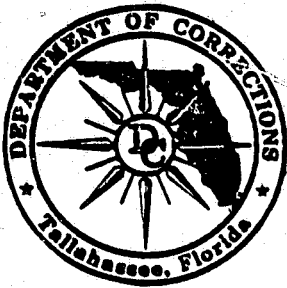


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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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Research Report

A STUDY OF RECOMMITMENT RATES FOR INMATES
RELEASED FROM CUSTODY DURING CALENDAR
YEARS 1973, 1974 AND 1975

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ACQUISITIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an update on an earlier study conducted by the Bureau of Planning, Research and Statistics to determine: 1) the number of offenders released from DC institutions who had been re-admitted within a period of 18, 24, 30 and 36 months following their release; 2) determine rates of recommitment to prison; 3) identify any critical period after release relative to the increased likelihood of recommitment; and 4) determine if there was any significant relationship between type of release and the above factors.

The methodology of the study was established by federal Guidelines Manual; M4100.1F, published by LEAA. The sample of ex-offenders used in the study were those released in calendar years 1973, 1974 and 1975. DC prison admission data was analyzed to determine if any of these ex-inmates were re-admitted within four time categories from the date of release. Since admission date was only available (at the time of the study) to June 30, 1978, those released in December of 1975 could only be followed for 30 months. Therefore, all offender recommitment data for those released in 1975 was limited to 30 months while those released in 1973 and 1974 were followed for a thirty-six month period. This report deals with only a 30 month follow-up as that was the longest period for all man years. As per the LEAA requirements, all types of readmissions were included in the study whether commission of a new offense was involved or not. Therefore, a significant number of offenders released under community

supervision, who were returned for technical violations, are included in the study.

Utilizing this methodology, the following results were established:

- * Of the 4514 inmates released¹ during calendar year 1973, 801 (17.7%) were readmitted to prison within 30 months.
- * Of the 4396 inmates released¹ during calendar year 1974, 725 (16.5%) were readmitted to prison within 30 months.
- * Of the 3871 inmates released¹ during calendar year 1975², 469 (12.1%) were readmitted to prison within 30 months.
- * Paroles accounted for the greatest proportion of releases in the years examined (69% in 1973, 66% in 1974, and 46%² in 1975). Therefore, it was not surprising to note that the greatest number of recommitments were of offenders released on parole .. .64% of those released in 1973, 67% of those released in 1974, and 44% of those released in 1975.
- * Mandatory Conditional Release (MCR) accounted for the smallest proportion of releases in the years studied (10% in 1973, 14% in 1974, and 22% in 1975), yet the relative proportion

¹The number released does not include deaths, court vacated sentences, commutations or other miscellaneous types of release.

²The decline in the total release during 1975 by expiration, mandatory conditional release, and parole is the result of exceptional and inordinately high parole releases that occurred in 1973 and again in December of 1974. The exceptional parole release in 1974 was in direct response to overcrowded conditions in the Florida prison system. In an effort to reduce overcrowding, the Parole Commission apparently depleted the pending parole caseload by accelerating the release of some inmates who otherwise might have been paroled during 1975.

of recommitments represented by this group indicated that these offenders are more likely to return to prison than those paroled or released by expiration of sentence.

- * While those under community supervision (parole and MCR) represented nearly four-fifths of those recommitted, it should be noted that an offender who is released upon expiration of sentence (EOS) can only be returned to prison upon conviction for a new offense, while those under supervision can be readmitted for a number of violations relative to the conditions of their parole or mandatory conditional release provisions. In fact, about 57% of inmates under supervision were readmitted for technical violations during the years from 1973 to 1976. It is not unlikely, however, that some of those returned to prison for technical violation were so returned in lieu of prosecution for new offenses.

- * Expiration of sentence accounted for 20% of the releases in 1973 and 1974, and 32% of the releases in 1975. The dramatic change in the 1975 proportion is the result of a sharp drop in the number and percentage of paroles during that year.

