3.0
Indecent Contact	38	3.5	2.0
Total	**1,694**	**5.5**	**6.0**

There was considerable variation in the extent to which cohort members were either released on parole or expired their sentences (without parole), as shown in Table 6. The table distinguishes between sex offenders and other violent offenders because of recent movement in Iowa toward holding sex offenders until their sentences expire.

Table 6. Release Type by Lead Offense

	Expire	Parole		
Offense Name	**N**	**N**	**%**	**Total**
Burglary-1st	3	20	87.0%	23
Conspiracy	3	16	84.2%	19
Robbery	49	222	81.9%	271
Terrorism	15	52	77.6%	67
Going Armed w/intent	21	55	72.4%	76
Murder	28	60	68.2%	88
Willful Injury	23	48	67.6%	71
Extortion	15	26	63.4%	41
Other	17	26	60.5%	43
Habitual Criminal	8	12	60.0%	20
Kidnapping	7	10	58.8%	17
Child Endangerment	32	34	51.5%	66
Assault	98	99	50.3%	197
Domestic Assault	105	81	43.5%	186
Stalking	6	4	40.0%	10
Interference	10	6	37.5%	16
Harassment	17	5	22.7%	22
Total Non-sex	**457**	**776**	**62.9%**	**1,233**
Sex Abuse	195	155	44.3%	350
Lascivious Acts	105	38	26.6%	143
Indecent Contact	33	5	13.2%	38
Indecent Exposure	4	0	0.0%	4
Total Sex Offenses	**337**	**198**	**37.0%**	**535**
Grand Total	**794**	**974**	**54.3%**	**1,794**

Table 7 presents additional demography of the cohorts, showing the distribution of offense types among large, medium-sized, and small counties in Iowa. Iowa's eight metropolitan counties (designated as large counties in the table) account for a substantial percentage of violent prison releases, as shown in the table. Perhaps the most interesting finding in the table is the general over-representation of sex offense releases in the State's smaller (predominantly rural) counties. This is probably explained by exceptionally low rates of such crimes like robbery in Iowa's rural counties.

Table 7. Offense Type by County Size

	Non-Sex		Sex		Total	
County Size	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Large	796	73.0%	295	27.0%	1,091	61.7%
Medium	188	68.9%	85	31.1%	273	15.4%
Small	228	56.6%	175	43.4%	403	22.8%
Total	**1,212**	**68.6%**	**555**	**31.4%**	**1,767**	**100.0%**

Recidivism Findings

Seven primary definitions of recidivism have been used in conducting this research:

- Any new arrest
- Any new felony arrest
- Any return to prison
- Any return to Iowa prison
- Any new arrest for a violent crime
- Any new felony arrest for a violent crime
- Any new arrest for a sex offense.

With the exception of the last criterion,[5] for each of these a determination was made of the length of time elapsing between release from prison and the criterion event. In establishing the length of time between release and the event, the concept of *time at risk* was employed; any time spent imprisoned, for example, was not counted as time at risk when considering the length of time between release and a new arrest that occurred after the subsequent imprisonment. There were also a number of cohort members who had no time at risk after release due to immediate incarceration, civil commitment, deportation, death, or some combination thereof. Deleting these individuals from the original 1,768 in the study resulted in a cohort size of 1,721 when **re-arrest** was used as the recidivism criterion. Rates of **return to prison** were based upon 1.743 releases (i.e., there were 25 cohort members who were immediately deported and [theoretically] had no opportunity to return to prison in the United States). Twelve of these 1.743 went directly to prison out-of-state, so **rates of return to Iowa prison** were based on 1,731 releases.

Once the time at risk had been determined for cohort members, notation was made of whether the criterion event occurred within the first, second, and third years of time at risk. Although the older two cohorts of releases (FY96 and FY98) were tracked beyond three years, events occurring after three years of time at risk are not included here (e.g., maximum time at risk for the FY96 cohort was 2,001 days, but any event occurring after 1,096 days was ignored).

[5] The incidence of new sex offenses is very low; analysis of the time elapsing until a new sex offense arrest did not yield helpful results.

General Recidivism Findings

Table 8 shows general recidivism findings for the cohort members who had time at risk for the various measures of recidivism. Within three years, 52.2 percent of the cohort was arrested for a new crime. This figure compares to 61.7 percent of violent offenders tracked in a recent Bureau of Justice Statistics study.[6] Figures pertaining to arrests for felonies suggest that many of the new arrests were for misdemeanors, as the three-year rate of new felony arrests – 26.5 percent – is only slightly over half that of the figure for total arrests.

Iowa figures are also below the national norm when it comes to returns to prison, as 28.7 percent of the cohort was returned to prison within three years, compared to 48.8 percent of the violent offenders in the BJS recidivism study. Most of these returns were to Iowa prisons, as the three-year figures for Iowa returns are only slightly lower than total prison returns. Not shown in the table, 24.2 percent of the Iowa releases were returned to prison on a new commitment within three years of time at risk, compared to 25.4 percent in the BJS study. Seventy-five, or 4.3 percent of those at risk, were returned to prison without a new conviction (e.g., technical parole revocation or "safekeeper"). Twenty-nine (1.7 percent) returned on a new conviction within three years after initially being returned for other reasons.

Table 8. Recidivism of Violent Offenders Released from Iowa Prisons

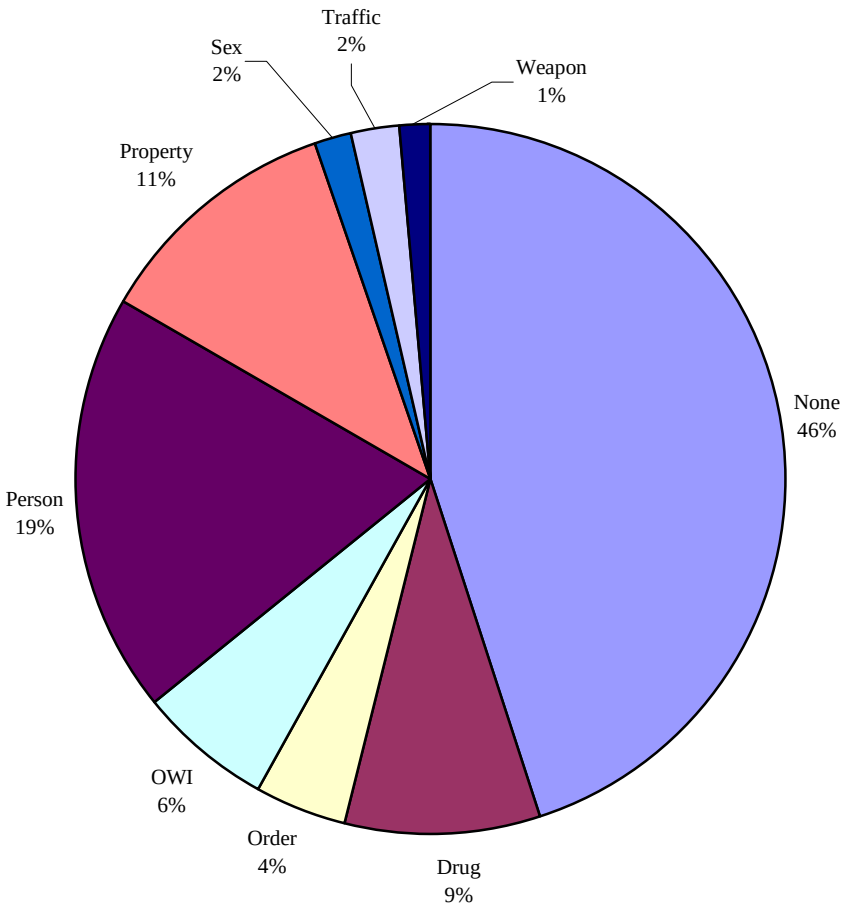
		Cumulative Total		
Type of Recidivism	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Any New Arrest	1,721	27.6%	45.0%	52.2%
Any Felony Arrest	1,721	12.0%	21.0%	26.5%
Any Return to Prison[7]	1,743	10.6%	21.2%	28.6%
Return to Iowa Prison	1,731	8.4%	17.7%	24.3%
New Violent Arrest	1,721	12.6%	22.5%	27.4%
New Violent Felony Arrest	1,721	7.6%	14.2%	17.7%

Table 8 also shows that about one-quarter of these offenders were arrested on a new crime of violence during the three year tracking period, with about 65 percent of these involving felony charges.

[6] BJS, 2002.
[7] "Any return to prison" as a criterion in this report includes returns to prison either in Iowa or in another state.

The study collected data on the types of most serious new arrest charges. As shown below, the largest percentage of most serious new arrests involved (non-sex) violent crimes. The next most-frequent type of most-serious arrest charge was property offenses, followed closely by drug offenses. Overall, sex offenses accounted for only about two percent of the most serious new charges. Although there were fewer new convictions than charges, the distribution of conviction offense types was very similar to that for arrests. Note that the percentages here are not the same as in the previous table, as the chart below looks only at the type *of most serious* new charge (e.g., an individual could have been arrested for a new violent offense without having that offense be the most serious for which he was arrested, so the 27.4 percent three-year rate of new violent arrests in Table 7 is greater than the 19 percent in the chart below).

Most Serious New Arrest Offense Types



Recidivism by Release Cohort

Table 9 shows that there was little difference in the rates of new arrests among the three study cohorts:

Table 9. Any New Arrests, by Year of Release

Release Year	Total N	Cumulative arrests within: One Year	Two Years	Three Years
1996	486	23.9%	40.1%	50.6%
1998	560	29.1%	44.6%	51.4%
2000	675	29.0%	48.7%	54.1%
Total	**1,721**	**27.6%**	**45.0%**	**52.2%**

The table shows generally rising figures among the cohorts, as after two and three years the FY2000 cohort shows higher rates of re-arrest than either of the others.[8] Findings shown in the table are consistent with previous recidivism findings in Iowa[9] in that the highest risk for new arrest occurs within the first year after release, with subsequent reductions during the second and third years (i.e., 27 percent rearrested during the first year, an additional 17 percent the second year, and an additional seven percent the third). Previous Iowa studies have shown continued decreases past three years for all types of offenders.

