

A Profile of Factors and Offenses Related to Parolee Recidivism

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One of the Parole Board's primary functions is promoting and ensuring public safety for the community, the victims, and also for the offenders themselves. To perform this duty, the Parole Board must identify those parole-eligible offenders for whom there is sufficient indication that confinement has served its purpose and to set various conditions for their release into the community. Upon their release into the community, the Parole Board provides supervision and assistance to the offender and direction to relevant services that promote responsible conduct.

The Parole Board utilizes assessment tools and current research on parolee recidivism (return to incarceration) to make more informed decisions regarding releasing practices, supervisory strategies, and revocation (termination of parole supervision) practices. Therefore, it is necessary that the Parole Board have access to current information regarding offender characteristics and offense history, as well as their relationship to offender recidivism, to ensure its primary objective—public safety.

It is the goal of this report to accurately analyze recidivism data and be able to translate the findings to Parole Board members, field parole officers, and other Parole Board staff in an understandable and informative manner to promote effective decisionmaking for release and parole supervision.

Method

Recidivism, for the purposes of this study, is defined as any new incarceration by an offender who successfully completed parole supervision in 2004. Parole revocations of supervision will **not** be factored into the recidivism results of this report, only re-imprisonment in either a Massachusetts county or state correctional facility.

This report tracks any new incarceration(s) from the date of the offender's parole discharge date (PDD) in 2004 through December 31, 2007. A three-year follow-up period is known in criminal justice literature as the *release threshold*—the period of time the offender is in the community and at risk of repeat criminal activity. There is also agreement among researchers and criminal justice administrators that a three-year follow-up period is a sufficient follow-up period to identify a majority of the offenders who would eventually be re-incarcerated for a new crime (Legislative Budget Board, 2005).

In 2004, 5,399 offenders successfully completed their parole supervision period. The State Parole Integrated Records and Informational Tracking System (SPIRIT), the Parole Board's tracking and informational database, was able to query and identify which of these 5,399 offenders had been re-incarcerated in a Massachusetts county or state correctional facility on or before December 31, 2007, for any new misdemeanor or felonious offense.

This report will highlight the number of parole recidivists in this time period in addition to analyzing these recidivists by the following criteria:

- Offense type(s)
- Governing offense history
- Gender
- Race
- Age
- Commitment type

Results

In total, 1,146 (21% of the 5,399) offenders who successfully completed parole supervision in 2004 were returned to a Massachusetts county or state correctional facility on or before December 31, 2007. There are no statistics currently available that portray an overall recidivism rate for all parole agencies across the United States, yet we know that recidivism rates across the country for all prisoners being released from jail consistently hover around 50%. Although parole revocations and out-of-state incarcerations were not factored into this report, a 21% recidivism rate should indicate to the agency and other criminal justice administrators that supervision can have a positive effect on lowering recidivism rates for new criminal activity.

Criminal Offense Type(s)

The following table will break down the 1,146 parole recidivists by the offense type (i.e., Person, Sex, Property, Drug, Other Weapon, Other Motor Vehicle, and Other) from their parole commitment's governing offense. The idea behind using the offender's parole commitment instead of the new offense commitment is to analyze which categories of offenders are more likely to be re-incarcerated on new charges.

Table 1. Offense Type

Governing Offense Type	Overall Number	Overall %	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
			Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Person	272	24.0	92	34.0	101	37.0	79	29.0
Sex	10	1.0	0	0.0	4	40.0	6	60.0
Property	380	33.0	154	41.0	118	31.0	108	28.0
Drug	265	23.0	87	33.0	76	29.0	102	38.0
Other Weapon	18	2.0	10	56.0	2	11.0	6	33.0
Other Motor Vehicle	105	9.0	25	24.0	37	35.0	43	41.0
Other	96	8.0	36	38.0	36	38.0	24	24.0
Total	1,146	100.0	404	35.0	374	33.0	368	32.0

From the table above, we can observe the following:

- *Property* offenders were more likely than any other group to recidivate; in addition, 41% of the *Property* offenders recidivated within one year.
- *Person* and *Drug* offenders made up the next two highest categories of recidivists.