- * The observed drop in recommitments in the parole class (from 16% in 1973 to 12% in 1975) is also demonstrated in Expiration of Sentence (from 17% in 1973 to 5% in 1975).

* Finally, the study is consistent with Annual Report statistics that reports approximately 20% of annual admissions have been committed to the Department one or more times previously.

I

INTRODUCTION

It is very popular, at this time, to use "recidivism" as a measure of the "progress and performance of the criminal justice system" toward the state objective of "rehabilitation" of the offender. Current published estimates of the "rate of recidivism" range from 20-25% (Martinson, 1976) to 66% (Uniform Crime Reports). Public statements appearing in the press have claimed a Florida "recidivism" rate as high as 80%.

Much of this variance can be attributed to lack of a generally accepted definition of the term "recidivism". The dictionary definition of the word indicates "a return to a prior mode of behavior". In the context of a return to criminal behavior, recidivism has been defined as re-arrest, re-conviction, or re-commitment to prison. UCR analysis of data regarding recidivism did not distinguish adequately between those who are arrested and released without conviction and those subsequently convicted and/or returned to prison.

There have been many definitions of "recidivism" (Uniform Crime Report, 1971; Fox, 1968; National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1973; Offender Based State Correctional Information System, 1975).

The period of time over which a person may return to criminal behavior after release from custody has been a hotly contested issue among various authorities on criminal justice statistics.

There have also been many interpretations of meaning of the reported data in terms of success/failure, performance and/or progress of the criminal justice system. This report does not attempt to address what may be academic or hypothetical interpretations of the statistic presented.

The purpose of this study is to determine how many inmates have been recommitted to DC institutions during an ensuing period following their release from DC custody. Recommitment is defined as readmission, for any reason, to a Department of Corrections institution following release by expiration of sentence, parole or mandatory conditional release. Offenders returned for technical violations have been included in this study as required by the LEAA Guidelines Manual; M4100.1F.

Recommitment may be the result of action taken to enforce technical violations of parole or MCR as well as for admissions related to new criminal offenses. In this respect, it is not surprising to see a disproportionate distribution of recommitment among those released under community supervision programs. It is likely that Florida may see the impact of improved collection of delinquent cost of supervision payments or improved caseload/supervision ratios reflected in future recommitment figures.

In essence, this study is not intended to be a report of the "progress and performance" of the Florida Department of Corrections based upon "recidivism rate". Too many factors not under the control of the correctional process (i.e., unemployment, inflation, family and peer group pressures, prior programmed behavior and established values of each offender, etc.) and too many extraneous variables (i.e., increases caused by improved efficiency in

community supervision, administrative policies, changes in jurisdiction of the Department, statutory change, etc.) are involved to use this data as a systems performance measure relative to offender "rehabilitation".

II

METHODOLOGY

The definitions applied to this study for "recommitment to the corrections system" were established by Section M4100.(1)F of the LEAA Guidelines for Comprehensive Criminal Justice Planning (paragraph 73; 16a; and 16b). This definition includes "violations for conditional release" related to criminal acts as well as "technical violations" in which the Paroling Authority or Courts "have taken an action resulting in an adverse change in offender status."

The sample data was compiled from DC computer sources. An inmate was included in this sample if he was released (by expiration of sentence, parole or mandatory conditional release) during calendar year 1973, 1974 or 1975 and was subsequently recommitted in a 30 month period following the date of his release.

The three cohorts with their respective recommitments are presented in the following table:

Release Year	Number in Cohort	Number Readmitted after 30 months
1973	4514	801
1974	4396	725
1975	3871	469

Analysis was conducted by comparing: (1) the percentage of cohort (total released) and readmissions in each group by type of release and (2) the percentage of each type of release for readmissions after 30 months.