The next four tables and the accompanying graph present the various measures of recidivism for the three release cohorts. Most tables show first- and second-year rates that are very similar, especially those dealing with return to prison. Third-year rates then tend to be lower than either of those in the first two years. Remember that the rates presented in the tables are cumulative.

The tables typically illustrate that the FY2000 cohort exhibits higher rates of recidivism than either the FY1996 or FY1998 group; the FY96 and FY98 cohorts alternate showing the lowest rates over time. The criterion showing the highest recidivism rates in these tables after three years is returning to prison; the lowest is a new arrest for a violent felony. Three-year rates of return to prison increase about eighteen percent if one includes out-of-state incarcerations (28.6/24.3 = 17.7%).

[8] If one examines **all** prison releases for these three years, FY96 and FY2000 show identical 2-year re-arrest rates (49.7 percent), with the FY98 cohort at 47.2 percent.

[9] See, e.g., "Recidivism of State FY96 Prison Releases in Iowa," Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning and Statistical Analysis Center, April, 2001.

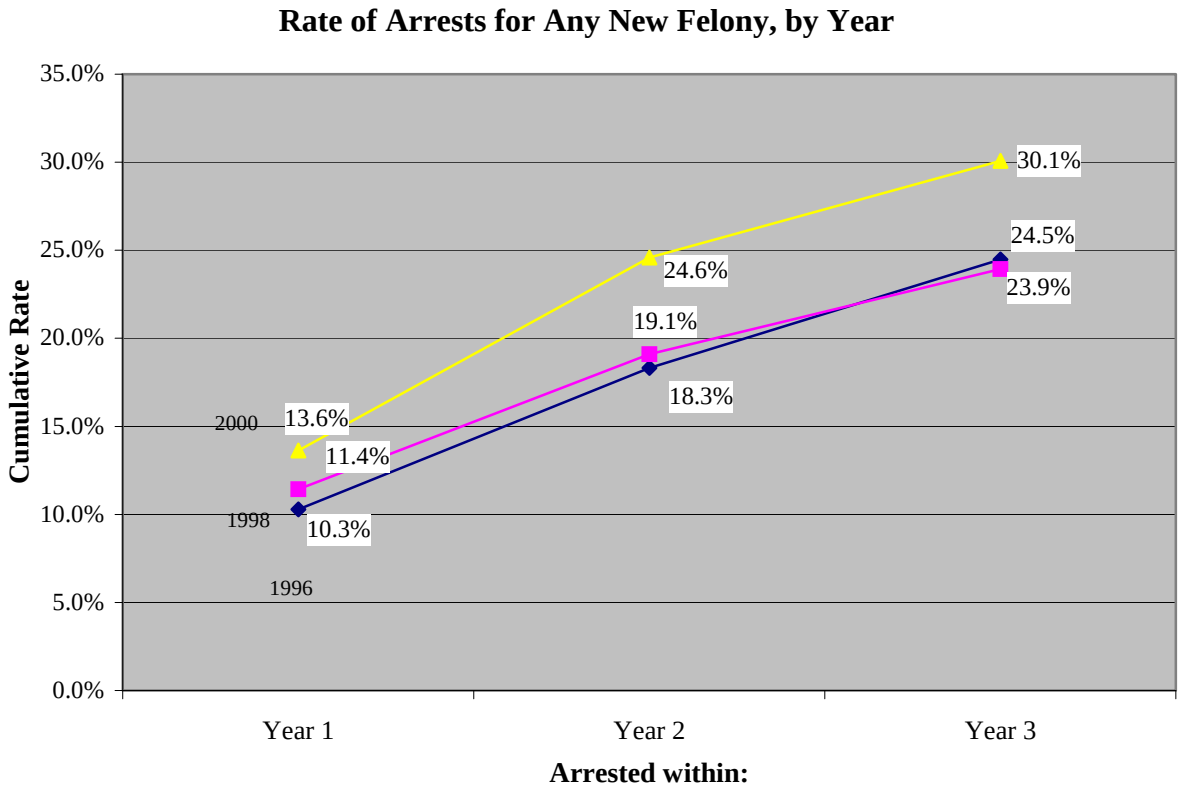


Table 10. Return to Prison, by Year

		Cumulative return to prison within		
Year	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
1996	487	10.5%	19.9%	27.3%
1998	565	9.9%	18.1%	25.5%
2000	691	11.3%	24.7%	32.0%
Total	**1,743**	**10.6%**	**21.2%**	**28.6%**

Table 11. Return to Iowa Prison, by Year

		Return to prison within		
Year	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
1996	486	8.4%	16.7%	22.8%
1998	565	7.8%	14.9%	21.4%
2000	680	9.0%	20.9%	27.6%
Total	**1,731**	**8.4%**	**17.7%**	**24.3%**

Table 12. New Violent Arrests, by Year

		Cumulative Arrest within		
Year	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
1996	486	10.9%	18.3%	24.3%
1998	560	12.9%	22.1%	27.9%
2000	675	13.6%	25.8%	29.3%
Total	**1,721**	**12.6%**	**22.5%**	**27.4%**

Table 13. New Violent Felony Arrests, by Year

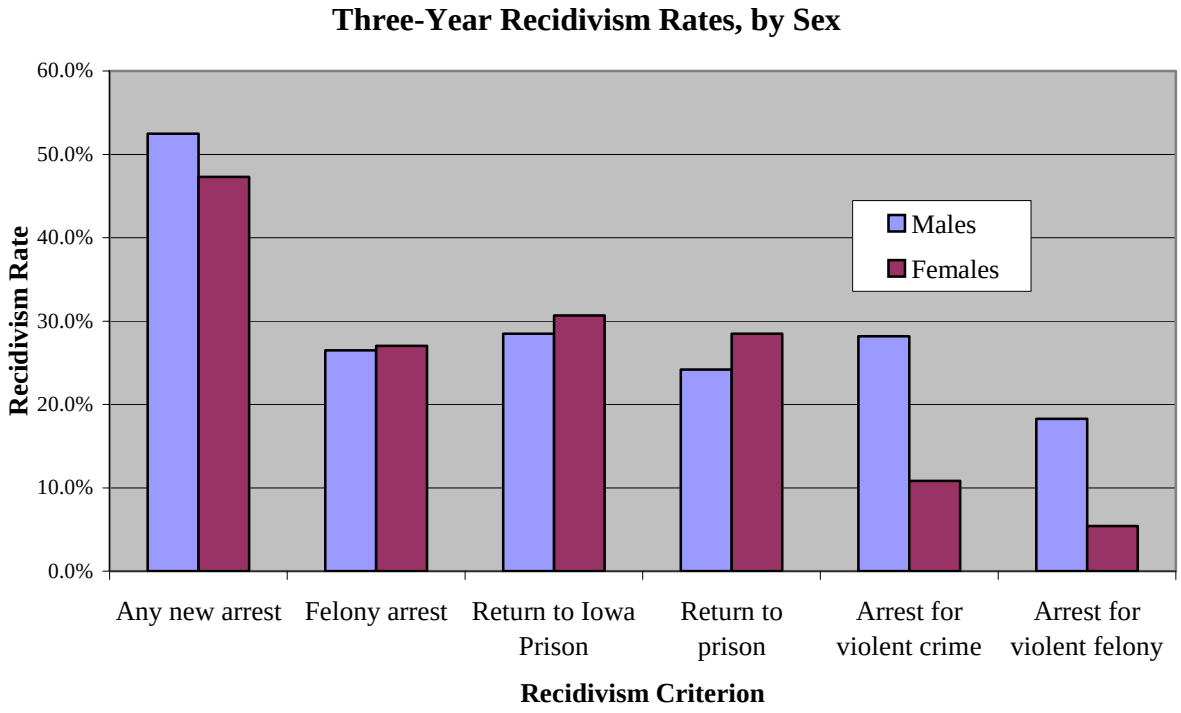
		Cumulative Arrest within		
Year	**Total N**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
1996	486	8.0%	13.2%	17.3%
1998	560	7.1%	12.5%	15.9%
2000	675	7.7%	16.4%	19.6%
Total	**1,721**	**7.6%**	**14.2%**	**17.7%**

Recidivism by Sex

Table 14 presents the various measures of recidivism, by sex. It shows that men and women offenders released from Iowa prisons on violent crimes have remarkably similar rates of recidivism after three years on four of the criteria, but that women tend to have lower rates of arrest for new violent crimes. There are some measures for which cohort members showed very similar or higher rates during the second year after release than during the first; this was true for women for new felony arrests and new violent felony arrests and for men on both the return to prison criteria. Note, too, that women tend to return to prison more often than men.

Table 14. Recidivism of Total Cohort, by Sex

		Cumulative Total		
Gender	**Criterion**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Females (N=74)	Any new arrests	21.6%	40.5%	47.3%
	Felony arrests	9.5%	21.6%	27.0%
	Return to prison	14.7%	21.3%	30.7%
	Return to IA prison	9.5%	16.2%	25.7%
	Arrest for violent crimes	5.4%	8.1%	10.8%
	Arrest for felony violent crimes	1.4%	4.1%	5.4%
Males (N=1,647)	Any new arrests	27.9%	45.2%	52.5%
	Felony arrests	12.1%	21.0%	26.5%
	Return to prison	10.4%	21.2%	28.5%
	Return to IA prison	8.4%	17.8%	24.2%
	Arrest for violent crimes	12.9%	23.1%	28.2%
	Arrest for felony violent crimes	7.9%	14.7%	18.3%
Total	Any new arrests	27.6%	45.0%	52.2%
	Felony arrests	12.0%	21.0%	26.5%
	Return to prison	10.6%	21.2%	28.6%
	Return to IA prison	8.7%	18.0%	24.6%
	Arrest for violent crimes	12.6%	22.5%	27.4%
	Arrest for felony violent crimes	7.6%	14.2%	17.7%



The differential seen above in arrests for violent crimes leads to a question about the types of offenses for which cohort members are re-arrested. Beyond the difference seen above in violent arrests, are there other types of offenses for which men and women had disparate rates of arrest? This question is answered in Table 15:

Table 15. Most Serious New Arrest Type, by Sex

	Sex					
Most Serious	**Female**		**Male**		**Total**	
New Arrest Type	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
None	36	48.6%	727	44.1%	763	44.3%
Drug	7	9.5%	153	9.3%	160	9.3%
Public Order	3	4.1%	70	4.3%	73	4.2%
OWI	4	5.4%	103	6.3%	107	6.2%
Person	7	9.5%	324	19.7%	331	19.2%
Property	16	21.6%	172	10.4%	188	10.9%
Sex	0	0.0%	35	2.1%	35	2.0%
Traffic	1	1.4%	37	2.2%	38	2.2%
Weapon	0	0.0%	26	1.6%	26	1.5%
Total	**74**	**100.0%**	**1,647**	**100.0%**	**1,721**	**100.0%**

First, note that the total arrest rate in Table 15 is not the same as in the previous table, as Table 15 includes new arrests that occurred beyond the three-year period of tracking used for the total cohort. The table shows, however, that there are several types of offenses having differential rates of re-arrest: the violent offenses, for which males have considerably higher

rates of arrest than females. There were also no women in the cohort who were re-arrested for a sex offense, and only one who had a traffic offense (e.g., driving while barred) as her most serious new arrest.. Conversely, the rate of new property crime arrests by women was more than twice the rate for men

Recidivism by Race/Ethnicity

Recidivism by race/ethnicity is dealt with in a series of tables rather than a single table. Table 16 shows three-year rates of new arrests among the cohort, and shows both the highest and lowest rates of new arrests among minority releases. Native Americans were most likely to be re-arrested during the tracking period, while Asians were least likely to be arrested.

