



# Recidivism of Adult Felons 2004

## Overview

During Calendar Year 2004, Washington courts entered 28,076 adult felony sentences. Approximately 80% of the offenders were male and 61.5% of the sentences involved offenders who had a history of one or more prior offenses (Table 1).

**Table 1: Demographics**

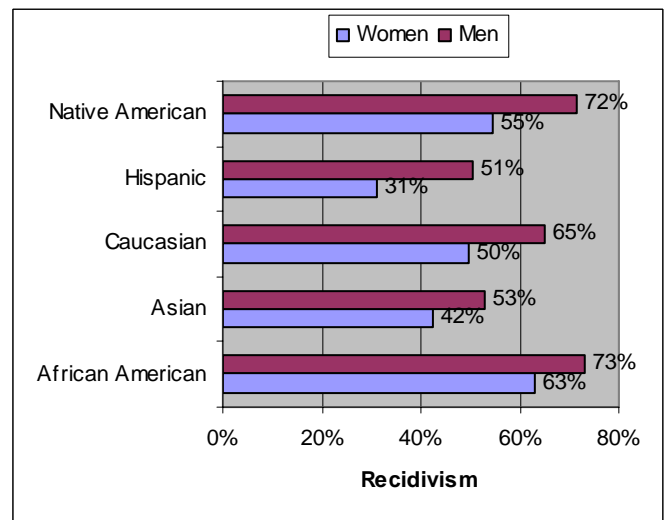
	Number	% Sentenced	% Recidivism
<b>Gender and % of population<sup>1</sup></b>			
Male 49.8%	21,449	76%	65%
Female 49.6%	5,383	19%	50%
Unknown 0.6%	1,244	4%	57%
<b>Ethnicity and % of population</b>			
African American 3.5%	3,806	13.6%	71.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander 6.5%	624	2.2%	50.8%
Caucasian 77.6%	20,227	72.0%	61.1%
Hispanic <sup>2</sup> 8.5%	1,095	3.9%	48.5%
Native American 1.7%	719	2.6%	65.4%
Other 3%	6	0.0%	50.0%
Unavailable	1,599	5.7%	54.7%
<b>Age and % of population</b>			
15 to 24 – 14.3%	8,248	29.4%	54.6%
25 to 34 – 13.5 %	8,734	31.1%	65.6%
35 to 44 – 15.3%	7,318	26.1%	66.0%
45 to 54 – 15.1%	2,935	10.5%	61.7%
55 to 64 – 10.1 %	496	1.8%	46.0%
Over 65 – 11.3%	94	0.3%	36.2%
Unknown	251	0.9%	53.8%

<sup>1</sup> The data are estimates from the National Center for Health Statistics, provided by the Washington Office of Financial Management.

<sup>2</sup> Although the United States Census Bureau does not include Hispanic in its list of “races,” due to the relatively large segment of Washington’s population identified as “Hispanic” and in the interest of clarifying disproportionality issues, persons of Hispanic ethnicity have been placed in this group regardless of race.

For purposes of this report, the term “recidivism” includes any sentence in which the offender’s criminal history contains a prior felony sentence<sup>3</sup>. The overall rate of recidivism for men was 64.6% compared to 50.5% among women. African Americans account for 3.5% of the population in Washington, a disproportionately high 13.6% of all sentences, and had the highest recidivism rate of all racial groups at 71.5%. Native Americans, the smallest group with 1.7% of the general population received 2.6% of all sentences and had 65.4% recidivism. Caucasians, the largest segment of the general population, 77.6%, received 72% of all sentences with recidivism at 61.1%. Hispanic women accounted for the lowest overall recidivism (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Recidivism by Race and Gender**



Contrary to generally accepted views, the average age of first time offenders, 30.7 years, was only slightly lower than the average age of repeat offenders, 31.7. Women tended to become repeat offenders at a later age,

<sup>3</sup> The SGC database does not contain data relating to dates of release from confinement. As such, unlike some other studies, the length of time between convictions has not been factored into this report.

averaging 32.7 years old, compared to men at 31.5. Offenders between the ages of 35 and 44 years old received 26% of sentences and had the highest percentage of recidivism at 66%. They were followed closely by offenders between 25 and 34 years old who received 31% of sentences and experienced a recidivism rate of 65.6%.