- Sex offenders were least likely to be re-incarcerated for further criminal activity.
- The majority of offenders (35%) recidivated within the one-year follow-up period.

Governing Offense(s)

The next seven tables break down the 1,146 recidivists by their parole commitment's governing offense. The governing offenses will be presented in tables grouped by the offense types listed previously.

Table 2. Person

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Assault & Battery	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Assault & Battery on +60/Disabled	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Assault & Battery upon Public Employees	12	6	50.0	2	17.0	4	33.0
Assault & Battery with Dangerous Weapon	52	19	37.0	19	37.0	14	26.0
Assault & Battery with Dangerous Weapon +60, Subsequent Offense	4	1	25.0	3	75.0	0	0.0
Aggravated Assault & Battery	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Assault or Assault & Battery	127	45	35.0	47	37.0	35	28.0
Assault with Dangerous Weapon	25	6	24.0	12	48.0	7	28.0
Assault to Murder or Maim	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Armed Assault to Rob	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Unarmed Assault to Rob +60	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Armed Robbery	15	2	13.0	6	40.0	7	47.0
Armed and Masked Robbery	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Unarmed Robbery	9	4	44.0	1	12.0	4	44.0
Unarmed Robbery +60	2	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
Conspiracy	9	3	33.3	3	33.3	3	33.3
Kidnapping	3	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3
Manslaughter	3	1	33.0	0	0.0	2	67.0
Criminal Harassment	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Stalking	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Attempted Extortion	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Homicide by Motor Vehicle	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	272	92	34.0	101	37.0	79	29.0

Table 3. Property

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Breaking & Entering Nighttime for Felony	59	19	32.0	23	39.0	17	29.0
Breaking & Entering for Misdemeanor	9	6	67.0	3	33.0	0	0.0
Breaking & Entering Daytime for Felony	26	15	58.0	9	34.0	2	8.0
Larceny over \$250	76	29	38.0	21	28.0	26	34.0
Larceny under \$250	14	5	36.0	7	50.0	2	14.0
Larceny from Person	31	12	39.0	9	29.0	10	32.0
Shoplifting	16	5	31.0	5	31.0	6	38.0
Shoplifting over \$100	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Stealing in Building, Ship, or Railroad Car	8	2	24.0	3	38.0	3	38.0
Malicious Destruction of Property	24	11	46.0	4	17.0	9	37.0
Larceny, Malicious Damage, Receive Stolen, or Take and Steal Parts of Motor Vehicle	33	15	46.0	11	33.0	7	21.0
Larceny, Malicious Damage, Receive Stolen, or Take and Steal Parts of Motor Vehicle, Subsequent Offense	2	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Buying or Receiving Stolen Goods	22	9	41.0	5	23.0	8	36.0
Use Motor Vehicle Without Authority	10	5	50.0	0	0.0	5	50.0
Use Motor Vehicle Without Authority 2nd Offense	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Uttering False or Forged Records, Deeds, or Other Writings	11	3	28.0	4	36.0	4	36.0
Utter False Prescription	2	1	50.0	0	0.0	1	50.0
Fraudulent Use of Credit Cards to Obtain Money, Goods, or Services	3	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3
Drawing or Uttering Fraudulent Checks	4	3	75.0	0	0.0	1	25.0
Use of Personal Identification of Another; Identity Fraud	2	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Making, Possession, or Use of Burglarious Instruments	5	3	60.0	2	40.0	0	0.0
Unarmed Burglary	4	1	25.0	1	25.0	2	50.0
Destruction of Place of Worship	2	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
Motor Vehicle Theft or Concealment	2	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Natural Scenery	2	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
Enter Dwelling at Night for Felony	2	1	50.0	0	0.0	1	50.0
Misuse of Credit Cards	2	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Burning or Aiding in Burning of Dwelling Houses	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Burning or Aiding in Burning of Woods and Other Property	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Larceny from Person +65	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Larceny of Leased or Rented Property	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Possession of False, Forged or Counterfeit Bills, Notes or Traveler's Checks	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Willful Throwing or Placing of Explosives at or Near Persons or Property	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Common and Notorious Thief	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Total	380	154	41.0	118	31.0	108	28.0