Table 16. Any New Arrests, by Race/Ethnicity

		Cumulative Arrests		
Race/Ethnicity	**Total**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Asian	12	8.3%	8.3%	16.7%
African-American	471	33.8%	58.2%	67.3%
Hispanic	54	35.2%	46.3%	53.7%
Native American	25	44.0%	68.0%	76.0%
Other	2	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
White	1,157	24.5%	39.4%	45.9%
Total	**1,721**	**27.6%**	**45.0%**	**52.2%**

This table leads to a question about the types new arrests among the release cohort. Table 16 obviously shows differences in the extent of new arrests; are there similar differences in the *types* of new arrests? This questions is addressed in Table 17:

Table 17. Type of Most Serious New Arrest, by Race/Ethnicity

		Most Serious New Arrest Type								
Race/Ethnicity	**Total N**	**None**	**Drug**	**Order**	**OWI**	**Violent**	**Prop**	**Sex**	**Traffic**	**Weapon**
Asian	12	66.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
African-American	471	29.1%	14.4%	1.7%	3.4%	32.1%	13.8%	1.3%	2.3%	1.9%
Hispanic	54	38.9%	9.3%	9.3%	16.7%	13.0%	5.6%	3.7%	3.7%	0.0%
Native American	25	24.0%	8.0%	8.0%	16.0%	28.0%	8.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%
Other	2	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	1,157	50.9%	7.2%	4.9%	6.7%	14.3%	10.2%	2.2%	2.2%	1.4%
Total	**1,721**	**44.3%**	**9.3%**	**4.2%**	**6.2%**	**19.3%**	**11.0%**	**2.0%**	**2.2%**	**1.5%**

While one must be cautious in drawing conclusions due to small numbers of Asians, Native Americans, and Others, the table nonetheless shows some interesting variations. First of all, the largest single category of new offenses for this cohort was new violent (non-sex) offenses,

followed by new property offenses.[10] Four of the six groups showed higher rates of new violent offenses than any other offense type. African-Americans and Asians showed the highest rates of new drug offenses, but these two groups show low rates of new OWI (Operating While Intoxicated) offenses. African-Americans and Native Americans tended to have high rates of new violent offenses, while the white and Hispanic rates were below the cohort average. Generally, the rates of new sex and weapons offenses were low, irrespective of the racial group.

Table 18 presents three-year data on arrests for new felonies, by race/ethnicity:

Table 18. Any New Felony Arrests, by Race/Ethnicity

		Cumulative Arrests		
Race/Ethnicity	**Total**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Asian	12	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
African-American	471	14.4%	29.3%	37.8%
Hispanic	54	22.2%	27.8%	29.6%
Native American	25	24.0%	40.0%	40.0%
Other	2	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
White	1,157	10.2%	17.0%	21.6%
Total	**1,721**	**12.0%**	**21.0%**	**26.5%**

First, note that after three years the rate of new felony arrests is about half that shown in Table 16, so about half of those re-arrested have been taken into custody for misdemeanors. Note that the second-year rate nearly doubles the first-year rate, and for African-Americans the second-year rate is higher than that for the first year. During the third year after release, however, there is a precipitous drop in new felony arrests (year 1 = 12.0 percent, year 2 = 9.0 percent, year 3 = 5.5 percent). In other words, 79 percent of the new felony arrests occurred within the first two years.

[10] Previous Iowa studies have shown that property and drug crimes are the most common re-arrest offenses among *all* prison releases (violent and non-violent offenders).

The next table presents information on returns to prison after release. This is one table in which the reader should notice that there is no difference in the rates during the first and second years (i.e., first year rate = 10.6 percent and second year rate = 10.6 percent). This is true for several reasons. First, we have already seen (Table 6) that many of the cohort, rather than being released on parole, discharged their sentences from prison (with no parole supervision). When this occurs, there are essentially two ways to return to prison quickly: immediate transfer out-of-state on a previous conviction or relatively rapid commission and

Table 19. Any Return to Prison, by Race/Ethnicity

		Cumulative Returns		
Race/Ethnicity	**Total**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Asian	13	15.4%	23.1%	23.1%
African-American	478	12.8%	25.3%	36.6%
Hispanic	55	10.9%	27.3%	30.9%
Native American	25	16.0%	32.0%	36.0%
Other	3	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%
White	1,169	9.4%	18.9%	25.0%
Total	**1,743**	**10.6%**	**21.2%**	**28.6%**

adjudication of an offense (probably a felony) which results in imprisonment. Thus, inmates who are discharged directly from prison are more likely to return during the second year than the first. This is supported by a further analysis of this phenomenon that showed discharged inmates returning at a rate of 9.0 percent the first year and 12.1 percent the second.

Parolees, on the other hand, show higher rates of return to prison during the first year due to parole revocations on technical violations. While they tend to show lower rates of return than discharges after three or four years, their first- and second-year rates of return tend to be higher. Thus, it is not surprising to see a stable return-to-prison rate for the entire cohort during the first two years for this group containing a relatively high percentage of discharges. Parolees in the current cohort showed return rates of 12.3 percent the first year and an additional 9.4 the second.

Beyond the stability of the return rate over the first two years, Table 19 shows remarkable similarity to Table 18. African-Americans and Native Americans show the highest return rates, just as they showed the highest rate of new felony arrests.

Rates of return specifically to Iowa prisons follow the same basic pattern as that seen in Table 19, although the rates generally were nearly 20 percent lower (e.g., the total rate of return after three years was 24.3 percent, compared to 28.6 percent here).

Tables 20 and 21 examine arrests for new violent crimes, the first looking at any new such arrest and the second specifically examining felony arrests. Overall, 27.4 percent of the cohort was arrested for a new violent crime during the three-year tracking period, with the highest rates for each year being found among Native Americans and African-Americans. As has been seen before, each of these tables shows only slightly lower rates of arrest during the second year of tracking than in the first. Hispanics, in fact, showed a second-year rate (in Table 20 identical to that in the first year. When considering only new violent felonies (Table 21), Native Americans and African-Americans showed second year rates equal to or higher than first year rates. Comparing the two tables, it is evident that about 5/8 of those being arrested for new violent crimes were arrested for felonies (e.g., felony assault, terrorism, going armed with intent, sexual abuse).

Table 20. Any New Violent Arrest, by Race/Ethnicity

		Cumulative Arrests		
Race/Ethnicity	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Asian	12	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
African-Americans	471	19.3%	36.1%	42.9%
Hispanic	54	11.1%	22.2%	24.1%
Native Americans	25	20.0%	36.0%	44.0%
Other	2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	1,157	9.9%	16.9%	21.2%
Total	**1,721**	**12.6%**	**22.5%**	**27.4%**

Table 21. Any New Violent Felony Arrest, by Race/Ethnicity

		Cumulative Arrests		
Race/Ethnicity	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Asian	12	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
African-Americans	471	11.3%	22.7%	28.0%
Hispanic	54	9.3%	13.0%	13.0%
Native Americans	25	12.0%	24.0%	32.0%
Other	2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	1,157	6.0%	10.7%	13.6%
Total	**1,721**	**7.6%**	**14.2%**	**17.7%**

Recidivism by Age at Release

Criminologists have long known that there tends to be an inverse relationship between recidivism and age. While the public may fear the older 'three-time loser," research has shown that criminal careers (as reflected in official statistics) tend to become less intense as offenders age, either because offenders commit fewer crimes or because they become more proficient criminals and are caught less often.[11] Typically, criminologists have seen the highest recidivism rates among those in the late teens or early twenties, with a drop off in career intensity beginning sometime in the 30's.

This notion has been supported in Iowa research, although recent Iowa data have tended to show a sustaining of high recidivism rates through the 30's into the mid- or late-40's. In other words, Iowa data (on the larger populations from which the current cohort was developed) have tended to show a lengthening of criminal careers, with delayed "burn-out." Thus there was interest in determining if this phenomenon was also found among violent offenders.

