

# Examining Sex-Offender Recidivism

January 20, 2002

[A] number of government studies... show that the widely-held and oft-stated belief that sex offenders have exceedingly high recidivism rates is false...

It is often stated and generally believed that sex-offenders have the highest recidivism rate of all criminals, that they cannot help themselves and are incurable, so that the most draconian (and costly) measures are justified in order to protect society. But a number of government studies produced by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and other agencies do not support this conclusion. These studies show that that the widely-held and oft-stated belief that sex offenders have exceedingly high recidivism rates is false, that in reality sex-offenders have a recidivism rate lower than that of most other offenders.

There have been crimes that were exceptionally abhorrent, often recalled by the names of the victims, such as Diane Ballasiotes and "The Little Boy from Tacoma" in Washington, Polly Klaas in California, and Megan Kanka in New Jersey, every one a parent's worst nightmare. But frequently enough there have been those who seized upon these exceptionally awful crimes and portrayed them to the public, not as the exception, but as the norm for sex offenses, as justification for unusual measures – measures which have been countered as being either unconstitutional, a threat to civil liberties, or both.

This report does not downplay the suffering of the victims and their families, it does not excuse the crimes committed by sex offenders, nor does it address the issue of punishment for the crime. This report presents studies that refute the driving force behind the often draconian, sometimes bizarre,<sup>1</sup> laws encountered by the sex offender once his official punishment is over, frequently for the rest of his life: The notion that the sex offender has a rate of recidivism higher than any other criminal.

This report is organized along two topics. The first is a static comparison of recidivism rates for convicted sex-offenders compared to other offenders. The second looks at offender recidivism rates over time.

In the tables from the referenced studies presented in this report, the statistics for sex-offenders are used as a basis of comparison to other offenders and are presented in **blue**. Recidivism statistics for other offenders worse than those of sex-offenders are presented in **red**. (Where the statistics are close, **brown** is used.)

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Washington State RCW 59.20.080(f) allows a registered sex-offender to be evicted from a trailer park solely because he is registered *as required by law*, under the ironic rubric "Engaging in 'criminal activity'."

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## 1. Static comparisons of recidivism rates

This section presents several different reports that compare the recidivism rate of the sex offender to other offenders. The exact definition of recidivism varies, the methodology varies, and so the actual measurements also vary, but the common thread that runs through the reports is that, as a group, sex offenders have a recidivism rate that is one of the lowest of all offenders.

### 1.1. "Examining Recidivism" (NCJ-96501)

Apparently the BJS' first study and the most direct on the subject of recidivism is titled, appropriately enough, "Examining Recidivism" (NCJ-96501). The following data from that study shows that sex offenders are among the slowest, not the quickest, to reoffend and return to prison.

It took 28.6 months post-release, over two years, before half of the sex offenders had returned. By contrast, half of the property offenders (burglars, bad-check artists, con men, etc.) had returned within 21.9 months, in less than two years.

Table 6. Median time (in months) to prison return and percent returning in first year after release by new admission offense

New admission offense	Median months to prison return	Percent returning in first year after release [a]
Violent	<b>27.9 months</b>	<b>24.2%</b>
Murder	38.9	<b>17.2</b>
<b>Rape/sexual assault</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>15.1</b>
Robbery	<b>21.1</b>	<b>29.4</b>
Assault	32.1	<b>22.3</b>
Property	<b>21.9</b>	<b>26.4</b>
Drugs	37.0	<b>21.5</b>
Public order/other	<b>27.6</b>	<b>23.5</b>
All crimes	<b>26.0</b>	<b>25.1</b>

[a] Percent of all those returning over 20 years who return in first year after release.

## Examining Sex-Offender Recidivism

In the following data from the same study, one sees again that among the repeat offenders, the sex offender has one of the lowest return rates. Observe that the rape/sexual assault category has one of the highest "first-timer" percentages (56.4%); this means that this category has one of the lowest repeat-offender percentages (43.6%). Either the sex-crime rate was massively skyrocketing, which we know was not the case, or the sex offender has a lower re-offense rate over any period of time.

Table 8. Offense distribution of 1979 admissions with new sentence by admission type [a]

Offense	Non-avertable <sup>2</sup> recidivists	Avertable recidivists	First-timers	Total	Number of offenses
All crimes	38.4%	24.4%	40.8%	100%	200,189 [c]
Violent	32.4	20.3	47.4*	100	79,391
Murder / manslaughter	27.1	15.7	57.2*	100	7,469
Rape / sexual assault	24.9	18.7	56.4*	100	10,300
Robbery	32.5	22.2	45.3*	100	35,331
Assault [b]	40.3*	23.2	36.5	100	17,020
Other violent	29.9	12.9	57.2*	100	9,271
Property	38.4*	27.9*	33.7	100	84,169
Drugs	30.4	24.3	45.2*	100	17,634
Public order / other	32.9	26.3*	40.8	100	18,995

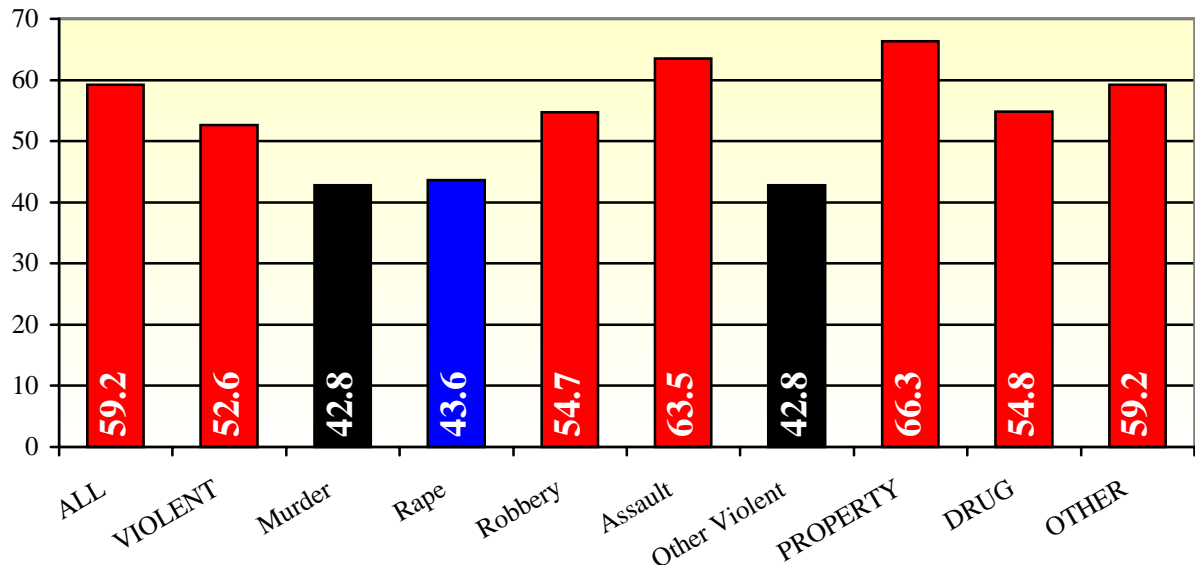
Note: as shown in table 7, nonavertable offenders are 34.5% of the admissions with new crimes, avertable offenders are 24.9%, and first-time offenders are 40.5%. Items marked with an asterisk on this table indicate where an admission type is over-represented for a particular offense relative to their distribution among all admissions.