Table 4. Drug

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Possess Class A Drug	20	6	30.0	7	35.0	7	35.0
Possess Class B Drug	22	5	23.0	6	27.0	11	50.0
Possess Class B Drug, Subsequent Offense	2	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Possess Class C Drug	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Possess Class D Drug	23	11	48.0	6	26.0	6	26.0
Possess Class D Drug, Subsequent Offense	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Possess Class E Drug	2	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
Drug Violation Near School	8	0	0.0	4	50.0	4	50.0
Possession with Intent to Distribute Class B Substance	47	14	30.0	12	25.0	21	45.0
Possession with Intent to Distribute Class D Substance	21	8	38.0	5	24.0	8	38.0
Possession with Intent to Distribute Class A Substance	48	10	21.0	18	37.0	20	42.0
Possession of Hypodermic	9	6	67.0	0	0.0	3	33.0
Unlawful Possession of Particular Controlled Substances, Including Heroin and Marihuana	48	18	38.0	15	31.0	15	31.0
Unlawful Manufacture, Distribution, Dispensing or Possession of Class B Controlled Substances with Intent to Manufacture	10	3	30.0	1	10.0	6	60.0
Sale of Drug Paraphernalia	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Theft of Controlled Substances from Persons Authorized to Dispense or Possess	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Trafficking in Cocaine 28 to 100 Grams	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	265	87	33.0	76	29.0	102	38.0

Table 5. Sex

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Indecent Assault and Battery on Child Under Fourteen	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Open and Gross Lewdness and Lascivious Behavior	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Rape	3	0	0.0	1	33.0	2	67.0
Rape and Abuse of Child	4	0	0.0	1	25.0	3	75.0
Aggravated Rape	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
Total	10	0	0.0	4	40.0	6	60.0

Table 6. Other Weapon

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Carry Dangerous Weapon	2	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Possess Firearm Without FID Card	5	3	60.0	0	0.0	2	40.0
Carry Firearm Without License	4	2	50.0	0	0.0	2	50.0
Sell Rifle/Shotgun Without Serial Number	7	3	42.0	2	29.0	2	29.0
Total	18	10	56.0	2	11.0	6	33.0

Table 7. Other Motor Vehicle

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Leaving the Scene of Personal Injury	3	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3
Leaving the Scene of Property Damage	3	0	0.0	2	67.0	1	33.0
Negligent or Reckless Operation of Motor Vehicle	8	2	24.0	3	38.0	3	38.0
Operation of Motor Vehicle after Suspension or Revocation of License	14	7	50.0	4	29.0	3	21.0
Operation of Motor Vehicle after Suspension or Revocation of License, Subsequent Offense	20	2	10.0	5	25.0	13	65.0
OUI Liquor or Drugs	21	6	29.0	8	38.0	7	33.0
OUI Liquor or Drugs, 2nd Offense	20	5	25.0	9	45.0	6	30.0
OUI Liquor or Drugs, 3rd Offense	9	1	11.0	3	33.0	5	56.0
OUI Liquor or Drugs, 4th Offense	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
License Suspended for OUI	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Operation of Motor Vehicle Without License	1	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Operating Motor Vehicle Without Liability Policy	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Operation on Public Ways; Emergencies; Regulations	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
Number Plate Violation to Conceal ID	2	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
Total	105	25	24.0	37	35.0	43	41.0

Table 8. Other

Governing Offense	Overall Number	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
		Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
Violate Abuse Prevention Order	31	10	32.0	16	52.0	5	16.0
Attempt to Commit Crime	4	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0
Threat to Commit Crime	17	6	35.0	4	24.0	7	41.0
Engaging in Sexual Conduct for a Fee	6	0	0.0	3	50.0	3	50.0
Escape or Attempt to Escape, or Failure to Return from Temporary Release or Furlough	3	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3
Furnishing False Name or Social Security Number to Law Enforcement Officer or Official	5	2	40.0	2	40.0	1	20.0
Intimidation of Witnesses, Jurors and Persons Furnishing Information in Connection with Criminal Proceedings	4	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0
Penalty for Certain Offenses	9	4	45.0	2	22.0	3	33.0
Resisting Arrest	15	8	53.0	3	20.0	4	27.0
Trespass	2	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Total	96	36	38.0	36	38.0	24	24.0