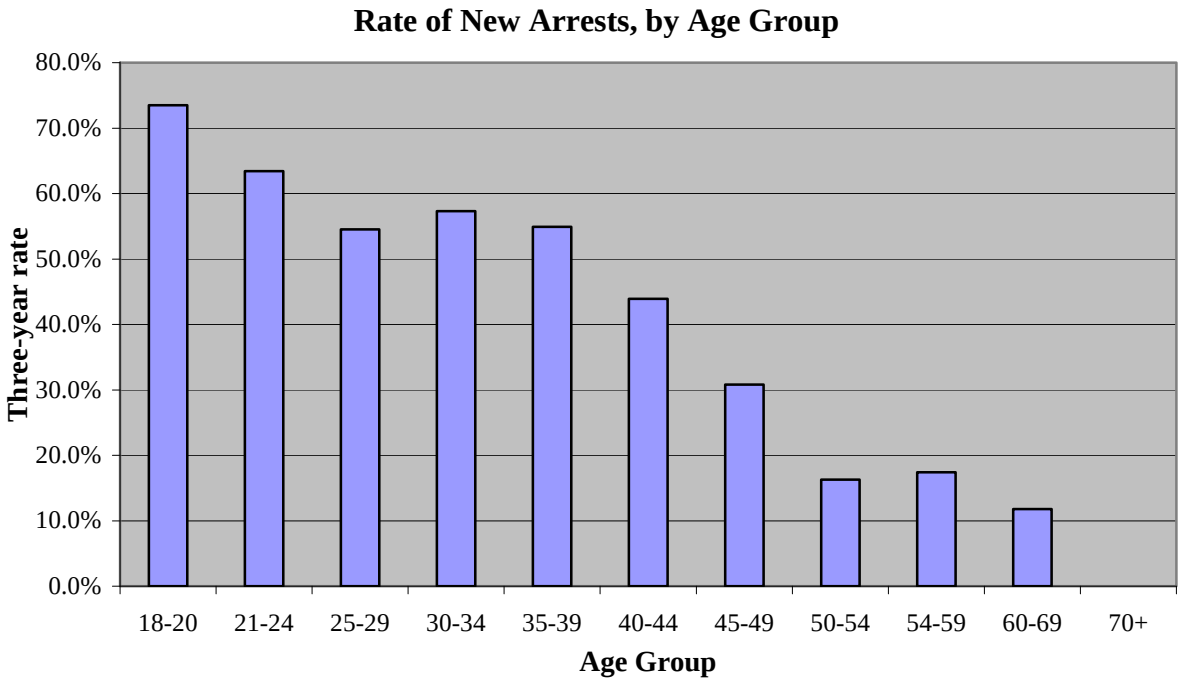
Table 22. Any New Arrests, by Age at Release

		Cumulative Arrests		
Age	**Total**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
18-20	68	36.8%	67.6%	73.5%
21-24	284	35.6%	53.2%	63.4%
25-29	336	27.1%	46.1%	54.5%
30-34	344	31.7%	48.8%	57.3%
35-39	295	30.8%	50.5%	54.9%
40-44	180	19.4%	37.8%	43.9%
45-49	107	14.0%	24.3%	30.8%
50-54	43	9.3%	14.0%	16.3%
55-59	23	0.0%	4.3%	17.4%
60-69	34	11.8%	11.8%	11.8%
70 and over	7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**27.6%**	**45.0%**	**52.2%**
18-39	1,327	31.4%	50.4%	58.2%
40-49	287	17.4%	32.8%	39.0%
50+	107	7.5%	10.3%	14.0%

Looking at the three-year results, there is a clear relationship between recidivism and age. All the cohorts below age 40 show 3-year rates of new arrest over 50 percent and all those 45 or over show rates less than 31 percent. The only puzzling group in the table is the 25-29 age group, which shows a three year rate slightly less than those shown by the next two older

[11] See, e.g., BJS, 2002.

groups; nonetheless, their rate is over 50 percent; in other words, they still exhibit a rate higher than all the older cohorts age 40 or above.



The results in Table 23 are not as clear-cut as those in the previous table and graph, as the linearity seen earlier is not quite so evident here. The 25-29 year group again shows a lower rate of recidivism than the next two older groups. The 45-49 and 50-54 year groups also show lower rates than might be anticipated.

Table 23. Any New Felony Arrests, by Age at Release

		Cumulative Arrests		
Age	**Total**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
18-20	68	16.2%	27.9%	42.6%
21-24	284	16.9%	26.1%	33.8%
25-29	336	10.7%	20.8%	25.0%
30-34	344	13.4%	23.8%	30.8%
35-39	295	14.2%	23.1%	28.8%
40-44	180	8.9%	19.4%	21.1%
45-49	107	2.8%	6.5%	8.4%
50-54	43	0.0%	4.7%	4.7%
55-59	23	0.0%	4.3%	13.0%
60-69	34	11.8%	11.8%	11.8%
70 and over	7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**12.0%**	**21.0%**	**26.5%**
18-39	1,327	13.8%	23.6%	30.1%
40-49	287	6.6%	14.6%	16.4%
50+	107	3.7%	6.5%	8.4%

Table 24, which shows data on returns to prison, shows the same type of pattern shown in the previous table, with the 25-29 year age group showing lower rates of return than the next two older groups. That said, the 30-34 year group showed a three-year rate of return almost identical to the rate shown by the 18-20 year-olds.

Table 24. Any Return to Prison, by Age at Release

		Cumulative Returns		
Age	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
18-20	70	10.0%	24.3%	37.1%
21-24	284	11.6%	24.3%	32.0%
25-29	340	7.9%	19.4%	26.2%
30-34	348	13.5%	27.6%	36.2%
35-39	299	12.4%	21.7%	30.1%
40-44	186	12.4%	19.9%	25.3%
45-49	109	5.5%	10.1%	16.5%
50-54	43	7.0%	16.3%	16.3%
55-59	23	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%
60-69	34	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%
70 and over	7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,743**	**10.6%**	**21.2%**	**28.6%**

As a further descriptor of the rate of returns to prison, the table below shows returns by type of release. Note that over three years the rate of returns for parolees and expirations is relatively similar, but that the parolees tend to return more quickly (11.9 percent vs. 9.0 percent during the first year). This occurs as discussed above: parolees may be returned due to violations of parole rules, while those expiring sentences must either be convicted of a new offense or transferred to an out-of-state prison on a prior conviction.

Table 25. Rate of Return to Prison, by Release Type

		Cumulative Re-imprisonments		
Release Type	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Expire/Discharge	787	9.0%	21.1%	27.3%
Parole	956	11.9%	21.3%	29.6%
Total	**1,743**	**10.6%**	**21.2%**	**28.6%**

Data on returns to Iowa's prison system are not included here because they show the same pattern as seen in Table 25.

Table 26 shows the cohort's rate of new arrests for violent crimes, by age. Note first that the second-year rate of arrest is nearly as high as that for the first (9.9 percent vs. 12.6 percent), but that the rate falls is halved in year three (4.9 percent). While the youngest age cohort showed the highest rate of re-arrest after three years, it was the next-older group that showed the highest rate after one year. The data in this table tend to show a two-way split in recidivism rates rather than the three-way split shown above (e.g., Table 23). This is included at the bottom of the table.

Table 26. Any New Violent Arrests, by Age at Release

		Arrested within:		
Age	**Total**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
18-20	68	13.2%	29.4%	36.8%
21-24	284	18.3%	29.9%	35.9%
25-29	336	13.4%	24.1%	28.6%
30-34	344	15.4%	25.0%	32.8%
35-39	295	12.5%	23.7%	25.1%
40-44	180	8.9%	19.4%	23.9%
45-49	107	1.9%	4.7%	10.3%
50-54	43	0.0%	2.3%	4.7%
55-59	23	0.0%	4.3%	13.0%
60-69	34	8.8%	8.8%	8.8%
70 and over	7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**12.6%**	**22.5%**	**27.4%**
18-44	1,507	14.1%	25.0%	30.1%
45+	214	2.3%	4.7%	8.9%

The felony re-arrest rate in Table 27 is obviously lower than in the previous table, as it includes only new violent *felonies*. The most interesting figures in the table are those for the 18-20 year-old-group, which showed only a 4.4 percent rate in the first year, only to have the rate jump to 17.6 percent the following year. Also, on this criterion the 30-34 age group showed the highest rate of re-arrest regardless of the length of tracking.

Table 27. Any New Violent Felony Arrests, by Age at Release

		Cumulative Arrests		
Age	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
18-20	68	4.4%	17.6%	20.6%
21-24	284	9.2%	16.5%	20.8%
25-29	336	6.5%	13.4%	17.9%
30-34	344	11.0%	18.3%	22.7%
35-39	295	9.2%	16.9%	18.6%
40-44	180	6.7%	12.8%	15.6%
45-49	107	0.9%	2.8%	5.6%
50-54	43	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
55-59	23	0.0%	0.0%	13.0%
60-69	34	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
70 and over	7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**7.6%**	**14.2%**	**17.7%**
18-45	1,507	8.5%	15.9%	19.5%
45+	214	1.4%	2.3%	5.1%

This low rate of new violent felony arrests led to Table 28, which shows the rate of such new arrests by release type. Perhaps part of the reason for low first-year arrests for some groups may be the result of supervision in the community or the threat of revocation, an hypothesis supported in Table 28, as the rate of new felonies among expirations was about 43 percent higher than that for parolees during the first year after release. The differential is reduced each of the following two years, although the rate for parolees remained somewhat below that for expirations.

Table 28. Rate of New Violent Felony Arrests, by Release Type

		Cumulative Arrests		
Release Type	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Expiration	779	9.1%	16.4%	19.0%
Parole	942	6.4%	12.4%	16.7%
Total	**1,721**	**7.6%**	**14.2%**	**17.7%**
Expiration increase over parole		**+43.1%**	**+32.3%**	**+14.0%**

The table appears to support the provision of parole supervision as a means to prevent re-arrest on violent felonies, as the disparity between the rate of new violent felony arrests among expirations and parolees decreases over the three years of tracking. That is, the differential is greatest during the first year, when parole supervision is most likely to be provided, and least in the third year, when supervision is most likely to have been discontinued. If the differential between the two groups had remained similar during the three-year period, one would be tempted to say that the Board of Parole simply does a good job of identifying those who are most likely to be repeat violent offenders and refusing to release that group. While there is some evidence of this – after three years there is still a 14 percent differential between parolees and expirations – the large differential during the first two years suggests an added interaction.

This analysis was continued by examining rates by age group and then by release offense type. It was found that the youngest offenders – age 18 to 20 at release – showed the greatest differential between expirations and parolees during the first two years. In every age group but the oldest offenders (age 50 and above) parolees exhibited lower rates of new violent felony arrests than expirations and, with no exceptions, this effect decreased over time.

A somewhat different result was obtained when arrests for new violent felonies were analyzed with respect to both release type and release offense type (sex or non-sex). This analysis showed that the non-sex expirations showed nearly 70 percent more such arrests during the first year after release than the parolees. By the third year, however, this differential had decreased to about 33%, which is consistent with what was shown above.