[a] Excludes 7,472 revoked conditional release violators.

[b] Includes attempted murder.

[c] The number of offenses exceeds the number of offenders because some offenders have more than one conviction offense. The number of offenders with new crimes was 145,993.

The following chart shows, for each category, the percentage of admissions who were recidivists (calculated by subtracting the value in the "First-timers" column from 100%) :



<sup>2</sup> "Avertable" means that the offender would have still been incarcerated at the time of the crime had he served out his full sentence; asterisks indicate that the percentage so flagged is higher than the "All crimes" average.

## 1.2. "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983" (NCJ-116261)

It may be argued that "Examining Recidivism", for all its comprehensiveness, is less relevant because of its age (the data was from 1979), but more recent studies have continued to support its findings. For example, in the following table from "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983" (NCJ-116261), a three-year study published in April, 1989, one sees again that by 1986 the sex offender still had a lower rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration rate than most other violent offenders, and lower than the aforementioned property offenders.

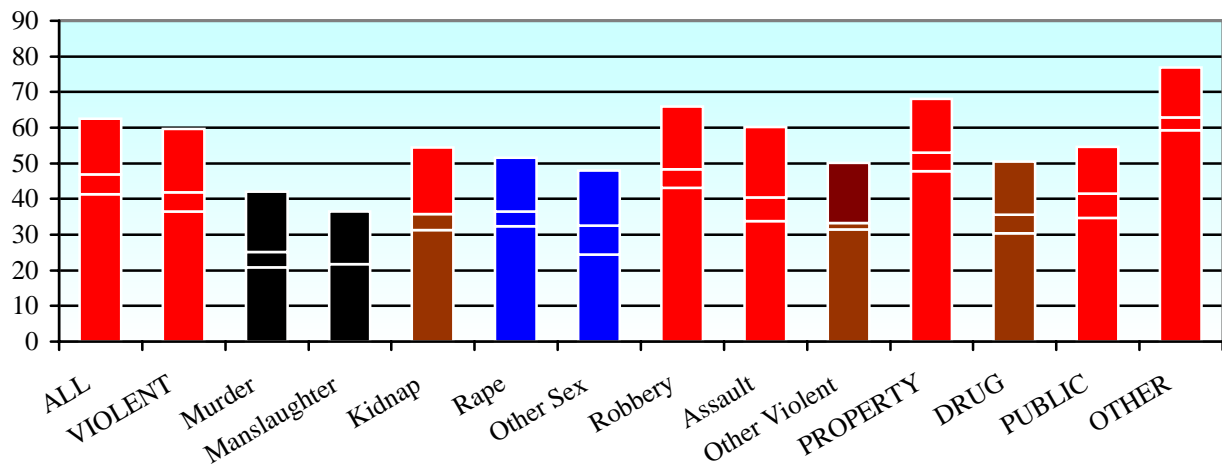
Table 8. Recidivism rates of State prisoners released in 1983, by most serious offense for which released

Most serious offense for which released:	Percent of all released prisoners:	Percent of released prisoners who within 3 years were:		
		Rearrested	Reconvicted*	Reincarcerated*
All offenses	100.0%	62.5%	46.8%	41.4%
Violent offenses	34.6%	59.6%	41.9%	36.5%
Murder*	3.1	42.1	25.2	20.8
Negligent manslaughter	1.4	42.5	27.9	21.8
Kidnapping	0.6	54.5	35.7	31.3
Rape	2.1	51.5	36.4	32.3
Other sexual assault	2.1	47.9	32.6	24.4
Robbery	18.7	66.0	48.3	43.2
Assault	6.4	60.2	40.4	33.7
Other violent	0.4	50.1	33.2	31.4
Property offenses	48.3	68.1	53.0	47.7
Drug offenses	9.5	50.4	35.5	30.3
Public-order offenses	6.4	54.6	41.5	34.7
Other offenses	1.1	76.8	62.9	59.2

Note: the offense distribution and percents rearrested are based on 106,216 releases for whom most serious offense at release was known. Percents of those reconvicted and reincarcerated are based on 99,103 releases, after data from Ohio were excluded.

\* Includes non-negligent manslaughter.

The following chart plots the rates (top to bottom) of re-arrest, reconviction and reincarceration for various offenders.



## Examining Sex-Offender Recidivism

The following table from the same report provides another interesting observation: Unlike most offenders, who generally re-offend within category, the recidivist sex offender is much more likely to commit some other offense.

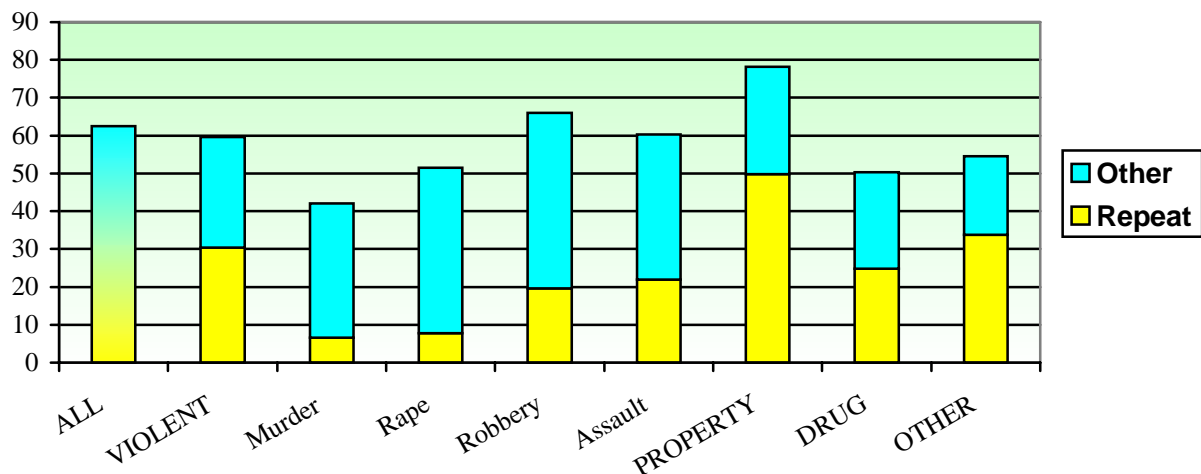
In the table, the items highlighted in yellow indicate the percentage of those released (in 1983) who were re-arrested for the same category of offense. Murderers and rapists had by far the lowest in-category re-arrest rates. Whereas 62.4% of all offenders overall were re-arrested, only 51.5% of rapists were re-arrested and of that only 7.7% for rape. The only rate lower is for murderers.