III

RECOMMITMENT OF OFFENDERS RELEASED IN CALENDAR YEARS 1973, 1974 AND 1975 (A Twenty-four Month Follow-up)

There were 4514 inmates released from DC custody in calendar year 1973. Within a 30 month period subsequent to release, 801 of these offenders have been readmitted to DC institutions. This represents a recommitment rate of 17.7%.

The following section of this report presents data about the group of 1973 releases and their rate of return to the Department of Corrections.

Table 1 compares the 1973 cohort (total releases by category of release) with readmissions.

Table 1

Percentages and Frequency of Cohort and Readmissions By Type of Release (1973 Releases)

Type of Release	Cohort		Readmissions	
Expiration	21%	954	20%	140
Parole	69%	3112	64%	509
MCR	10%	448	16%	132
Total	100%	4514	100%	801

The table shows that there are different rates of readmission by category of release. Inmates released on parole constituted the largest percentage for both groups. However, the percentage of inmates who were released on parole is larger in the cohort group than it is in the readmission group (69%; 64% respectively). In contrast, the percentage of readmissions for the other categories of release is larger than it is in the cohort group. Inmates who received mandatory conditional releases showed the greatest disparity (10% cohort group; 15% readmission group). Furthermore, the data shows that 30% of the inmates who received Mandatory Conditional Releases, 17% who terminated their sentences by expiration and 16% who were released on parole were readmitted to prison within 30 months after their release.

* 1974 Follow-up *

There were 4396 inmates released from DC custody in calendar year 1974. Within a 30 month period subsequent to release, 725 of these offenders have been readmitted to DC institutions. This represents an overall recommitment rate of 16.5% for the 1974 release group.

Table 2 compares the 1974 cohort (total releases by category of release) with readmissions.

Table 2

Percentages and Frequency of Cohort and Readmissions
By Type of Release (1974 Releases)

Type of Release	Cohort		Readmissions	
Expiration	20%	899	9%	69
Parole	66%	2893	67%	485
MCR	14%	604	24%	171
Total	100%	4396	100%	725

Table 2 indicates, as did Table 1, that there are different rates of readmission by category of release. Inmates released on parole still constituted the largest percentage for both groups. However, the percentage of inmates who were released on parole is nearly the same in the cohort group and in the readmission group. In contrast, the percentage of readmissions for the other categories of release is considerably different than it is in the cohort group. Inmates who received mandatory conditional releases in 1974 showed an increase (14% cohort group; 24% readmission group). Whereas the inmates released that same year on Expiration of Sentence showed a decrease (20% cohort; 9% readmission). Furthermore, the data for the 1974 Cohort shows that 28% of the inmates who received Mandatory Conditional Releases, 8% who terminated their sentences by expiration and 17% who were released on parole were readmitted to prison within 30 months after their release.

* 1975 Follow-up *

There were 3871 inmates released from DC custody in calendar year 1975. Within a 30 month period subsequent to release, 469 of these offenders have been readmitted to DC institutions. This represents a recommitment rate of 12.1% for the 1974 release group.

Table 3 compares the 1975 cohort (total releases by category of release) with readmissions.

Table 3

Percentages and Frequency of Cohort and Readmissions
By Type of Release (1975 releases)

Type of Release	Cohort		Readmissions	
Expiration	32%	1255	12%	58
Parole	46%	1764	44%	205
MCR	22%	852	44%	206
Total	100%	3871	100%	469

The Table 3 shows that there are different rates of readmission by category of release. Inmates released on parole constituted the largest percentage for both groups. However, the percentage of inmates who were released on parole is larger in the cohort group than it is in the readmission group (46%; 44% respectively). In contrast, the percentage of readmissions for the MCR category of release is larger than it is in the cohort group. Inmates who received mandatory conditional releases showed (22% cohort group; 44% readmission group), while inmates who were released by expiration of sentence again showed a trend in the opposite direction (32% cohort; 12% readmission).

The data also shows that 24% of the inmates who received Mandatory Conditional Releases, 5% who terminated their sentences by expiration and 12% who were released on parole were readmitted to prison within 30 months after their release.

END