Table 29. Rate of New Violent Felony Arrests, by Crime Type and Release Type

			Cumulative Arrests		
Crime Type	**Release Type**	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Non-Sex	**Expire**	434	12.0%	22.1%	25.8%
	Parole	750	7.1%	14.4%	19.3%
	Total	**1,184**	**8.9%**	**17.2%**	**21.7%**
Sex	**Expire**	345	5.5%	9.3%	10.4%
	Parole	192	3.6%	4.7%	6.3%
	Total	**537**	**4.8%**	**7.6%**	**8.9%**
Non-Sex	**Expiration increase over parole**		**+69.6%**	**+53.6%**	**+33.5%**
Sex	**Expiration increase over parole**		**+51.1%**	**+97.9%**	**+67.0%**

When looking at only the sex offenders, however, this pattern was **not** repeated. Parolees showed consistently lower rates than the expirations throughout the period without any reduction in differential from the first year to the third. The second year, in fact, showed the greatest differential between expirations and paroles, with the expirations showing nearly twice the rate of arrests for new violent felonies as the parolees. Sex offenders as a group, however, showed lower rates of arrest for new violent felonies than the non-sex offenders.

This leads to the suggestion that parole supervision may help reduce new violent felonies for those released on non-sex charges, but that sex offenders tend to show low rates of such crimes regardless of whether they expire their sentences or are released on parole.

Recidivism by Release Offense

This section examines the various recidivism criteria by release offense. This is the 'classic' way to examine recidivism rates, as criminologists (as well as those responsible for making release decisions) have historically been interested in rates of re-arrest and return to prison based upon the offenses for which the cohorts were serving sentences prior to release.

Offenses in this section have been combined to some degree to reduce the number of categories contained in each table. The tables are sorted so that the topmost offense is the one with the highest rate of recidivism after three years.

Table 30. Any New Arrests, by Release Offense

		Cumulative Arrests		
Release Offense	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Interference w/Official Acts	16	43.8%	75.0%	81.3%
Stalking	10	50.0%	60.0%	80.0%
Assault-Weapon	59	40.7%	61.0%	69.5%
Conspiracy	19	21.1%	42.1%	68.4%
Robbery-2	174	33.3%	56.3%	67.8%
Kidnapping	15	20.0%	53.3%	66.7%
Domestic Assault	184	35.9%	59.2%	65.8%
Assault	45	37.8%	60.0%	64.4%
Robbery-1	90	32.2%	56.7%	64.4%
Assault in Felony	33	39.4%	60.6%	63.6%
Extortion	41	41.5%	58.5%	63.4%
Going Armed w/Intent	74	35.1%	52.7%	62.2%
Assault w/Intent	58	50.0%	55.2%	58.6%
Habitual Criminal	19	31.6%	57.9%	57.9%
Terrorism	66	22.7%	43.9%	57.6%
Assault-Sex Abuse	75	33.3%	53.3%	57.3%
Harassment	22	36.4%	54.5%	54.5%
Willful Injury	67	25.4%	43.3%	52.2%
Other	44	20.5%	40.9%	50.0%
Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	21.4%	38.1%	45.2%
Murder	57	12.3%	26.3%	35.1%
Child Endangerment	63	17.5%	28.6%	34.9%
Burglary-1st	23	13.0%	26.1%	34.8%
Lascivious Acts w/Children	139	15.8%	28.1%	34.5%
Sex Abuse-3	218	17.9%	27.5%	31.7%
Sex Abuse-2	40	10.0%	20.0%	25.0%
Homicide by Vehicle	28	7.1%	10.7%	14.3%
Total	**1,721**	**27.6%**	**45.0%**	**52.2%**

There is much variation in the rates of new arrest in the table. While it may not be immediately apparent, the factor that probably distinguishes the offenses with the highest

rates from those with the lowest is probably that the former offenses are more likely to be committed by offenders with extensive criminal histories. It is also evident that some of the offenses with the highest rates (e.g., interference, stalking, assault with a weapon) are misdemeanors not ordinarily resulting in prison sentences absent either a significant criminal history or several companion offenses. The offenses with the lowest rates, on the other hand, tend to be so serious that an offender may be committed to prison for them even without any extensive criminal history or companion offenses.

Table 31, which looks only at new felony arrests, paints a somewhat different picture, at least when examining the offenses with the highest rates of recidivism. Rather than being headed by misdemeanor offenses, Table 31 shows felony offenses with the highest rates. Offenses with the lowest rates, however, are similar to those in Table 30.

Table 31. Any New Felony Arrest, by Release Offense

		Cumulative Arrests		
Offense Name	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Habitual Criminal	19	21.1%	42.1%	52.6%
Robbery-1	90	18.9%	37.8%	44.4%
Assault w/Intent	58	34.5%	37.9%	43.1%
Robbery-2	174	17.2%	31.6%	40.2%
Kidnapping	15	13.3%	20.0%	40.0%
Stalking	10	10.0%	20.0%	40.0%
Going Armed w/Intent	74	14.9%	27.0%	37.8%
Assault in Felony	33	21.2%	36.4%	36.4%
Harassment	22	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%
Extortion	41	14.6%	29.3%	34.1%
Assault-Weapon	59	15.3%	22.0%	32.2%
Interference w/Official Acts	16	12.5%	31.3%	31.3%
Willful Injury	67	11.9%	19.4%	29.9%
Domestic Assault	184	12.5%	23.4%	29.3%
Assault-Sex Abuse	75	14.7%	25.3%	28.0%
Terrorism	66	6.1%	16.7%	25.8%
Other	44	4.5%	18.2%	25.0%
Assault	45	15.6%	22.2%	24.4%
Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	9.5%	19.0%	23.8%
Conspiracy	19	5.3%	10.5%	21.1%
Burglary-1st	23	0.0%	13.0%	17.4%
Sex Abuse-3	218	7.8%	12.4%	14.2%
Sex Abuse-2	40	2.5%	7.5%	12.5%
Lascivious Acts w/Children	139	5.8%	7.9%	11.5%
Murder	57	7.0%	10.5%	10.5%
Child Endangerment	63	4.8%	6.3%	7.9%
Homicide by Vehicle	28	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**12.0%**	**21.0%**	**26.5%**

The differences between Tables 30 and 31 leads to the suspicion that persons who are incarcerated on felonies are more likely to be arrested for new felonies than are misdemeanants. While this may seem intuitively obvious, such a result has not always been found in Iowa recidivism research. This hypothesis led to the inclusion of Table 32, which examines new felony arrests by the class and type (sex and non-sex) of the release offense. The table shows conflicting results, with there being essentially no relationship between release offense severity and the likelihood of new felony arrests for non-sex offenders, but the misdemeanor sex offenders showing a much higher rate of new felony arrests (after three years) than the felony releases. Note that the felony sex offenders show a three-year rate of less than half that of the felony non-sex offenders, while the rates for misdemeanants are similar regardless of whether the release offense was a sex offense. In another difference, the three-year rates for non-sex offenders are similar for released felons and misdemeanants, while the released misdemeanor sex offenders show considerably higher rates than the released felons.

Table 32. Rate of New Felony Arrests, by Release Offense Severity

		Cumulative Arrests		
Offense Severity	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
B Felony non-sex	141	14.2%	29.8%	35.5%
Habitual non-sex	16	18.8%	37.5%	50.0%
C Felony non-sex	347	13.0%	22.5%	30.3%
D Felony non-sex	259	11.6%	23.2%	30.5%
Felony Total non-sex	**763**	**12.8%**	**24.4%**	**31.7%**
Agg. Misdem. non-sex	392	15.6%	24.5%	29.6%
Serious Misd. non-sex	29	17.2%	31.0%	34.5%
Misd. Total non-sex	**421**	**15.7%**	**24.9%**	**29.9%**
Total non-sex	**1,184**	**13.9%**	**24.6%**	**31.1%**
B Felony sex	40	2.5%	7.5%	12.5%
Habitual sex	3	33.3%	66.7%	66.7%
C Felony sex	223	7.6%	12.1%	13.9%
D Felony sex	180	7.8%	10.6%	14.4%
Felony Total sex	**446**	**7.4%**	**11.4%**	**14.3%**
Agg. Misdem. sex	83	10.8%	21.7%	26.5%
Serious Misdem. sex	8	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%
Misdem. Total sex	**91**	**9.9%**	**22.0%**	**26.4%**
Total Sex	**537**	**7.8%**	**13.2%**	**16.4%**
Grand Total	**1,721**	**12.0%**	**21.0%**	**26.5%**

Table 33 shows the rate of re-imprisonment among the cohort members. These imprisonments may have been the result of parole revocation, "safekeeping" (usually offenders being held awaiting civil commitment), conviction on a new offense, or re-imprisonment in another state on a prior conviction. The offense that immediately shows a change from previous tables is stalking, which showed very high re-arrest rates for any crime and above-average rates of arrests for new felonies, but which here shows no new incarcerations until the third year. While the rate for stalking is based on only ten offenders, it is surprising nonetheless.

Table 33. Rate of Return to Prison, by Release Offense

		Cumulative Re-imprisonment		
Offense Name	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Habitual Criminal	20	15.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Robbery-1	91	17.6%	33.0%	47.3%
Robbery-2	176	15.9%	29.0%	41.5%
Assault w/Intent	58	13.8%	29.3%	41.4%
Assault in Felony	34	14.7%	35.3%	38.2%
Assault	45	13.3%	31.1%	37.8%
Extortion	41	14.6%	29.3%	36.6%
Harassment	22	13.6%	18.2%	36.4%
Kidnapping	17	11.8%	17.6%	35.3%
Assault-Weapon	60	16.7%	28.3%	33.3%
Going Armed w/Intent	76	11.8%	23.7%	32.9%
Sex Abuse-2	40	7.5%	15.0%	32.5%
Interference w/Official Acts	16	18.8%	31.3%	31.3%
Domestic Assault	184	8.2%	22.8%	30.4%
Willful Injury	70	11.4%	20.0%	30.0%
Assault-Sex Abuse	76	9.2%	21.1%	27.6%
Other	44	9.1%	20.5%	25.0%
Terrorism	66	3.0%	15.2%	24.2%
Burglary-1st	23	0.0%	13.0%	21.7%
Conspiracy	19	5.3%	10.5%	21.1%
Murder	58	10.3%	15.5%	20.7%
Sex Abuse-3	222	10.8%	15.3%	18.5%
Lascivious Acts w/Children	140	5.7%	12.9%	15.0%
Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	4.8%	9.5%	14.3%
Child Endangerment	64	6.3%	10.9%	12.5%
Homicide by Vehicle	29	6.9%	10.3%	10.3%
Stalking	10	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Total	**1,743**	**10.6%**	**21.2%**	**28.6%**

With the exception of Stalking, Table 33 shows some similarities with Table 30, with Robbery and Habitual Criminal showing high rates of re-imprisonment and Child Endangerment, Lascivious Acts with Children, and Homicide by Vehicle showing low rates. Despite seeing low rates of re-arrest for those released on Sex Abuse-2 in Table 31, in Table

33 we see an above-average rate of re-imprisonment for that group. The re-imprisonment pattern for that group is also interesting in that it is below the cohort average for the first two years but more than doubles between the second and third years.