### Recidivism by Offense

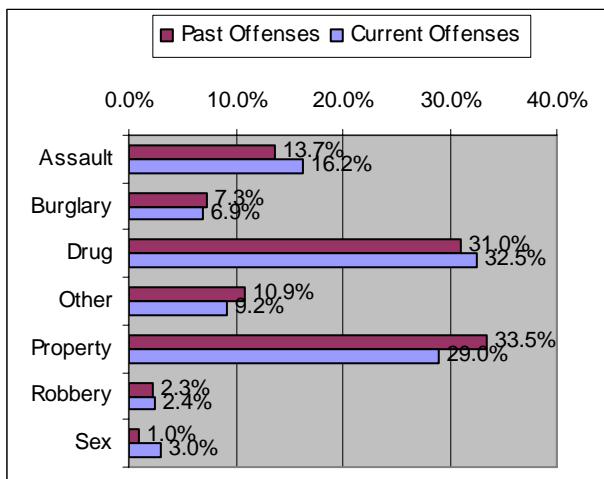
Felony offenses are categorized into nine primary offense groups: assault, burglary, drug, manslaughter, murder, property, robbery, sex, and other. Drug and property crimes accounted for the largest share of current offenses, 33% and 29% respectively (Table 2).

**Table 2: Recidivism by Offense**

Offense Type	Total Offenders	Offenders with prior felonies	% of all Sentences	% Recidivism
Assault	4,547	2,569	16%	56%
Burglary	1,931	1,229	7%	64%
Drug	9,138	5,609	33%	61%
Manslaughter	102	27	0%	26%
Murder	109	38	0%	35%
Other	2,596	1,780	9%	69%
Property	8,142	5,381	29%	66%
Robbery	680	389	2%	57%
Sex	831	249	3%	30%
Total	28,076	17,271	100%	62%

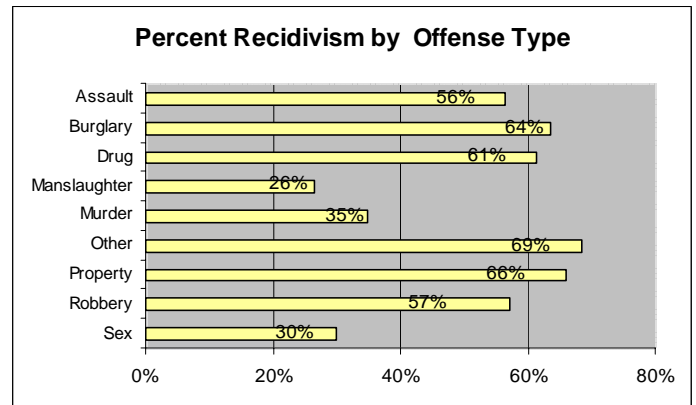
There were 17,271 sentences that involved offenders with a history of past offenses. The most frequently listed prior convictions were drug crimes, closely followed by property crimes. Drug crimes had a recidivism rate of 61%. Other felonies had the highest recidivism rate at 69%, followed closely by property crimes at 66%.

**Figure 2: Current versus Past Offenses**



Despite generally held views, the more violent crimes including manslaughter, murder and robbery, accounted for the smallest number of offenses and, along with sex offenses, the lowest recidivism rates (Figures 2 and 3).

**Figure 3: Recidivism Percent**



Most recidivist sentences involved multiple prior convictions. There were a total of 66,240 prior sentences resulting in a rate of 3.84 past convictions per recidivist sentenced. Although offenders convicted of murder had the third lowest percentage of recidivism (35%) those who were recidivists, had the highest rate of prior convictions per sentence (4.4). Property crimes accounted for the second highest rate of prior offenses per recidivist at 4.1 prior convictions per sentence (Table 3).

