



Recidivism of Adult Felons

2007

Overview

During Fiscal Year 2007, Washington courts entered 29,196 adult felony sentences. Approximately 75% of the offenders were male and 63.3% of the sentences involved offenders who had a history of one or more prior offenses (Table 1).

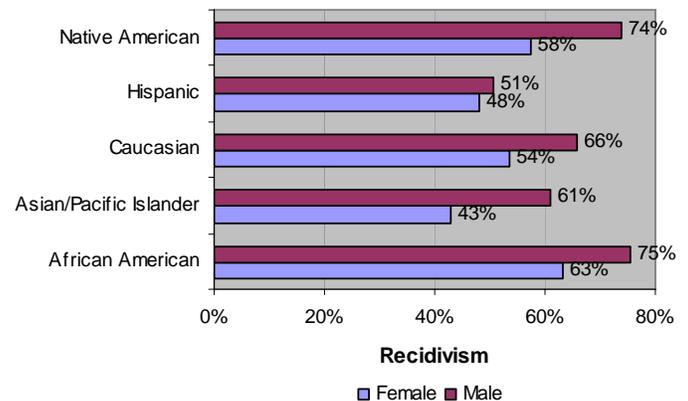
Table 1: Demographics

		Number	% Sentenced	% Recidivism
Gender and % of population¹				
Male	49.8%	21,860	74.9%	65.9%
Female	49.6%	5,602	19.2%	53.6%
Unknown	0.6%	1,734	5.9%	52.5%
Ethnicity and % of population				
African American	2.6%	4,053	13.9%	73.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.7%	674	2.3%	57.7%
Caucasian	65.6%	20,510	70.2%	63.2%
Hispanic	6.0%	1,178	4.0%	50.3%
Native American	1.1%	734	2.5%	69.1%
Other	1.7%	1	0.0%	100.0%
Unavailable		2,046	7.0%	51.5%
Age and % of population				
15 to 24	14.9%	7,983	27.3%	55.2%
25 to 34	13.7%	9,230	31.6%	67.2%
35 to 44	15.3%	7,054	24.2%	69.3%
45 to 54	15.7%	3,440	11.8%	65.6%
55 to 64	11.3%	618	2.1%	53.2%
Over 65	11.8%	102	0.3%	35.3%
Unknown		769	2.6%	46.9%

For purposes of this report, the term “recidivism” includes any sentence in which the offender’s criminal

history contains a prior felony sentence². The overall rate of recidivism for men was 65.9% compared to 53.6% among women. African Americans account for 2.6% of the population in Washington, a disproportionately high 13.9% of all sentences, and had the highest recidivism rate of all racial groups at 73.5%. Native Americans, the smallest group with 1.1% of the general population received 2.5% of all sentences and had 69.1% recidivism. Caucasians, the largest segment of the general population, 65.6%, received 70.2% of all sentences with recidivism at 63.2%. Asian Pacific 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, 33.8 years, was only slightly higher than the average age of repeat offenders, 33.7. Women tended to become repeat offenders at a later age, averaging 33.2 years old, compared to men at 32.3. Offenders between the ages of 35 and 44 years old received 24.2% of sentences and had the highest

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

² 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.

percentage of recidivism at 69%. They were followed closely by offenders between 25 and 34 years old who received 31.6% of sentences and experienced a recidivism rate of 67%.

Recidivism by Offense

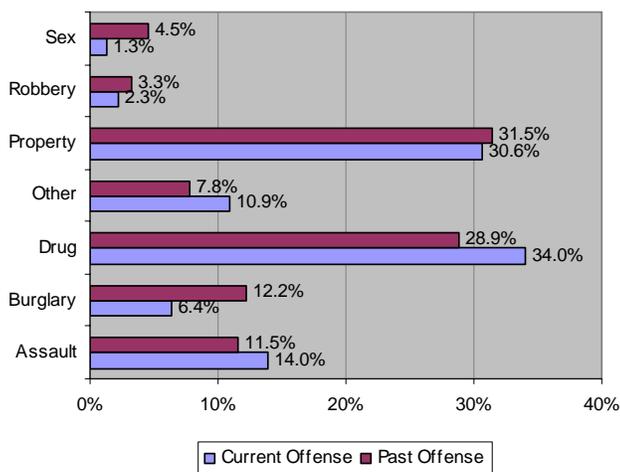
Felony offenses are categorized into nine primary offense groups: assault, burglary, drug, manslaughter, murder, property, robbery, sex, and other. Drug and property crimes accounted for the largest share of current offenses, 33% and 29% respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Recidivism by Offense

Offense Type	Total Offenders	Offenders with prior felonies	% of all Sentences	% Recidivism
Assault	4,315	2,572	14.8%	59.6%
Burglary	1,893	1,177	6.5%	62.2%
Drug	10,002	6,267	34.3%	62.7%
Manslaughter	94	36	0.3%	38.3%
Murder	150	78	0.5%	52.0%
Other	2,712	2,013	9.3%	74.2%
Property	8,503	5,643	29.1%	66.4%
Robbery	640	416	2.2%	65.0%
Sex	820	233	2.8%	28.4%

There were 18,481 sentences that involved offenders with a history of past offenses. The most frequently listed prior convictions were property crimes, closely followed by drug crimes. Drug crimes had a recidivism rate of 62.7%. Other felonies had the highest recidivism rate at 74.2%, followed closely by property crimes at 66.4%.