Table 9. Rearrest rates of State prisoners released in 1983 by most serious offense at release and charge at rearrest

Rearrest charge:	Total, all offenses	Total Violent	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Total Property	Total Drug	Public-order
All charges	62.5%	59.6%	42.1%	51.5%	66.0%	60.2%	68.1%	50.4%	54.6%
Violent offenses	22.7%	30.4%	21.6%	27.5%	33.3%	31.5%	19.7%	12.2%	19.3%
Homicide	1.6	2.8	6.6	2.8	2.9	1.7	1.1	0.3	0.9
Rape	0.9	1.7	0.8	7.7	1.4	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.8
Robbery	9.9	14.1	7.0	8.5	19.6	9.1	8.4	4.2	5.9
Assault	12.6	15.7	10.5	10.7	15.8	21.9	11.1	7.8	13.4
Property offenses	39.7	32.1	16.8	25.0	38.9	28.9	49.8	22.9	28.2
Drug offenses	16.6	14.8	9.1	11.3	18.0	13.8	16.2	24.8	14.0
Public-order offenses	29.9	29.0	19.2	22.3	32.0	30.9	31.0	23.0	33.7
Number of released prisoners	106,216	32,769	3,258	2,214	19,815	6,756	51,332	10,104	6,826

(Note: The numerator for each percent is the number of persons rearrested for a new charge, and the denominator is the number released for each type of offense. Detail may not add to totals because persons may be rearrested for more than one type of charge.)

The following chart shows the percentage of the released offenders whose re-arrests were for an offense in the same category as their prior conviction (yellow) and the percentage arrested for an offense in a different category (light blue). Murderers and rapists stand out for lower recidivism rates.



### 1.3. "Recidivism of Felons on Probation, 1986-89" (NCJ-134177)

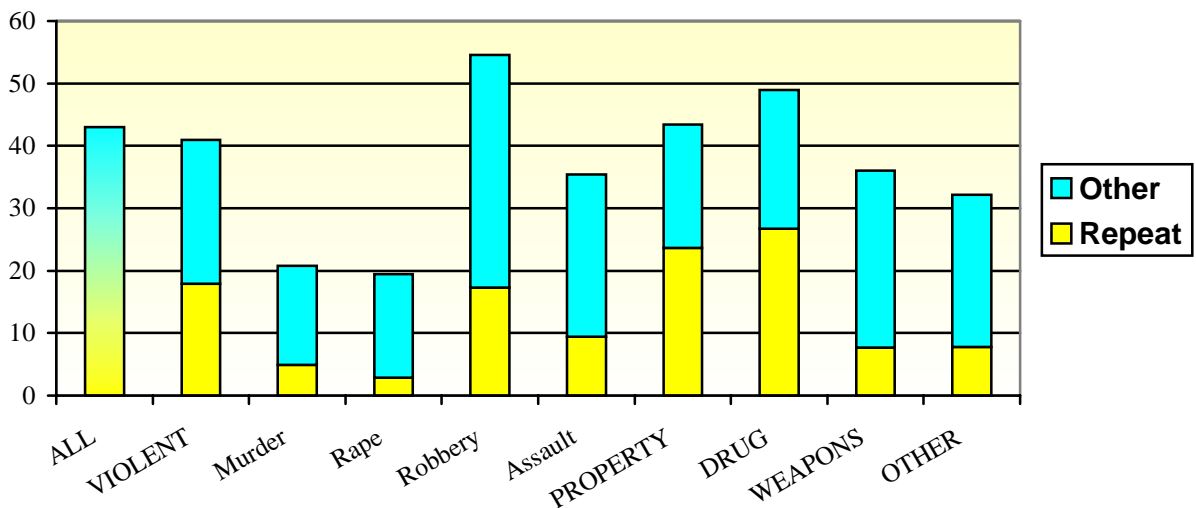
A 1992 report, "Recidivism of felons on probation, 1986-89" (NCJ-134177) continues to support the observation that the sex offender is less likely to re-offend, though admittedly here the convicted felons were under rather different (i.e. supervised) circumstances of release.

Table 4. Felony probationers in the follow-up survey who were arrested for a felony offense while on probation<sup>3</sup>

Most serious felony arrest conviction	Percent of probationers arrested for:									
	Total	Total Viol.	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Total Prop.	Total Drug	Total Weap.	Total Other
All	43.0%	8.5%	0.8%	0.6%	3.5%	3.6%	14.8%	14.1%	1.3%	4.3%
Violent	41.0	17.9	1.2	1.5	8.6	6.6	9.4	8.9	1.5	3.3
Murder	20.8	7.9	4.9	0.5	0.5	2.0	4.4	6.0	0	2.5
Rape	19.5	8.3	0.4	2.9	2.0	3.0	2.7	5.1	0.2	3.2
Robbery	54.6	24.8	1.0	1.3	17.3	5.2	13.3	11.4	2.2	2.9
Assault	35.4	14.7	1.4	1.3	2.6	9.4	7.9	7.7	1.4	3.7
Property	43.4	7.4	0.5	0.5	3.2	3.2	23.7	7.3	1.1	3.9
Drug	48.9	7.4	0.9	0.4	2.7	3.4	10.3	26.7	1.0	3.5
Weapons	36.0	11.2	1.0	0	5.6	4.6	4.8	10.1	7.7	2.2
Other	32.2	5.8	0.7	0.7	1.9	2.5	11.4	5.7	1.5	7.8

(Note: any person arrested for multiple offenses received the arrest offense designation of the most serious arrest offense. The hierarchy from most serious to least serious was generally the order in which offense categories are displayed in the table...)

The following chart shows the percentage of the probationers who re-offended in the same category as their conviction (yellow) and the percentage arrested for an offense in a different category (light blue). Murderers and rapists again stand out for lower recidivism rates.



<sup>3</sup> Note: The column headings have been abbreviated and the word "offenses" removed from row headings to fit this presentation.