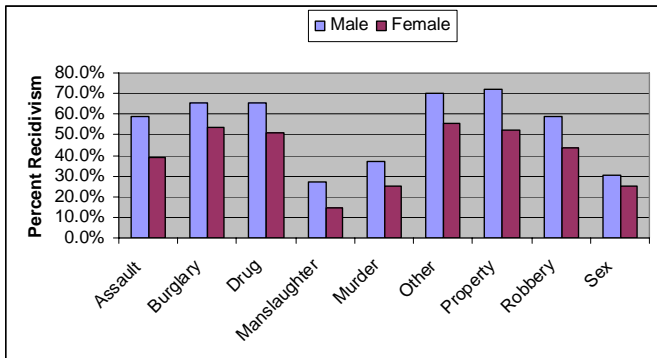
**Table 3: Rate of Prior Offenses<sup>4</sup>**

Offense Category	Total Prior Offenses	Rate of Priors per Current Sentences	Rate of Priors per Recidivist Sentences
Assault	9,045	1.99	3.52
Burglary	4,804	2.49	3.91
Drug	20,567	2.25	3.67
Manslaughter	72	0.71	2.67
Murder	168	1.54	4.42
Other	7,207	2.78	4.05
Property	22,209	2.73	4.13
Robbery	1,494	2.20	3.84
Sex	674	0.81	2.71
Total	66,240	2.36	3.84

<sup>4</sup> The rate of prior convictions for each sentence was calculated by dividing the total number of prior offenses by the total number of current sentences the rate of prior convictions for each recidivist was calculated by dividing the total number of prior offenses by the number of recidivist sentences.

Figure 4 illustrates recidivism by gender for each offense group. Property offenses were the most likely to have been committed by repeat offenders among men, with recidivism at 72%. Fifty-five percent of women recidivists were convicted of other felonies.

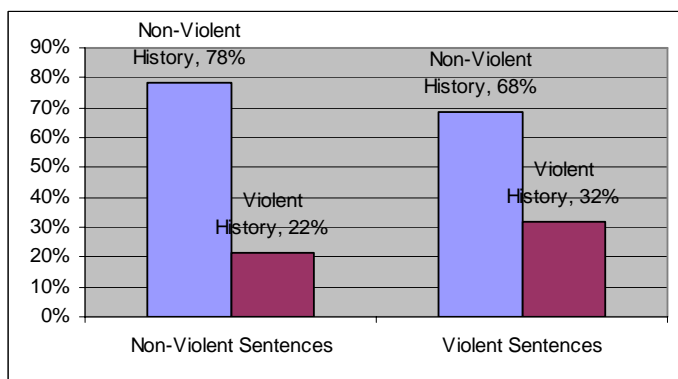
**Figure 4: Recidivism by Gender and Offense Group**



**Violent and Nonviolent Offenders**

Individual crimes in each category are classified as either violent or non-violent. Nearly 9% of the 2004 sentences involved violent offenses. 63% of non-violent sentences involved recidivists compared to violent offenses at 45%. However, among the current, non-violent recidivist sentences, 22% of the prior convictions were for violent crimes (Figure 5). Current violent recidivist sentences had a higher percentage of prior violent convictions at 32%. Of the sentences for violent crimes, the highest recidivism rate was for robbery at 58%, followed by burglary at 53% (Table 4).

**Figure 5: Percentage of Recidivism for Violent Offenses**



Of the sentences for non-violent offenses the “other” offense group had the highest recidivism at 69%, followed by 66% for property crimes and 64% for burglary.

**Table 4: Violent/Non-violent by category**

Current Category	Violent		Non-Violent	
	Total Offenses	Recidivism	Total Offenses	Recidivism
Assault	1064	45.4%	3483	59.9%
Burglary	137	52.6%	1794	64.5%
Drug			9138	61.4%
Manslaughter	95	26.3%	7	28.6%
Murder	109	34.9%		
Other	5	40.0%	2591	68.6%
Property	59	49.2%	8083	66.2%
Robbery	620	58.5%	60	43.3%
Sex	427	27.9%	404	32.2%

**Recidivism by County**

Pierce County had the highest percent of recidivism at 68%, Grays Harbor, Spokane and Yakima counties each had 66% recidivism. King County was 13<sup>th</sup> highest with 58% recidivism (Table 5).