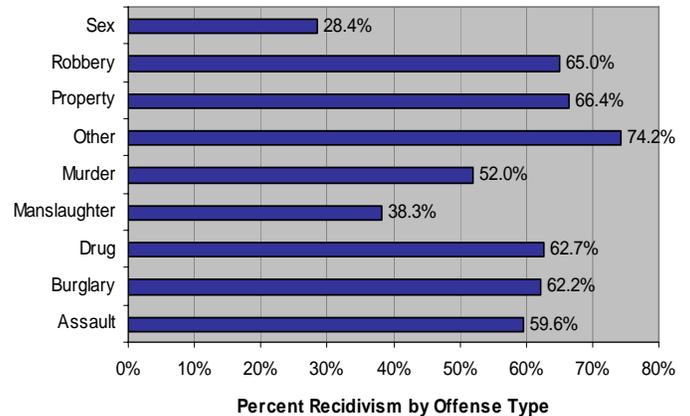
Figure 2: Current versus Past Offenses³



³ Manslaughter and Murder have ratio of current versus past offense less than 0.3%

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 72,894 prior sentences resulting in a rate of 3.94 past convictions per recidivist sentenced. Although offenders convicted of murder had the third lowest percentage of recidivism (52%) those who were recidivists, had the highest rate of prior convictions per sentence (4.41). Property crimes accounted for the second highest rate of prior offenses per recidivist at 4.18 prior convictions per sentence (Table 3).

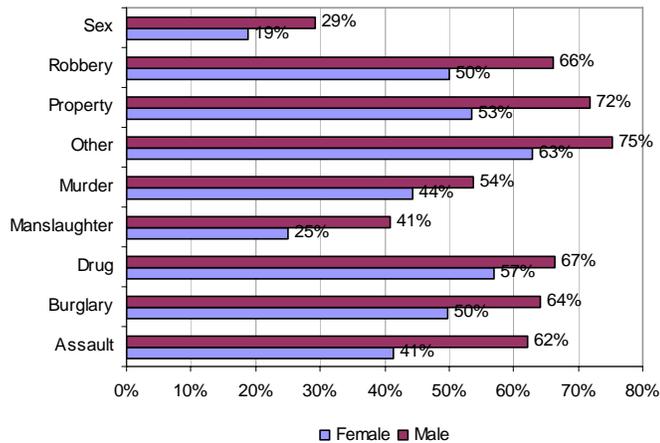
Table 3: Rate of Prior Offenses⁴

Offense Category	Total Prior Offenses	Rate of Priors per Current Sentences	Rate of Priors per Recidivist Sentences
Assault	9,407	2.18	3.66
Burglary	4,688	2.48	3.98
Drug	24,040	2.40	3.83
Manslaughter	113	1.20	3.14
Murder	344	2.29	4.41
Other	8,215	3.03	4.08
Property	23,587	2.77	4.18
Robbery	1,642	2.57	3.95
Sex	656	0.80	2.82
Total	72,894	2.50	3.74

⁴ 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.

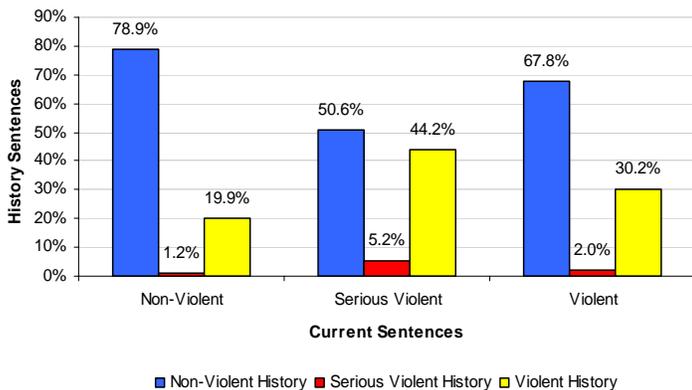
Figure 4: Recidivism by Gender and Offense Group



Violent and Nonviolent Offenders

Individual crimes in each category are classified as either violent or non-violent. Nearly 7% of the 2007 sentences involved violent offenses. 64.5% of non-violent sentences involved recidivists compared to violent offenses at 48.6%. However, among the current, non-violent recidivist sentences, 19.9% of the prior convictions were for violent crimes (Figure 5). Current violent recidivist sentences had a higher percentage of prior violent convictions at 30.2%. Of the sentences for violent crimes, the highest recidivism rate was for the “other” offense group at 75%, followed by robbery at 63.9%, then burglary at 53.5 (Table 4).