The 1997 BJS report "Sex Offenses and Offenders," NCJ-163392, in the section on recidivism (pp. 25-26), remarks on these results:

" A 3-year BJS followup of a sample of felony offenders placed on probation found that rapists had a lower rate of re-arrest for a new felony and a lower rate of re-arrest for a violent felony than most categories of probationers with convictions for violence. While about 41% of violent probationers were re-arrested within 3 years of placement on probation for a new felony offense, an estimated 19.5% of rapists were re-arrested for a new felony within 3 years."

#### 1.4. "Summary of Sex Offender Characteristics: 1992 Intake Sample Population"

Also called "Sex Offender Report; Intake 1992," this 1995 report by the Ohio Department of Corrections' Bureau of Research studied sex-offenders in prison in Ohio in 1992 and provides a slightly different perspective by classifying different types of sex-offenders.

In the short section "Prior Convictions" (pp. 8-9) are the following three tables of data regarding recidivism:

**Table 12a. Prior Felony Conviction (any type)**

	Child Molesters		Teen Molesters		Rapists	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	106	79.1	24	66.7	28	46.7
One to Three	26	19.4	8	22.2	23	38.3
Four or More	2	1.5	4	11.1	9	15.0

Missing = 2

**Table 12b. Prior Violent, Non-Sex Felony Convictions**

	Child Molesters		Teen Molesters		Rapists	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	124	92.5	33	91.7	48	80.0
One or More	10	7.5	3	8.3	12	20.0

Missing = 2

**Table 12c. Prior Felony Sex Convictions**

	Child Molesters		Teen Molesters		Rapists	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	119	88.8	32	88.9	50	83.3
One or More	15	11.2	4	11.1	10	16.7

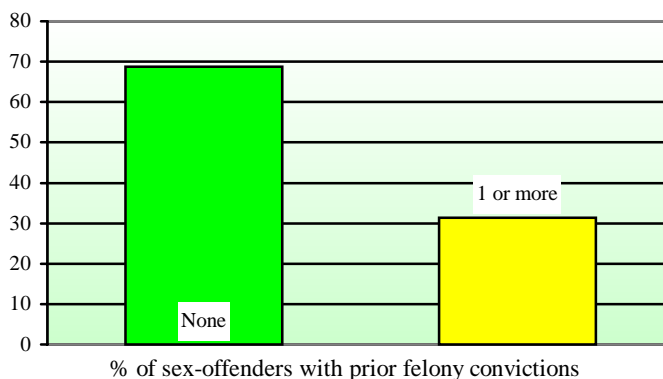
Missing = 2



Summarizing the data of Table 12a to obtain a general number for sex-offenders, we find:

No prior convictions:	158	68.7%
Prior convictions:	72	31.3%
Total:	230	100%

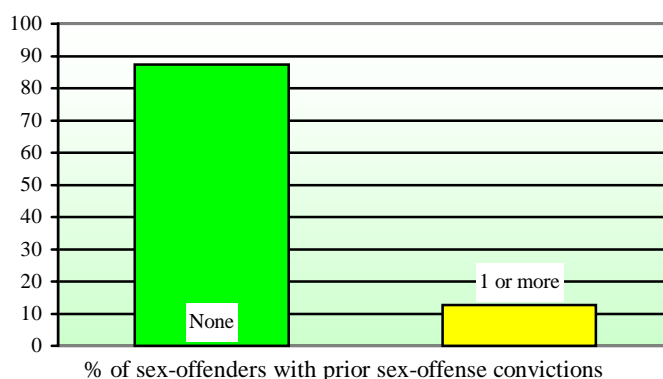
Allowing for the relatively small sample size used for this study and possible local effects such as cultural or statutory differences from the nation as a whole, the results approximate the re-incarceration rates presented earlier for convicted sex offenders in Table 8 of "Examining Recidivism" (NCJ-96501).



But what is also interesting is the summarized data on *repeat* sex-offenders from Table 12c:

No prior sex-offenses:	201	87.4%
Prior sex-offenses:	29	12.6%
Total:	230	100%

This data, evaluating the proportion of incarcerated sex-offenders who have been convicted of sex-offenses before, again does not show a high recidivism rate for sex-offenders.



As an aside, this study also evaluated number of victims by sex offender category. In the section titled "*Number of Victims*" is this table:

**Table 13. Number of Victims**

	Child Molesters		Teen Molesters		Rapist	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>One Victim</b>	86	63.7	39	83.8	49	94.9
<b>Two Victims</b>	28	20.7	5	13.5	3	5.1
<b>More than Two Victims</b>	21	15.4	1	2.7	0	0.0

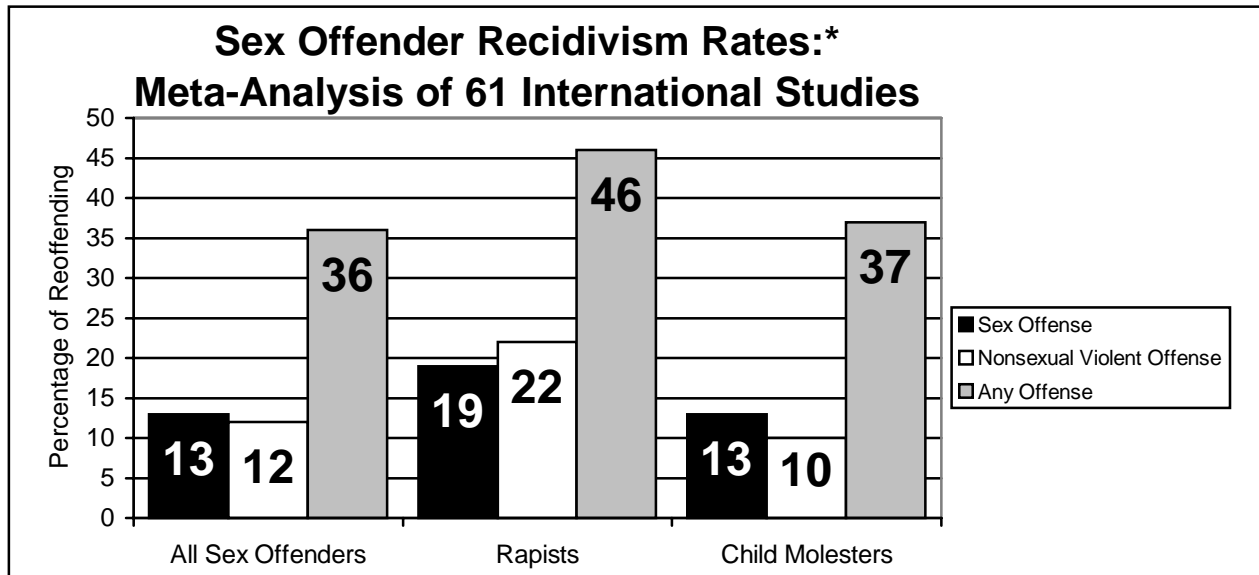
Although the data is sparse and the sample size small, it can be seen that even the category with the most victims, the Child Molester, overwhelmingly does not as a rule have a large number of victims.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Applying the logarithmic-fit analysis used in Section 2.4 to the Child Molester data, the table expands to 3 victims: N=9, 4 victims: N=3, 5 victims: N=1, and beyond this the data is deep in the statistical "noise". It seems reasonable from this that although there are offenders with numerous victims, they are in the minority.