Table 34 presents re-imprisonment rates but includes data only for Iowa re-imprisonments. Obviously there are many similarities between Tables 32 and 33, as most re-imprisonments of Iowa prison releases take place in Iowa. Previous recidivism research in Iowa has suggested that findings pertaining to re-arrest and re-imprisonment rates increase approximately 10-15 percent when out-of-state incarcerations are included. With the current cohort the increase was 17.7 percent.

Table 34. Rate of Return to Iowa Prison, by Release Offense

		Cumulative Re-imprisonment		
Offense Name	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Robbery-1	90	14.4%	28.9%	40.0%
Robbery-2	176	12.5%	25.0%	36.4%
Assault w/Intent	58	12.1%	24.1%	36.2%
Assault	45	8.9%	26.7%	33.3%
Harassment	22	9.1%	13.6%	31.8%
Extortion	41	12.2%	24.4%	31.7%
Interference w/Official Acts	16	18.8%	31.3%	31.3%
Habitual Criminal	20	15.0%	30.0%	30.0%
Sex Abuse-2	40	7.5%	12.5%	30.0%
Assault in Felony	34	8.8%	26.5%	29.4%
Domestic Assault	184	7.6%	21.2%	28.3%
Going Armed w/Intent	75	6.7%	17.3%	25.3%
Kidnapping	16	6.3%	12.5%	25.0%
Other	44	9.1%	20.5%	25.0%
Assault-Sex Abuse	76	7.9%	15.8%	23.7%
Assault-Weapon	60	11.7%	20.0%	23.3%
Willful Injury	67	6.0%	14.9%	22.4%
Murder	57	8.8%	12.3%	17.5%
Burglary-1st	23	0.0%	13.0%	17.4%
Sex Abuse-3	220	9.1%	13.6%	16.8%
Terrorism	66	3.0%	10.6%	16.7%
Conspiracy	19	5.3%	10.5%	15.8%
Lascivious Acts w/Children	139	5.0%	12.2%	13.7%
Child Endangerment	63	4.8%	9.5%	11.1%
Stalking	10	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	2.4%	4.8%	9.5%
Homicide by Vehicle	28	3.6%	7.1%	7.1%
Total	**1,731**	**8.4%**	**17.7%**	**24.3%**

The offense showing the greatest disparity between total imprisonments and Iowa imprisonments is habitual criminal, which rises by 67 percent (30 percent to 50 percent) when out-of-state incarcerations are included. The opposite is true for offenders released after serving sentences for Interference, Stalking, and "other" offenses with low numbers of releases (including Abandonment, Sexual Exploitation, Arson, Incest, Witness Tampering, Injury by Vehicle, Nonsupport, Sex Abuse by Therapist, and Sex Predator), none of whom were re-imprisoned outside of Iowa during the tracking period.

Table 35. Rate of Arrests for New Violent Crimes, by Release Offense

		Cumulative Arrests		
Offense Name	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Interference w/Official Acts	16	31.3%	50.0%	50.0%
Domestic Assault	184	17.4%	38.0%	45.1%
Assault in Felony	33	21.2%	39.4%	42.4%
Conspiracy	19	10.5%	21.1%	42.1%
Habitual Criminal	19	26.3%	36.8%	42.1%
Going Armed w/Intent	74	23.0%	31.1%	40.5%
Robbery-2	174	15.5%	28.7%	36.8%
Assault-Weapon	59	18.6%	27.1%	35.6%
Robbery-1	90	15.6%	26.7%	34.4%
Extortion	41	22.0%	29.3%	34.1%
Assault-Sex Abuse	75	17.3%	28.0%	32.0%
Harassment	22	18.2%	31.8%	31.8%
Willful Injury	67	13.4%	23.9%	29.9%
Assault	45	11.1%	22.2%	28.9%
Assault w/Intent	58	19.0%	25.9%	27.6%
Other	44	6.8%	18.2%	22.7%
Terrorism	66	4.5%	16.7%	21.2%
Kidnapping	15	6.7%	13.3%	20.0%
Stalking	10	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Murder	57	5.3%	14.0%	17.5%
Child Endangerment	63	9.5%	14.3%	17.5%
Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	4.8%	11.9%	14.3%
Sex Abuse-3	218	8.7%	12.4%	13.8%
Lascivious Acts w/Children	139	5.0%	10.8%	13.7%
Sex Abuse-2	40	0.0%	2.5%	7.5%
Homicide by Vehicle	28	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%
Burglary-1st	23	0.0%	4.3%	4.3%
Total	**1,721**	**12.6%**	**22.5%**	**27.4%**

Table 35 continues to show high rates of re-arrest for many of the assaultive crimes, but note that the two robbery offenses do not show as high a ranking for new violent crimes as they did

when using other recidivism criteria. Note, too, that while the sex offenses of Sex Abuse-2 and –3 and Lascivious Acts with Children show low rates of new arrests, Assault with Intent to Commit Sex Abuse shows an above average rate. This same phenomenon has been seen in a number of the other tables. With 76 offenders in the cohort of those released on charges of Assault to Commit Sex Abuse, one can be reasonably confident of results, leading to speculation that there is something that sets this group apart from other sex offenders.

Rates of new violent felony crimes are found in Table 36. First, note that the three-year rate of re-arrests for new violent felonies is about 40 percent lower than it is for new violent arrests in general, indicating that a substantial portion of the new arrests for violent crimes

Table 36. Rate of New Arrests for Violent Felonies, by Release Offense

		Cumulative Arrests		
Release Offense	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Habitual Criminal	19	21.1%	31.6%	36.8%
Domestic Assault	184	13.0%	27.2%	33.7%
Robbery-1	90	10.0%	20.0%	27.8%
Assault in Felony	33	15.2%	27.3%	27.3%
Harassment	22	13.6%	27.3%	27.3%
Robbery-2	174	9.8%	20.7%	26.4%
Going Armed w/Intent	74	13.5%	16.2%	24.3%
Assault-Weapon	59	8.5%	16.9%	23.7%
Extortion	41	9.8%	17.1%	22.0%
Assault-Sex Abuse	75	9.3%	18.7%	21.3%
Conspiracy	19	5.3%	15.8%	21.1%
Assault	45	8.9%	17.8%	20.0%
Kidnapping	15	6.7%	6.7%	20.0%
Interference	16	0.0%	18.8%	18.8%
Assault w/Intent	58	8.6%	15.5%	17.2%
Willful Injury	67	6.0%	10.4%	14.9%
Other	44	4.5%	11.4%	13.6%
Terrorism	66	3.0%	10.6%	12.1%
Lascivious Acts w/Children	139	5.0%	7.9%	10.1%
Stalking	10	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Homicide by Vehicle	28	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%
Sex Abuse-3	218	5.0%	6.4%	6.4%
Child Endangerment	63	4.8%	4.8%	6.3%
Murder	57	1.8%	3.5%	5.3%
Sex Abuse-2	40	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%
Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%
Burglary-1st	23	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**7.6%**	**14.2%**	**17.7%**

are misdemeanors. Again we see in this table that habitual criminals and those previously convicted of felony assaults show high rates of new arrests for violent felonies, while the sex offenders (with the exception of Assault with Intent to Commit Sex Abuse) tend to have low rates. Also interesting is that those released on Burglary-1 – a Class B felony involving assault and frequently involving weapon use – show a low rate of felony re-arrest.

Also of note is the high rate of new felony arrests for those previously convicted of domestic assault, as most of the domestic assault offenses were misdemeanors (only 16 of the 185 domestic assault release offenses were felonies).

Recidivism by Statistical Risk

Since the early 1980's the Iowa Board of Parole has employed a statistical risk assessment tool to assist in controlling the size of the prison population while also protecting society.[12] The device has been validated several times, most recently in 2003. It has also undergone some modifications since its original implementation, the last occurring in 1999. These modifications prevent a "pure" validation of the system on the current cohorts, as the cohorts may have been scored on different versions of the instrument. On the other hand, Iowa's parole risk assessment has consistently made use of a nine-point scoring system, so without a great deal of data modification it is possible to examine the combined cohorts to see if there appears to be a relationship between statistical risk and recidivism.

Table 37 shows, first, the distribution of risk scores for those in the cohort released on violent non-sex crimes and violent sex crimes. The table shows generally that the sex offenders are slightly lower risk, but that there are many high-risk individuals in both groups.

The table also shows a good "split" between low and high scores. Ideally a risk assessment tool used in decision-making would have only two categories: good risk and bad. The decision-making body using the tool, then, could base its decision on which of the two categories an offender falls into. In the real world, however, persons cannot be categorized

Table 37. Risk by Release Offense Type

	Release Offense Type					
	Violent non-sex		Violent sex		Total	
Risk Score	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Missing	50	4.1%	24	4.3%	74	4.2%
1	71	5.9%	62	11.1%	133	7.5%
2	189	15.6%	168	30.1%	357	20.2%
3	111	9.2%	78	14.0%	189	10.7%
4	8	0.7%	7	1.3%	15	0.8%
5	6	0.5%	1	0.2%	7	0.4%
6	226	18.7%	74	13.2%	300	17.0%
7	4	0.3%	0	0.0%	4	0.2%
8	158	13.1%	56	10.0%	214	12.1%
9	386	31.9%	89	15.9%	475	26.9%
Total	**1,209**	**100.0%**	**559**	**100.0%**	**1,768**	**100.0%**
1-3	371	30.7%	308	55.1%	679	38.4%
4-6	240	19.9%	82	14.7%	322	18.2%
7-9	548	45.3%	145	25.9%	693	39.2%
Mean	**6.01**		**4.41**		**5.50**	

[12] When the Iowa Board of Parole began use of the risk assessment tool, Iowa maintained a statutory prison "cap" that required releases once the prison population reached a certain level. The tool was seen as a vehicle to assist the Board in releasing additional inmates without jeopardizing the public.

so easily, as some people fall into the grey area between “good risk” and “bad risk”. The designers of risk assessment tools attempt to have as few people in the middle categories as possible, however, to better assist decision-making.