Analyzing and comparing the above seven tables we can infer the following:

- The top five governing offenses with the highest parolee recidivists were as follows:
 - (1) Assault or Assault & Battery (*n* = 127)
 - (2) Larceny Over \$250 (*n* = 76)
 - (3) Breaking & Entering Nighttime for Felony (*n* = 59)
 - (4) Assault & Battery with Dangerous Weapon (*n* = 52)
 - (5) Possession with Intent to Distribute Class A Substance (*n* = 48, *tie*)
Unlawful Possession of Particular Controlled Substances, Including Heroin and Marihuana (*n* = 48, *tie*)

- No *Sex* offenders recidivated within the one-year follow-up period, yet their rates of recidivism increased in the second and third year of follow-up.
- 41% of the *Other Motor Vehicle* offenders recidivated in their third year of the follow-up period.
- 38% of the *Drug* offenders recidivated in their third year of the follow-up period.
- More than half of all offenders with a weapons charge recidivated within their first year of the follow-up period.
- Other governing offenses with high rates of parolee recidivism were as follows:
 - Larceny, Malicious Damage, Receive Stolen, or Take and Steal Parts of Motor Vehicle ($n = 33$)
 - Violate Abuse Prevention Order ($n = 31$)
 - Larceny from Person ($n = 31$)

Gender

Out of the 1,146 parole recidivists being examined, 1,042 (91%) were males and 104 (9%) were females. Research has shown that the male gender is a significant predictor of future criminal activity (Kim & MacKenzie, 2006).

Another way of examining these figures is to look at the number of males versus females who completed parole supervision in 2004 and compare against the recidivism data:

- 4,837 males completed parole supervision in 2004. Knowing that 1,042 males recidivated, one can say that overall, 22% of the male population recidivated.
- 562 females completed parole supervision in 2004. Over the three-year tracking period, 104 of these females were returned to custody. Interestingly, 19% of the females discharging from supervision in 2004 had new incarcerations.

From the above data, it appears that females who are on parole supervision run almost the same risk of being re-incarcerated for new offenses as do males.

Race

From the group of 1,146 parole recidivists,

- 690 (60%) were White.
- 247 (22%) were Black.
- 187 (16%) were Hispanic.
- 7 (1%) were Asian or Pacific Islander.
- 1 (0%) was American Indian or Alaskan Native.
- 14 (1%) were of Unknown origin.

The data shows that the majority of offenders who recidivated were White, yet when comparing against the different races who completed supervision in 2004, the figures show that Black offenders had the highest rates of recidivism:

- 247 (24%) of the 1,039 Black offenders completing supervision in 2004 recidivated.

Compare this to the following:

- 690 (21%) of the 3,251 White offenders completing supervision in 2004 were recidivists.
- 187 (19%) of the 993 Hispanic offenders completing supervision in 2004 were recidivists.

Age and Commitment Type

Criminal justice literature reports that age has a positive correlation with recidivism—the younger the offender, the more likely his chances of becoming a repeat criminal (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2004). The results from this study are no different. Out of the 922 offenders completing supervision in 2004 who were between the ages of 26 to 30, 286 (31%) were recidivists. This by far was the highest age category for offenders being re-incarcerated for new offenses.

For parolees, another factor strongly associated with new criminal behavior was their parole commitment type. Parolees discharging from supervision in 2004 with a county commitment recidivated at a rate of 22% versus 16% for state offenders and 9% for out-of-state offenders.

Recommendation

Monitoring data and trends for recidivism within the parole population is crucial for making decisions and monitoring outcomes that affect public safety. Ideally, the information presented in this report can lay the groundwork for continued research in regards to parolee criminal behavior. These statistics highlight the need to establish an ongoing process to research and make available the rate of recidivism for Massachusetts parolees.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Massachusetts Parole Board that on a yearly basis the rates of recidivism for parolee offenders be tracked and analyzed for any given follow-up period.

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