### 1.5. "Sex Offenses in Washington State: 1998 Update"

This report by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy provided little more on the topic of likelihood of recidivism than the following chart on the categories of sex offender recidivism (Section 5, Recidivism Patterns, p.35).

Still, this chart reinforces the statistics observed by "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983" (NCJ-116261), Table 9; "Recidivism of felons on probation, 1986-89" (NCJ-134177), Table 4; and "Summary of Sex Offender Characteristics: 1992 Intake Sample Population" (Ohio D.O.C.), Tables 12a through 12c, all of which show that even when sex offenders do re-offend, they are likely to commit an offense that is not a sex offense.



WSIPP 1998  
R. K. Hanson and M. T. Mussiere: "Predicting Relapse: A  
Meta-Analysis of Sexual Offender Recidivism Studies." (1998)

\* The most common measures of recidivism  
include reconvictions and re-arrest.

(This report also included studies on the rates of re-offense *over time*, dealt with in Section 2.2.)

...even when sex offenders do re-offend, they are  
likely to commit an offense that is not a sex offense.

## 2. Recidivism over time

One item largely absent from discussions of recidivism is the effect of time spent offense-free after release. Only three of the studies seen so far address this issue to any extent, as follows.

### 2.1. "Recidivism Briefing Paper 18: Offense Comparison – Two Definitions"

In October, 2000, the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) published "Recidivism Briefing Paper 18: Offense Comparison – Two Definitions," a followup report utilizing the same data as its September, 1999, report "Recidivism Briefing Paper 17: Offense Comparison – Returns to Prison." Unlike many of the BJS reports, the DOC study evaluated rates of return to prison over time.

The summary tables published in "Paper 18" are as follows (coloring added):

	Average Percent Return to Prison				
OFFENSE	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Property*	16.4	13.3	7.4	4.6	3.2
Person**	9.0	9.3	6.2	3.8	2.6
Drug	6.5	7.9	4.9	3.8	2.8
Sex	4.1	5.2	3.8	2.7	1.7
Overall Average	9.8	9.5	5.9	3.9	2.7

	Average Percent New Felony Conviction				
OFFENSE	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Property*	30	12	7	4	3
Person**	18	9	6	4	3
Drug	19	10	6	4	3
Sex	7	4	4	3	2
Overall Average	20	9	6	4	3

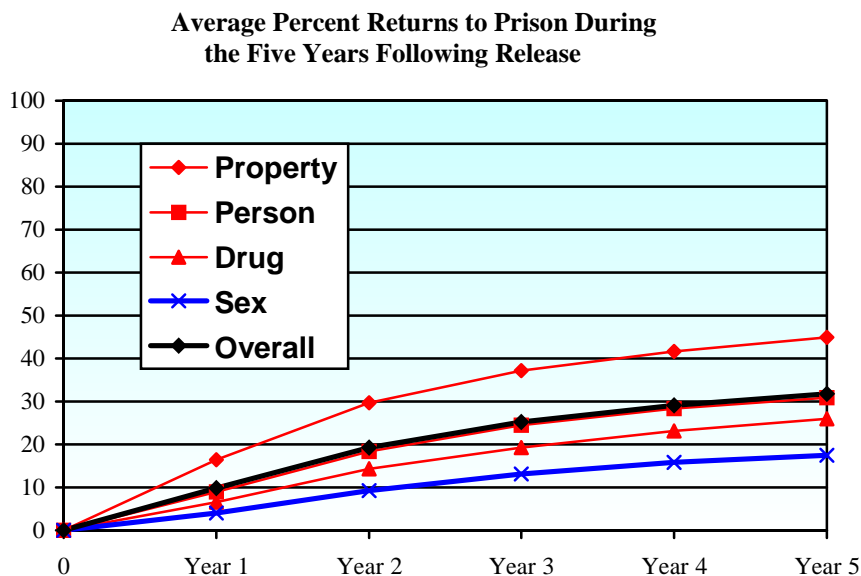
\* Includes "Other" Offenses

\*\* Other than Sex Offenses

"Person, property and drug offenders all commit new felony offenses and are returned to prison *at a higher rate than sex offenders.*" (emphasis added)

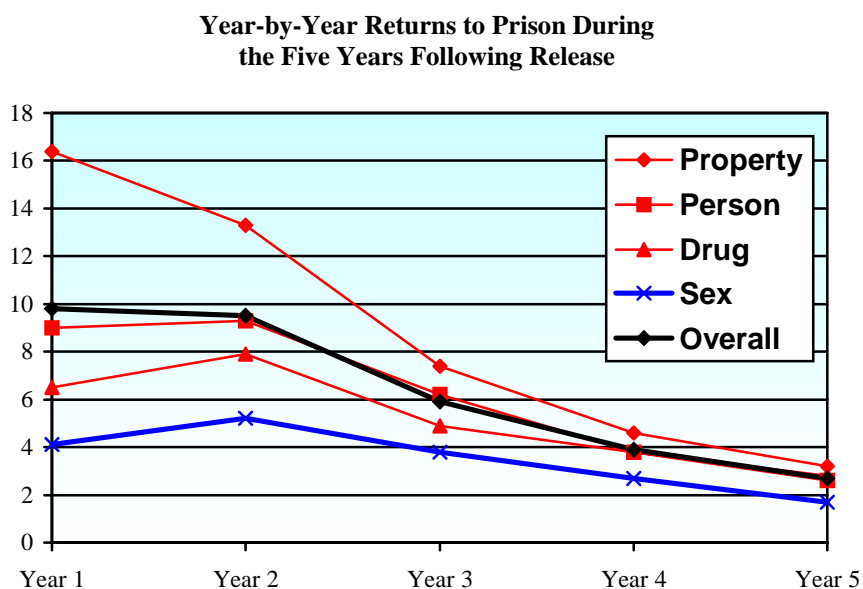
The DOC study presents the following graph, showing the cumulative (not year-by-year) returns to prison, based on the data above, and remarks:

"Person, property and drug offenders all commit new felony offenses and are returned to prison *at a higher rate than sex offenders.*" (emphasis added)



(The original chart, without the "Overall" category and coloring, may be found on the DOC website at <http://www.wa.gov/doc/Content/faq/recidivism.htm>.)