Table 37 shows that the Iowa Risk Assessment tool does a very competent job in “splitting” offenders into high and low risk categories, regardless of whether they are non-sex or sex offenders.

We have seen previously that there are a number of factors that have correlated to some degree with recidivism. There has been a relationship between age at release and the various rates of recidivism, for example, and there was some evidence of an association between race/ethnicity and recidivism (although clearly there may be intervening factors, e.g., criminal history, that would explain this apparent relationship). Table 38, which shows new arrests by risk score and grouped risk scores, shows a definite relationship between risk and new arrests, although the relationship is not precise. Some lack of linearity in the table may be due to small numbers of offenders having certain scores (i.e., those scoring 4,5, and 7).

Table 38. Any New Arrests, by Risk

		Cumulative Arrests		
Risk Score	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Missing	71	36.6%	49.3%	56.3%
1	123	13.0%	20.3%	23.6%
2	351	16.2%	28.8%	37.3%
3	179	14.5%	26.3%	33.0%
4	15	26.7%	53.3%	60.0%
5	7	71.4%	71.4%	71.4%
6	296	28.0%	51.0%	56.8%
7	4	75.0%	100.0%	100.0%
8	210	28.1%	55.2%	62.9%
9	465	42.2%	60.6%	69.2%
Total	**1,721**	**27.6%**	**45.0%**	**52.2%**
1-3	653	15.2%	26.5%	33.5%
4-6	318	28.9%	51.6%	57.2%
7-9	679	38.0%	59.2%	67.5%

The measure most frequently used in Iowa to assess the utility of the Board of Parole risk assessment tool has been the Mean Cost Rating (MCR), a statistic that measures the degree to which the prediction tool places those who recidivate into the “high” risk categories and those who don’t recidivate into “low” categories. MCR ranges from –1.0 to +1.0, with a score of zero showing no predictive power at all. For the purposes of putting a statistical score into layman’s terms, the following table is offered:

MCR Score	Rating
<.10	Very Poor
.10 - .19	Poor
.20 - .29	Fair
.30 - .34	Good
.35- .40	Very Good
>.40	Excellent

The MCR for the entire range of risk scores (1-9 individually rather than grouped) for any new arrest within the first three years is .43. In the context of this rating system, then, the BOP risk assessment tool does an excellent job of identifying those most likely to be re-arrested within three years of release.

Table 39 shows rates of re-arrest for new felonies. Although prediction appears to be even better here, in fact the MCR for new felony arrests within three years is .317, suggesting that the risk assessment tool does only a "good" job of predicting new felony arrests.

Table 39. Any New Felony Arrests, by Risk

		Cumulative Arrests		
Risk Score	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Missing	71	16.9%	26.8%	28.2%
1	123	5.7%	10.6%	13.0%
2	351	4.8%	10.8%	14.5%
3	179	7.3%	9.5%	14.0%
4	15	6.7%	26.7%	33.3%
5	7	14.3%	14.3%	28.6%
6	296	12.2%	22.0%	26.0%
7	4	75.0%	100.0%	100.0%
8	210	8.1%	21.4%	28.6%
9	465	21.3%	33.5%	42.2%
Total	**1,721**	**12.0%**	**21.0%**	**26.5%**
1-3	653	5.7%	10.4%	14.1%
4-6	318	11.9%	22.0%	26.4%
7-9	679	17.5%	30.2%	38.3%

Because the risk assessment tool was designed to predict new incarcerations, it is appropriate to test it on this criterion. Tables 40 and 41 again show an association between risk score and new imprisonments.

Table 40. Any Return to Prison, by Risk

		Cumulative Re-imprisonments		
Risk Score	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Missing	73	17.8%	27.4%	30.1%
1	123	0.8%	4.9%	9.8%
2	354	6.2%	12.1%	14.4%
3	182	6.0%	9.9%	13.7%
4	15	6.7%	40.0%	46.7%
5	7	14.3%	14.3%	28.6%
6	298	10.1%	21.1%	30.5%
7	4	0.0%	75.0%	75.0%
8	212	10.8%	26.9%	36.3%
9	475	17.5%	32.2%	43.8%
Total	**1,743**	**10.6%**	**21.2%**	**28.6%**
1-3	659	5.2%	10.2%	13.4%
4-6	320	10.0%	21.9%	31.3%
7-9	691	15.3%	30.8%	41.7%

Table 41. Any Return to Iowa Prison, by Risk

		Cumulative Re-imprisonments		
Risk Score	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Missing	71	14.1%	23.9%	26.8%
1	123	0.8%	2.4%	6.5%
2	353	4.5%	9.9%	12.2%
3	180	2.8%	6.1%	9.4%
4	15	6.7%	33.3%	40.0%
5	7	14.3%	14.3%	28.6%
6	296	8.1%	17.9%	26.4%
7	4	0.0%	75.0%	75.0%
8	211	9.0%	22.7%	30.3%
9	471	14.6%	27.8%	38.2%
Total	**1,731**	**8.4%**	**17.7%**	**24.3%**
1-3	656	3.4%	7.5%	10.4%
4-6	318	8.2%	18.6%	27.0%
7-9	686	12.8%	26.5%	36.0%

Both these tables show a good "split" between the low- and high-risk groups, with the low-risk rates being about 1/3 of the high risk rates and the middle group rates being approximately midway between. Thus the parole risk score is associated with rates of return

to prison, although the associations are not statistically significant on this release cohort. The three-year MCR for any return to prison is .359 (very good), while the score for any return to Iowa prison is .324 (good). Thus the instrument is more accurate in identifying all new imprisonments than imprisonment only in Iowa.

Tables 42 and 43, below, continue the pattern shown above. Both show low risks being re-arrested at less than half the rate of high risks, as well as good linearity among the individual risk scores. The MCR after three years for any new violence arrests is .359, placing it in the 'very good' category. It should be noted that, while this score is somewhat lower than that found for **any** new arrest, the prediction of violence in a cohort of violent offenders may, in fact, be more difficult than predicting new violence in a more general cohort (e.g., all prison releases).

Table 42. Any New Violent Arrests, by Risk

		Cumulative Arrests		
Risk Score	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Missing	71	9.9%	18.3%	21.1%
1	123	8.1%	9.8%	11.4%
2	351	4.6%	11.4%	13.1%
3	179	5.0%	10.6%	15.1%
4	15	6.7%	20.0%	26.7%
5	7	28.6%	42.9%	42.9%
6	296	11.8%	20.3%	26.4%
7	4	25.0%	75.0%	75.0%
8	210	17.1%	32.9%	38.6%
9	465	21.5%	35.5%	43.2%
Total	**1,721**	**12.6%**	**22.5%**	**27.4%**
1-3	653	5.4%	10.9%	13.3%
4-6	318	11.9%	20.8%	26.7%
7-9	679	20.2%	34.9%	42.0%

The MCR for any new violent felony arrests (Table 43) is the lowest encountered in this assessment, falling only into the "fair" range (.255).

The data suggest that, for this cohort, on average the predictive power of the Board of Parole Risk Assessment would fall in the "very good" range. It should be noted that this rating shows some "shrinkage" from the scores originally obtained when the tool was developed, not unexpected given that the instrument is now over ten years old and has also undergone modifications without any empirical support. While the instrument shows sufficient predictive accuracy to warrant its continued use (in conjunction with other data) in the release deliberation process, it would not be impossible to improve on the current tool given sufficient resources to thoroughly analyze recidivism patterns in Iowa.

Table 43. Any New Violent Felony Arrests, by Risk

		Cumulative Arrests		
Risk Score	**Total N**	**One Year**	**Two Years**	**Three Years**
Unknown	71	5.6%	12.7%	15.5%
1	123	2.4%	4.1%	5.7%
2	351	2.0%	7.4%	8.3%
3	179	2.8%	5.6%	8.9%
4	15	6.7%	20.0%	26.7%
5	7	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%
6	296	6.1%	11.5%	15.5%
7	4	25.0%	50.0%	50.0%
8	210	10.0%	20.5%	24.3%
9	465	14.8%	23.9%	29.5%
Total	**1,721**	**7.6%**	**14.2%**	**17.7%**
1-3	653	2.3%	6.3%	8.0%
4-6	318	6.6%	12.3%	16.4%
7-9	679	13.4%	23.0%	28.0%

New Sex Crime Arrests as a Criterion

Justice system officials and the public are justifiably concerned about the extent to which prison releases return to the community and are subsequently arrested for sex crimes. This has been demonstrated clearly by the Iowa Board of Parole in recent years as the percentage of sex offenders who receive paroles prior to expiring their sentences has dropped precipitously. This is illustrated in the current cohort:

Table 44. Release Type, by Crime Type, by Year

Crime Type	Year	Total Released	Paroled N	Paroled %
Violent Non-sex	1996	306	230	75.2%
	1998	404	247	61.1%
	2000	499	291	58.3%
	Total	**1,209**	**768**	**63.5%**
Violent Sex	1996	182	85	46.7%
	1998	169	81	47.9%
	2000	208	40	19.2%
	Total	**559**	**206**	**36.9%**

The table shows not only that sex offenders historically have received paroles less frequently than others committed for violent crimes, but also that, while the percentage paroled has dropped for both groups, it has dropped more severely for the sex offenders. Discussions with the Board have indicated that this reluctance to parole sex offenders is due both to 'just deserts' and to the fear that they will re-offend. It is within this context that the study examined new arrests for sex offenses.