**Table 5: Percent of Recidivism by County**

County Name	Total	Recidivism	% of total sentences
Adams	131	56%	0%
Asotin	189	50%	1%
Benton	1,000	61%	4%
Chelan	416	56%	1%
Clallam	309	56%	1%
Clark	2,010	60%	7%
Columbia	22	45%	0%
Cowlitz	976	65%	3%
Douglas	165	58%	1%
Ferry	28	25%	0%
Franklin	266	55%	1%
Garfield	12	42%	0%
Grant	470	49%	2%
Grays Harbor	502	66%	2%
Island	171	57%	1%
Jefferson	58	62%	0%
King	5,067	59%	18%
Kitsap	1,278	62%	5%
Kittitas	174	57%	1%
Klickitat	118	50%	0%
Lewis	754	65%	3%
Lincoln	29	52%	0%
Mason	266	54%	1%
Okanogan	177	46%	1%
Pacific	105	57%	0%
Pend Oreille	26	42%	0%
Pierce	4,258	68%	15%

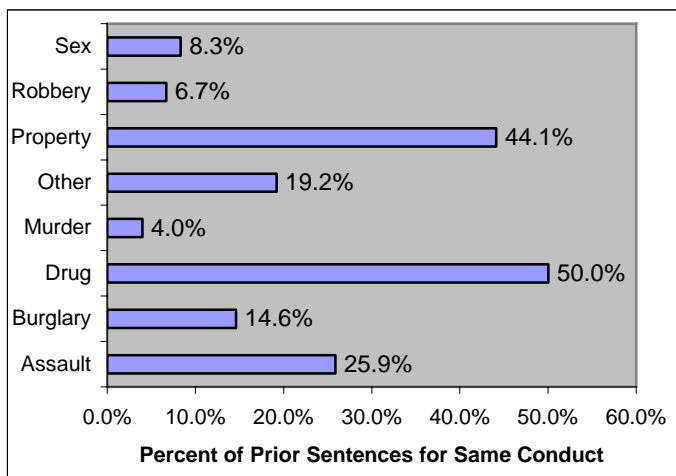
County Name	Total	Recidivism	% of total sentences
San Juan	33	42%	0%
Skagit	485	58%	2%
Skamania	50	46%	0%
Snohomish	2,002	61%	7%
Spokane	2,392	66%	9%
Stevens	140	52%	0%
Thurston	1,361	65%	5%
Wahkiakum	11	27%	0%
Walla Walla	279	53%	1%
Whatcom	914	55%	3%
Whitman	67	31%	0%
Yakima	1,364	66%	5%

### Same Criminal Conduct

A subset of recidivists includes offenders whose current sentence was for the same type of offense committed in the past, referred to as “same criminal conduct.”

Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of same criminal conduct for each offense group<sup>5</sup>. Drug offenders were the most likely to have repeated the same type of offense. Of the recidivists sentenced for drug offenses, 50% had criminal histories for other drug offenses. Property offenders were the next most likely to have repeated the same type of offense. Murder, robbery and sex offenders were the least likely to have current criminal behavior that was the same type as that committed in the past.

**Figure 6: Same Criminal Conduct**



<sup>5</sup> Failure to register as a sex offender was classified as “other” for the analysis of repeat offenders rather than “sex” because such a conviction by definition requires a prior sentence for sex crimes but does not involve subsequent sexual misconduct.

### Trends in Recidivism

During the period between 2000 and 2004 recidivist sentences increased by 2.4% (Table 6). Although the percentage of recidivism appears to be rising slightly, there is no clear trend. Recidivism in 2002 declined. The overall average recidivism for these five years was 59.4%

**Table 6: Recidivism from 2000 through 2004**

Sentence Year	First Offense	Sentences with Priors	Total Sentences	Percent of Recidivism
2000	10,274	14,817	25,091	59.1%
2001	10,776	15,645	26,421	59.2%
2002	11,548	16,663	28,211	59.1%
2003	10,874	16,548	27,422	60.3%
2004	10,807	17,268	28,075	61.5%

### Conclusion

The Sentencing Guideline’s database does not contain demographic information on individual offenders sufficient to support intensive research into the causes of recidivism. As such, this report is intended to summarize the state’s recidivism statistics and to provide a starting point for reviewing efforts aimed at reducing recidivism. Additional tables and charts relating to recidivism in Washington State can be found on the Sentencing Guidelines Commission’s Internet Website at <http://www.sgc.wa.gov/>.

#### Data

Offense and offense history data are derived from the Washington Judgment and Sentencing (J & S) forms transmitted to the Sentencing Guidelines Commission by the courts. In reporting on sentences that involved convictions for multiple charges, only the most serious offense was used. Some individual offenders were sentenced for more than one offense in FY 2005. In such cases each sentence is counted as a separate case record. As such, it should be understood that this report reflects sentencing data, not offender data.

Comments or questions may be directed to:

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