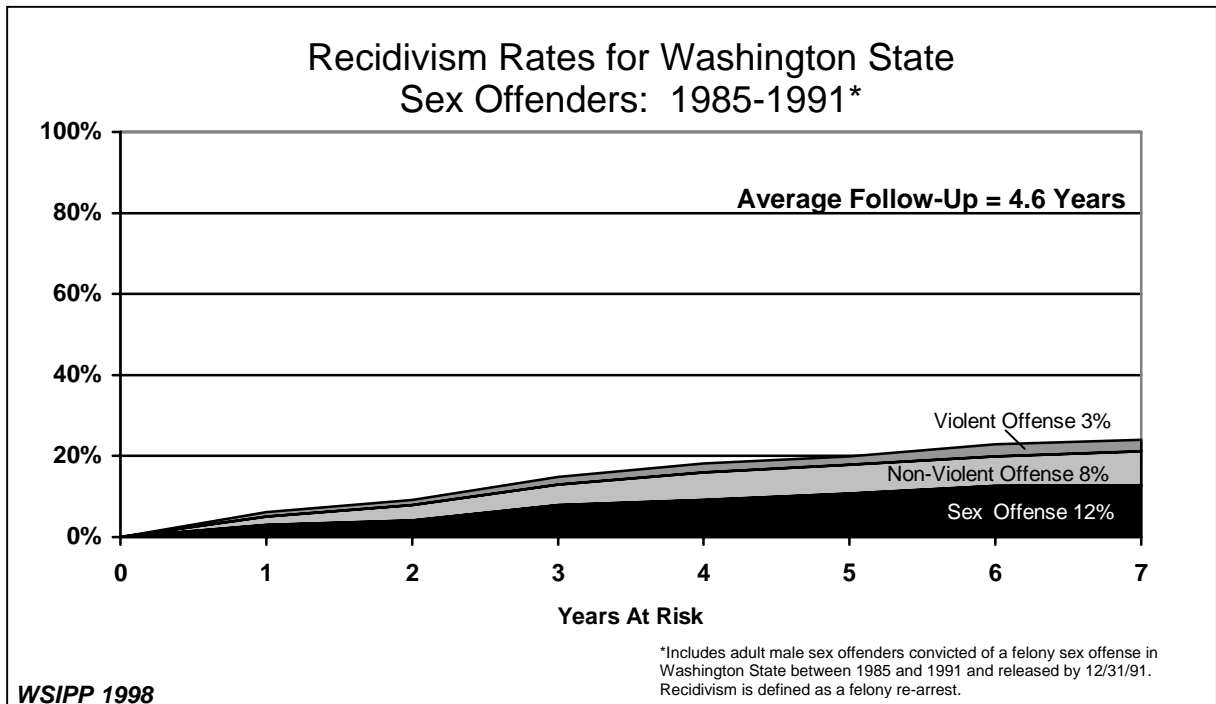
It is essential to understand that the graph above presents the cumulative, not year-by-year, returns to prison. With that understanding it is clearly seen that the rate of re-offense declines the longer the offender remains in the community, as shown in the year-by-year plot of the data below.<sup>5</sup> (This chart was not presented by DOC.)



<sup>5</sup> The peak in "Year 2" for some of the categories may be an artifact of a decision of how a return gets assigned to a particular year. For example, does a return 367 days after release count as "one year" or "two years"?

## 2.2. "Sex Offenses in Washington State: 1998 Update"

(Section 5, Recidivism Patterns, p.35). presented the graph reconstructed here. Analysis of the data presented by the chart indicates that it shows the cumulative re-offense rates over a seven year period following release. (If it were year-by-year as the title suggests, approximately 115% of those released would have re-offended. See Section 2.1 for a comparison of cumulative versus year-by-year charts.)



Although the source data was not presented with this chart, it can be readily seen that a significant portion of sex offender recidivism are out-of-category offenses (other than sex offenses), as indicated originally by "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983" (section 1.2). And though the sample was apparently quite small, leading to a greater variance in the data, the graphs are consistent with the reduction over of time of recidivism observed in other reports.

### 2.3. "Examining Recidivism"

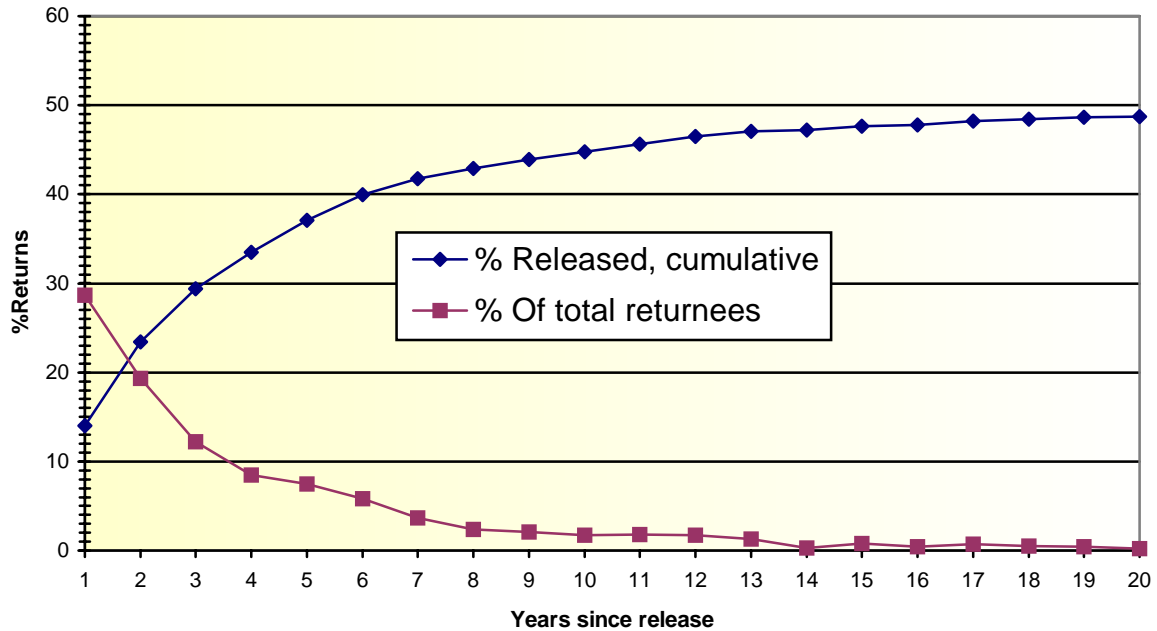
"Examining Recidivism" does not track sex offender recidivism rates over time specifically, but in the context of Recidivism Briefing Paper 18 (section 1.6) it is worth a quick look at the rates in general, over time. The following table is from the report "Examining Recidivism" (section 1.1).