Paroles as a Percentage of Releases, by Crime Type

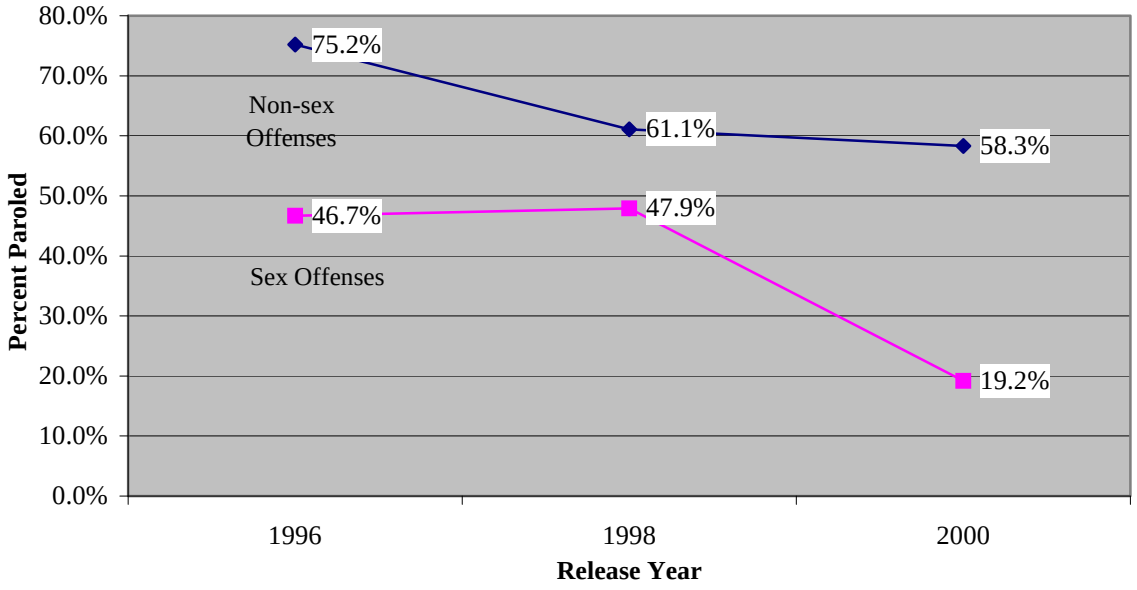


Table 45 shows first that there were 41 members of the current cohorts who were re-arrested for new sex offenses during the three-year period of tracking. The majority of new sex offenses occurred among offenders age 30 to 39 at the time of release from prison. While those aged 55 to 59 also showed a high rate of re-arrest, their small numbers make the rate somewhat unreliable.

Table 45. New Sex Offense Arrests, by Age

		Yes	
Age	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
18-20	68	1	1.5%
21-24	284	3	1.1%
25-29	336	8	2.4%
30-34	344	14	4.1%
35-39	295	8	2.7%
40-44	180	5	2.8%
45-49	107	0	0.0%
50-54	43	0	0.0%
55-59	23	2	8.7%
60-69	34	0	0.0%
70 & over	7	0	0.0%
Total	**1,721**	**41**	**2.4%**

The next table shows that all the new sex offense arrests occurred among the men in the cohort:

Table 46. Arrests for New Sex Offenses, by Sex

		Yes	
Gender	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
Females	73	0	0.0%
Males	1,648	41	2.5%
Total	**1,721**	**41**	**2.4%**

New sex offense arrests are shown by race/ethnicity in Table 47. The table demonstrates something suggested earlier: that African-Americans have lower rates of sex offenses than whites. While the highest rates on the table were for Native Americans and Hispanics, their low number in the cohort reduces the reliability of the finding.

Table 47. Arrests for New Sex Offenses, by Race/Ethnicity

		Yes	
Race	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
Asian	12	0	0.0%
African-American	471	7	1.5%
Hispanic	54	2	3.7%
Native American	25	1	4.0%
Other	2	0	0.0%
White	1,157	31	2.7%
Total	**1,721**	**41**	**2.4%**

We have seen earlier that the Iowa risk assessment tool competently predicts the various definitions of recidivism used here. Table 48 presents risk score and arrests for new sex crimes. Readers should be aware that predicting a low-rate phenomenon like new sex crime arrests is a difficult task; the Iowa tool, however, shows considerably lower rates of new arrests in the lower-risk offenders than in the higher risks. The tool does not show linearity, as those in the mid-risk group (scoring 4-6) exhibit lower rates of new sex crime arrests than those in the low (1-3) group. Both, however, exhibit lower rates than the high-risk group. Note that if one combines the 1-3 and 4-6 categories their combined rate of new sex crimes is well less than half that of the 7-9 group. The 3-year MCR for prediction of new sex offense arrests is .023, however, suggesting that current assessment scores have little relationship with arrests for new sex crimes.

Table 48. Arrests for New Sex Offenses, by Risk

		Yes	
Risk Score	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
1	123	1	0.8%
2	351	6	1.7%
3	179	5	2.8%
4	15	0	0.0%
5	7	0	0.0%
6	296	5	1.7%
7	4	0	0.0%
8	210	8	3.8%
9	465	16	3.4%
Total	**1,650**	**41**	**2.5%**
1-3	653	12	1.8%
4-6	318	5	1.6%
1-6	971	17	1.8%
7-9	679	24	3.5%

There has been occasional speculation about the advantages of permitting some groups of offenders to discharge their sentences in prison (expiration) rather than granting them parole. Previous Iowa research has tended to suggest that parolees as a group tend to have lower recidivism rates than expirations, but until the current research there had been no analyses of this issue specifically dealing with violent offenders. Table 49, below, suggests that parolees released on violent crimes had a lower rate of new sex offenses than expirations.

Table 49. Arrests for New Sex Offenses, by Release Type

		Yes	
Release Type	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
Expire	779	25	3.2%
Parole	942	16	1.7%
Total	**1,721**	**41**	**2.4%**

To delve into this area more deeply, Table 50 was prepared to determine if the lower rate of new sex offense arrests among parolees may have been due to the relatively low numbers of sex offenders released on parole. This hypothesis is supported in the table, as, while non-sex violent offenders who are paroled have lower rates of new sex offenses than those who expire their sentences (0.9 percent to 2.1 percent), there is virtually no difference among sex offenders who are paroled or who expire their sentences (4.7 percent for parolees vs. 4.6 percent for expirations). Although one must be careful in interpreting these results due to small numbers of new sex offenses, the similarity in these two percentages gives one confidence in the reliability of the finding.

Table 50. Arrests for New Sex Offenses, by Offense Type and Release Status

			Yes	
Release Offense Type	**Release Status**	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
Non-Sex	Expire	434	9	2.1%
	Parole	750	7	0.9%
	Total	**1,184**	**16**	**1.4%**
Sex	Expire	345	16	4.6%
	Parole	192	9	4.7%
	Total	**537**	**25**	**4.7%**

Table 51 shows that persons released after serving sentences on sex offenses show higher rates of arrest for new sex offenses than other offenders committed for violent offenses. The highest rates of new sex offenses were found among serious misdemeanants regardless of whether the original committing offense was a sex crime. The 4.7 percent re-arrest rate for sex offenders is consistent with national figures published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which show 5 percent of sex offenders arrested for a new sex crime within three years of release.[13]

Table 51. Arrests for New Sex Offenses, by Release Offense Severity and Type

			Yes	
Offense Type	**Offense Severity**	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
Violent non-sex	B Felony	141	2	1.4%
	Habitual Criminal	16	0	0.0%
	C Felony	347	5	1.4%
	D Felony	259	3	1.2%
	Agg. Misdemeanor	392	5	1.3%
	Serious Misdemeanor	29	1	3.4%
	Total	**1,184**	**16**	**1.4%**
Violent Sex	B Felony	40	2	5.0%
	Habitual Criminal	3	0	0.0%
	C Felony	223	7	3.1%
	D Felony	180	12	6.7%
	Agg. Misdemeanor	83	3	3.6%
	Serious Misdemeanor	8	1	12.5%
	Total	**537**	**25**	**4.7%**

Finally, Table 52 shows the rate of new sex offense arrests by individual offenses. The table shows there were no new arrests for sex offenses among most of the non-sex offense releases. Most of the non-sex offenses showing the highest rates had such rates because of the occurrence of a single new arrest within the category; only five offenses showed more than one new sex offense arrest.

[13] BJS, 2003.

Among the released sex offenders the pattern was somewhat different, with only three crimes *not* showing a new sex offense arrest. The highest rates of new sex offenses were found for those who had served time for Kidnapping (with a sexual component), Lascivious Acts with Children, and Sexual Assault-2nd degree. Six of the eight sex offenses exhibited rates higher than the average for the non-sex offense group. Even among the sex offenders, however, the total rate of new sex offense arrests was only 4.7 percent during the three-year tracking period.

Table 52. Arrests for Any New Sex Offense, by Release Offense and Type

			Yes	
Offense Type	**Release Offense**	**Total N**	**N**	**%**
Non-sex	Burglary-1st	23	1	4.3%
	Assault in Felony	33	1	3.0%
	Willful Injury	67	2	3.0%
	Going Armed w/Intent	74	2	2.7%
	Assault	45	1	2.2%
	Robbery-1	90	2	2.2%
	Domestic Assault	184	4	2.2%
	Assault-Weapon	59	1	1.7%
	Robbery-2	174	2	1.1%
	Assault w/Intent	58	0	0.0%
	Child Endangerment	63	0	0.0%
	Conspiracy	19	0	0.0%
	Extortion	41	0	0.0%
	Habitual Criminal	16	0	0.0%
	Harassment	22	0	0.0%
	Homicide by Vehicle	28	0	0.0%
	Interference w/Official Acts	16	0	0.0%
	Kidnapping	12	0	0.0%
	Murder	57	0	0.0%
	Other	27	0	0.0%
	Stalking	10	0	0.0%
	Terrorism	66	0	0.0%
	Total	**1,184**	**16**	**1.4%**
Sex	Kidnapping	3	1	33.3%
	Lascivious Acts w/Children	139	11	7.9%
	Sex Abuse-2	40	2	5.0%
	Indecent Contact/Exposure	42	2	4.8%
	Sex Abuse-3	218	7	3.2%
	Assault-Sex Abuse	75	2	2.7%
	Habitual Criminal	3	0	0.0%
	Other	17	0	0.0%
	Total	**537**	**25**	**4.7%**