Figure 5: Percentage of Recidivism for Violent Offenses



Of the sentences for non-violent offenses robbery offense had the highest recidivism at 76.9%, followed by 66.4% for property crimes and 62.7% for burglary and drug.

Table 4: Violent/Non-violent by category

Current Category	Non-Violent		Serious Violent		Violent	
	Total Offenses	Reci.	Total Offenses	Reci.	Total Offenses	Reci.
Assault	3,275	63.1%	120	52.5%	920	47.9%
Burglary	1,779	62.7%			114	53.5%
Drug	10,006	62.7%				
Manslaughter	11	45.5%	13	38.5%	70	37.1%
Murder	1	100.0%	149	51.7%		
Other	2,708	74.2%			4	75.0%
Property	8,461	66.4%			42	52.4%
Robbery	52	76.9%			588	63.9%
Sex	487	31.6%	17	52.9%	316	22.2%

Recidivism by County

Clallam County had the highest percent of recidivism at 72%, Grays Harbor, Pierce, and Yakima counties each had 68% recidivism. King County was 11th highest with 63% recidivism (Table 5).

Table 5: Percent of Recidivism by County

County Name	Total	Recidivism	% of total sentences
Adams	68	61%	0.4%
Asotin	75	55%	0.5%
Benton	612	62%	3.4%
Chelan	267	60%	1.5%
Clallam	225	72%	1.1%
Clark	1,115	58%	6.6%
Columbia	12	60%	0.1%
Cowlitz	755	66%	3.9%
Douglas	89	51%	0.6%
Ferry	8	44%	0.1%
Franklin	219	58%	1.3%
Garfield	2	33%	0.0%
Grant	183	52%	1.2%
Grays Harbor	364	68%	1.8%
Island	36	55%	0.2%
Jefferson	70	67%	0.4%
King	3,364	63%	18.3%
Kitsap	819	63%	4.5%
Kittitas	78	53%	0.5%
Klickitat	53	59%	0.3%
Lewis	328	63%	1.8%
Lincoln	17	53%	0.1%
Mason	185	59%	1.1%
Okanogan	108	50%	0.7%
Pacific	75	56%	0.5%

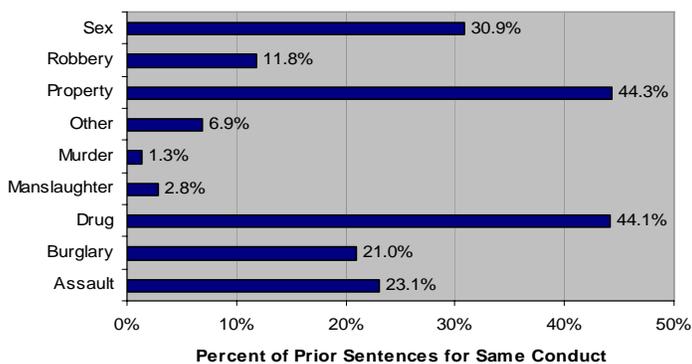
County Name	Total	Recidivism	% of total sentences
Pend Oreille	15	39%	0.1%
Pierce	2,882	68%	14.5%
San Juan	16	67%	0.1%
Skagit	288	59%	1.7%
Skamania	44	52%	0.3%
Snohomish	1,452	63%	7.9%
Spokane	1,922	66%	9.9%
Stevens	75	52%	0.5%
Thurston	887	65%	4.7%
Wahkiakum	18	64%	0.1%
Walla Walla	127	54%	0.8%
Whatcom	639	62%	3.6%
Whitman	26	37%	0.2%
Yakima	963	68%	4.8%

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 group⁵. Drug offenders were the most likely to have repeated the same type of offense. Of the recidivists sentenced for property offenses, 44.3% had criminal histories for other drug offenses. Drug offenders were the next most likely to have repeated the same type of offense. Murder and manslaughter 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



⁵ 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 2007 recidivist sentences increased by 4.2% (Table 6). Although the percentage of recidivism appears to be rising slightly, there is no clear trend.

Table 6: Recidivism from 2000 through 2007

Sentence Year	First Offense	Sentences with Priors	Total Sentences	Percent of Recidivism
CY 2000	10,274	14,817	25,091	59.1%
CY 2001	10,776	15,645	26,421	59.2%
CY 2002	11,548	16,663	28,211	59.1%
CY 2003	10,874	16,548	27,422	60.3%
CY 2004	10,807	17,268	28,075	61.5%
FY 2007	10,715	18,481	29,196	63.3%

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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