Table 3. Constructing a 20-year estimate for returning to State prison					
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
Year of last release	Number entering prison in 1979	Total number released from State prison in that year	Percent returning to prison by 1979 (B/C)	Cumulative return rate through year 20	Percent of total returns occurring in each year <sup>a</sup>
1979	18,067	128,980	14.01%	14.01% (1)	28.7%
1978	11,212	118,920	9.43	23.44 (2)	19.3
1977	6,923	116,162	5.96	29.40 (3)	12.2
1976	4,466	108,442	4.12	33.52 (4)	8.5
1975	3,869	109,035	3.55	37.07 (5)	7.5
1974	2,602	91,183	2.85	39.92 (6)	5.8
1973	1,735	95,324	1.82	41.74 (7)	3.7
1972	1,135	96,373	1.18	42.92 (8)	2.4
1971	967	96,701	1.00	43.92 (9)	2.1
1970	653	76,649	0.85	44.77 (10)	1.7
1969	654	74,109	0.88	45.65 (11)	1.8
1968	585	70,250	0.83	46.48 (12)	1.7
1967	489	79,835	0.61	47.09 (13)	1.3
1966	114	83,237	0.14	47.23 (14)	0.3
1965	326	86,876	0.38	47.61 (15)	0.8
1964	184	87,030	0.21	47.82 (16)	0.4
1963	307	85,101	0.36	48.18 (17)	0.7
1962	206	86,589	0.24	48.42 (18)	0.5
1961	180	81,599	0.21	48.63 (19)	0.4
1960	90	77,870	0.12	48.75 (20)	0.2
Notes: Column B derived from table 2. Column C derived from National Prisoner Statistics. <sup>a</sup> Total returns over 20-year period.			Does not include those released from prison prior to 1960. Column F was calculated by dividing column D by 48.75 from column E.		

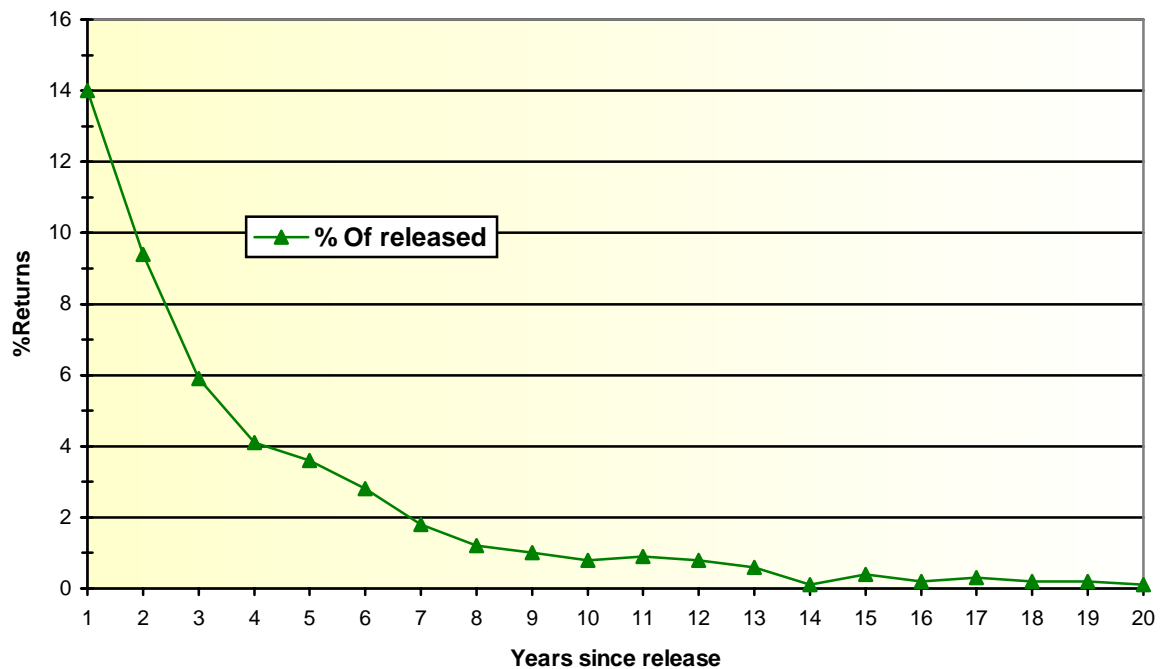
"...it is estimated that nearly half (48.7%) of those who exit prison will return within 20 years of release. Most of the recidivism, however, was found to occur within the first 3 years after release: an estimated 60% of those who will return to prison within 20 years do so by the end of the third year." "Examining Recidivism", pp.1-2.

## Examining Sex-Offender Recidivism

The following chart plots the data from columns E (cumulative % of returning prisoners by years since release) and F (percentage of all returnees, year-by-year since release):

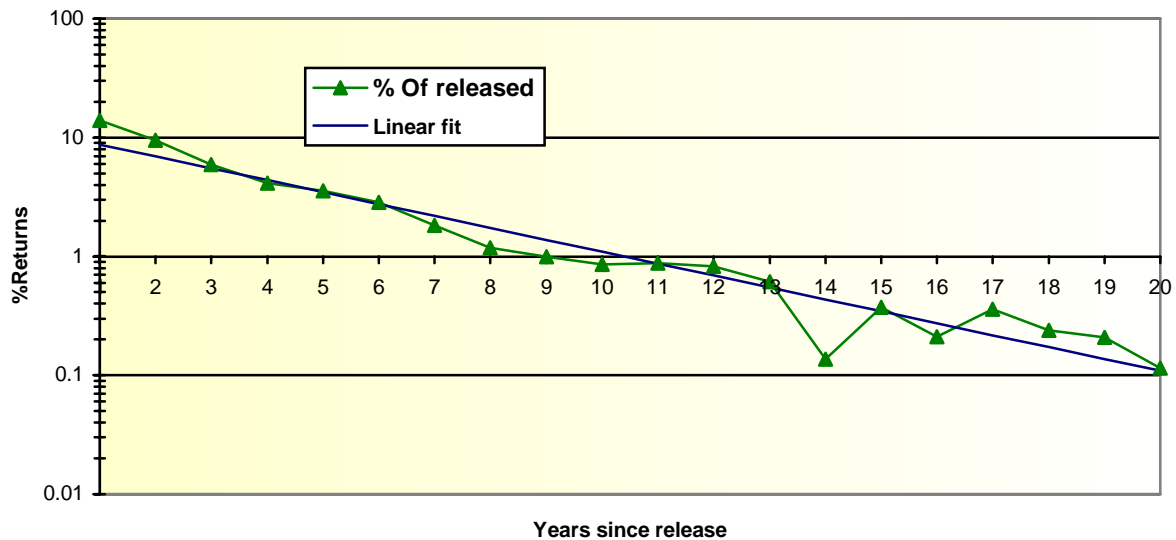


The following chart (column F, normalized) shows the percentage of all those who entered prison in 1979 who were released in years preceding 1979. As can be seen, towards the end of the second decade after release, the re-offense rate drops to very low levels.



## 2.4. Analysis and Extrapolation

While analysis of this data would best be done by a professional statistician, the following is an attempt to reach some general conclusions based on the data from "Examining Recidivism." A logarithmic regression was performed on the data from Column F, again normalized to show the percentage of those released who return in each year following release. The results are plotted below, on a logarithmic scale, along with the best-fit estimate.<sup>6</sup>



The trend exhibited by all these recidivism studies seems rather clear: The longer the ex-offender remains offense-free in the community after release, less likely it is that he will re-offend, and the decrease in likelihood is logarithmic.

Every year approximately 0.11% of the public is convicted of a crime for the first time.<sup>7</sup> This is about the same conviction rate of ex-offenders in general who have spent about 20 years in the community, according to the data and analysis above.

Although no studies of sex-offender recidivism over such long periods are known, the trends in recidivism rates over shorter terms (5 years in "Recidivism Briefing Paper 18: Offense Comparison – Two Definitions" and 7 years in "Sex Offenses in Washington State: 1998 Update") correlate very closely with those of offenders in general, albeit at lower levels.

Extrapolating the trends in sex offender recidivism relative to those of offenders in general shows the sex offender recidivism rate falling to the 0.1% level about 17 or 18 years after release. In other words, according to these trends the sex offender who has spent 18 years in the community without a re-offense is no more likely to commit a crime, any crime, than a member of the general public.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that in the raw data for the apparently discrepant year 14, a simple reversal of the number "114" to "411" would place the plotted value as close as the other points to the "Linear fit" estimate.

<sup>7</sup> According to "Felony Sentences in State Courts, 1998" (NCJ-190103), there were an estimated 927717 adults convicted of a felony in 1998. Using the approximation that 1/3 of these are not recidivists, based on the "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983" (section 1.2), and an estimated population of 270 million Americans: the rough calculation  $100 \times (927717 \div 3) \div 270 \text{ million} = 0.114\%$ .



### 3. Conclusion

The common thread through the studies presented here is that the recidivism rate for sex offenders is lower, not higher, than the recidivism rate for nearly all other types of offenders, and that the reoffenses are frequently in some crime category other than sex offenses.

In reviewing this data, one is led to wonder about the alleged "incurability" of sex offenders in general, which has often been cited to justify special post-release requirements imposed upon the convicted sex offender (such as registration and community notification). If sex offenders really are "incurable," that fact would be expected to show up in these surveys. But in a number of independent government studies, performed by different researchers from different agencies, utilizing different datasets, spread out over decades, the data that should show "incurability" and "most likely to re-offend" does not appear.

Of course, there will always be those individuals who will re-offend over and over, given the opportunity, but such are to be found in all categories of offenders. But the many government studies cited here show that these individuals, the kind who make headlines, are the exception and not the norm; analysis of the data leads one to conclude that a significant proportion of sex offenders released from prison are not likely to return, ever.

The common thread through the studies presented here is that the recidivism rate for sex offenders is lower, not higher, than the recidivism rate for nearly all other types of offenders, and that the reoffenses are frequently in some crime category other than sex offenses.

## 4. Sources

The following are the sources for the studies reviewed in this report. URLs are provided for reports that are available on the Internet. This list is not comprehensive; during the compilation of these studies for this report a number of other state and international studies were encountered on the Internet, but were not included because they duplicated the data presented or were less comprehensive than these studies. Examples are:

Florida Department of Corrections	<a href="http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/recidivism/index.html">http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/recidivism/index.html</a>
Kentucky Department of Corrections	<a href="http://www.cor.state.ky.us/facts_n_figures/recidivism.html">http://www.cor.state.ky.us/facts_n_figures/recidivism.html</a>
Solicitor General Canada	<a href="http://www.sgc.gc.ca/epub/corr/e199604/e199604.htm">http://www.sgc.gc.ca/epub/corr/e199604/e199604.htm</a>

### 4.1. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Paper copies of Bureau of Justice Statistics reports may be requested from:

BJS Clearinghouse  
Box 179  
Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-0179  
Tel: 1-800-732-3277

"Examining Recidivism" (NCJ-96501)	
"Felony Sentences in State Courts, 1998" (NCJ-190103)	<a href="http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fssc98.htm">http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fssc98.htm</a>
"Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983" (NCJ-116261)	<a href="http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/rpr83.htm">http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/rpr83.htm</a>
"Recidivism of Felons on Probation, 1986-89" (NCJ-134177)	
"Sex Offenses and Offenders" (NCJ-163392)	<a href="http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/soo.htm">http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/soo.htm</a>

### 4.2. Ohio Department of Corrections, Bureau of Research

"Summary of Sex Offender Characteristics: 1992 Intake Sample Population" (also called "Sex Offender Report; Intake 1992") <http://www.drc.state.oh.us/web/Reports/sexoffnd.pdf>

### 4.3. Washington State Institute for Public Policy

Copies of reports by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy may be obtained from:

Washington State Institute for Public Policy  
110 East Fifth Avenue, Suite 214  
Post Office Box 40999  
Olympia, Washington 98504-0999  
Tel: (360) 586-2677  
FAX: (360) 586-2793  
URL: <http://www.wa.gov/wsipp>

"Sex Offenses in Washington State: 1998 Update," Document No. 98-08-1101  
<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/crime/cprot.html>

#### **4.4. Washington State Department of Corrections, Planning and Research Section**

For information about these briefing papers, or how to obtain them, call:

R.P.P. Smith, Ph.D.  
Planning and Research Administrator  
Department of Corrections  
Planning and Research Section  
P.O. Box 41108  
Olympia, WA 98504-1108  
Tel: (360) 753-4604  
FAX: (360) 664-8754  
[rpsmith@doc1.wa.gov](mailto:rpsmith@doc1.wa.gov)

"Recidivism Briefing Paper 17: Offense Comparison – Returns to Prison, September 1999"  
<http://www.wa.gov/doc/Content/paper17.pdf>

"Recidivism Briefing Paper 18: Offense Comparison – Two Definitions, October 2000"  
<http://www.wa.gov/doc/Content/paper18.pdf>

Chart: "Average Percent Returns to Prison During the Five Years Following Release"  
<http://www.wa.gov/doc/Content/faq/recidivism.htm>

